

Blasphemy lawsuit submitted against secular writers

On 17th October 2018 the perennially busy and overworked Dhaka Judicial Magistrate Court-1, Amoli Court, added a blasphemy lawsuit to its already burgeoning workload. The blasphemy lawsuit, which sent shockwaves across the court premises today according to our sources, has been filed against a total of 55. The defendants (whose names have been disclosed below) have been accused of being derogatory and abusive towards religion, particularly Islam. Unsurprisingly thus, the lawsuit has been filed in accordance with Bangladesh Penal Code 295.

For those of our readers who are unaware, the Bangladesh Penal Code 295 is a law which when breached can lead to serious legal consequences including fines, and long jail times. Naturally, it was introduced in a bid to discourage blasphemy indeed or indulge in it at all.

The plaintiff of this lawsuit has been identified as one Munshi Mokidul Islam his full identity is unknown to us at the moment, as are the explicit reasons as to why he has taken such an initiative. But our court sources cite that the plaintiff “felt compelled” from “his sense of duty as a Muslim” to punish those that seek to harm Islam. An attempt to contact the plaintiff ended in failure as his premises appeared to be vacant at the time we tried to establish contact. However our court correspondent is still working away diligently in order to obtain the plaintiff’s current whereabouts. More on that to follow in future reports.

Meanwhile we were able to extract a lot more information on the defendants of this lawsuit. The list comprises of rather well-known bloggers, online activists. It appears the plaintiff has named one Zobair Hossain, who the plaintiff along with his other (listed) colleagues accuses of producing ‘crude and perverted’ content on religion in general. It appears that the accused have had the alleged blasphemous content they produced, published properly on to a magazine called “Atheist in Bangladesh”. An attempt to contact the defendants was futile as well for our correspondent understands that most of these individuals are currently residing on foreign soil. The names of these bloggers and activists are now listed below,

Zobair Hossain, Arifur Rahman (Editor), Md. Tofail Hossain (Assistant Editor), Hosni Mubarak (Assistant Editor), Publisher (Secular Publishers Ltd), Arunangsho Chakrabarty, Chinmoy Debnath, Adnan Saqib, Abdur Rahman, Abu Hanif, Syed Mohammad Sajeeb Abed, Syed Sunvy Anick Hossain, Naymul Islam, M D Abdullah Al Hasan, H.M Atiqur Rahman, Asif Abrar Titu Abul Hasnat, Hayat Hamid Ullah Robin, Shafi Nawaz Shipu, Milton Kumar Dey, Sharmin Jannat Bhutto, Abu Taher Muhammad Mustafa, Md. Mostafa Saiful Islam, Arman Ahmed, Nazmul Hossain, Sujana Chandra Deb, Suranjoy Sarker, Syed Samun Ali, Faisal Hossain Anik, Abdul Ahad Shanto, Syed Ishtiaq Hossain, Pinaki Deb Apu, Enyetul Huda, Yeaz Kawsar, Syed Istek Hossain Shawon, Farhana Yasmin, Masud Khan, M.D Sabbir Hossain, Jawad Nirjhor, Kisore Das, Hafizur Rahman, Abdul Kader, Shipon Ahmed, A.F.M Abdullah Masum, Farzana Islam, Bani Mahmud Shuvo and others

What was surprising, however, was that this magazine already has a rather chequered history in terms of facing legal charges, with already quite a few other lawsuits to its name. We are trying to obtain more information on that as we write this.

Our correspondent next got in touch with the local police station in a bid to determine whether any formal investigations have been launched or not. However, a spokesperson for the station (the chief inspector refused to speak to us) cited that if a complaint has indeed been launched, it will take time for the place to receive official instructions to carry out an investigation. Before ushering our correspondent out the spokesperson stated that they take all matters of blasphemy very seriously.

Meanwhile, social media channels have been rife with a discussion once news of the lawsuit

broke today. The popular opinion here appears to be that of general approval, several agreeing that the plaintiff has 'taken the right' measures in order to preserve the holiness of this 'Land of Allah'.