

GENOCIDE 1971: Bangladesh moves to get UN recognition

Bangladesh observed “Genocide Day” on 25 March for the first time to commemorate the brutality carried out by the Pakistani Army in the “Black Night” of March 25, 1971. It may be mentioned that the Pakistan Army swooped on unarmed civilians to crush the Bengali rebellion following refusal by the military leadership to accept the election results of 1970 in which the Awami League got thumping majority. ‘Operation Searchlight’ began in the first hours of March 25 in Dhaka.

Earlier, Bangladesh government unanimously adopted a resolution declaring March 25 as Genocide Day, in remembrance of the atrocities carried out by the Pakistani Army. Members of the Parliament in presence of the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, passed the motion unanimously after a long 7-hour discussion in the Parliament. The cabinet later at a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina approved March 25 to be observed as Genocide Day, clearing all formalities to recognise the brutal genocide committed on this day in 1971.



Bangladesh has finally taken initiatives to get recognition of the Pakistan army led genocide by the UN. An earlier report says, ahead of Bangladesh observing March 25, the day when the Pakistan army unleashed its war machine against a sleeping population, as Genocide Day, the government will send two senior officials to the UN headquarters in New York and the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) headquarters in Geneva. They will talk to senior UN officials to start the process of getting UN recognition of the Pakistani atrocity. “This is a tall task, needing support from many,” Shahriar Alam, state minister for foreign affairs, told The Daily Star, a Bangladesh daily newspaper recently. “We will approach those countries like Russia, India and the UK which had supported our cause in

1971 so that these countries pass resolutions in their own parliaments to recognize the killings in Bangladesh as genocide.” Shahriar said the foreign ministry has also set up a desk with two secretaries which will monitor the task. The UN has recognized two massacres as genocide – the Holocaust and the Rwanda genocide.

The report further says, although the world leaders did not pay heed to the grisly murders in this part of the world, often considered as a backwater in the then geopolitical map dominated by the Soviet Union, China, Pakistan, India and Indo-China, concerns were raised by the world press at the time. The New York Times in a piece in May of 1971 called the killing "one of the bloodiest slaughters of modern times." In April that year, New York Times, in an editorial headlined "Bloodbath in Bengal," condemned Washington's silence on what it called the "indiscriminate slaughter of civilians and the selective elimination of leadership groups in East Bengal." The Sunday Times published articles and editorials under headlines of "Genocide." The US Consul General in Dhaka, Archer Blood, sent a telegram to Washington headed with the phrase "Selective Genocide." The recently published book by Prof Gary Bass, based primarily on the declassified White House tapes, has been named as Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide." The then UN Secretary General, U Thant, on June 3, 1971, wrote to the President of the Security Council saying "The happenings in East Pakistan constitute one of the most tragic episodes in human history. Of course, it is for future historians to gather facts and make their own evaluations, but it has been a very terrible blot on a page of human history." But world leaders would not pay much attention to these pleas in the then complicated geopolitics. The onus of having it recognised internationally as genocide and for the dead to be recognised as victims of genocide fell on Bangladesh.

What significance will UN recognition have? First, it will officially document the atrocities of war against this population by a brutal regime. For humanity to move forward, it has strong significance. A crime has been committed and that has to be recognised as a crime. Otherwise, humanity will see recurrence of genocides. It is also a process of shaming the perpetrators. Secondly, if Bangladesh takes forward charges against the Pakistani leaders and soldiers for war crimes in international courts, this recognition will help it happen as such recognition has been in the case of the Bosnian genocide.

Recognise Bangladesh Genocide: Atrocities of Balochs in Pakistan- Nirmul Committee at UN in Geneva

Geneva: Bangladesh genocide was raised at the UN 34th Session of the Human Rights Council on 14 March by a delegation led by Rahman Khalilur, Executive President of International Forum for Secular Bangladesh, Switzerland Chapter. The delegation included Swiss Nirmul Committee activists, Hassan Imam Khan, Nezam Uddin, Arun Barua and Ansar Ahmed Ullah of European Bangladesh Forum from the UK.

Rahman Khalilur spoke about '1971 Liberation War in Bangladesh, Crimes against Humanity & Genocide by Pakistan Army' & Ansar Ahmed Ullah told the seminar that according to United Nations Human Rights Commission report Pakistan was responsible for one of the worst & most intense genocide in Bangladesh in 1971. But Pakistan has never acknowledged or accepted the crimes they committed against the civilian population of Bangladesh. None of the army Generals involved in the genocide has ever been brought to trial for their crimes. Unless those responsible are brought to justice a culture of impunity will prevail and the Pakistani military will continue to commit crimes against humanity.



(Photo: from left: Ansar Ahmed Ullah, Claudia Heildberg, Munir Mengal, H H Khan & Baseer Naveed)

Nirmul Committee delegation were speaking at the UN 34th Session of the Human Rights Council's Open Dialogue on Enforced Disappearances in Pakistan, an interactive Global Talk held on Tuesday at UN's Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland organised by the Action Aides Aux Familles Demunies (A.A.F.D.). They attended the session in solidarity with Baloch people.

The event was chaired by Munir Mengal, President of Baloch Voice Association with special guest HH Khan of Kalat Mir Suleman Saud Ahmedzai. Other Key note speakers were Claudia Heildberg, human rights activist, Germany, Randi Hagen, lawyer, Norway, Baseer Naveed, Asian Legal Resource Centre, Prof K. Warikoo of Himalayan Research Foundation, Nepal and Italian poet Tony Schito. In addition, Kashmiri, Sindhi, Pashtun & Bengali human rights activists amongst others took part in the general discussion following the keynote presentations. The seminar addressed the systematic disappearances of Baloch people in Pakistan. Speakers stated 1992 Declaration for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances affirms the connection between enforced disappearances and crimes against humanity. Human rights organisations and the family members of victims claim that more than 24,000 people are missing. Mass graves have been unearthed at different parts Balochistan.

Pakistani propaganda on 71 Liberation War condemned in Netherlands

The Hague, 25 March 2017: In observance of the Genocide Day, Bangladesh Embassy and the Bangladeshi community in the Netherlands organised a discussion meeting titled, "We shall not forget you". The discussion meeting was organised on 25 March at the Embassy conference room. It was participated by members of the embassy and the Bangladeshi community in the Netherlands.

(Photo below left: Bangladesh ambassador in Netherlands, Sheikh Mohammad Belal speaking and right: partial view of the participants in the meeting)



At the start of the program one-minute silence was observed to pay respect to the martyrs killed

brutally by the Pakistani Army and their local collaborators in 1971. The messages on the Day sent by

the President and the Prime Minister of Bangladesh were read out in the meeting. After the message was read out a Documentary film titled, “Genocide in Bangladesh and killing fields” was screened. The film captured the tragic scenes of the killing fields where unarmed and innocent Bangladeshis were taken and brutally killed by Pakistani occupation forces during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971. The documentary film touched the participants in the meeting. The ten-year-old Prima, a Bangladeshi girl shared her ideas and conception of the Day with the participants and expressed her determination to make Bangladesh a strong and independent country, so that all can be proud of it.

The keynote paper was presented by journalist Bikash Chowdhury Barua of European Bangladesh Forum. In his key note paper Bikash Chowdhury compared the brutality of 1971 by the Pakistan army and their local collaborators, such as Jamat e Islami, Razakars, Al Shams with the genocide committed by the Nazis on the Jews during the second world war and also with the genocide in Rwanda, Cambodia and Burundi. Journalist Bikash Barua said, even after 46 years of independence, the anti-liberation forces are active today and trying to destroy the secular Bangladesh. He called upon the people not only to be vigilant against such forces, but also to fight them back collectively.

Another speaker, cultural activist Tanbira Talukder in her presentation narrated the shocking heart-touching stories of the family members who became victims of mass killings and genocide in 1971. She called upon all for their cooperation and joint efforts to avoid such inhuman incidents in the future. Describing the stories of Shaheed Azad’s mother, Shaheed mother Jahanara Imam and Birangana Rama Chowdhury she said, ‘war has not yet finished’.

Bikash. Roy, Secretary of EBF shared his horrific experience of 25 March night, the attack of Pakistani soldiers on the innocent people in the name of Operation Searchlight. On that fatal night he was with his parents in Ramna Kali mandir in Dhaka. He described how the Pak army demolished the famous Ramna Kalibari Mandir where more than 200 Hindu families were living and killing of many Hindus of the mandir vicinity on that night.



(Photo from left: keynote speakers Bikash Chowdhury Barua of European Bangladesh Forum, social activist Tanbira Talukder and Bikash Roy of European Bangladesh Forum)

Bangladesh ambassador in the Netherlands, Sheikh Mohammad Belal in his speech paid rich tributes to the martyred Bangladeshis who lost their lives during the liberation war and also to the founder of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Ambassador Belal underscored the need to maintain a close contact with the International Criminal Court and Permanent Arbitration Court in the Netherlands. Reiterating the statement, “war has not yet ended” the ambassador severely criticized the false propaganda against the great liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971 by infamous Pakistani writer, Junaid Ahmed in his book, “Myth Behind the Creation of Bangladesh”. He underscored the need for preserving the interviews and statements of the witnesses of the brutality of Pakistani forces through archive to create attention of the world population. At the end of the program, special prayers were offered for the departed souls of the martyrs killed in the 1971 genocide in Bangladesh. (Courtesy: Bangladesh Embassy, Netherlands website)

Islamism & Europe

by Ansar Ahmed Ullah, EBF



European Bangladesh Forum had organised an international conference in Brussels on 18 October 2017 with participants from Bangladesh, the UK, The Netherlands, France, Sweden, Switzerland and Belgium. The conference was held in the backdrop of an Islamist hostage taking and attack in Dhaka on 1 July 2016 where twenty-four innocent people including nine Italians & seven Japanese citizens were brutally killed. This attack in Bangladesh was followed by similar attacks in the Middle East, Europe, US and Turkey claimed by the ISIS. It was in this backdrop the European meeting in Brussels was held to discuss the ways to understand as to why young European Muslims were being drawn to extremism. One of the reasons the conference was held in Belgium was because of the concerns of the number of Europeans who had gone to Turkey & Syria to join the ISIS.

Brussels conference concluded that without understanding the theories of Islamism, without an effective counter-narrative, it will be impossible to eliminate terrorism. The philosophy of Islamist terrorism is deeply rooted in the writings of Abul Ala Maududi, founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, Hassan al-Banna, founder of Muslim Brotherhood and Sayyid Qutb, leading member of Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt. Militants take up Islam as a political ideology and a way of life. They have an orthodox interpretation of religion, are opposed to the secular values, maintains transnational jihadi connections and view militancy as a legitimate means to attain their goals. Many in Europe are surprised to discover the identity of Islamist killers who had come from well to do backgrounds, studied well and to an extent were integrated. There is a stereotype that Islamists, are from a poor background, often victims of society who does not accept them and does not offer them sufficient opportunities. But the reality is that less than 2% of the terrorists are illiterate. A recent study examining the economic situation of countries that supply ISIS with recruits have discovered that 'the richer the countries are the more likely will provide foreign recruits to the terrorist group.'

Some of the British terrorists who joined the ISIS came from wealthy families and prestigious schools in the UK. The mastermind of the kidnapping and killing of the American journalist, graduated from the London School of Economics (LSE). The person who drove a jeep full of explosives into the Glasgow airport, had been president of the Islamic Society at Queen's University. The failed terrorist of Times Square in New York, was the son of a high official in the Pakistani military. The twentieth man of the 9/11 attacks, had a PhD in International Economics from the London's South Bank University. The Islamist who wanted to blow up a commercial flight, studied optometry at London University. The terrorist who prepared the bombs in Bali, studied at the University of Reading.

Britain's MI5 revealed that 'two-thirds of the British suspects have a middle-class profile and those who want to become suicide bombers are often the most educated.' One of the suicide bombers of 7 July 2005, studied at Leeds Metropolitan University. One suicide bomber had a scholarship at King's College before carrying out attack on Tel Aviv's seafront promenade in 2003. 15 of the 19 suicide bombers of 11 September came from prominent Middle Eastern families. One was the son of a lawyer in Cairo. The one who crashed Flight 93 in Pennsylvania, belonged to one of the most affluent Lebanese families.

A report on British multiculturalism published in May last year stated that one-third of Muslim adults in Britain do not feel 'part of British culture' and nearly half (47%) of Muslims consider their Islamic faith to be the most important part of their identity. In September, last year the Guardian newspaper reported that young Muslims living in Rochdale are increasingly turning to anti-Western sentiment and extreme interpretations of Islam. Muslim leaders interviewed by the paper described a 'disturbing trend' of young Muslims adopting more fundamentalist beliefs on key social and political issues than their parents or grandparents. In December 2016, a UK government-commissioned report said that

Muslims living in the UK are increasingly identifying with a global Islamic "Ummah" community, rather than with being British.

It's this sense of lack of belonging that is driving many young to Islamists to be part of a larger global community i.e. the Ummah. Amongst Bengali young people many appear to be keen in identifying themselves as Muslim. This was evident in a British academic research when he talked about Muslim identity. He stated the Bangladeshi participants often prioritised their Muslim identity. For Muslims living in a non-Muslim environment raises a number of dilemmas both externally and within, because strongly held Muslims values and customs are constantly being challenged by living as a minority within a majority Christian society of Europe. This dilemma of identity is being exploited by the extremist groups who appear to be providing a belonging to a wider global community. While the current social, economic and political conditions are pointing towards the foregrounding of a Muslim identity, it does not stand alone from other identities. The assertion of ethnic cultural identity and exposing European Muslims to their parents' heritage may halt the flow towards extremism.

Genocide Day observed in London

The UK Nirmul Committee and pro-liberation Bengali diaspora in the U.K. remembered the genocide



of the dark night of 25th March, 71 in a 'Light Vigil' on Saturday 25th March, 6pm at Central Shahid Minar, Altab Ali Park, East London.

People who gathered in Altab Ali Park in East London paid homage to those who lost their lives on the night of 25th when the Pakistani military launched assault on the innocent un-armed Bengalis of the then East Pakistan. In addition, the event reit-

erated the quest to seek justice for the victims of '71 war & to demand the completion of trial of all war criminals including Pakistani military personnel who carried out genocide of innocent millions.

The event was conducted by Nirmul Committee's Asst Sec Jamal Khan. It started with a minute silence and followed with a brief commemoration. Those who addressed the event were Nadeem Qadir, Minister (Press) at Bangladesh High Commission who lost his father during the war, Gita Sahgal, producer of 'War Crimes File' that exposed war criminals residing in the UK, Nirmul Committee's Vice President Ishaque Kajol, freedom fighter Abu Musa Hassan, UK Awami League's Women Sec Meher Nigar Chowdhury, Mohila Awami League's Chair Khaleda Qureshi & vice chair Husnera Matin, JASOD's Mojibul Haq Moni & Redwan Khan, Nirmul Committee's organising secretary Ruby Haq, Nirmul Committee's treasurer Shah Mustafijur Rahman Belal, Nirmul Committee's executive member Nilufa Yasmin, Monjuri Nasreen of Jubo Union, Gulab Ali of East London Awami League, Shayek Ahmed, Batirul Haq Shorder of Bangabandhu Writers Forum, poet Nazrul Islam, Mohila Jubo League's Jennifer Sarwar and Munmun Kaur amongst many others.

Nirmul Committee's vice president Ishaque Kajol brought the event to an end by saying that the genocide carried out by Pakistani military on the night of 25 March was one of the most brutal in the world. The Nirmul Committee has been commemorating the killings of innocent on the dark night of 25 March by holding annual 'Light Vigil' and has been demanding that 25 March be declared as 'Genocide Day'. He welcomed the decision by Bangladesh government and congratulated PM Sheikh Hasina for officially declaring 25 March National Genocide Day.

Protest against 'Creation of Bangladesh: Myths Exploded' in front of Pakistan Embassy in Paris

Paris: 'We Pro-liberation Forces', a group of Bangladeshis in France organised a protest demonstration in front of Pakistan embassy in Paris, on 9 March 2017 against the book, 'Creation of Bangladesh: Myths Exploded', written by Pakistani writer Junaid Ahmed. The book was published recently in Pakistan. The book according to the protesters, contains false and fabricated information about genocide, number of martyrs and torture of women by the Pakistani army during the country's War of Independence in 1971.

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Awami League ers, including Minister Sheikh strongly con- the contains of during a discus- parliament re-Hasina said that ask the foreign to lodge official against the con-book. Respond- question, Com- Minister Tofail

Ahmed said that the government of Pakistan owned the book as Inter Service Intelligence sent the copies of the book to the Bangladeshi High Commission in Pakistan. The ISI is the main intelligence agency of Pakistan, he said, adding that ISI tried to cause damage to Bangladesh on many occasions in the past.

Demand for prosecution of 195 Pak military: Demo outside Pakistan Embassy in London

A protest demanding indictment and prosecution of 195 Pakistani military officials accused of acts of genocide and war crimes, that Pakistan take back stranded Pakistanis-Biharis from Bangladesh, that



Pakistan should compensate rape survivors and the families of victims and pay back what Pakistan owes Bangladesh, half of the war-time reserve of undivided Pakistan was held on 22 March outside the Pakistan Embassy in West London.

The protest was organised by Juddoaparadh Moncho in association with the Nirmul Committee, Gonojagoron Moncho, Projonmo

Ekattor & Bangladesh Human Rights Council Following the demo in a brief address Juddoaparadh Moncho's president Matiar Chowdhury, Juddoaparadh Moncho's secretary Anisur Rahman Anis, freedom fighter engineer Mifta Islam, Gonojagoron Moncho's Ajanta Dev Roy, Sinthia Arefin, Sharmin Bhutto, Saif Mitu, Nurul Islam, Raku Ghosh, Shafi Newaz amongst others urged Pakistani authorities to take necessary steps to bring all war criminals to justice.

They further said that during the conflict in 1971 Pakistani military forces were involved in mass killings in Bangladesh in 1971. To date we are not aware of any such trial. Instead Pakistan has objected to Bangladesh holding trials of its own citizens for collaborating with Pakistan which is meddling in

Bangladesh's internal affairs. There are also allegation of Pakistan's intelligence agencies supporting and encouraging Islamist terrorists in Bangladesh. A memorandum with those demands were handed in addressed to Pakistani Ambassador Syed Ibne Abbas.

Brussels Conference calls for greater unity of Secular forces to fight terrorism

Brussels: Association of Bangladesh Community in Belgium (ABCB) and Belgium Awami League on 21 March 2017 organised a conference titled, 'Dhaka and Brussels Solidarity for Peace' at the European Press club in Brussels. The conference was organised in commemoration with the terrorists' attack on 22 March last year at Brussels airport and metro station in Belgium and also at the Holy Artisen restaurant attack in Dhaka last year. The conference participated by leaders of Awami league, social and secular activists and community leaders from different European countries, European political leaders and the Bangladeshi community people called for an urgent need for forging greater unity among the secular forces across Europe to fight the terrorism in the name of religion, which they said, was a global phenomenon. They expressed concern at the rise of Jamaat-e-Islam (Jel) activities in and outside the country, especially in some European countries to thwart the efforts being made by the



present AL government led by Sheikh Hasina to make Bangladesh a secular, democratic and prosperous country.

(Photo: from right Nora Babalova, Ansar Ahmed Ullah, Shahidul Hoque, Paulo Casaco MEP

and Jahangir Chowdhury) The speakers also appreciated the Sheikh Hasina government's firm determination of 'zero tolerance' on terrorism. They said, terrorists do not have any faith or religion and needs to be uprooted from all over the world including Bangladesh. They underscored the need to raise citizen's voice to fight terrorism in the name of religion.



(Photo: Mr. Paulo Casaca, former Member of European Parliament and head of South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF) addressing the conference)

Addressing the conference as chief guest, Mr. Paulo Casaca, former Member of European Parliament and head of South Asia Democratic Fo-

rum (SADF) who was in Dhaka when blogger Avijit Roy was killed gave a picture of the emergence of Jel and Islamic forces in Bangladesh. Mr. Paulo went to the site of the killing and placed flower in

respect to blogger Avijit Roy. Describing the situation, he said, “That is the blood of assault, it is the blood that unites us. It is the blood that tells us that we cannot allow this to go on and on. We have to stop this!” He added. “We are facing what psych sociologists call fundamentalist Paranoid Gestalt which is a collective phenomenon of paranoia. This paranoia uses some symbols, in this case religion. This is a sort of paranoia that can attain people in a tremendously devastating sequence. “This is fundamentally a manual to a revolution, a global totalitarian revolution where a group of people want to grab power. This is the essence of this and this is what we have to take into consideration.” He further continued, “When we see the decisions of the judicial authorities and the international court tribunal



on the crimes of the genocide I have to tell you very clearly that these are measures that we have to full-heartedly support.” (Photo below: M.M. Murshed, one of the coordinators speaking at the conference.)

“Please, do your at most to a fruitful dialogue with every political force in Bangladesh that is not staying by crimes. I think you need it; we do need it as well in Europe. We have to ensure that democracy in Bangladesh will move forward, that it will move forward on the basis of the unreserved condemnation of the criminals, unreserved condemnation of all the organisations that have

been involved in the genocide.” On democracy Mr Paulo said, “Democracy is not such a solid concept as most of us think here in Europe. Democracy is a very recent phenomenon. This is something that is very modern, very fragile and we are still discovering a lot of things. We are far from knowing things in a clear, established way. We are discovering it together.” “India was a democracy much before most of the western countries were democracies. So to speak about democracy as a western concept doesn’t make much sense.” “In Iraq I have seen the worst I have seen in my life. I think it gave me a lot of validity to say 'We have to be united against this sort of killings!'.”

We have to find out the problem and that is why SADF is investing time. What we are facing now is collective paranoia. He emphasised the importance of acting together to stop the bloodshed in Bangladesh. For him extremism is a collective paranoia using symbols like religion in this case. He calls Abul A’la Maududi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, the most influential motor of Bangladesh’s islamist movement. His condemnation has been the first fundamental step. Having dialogues with every political force in Bangladesh, which has not been involved in criminal activities and the genocide, should be the next one. This is necessary in order to make democracy move forward and make it less fragile. His full speech can be seen in the video link given below:

<https://www.facebook.com/nobokontho24/videos/599374343586004/>

Mr. Ansar Ahmed Ullah said, none of us is immune of terrorist attack. In fact, in 2015 a number of terrorists from Belgium took part in the attack in France. Mr. Ansar Ahmed Ullah of European Bangladesh Forum (EBF) of London was the main speaker at the conference. Chaired by Mr. Shahidul Hoque, President Belgium AL the conference was addressed by Mr. Bikash Chowdhury Barua of European Bangladesh Forum (EBF), Ms. Nora Babalova, a secular activist from Slovakia, Mr. Hasnat Karim, European Awami League (AL), Germany, Dr. Biddut Barua, Secretary, Sweden AL, Mr. Rizvi Alam, Spain AL, Mr. Murad Khan, Secretary, Holland AL, Mr. Mainul Islam, Finland AL and Mr. M.M. Murshed, one of the coordinators of the conference. Mr. Jahangir Chowdhury Ratan, Secretary Belgium AL conducted the conference. A Japanese musician played violin in memory of the victims died in the terrorist attacks on 22 March 2016 at Brussels airport and metro station. Prior to the conference a delegate from the organisers went to the place of bomb attack and laid floral wreath in memory of the victims. A documentary film was screened on Brussels and Dhaka Holey Artisan attack.

A Japanese violinist performed two tracks dedicated to peace. The event was attended by civil society members, social, cultural, political activists and Bengali delegates from Europe with the aim of promoting peace, harmony, democracy, diversity, international co-operation to make the world a planet of peace.

The latest Policy Paper of the South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF) mentioned that, ‘the rise of Jel is connected, directly, through individual members, or indirectly through its affiliates- with the rise of violence and terrorism in Bangladesh, including its cross-border components. Jel is already so deeply entrenched into the institutional system of governance and public sphere in Bangladesh that it can continue to function, even without being in power, build up its fanatic Islamic network. Jel risks turning Bangladesh into a major hub of terrorist activists, the Policy paper adds. It further said that Jel’s connection to Western based Jihadist organisations, mainly in the U.K. shows that it is not just a regional phenomenon but an important international player.

According to the SADF Policy paper, March 2017 Issue, ‘according to the South Asian Terrorism Portal’, members of the student wing of Jel are cooperating with Pakistan’s ISI in order to support Islamist subversive agenda in many regions in India, particularly in areas bordering Bangladesh, they also claim ISI finances Islamic Chattra Shibir (JL student wing). The SADF policy paper came up



(Photo: Ansar Ahmed Ullah of European Bangladesh Forum is addressing the conference. Also see in the photo are: former MEP Paulo Casaca, Shahidul Haque, chair and Nora Babalona: below is M M Murshed, one of the Coordinations of the conference)

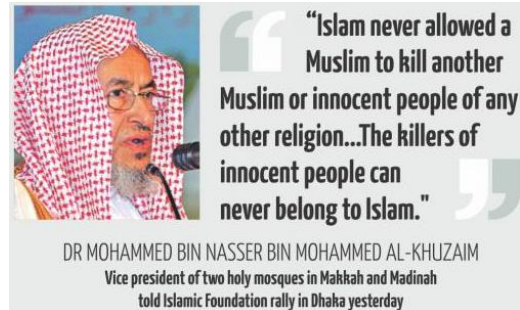
with the suggestions that: 1) most western governments assume the so-called Islamist parties are willing and able to take part in democratic processes. This according to SADF needs to be reassessed.; 2) political parties that directly or indirectly associate- either through individual members of third entities (Muslim charity and cultural organisations) –with violent Jihadist organisations must be considered as part of the Jihadist movement and the West must stop acting as their safe heaven, granting them freedom of movement, economic and financial activities that eventually destabilise non-Jihadist Muslim countries. It further said that western government must ensure that their territories are not used by parties supporting terrorism, directly or indirectly. The Western authorities should encourage cross-border cooperation to combat terrorism in South Asia and beyond. In particular, the West should help Bangladesh authorities and actively develop its education sector, and particularly encourage secular education in public schools. DADF further suggests that the western governments should support Bangladesh’s authority’s action to promote civil society, to eliminate the spread of ‘ideologies of hate’.

Join hands to eliminate terrorism: Hasina urges Muslim countries

Dhaka: Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina recently called upon Muslim countries to join hands to launch a concerted campaign to eliminate terrorism. “Everybody who believes in peace should be united against terrorism,” she told a mammoth rally of Islamic religious leaders and scholars in the city’s Suhrawardy Udyan. The programme was organised marking the 42nd founding anniversary of Islamic Foundation. The premier said Bangladesh will remain beside Saudi Arabia as the Kingdom took the initiative to fight terrorism and violent extremism in the name of Islam. She reiterated her solidarity with Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz initiative. Hasina said weapon producers’ traders were the eventual beneficiaries of the militancy at the cost of Muslims’ blood. “It is very unfortunate that Muslims are being killed by Muslims. So I hope that the initiative of the Saudi King would help make all Muslim countries aware of the fact,” she added.



Vice President of two holy mosques in Makkah and Madina Mohammed bin Nasser bin Mohammed Al-Khuzaim and Imam and Preacher of the Prophet’s (SM) mosque Abdulmehsin bin Mohammad bin Abdul Rahman Al-Qasim attended the rally as special guests. Mohammed Al-Khuzaim thanked the PM for inviting him to Bangladesh and extending warm hospitality. He said the Saudi government was making constant efforts to uphold the dignity of Muslims across the world. In view of this, an institution was established to expand Islamic cultural education and correction of people worldwide. Terming the killing of innocent people, a sin in Islam, he said the religion never allowed a Muslim to kill another one or innocent non-Muslims. According to Islam, it’s the duty of a Muslim to protect the lives and property of non-Muslims in his country, he added. “The killers of innocent people can never belong to Islam,” the vice president of the holy mosques said. He urged Muslims to stand against terrorism and militancy. He praised Bangladesh’s efforts in containing terrorism saying it was one of the countries successfully spearheading the anti-militancy campaign.



The PM said her government would not tolerate any ulterior design to undermine Islam and that it was ready to work together with other countries to eliminate the local and international roots of terrorism and militancy. It’s the duty of every Muslim to propagate the message of peace and work for peace and



the Bangladesh government was trying its best to educate people and train up religious leaders towards that end, Hasina told the programme. Welcoming the vice-president of the holy mosques and the Khatib of the Prophet’s (SM) mosque, she said their presence and inspirational speeches at the rally would stimulate the religious spirit of the people of Bangladesh. “It will make our task easy to establish peace in the society,” the premier said.

She thanked the Saudi king for sending the two top religious leaders to Bangladesh. She also conveyed her best wishes to all Imams and Ulemas of the two holy mosques of Mecca and Madina. Hasina said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the pioneer in promoting Islam. The PM urged the Ulema-Mashayeks to reach the real message of Islam to people. She said a vested quarter was out to portray Awami League as an anti-Islam party, particularly after the killing of Bangabandhu in 1975. Spiritual leaders, Imams, students and pious people from far-flung areas of the country joined the rally, with Religious Affairs Minister Matiur Rahman in the chair. (Courtesy:BSS).

Don't be divided, Stay UNITED! **European Action Week Against Racism 2017**



Organisations all over Europe organised separate programs to mark the European Week Against Racism from 18–26 March. Organised by UNITED for Intercultural Action, a European network of anti-racist NGOs, this annual campaign sees civil society groups, educational institutions and city governments come together to protest against racism and celebrate the diversity that enriches European societies. UNITED is the Pan-European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees, supported by more than 550 organisations from 48 European countries. How to join the network: see www.unitedagainstracism.org/supporters

In light of the divisive political rhetoric that has gripped Europe in recent years, the message of the 2017 Action Week campaign was: Don't be divided, Stay UNITED! The campaign is based around 21 March, the anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa in 1960, which in 1966 was recognised by the UN as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

EBF to organise conference on "Countering Violent Extremism: Global Context and Bangladeshi Diaspora" ON 11 July 2017



European Bangladesh Forum plans to organise its next conference on "Countering Violent Extremism: Global Context and Bangladeshi Diaspora" on 11 July 2017 (tentative date) at the European Press Club. The final date and the detailed program will be announced soon.

PICTORIAL



(Photo: Dr. Charles Tannock, MEP (middle) speaking at EBF conference on 18 October 2016 at European Press Club, Brussels. From right are: British journalist Martin Bright, Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta, Dr Charles Tannock MEP, Shahriar Kabir and Dr. Usama Hasan).



(Photo: Prof Dr. Willem van der Geest speaking at the 2nd session of the conference on 18 October 2016 at European Press Club, Brussels. On his right are Ilyas Sherali, Remi Kempers, Prof Dr. Tazeen Murshid, Ted Jeory and Maolana Feroz Alam)



(Photo left: Protests against Pakistani propaganda on Bangladesh Liberation War in front of Pakistan Embassy in Paris and right: in Geneva)