

36 accused in biggest blasphemy lawsuit of recent times



In what is potentially one of the most significant blasphemy lawsuits of recent times, 35 individuals have been accused of having “offenses against religion” in Bangladesh. In accordance with Bangladesh Penal Code 295, C. R. case number 273/18 was filed with the Judicial Magistrate Court this past 16th of April 2018.

The plaintiff, one Mr. Shamim, has named 36 individuals in this lawsuit, and accused them of writing abusively about religion, in particular, Islam. The other accused are Nazmul Hossain Ghatok as the main accused, Editor Arifur Rahman, Roosevelt Halder, Adnan Saqib, Suranjoy Sarker, Sharmin Khan, Tahera Sultana, Syed Sunvy Anick Hossain, Syed Mohammad Sajeeb Abed, Saiful Islam, Faysal Hossain Onik, Pinaki Deb Apu, Miltan Kumar Dey, Sujan Chandra Dey, Abu Taher Muhammad Mustafa, Enyetul Huda, Husni Mubarak, Syed Isteak Hossain Shawon, Tofail Hossain, Naymul Hossain, Ashef Abrar Titu, MD Abdullah Al Hasan, Tamzid Hussain, Siddikur Rahman, Reana Trina, Hussain Muhammad Parvez, Shahadat Hosain, Syed Samun Ali, Abdul Ahad Shanto, Saiful Islam, Shipon Ahmed, Zubayer Ahmed and Kamrunnaher Shahana.

The primary defendant, one [Mr. Nazmul Hossain A.K.A “Ghatok”](#), and a magazine called “Atheist In Bangladesh”, who published an article he wrote, seem to be at the center of this lawsuit.

Our court correspondent reports that the plaintiff Mr. Shamim came across Mr. Hossain’s article first in this particular magazine. The abusive content he found in the said article, prompted him to go through the entire magazine which he found to be inundated with crude, offensive and vehemently demeaning words towards religion as a whole.

We launched a small investigation in an attempt to uncover the history of this magazine. It appears “Atheist in Bangladesh” have been publishing such obscene content about religion, Islam in particular, for a good while now. Alongside that, it has also been endorsing and facilitating several individuals, particularly those accused in the lawsuit, who devote themselves towards producing such obscene, rude content.

This lawsuit comes of course on the back what is currently rather a fragile environment in

Bangladesh. On one side we have a society readily embracing and accepting fundamentalism. And on the other, we have a government and law enforcement authorities currently engaged in an almighty tussle with bouts of terrorism, militancy that have plagued the nation in recent times.



Nevertheless, we were unable to get in touch with Mr. Shamim. Unsurprisingly our correspondent was not able to get in touch with any of the accused. However, he did manage to track down Mr. Nazmul Hossain's house in his hometown of Kalkini, Madaripur but found it to be devoid of living souls. When he queried some of the neighbors they revealed that the house has been empty for some time now and no one knows the whereabouts of its previous inhabitants.



Reactions towards the lawsuit have been generally mixed. Social media platforms which have been rife ever since news of the lawsuit broke in, are a perfect indicator of that. There were several users on Facebook for instance who claimed that "justice had been served". Some stated that 'Kafir's Munafiks and Indian agents like that' should be hanged till death. Some claimed that the accused should be grateful that they are even getting a chance at

fair trial, instead of being shot dead.

Meanwhile, several writers, bloggers, and online activists have firmly criticised Mr. Shamim for his actions. They described the Bangladesh Penal code 295 as the nation's excuse for stifling freedom of speech. Some claimed that it encourages individuals like Mr. Shamim, who do not even have the required depth to understand religion and its roots, to take up arms against free-thinking souls at will.

We spoke to Mufti Babunagari, spokesperson of Hefajat E Islami Bangladesh, He condemned the accused for their actions, lauding Mr. Shamim meanwhile as a true Muslim. He claimed that Kafirs, Munafiks like that should either be stripped of their rights or deported to India.

The Police Bureau of Instigations (PBI) meanwhile has taken charge of this incident. One of their spokespersons, who wished to remain anonymous, revealed that the PBI is hard at work on investigating the claims made in this lawsuit. With time he promised all the details will be revealed, but for now, there is nothing to report.