

Bangladesh: Xulhaz Mannan, LGBT editor killed - Media Reports and Statements

Tuesday 26 April 2016, by [Amnesty International](#), [BBC](#), [GANI Aisha](#), [HAMMADI Saad](#), [PEN International](#), [The Daily Star](#)
(Date first published: 25 April 2016).

Following the killing of Xulhaz Mannan on 25 April 2016 in Dhaka, Media Reports and Statements by PEN and Amnesty are posted below.

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LGBT magazine editor stabbed dead at Dhaka home

Star Online Report

The Daily Star, April 25, 2016

- Assailants posed as courier service staff
- To make way into the house, attackers stabbed security guard
- Victim Mannan worked as US ambassador's protocol officer
- 'Islamists posted threat messages online'
- Senseless act of violence, says US envoy

Miscreants stabbed dead a local staff of USAID, who was one of the senior editors of the country's first LGBT magazine, along with his friend at his flat in Dhaka's Kalabagan area this evening.

Talking to *The Daily Star*, Mohammed Iqbal, officer-in-charge of Kalabagan Police Station, said they suspect the involvement of militants in the killing.

Editor of LGBT magazine 'Roopbaan', Xulhaz Mannan was known for his gay rights activism.

He was working for USAID. Earlier, he worked as a protocol officer of former US ambassador Dan Mozena for a long time.

Tanay Fahim, the other victim and his friend, was also a LGBT activist.

“He was a theatre activist,” M Ibrahim Khan, additional deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Ramna Division), told *The Daily Star*.

The incident took place two days into the grisly murder of Rajshahi University teacher Rezaul Karim Siddiquee in the northern city. According to US-based SITE Intelligence Group, international militant group Islamic State claimed responsibility of Siddiquee’s murder.

“Three persons came around 5:45pm and claimed they had a courier for Mannan. When I went up and told him (Mannan) this, he said that he was not expecting any such parcel,” Parvez Mollah, a security guard of the building, told *The Daily Star*.

Mannan used to live on the first floor of the seven-storied building on lane No. 35 in Lake Circus neighbourhood.

“As I came down and told them this, they insisted that I allow them to meet him (Mannan),” Mollah said.

As he declined to allow them in, the group stabbed him leaving him injured in the left eye and left arm.

The assailants then rushed to Mannan’s flat and swooped on Mannan and his friend Tanay indiscriminately, Abdul Bari, a sub-inspector of Special Branch (SB) of police, told *The Daily Star*.

The two died immediately on the spot.

Accomplishing their mission, the attackers fled by Dolfin Goli, Bari said quoting locals.

A patrol team of police tried to intercept the assailants as they were fleeing, Ibrahim Khan of DMP said. “One of the assailants this time attacked ASI [assistant sub-inspector] Momtaz with a machete.”

Describing the incident to *The Daily Star*, a witness said wishing not to be named: “I saw six to seven people rushing out of the building. Each of them was carrying bag packs.”

The body of Mannan was found lying at the entrance of the house while Tanay’s body was found inside.

During the attack, Mannan’s mother and a domestic help were at home, said Nurul Islam, the driver of Xulhaz’s brother Minhaz Mannan Emon.

‘THREATS FROM ISLAMISTS’

A spokesman for a gay group, Boys of Bangladesh, confirmed to AFP by text message that the *Roopbaan* editor was among the two dead victims.

He was behind an annual Rainbow Rally, which since 2014 has been held on April 14, Bengali New Year.

But police this year banned the rally as part of widespread security measures. Ahead of the banned rally earlier this month, the editor told AFP that they had received threats from Islamists, who posted messages online.

"They have even set up an online group to threaten us," he said.

'SENSELESS ACT OF VIOLENCE'

US Ambassador Marcia Bernicat said she is devastated by the brutal murder.

"We abhor this senseless act of violence and urge the government of Bangladesh in the strongest terms to apprehend the criminals behind these murders," the US envoy said in a statement this evening.

* <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/2-stabbed-dead-kalabagan-1214434>

Bangladesh LGBT editor hacked to death

Police in Bangladesh say two people including a leading gay rights activist and editor at Bangladesh's only LGBT magazine have been hacked to death.

The US ambassador to Bangladesh condemned the killing of Xulhaz Mannan, who also worked at the US embassy.

Another person was also injured when the attackers entered a Dhaka flat.

Since February last year suspected militants [1] have killed several secular or atheist writers and members of religious minority groups.

The two men were murdered two days after a university teacher was hacked to death by suspected Islamist militants.

So-called Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility - but the Bangladeshi government insists there is no IS presence in the country.

Who is behind the Bangladesh killings?

"I am devastated by the brutal murder of Xulhaz Mannan and another young Bangladeshi," said US Ambassador Marcia Bernicat.

"We abhor this senseless act of violence and urge the Government of Bangladesh in the strongest terms to apprehend the criminals behind these murders," she added.

Image caption The other victim, identified by Bangladeshi media as Tanay Mojumdar, also worked at Roopbaan

BBC Bengali Service editor Sabir Mustafa said staff at Roopbaan, which had not been condemned by the government and received some support from foreign embassies, had been careful to protect their identities but had not believed their lives were at risk.

Suspected extremists in Bangladesh are gaining a sense of security that they can carry out killings with impunity, he says.

A British photographer who knew Mr Mannan and the other victim, known as “Tonoy” and named in Bangladeshi media as Tanay Mojumdar, said they and other friends had set up Roopbaan with the aim of spreading tolerance.

Both men were openly gay and believed that if more gay Bangladeshis came out then the country would have to accept them, the photographer said.

They were also behind the annual “Rainbow Rally”, held on Bengali New Year, 14 April, since 2014. This year’s rally was banned by police as part of widespread security measures.

Their killings were likely to spread fear among the gay community in a country where homosexuality is technically illegal and remains a deeply sensitive issue, the photographer said.

“Until a year ago the only threat to coming out was shame of the family and having to start a new life elsewhere in Bangladesh. Now it’s one of danger,” he said.

Meanwhile Bangladesh’s best known blogger said he had received a death threat on Sunday.

Imran Sarker, who led major protests by secular activists in 2013 against Islamist leaders, said he had received a phone call warning that he would be killed “very soon”.

Image copyright AFP/Getty

Earlier this month, a Bangladeshi law student who had expressed secular views online died when he was hacked with machetes and then shot in Dhaka.

Last year, four prominent secular bloggers were also killed with machetes.

The four bloggers had all appeared on a list of 84 “atheist bloggers” drawn up by Islamic groups in 2013 and widely circulated.

There have also been attacks on members of religious minorities including Shia, Sufi and Ahmadi Muslims, Christians and Hindus.

Two foreigners - an Italian aid worker and a Japanese farmer - have also been killed.

Muslim-majority Bangladesh is officially secular but critics say the government has failed to properly address the attacks.

* BBC:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36128729>The US ambassador to Bangladesh condemned the killing of Xulhaz Mannan, who also worked at the US embassy.

Founder of Bangladesh’s first and only LGBT magazine killed

***The Guardian* - 25 April 2016**

Saad Hammadi in Dhaka and Aisha Gani

The founder of Bangladesh's only lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) magazine has been killed in the latest of a series of horrific murders of bloggers and activists.

Xulhaz Mannan was one of two people hacked to death in an attack in the capital, Dhaka, police said, by a gang posing as couriers in order to gain access to his apartment in the Kalabagan area of the city.

Mohammad Iqbal, the officer in charge of the local police station, confirmed that about six people had entered the apartment building and hacked Mannan and his friend to death in a first-floor flat. Two other people were seriously injured.

"A person came with a box identifying himself as courier service personnel. Xulhaz took him upstairs to his flat," Iqbal said.

Mannan, 35, was a founding editor of Roopbaan, the country's only magazine for the LGBT community and also worked at the US development agency USAid. The magazine had been launched in 2014 to promote greater acceptance of LGBT communities in Bangladesh.

A security guard at Mannan's building said the group had identified themselves as courier company officials when they arrived at around 5pm. "Half an hour later, I heard shouting and shooting sounds from the flat and went to look into the incident," he told the Dhaka Times. "The assailants then attacked me with knives."

Police said they had found the box, but did not divulge its contents.

Marcia Bernicat, the US ambassador to Bangladesh, condemned the killing. "I am devastated by the brutal murder of Xulhaz Mannan and another young Bangladeshi," she said.

"We abhor this senseless act of violence and urge the government of Bangladesh in the strongest terms to apprehend the criminals behind these murders."

The deaths of Mannan and his friend adds to a series of horrific murders of bloggers and academics in the country. It comes two days after Rezaul Karim Siddique, 58, an English professor, was hacked to death with machetes as he walked from his home to a bus station in the north-western city of Rajshahi.

Earlier this month, Nazimuddin Samad, 28, an atheist blogger, was murdered near Jagannath University, where he was a law student.

Mannan had been behind an annual "rainbow rally" in Dhaka, which since 2014 had been held on 14 April, at the beginning of the Bengali new year. It was cancelled this year on police instruction.

A close friend of Mannan's who lives in the US said Mannan had told him on Facebook that after the rally was cancelled four participants were arrested and only released after their families had been informed "that their sons were homosexuals".

Homosexual relations are criminalised in Bangladesh and many LGBT activists have been forced into exile.

The friend described Mannan as "my elder brother, friend, guardian, mentor". He said the two had known each other since becoming friends through the online LGBT group Boys of Bangladesh, where members would talk about their daily struggles and challenges.

“People would make friends there, virtual friendship under pseudo names as no one trusted nobody ... insecurity was high in that group, but he shared a series of photographs on Dhanmondi Lake on a winter morning and posted them under his real name Xulhaz Mannan,” he said.

“Xulhaz was the first openly gay person I had known. He was out to his close university and school friends, out to his colleagues, and everybody loved him to bits ... he introduced me to a world where straight people did not care what my sexual orientation was.”

Champa Patel, Amnesty International’s south Asia director, said: “There have been four deplorable killings so far this month alone. It is shocking that no one has been held to account for these horrific attacks and that almost no protection has been given to threatened members of civil society.

“Bangladeshi authorities have a legal responsibility to protect and respect the right to life. They must urgently focus their energies on protecting those who express their opinions bravely and without violence, and bringing the killers to justice. The authorities must strongly condemn these horrific attacks, something they have failed to do so far.”

Rashed Zaman, a professor of international relations at the University of Dhaka, said. “This is unacceptable. People may have belief and orientation but at the end of the day everyone has their own individual rights to live the life they want.

“I firmly believe in spite of the many difficulties I think our law enforcement are more than capable enough to unearth these cases if they put in effort.”

* This article was amended on 26 April 2016. Mannan was one of the founders of *Roopbaan*, not the current editor, as the article suggested.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/25/editor-bangladesh-first-lgbt-magazine-killed-reports-say-roopbaan>

Brutal murder of LGBT editor an appalling indictment of authorities’ failure to protect

PEN International

25 April 2016 - The savage murder of an editor and leading gay rights activist of Bangladesh’s only LGBT magazine in Dhaka is another tragic example of the government’s gross failure to protect intellectuals, activists and writers in Bangladesh, PEN International said today.

Xulhaz Mannan, an editor at LGBT magazine *Roopbaan*, was killed alongside another victim, when unidentified attackers came to their apartment in Dhaka earlier today, posing as couriers. Another person was also injured in the attack

The killings come just two days after a university professor, 58-year-old Rezaul Karim Siddique, was hacked to death near his home in the northern Bangladesh district of Rajshahi, on his way to the city’s public university where he taught.

‘How many more writers, editors, and free thinkers in Bangladesh will have to pay the ultimate price

- their life - in exercising their right to speak freely, before the government acts? What the government needs to do is pretty clear: it must say, unequivocally, that freedom of expression means the freedom to express views with which others, even the majority, might disagree', said Salil Tripathi, Chair of PEN International's Writers in Prison Committee.

'Bangladesh must ensure that the investigative authorities identify the murderers and prosecute them, instead of advising writers, editors, and bloggers about what is permissible and what is not, what they can say and what they cannot - all of which only ends up rationalising the murderers who have acted with impunity.'

There has been a spate of murders of secular bloggers and thinkers in Bangladesh over the last year. Earlier this month Nazimuddin Samad, a Bangladeshi law student who had expressed secular views online, died when he was attacked with machetes and then shot in the capital, Dhaka. In 2015, four prominent secular bloggers were killed with machetes.

In May 2015, more than 150 PEN members and writers around the globe called on the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to take immediate action. It is an appalling indictment of the failure of the authorities to act decisively in this regard that another three writers have lost their lives since then. PEN International reiterates its call on the Bangladesh authorities to make the protection of vulnerable writers and investigation of these crimes an utmost priority and to ensure that an immediate end is put to this cycle of violence, fear and consequent self-censorship.

Authorities fail to curb brutal killing spree as LGBTI editor hacked to death

Amnesty International

25 April 2016, 17:09 UTC

"The brutal killing today of an editor of an LGBTI publication and his friend, days after a university professor was hacked to death, underscores the appalling lack of protection being afforded to a range of peaceful activists in the country," said Champa Patel, Amnesty International's South Asia Director.

"There have been four deplorable killings so far this month alone. It is shocking that no one has been held to account for these horrific attacks and that almost no protection has been given to threatened members of civil society. Bangladeshi authorities have a legal responsibility to protect and respect the right to life. They must urgently focus their energies on protecting those who express their opinions bravely and without violence, and bringing the killers to justice. The authorities must strongly condemn these horrific attacks, something they have failed to do so far."

The brutal killing today of an editor of an LGBTI publication and his friend, days after a university professor was hacked to death, underscores the appalling lack of protection being afforded to a range of peaceful activists in the country. —Champa Patel, Amnesty International's South Asia Director

Homosexual relations are criminalised under the Bangladeshi Penal Code. Amnesty International has interviewed exiled LGBTI activists who said that when they tried to report threats against them to

police, the police instead said they could be charged for “unnatural offences.”

“While the Bangladeshi authorities have failed to bring these violent groups to justice, the attackers have expanded their range of targets to now include a university professor and LGBTI activists,” said Champa Patel.

“The Bangladeshi police needs to guarantee the protection of the country’s LGBTI community, not harass them or threaten them with arrest, as they have been doing.”

Background

Since the start of the month, four brutal killings have taken place of Bangladeshi activists and their associates. On 7 April, four masked men attacked Nazimuddin Samad, 28, with a machete before shooting him dead. Samad was a student activist who had organised campaigns for secularism on social media. He was named on a “hit list” of 84 bloggers published by a group of radical Islamists in 2013.

On 23 April, Rezaul Karim Siddique, 58, a much-admired university professor was attacked by men carrying machetes as he walked to the bus station in the city of Rajshahi. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by jihadists belonging to Islamic State.

On 25 April, Xulhaz Mannan, 35, the editor of Roopbaan, Bangladesh’s first LGBTI magazine, and his friend Tanay Mojumdar were both hacked to death after a group of attackers posed as couriers to gain entry to Mannan’s apartment.

During 2015, five secular Bangladeshi bloggers were hacked to death using machetes.

The first attack of this kind took place in 2013. For the killings starting in February 2015, not a single person has been held to account.

Bangladeshi authorities continue to criminalise the country’s LGBTI community and, far from offering them security, have urged them to be “less provocative.” Many Bangladeshi LGBTI activists have been forced into exile because of the threats against them.

P.S.

* <http://sacw.net/article12631.html>

Footnotes

[1] “militant” is used in the region to name fundamentalist islamists and jihadists, without giving any positive connotation to this world. ESSF.