

## Concern over blogger murders and hit list

Perhaps the most hotly debated topic in Bangladesh at the moment is the recent serial blogger murders. One by one blogger is being killed because of the rose above religious teachings and disagreed with its notions, something which has, in turn, plunged the country's current situation in terms of law and order, into further turmoil. The bloody and gory pattern began with the murder of one Rajib Haidar, aka 'Thaba Baba' on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2013, during the Shahbag Movement of course. Later on, extremists murdered an American citizen and writer Dr. Abhijit Rai by hacking him to death with machetes in the open vicinity, quite near to the then ongoing Ekushey February Bookfair. His wife, Rafida Ahmed Bonna, was grievously injured during the incident.

The death of Abhijit Rai was followed by that of blogger Washiqur Rahman Babu on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, who was murdered in similar fashion at the front of his own house, even though a couple of the perpetrators were caught at the scene of the crime. Not even a month had passed since that incident and the death of blogger Ananta Bijoy Das followed. He was also murdered right inside his own house. Later on, Islamic fundamentalist terrorists infiltrated the home of blogger Niladri Chottopoddhay Nil and murdered him as well.

Even before these effects of these events had diluted, just this past 31<sup>st</sup> of October one Arefin Dipon, who was the publisher of Dr. Abhijit Rai's book, was brutally murdered in his office. On the very same day publisher Ahmedur Rashid Tutul, poet Tarek Rahim, and writer Ronodipom Basu were brutally hacked to death with machetes in their Dhaka based Lalmatia offices. It is worth mentioning that publisher and blogger Ahmedur Rashid Tutul, who survived the barbaric attack was the caretaker for Shuuddhoshor Publications. The rest of the victims were all active bloggers who regularly wrote and published content online.

Every single one of the individuals who was murdered, were all free-thinking spirits, bloggers or writers. These incidents are being treated as the biggest assault on the freedom of speech rights, freedom of expression and writing in Bangladesh, since after independence.

It is with quite concerning to report that these murders are being committed in the name of one Ansarullah Bangla Team, with the intent of committing these grisly acts being openly expressed online, or by sending letters to various national daily newspapers. According to Bdnews and the Daily Prothom Alo, this mysterious Ansarullah Bangla Team has now published a new 15 man hit



list which contains the names of Bangladeshi citizens residing at both at home and abroad. There are quite a few well-known and prominent bloggers on the list Ansarullah has compiled, with the group threatening that they will kill each and every one of

them wherever they may be.

The following names are on the aforementioned list, blogger Asif Mohiuddin, Arifur Rahman, Omi Rahman Pial, Md Shariful Islam, Suranjoy Sarker, Rasel Parvez, Subroto Shubho, Syed Sunvy Anick Hossain, Omar Faruk Lux, Md Abdur Rahman, Imran H Sarkar, Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury, Taslima Nasrin, Daud Haidar, Roosevelt Halder, Nurun Nabi, Abdul Ahad Shanto, Turin Afroz, Shammi Haque and others.

We spoke to blogger Omi Rahman Pial, who is currently in Bangladesh, regarding the incident. He informed us that he has received such death threats on various occasions and that it is nothing new. Bangladesh government has appointed a gunman for his security and that law enforcement agencies are always in touch with him.

When we contacted the chief administrator for Bangladesh police, Mr. Benazir Ahmed, he informed us that the police has already taken all appropriate measures to tackle the situation and will continue to do so. Religious fundamentalism has no space in Bangladesh. He declined to comment when we asked him whether IS has any influence here in Bangladesh.

In these desperately anxious times here in Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Bloggers Association BOAN feel that the Bangladeshi government has to be much more proactive and in order to reduce the volume of such crimes, the fast track tribunals must do their jobs and punish the criminals to ensure swift justice.

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