

Target Killings of Secularists in Bangladesh: Press Editorials on the killing of Nazimuddin Samad

“Bloggers cannot be the only opposition to extremism”

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Stand with Nazim, put an end to religious extremism

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Editorial

The murder of Jagannath University Masters student Nazimuddin Samad by assailants we have strong reason to believe were religious extremists was a most despicable crime committed in cold blood, and should be condemned in the harshest manner by all.

The police must leave no stone unturned in ensuring that the killers are found and brought to justice. As of now, the perpetrators have not even been identified yet. And even though the chant “Allahu Akbar” was heard at the site of the murder, which was crowded at the time, witnesses have so far been reluctant to come forward with information.

It should be the topmost priority of our law enforcement to get to the bottom of the Nazim murder, and for the government to send a strong message that those who commit murder, in the name of religion or not, will never get away with impunity.

Regrettably, the murder of 28-year-old Nazim was not an isolated incident. In recent times, the country has seen the horrifying, brutal killings of secular bloggers and authors, such as Oyasiquir Rahman, Avijit Roy, and numerous others.

Just earlier this year, Hindu priest Jagneshwar Roy was stabbed to death, allegedly by JMB and Shibir members.

We cannot allow Bangladesh to become a haven for religious extremists, who get away with murder after murder. These crimes not only take away innocent lives and destroy families, but threaten to destroy the secular fabric of our nation and divide our society.

We cannot let extremists win. These crimes must be made to stop.

Another killing in Bangladesh

The Hindu (Editorial)

The death of one more secular activist in Bangladesh this week is a chilling reminder of the unrelenting assault by Islamist groups on freedom of expression. Nazimuddin Samad was returning from classes in Dhaka's Jagannath University when attackers waylaid him. They hacked his head with a machete, and then shot him. In initial comments the police did not say whether Islamists were responsible, but it is no accident that Samad's name figured in a hit list of 84 Bangladeshi bloggers and activists compiled in 2013 and sent anonymously to media organisations. The manner of the 26-year-old law student's murder bore close similarity to the death by machetes of four bloggers in 2015. To reaffirm that Bangladesh is a secular republic, young campaigners have taken the fight to Islamist groups in multiple ways. They have braved threats from extremists and carried on writing, in print and on social media platforms. They have also, importantly, mobilised tens of thousands of Bangladeshis in seeking strict punishment for Islamists implicated in war crimes in the nine months leading up to the liberation of Bangladesh. These activists — mostly students and writers/bloggers — are at the vanguard of the ongoing struggle to define the secular and democratic nature of the Bangladeshi state, an issue that has been acrimoniously contested by political parties, Islamists and the military since the 1971 war.

Upon her return to power in 2009, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made the war crimes tribunal central to the Awami League's politics, and brought leaders of Islamist groups, notably the Jamaat-e-Islami, to trial for collaborating with the Pakistan army in war atrocities. When a key Jamaat leader, Abdul Quader Mollah, was handed life imprisonment, huge protests erupted in Dhaka's Shahbag Square demanding that he be punished with the death penalty. The protests, named the Shahbag movement, called for accountability as well as returning Bangladesh's Constitution to its initial secular character. It is reported, for instance, that Samad had participated in the Shahbag protests. There is, however, anxiety that Sheikh Hasina is using the war crimes issue not only to secure the secular character of Bangladesh, but also to consolidate her grip on power. There is a grain of truth in the charge that she has been somewhat slow, inactive even, in bringing those responsible for the threats and assaults on secular activists to book. She has used a variety of measures to discredit her long-time rival, Khaleda Zia of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, and to target journalists and well-regarded civil society members such as Grameen Bank founder Muhammad Yunus. Samad's death is a cautionary alert that the logical extension of the purported fight to rescue the progressive vision of the country's founders is to assert its democratic ethos. Bloggers cannot be the only opposition to extremism.

* The Hindu. April 9, 2016. Updated: April 9, 2016 03:54 IST:

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/another-killing-in-bangladesh/article8452259.ece>
