



UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR)

Stakeholder Report on

Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Minorities in Bangladesh

Submitted by

South Asia Forum for Freedom of Religion or Belief (SAFFoRB)

and

Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC)

Introduction

Bangladesh is currently on track to be ranked as a developing country and the government is also committed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Human rights and justice for all, leaving no one behind, are among the basic elements in the set of pledges made under the SDGs, goal 16 in particular. Therefore, it would be of member state's interest to learn how the Bangladesh government is going to mainstream issues of human rights, freedom of religion and belief, justice, and equity in the development agenda for the period leading up to 2030. Here lies the importance of submitting UPR report by interested stakeholders, in particular to human rights defenders, civil society organizations and members of national human rights institutions currently working in Bangladesh.

The report is prepared with the help of valuable data and suggestions from assembly of religious freedom advocates, civil society activists and human rights defenders who are dedicated to promote religious freedom and freedom of belief in Bangladesh. Different organizations working for long time in Bangladesh among religious and ethnic minority population, which provides them with clear insight and first-hand experience of current situation in the field of religious freedom and belief. Also, it enables them to collect data and information from various sources related to mentioned matter, which will reflect in this report.

This report will highlight certain issues related to the freedom of religion and belief which are pivotal for the secular structure of Bangladesh and its minority population. Also, the report will analyze key measures taken to mitigate those issues by the authority and various civil society organizations, how far the impact of those issues will spread, current challenges in achieving freedom of religion and belief; and finally, the report will indicate several recommendations to improve current situation.

Methodology

The main aim of this report is to highlight current condition of freedom of religion and belief in Bangladesh, particularly from the perspective of religious and ethnic minority population living in the country. This report uses data and information from diverse sources:

- 1) Seminars and round table discussion sessions with civil society activists, representatives from different local authorities, intellectuals and individuals working in the field of human rights in Bangladesh.
- 2) Through the consultation with various electronic and print media, local and international NGOs, and other civil society organizations
- 3) Face-to-face meetings with individuals effected by problems, people belong to various socio-economic and religious backgrounds and members of law enforcing agencies to gather first-hand experience regarding incidents of communal violence, attacks on religious and ethnic minority population in the name of religion.

The psychological and social trauma suffered by the victims of several incidents and overall assessment of different related matters revealed considerable evidence of problems being faced in the society of Bangladesh by the religious and ethnic minority population.

It has been observed that certain measures have been implemented already since 3rd cycle to promote freedom of religion and belief, which helped overall situation to improve to some extent. However, most of the critical issues yet to be resolved properly and action plan by the state to mitigate those problems not in line with the recommendations made during 3rd cycle. The recommendations which will be mentioned later part of this report will be based on the that observation.

UPR 3rd Cycle: Context of Bangladesh

The national context of Bangladesh in relation to the UPR includes ongoing challenges such as discrimination against religious and ethnic minority groups, limitations on freedom of religion and belief, and restrictions on freedom of expression and religious practices. The country received 251 and supported 178 recommendations during the 3rd UPR cycle (2017-2021). Among those, several recommendations have been made to promote the freedom of religion and belief in Bangladesh. Some crucial recommendations are:

- Ensure legal and constitutional protection of Indigenous and religious minorities, and facilitate the reporting of violations of their rights
- Ensure the effective investigation and sanctioning of all cases of violence against religious minorities
- Guarantee the protection and rights of persons belonging to minorities
- Continue efforts to implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord and ensure that the ethnic minorities fully enjoy their rights
- Protect freedom of expression in media, politics and religion, and work with civil society to address concerns over freedom of religion and belief.

It has been observed that the government of Bangladesh has taken some steps to implement certain recommendations.

- During the Festivals of religious minorities, like the Durga Puja and Christmas; government have been provided adequate security by the law enforcement agencies. Despite that measure, numerous incidents of attack during religious festivals of minority population have been reported in recent time. Although since the year 2022, the occurrence of such attacks has been minimized significantly because of the continuous effort by both the authority and human rights organizations.
- Several charges have been made against the people responsible for attacks on religious and ethnic communities in recent years, however in most cases the main perpetrators of those heinous attacks are roaming free due to lack of evidence and political affiliation.
- Laws have been enacted in accordance with the CHT treaty, since the establishment of the CHT Regional Council, the reconstitution of Hill district councils, and crucially, the formation of the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission, quality of living by ethnic minority population has improved. Furthermore, this has brought peace and stability in CHT region and in the lives of ethnic minority population after years of bloodshed and conflict.

The level of implementation on recommendations received during the 3rd cycle will be discussed in detail in later part of this report.

However, there is no denying that more work is needed to ensure the protection and promotion of freedom of religion and belief for minorities living in the country regardless of their socio-economic status and to establish an open environment where anybody can express and practice their religious belief without harassment and fear.

Freedom of Religion and Belief

Bangladesh is a country with a diverse religious landscape, with most of the population being Muslim, followed by Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians. The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees the freedom of religion and belief for all citizens, and the government respects these rights in practice. Secularism and freedom of religion and belief were integral parts of the Bangladeshi constitution of 1972, the first constitution of Bangladesh drafted

immediately after the liberation war of 1971; in which it calls for equal rights to all its citizens irrespective of their religious differences and it also bans discrimination on the grounds of religion on various platforms.

However, in 1988, the original constitution of Bangladesh lost that basic structure when the newly inserted Article (2A) declared that "Islam is the state religion of the republic"; this controversial modification of the original constitution fueled the instances of discrimination and violence against religious minorities in Bangladesh. The country has also seen tensions between different religious groups, particularly between the Muslim majority and the Hindu minority since then. Despite of several modifications over the years, secularism remains one of the four basic pillars of the constitution as laid out in the preamble and it clearly states that:

Article 27: All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law.

Article 28 (1): The state shall not discriminate against any citizens on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth

Adopted in 1992, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (commonly known as the UN Minorities Declaration) defines 'minorities' based on national or ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic identity, and mandates the States to protect their existence. Besides the UN declaration, the rights of the minorities are protected in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 (Article 27), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 2 (2)), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Article 1), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 30).

According to the US Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2022, Bangladesh is among those countries where violations of religious freedom are rife (<https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/bangladesh/>). Recent census shows that over 90 per cent of Bangladesh's 170 million people are Muslims, around 8 per cent are Hindus and the rest belong to different religions, including Buddhism and Christianity. Besides the dominant ethnic Bengali people, there are some three million people belonging to 45 ethnic tribal groups who are Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, and animists.

In recent years, there have been reports of attacks on different religious minority groups and their properties by extremist groups and people connected to the ruling party. The influence of radical groups in Bangladesh has emboldened attacks on the religious minority community. Bangladesh has seen a number of violent attacks on religious and ethnic minority population since the year 2018, in most cases people belong to Hindu minority has become the target.

- (1) In March 2018, led by a local ruling party leader, approximately 80 armed members of the Muslim community in Jamalpur District attacked members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community at an Ahmadiyya mosque, injuring 22 Ahmadis. In the same month, unidentified individuals killed a Hindu priest in Chatmohar Upazila in Pabna District. According to press reports, law enforcement suspected individuals with anti-Hindu sentiments may have killed the priest.
- (2) In June 2019, the targeted communal attack in Langadu, a remote area of CHT populated with ethnic minority and Buddhist population, claimed more than 250 houses, including shops, belonging to Indigenous inhabitants. At least one elderly Chakma woman was killed in the arson. Accounts were given of looting, rape and beatings as the local authorities turned a blind eye.
- (3) In August 2019, according to multiple press reports, police found the body of Buddhist monk Amrita Nanda, Vice Principal of Gyanaratna Buddhist Monastery, under a railway bridge in Comilla district. According to media accounts, Nanda's throat was slit, and Buddhist community members said he may have been killed and his body dumped from the train while returning to his hometown from Dhaka.

Buddhists and human rights activists formed human chains and protest rallies throughout the country following Nanda's death. At year's end, however, no arrests were made.

- (4) A Christian pastor, and his 14-year-old daughter were abducted from their shelter in a refugee camp in Bangladesh on the morning of January 27, 2020. The previous night, scores of men attacked 22 Christian families living in Kutupalong refugee Camp in Cox's Bazaar. The attackers beat up residents, vandalized homes, and looted private property in the sprawling refugee camp.
- (5) In November 2020, there was a brutal attack on a Hindu temple in the district of Karimpur, where several people were injured, and the temple was vandalized. In October 2020, a Hindu teacher was beheaded in the southwestern district of Jhenaidah, by a group of Islamist extremists. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic period, at least 30 incidents of violence against members of minority communities occurred in Bangladesh.
- (6) During 13-24 October 2021, the country saw massive communal violence over the Holy Quran being placed on a Durga Puja booth. The incident sparked several communal attacks on the minority Hindu community in several districts, at least 7 people have been died across the country, including 5 Hindus, more than 50 temples and makeshift worship arrangements were vandalized. Recent reports suggest that Muslim hard-liners may have used social media to provoke the violence.
- (7) In July 2022, A mob vandalized a temple, a grocery store, and several houses of the Hindu community in Sahapara area of Lohagara, Narail district. Angry villagers went on a rampage in the afternoon, alleging that a Hindu man said to be 18 years old made a post on Facebook that hurt their religious feelings, officials said. Police could not bring the situation under control before night, said locals. The individual who allegedly made the post managed to flee the area.
- (8) On Aug 29, 2022, Jhumon Das, a social activist belongs to Hindu minority community, from Sunamganj district of Sylhet division, was taken from his home in Shalla's Noagaon village to the police station for questioning. Police later registered a case and placed him under arrest under the controversial Digital Security Act for making an alleged 'provocative' post on Facebook. Jhumon's wife Sweety Rani Das has claimed that the family has faced threats of violence and harassment due to this matter.
- (9) On March 3, 2023, A religious program of the minority Ahmadiyya community, in Panchagarh town came under fierce attack soon after the Jumma prayers, prompting the police to fire bullets and charge batons to restore law and order. At least two people have been killed and around three dozen sustained injuries due to the clash.

In addition to these specific incidents, there has also been a broader pattern of discrimination and violence against religious minorities in Bangladesh. Hindu communities have reported incidents of land grabbing, forced conversions, and attacks on their cultural and religious practices. Many religious attacks on Bangladeshi minorities are done on the guise of an attempt to steal land belonging to Hindus. In many cases, local politics is also at play.

- (1) In February 2018, failing to purchase it forcibly, a local influential Muslim person erected a tin-shed structure grabbing the seven decimals of land belonging to a minority Hindu family at Lalmonirhat district. Following a complaint filed with Sadar Police Station by the Hindu owner, police went to the spot and asked the grabber to free the land in two days.
- (2) An academic study shows that controversial Vested Property Act has become a tool to grab lands belonging to Hindu minority population in rural parts of Bangladesh (https://www.academia.edu/31175022/Politics_of_Land_Grabbing_The_Vested_Property_Act_and_the_Exploitation_of_Hindu_Communities_in_Bangladesh) . The study also finds it is apparent that ruling authority played political games with the act as Hindus are being robbed of their lands systematically using several provisions of this act.

- (3) According to the Bangladesh Ministry of Land, authorities settled approximately 15,224 of 118,173 property restitution cases filed under the Vested Property Return Act during the year 2018. Among which the owners, primarily Hindus, won 7,733 of the cases, recovering 8,187.5 acres of land. Media reports, minority rights activists, and the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC) attributed the slow return of land seized under relevant legislation from Hindus who had left for India to judicial inefficiency and general government indifference.
- ❖ Advocate Rana Dasgupta, General-Secretary of the Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian Unity Council, told the BBC “There is an orchestrated attempt to grab Hindu houses and lands in Bangladesh, and [people] are being forced to leave the country.” He also says that Bangladeshi minorities are used to quash sensitive social and political issues. Mr. Dasgupta says that if the situation continues minorities will disappear from the country one day. In a press conference, he also said political parties and their alliances have started visible activities ahead of the elections, to be held in 2024. It is quite normal in democratic practice. However, the use of communal hate speech and application of religious sentiment in state politics before the general election has alarmed the religious-ethnic minorities.
 - ❖ Condemning the attack on the Hindu community in Bangladesh (during the year 2022) the country’s National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has said that communal violence in a “secular country” is not acceptable under any circumstances. In its order, the commission directed the home ministry to probe whether there was negligence in preventing the situation of unwanted attack and whether the police played a proper role in controlling the situation, as per media reports.
 - ❖ In a statement following the recent attack on minority Ahmadiyya community, Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian Unity Council demanded the arrest and exemplary punishment of the perpetrators. Presidents of the council's central committee Ushaton Talukder, Dr Nim Chandra Bhowmik and Nirmal Rosario, General Secretary Advocate Rana Das Gupta issued the statement. They asked the government to ensure proper treatment, compensation, and rehabilitation of the affected people.

Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, a local organization working to promote freedom of religion and belief, hold a march towards the Prime Minister’s Office in January 2023 to press home their demand of implementation of election pledges given for the religious minorities in the election manifesto of last general elections held on December 30, 2018. The organization also handed over a memorandum to the PM office to press their demands. (<https://www.newagebd.net/article/190794/bhbuc-to-hold-march-towards-pmo-on-january-7>).

Freedom of Opinion and Expression

Right to freedom of opinion & expression is protected under the constitution of Bangladesh. According to the Constitution of Bangladesh, Article 39(1) guarantees the freedom of thought and conscience, article 39(2) (a) protects the freedom of speech and expression of every citizen, regardless of their religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. The alarming fact is that recently Bangladesh fares poorly in measures which compare the robustness of freedom of opinion and expression in various countries. Communication and Technology Act (ICT, 2006, amended 2013), and the Digital Security Act (DSA, 2018) appear to problematize the right of free speech granted in several provisions, but most explicitly in article 39 of the constitution of Bangladesh. The much controversial DSA is being used not only to muzzle critics and political dissidents, but also individuals from religious and ethnic minority as well. People belonging to religious minority groups are being arrested and detained for alleged ‘social media activities’ is likely to have a chilling effect on freedom of religion and belief, regardless of whether those individuals are ultimately convicted. Restrictions on freedom of opinion and

expression in Bangladesh is intricately linked to the rise of religious intolerance in the country. The existing law of the country further fuels the culture of intolerance as Bangladesh Penal Code punishes blasphemy with up to two years in prison and the mentioned Digital Security Act 2018 criminalizes blasphemy as non-bailable offense and increases the penalty. Extremist groups often target religious minorities and other vulnerable populations, leading to grave human rights abuses. One of the most concerning trends in Bangladesh has been the targeting of individuals who are working for the equal rights of religious minority, promoting the freedom of belief and who have spoken out against extremist ideologies. Many of these individuals have been subject to harassment, intimidation, and even murder, often with impunity. Different Bangladeshi organizations and government are working hand to hand with international organizations and other countries to combat rise of religious intolerance and protecting the victims of religious extremism, mostly people from the religious minority groups. The government has also taken steps to counter communal hate speech and religious propaganda that promotes extremist ideologies and posing threat to freedom of religion and belief through media monitoring, social media surveillance, and counter-narrative campaigns. However, critics have argued that these measures are often overly broad and have been used to target opposition figures and put strict restrictions on freedom of speech rather than protecting the minority population from violent extremism. On the other hand, according to some observers, heavy-handed operations by the government to control violent extremism appeared to be ruthlessly effective in protecting the country's religious minority to some extent. Unlike most of its neighbors, Bangladesh has avoided large-scale communal violence over the past four years. Yet beneath the surface, a different picture emerges. Online radicalization is widespread and increasingly normalized. A network of violent Islamist extremist groups is spreading hate speech and misinformation across the social media ecosystem. Bangladesh police say that more than 80 percent of the people arrested for religious extremism in past couple of years were radicalized online and almost 60 percent were university-educated.

Minority Rights

After the 1975, the assassination of President Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, widely hailed as the Father of the Nation, the country went into the hands of military rulers. For the 15 years that followed, the country was governed by a military-bureaucratic alliance that foiled democratic institutions. The founding principles of the State outlined in the Constitution—democracy, nationalism, secularism, and socialism—were compromised. In particular, the principles of absolute faith and trust to the Almighty were inserted in the place of secularism and the Islamic customary expression 'Bismillah Ar Rahman Ar Rahim' inserted at the outset of the Constitution. Such modification of the constitution put the religious and ethnic minority under jeopardy. In recent time, Bangladesh is once again under the spotlight in the international media for violating minority rights. There's been several attacks on religious and ethnic minority population of Bangladesh since 2018. The masterminds behind these attacks have an agenda of political opportunism and economic benefits. Bangladeshi human rights organizations have agreed that the government has been negligent in protecting the country's minority community. Furthermore, even though secularism was restored in the constitution in 2011, Islam remains as the state religion. This ambiguity shows the divided nature of the country's population, which hurts the imposition of equal rights for religious and ethnic minorities. The way some religious fanatics desecrate Hindu-Buddhist temples and Christian Churches, burn down minority properties, expropriate, rape, and kill members of minority communities are primarily greed-induced, economically motivated political violence by a tiny minority of Muslim hoodlums. Being too weak to resist the criminals, non-Muslim, and ethnic minority victims simply suffer, flee, or die without any redress. Many of them sell their properties (at nominal price) and migrate to neighboring country. Along with the failed promises of successive governments, many factors have pushed many ethnic and religious minority population out of their homelands and into the radical margins, and drive them into an

increasingly unstable and uncertain future. Since the beginning of the year 2022, the minority community has been conducting the movement to implement the promises made by the ruling government before the general election of 2018. Although many social organizations have conducted many programmes to draw the attention of the government to their demands, no initiative of the government has been observed so far to ensure equal rights of the ethnic-religious minority population in Bangladesh. It has been said by several foreign media that Bangladesh must pledge to do more to bolster the confidence its minority population. They also urges to develop the culture of strong judicial system, which is independent, impartial, and able to provide timely and fair justice for all citizens, no matter which religion, race and caste they belong to. Also, it requires to improve existing laws and provide modern resources and technology to law enforcement agencies to stop the violation of minority rights better.

Effectuated People/Group

Religious minority population living in Bangladesh, namely Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and people belong to ethnic communities, i.e., Chakma, Garo, Santals and believers of animism. Also, some sects of the Muslim community, like- Ahmadiyya and Shia.

Level of Implementation

The government of Bangladesh recognizes the right to freedom of religion and belief, there are ongoing challenges in ensuring that these rights are fully respected and protected for all citizens. Government has already taken some initiatives to safeguard the freedom of religion and belief in the country, however, the effectiveness of some of those initiatives is questionable.

Recommendation	Initiative Taken by the government	Level of implementation
Legal and constitutional protection of Indigenous and religious minorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Along with existing laws like Religious Welfare Trust (Amendment) Act and Vested Property Return Act, government has taken steps to initiate Hindu Marriage Registration Act. Amendment to the Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act of 2001 finally recognized the customary rights of the Indigenous Jumma and confirmed that land disputes in the hills would be resolved "in consonance with the law, custom and practice in force in the Chittagong Hill Tracts 	Partially Implemented
Effective investigation and sanctioning of all cases of violence against religious minorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the year 2021, High Court issued a rule asking the local administrations concerned to explain in four weeks why their inaction and failure to protect Hindu citizens and their properties in the districts during their biggest religious festival should not be declared illegal. Bangladesh Police filed cases against over 4,000 suspects involved in the violence. They filed at least 52 cases following 2021 Durga Puja attacks. Police also arrested the main suspect and hundreds of others — but cases are still pending. 	Not Implemented

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2022, government has taken steps to address security issues, such as increasing security measures around religious sites, makeshift puja mandap, temples. The law enforcers set up CCTV cameras in all the puja pavilions and deployed enough police or other law enforcing members to safeguard the biggest religious festival of Bangladeshi Hindu community. However, the main perpetrator behind the 2021 attack remains undetected. 	
Protect freedom of expression in media, politics and religion, and work with civil society to address concerns over freedom of religion and belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government took action to remove postings from social media that it considered provocative, such as fake pictures that triggered attacks on Hindus. Government and non-government organizations has engaged with local religious communities to build trust and promote social cohesion. The government has encouraged community leaders and religious scholars to speak out against extremism and to work with law enforcement agencies to prevent communal hate speech. The government instructed imams to denounce extremism. Religious community leaders said imams in all mosques usually continued the practice of avoiding sermons that contradicted government policy. 	Implemented
Enforce constitutional provisions safeguarding freedom of expression, religion, and belief, including by amending section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act and redraft the Digital Security Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2018, the government finally decided to repeal five controversial sections of the ICT Act 2006, including the offending Section 57. However, the decision didn't result in a freer environment because the proposed DSA essentially incorporated these sections with even harsher penalties, which came into force on October 1, 2018. In May 2022, Law Minister has said the government has taken necessary steps to ensure the best practices of the Digital Security Act, as this law has been misused and abused "to some extent". 	Partially Implemented

Limitation(s)

Despite of several initiatives by the government and human rights organizations working to protect the freedom of religion and belief in Bangladesh, there are still a number of challenges remains in ensuring that religious and ethnic minority groups practice their religion and belief in a free environment. The situation is further exacerbated by narrowing political space for dissent, radicalization of rural population, contentious regional politics, and the poor socio-economic status of the society after COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Blasphemy Laws:** Bangladesh has strict blasphemy laws that criminalize insulting religion or religious beliefs. These laws have been used to target religious minorities and dissenters, with many facing imprisonment or even death for alleged blasphemy. Bangladesh Penal Code punishes blasphemy with up to two years in prison and Digital Security Act 2018 criminalizes blasphemy as non-bailable offense and increases the penalty.
- **State religion:** Although the Bangladesh Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, it also declares Islam as the state religion by newly inserted Article 2(A) in 1988. That has led to concerns about the unequal treatment of religious minorities and their access to public services.
- **Limited access to justice:** Religious minorities often faces challenges in accessing justice and redress for crimes committed against them. The police and judiciary have been accused of bias and discrimination against minorities, leading to impunity for perpetrators of violence. Furthermore, the prolonged authority system of country often let the attackers become free of their committed crime. Because of this lengthy process, true verdict is often denied.
- **Wave of violent attacks on religious minority groups and no visible justice:** Bangladesh has experienced a series of violent attacks in last few years by Islamic extremists. The victims have included not only religious minority groups like Hindu, Buddhist or Christian but several sects of Muslims, namely Ahmadis and Shi'a Muslims also becomes victim of communal violence. Despite of a number of countermeasures, the authorities have visibly failed to ensure the protection of those targeted. Many cases have been filed by the law enforcing authorities after each incident of attack happens, although the main perpetrators roam free in each case and there has been no visible progress of the cases even after several months or years.
- **Restrictions on religious practices:** There have been instances of authorities restricting or banning religious practices, particularly those of minority groups. For example, sometimes the government has imposed restrictions on Hindu festivals on account of religious sentiment of religious majority groups, and Ahmadi Muslims have been prohibited from identifying as Muslims.
- **Political indemnity:** Not only that after each of this attack, two main political parties Awami League and BNP start to blame each other and ultimately try to shelter their activists involved with violence. This sort of political indemnity is a big reason incidence of communal attacks are repeated in the country. And for this kind of political immunity, the acts and sections of Bangladesh Penal Code fails to protect the rights of the religious minority.
- **Propaganda and rumors:** In Bangladesh today, especially in rural areas, rumors are a kind of manifesto of peasant consciousness. The baseless propaganda called rumor is so powerful that it can cause serious disaster to an individual, family, society, or state in any country at any time. People of Bangladesh are prone to strong emotions and religious sentiment. Different vested quarters want to serve their interests by spreading rumors on different issues at various times. One of the elementary causes behind the minority rights violation in Bangladesh is fake information in different social media including Facebook and rapid propagation of those information among the general population.

- **Religious intolerance:** According to several independent research, there is deep support for ‘Sharia Laws’ among Bangladeshi population, including its draconian physical punishments, as well as a strong preference for upon non-Muslims. A large number of Bangladeshi Muslims not only register elevated levels of communal intolerance, but they also evince significance sectarian intolerance.
- **Psychological inferiority complex of the minority population:** Communal attack often results in forced migration. These types of repression remark the fear in the mind of minority people and gradually they feel inferior. Sometimes they even lose their words to protest and to talk about their rights.

Recommendation(s)

- 1) Enact Minority Protection Act to ensure protection of members of a minority group from discrimination, forced conversion, and violence.
- 2) Abolish discriminatory constitutional regulation against religious and ethnic minorities in Bangladesh.
- 3) Investigate all the incident of attacks on religious minority population and ensure main perpetrators brought into justice regardless of their identity and political affiliation. Also, ensure exemplary punishment for them if found guilty.
- 4) Ensure immediate returning of the vested Properties to the original owners according to the “Vested Property Return Act 2011”
- 5) Bangladesh should form the National Commission for minorities.
- 6) Amend the Digital Security Act 2018, which imposes draconian punishments for a wide range of vaguely defined acts and being used as a tool to put individuals from religious minority communities and religious freedom advocates behind the bars.
- 7) Formation of Land Commission for Indigenous population living in plane, to ensure their equal rights in social affairs and ownership on the properties owned by them.
- 8) Enact the Endowed Property Act, to ensure protection of endowed properties of the religious minorities from grabbers, it will help prevent illegal transfer or forcible occupation or misuse of such properties.
- 9) Fully Implement the Chittagong Hill tracts peace accord, 1997, the Indigenous people’s land should not be bought by outsiders.
- 10) Bangladesh should invite UN special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief.
- 11) Government enforcement officers should undergo Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief training.
- 12) Ratify ILO convention 169 on Indigenous and tribal population, ensure proper involvement of religious and ethnic minority communities in social safety net programmes and the national social security strategy.