Lives of Bangladeshi bloggers in jeopardy: Constant death threats

Special report By Md Abdun Nafi

Bangladeshi bloggers today are on the brink of extinction. Although on paper this South Asian nation practices secularism, it is evident that it is actually dominated by Islamic fundamentalism, based on the recent grisly murders of free-thinking bloggers in the country. These constant brutal assaults on bloggers for the past 3 years has left writers, literary artists and bloggers constantly fearing the worst.

This past 2nd June, a list bearing the names of 10 bloggers was published by one 'Ansarullah Bangla Team' on all mainstream news outlets and electronic media. There the organization warned said bloggers 'tread carefully' from now on and that death may soon pay them a visit. These 10 bloggers are – (1) Asif Mohiuddin (Germany) (2) Omi Rahman Pial (Switzerland) (3) Sanyasi ratan (Norway) (4) Omar Faruque Lux (Germany) (5) Parvej Alam (Bangladesh) (6) Syed Sunvy Anick Hossain (London) (7)Nur Nabi Dulal (Germany) (8) Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury (London) (9) Shamima Mitu (Bangladesh) (10) Ananya Azad (Germany)

It is important to mention that, not all of these 10 names reside in Bangladesh. Instead, they are scattered about in different corners of the world.

In 2004, whilst exiting the Bangla academy book fair, Dr. Humayun Azad, infamous in Bangladesh for his perceptions against various social norms, came under attack from fundamentalists who hacked him repeatedly with sharp weapons. Later an organization calling themselves the Jamaitul Mujahidin claimed responsibility for that attack on Dr. Azad. Nearly a decade later after that incident, on December 2012, atheist blogger Asif Mohiuddin was hacked with sharp weapons as well, a few months after which saw a member of the Bangladesh Gonojagoron Moncho and atheist blogger Rajib Haider aka "Thaba Baba" hacked to death by terrorists.

Later on, another Islamic fundamentalist group calling themselves the "Ansarullah Bangla Team" claimed full responsibility for the attack. Given the circumstances, the government failed to react quickly to tackle and subside these atrocities, which paved the way for the further murders of 4 more atheist bloggers. They are as follows, Doctor Abhijit Rai, Washiqur Babu,

Ananta Bijoy Das, Niloy Nil. Dr. Abhijit Rai, who was an American citizen as well, was killed by fundamentalists during his visit to Bangladesh with the intention of publishing a book he wrote. His wife Rafida Bonna who was with him that day was gravely injured.

It took only till the month of October (2015) to kill Dr. Abhijit Rai’s publisher, Mr. Faisal Arefin Dipon whose death was synonymous with that of another publisher Mr. Rashid Tutul, who died on the same day. The South Asian Al-Qaeda conducted a press release saying that he committed a crime when he published Dr. Abhijit Rai’s book, and as such, these are the consequences.