



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Israel - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Tuesday 2 August 2016

Information on attacks on Buddhists/temples between 2012 & August 2016

A report released in July 2016 by the *United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office* states:

“In addition to extremist attacks on Christians, Buddhists and Hindus, 2016 has also seen an increase of wider intolerance towards minority religions” (United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (21 July 2016) *Bangladesh - Human Rights Priority Country update report: January to June 2016*).

In July 2016 the *Independent* notes:

“Yet another Hindu priest was hacked to death by unidentified assailants in Sadar Upazila of Jhenidah yesterday while a Buddhist man was hacked to death in Bandarban on Thursday night. US based SITE Intelligence Group reported that Islamic State (IS) has claimed responsibility for the murders of the Hindu priest in Jhenidah and the Buddhist man in Bandarban” (Independent (2 July 2016) *Hindu priest, Buddhist man hacked dead*).

An article released by *BBC News* in May 2016 states:

“Police in Bangladesh say a 75-year-old Buddhist monk has been hacked to death in the south-eastern district of Bandarban. An official said the monk's body was found inside a Buddhist temple. It is the latest in a spate of murders of religious minorities, secular activists and academics” (BBC News (14 May 2016) *Elderly Buddhist monk hacked to death in Bangladesh*).

In May 2016 the *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom* states in a report that:

“Christian and Buddhist communities also were targeted. Most attacks were attributed to individuals and groups associated with the BNP and the main Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamaat)” (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (2 May 2016) *USCIRF Annual Report 2016 - Other countries/regions monitored – Bangladesh*).

A report issued in January 2016 by the *United Nations Human Rights Council* notes that:

“The Special Rapporteur also heard Buddhists in the Chittagong Hill Tracts being associated with Myanmar, where Buddhists constitute the majority religion. Reportedly, there have been isolated incidents in which militant Muslims called upon the Buddhists to leave the country and settle in Myanmar. Fortunately, such ideas do not find an echo in the larger society” (United Nations Human Rights Council (22 January 2016) *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief on his mission to Bangladesh*, p.6).

This document also states that:

“Some of the violent incidents that have occurred over the past years have caused feelings of insecurity among minority communities, civil society organizations and individuals expressing critical opinions. One well-known case is the “Ramu incident” of 2012, when more than 20 historic Buddhist temples were ransacked, torched and finally destroyed. At the same time, a number of houses owned by Buddhists burned down to ashes. In that case, the Government reacted promptly and restored the destroyed temples, thus sending a much-needed message that such acts would not be tolerated. However, none of the perpetrators of the Ramu violence has been held accountable yet” (ibid, p.11).

In October 2015 the *United States Department of State* notes in a document that:

“According to the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist and Christian Unity Council (HBCU), vandals damaged at least 23 pandals (religious structures), including five in Batrish area of Kishoreganj town, in the 14 days leading up to the Hindu Durga Puja festival in October” (United States Department of State (14 October 2015) *2014 Report on International Religious Freedom – Bangladesh*).

In December 2014 the *International Humanist and Ethical Union* states in a report that:

“Violence against Ahmadi Muslims (considered heretical by other branches of Islam) and Buddhists has increased in recent years. The Buddhists mostly belong to indigenous hill tribes in south eastern Bangladesh (Chittagong Hill Tracts). In September 2012, following the posting of a photograph of a burnt Koran on Facebook, more than 20 Buddhist temples, along with homes and shops, were attacked and set on fire by Muslim protestors” (International Humanist and Ethical Union (10 December 2014) *Freedom of Thought 2014: A Global Report on Discrimination Against Humanists, Atheists, and the Non-religious; Their Human Rights and Legal Status – Bangladesh*).

A report issued in July 2014 by the *United States Department of State* notes that:

“Members of the Sunni Muslim majority at times harassed and physically attacked members of the Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, and Ahmadiyya Muslim minority religious groups” (United States Department of State (28 July 2014) *2013 Report on International Religious Freedom – Bangladesh*).

The *Society for Threatened Peoples* in May 2013 points out in a document that:

“The recent wave of violence was caused by a death sentence against the leader of the radical Islamic Jamaat-e-Islami party, Delwar Hossain Sayeedi, on 28 February 2013. The ruling was found by a war crimes tribunal that pursues crimes committed during the liberation war of 1971. Numerous Buddhist temples have since been destroyed in attacks by suspected Islamists” (Society for Threatened Peoples (6 May 2013) *Bangladesh: Mass protests by Islamists: Religious freedom of religious minorities is in danger*).

In May 2013 the *United States Department of State* points out in a report that:

“There were reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. There were scattered attacks on members of minority religious and ethnic groups, most notably against Buddhists in Ramu in September and October” (United States Department of State (20 May 2013) *2012 Report on International Religious Freedom – Bangladesh*).

Inter Press Service in October 2012 states:

“The riot began on Sept. 29, when large crowds of Muslims attacked Buddhist shrines and torched homes in southeast Bangladesh, home to the highest concentration of Buddhists in the country. Protesters chanted anti-Buddhist slogans and rioted throughout the night in the town of Ramu in the tourist district of Cox’s Bazar. Violence spilled into the adjoining areas and continued the following day” (*Inter Press Service* (10 October 2012) *After Riots, Buddhists Call for Peace*).

A report issued in October 2012 by *Amnesty International* states:

“More than 20 Buddhist temples and monasteries and at least one Hindu temple, along with scores of homes and shops, were set on fire during attacks in southern cities of Cox’s Bazar and Chittagong over the weekend and on Monday after thousands of people protested against the posting of an allegedly derogatory image of the Quran on social network site Facebook” (Amnesty International (3 October 2012) *Minority communities must be protected and arsonists face justice*).

In October 2012 *Agence France-Presse* states in a report that:

“Bangladesh sent in troops to guard Buddhist neighbourhoods on Monday after Muslim mobs carried out fresh attacks on temples and homes over Facebook photos deemed offensive to Islam. At least six temples were attacked in different neighbourhoods of the resort region of Cox’s Bazaar late Sunday, with thousands of protesters smashing statues of Lord Buddha before riot police used force to repel the crowds” (Agence France-Presse (1 October 2012) *Bangladesh deploys troops after new attacks on Buddhists*).

This document also states:

“Buddhists, who make up less than one percent of Bangladesh’s 153 million mostly Muslim population, are based mainly in southeastern districts, close to the border with Buddhist-majority Myanmar...Although Bangladesh, where nearly 90 percent of people are Muslims, has witnessed violent conflicts between Muslims and Hindus in the past, sectarian clashes involving Buddhists are rare” (ibid).

References

Agence France-Presse (1 October 2012) *Bangladesh deploys troops after new attacks on Buddhists*

<http://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/bangladesh-deploys-troops-after-new-attacks-buddhists>

Accessed Tuesday 2 August 2016

Amnesty International (3 October 2012) *Minority communities must be protected and arsonists face justice*

<http://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/minority-communities-must-be-protected-and-arsonists-face-justice>

Accessed Tuesday 2 August 2016

BBC News (14 May 2016) *Elderly Buddhist monk hacked to death in Bangladesh*

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36292457>

Accessed Tuesday 2 August 2016

Independent (2 July 2016) *Hindu priest, Buddhist man hacked dead*

<http://www.theindependentbd.com/printversion/details/50017>

Accessed Tuesday 2 August 2016

International Humanist and Ethical Union (10 December 2014) *Freedom of Thought 2014: A Global Report on Discrimination Against Humanists, Atheists, and the Non-religious; Their Human Rights and Legal Status – Bangladesh*

<http://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/freedom-thought-2014-global-report-discrimination-against-humanists-atheists-5>

This is a subscription database

Accessed Tuesday 2 August 2016

Inter Press Service (10 October 2012) *After Riots, Buddhists Call for Peace*

<http://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/after-riots-buddhists-call-peace>

This is a subscription database

Accessed Tuesday 2 August 2016

Society for Threatened Peoples (6 May 2013) *Bangladesh: Mass protests by Islamists: Religious freedom of religious minorities is in danger*

<http://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/bangladesh-mass-protests-islamists-religious-freedom-religious-minorities-dan>

This is a subscription database

Accessed Tuesday 2 August 2016

United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (21 July 2016) *Bangladesh - Human Rights Priority Country update report: January to June 2016*

<http://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/bangladesh-human-rights-priority-country-update-report-january-june-2016>

This is a subscription database

Accessed Tuesday 2 August 2016

United Nations Human Rights Council (22 January 2016) *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief on his mission to Bangladesh*

http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/31/18/Add.2

Accessed Tuesday 2 August 2016

United States Department of State (14 October 2015) *2014 Report on International Religious Freedom – Bangladesh*

<http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=printdoc&docid=562105d615>

Accessed Tuesday 2 August 2016

United States Department of State (28 July 2014) *2013 Report on International Religious Freedom – Bangladesh*
<http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/tehis/vtx/rwmain?page=printdoc&docid=53d907ac14>
Accessed Tuesday 2 August 2016

United States Department of State (20 May 2013) *2012 Report on International Religious Freedom – Bangladesh*
<http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/tehis/vtx/rwmain?page=printdoc&docid=519dd4e69b>
Accessed Tuesday 2 August 2016

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (2 May 2016)
USCIRF Annual Report 2016 - Other countries/regions monitored – Bangladesh
<http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/tehis/vtx/rwmain?page=printdoc&docid=57307cda13>
Accessed Tuesday 2 August 2016

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre 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.

Sources Consulted

Amnesty International
BBC News
Electronic Immigration Network
European Country of Origin Information Network
Freedom House
Google
Human Rights Watch
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
International Crisis Group
IRIN News
Lexis Nexis
Minority Rights Group International
Online Newspapers
Refugee Documentation Centre E-Library
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
Reliefweb
Reuters
United Kingdom Home Office
United States Department of State
UNHCR Refworld