

1971 BENGALI HINDU GENOCIDE

DRAFT STATEMENTS FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

DRAFT 1

I join with my Bengali Hindu constituents to honor and commemorate the tragedy that befell their people 50 years ago. The 1971 Bengali Hindu Genocide was one of the worst human tragedies of the 20th century and sadly is one of the few unrecognized or forgotten genocides.

On March 25, 1971, the Pakistani Army launched an offensive called 'Operation Searchlight' into East Pakistan, present-day Bangladesh, thus beginning the 10-month genocidal campaign. Over that time, approximately 2-3 million people were killed, over 200,000 women were raped in organized rape camps, and over 10 million people were displaced, most finding refuge in India.

But don't just take it from me. Here are the words of the late U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) who visited the refugee camps in India in 1971 as the genocide was unfolding in neighboring Bangladesh. On the floor of the U.S. Senate on November 7, 1971 Senator Kennedy said, "Field reports to the U.S. Government, countless eye-witness journalistic accounts, reports of International agencies such as [the] World Bank and additional information available to the subcommittee document the reign of terror which grips East Bengal (East Pakistan). Hardest hit have been members of the Hindu community who have been robbed of their lands and shops, systematically slaughtered, and in some places, painted with yellow patches marked 'H'. All of this has been officially sanctioned, ordered and implemented under martial law from Islamabad."

I ask my colleagues to join me, the Bengali Hindu diaspora, and human rights activists around the world in remembering the tragic events of the 1971 Bengali Hindu Genocide so that we and the world may never forget.

SOURCE:

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1971-pt29/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1971-pt29-5-1.pdf>

DRAFT 2

In honor of the 50th anniversary of the Bengali Hindu Genocide, I join with the Bengali Hindu American community in my district and across the U.S. to remember and commemorate the over 2 million people who were systematically killed. I offer my prayers and condolences to the victims and their families who still feel the very real effects of that most colossal crime.

This March 25th will officially mark the beginning of the genocide in Bangladesh. In addition to the two million people killed, over 200,000 women were raped, and over 10 million people were displaced by the atrocities. 10 million people. That is no small number and the scale of these atrocities is grand. The brutality unleashed by the Pakistani army and the targeting of Bengali Hindus simply because of their religion must be strongly condemned as religious freedom is one of the most sacred human rights we hold dear here in the United States.

It has been 50 years since the genocide in Bangladesh, and the survivors and their descendants are still fighting for recognition; they are still fighting for an apology from Pakistan, as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh formerly asked her Pakistani counterpart as recently as January of 2021; and they are still fighting for justice and for closure.

And that is why we are here today. We are here to remember that history, to tell the victims and the survivors that we remember what you went through and what you are going through today.

That is why I've chosen to recite the words of one of our bravest foreign service officers to have ever served the United States. On March 28, 1971, Archer K. Blood, U.S. Consul General stationed in Dhaka, East Pakistan, present-day Bangladesh, during the genocide, sent a cable back to Foggy Bottom with the subject reading "Selective Genocide." Blood tells his superiors at the State Department that "Here in Dacca we are mute and horrified witnesses to a reign of terror by the Pak military. Moreover, with support of Pak military, non-Bengali muslims are systematically attacking poor people's quarters and murdering Bengalis and Hindus. Full horror of Pak military atrocities will come to light sooner or later."

Indeed the truth will prevail and after 50 years, it's about time we started telling the truth about what happened in Bangladesh in 1971.

SOURCE: <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu//NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEbb1.pdf>

DRAFT 3

As we approach the 50th anniversary of the 1971 Bengali Hindu Genocide, I join with the Bengali Hindu American community in commemorating the lives of over 2 million people killed in what is today Bangladesh.

I would also like to recall the courageous service of our men and women in the foreign service who, without acknowledgment, risk their lives to extend America's helpful hand and help those in need across the globe.

In that spirit, I would like to recognize the late Archer K. Blood, former U.S. Consul General who was stationed in Dhaka, Bangladesh, at the time of the genocide. He along with 19 of his colleagues at the U.S. Consulate at the time signed a rarely known statement of protest to the Secretary of State about U.S. inaction while the genocide was unfolding.

They wrote, "Numerous officers of AMCONGEN, USAID Dacca, and USIS Dacca consider it their duty to register strong dissent with fundamental aspects of this [U.S.] policy...we have chosen not to intervene, even morally, on the grounds that the Awami conflict, in which unfortunately the overworked term genocide is applicable, is purely internal matter of a sovereign state. Private Americans have expressed disgust. We, as professional public servants express our dissent with current policy and fervently hope that our true and lasting interests here can be defined and our policies redirected in order to salvage our nation's position as a moral leader of the free world."

I echo their statement and I note it because it is important that Americans know that in the face of evil, there are good men and women who will stand up and do what is right.

SOURCE: <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BE888.pdf>