

# **TORMENTING SEVENTY ONE**

An account of Pakistan army's atrocities  
during Bangladesh liberation war of 1971

*Interviewed and reported by*

Ruhul Motin, Dr. Sukumar Biswas  
Julfikar Ali Manik, Mostafa Hossain  
Krishna Bhowmik, Gourango Nandi  
Abdul Kalam Azad, Prithwijeet Sen Rishi

*Translated by*

Zahid Newaz, Ziahul Haq Swapan  
Nazrul Islam Mithu, Nadeem Qadir

*Edited by*

Shahriar Kabir

*Nirmul Committee*

(Committee for Resisting Killers & Collaborators of  
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Dedicated to

Those who are campaigning for the trial of  
1971 war criminals in Bangladesh  
and  
those who supporting this cause from  
India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and  
several other countries across the world

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## Introduction

I was put in a gunny bag and kept in the scorching sun

*Brigadier (Retd.) M. R. Majumdar*

One day they forced me to lie on a slab of ice

*Lt. Col. Masoudul Hossain Khan (Retd.)*

They pressed burning cigarettes on my throat

*Masud Sadique Chullu*

I had seen many deaths, heard about many incidents of women repression, but never thought that I'd also have to become the victim of such cruelty

*Ferdousi Priyobhashinee*

A burning cigarette was pushed at his limbs and needles pierced into

his finger nails

*Syed Abul Barq Alvi*

As we entered the building, we saw many other dead bodies lying on the floor

*Abul Fazal*

I saw signs of terror everywhere

*Protiti Devi*

They used to uproot the prisoners' nails by piercing knives to

their fingers

*Singer Linu Billah*

They broke ribs by beating with iron rods

*Professor A. M. M. Shahidulla*

The Pakistanis used to enjoy everyday after unleashing torture on us

*Capt. (Retd.) Syed Suzauddin Ahmed*

My arms, hips and back turned blood-stained as they

beat me mercilessly

*Naser Bukhtear Ahmed*

**Before hearing the sound of firing we thought that they would burn  
us to death**

*Durgadas Mukharjee*

**The Pakistanis used to pierce needles into my nails everyday during interrogation.**  
*Mosharraf Hossain*

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*Mohammad Nazrul Islam*

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## Introduction

Since independence in 1971, about 1200 books have been published on the liberation war of Bangladesh, of which 300 are historical or memoirs with the focus on the reasons or political analysis as well as documentation of the war itself.

One can safely say there are hardly any book focussing on the atrocities carried out by the Pakistani army during the war in Bangladesh. Keeping that in mind, we decided to publish a book, not only to fill that gap, but also to make it credible. “Tormenting Seventy One” is the result of that urge and the need.

This book not only contains vivid descriptions of torture, rape and other brutal activities of the Pakistani army, but also statements of victims and experiences of reliable eyewitnesses.

One of the significant part of this book is the first-ever publication of the list of military officials, whom the government wanted to put on trial for war crimes in 1972, but failed due to different reasons.

In 1972, the Bangla Academy first undertook a project sponsored by the government to gather information on the destruction carried out by the Pakistani occupation forces. Then the ministry of information took up the “Bangladesh Swadhinata Juddho Itihas prakolpa” (History of Bangladesh Independence War Project) in 1977 under which a volume of 16 books were published entitled “Documents of Bangladesh’s Independence War.” In the 8th volume (total page 731) contains description of ‘mass-killings, refugee and related incidents.’ The 14th volume contains partial description of world media reports on the genocide.

The “Muktijuddho Gobeshana Trust” led by Professor Salahuddin Ahmed interviewed some 300 witnesses at the grassroot level.

Recent publication on the 1971 mass killings and repression on women are based on the 8th volume, but they have not been authenticated. Some memoirs or books based on experiences of time, including the one by “Haynar Chokhe Addommo Jibon” by Montu Khan is mentionable among them. The other is the series edited by Rashid Haider entitled “Smriti: 1971”. There are about a dozen more books on the Razakars (collaborators known as Razakar) and their atrocities both in Bengali and English. One can safely conclude that there is hardly any book which contains documentary evidence of the destruction and atrocities of the Pakistan army.

We took into consideration along with unearthing new, but missing chapter of the Liberation War, the political and social importance of the episode. The demand for trial by the *Ekatturer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee*, an anti-fundamentalist organisation pushing for war crimes trial initiated by Jahanara Imam, has been incorporated with new insights.

The campaign in January 1992 by the Committee sparked reactions in Pakistan after the news was published worldwide. Some Pakistani individually along with human right organisations demanded the trial of those responsible for war crimes in Bangladesh in 1971. They have sought documents and evidences from us as these are essential for holding such a trial.

These crimes were committed 28 years ago and many of the witnesses or victims have passed away since then, and we decided to do something quickly before all evidences were lost.

In the 8th volume of the government’s publication, interview of 262 people were published, but it was there general description only and 80 percent could not specifically provide any name. The reason being those who were involved in torturing Bengalees did not display their ranks or names. Thus we stressed on finding the name and rank of these Pakistanis during our reasearch to help us eventually put them on the dock.

The Committee members worked hard nationwide to get authentic versions of the war from individuals and tried their best to get accurate depositions, some of which have been selected and we have decided to publish those in a book form. This book also contains articles based on depositions of witnesses and survivors of killing fields.

The list which is being published for the first time contains some 200 Pakistani army officers who were supposed to be put on trial in 1972 by the government, but could not proceed for different reasons.’

## 2

Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators in 1971 killed three million innocent Bengalees. Some 250,000 women fell prey to their barbaric repression. They destroyed thousands of localities in rural and urban areas. It became impossible for people to bear the repression, killings and barbarism unleashed by the Pakistani army which led to the exodus of 10 million people into India for shelter and safety.

What was the fault of the Bengalees ? They wanted democracy, a society free from all kinds of

deprivation and repression. They wanted to be a self-reliant country, free from religious conflicts and on the basis of thousand-year-old rich heritage.

The expectation of the Bengalees was just a reverse of the state philosophy of Pakistan. Pakistan is such a militarist and fundamentalist country where there is no place for democracy and human rights.

Their military junta headed by General Yahya Khan carried out a genocide in the eastern part of Pakistan, now Bangladesh, which has no comparison. Systemtic killings, rapes and other barbaric methods were used on the Bengalees in the name of 'protecting the integrity of Pakistan' and 'to protecting Islam'. The killing, repression and atrocities began on March 25, 1971 and it continued until 92,000 Pakistani forces surrendered to Bangladesh- India Joint Command on December 16, 1971.

On March 25 midnight, the Pakistani forces suddenly cracked down on the sleeping people of capital Dhaka. Their first target was the residence of teachers, officials and employees and student dormitories of Dhaka University, once known as the Oxford of the East. The police and East Pakistan Rifles (EPR), headquarters followed. Then came the slums, markets and Hindu-populated areas in Dhaka, most of which were torched. They killed university teachers, employees and students either in their rooms or by firing squad in the campus gardens. Some were taken away and remained missing. They sprayed bullets as people fled from burning homes. These people died without knowing their crime. It is estimated that around 60,000 people of the city were killed on that single night.

The Pakistani occupation forces followed similar methods across the country and the genocide continued during the next nine months or until the country was freed from their clutches. Apart from mass killings, systemetic killings of identified personalities or professionals was carried out under a blueprint. This process started with the slaying of Dhaka University teachers and reached its peak ahead of the Victory Day on December 16, 1971, as they realised their defeat was imminent.

In conducting the killings, there was a priority list. They had identified five sections of the populace as their main enemies.

1) leaders, activists and supporters of Awami League, 2) communists and socialists, 3) freedom fighters and their associates, 4) the Hindu community irrespective of sex or age and 5) students and intellectuals or professionals.

There was no specific type of killings. The Pakistanis at first shelled by tanks and mortars to kill a large number of people of a locality. Then they killed innocent ones lining them up after taking them away from their houses. Some were put to death by bayonets or burnt alive by the barbaric Pakistani army. They also slaughtered people like animals. In some cases people were tortured for months until death saved them. The last method was followed specially for the freedom fighters. There are many people who witnessed that freedom fighters were dragged on the streets pulled by army jeeps, which would only stop to confirm if their prey was dead.

Captain (Retd.) Sujauddin Ahmed in his testimony to us said grenades were tied to the back of freedom fighters and told to run after pulling the pin out. Within seconds they were blown up into pieces to the great rejoice of the Pakistanis.

The ways the Pakistani forces followed in unleashing torture can't be expressed in any language. Those who experienced or witnessed the repression said the cruelty of Pakistani forces was more even than that unleashed by the Nazis of Hitler during the Second World War.

The major methods used by the Pakistanis to torture the Banglaeess were: 1) Verbal abuse coupled with beating until blood oozed out, 2) Poking with bayonet or beating with rifle butts after hanging the victim by the leg from the ceiling, 3) the victim was stripped and kept standing for hours in public 4) Burning the whole body with cigarette, 5) Pushing needles through nails and the head, 6) spraying injuries with salt and chilly, 7) Pushing electric rod through the anus, 8) giving urine for drinking when the victims screamed for water, 9) pushing ice through the anus or injuring the entry point of the anus with cigarette burns, 10) the victim, with his hands and legs tied, was put into a gunny bag and kept under the scorching sun, 11) keeping the injured naked body on ice slab, 12) denying sleep for days, high powered lights focussed on the eye, 13) giving electric shock to the sensitive parts of the body, 14) uprooting nails with the help of tweezers and 15) the head was repeatedly forced into hot water with the body hanging from the ceiling. Besides extremely brutal sexual tortures were also very common whether male or female.

Depositions of some witnesses of torture by the Pakistani forces were recorded in the eighth volume of '*Bangladesher Swadhinata Juddher Dalilpatra*'. A brief idea about the brutality of Pakistanis forces could be known from statements of some sweepers of the then Dhaka municipality. They were picked up from their houses to remove the bodies.

Describing the experiences of March 29, 1971, Pardeshi, son of Chhoton, a sweeper of Government Veterinary Hospital said:

‘After I went to office on March 29 morning, I was asked to go to Sakharibazar along with others for lifting bodies by trucks. As there were Pakistani troops patrolling the road and fire was in front of the Judge Court, we couldn’t go to Sakharibazar through that way. We entered Sakharibazar on its west side after crossing the Patuatuli police box. We went to every house of the area and found bodies of female, male, youths, elderly people, boys, girls and children in every room. Most of the buildings were destroyed. Most of the bodies of women were without any clothes. Their breasts were cutoff. We found sticks pushed into their vaginas. Many bodies were burnt. As the Punjabi soldiers sprayed bullets, the Biharis looted their homes. We took bodies on two trucks and left the area shortly. Though there were many bodies, we, being afraid, didn’t go to Sakharibazar on that day again. I was asked to take bodies from Mill-Barrack on March 30 morning.

After going to the Mill-Barrack ghat with the truck of municipality, I saw many scattered bodies. Many bodies were tied with rope in a ring. We removed the rope and took the bodies. Most of them were youth. Their hands were tied with rope, blind folded and faces blackened by acid burns to avoid identification. Foul smell filled the air and we found bullet-ridden bodies and those badly mutilated after bayonet charge. Some skulls were smashed with brain seeping out. I saw bodies of six beautiful women on the bank of the river. They were naked and were shot to death. Their breasts and sexual organs were bloody. I dumped some 70 bodies at Dhalpur garbage after taking those from Mill-Barrack ghat.

Later I was asked to carry bodies from Sadarghat, Shyambazar and Badamtali ghat. I took decomposed bodies from the areas to dumped at Dhalpur garbage. The day I took bodies from Kalibari, I had to carry bodies also from a professor’s residence behind the Rokeya Hall of Dhaka University. I carried a total of nine bodies, including of male and children, from the staff quarters behind the Rokeya Hall. And I also took away the body of a professor from the staircase of his residence. The body was wrapped with mattress.’<sup>3</sup>

The Pakistanis in 1971 by killing philosopher professor Govinda Chandra Dev, who was innocent could be compared to a child, showed their brutality had no limits.

The newspapers in 1972 carried the news of brutality of Pakistani forces depicting in 1971 killing of Mashihur Rahman, elected to Pakistan National Assembly in 1970 and a popular leader of the Awami League.

‘The Pakistani forces killed him by torturing for days ... They hated people like animals and tortured him so that he gave into their demands. Different parts of his body were burnt. They also chopped him time and again and sprayed salt on the wounded parts. He was also given electric shocks. But he didn’t compromise although he was proceeding towards death everyday. He always said the same: ‘I’ll never say or write anything against my people.’

He stood by his faith until the last day and only trembled when the occupation forces chopped his left hand off and ordered him to write with the remaining one. He didn’t groan. He didn’t say a single word of compromise although all of his hands and limbs were cut off one after another.’<sup>3</sup>

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman burst into tears when he came to know that his comrade died such a cruel death.

### 3

Repression on women by occupation forces is no exception in world history. There are many books and films on women repression by Nazis of Germany, fascists of Italy and soldiers of Japan during the Second World War. But there is no second example of brutal ways of repressing women by Pakistanis in 1971. More than 250,000 women were raped by them. As the women couldn’t bear the pain of repression many of them committed suicide. The sadist Pakistanis also killed many women meeting their instinct of rape.

It is most unfortunate that the incidents of repression on women was not recorded properly although there were many witnesses. A victim of rape in this society doesn’t want to disclose her tragedy due to social taboos and family barriers.

The post-liberation Awami League government had taken steps to rehabilitate the women who were repressed during the War of Independence. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was very sympathetic towards them and called them as ‘*Beerangana*’ (heroic women). A social worker, Maleka Khan, assigned to rehabilitate the repressed women at that time, said that no list of the women was prepared as they didn’t want these women to be identified to ensure their quick to return to normal life.

Maleka Khan has herself read the deposition of more than 5,000 war-repressed women. These papers were destroyed after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Maleka Khan said abortion was done on women who were in an early stage of pregnancy: She introduced us to Dr. Geoffrey Davis, who came from Australia and travelled across Bangladesh to provide medical help to these women. According to Dr. Davis the number of women raped was more than 400,000. The *Banglar Bani* newspaper published an article on Dr. Davis in 1972. Excerpts follows:



“A large number of women raped by the Pakistanis are suffering from infertility or sexually transmitted disease. Sydney’s Dr. Geoffrey Davis recently said in London that these women were mainly suffering from syphilis or gonorrhoea or both and most had abortion which could lead to infertility or can suffer from the diseases for the rest of their life.

Dr. Davis, who arrived in Dhaka when the victims were at least 18 weeks pregnant, said 170,000 women took the help of quacks or village doctors with no educational background for abortion before international help arrived either because they were forced to do so or were victims of social conditions.

Some girls suffered immensely because they were too young to have sex and even if they could afford to a doctor “it will be difficult to find a man to marry them,” he said.

Doctors working at a government clinic to help the tortured women estimated their number at about 200,000. But Dr. Davis rejecting the figure, said it was over 400,000 and of them 170,00 had been aborted.

Many of the 30,000 out of the 200,000 government estimate committed suicide and some kept their babies.

Dr. Davies reasoned to clarify his stand on the figure by saying on an average two women were reported missing daily which put the number at 200,000 as the Pakistani troops controlled 480 police stations for 270 days. No count of women raped in villages as the occupation forces moved from one village to another and they kept many of them in their camps to meet their sexual demands. Many of these women were thrown out of the camps or killed when they got pregnant or were infected with disease. In some areas girls as young as 12 or 13 were repeatedly raped and kept naked always so that they did not flee.

Some of them hanged themselves when they got the chance to wear a sari, the traditional Bengali dress, while others jumped into rivers tying themselves with heavy stones.

Dr. Davis said those who survived were rejected by their families as untouched “unclean” as they were raped and pregnant, which was indeed very sad.’

Information about the war-babies born in 1972 is also very rare. Most of them were adopted by Europeans or Americans.

Renowned academic Professor Neelima Ibrahim was involved with the government rehabilitation programme. Based on experiences of the war-repressed women, she also wrote a book titled *‘Ami Berangana Bolchhi’* (I am the heroic woman speaking). Those who gave statements to her are from middle and higher-middle class families. They were made captives during the nine-month. One of them wrote:

‘We’re not allowed to wear sari or scarf as one woman had committed suicide by hanging herself by her sari. We only wore blouse and petty-coat. Those were dirty and torn. Those were thrown to us after taking from shops. The style was like giving something to a beggar during the Eid. Our eyes would fill into tears.

‘... The next day a girl died. She was pregnant. Bleeding continued since morning. The girls had shouted from the other side of the closed door. But none turned up. Her name was Moyna. She was only 15-year-old. She was first screaming and later became frozen. Her face was looking blue. Elderly Sufia’s mother covered the body by the blanket. There was no bed cover as it was not provided. They took away the body in the evening.’

The book by Neelima Ibrahim has such descriptions.

About the list of rape victims, Neelima Ibrahim said Bangabandhu himself had asked to destroy the list, because he had understood that our society would not accept the war-repressed women if their names were disclosed. Bangabandhu from the core of his heart had wanted a normal life for every repressed woman.

Neelima Ibrahim said that she heard 30/40 raped women are leaving country along with the war detainees who were going to India in 1972. In cooperation with the Indian and Bangladesh authorities, she instantly met the women and requested them to stay here. But they were determined to leave the country as they were not accepted by their close kins. A 14 or 15 year old girl was among them. Neelima Ibrahim told her ‘You’ll be staying at my home like my daughter.’ But she didn’t agree. She said: ‘What will happen to me when you’ll not be there. Everyone will hate me when people will know I was touched by the Pakistanis.’ Neelima Ibrahim asked if she knew what the Pakistanis will do with her. The girl said: ‘Yes, I know. They will sell me. But none will know me there.’

Three repressed women had come to Dhaka to give witnesses when the public court led by Jahanara Imam tried war criminal Ghulam Azam on March 26, 1992. Newspapers had news items on them. They were boycotted by others when they returned to their village. People started to ridicule them. It was a new pain for them, which made their hearts bleed again. The bleeding will continue until their death. One of them said: ‘We didn’t give a second thought. We rushed to Dhaka for justice. The justice is yet to be ensured, but we’re getting hurt everyday as people started to tease us indicating towards our worst time we experienced in 1971.’

In 1971 we saw cruelty and brutality of Pakistan army. At the same time we also saw the greatness of Indian forces. Freedom fighters, who had escaped from the Pakistani captivity or were injured in war fields were given treatment at the hospitals of Indian army. The injured Bangalees at the refugee camps in India were also provided treatment by the military hospitals.

An example of humanity of Indian forces can be given from the book of Neelima Ibrahim. The repressed women who were in the bunkers became overwhelmed when they heard the slogans 'Joy Bangla' (victory to Bangla) on December 16. They could understand that the country has been freed from the occupation forces. But they were not able to come out as they were not wearing any clothes. Neelima Ibrahim quoted tortured Shefa as saying:

'All on a sudden we heard shouts of many people who were coming and going. One gave a look through a small opening of the bunker and said in Urdu 'Koi hai? Idhar Aou.' (Is there any body? Come here.) We started crying. The language gripped us with fear of new torture. Later we heard several were saying in Bangla 'Mothers, come on.' I was courageous than others. I got up. But again I tried to enter into the bunker as I was totally naked. The man who had the voice 'Koi hai' covered me with his headscarf. I told them there are six more women in the bunker. They collected some shirts and lungis and covered all of us by the clothes. I embraced the Shikh commander and started weeping. The gentleman kept his hands on my head and said 'Ro mat mayi' (Don't cry mother).

Shefa returned to her normal life. She got married. Her father-in-law gave the name of her eldest son Arman. But Shefa used to call him Yogi.

'None knows the significance of the name, Yogi. Shefa had met a man like a saint at the end of her worst time in 1971. He was Yogindar Singh who had covered her with his headscarf and called her mother. Shefa thinks Yogindar is her first child. She kisses Arman time and again and prays to Allah so that he could maintain the honour and dignity of his mother as Yoginder did.'

#### 4

Some 92,000 Pakistani troops surrendered to Bangladesh-India Joint Command on December 16, 1971. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was released from Pakistan jail and returned home on January 10, 1972. He pledged to try the war criminals.

There were two categories of war criminals – 1) Members of occupation Pakistani forces and 2) Local collaborators of Pakistani junta, who were mainly involved with Jamaat-e-Islami, Muslim League and Nejam-e-Islami and other fundamentalist parties. Bangladesh government prepared a list of the main war criminals with names of 500 Pakistani forces. Later the number was decreased to 200.

The tough stand taken by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the then president of Pakistan, was the main problem in holding the trial of the Pakistani war criminals. He had said no Bengalee stranded in Pakistan will be freed if a single Pakistani soldier is tried. At that time some 500,000 Bangalees were in Pakistan either as detainees or stranded. The policymakers of India have said that India before signing the Simla agreement wanted that Bangladesh put some Pakistani war criminals on trial. But Bangladesh did not agree. PN Haksar, the advisor of the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, said he had two meetings with Bangabandhu before the Simla agreement, but he (Bangabandhu) didn't agree with the proposal. Bangabandhu's argument was that complexities will arise over return of Bangalees if the war criminals are tried. It will also create problem over developing relations with Pakistan and Islamic world."

According to political observers India alone could have held the trial of Pakistani war criminals as the victorious country. In this regard India's stand was that the crime was committed in Bangladesh, which was recognised by India as an independent country long before the Simla agreement, it was not possible by New Delhi to put the Pakistanis on trail under international laws.

*Under the Simla agreement, the Pakistani soldiers were allowed to return home by New Delhi killed both defence and civil Indian personnel too. Indians who were captured by the Pakistanis during the war, were brutally killed. After 1971, India obviously witnessed how brutally Pakistanis killed Indian soldiers after they were arrested during the Kargil war.*

In January, 1972, Bangabandhu had formulated the Collaborators Act to try the local killers, collaborators and war criminals. This Act covers those individuals or organisations who collaborated the Pakistani army in mass killings, conducted crimes against humanity, unleashed torture on men, women and children, destroyed property, or helped in destructive activities or fought against the People's Republic of Bangladesh siding with the occupation forces or supported them. The Act also explained in detail how a tribunal to punish them could be set up and the trial process itself."

The 1972 Act gave no scope to put the Pakistani criminals on trial. He then enacted the 'International Crimes (Tribunals) Act 1973' in July, 1973, basically to bring them under that process and to expand the scope of their trial. But the laws had some limitations. The officers-in-charge of respective thanas (police stations) were given responsibility to frame charges against the war criminals. Most of the OCs had served the Pakistan government during the 1971 Liberation War. They were not sincere in framing charges against the war

criminals. They were also not free from biases towards the war criminals.

Considering the problem, Dainik Bangla published a report titled 'Amendment to Collaborators Act is Needed'. The reports says:

'Seventy-five percent of those arrested after independence under the charge of collaboration have chance to be freed. The reason is that specific allegations are not filing against them...

There is a deficiency of police. OCs of the thanas have been given responsibility to investigate into the allegations under the Collaborators Act. The OC alone is not capable to investigate all the allegations in a thana...

Besides, the legal experts have something to say about the Collaborators Act. They said the Act was enacted to hold trial of crimes taken place under a special circumstances. So the trial procedures need a special type to probe an allegation. But the present law follows the century-old Evidence Act. Many complexities are being seen while following the Evidence Act for trial of crimes committed in a special time. It is becoming impossible to probe the crimes of the war criminals.'<sup>2</sup>

Other people say demanding trial of war criminals is irrelevant as Awami League government had a general amnesty to them. This was said time and again that none pardoned Pakistani war criminals. Their main associate Ghulam Azam has also not been forgiven. The section two of the press note issued on November 30, 1973 categorically said 'those who were punished for or accused of rape, murder, attempt to murder or arson will not come under general amnesty under the section one.' Some 26,000 people, out of 37,000 sent to jail on charge of collaboration, were freed after announcement of the general amnesty. But 11,000 were still in the prison. The government of Justice Sayem and General Zia scrapped the Collaboration Act on December 31, 1975. As a result, the 11,000 war criminals appealed and were released.

*Ekatturer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee* (The Committee for Resisting Killers and Collaborators of 1971) led by Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam was formed in January, 1992. The next month with the same goal in holding trial of the war criminals, she brought all pro-liberation political, socio-cultural, student and professional organisations under the umbrella of '*Jatiya Samonnoy Committee*' (National Co-ordination Committee). People from all walks of life raised their voice for the trial of the war criminals. The resentment prevailing among people for not holding the trial of the war criminals in the previous year was reflected through symbolic trial of Ghulam Azam at a public court. The then BNP government had brought treason charges against the initiators of the Peoples' Court (Gano Adalat).

On the Gano Adalat and trial of the war criminals, the then Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina on April 16, 1992 had told the Parliament:

'... They didn't take law in their own hands following the verdict of the Gano Adalat, Mr Speaker. Since they didn't take law in their own hands, so none can call them illegal, there is no scope, too. What did they say? They said Ghulam Azam is a war criminal. The crimes of the war criminal (showing a copy of the verdict of the peoples' court) are recorded here. And the person who was found guilty with the crimes, deserves capital punishment. We came to this Parliament through mass upsurge, struggle and peoples' mandate. I think, the verdict they proclaimed in the Gano Adalat, says the crimes deserve death sentence. Many of those who are sitting in this parliament lost their husbands, lost their brothers; mothers and sisters were humiliated during the Liberation War. Those who took part in the war continued armed struggle amid starvation day after day. My appeal to those who liberated the country by fighting for nine months when their lives were always at risk, let's come together irrespective all opinion and party affiliation to show respect to the verdict of people. The debate here on who did who did not, will bring no good for us. If you think Awami League didn't do, my question is why didn't you try? Why did you scrap the law through martial-law proclamation? In this independent and sovereign Bangladesh why are you pushing the nation towards such a debate? So, my appeal, Mr Speaker, still there is a time, come on irrespective all opinions and party affiliation, let's work together as we did in bringing 11th and 12th amendment to the constitution. Those who lost their kin, those who still feel the pain of losing relatives, let's accept the decision. To implement the verdict, Mr Speaker, current laws (International Crime Act, 73) is enough. If you think there is a lack of law, this great Sangsad could fill it up.

This great Parliament has that right. The nation gave that right. This Sangsad is sovereign. Through you I'm urging the government to form a special tribunal under International Crime Act (Act of XIX of 1973) to implement the verdict of the peoples' court against Ghulam Azam accusing him of opposing the Liberation War, taking part in war against the nation, conducting mass killings, committing crimes against humanity, opposing Bangladesh even after its establishment, conspiring to revive East Pakistan and being a foreign national taking part in illegal political activities to capture power through conspiracy and to take legal action to hold trial of the allegations brought against him. I'm proposing to lodge a case and hold trial immediately. At the same time, I on behalf of the Parliament expressing sorrow for filing the disgraceful case against the organisers of the Gano Adalat that reflected the opinion of people and through you urging the government to withdraw the case immediately.'

The government and the opposition on June 29, 1992, signed an agreement after a long debate in the Jatiya Sangsad (National Parliament) and pressure from outside the Parliament. The government in the

agreement agreed to the condition of holding trial of Ghulam Azam and to withdraw the case against the 24 organisers of the Gano Adalat. It is unfortunate that the trial of Ghulam Azam is yet to be held. No step was taken also to hold trial of other war criminals of 1971.

London-based 'Twenty Twenty Television' has made an hour-long documentary titled 'War Crimes File' on three war criminals staying there. It created much sensation in London after it was showed in Channel Four of BBC. Elaborating the target of making the documentary, one of its makers and chief researcher David Bergman said the conscious world, including the European community raised their voice against the mass killings and war crimes committed in former Yugoslavia's Bosnia. A strong demand was raised that the war criminals have to be punished. At that time he came to know that three war criminals of Bangladesh are residing in London in disguise. They also became leaders of the Bengalee community there. They are involved with various fundamentalist and communal groups. They made the film to unmask the war criminals and bring them to book.<sup>14</sup>

The British government took steps for investigation into the three war criminals after the Bangalee community in UK as well as the human rights organisations there raised their voice for punishment of the trio. The British government also sought cooperation from the Bangladesh government. The then BNP government didn't take any step in this regard. However, the Awami League government assured the UK of cooperating with them. The government on its own also filed an allegation with Ramna police station in Dhaka (case no 115, date 24.9.1997).

We came to know it was buried after some interrogation and brief investigation. Fiona McKay, a lawyer who runs a human rights organisation in London, said she thought though the British government is very enthusiastic, Bangladesh government is not so keen. She informed that senior officials of Scotland Yard Rees, Detective Chief Superintendent and Walton, Detective Inspector were appointed to investigate it.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the interest of the British government and its people about the trial of Bangladesh's war criminal, reluctance of Bangladesh government is a great shame for the nation.

## 5

Pakistan didn't try the war criminals of 1971 and, also didn't allow Bangladesh to hold the trial. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto after coming to power had formed a Commission of Enquiry to probe the defeat of Pakistan in eastern part in 1971. Justice Hamudur Rahman was chief of the commission. Some Bengalee war-detainees and Pakistanis told the commission about the war crimes committed by the Pakistani soldiers. The report of the commission is yet to be published. Though too late, Pakistani people and organisations, who have respect for democracy and human rights are demanding publishing of the report and trial of war criminals of '71.

Bangladesh could not try the war criminals following pressure by different quarters, including Pakistan. But people of this country always demanded the trial. The first demonstration took place in post-liberation Bangladesh demanding trial of the war criminals when the Awami League government was at the peak of its popularity. Several hundreds members of martyred families gathered at Central Shaheed Minar on March 17, 1972, marched towards Bangabhaban and submitted a memorandum to Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Though the Collaborators Act had some limitations, still then the trial process continued during the Bangabandhu regime. More than 750 war criminals were awarded imprisonment of different period.

General Zia not only scrapped the Collaborators Act to stop the trial procedures, he also brought a number of war criminals to his newly formed party. A war criminal had become prime minister during Zia's tenure, while many others were cabinet members. Their task was collecting documents of their war crimes from different thanas and destroying those. And that is why they could now say that they didn't do anything in 1971.

There are many books on war crimes committed by Jamaat-e-Islami, Muslim League and Nezame Islami who were main collaborators of occupation Pakistani forces. Among those, two reports of National Mass Investigation Commission were most investigative ones.

The commission with Begum Sufia Kamal as chief and renowned layers, academics, journalists and writers as members published two reports in 1994 and 1995. After intensive investigation, the commission in the reports described the war crimes committed by 16 leading war criminals.<sup>16</sup> The reports are based on depositions of affected people and witnesses of the concerned areas.

Besides, Bangla daily Dainik Sangram, the spokesman of Jamaat-e-Islami, itself is a big document of the war criminals on how they cooperated Pakistani military rulers, instigated them to kill and how they

voluntarily formed Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams militia forces to conduct mass killings. The copies of Sangram in 1971 prove that they are war criminals.

There are enough documents of war crimes committed by the local war criminals. The war crimes committed by the Pakistanis were not recorded properly after the war. But the press reports published in 1972 describing the experiences of people who were detained and witnessed the brutality of the Pakistanis are enough to accuse the Pakistani troops for war crimes.

Apart from newspapers, Bangla Academy through its Liberation War Research Centre' in two phases had recorded statements of several hundreds of affected people. Led by Hasan Hafizur Rahman, the researchers of 'Bangladesher Swadhinata Juddher Itihash Prokolpo' also interviewed many affected people and witnesses. The statements were published in eighth part of the 15-part book.

Most of the people who made statements or were interviewed generally mentioned Pakistani forces as the war criminals. Names mentioned categorically were very rare. As a result the intensity of atrocities of Pakistan could be known. But it is too tough to categorically identify the responsible army men. A person could be identified only by those who could escape death from the torture camps. The people survived informed in most cases the army officers and personnels didn't carry the in names and rank badges while they unleashed torture, but the victims knew their names as they remained captive for a long time.

Recently a mass-grave of 1971 was found in capital's outskirts, Mirpur. Human skeletons and remains come out from under the soil while construction work of a mosque was going on at the Muslim Bazar area. The mass-grave attracted peoples' attention as soon as the news of discovery of a mass-grave was published in newspapers. In the initial stage the Liberation War Museum alone conducted the digging work. Later, they took help from Bangladesh Army. The human remains and other things found after straight 39 days digging proved the sign of the incidents they carried out during 1971 Liberation War.

While the digging was going on at Muslim Bazar, the newspapers carried out many news items on a number of mass-graves of 1971, which are yet to be discovered. At that time, newspapers also published news items on how Pakistani forces had taken shelter in Bihari-dominated Mirpur after December 16, 1971 and killed celebrated filmmaker Zahir Raihan as well as more than 100 members of army and police when they went there to free the area from the clutches of occupation forces.

The recently discovered Muslim Bazar mass-grave came to people with a new dimension to remind them about brutal atrocities of the Pakistani forces. Thousands of people, from far-flung areas, who lost their close relations during the Liberation War, everyday thronged the mass-grave. Many people whose relatives were killed on January 30, 1972 in the area came to know whether there were bodies of them. The bones found at the mass-grave showed that the killers not only murdered the Bangalees in a brutal ways, they also chopped the bodies to many pieces and threw into the ditch.

The news of discovery of Muslim Bazar mass-grave and many others yet undiscovered across the country struck people as those reminded them of the horrid days they passed in 1971. Different quarters also came up with renewed zeal to raise their voice demanding trial of the war criminals.

The movement for trial of the war criminals was strengthened following continued terrorist and subversive acts of the fundamentalist and communal forces. The main party of fundamentalists and communals — Jamaat-e-Islami and its allies with the help of Pakistani intelligence agency ISI have continued their attack on progressive political leaders, intellectuals, cultural activists, social workers and religious minority people. The fundamentalists unleashed a series of attacks on development workers in Brahmanbaria in December, 1998 and injured and assaulted at least 200 children and women. They were directed by their main leader whom they called 'Boro Hujur'. The leader of the fundamentalists earlier had gave a 'fatwa' (religious order) prohibiting participation of women in rallies.

The members of Pakistan-based fundamentalist group Harkatul Jihad in January, 1999, stormed into the residence of country's celebrated poet Shamsur Rahman to assassinate him. The poet could manage to escape unhurt, but his wife was seriously injured. The fundamentalists were very angry about poet Shamsur Rahman as he always wrote against fundamentalism and all kinds of reactionary forces. Besides, Shamsur Rahman is the president of Ekatturer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee and was one of the key members of National Enquiry Commission to probe the war crimes of the local war criminals.

Kazi Aref Ahmed, one of the main organisers of country's Liberation struggle, was assassinated in February, 1999, while he was addressing a public meeting in Kushtia. His 'crime' was that he was one of the main organisers of the movement led by Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam to try the war criminals and ban fundamentalist politics. In last three years, he time and again had warned the countrymen about conspiracy and subversive activities of Pakistani intelligence agency, ISI. Finally he became a victim.

In March, 1999, the fundamentalist forces exploded remote-control bombs at the conference of Udichi, the country's leading progressive cultural organisation, in Jessore. Ten people were killed and 200 others were injured in the bomb explosion. Many of the injured people became disable. The 'crime' of Udichi is that the cultural organisation has been playing a vital role in anti-communal and anti-fundamental movement since 1960s.

Fundamentalist Islami Oikya Jote, an alliance of extremists, in a rally in Dhaka in March, 1999 threatened to kill Prof Kabir Chowdhury, poet Shamsur Raahman, Dr Kazi Faruque Ahmed and other leading intellectuals and NGO leader and throw their bodies into the Bay of Bengal. They also threatened to capture power by the year 2000 through a revolution like Talebans in Afghanistan. This kinds of threat by the fundamentalists are very common in their rallies and meetings.

When this introduction was being written in the month of October, 1999, the fundamentalists exploded bombs at a mosque of the minority Islamic sect Ahmadia and killed five people who were praying at that time. Many were also injured in the bomb explosion. Only 12 to 14 days before the bombing, the Pakistan-based fundamentalist organisation Tahaffuze Khatme Nabuyot had threatened to destroy the Ahmadia people. On October 8, the fundamentalists had placed an anti-tank mine at the office of the widely circulated daily Janakantha to blow up the office of the newspaper. However, they couldn't blast the mine following immediate steps taken by Bangladesh Army. The fundamentalist terrorists also earlier attacked the Janakantha office many times. The newspaper is playing a vital role in unearthing the evil activities of the communal and fundamentalist forces. Three key leaders of Markajul Islam were arrested in connection with the conspiracy to destroy the Janakatha building by mine explosion.

Trial of the war criminals and a total ban on fundamentalist and communal politics are a must to foil the conspiracy hatched by the fundamentalists who are financially patronised by Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), trained in Pakistan with aim of turning Bangladesh into a fundamentalist state like Pakistan.

Recently Pakistani troops intruded into India over Kashmir and were locked in a war that left several thousands people from both sides killed. After 1971 it was the first war between India and Pakistan. When the unexpected Kargil war was going on, intellectuals in Dhaka opined that Pakistan would have given a second thought in involving itself with any war, had the war criminals of 1971 been tried. Prosecutors of the Nuremberg Trial said war criminals should be tried to stop future conflicts. It is a punishable offence, not only in the eyes of law, but also from the political, social and humanitarian point if the war criminals are not brought to justice.

## 6

'Tormenting Seventy One' is going to be published in the backdrop of the demand for the trial of the war criminals. Earlier, we published a number of books on misdeeds of the killers, collaborators and war criminals of 1971. It is our first documentary book on the war crimes committed by the Pakistani forces.

The book has been planned to enable the readers to get a general idea on torture, mass killings, women repression and other atrocities conducted by the Pakistani forces. The brutality shown by the Pakistani forces added new dimensions with the traditional definition of war crimes. The statements of the victims and witnesses indicated how terrible and exceptional the Pakistani forces were in unleashing torture and killing innocent people.

The people who were interviewed for the book represent various spheres of society. Many of them didn't make any statement earlier. All the witnesses said they are ready to make their depositions to the special tribunal if it is formed for trial of the war criminals. Among the interviewees was Ferdousi Priyobhashinee. She was among the 250,000 women who were raped by the barbaric Pakistani forces in 1971. This is for the first time she made her statement in public. She said: 'I'm telling you about the horrible days and nights of 1971 as the trial of those, who killed three million Bangalees and raped 250,000 women is yet to be held. The new generation is going to forget what frightful time we had in 1971. I want to recall the bad times also for the reason that we know very less about the Pakistani repression on women during our Liberation War. The cause is our conservative society and family. I hope that my statement will encourage other repressed women to raise their voice against the barbarism.'

The book is divided into two parts. The first part is on the depositions of those who were captured and tortured by Pakistani troops as well as witnesses of the mass killings and atrocities. The second part includes description of several mass-graves scattered across Bangladesh.

There is a list of 200 Pakistani war criminals in the appendix of the book. Bangladesh government had prepared the list. It was never published before, although names of many top-ranking Pakistani army are not there. Even then it is important as it was prepared by the government. Besides there are also pictures of mass killings, torture on women and some of the top war criminals.

Some of the persons who gave statements for the book expressed their resentment as they didn't get the recognition as freedom fighters. Members of thousands of martyred families have also been expressing their anger for a long time as the contribution of their Shaheed father-mother, son-daughter or brother-sister were not acknowledged properly.

Those who took part in the Liberation War and defeated Pakistani forces by guerilla warfare were lucky in one sense — it could be felt by going through the description of torture unleashed on the people in captivity. Many freedom fighters were also detained by the Pakistani forces. They preferred death rather than being tortured.

In fact, the torture and atrocities unleashed by the Pakistani troops during the nine-month war expedited their defeat in the conflict. The mental and physical pains of those who witnessed repression and killings or were tortured by the Pakistani occupation forces turned into hate towards the barbarians. The hate created resentment among them and the resentment turned into strong resistance and finally it became the spirit to avenge the brutalities.

Many freedom fighters who were given gallantry awards of Bir Uttam, Bir Bikram but after the war some of them provided political, financial and social supports to the killers, collaborators and the war criminals and cooperated with them. But those who were tortured in captivity, witnessed killings of their close relations; the father the brother who saw his daughter or sister being raped by Pakistani animals will never forget the memories. The memories of 1971 are unbearable for them.

During research work for this work, it was found that even many Razakars could not tolerate the repression by occupation Pakistani forces on innocent Bangalees. Durgadas Mukherjee has spoken of compassionate non-Bengalis in this book. Sculptor Ferdousi Proiyabhasheeni in her deposition has mentioned the reaction against Pakistani atrocities by its own troops. Protiti Devi in her deposition has said how their lives were saved because of a Baluchi captain. An example could be given from the Swadhinata Juddher Dalilpatra as to how the Razakars were also tortured by the Pakistanis. Khandaker Nurul Islam of Batiamara of Kumarkhali in his statement said: 'One day two military personnel were asking a Razakar to manage a girl for them. The Razakar took them to a home. But they got none at the house as all fled before the army men and the Razakar reached there. The military personnel asked the Razakar, 'friend where is your house?' The Razakar took them to his house. The military personnel found the Razakar's mother. One army man pointed his gun at the Razakar's chest and his colleague raped the mother. Later the second one tortured the mother in the same way, while the first one kept the Razakar under the gun-point. As the news spread, the Razakar didn't return to the camp. He was not seen any longer. The incident showed that the close relations of associates of the Pakistanis were not spared from cruelty. Even, leaders of Peace Committee, Jamaat-e-Islami and Muslim League were not spared.'

I read in the document of Liberation War that a Pathan soldier was shot dead as he refused to carry out an order of a superior officer.

The political leaders showing different excuses may show reluctance over trial of the war criminals. They could try to defer the trial process and some of them even could make alliance with them and build movement. But families of three million martyred and 250,000 war-repressed women and their close relatives will never pardon the war criminals.

It is impossible for a civilised man to forget or forgive this most disrespectful act against humanity. Nazi war criminals are still being hunted for crimes committed during the second world war and being put on trial in Europe.

The western world is forcefully pushing the issue of war crimes in Bosnia in 1994. The International Criminal Court's 1998 constitution says that rape, sexual torture and forced labour are all war crimes and crimes against humanity. In the year 2000 a special court in Tokyo will sit for the trial of Japanese soldiers involved in crimes committed during the second world war. Some 200,000 women from China, North Korea, South Africa, Philippines and Indonesia fell victim to rape and torture by the Japanese troops. These women have spoken after 50 to 55 years since being tortured and are now demanding compensation from Japan.'

Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam had termed her movement demanding trial of the war criminals and ban on communal politics as 'Second Phase of the Liberation War'. Some young warriors of this phase of movement had important roles in bringing out the book. They did the appreciable job being inspired with their

duty and ideology, following their commitment to Shaheed Janani. Special mention in the effort goes to the vice president of Nirmul Committee Professor Muntasir Mamun, its General Secretary and Information and Research Secretary respectively Kazi Mukul and Julfikar Ali Manik. Journalist Ruhul Motin took most of depositions and interviews. Besides Dr. Sukumar Biswas, Shofiul Alam Raja, Krishna Bhoumik, Gouranga Nandi, Mostafa Hosein and Prithijith Sen Rishi also took some interviews or wrote articles. Four young journalists Zahid Newaz, Ziaul Huq Sawpan, Nazrul Islam Mithu and Nadeem Qadir undertook the hectic task of translating the book into English in a very short time. Here I would take the opportunity to congratulate them.

Those who gave statement came forward responding to their duty and ideology. The trial of war criminals is not possible without their cooperation. Endless thanks to them.

We hope that the government of Sheikh Hasina will fulfill its commitment by taking steps for holding trial of the war criminals. Spirit of democracy and human rights will be meaningless if the war criminals of 1971 are not tried. It will hamper the march towards socio-economic development and cultural freedom.

In fact Bangladesh's existence will be threatened if the war criminals are not tried and punished for their evil activities during our Liberation War in 1971.

**Shahriar Kabir**

Dhaka, 31 October 1999

## Footnote

1. See Appendix.
2. *Bangladesher Swadhinata Juddher Dalilpatra*: Eighth volume, Editor: Hasan Hafizur Rahman, Information Ministry of Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka June 1984, P. 51-52.
3. *Dainik Bangla*, February 16, 1972.
4. Interview with the Editor, Dhaka 28 June, 1998
5. Daily Banglar Bani, Special issue on Genocide, Dhaka, December, 1972
6. 'Ami Beerangona Bolchchi', Neelima Ibrahim, Jagriti Prokashonee, Dhaka, January, 1998, Pag: 15-16
7. Interview with the Editor, Dhaka, October 9, 1998
8. Interview with the Editor, Dhaka, February 25, 1997
9. Ibid.
10. Interview with the Editor, New Delhi, January 20, 1996
11. Bangladesh Gazette, titled : President Order No. 8 of 1972 : Bangladesh Collaborators (Special Tribunals) Order 1972.
12. *Dainik Bangla*, Dhaka, July 23, 1972
13. *Muktijuddher Brittonbondi Itihas*, by Shahriar Kabir, Dhaka, February 1999, p. 53-54.
14. Interview with the Editor, London, August 20, 1996
15. Interview with the Editor, London, September 15, 1999
16. Name of these 16 accused person are : 1. Abbas Ali Khan, 2. Maulana Matiur Rahman Nizami, 3. Mohammad Kamruzzaman, 4. Abdul Alim, 5. Maulana Delwar Hossain Sayeedi, 6. Maulana Abdul Mannan, 7. Anwar Zahid, 8. Abdul Kader Molla, 9. A S M Solaiman, 10. Salauddin Kader Chowdhury, 11. Maulana Abdus Sobhan, 12. Maulana A K M Yousuf, 13. Mohammad Ayen Uddin, 14. Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid, 15. A B M Khaleque Mojumdar and 16. Dr. Syed Sajjad Hossain. Golam Azam's name was not included in this probe because his crimes have been recorded earlier. For more information about these people please see 'Genocide '71', edited by Dr. Ahmed Sharif, Professor Serajul Islam Chowdhury, Qazi Nur-uz-Zaman & Shahriar Kabir, Dhaka, December, 1987.
17. Ibid, p. 288
18. Leaflet : The International Organizing Committee for Women's Internaitonal War Crimes Tribunal, VAWW-NET Japan



**Testimony of witnesses and victim's on atrocities and genocide by Pakistan army**

