

51ST ANNIVERSARY OF
BENGALI HINDU GENOCIDE
DRAFT BILL

H.Res.XX - Commemorating March 25, 2022 as the 51st Anniversary of the Bengali Hindu Genocide and calling on the Government of Bangladesh to protect the human rights of all its citizens, particularly religious minorities.

RESOLUTION

Commemorating March 25, 2022 as the 51st Anniversary of the Bengali Hindu Genocide and calling on the Government of Bangladesh to protect the human rights of all its citizens, particularly religious minorities.

Whereas the nation of Bangladesh achieved independence in 1971 and established a secular democratic state, which is home to Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, indigenous people and atheists;

Whereas, the evening of March 25, 1971 marks the beginning of the Bengali Hindu Genocide when the West Pakistan army launched 'Operation Searchlight' in conjunction with local militias and carried out crimes against humanity against the ethnic Bengali population, particularly targetting Hindus in East Pakistan, where on that day alone approximately 100,000 people were killed;

Whereas, though numbers vary, reports indicate that the violence resulted in approximately 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 deaths, more than 10,000,000 people displaced, and approximately 200,000 to 400,000 women raped, many occuring in organized rape camps established by the West Pakistan army;

Whereas Edward Kennedy, the former Democratic Senator from Massachusetts, denounced the massacres of civilians on the Senate floor and wrote the following in a report for a Senate Judiciary Subcommittee Hearing, "Field reports to the U.S. Government, countless eye-witness journalistic accounts, reports of International agencies such as 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";

Whereas, Archer Kent Blood, U.S. Consulate General of East Pakistan, present day Bangladesh, in cable 1138 Dacca dated April 6, 1971, wrote to the U.S. State Department that "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" and that "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.”;

Whereas a report by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) following the war confirmed that the Pakistani army and local paramilitary militias were responsible for an “attempt to exterminate or drive out of the country a large part of the Hindu population of approximately 10 million people.”;

Whereas Bengali nationalists also carried out attacks on the ethnic Bihari population, who were viewed as supporters of Pakistan during the war;

Whereas according to the 1961 East Pakistan census the Bengali Hindu population of East Pakistan comprised 18.5% of the total population, and that according to the 1974 Bangladesh census the Bengali Hindu population comprised 13.5% of the population, and that according to the 2011 Bangladesh census the Hindu population of Bangladesh comprised 8.5% of the total population;

Whereas, Tribunals were established in 2010 by the Bangladeshi government, with broad support from Hindu Americans and the Bangladeshi people, to investigate war crimes committed during the 1971 War of Independence by local militias, including Jel and ICS, that collaborated with the Pakistani army;

Whereas during violent riots against the International Crimes Tribunals (ICT), Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) along with its opposition alliance partner Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel), and Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) supporters set off dozens of bombs, removed tracks from major railways, attacked security personnel, and forcibly shut down businesses, disrupting life for ordinary Bangladeshis;

Whereas BNP, Jel, and ICS engaged in widespread violence against vulnerable minorities following verdicts by the tribunals, resulting in the destruction of nearly 50 Hindu temples and 1,500 Bengali Hindu homes;

Whereas Amnesty International, subsequent to the violence, noted with concern that, “The Hindu community in Bangladesh is at extreme risk ... It is shocking that they appear to be targeted simply for their religion. The authorities must ensure that they receive the protection they need.”;

Whereas minorities were similarly targeted by BNP, Jel, and ICS in the run-up to and during the 2014 elections, during which 495 Hindu homes were damaged, 585 shops were attacked or

looted, and 169 temples were vandalized between November 2013 and January 2014, according to Bangladesh human rights groups;

Whereas religious extremists in Bangladesh have also attacked Buddhists, Christians, and Ahmadi Muslims;

Whereas machete wielding Islamists brutally murdered Avijit Roy and critically injured his wife Rafida Ahmed, both United States citizens of Bangladeshi origin and atheist activists, on February 26, 2015, in close proximity of police officers at the world famous Dhaka Book Fair;

Whereas Islamists in Bangladesh have a history of targeting atheist bloggers and activists, as at least 30 individuals were killed between 2013-2016, and many more are now in hiding for fear of their lives;

Whereas Jel, ICS, Hefazat-e-Islam, Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and its female wing Neo-JMB, which was responsible for July 1, 2016 Holey Artisan Bakery terrorist attack in Dhakka claimed by Islamic State (IS) that killed 22 people, and other extremist groups pose an ongoing threat to Bangladesh's stability and secular democracy, and religious minorities remain at grave risk of continuing violence;

Whereas the ruling Awami League (AL) party, which led the country to liberation with the promise that Bangladesh would be a secular country, has not lived up to its own commitment to secularism by declaring "Islam" as the "State Religion" in the Constitution; and

Whereas the Awami League, as a political party and ruling government in power has failed to protect religious minorities from violence and, in many cases, AL Ministers and local leaders are known for committing religious and ethnic minority persecution, including incidents of mass violence such as in Ramu Upazila, Cox Bazar in 2012 where dozens of homes and temples in Buddhist and Hindu villages were destroyed, and in Nasirnagar Upazila, Brahmanbaria in 2016 where dozens of Hindu homes and temples were attacked;

Whereas as recently as November, 2020, an extremist Muslim-mob of approximately 3,000 people attacked 20 Hindu families and destroyed several Hindu homes and 4 Hindu temples in Comilla district;

Whereas human rights defender and attorney Rabindra Ghosh and other human rights activists have been targeted by state and non-state actors for their relentless legal defense of minorities who have faced religious persecution in Bangladesh;

Whereas repeated attacks on religious minorities, expanding religious intolerance, and growing destabilization caused by radical groups, including Jel, ICS, and JMB, undermine United States economic and strategic interests in Bangladesh;

Whereas there has been a dangerous trend of religious extremism in Bangladesh tied to Islamic State (IS) activity in Iraq and Syria, with several arrests of Islamists linked to the terrorist group made over recent years;

Whereas there are approximately 50,000 Bengali Hindus residing in the United States, including Bengali Hindu Genocide survivors, their family members, and their descendants;

Whereas the broader Hindu American community is deeply concerned with the plight of the remaining Bengali Hindu population in Bangladesh which continues to face targeted violence, land theft, destruction of property and religious sites; and

Whereas the United States Government should more actively engage with the Government of Bangladesh over our shared interests in safeguarding human rights, religious freedom, and secular democracy in Bangladesh, while working to eliminate religious extremism and militancy.

Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) acknowledges March 25, 2022 as the 51st anniversary of the 1971 Bengali Hindu Genocide;

(2) calls on the Government of Bangladesh to adhere to internationally recognized norms for elections, rule of law, and secular democracy;

(3) calls on the Government of Bangladesh to shut down radical organizations operating in the country, such as Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Chhatra Shibir, and Hefazat-e-Islam who pose an ongoing threat to the country's stability and secular democracy; and

(4) calls on the Government of Bangladesh to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all its citizens, particularly vulnerable minorities.

RESOURCES:

- HRES396 (114th Congress)
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-resolution/396> - text below
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H. RES. 396

Calling on the Government of Bangladesh to protect the human rights of all its citizens, particularly vulnerable minorities, strengthen democratic institutions and rule of law, and prevent the growth of extremist groups.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

July 29, 2015

Ms. Gabbard (for herself, Mr. Salmon, Mr. Sherman, Mr. Fattah, and Mr. Dold) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Calling on the Government of Bangladesh to protect the human rights of all its citizens, particularly vulnerable minorities, strengthen democratic institutions and rule of law, and prevent the growth of extremist groups.

Whereas the nation of Bangladesh achieved independence in 1971 and established a secular democratic state, which is home to Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, and atheists;

Whereas there is extensive documentation that the West Pakistan army in conjunction with local militias carried out crimes against humanity against the ethnic Bengali population in East Pakistan during the 1971 War of Independence;

Whereas though numbers vary, reports indicate that the violence resulted in approximately 3,000,000 deaths, more than 10,000,000 displaced, and 200,000 women raped;

Whereas Edward Kennedy, the former Democratic Senator from Massachusetts, denounced the massacres of civilians on the Senate floor and wrote the following in a report for a Senate Judiciary Subcommittee Hearing, "Field reports to the U.S. Government, countless eye-witness journalistic accounts, reports of International agencies such as 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";

Whereas a report by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) following the war confirmed that the Pakistani army and local paramilitary militias were responsible for an "attempt to exterminate or drive out of the country a large part of the Hindu population of approximately 10 million people.";

Whereas Bengali nationalists also carried out attacks on the ethnic Bihari population, who were viewed as supporters of Pakistan during the war;

Whereas during violent riots against the International Crimes Tribunals (ICT), Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) along with its opposition alliance partner Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI), and Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) supporters set off dozens of bombs, removed tracks from major railways, attacked security personnel, and forcibly shut down businesses, disrupting life for ordinary Bangladeshis;

Whereas the Tribunals were established in 2010 by Bangladesh to investigate war crimes committed during the 1971 War of Independence by local militias, including Jel and ICS, that collaborated with the Pakistani army;

Whereas BNP, Jel, and ICS engaged in widespread violence against vulnerable minorities following verdicts by the tribunals, resulting in the destruction of nearly 50 temples and 1,500 homes;

Whereas Amnesty International, subsequent to the violence, noted with concern that, "The Hindu community in Bangladesh is at extreme risk ... It is shocking that they appear to be targeted simply for their religion. The authorities must ensure that they receive the protection they need.";

Whereas minorities were similarly targeted by BNP, Jel, and ICS in the run-up to and during the recently conducted elections, during which 495 Hindu homes were damaged, 585 shops were attacked or looted, and 169 temples were vandalized between November 2013 and January 2014, according to the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council;

Whereas religious extremists have also attacked Buddhists, Christians, and Ahmadi Muslims;

Whereas Jel and ICS, and other extremist groups pose an ongoing threat to Bangladesh's stability and secular democracy, and religious minorities remain at grave risk of continuing violence;

Whereas the recent flawed elections also threaten Bangladesh's stability and democracy by leading to violence around the country;

Whereas machete wielding Islamic extremists brutally murdered Avijit Roy and critically injured his wife Rafida Ahmed, both United States citizens of Bangladeshi origin and atheist activists, on February 26, 2015, in close proximity of police officers at the world famous Dhaka Book Fair;

Whereas Islamic extremists in Bangladesh have a history of targeting atheist bloggers and activists, as more than 8 have been murdered over the past 11 years, and dozens more are now in hiding for fear of their lives;

Whereas repeated attacks on religious minorities, expanding religious intolerance, and growing destabilization caused by radical groups, including Jel and ICS, undermine United States economic and strategic interests in Bangladesh;

Whereas there is a growing trend of Islamic extremism in Bangladesh tied to pro-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria activity, with several arrests of Islamists linked with the terrorist group made over the past year; and

Whereas the United States should more actively engage with the Government of Bangladesh over their shared interests in safeguarding human rights, religious freedom, and secular democracy in Bangladesh, while preventing the growth of religious extremism and militancy: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

- (1) acknowledges the victims of the 1971 War of Independence;
- (2) calls on the Government of Bangladesh to adhere to internationally recognized norms for elections, rule of law, and for due process in the conduct of the International Crimes Tribunal;
- (3) calls on the Government of Bangladesh to stop radical organizations, such as Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir, who pose an ongoing threat to the country's stability and secular democracy; and
- (4) calls on the Government of Bangladesh to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all its citizens, particularly vulnerable minorities.

Cosponsors: H.Res.396 — 114th Congress (2015-2016)

Sponsor: [Rep. Gabbard, Tulsi \[D-HI-2\]](#) | Cosponsor statistics: 8 current - includes 4 original

Cosponsor	Date Cosponsored
Rep. Salmon, Matt [R-AZ-5]*	07/29/2015
Rep. Sherman, Brad [D-CA-30]*	07/29/2015
Rep. Fattah, Chaka [D-PA-2]*	07/29/2015
Rep. Dold, Robert J. [R-IL-10]*	07/29/2015
Rep. Trott, David A. [R-MI-11]	10/06/2015
Rep. Kind, Ron [D-WI-3]	10/07/2015
Rep. DeFazio, Peter A. [D-OR-4]	10/27/2015

