



Bangladesh – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 14 August 2013

Information required on the Islam Chatra Shebir (Islami Chhatra Shibir) party. Is it a religious or political organisation? What is its legal status? How are its members treated by the Government? Is there any information on the current treatment of its supporters by the government upon their return to Bangladesh? Do its members dress distinctly? Could they be easily identified?

A document published by the South Asia Terrorism Portal states:

“The Islami Chhatra Shibir is the student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, which came into existence in 1941.” (South Asia Terrorism Portal (2013) *Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS)*)

In a paragraph headed “Objective” this document states:

“According to the outfit, its objectives are to struggle for changing the existing system of education on the basis of Islamic values, to inspire students to acquire Islamic knowledge and to prepare them to take part in the struggle for establishing Islamic way of life. A significant aim of the outfit is to establish an Afghanistan-Taliban type Islamist regime in Bangladesh. Consequently, the outfit is opposed to forces of modernization, secularism and democracy.” (ibid)

A paragraph headed “External Linkages” states:

“As one of the largest Islamist student organisations in South Asia, the ICS maintains a close relationship with various Islamist fundamentalist organisations of different countries. In 1979, the ICS secured membership of International Islamic Federation of Student Organisation (IIFSO). Its former President Dr. S A M Taher was also the Secretary General of IIFSO. The outfit is also a member of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY). The outfit is also reported to be maintaining close links with the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan’s external intelligence agency. With the help of the latter, it is reportedly working to support Islamist subversive agenda in many regions in India, particularly in areas bordering Bangladesh. The ISI is also reportedly providing substantial amount of funds to the ICS. Other Islamic countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, have provided a major proportion of its financial resources. The ICS is also reported to be maintaining close links with various terrorist outfits operating in South Asia and Afghanistan. These terrorist outfits reportedly carry out their activities in Bangladesh through the ICS. The ICS reportedly helps them recruit and indoctrinate fanatic youth. A significant number of them were reportedly sent to Pakistan and Afghanistan during the reign of the Taliban regime where a large number of fanatic youth come under the direct command of Osama bin Laden. The ICS is also part of a larger network Islamist extremist network of the HUJI, Jamaat-e-Islami, and Islami Oikyo Jote. This network has assisted the terrorist outfits in developing

an effectual infrastructure for training as also a network of clandestine camps and shelters for stockpiling weapons and supplies in Bangladesh.” (ibid)

A document published on the South Asia Terrorism Portal lists incidents allegedly involving Islami Chhatra Shibir during the period January to August 2013. (South Asia Terrorism Portal (August 2013) *Incidents and Statements involving Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS): 2013*)

A 2006 report published by the International Crisis Group, in a section headed, “*Islami Chhatra Shibir (Shibir)*”, states:

“Jamaat-e-Islami’s student wing, Islami Chhatra Shibir (Shibir), was founded in 1941. Nurul Islam Bulbul is the current president and Muhammad Nazrul Islam the secretary general. The organisation, with six divisions countrywide, is seen as a training ground for Islamist politicians; many of its former members have become prominent leaders, some in legitimate politics, others in underground extremist movements. Shibir’s support has historically been concentrated in particular areas and university campuses, where it has a reputation for violence. Shibir campaigns for Islamisation of the education system. It also encourages students to pursue Islamic studies and prepares them to take part in the struggle for establishing Islamic rule. Critics allege that it is simply opposed to modernisation, secularism and democracy. Shibir is a member of the International Islamic Federation of Student Organisations and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth. It maintains close ties with similar youth organisations in Pakistan, the Middle East, Malaysia, and Indonesia. It reportedly supports Islamist groups in India and has links with Pakistani intelligence, from which, in addition to Saudi Arabia, it is said to receive financing. Shibir has a stronghold in the university in Chittagong and a significant presence on campus in Dhaka and recruits from privately run madrasas throughout Bangladesh. The group regularly clashes with other student organisations on university campuses and has been implicated in religiously motivated violence, murders and bomb attacks. When in 2003 members were charged with violent crimes, the home ministry intervened in some instances to dismiss the charges.” (International Crisis Group (23 October 2006) *Bangladesh Today*, pp.15-16)

An article published by the Bangladeshi English-language newspaper, The Daily Star, states:

“Islami Chhatra Shibir has been perpetrating a reign of terror on Rajshahi University campus for over two decades with the backup from university administration and pro-Jamaat teachers. Their terror activities cannot be controlled at present as some teachers loyal to Jamaat-e-Islami have been in the administration posing as Awami League loyalists, a few RU teachers told The Daily Star. Shibir, the student wing of Jamaat, has been able to carry out criminal activities and get away with it since the pro-Jamaat teachers have tactfully recruited their men in the RU administration as teachers, officials, proctors and even the vice-chancellor, they said.” (The Daily Star (11 February 2010) *Shibir grows under teacher-admin care*)

This article also states:

“According to the university administration sources, there are around 1,100 teachers at RU of whom around 325 belong to the progressive parties, 300

are loyal to BNP and 400 to Jamaat. To maintain its supremacy on the campus, Shibir keeps pressuring the university people by issuing threats directly and indirectly, sources said. Around 60 incidents of clashes among the student wings of different political parties have taken place on RU campus since 1971, which left 28 people killed and over 2,100 injured, sources in the RU administration said. The university remained closed for over 600 days because of the clashes. Shibir has been involved in most of the clashes since 1980s after it started its activities on the campus in 1980. Towards the end of the '80s, left-leaning student wings including Chhatra Moitree became weak organisationally, which helped Shibir establish its supremacy.” (ibid)

An article from The Daily Star states:

“Ruling Awami League lawmakers yesterday in parliament demanded that the government ban politics of Jamaat-e-Islami and pro-Jamaat student organisation Islami Chhatra Shibir to stop politics of killing. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court Bar Association yesterday demanded the government declare Shibir a terrorist organisation for their terrorist activities, including killing Rajshahi University student Faruk Hossain. Demanding immediate start of the trial of war criminals, the AL lawmakers also blasted Jamaat-Shibir leaders for the rampage at Rajshahi University and killing Chhatra League worker Faruk and cutting tendons of four others. ‘Time has come to take final decision to ban politics of Jamaat-Shibir who are doing politics of killing in the name of democratic rights,’ AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta said.” (The Daily Star (11 February 2011) *Ban politics of Jamaat, Shibir*)

A public statement from Amnesty International refers to the arrest of Islami Chhatra Shibir supporters:

“Last week more than 300 supporters of Islami Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of the opposition party Jamaat-e-Islami, were arrested in Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong and other cities. The majority of them were picked up from dormitories or rented accommodation in and around university campuses. It is not known if any of them have been charged with a recognizable criminal offence. The arrests followed a wave of violence at major university campuses in Bangladesh, where rival student activists of the ruling Awami League party and opposition parties have fought each other over control of university halls of residence. At least four students, one from Dhaka, two from Rajshahi, and one from Chittagong universities have been killed in the midst of these clashes since early February.” (Amnesty International (23 February 2010) *Bangladesh: Politically Motivated Arbitrary Arrests Hamper Impartial Investigation of Campus Violence*)

An Amnesty International alert on the detention of two Islami Chhatra Shibir members states:

“Al Mukaddas (22) and Mohammad Waliullah (23), both members of the Islamic student organisation Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir, were allegedly detained by members of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), a specialised law enforcement agency, and the Detective Branch (DB) of the Bangladesh Police on 4 February. They have not been heard from since and their whereabouts are unknown. The RAB has denied detaining the two men in a statement to a Bangladeshi newspaper. However, reports from several sources and a pattern of disappearances thought to have been conducted by

RAB in recent months cast doubt on RAB's denial. There are credible allegations that RAB is often involved in the abduction, torture and extrajudicial execution of suspected criminals." (Amnesty International (20 February 2012) *Authorities Told To Respond About Detainees*)

See also an Amnesty International alert which states:

"Anwarul Islam Masum is a university student and Rajshahi City Office Secretary of Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir (BICS), the student wing of the opposition political party Jamaat-e-Islami. According to members of his family, in the early hours of 4 April, 30-40 officers from the Bangladesh Police and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), a special police force implicated in hundreds of killings, raided Anwarul Islam Masum's home in Rajshahi and abducted him. Family members told Amnesty International they were not allowed to leave the house during the raid, so did not see where he was being taken. Neighbours told them they had seen the officers putting Anwarul Islam Masum inside a vehicle with RAB markings and take him away. Anwarul Islam Masum was abducted a few days after violent clashes between supporters of BICS and police." (Amnesty International (14 June 2013) *Opposition Activist Abducted In Bangladesh*)

A Human Rights Watch report on violent clashes during February 2013 states:

"The police in Dhaka and other places used live ammunition against protesters. Media reports suggest that most deaths were at the hands of police, but supporters of the ruling Awami League party have also engaged in vandalism and violence. The initial information received by Human Rights Watch suggests that the police were responding to attacks by Jamaat members and supporters that resulted in police and civilian deaths after the party called for protests against the verdict. The Jamaat party has denied that their members are responsible for any lethal violence, but media reports indicate that members of Jamaat's Shibir group were responsible for several attacks, including against Hindu temples and houses." (Human Rights Watch (1 March 2013) *Bangladesh: End Violence Over War Crimes Trials*)

An article from the Hindustan Times states:

"In Dhaka, police and television camera personnel were attacked with bricks and stones by people inside the capital's main Baitul Mukarram mosque, a mob proceeding to torch vehicles outside. Members of the Jamaat Shibir vandalised Dhaka University and various Martyrs' Day memorial structures in cities across Bangladesh. Martyrs' Day was celebrated on February 21 commemorating the start of the independence movement from Pakistan in 1952. A Dhaka Police spokesperson stated that 166 people were arrested across the city. At the Shahbagh Police station just across the square where anti-Jamaat demonstrations had been raging from February 5 till it was called off on February 21, Mahbul Kurram had come to plead the innocence of his brother who had been shot in the leg by the police today and was now in hospital under arrest. 'Rezaul has nothing to do with the Jamaat. He just came out of the mosque after Friday prayers,' said Kurram. Members of the Jamaat Shibir accused of the murder of anti-Jamaat blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider in Dhaka on February 15, were identified by the police as setting off Friday's outbreaks of violence." (Hindustan Times (22 February 2013) *'Civil war' erupts in Bangladesh; 4 killed*)

A recent article from The Daily Star states:

“Jamaat-Shibir activists yesterday hurled handmade bombs at police and carried out arson and vandalism at different places in the country on the eve of their two-day countrywide hartal beginning today. Police arrested around 50 Jamaat-Shibir leaders and activists from across the country on charges of creating pre-hartal violence.” (The Daily Star (13 August 2013) *Jamaat warms up with violence*)

A recent Bangladesh Government News bulletin states:

“Twenty-two leaders and activists of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh and Islami Chhatra Shibir were arrested from Boldipukur point under Mithapukur upazila here today on their way to commit subversive activities, police sources said.” (Bangladesh Government News (13 August 2013) *22 Jamaat-Shibir men arrested from Mithapukur*)

Information on the treatment of returned asylum seekers who are perceived to be supporters of Islami Chhatra Shibir was not found among sources available to the Research and Information Unit.

Information on the attire worn by members of Islami Chhatra Shibir was scarce among sources consulted by the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints.

In an article published on the In the Middle of Nowhere website the author states:

“While lungi remains the prime outfit of working and older middle class of Bangladesh, it has been losing (or lost) its popularity among the youth. When I grew up, started living in dorm, ‘lungi’ was the trademark dorm dress of Shibir students only.” (In the Middle of Nowhere (15 May 2006) *Generation Gap*)

A guidebook published by the US embassy in Dhaka, in a section headed “For Men”, states:

- Most Bangladeshi men wear Western dress at home and work, including everything from suits to business casual or jeans.
- The traditional dress for most occasions (from business to formal) is the white punjabi pajama (long white tunic-like shirt worn over close-fitting or baggy white pants). The Punjabi is particularly visible on Friday, the Muslim holiday.
- In general almost all men refrain from wearing shorts. Wearing them will be very noticeable.
- At home Bangladeshi men will generally wear a lungi (sarong-like garment) and punjabi or shirt.

(Embassy of the United States: Dhaka, Bangladesh (undated) *Guide Book on Your Visit to Bangladesh - A Fulbright Experience*)

An undated document published on the Everyculture.com website, in a section headed "Traditional Costumes", states:

"In Bangladesh one of the few overt differences between Muslims and Hindus is in traditional dress. Muslim men tend to wear a sarong-like garment, the lungi, which is tied around the waist. This garment is worn with a short vest."
(Everyculture.com (undated) *Countries and their Cultures - Bangladeshi Americans*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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