

# Jamat-e-Islami and Islamic Militancy in Bangladesh

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Year 2005 marks the emergence of Islamic militancy in Bangladesh for the first time in the nation's history since its independence. Communalism and religious fundamentalism have always existed in Bangladesh in one form or another, but never before have we witnessed the suicide bombing that has of late rocked the nation.

Islamic fundamentalism had been imported to Bangladesh from Saudi Arabia by the followers of *Wahabism* around two hundred years ago. During the British colonial period, the *Wahabis* led by one Syed Ahmed declared India 'Darul Harb' and locked themselves in a war against the Shikhs in Punjab and against the British everywhere else in a bid to establish the 'Darul Harb' brand of Islam. Theologically speaking, their views about Islam were utterly timeworn and conservative.

The brand of Islam that had been preached by the Sufis in this part of the globe was by and large liberal. The Sufis were very tolerant towards other faiths and adopted certain elements from Hinduism, Buddhism and the local culture, which helped spread Islam all over India. The Wahabis' object was to mingle Islam with politics and state activities on the pretext of Islam being 'the complete code of life'. In radically rectifying Islam, the Wahabis set themselves apart from the mainstream Muslims. The Sufis always put greater emphasis on the philosophy and spirit of Islam than on its regulations. There were numerous Sufis who would not even pray five times a day but would totally submit themselves to God in prolonged sessions of meditation. They never used religion for worldly gains. The Wahabis' stance is exactly the opposite. With a view to grabbing state power, they have always used Islam as a tool for fighting, killing and torturing.

The brand of Islam that has been preached by the founder of Jamat-e-Islami, Maulana Moududi, following the model of the architect of the so-called 'Islamic Brotherhood', Hasan Banna of Egypt, has nothing to do with the true spirit of Islam. Moududi's Islam is literally same as the Wahabis' political Islam. Rejecting the values of democracy, Moududi embraced fascism as his core ideology.

Wahabi Islam has evolved through Moududi's brand of Islam, otherwise known as Moududism, for the last seven decades in India. Moududi has made Islam a bit flexible for the sake of politics. Growing beards is not mandatory for his followers who include among others Jamat-e-Islami men. Despite regarding female leadership as illegitimate, Moududi was never ashamed of seeking votes for Fatema Jinnah during the presidential election of Pakistan in the mid 60's. Likewise, his followers in Bangladesh – Golam Azam, Nizami et al – have used Khaleda Zia and accepted her leadership to accomplish their mission of turning Bangladesh into an Islamic theocracy.

## 2

In the parliamentary election of 1 October 2001, Jamat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikkyo Jote (IOJ) bagged 17 and 2 seats respectively with support from BNP and other members of the alliance. In the '96 general election, Jamat-e-Islami got 3 seats only. Though Jamat-e-Islami and communist parties are poles apart with regard to their ideologies, they have a lot in common too. The party structure of Jamat-e-Islami is akin to that of communist parties during Stalin's period. Communist parties back in those days might have had different names in different countries, but they all had a *Commintern* or *Comminform* (central body) and so does Jamat-e-Islami. Communist party is basically a cadre-based party; one has to pass tests to become a member of the party. Jamat-e-Islami also follows a similar procedure. Anyone can walk into or out of BNP and Awami League but Jamat-e-Islami does not provide such easy access. It is pretty difficult to join Jamat-e-Islami and even more difficult to quit it. Like communist parties, Jamat-e-Islami has a two-tier organizational structure – open and clandestine. During the post-liberation period, Jamat-e-Islami could not openly carry out any

organizational activities due to a constitutional bar, but their clandestine activities went on. After the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with his family members in 1975, General Ziaur Rahman came to power and lifted the ban on religion based politics thereby paving the way for Jamat-e-Islami to indulge in open politics in this land.

Despite its open politics, Jamat-e-Islami never stopped its underground activities. The sister concerns of Jamat-e-Islami that are openly operated include a students' forum called Shibir, Farmers' Welfare Association, Dhaka Cultural Centre, Uccharon Artistes Association, Islamic Welfare Society and Simoom Artistes Association. The clandestine but parallel outfits that are part of Jamat-e-Islami's organizational structure include Harkatul Jihad, Jamatul Mujahideen, Jagroto Muslim Janata and so on. They are operating in the same manner as they did during the liberation war in 1971 under different nomenclatures e.g. Rajakar, Al Badr, Al Shams and so on.

In 2001, before Jamat-e-Islami and IOJ joined the ruling alliance, we knew of only three terrorist Islamic organizations whose activities were largely surreptitious. Among them Harkatul Jihad al-Islami or HUJI is worth noting. HUJI's roots are spread outside Bangladesh – in India, Pakistan, Burma and many other Middle Eastern countries.

HUJI was founded in Pakistan in 1980; it was created mainly to fight Soviet aggression in Afghanistan. Two of the Pakistani Wahabi groups, namely Jamiatul Olamaye Islam and Tabligue Jamat, crafted this organization. When General Ziaul Haque of Pakistan took CIA's help and recruited Taliban, HUJI came into limelight. Initially, HUJI would recruit *Mujaheds* (holy warriors) for Afghanistan's Hijbe Islami (Younus Khalid). Later they were recognized by al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. With financial assistance from bin Laden, they created an underground organization in Bangladesh in 1992. Young followers of Jamat-Shibir joined the terrorist outfit with overwhelming zeal and enthusiasm. In the same year, eminent writer Jahanara Imam, mother of a martyr of the liberation war initiated a movement for banning Jamat-e-Islami's communal politics and for trying the war criminals of 1971. In countering the movement, Jamat-e-Islami had to seek help from the underground organization.

With blessings from Jamat-e-Islami and other communalist political parties, HUJI started its activities in Bangladesh. Of all the militant outfits in the country, HUJI is the strongest and most organized. HUJI's founders in Bangladesh were Amir Shawkat Osman, A K A Sheikh Farid and General Secretary Imtiaz Quddus. HUJI received financial support from Pakistani intelligence agency ISI apart from bin Laden.

HUJI made its first appearance in Bangladesh through a plot to kill renowned poet Shamsur Rahman. On 18 January 1999, a group of terrorists from this outfit entered the poet's house and made an attempt on his life with Chinese axes. The poet's family members bravely thwarted the attempt and the poet was saved though his wife and daughter were severely injured. With the help of neighbors, three of the terrorists were caught and handed over to the police. Based on their testimony, the police arrested a few more people, two of whom were foreigners – one from Pakistan and the other from South Africa.

Subsequently, HUJI activists bombed the Udichee (a cultural organization) conference in Jessore, planted bombs at the meeting venue of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Kotalipara, and attacked with bombs a church at Baniyarchar, CPB's public meeting at Paltan and Chayanot's (a cultural organization) program during Bengali New Year celebration. In these incidents, HUJI's name repeatedly came in the news. Those HUJI members who have so far been arrested have never really hidden their identities despite the fact that leaders of Jamat-e-Islami have always denied the involvement of HUJI in all those incidents. Jamat chief Nizami has mockingly said that HUJI was born at the residence of poet Shamsur Rahman.

A lot of research reports and articles regarding HUJI's clandestine network have appeared in newspapers since the third year of the alliance government's sail to power. According to testimonies provided by the two foreign HUJI members, a sum of TK 20 million was provided by bin Laden. The money was distributed among 427 *madrasas* (religious seminaries) for the recruitment of Taliban from Bangladesh.

Ahmed Sadik – the South African arrestee – told the police that he had been a close aide to al-Qaeda supremo Osama bin Laden. The HUJI members who were caught from poet Shamsur Rahman's residence divulged to the police terrifying information regarding their group's network and international connections. Their testimonies led to the arrest of as many as 48 militants in 1999.

The Indian Daily Telegraph has published an investigative report stating that HUJI was recruiting Bangladeshi young men to send for jihad to Kashmir and Afghanistan. Once recruited, they were sent to Pakistan and Afghanistan for training. The report puts the number of Mujahideens at more than 100,000 in Afghanistan alone.

In mid 1999, a clandestine meeting of HUJI was intercepted by the local police in Cox's Bazar. The meeting resolved that HUJI would recruit 5,000 members from Bangladeshi madrasas and 10,000 from the Rohingya (Burmese refugee) community. The meeting was attended by among others Imtiaz Quddus and Maulana Abdul Qader Mollah, Chairman of the Muslim Liberation Front of Myanmar.

The meeting also resolved that every Muslim individual in Kashmir should join jihad for the sake of independence of the state. The members invited all the Muslims of the world to take part in jihad. According to the government's intelligence agencies, members recruited from madrasas and from the Rohingya community were sent to Pakistan and Afghanistan for training purposes within one month of the said meeting. (The Telegraph Kolkata, 7 July 1999)

According to the then government's estimates, HUJI recruited around 25,000 members. Later, during the alliance government's tenure dozens of Islamic extremist organizations sprouted across the country with the direct support of Jamat-e-Islami and IOJ.

Notwithstanding the fact that Jamat has categorically denied its connection with any terrorist outfits or for that matter with notorious extremist Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai, scores of investigative reports and articles appearing in the press have linked Jamat with such organizations and individuals. Different newspapers published photographic interviews of Bangla Bhai. Newspapers also published his pictures with Jamat leaders and the government declared a reward of five million takas for any assistance leading to the arrest of Bangla Bhai. Even so, Jamat kept on denying the existence of Bangla Bhai. The party has rather invented a conspiracy of Awami League and India behind all this. One of the main characteristic features of the fundamentalist party is that it shamelessly lies all the time.

During the Khaleda-Nizami regime, we collected names of about 100 militant organizations from different newspapers until 10 August 2006. Of them, some are only paper-based organizations. On the other hand, names of some other organizations do not appear in newspapers anymore. Although Jamat-e-Islami has no direct link with all these 100 militant organizations, they have a lot in common when it comes to their ideologies.

Remarkably, Hizbut Tahrir – another extremist group – has differences with Jamat. Hizbut Tahrir has a much bigger international network than Harkatul Jihad. The party is working for the establishment of Islamic Sharia Law in particular Muslim-majority states. Jamat-e-Islami never talks about Khilafat states but the kind of theocratic states the party talks about is ideologically akin to Khilafat states. Stalwarts of all these parties are unanimous in demanding exemplary punishment for such celebrated humanists as Dr. Ahmed Sharif, Professor Kabir Chowdhury, poet Shamsur Rahman, Professor Humayun Azad and writer Taslima Nasreen after branding them as 'Murtad' (a person eligible to be killed). They also agitate in support of the demand that the Ahmadiya Muslim community be declared 'non-Muslim'. Nor do they have any conflict in establishing Sharia Law. Conflict arises only when it comes to their sail to power. There are differences between Jamat-e-Islami and IOJ as far as explanations of the Quran and Hadith are concerned, but there is little or no disagreement at all when it comes to using Islam as a tool to abuse people's religious sentiment to grab state power.

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Ever since coming to power, Jamat-e-Islami has categorically denied the existence of al-Qaeda network in Bangladesh and for that matter the existence of any other militant groups.

Al-Qaeda is a political party led by Mollah Omar in Afghanistan. Apart from Mollah Omar's al-Qaeda, there were other Islamic extremist groups that took part in jihad against the Soviet-backed Najibullah's government. Notable among them are Jamat-e-Islami, Hizb-e-Islami (two groups – one led by Gulbuddin Hekmatiar and the other by Younus Khalis), Harkat-Inqilabi-Islami, Mohaj-Milli-Islami and Ittehad-e-Islami.

After the fall of Najibullah's government, conflicts of interest arose among the parties over the ownership of drugs and arms smuggling and yet they were unanimous in establishing a Sharia-based state. Most of the militant groups that have been discovered so far are operating underground and we have a list of 87 groups. If Jamat-e-Islami and other like-minded organizations are added to the list, the number will be no fewer than 100. No other Muslim country can boast of such a large number of militant groups; not even Pakistan or Afghanistan – the well-known breeding grounds for Islamic fanaticism. What explains this is the fact that Jamat-e-Islami has become a partner of the ruling party only in Bangladesh. Even in Afghanistan, Jamat-e-Islami's partner organization could go to power but could not hold on to it for long. Although Jamat-e-Islami is part of the coalition government in the North West in Pakistan, the party comprises opposition in the center.

In order to topple the pro-Soviet Najibullah government United States created demon of Frankenstein in the name of Taliban. The US administration could never imagine that their policy in Afghanistan would backfire in a matter of hardly a decade's time. Like an expert gambler, the United States put in place puppet fights. Sometimes it got Gulbuddin Hekmatiar to fight against Borhanuddin Rabbani; sometimes, Mollah Omar against Hekmatiar and then it ditched all of them and picked Hamid Karzai and put him in power. Our alliance government was playing 'Tom and Jerry' game with Bangla Bhai in the same manner as the United States is playing with Mollah Omar and bin Laden. Leaders of the Khaleda-Nizami alliance government once said it was a matter of time to arrest notorious extremists Bangla Bhai and Shayekh Rahman. We always believed that they would be nabbed anytime the government wanted to, as their whereabouts were very much known to the government.

It is very unfortunate that Khaleda Zia has no idea about how her alliance with Jamat-e-Islami would eventually boomerang and would put her into trouble. The Daily Bhorer Kagoj of 17 January 2006 carried a front-page report under the banner headline '*Grenades recovered from Satkhira meant to be blasted at PM's meeting, says arrested JMB militant Quddus*'. The prime minister's scheduled meeting in Satkhira had to be cancelled due to bombs discovered at the place of local Jamat-e-Islami leader Younus Mollah. Secret agents had prior information of likely attacks on prime minister's meeting. The police arrested Abdullah, son of local Jamat leader Younus Mollah, and Ruhul Quddus in connection with the plot.

Quddus admitted that he had been given two grenades to attack the prime minister's meeting. As usual, local Jamat-e-Islami leaders have denied involvement of any of their members in the plot despite the fact that Younus Mollah is still a fugitive and the police could not nab him as of today.

True, the government has banned four extremist organizations\* mainly because of pressures from the West. Even banning all the 100 militant organizations would not make a difference as long as Jamat-e-Islami and IOJ are in power and/or in control of administration. Since coming to power, Jamat-e-Islami has made all-out efforts to destroy everything that has anything to do with the liberation war in order to avenge their humiliating defeat in 1971. The

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\* Four party alliance government first banned 'Shahadat-Al Hiqma', based in northern part of Bangladesh on 9 February 2002. 'Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh' (JMJB) and 'Jamatul Mujahidin Bangladesh' (JMB) was banned on 9 February 2005. 'Harkat-ul Jihad of Bangladesh' (HUJI B) was banned 16 October 2005.

One of the top leader of JMB Azizul Bari Mintu, who was arrested in connection of 500 bomb blast of 17 August 2005 said, 'Harkatul Jihad' was transformed into 'Jamatul Mujahidin' in 2003. But Jamat-e-Islami always propagated that there is no existence of JMB or HUJI. On 11 September 2005 Jamat lawmaker Riasat Ali Biswas said in the parliament, in order to identify Bangladesh as an Islamic country a vested political group and India are always blaming Bangladesh for providing military training to JMB and HUJI. These are all false and baseless propaganda. (Daily Star, 18 October 2005)

party has already established its influence at every tier of the administration. In the last five years, it has marginalized BNP in both civil and military administrations. The student wing of Jamat-e-Islami has reduced that of BNP to a mere puppet organization on the campuses of the University of Rajshahi and the University of Chittagong. The University of Dhaka too is all set to be invaded by the student wing of Jamat.

With the BNP-led alliance government being humiliated on the issue of militancy, killings and terrorism, Jamat-e-Islami is thriving on many counts. The party has categorically denied its connection with militant groups. Therefore, it remains for BNP to be blamed for all these things.

The 26 October 2005 issue of the Daily 'Sangbad' published a photographic report depicting Jamat-e-Islami's connection with Afghan militancy. The report titled 'Jamat's Afghan connection' carried a photograph of Jamat leader and parliamentarian Maolana Sobhan along with Hekmatiar. Maolana Sobhan had had a meeting with Hekmatiar somewhere in Peshawar, Pakistan.

To any Islamic extremist groups in Bangladesh, the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan comprises an example of an ideal state. The 7 November 2005 issue of the Daily Star published an investigative report by Julfikar Manik establishing IOJ's connection with al-Qaeda with ample evidence. Inspired by the *Islamic Revolution* of Mollah Omar, the Bangladeshi Taliban published a bulletin under the same nomenclature in August 1998. The bulletin published an interview of extremist leader Maolana Habibur Rahman from Sylhet who gave an overview of his visit to Afghanistan along with other IOJ stalwarts, his meeting with bin Laden and participation in the war against the erstwhile Soviet Union. In March 1998 a nine-member delegation led by IOJ leader Shaikhul Hadith Azizul Haq visited Afghanistan at the invitation of Harkatul Jihad. The delegation also included former Member of Parliament and BNP leader Maolana Ataur Rahman.

Both Jamat-e-Islami and IOJ have repeatedly affirmed that they do not approve of fundamentalism and militancy and nor do they have links with any militant organizations. However, that they had met with extremists like Gulbuddin Hekmatiar is an established fact. It appears that they have mastered the art of lying and no one – not even the 'Satan' (Koranic devil) – can beat them when it comes to lying.

After their arrest on 13 December 2005, two leaders of the outlawed extremist organization JMB – namely Javed Iqbal and Naimuzzaman, divisional commander for Chittagong and district commander for Cox's Bazar – told journalists in presence of Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) personnel that reading books authored by alliance leader Maolana Delwar Hussain Sayeedee was mandatory for every JMB member. (The Daily Bhorer Kagoj, 19 January 2003) Accordingly, lots of Jamati literature and audio speeches by Sayeedee were seized from their den.

In 2003, a huge stack of books and documents of Jamat-e-Islami was seized from the house of a JMB member at Khetlal, Joypurhat. In the wake of the countrywide bomb blasts on 17 August 2005, the police nabbed a large number of JMB men who had claimed the responsibility of the attack. The police searched their dens and recovered piles of provocative write-ups by Jamat-e-Islami leaders motivating people to join jihad. In almost all his speeches, Maolana Sayeedee spreads hatred and vendetta against the West and those who subscribe to dissimilar ideologies and prompts his followers to annihilate those who contradict Jamat's philosophy. And it is mandatory on the part of JMB extremists to read books written by this fanatic politico-religious leader.

For obvious reasons, the police made no mention of any Jamat-e-Islami-related books or documents in their list of recovered materials. The 19 January 2006 issue of the Daily Bhorer Kagoj carried a color picture showing a pile of Jamat-e-Islami-related materials recovered from the dens of the arrested militants. The police are well aware of the influence of Jamat-e-Islami and of the fact that no militants can be arrested without a green signal coming from this party. More than 1,000 militants were arrested across the country in the wake of the 17 August bomb blasts. Whoever of them had any overt or covert links with Jamat-e-Islami or its student wing Shibir was released from the police custody without any delay.

As long as Jamat-e-Islami continues to be in power, militancy can no way be eradicated from the soil of Bangladesh. It should not come as a surprise even if the likes of Bangla Bhai and Shayekh Rahman are put to the so-called 'crossfire' (i.e. deliberately killed in RAB/police firing). Their godfathers – the Nizami-Aminee-Sayeedee gang – shall remain behind the scene, untouched, unscathed. Therefore, no amount of arrest or trial is going to end militancy so long as the real godfathers manage to go scot-free.

#### 4

We usually tend to attribute the alarming rise in militant fundamentalism in Bangladesh to ignorance and abject poverty among the general populace. There is no denying the fact that fundamentalism feeds on ignorance and poverty. Ignorance begets fear, lack of judgment, intolerance, cowardice and faith-based, unscientific beliefs. Ignorant people can be misled quite easily, and people who live in a perpetual state of poverty understandably turn to faith. Marxism gives a scientific explanation for the cause of poverty. After the fall of the socialist camp in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union, it became extremely difficult for the socialist and communist powers in impoverished countries to fight extreme poverty. The ideal weapon to fight the discriminatory capitalist society was effectively trimmed down and the failure to elucidate the justification of Marxism for that particular era left a tremendous vacuum in the intellectual world, that has been fully exploited by the American imperialists through nourishing Islamic fundamentalism. Furthermore, the decline and division of the leftist groups has paved the way for fundamentalism to spread at unthinkable rates.

The socialist government in Afghanistan led by Najibullah, a Soviet supporter, was ousted by the Americans who used the Wahabis for this purpose. In madrasas in Pakistan, the Taliban were ingrained with the idea of politicizing Islam and were also provided with necessary arms and ammunitions with hard cash to go for jihad against Najibullah's forces and his Soviet allies. The way America created such veritable demon of Frankenstein has been documented in great detail both in America and in Pakistan. After the eventual withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and the fall of Najibullah's government, Saudi Arabia, one of the followers of the Americans, stepped up efforts to promote the growth of the Wahabis in Bangladesh as well as in other countries worldwide. In Muslim-majority countries, their followers were provided with funds and arms. In this respect, the Saudis received considerable support from the Americans.

Political parties with a Wahabi-leaning have long operated in Asia and Africa with the backing of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. In India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, they operate as 'Jamat-e-Islami', in Africa as 'Islamic Brotherhood', in Malaysia and Indonesia as 'Jamaa-al-Islam' and in Central Asia as 'Islamic Movement'. In Bangladesh many militant fundamentalist groups and factions function under the umbrella of Jamat-e-Islami. Similarly, 'Islamic Brotherhood' and 'Islamic Movement' in several countries in Africa and Asia also have spread their network through such groups. When one faction is attacked, it either retreats or reveals itself in the guise of different organizations, or sometimes a new leader emerges. For instance, Shayekh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai had been active in Bangladesh for quite a long time. But only in 2004 did they surface as 'Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh'. Prior to this, they were linked with 'Jamatul Mujahideen', 'Ahle Hadith', 'Harkatul Jihad' and Jamat-e-Islami, and their activities were covert in nature.

Many socialist revolutions in different countries have failed in the past due to internal disputes. At the same time, the role of super powers such as the United States also cannot be ignored. After being ditched in Vietnam, the Americans have renewed their campaign to suppress socialist revolutions in economically backward countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. They duly realized that if the poor become poorer in those countries, these poor people would eventually be driven towards a revolution. In order to prevent such political uprisings, the Americans introduced the new concept of NGOs in these countries with different economic programs. Such NGOs recruited workers from among people who were wronged by the socialists and communists. In Bangladesh, over 10 thousand NGOs were set up in rural areas. While this succeeded in suppressing socialist movements, it also created

opportunities for women to become economically active, though on a limited scale. Such empowerment of women, which enabled them to defy the norms of a patriarchal society, began to offend the fundamentalists.

Taking cue from these NGOs, Jamat-e-Islami, after coming to power, started founding numerous Islamic NGOs all over the country with the objective of spreading their ideals. These NGOs get their funds mainly from the Middle East.\* However, many of the Islamic NGOs also get funding from the West. Despite sprouting all over the country, the Jamat NGOs remained opposed to the social and economic empowerment of women as a result of the Wahabi influence. Jamat-e-Islami and its allies have frequently attacked those NGOs that support the cause of women. Besides, they have issued *fatwas* (religious edicts) regarding women empowerment. Unable to bear the humiliation, quite a few of the victimized women have taken their own lives. In January 2001, a High Court bench passed a historical motion declaring *fatwas* illegal. The very next day, IOJ and alliance leader Mufti Amini openly censured the two judges who passed the motion and said the use of *fatwa* would continue in Bangladesh regardless of the verdict.

The Americans had used both the Taliban and NGOs to counter the communists in different countries, and had mostly succeeded. This is why there was hardly any opposition from the BNP-led alliance when the Americans attacked Afghanistan and Iraq. True, there were some protests from the fundamentalists who did not belong to the alliance. However, none of them went to participate in jihad against the Americans, neither in Iraq nor in Afghanistan.

Jamat-e-Islami and its allies, with financial assistance from different Middle Eastern Islamic NGOs, have spread their roots far and wide. The main activities of these Islamic NGOs include setting up of mosques, madrasas and other Islamic institutions, all of which preach Wahabism. With the promise of monetary benefits, many poor students from Bangladeshi madrasas have been recruited by Jamat and its allies for jihad in places such as Afghanistan, Kashmir, Palestine, Bosnia and Chechnya. These youths, blinded by their cause and enticed with the promise of wealth in this life and in heaven in the afterlife, have fought and died in far corners of the world, which their parents may never find out. Several militants who were arrested in the wake of the 17 August countrywide bomb blasts narrated their personal experiences of jihad in other countries.

After the Soviets retreated from Afghanistan, there were almost four hundred thousand Taliban militants without any work. In Pakistan, the state of law and order became a threat to them, so they were sent away to Kashmir to fight and to Bangladesh to train Bangladeshi militants. After the Americans invaded Afghanistan, it became exceedingly difficult for the Taliban to continue training in Pakistan due largely to the American military presence over there. While it is true that the Pakistani president General Musharraf was pressurized by the Americans to crack down on militants, Pakistan still has not refrained from exporting these extremists for jihad to India and Bangladesh. After the 17 August bomb blasts, our intelligence agencies questioned some of the arrested militants and learnt how many of the

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\* Recently the Asia Times Online has disclosed that at least 10 Islamic NGOs are channeling funds to various Islamist extremist outfits in Bangladesh. Quoting the Intelligence agencies, the Asia Times said, ‘while the bombs of August 17 did not signal any great technical expertise—they were crude, homemade bombs—the geographic spread of the operation signaled that a well-established terror network was behind the violence. The investigative report said “The serial blasts forced the Bangladesh government, which has for years been denying that Islamist extremists are present and active in the country, to admit the involvement of Islamists in the violence.

Quoting “a report prepared by Bangladeshi intelligence agencies”, the Asia Times said, it has “confirmed long-suspected links between Islamic NGOs and the mounting extremist violence in the country.”

“The report, which was prepared after a six-month investigation into the working of Islamic NGOs, named 10 NGOs with links to extremist activity. The NGOs are the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS), Rabita Al-Alam Al-Islami, Society of Social Reforms, Qatar Charitable Society, Al-Muntada Al-Islami, Islamic Relief Agency, Al-Forkan Foundation, International Relief Organization, Kuwait Joint Relief Committee and the Muslim Aid Bangladesh”, said the Asia Times. (Quoted in *SAN-Feature Service*, October 2, 2005)

Taliban, who originated from several countries including Pakistan and who had fought in Afghanistan, have conducted training sessions in Bangladeshi madrasas.

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By virtue of their presence in the government, Jamat people have engaged themselves in transparent as well as clandestine activities that are rapidly taking Bangladesh back to the middle ages. Darkness, ignorance, unscientific beliefs, intolerance, cruelty, superstition and terrorism are only a few words that can be used to describe these fundamentalists. The growth of fundamentalism and the decline of civility are plagues that destroy the collective conscience and transform people into mindless beasts. The fundamentalists in Bangladesh are advancing towards their ultimate goal with frightful ease.

It is imperative to resist fundamentalism from all fronts, most importantly from the political front. Without a secular democracy it is virtually impossible to thwart fundamentalism. All the political parties in Bangladesh that claim to be secular and democratic have hardly demonstrated these qualities. The very Awami League that led the liberation war and created such an extraordinary Constitution of '72 now has leaders who feel distinctly uncomfortable when it comes to uttering anything that sounds neutral from a religious standpoint. Top leaders of some leftist parties, even after singling out the anti-social elements of Islamic fundamentalism, have termed jihad as merely a class struggle.

We know that the people of Bangladesh are not fundamentalists, nor do they approve of the politicization of religion. However, they can never take a collective stand against fundamentalism until and unless the political leaders rise to the occasion. The 23-point action plan adopted by the 14-party alliance in order to oust the partisan Khaleda-Nizami alliance fails to address the reinstatement of the Constitution of '72.

The growth of fundamentalism in Bangladesh played an active part in the creation of the Constitution of '72, which championed religious neutrality and banned the floating of political parties on religious grounds. After the assassination of Bangabondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of Bangladesh and his four colleagues who led the liberation war, General Ziaur Rahman and General Ershad amended the Constitution. In the amended Constitution, secularism and progressive Bengali nationalism was wiped out, 'Bismillah...' was added at the beginning and Islam was declared the 'state religion'. Furthermore, it adopted, 'absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah' as the fundamental principle of the state policy. This tainted Constitution has played a definitive role in the rise of political Islam and Islamic militancy as well as violation of human rights in Bangladesh.

The secular democratic forces of Bangladesh first need to be united with regard to the Constitution of '72. Since Jamat-e Islami has already setup a global 'Jehadi' network there should a network of secular democratic forces of Muslim majority countries in order to fight back fundamentalism.

November 2006

#### **Appendix-1**

Compensation for the victims of Islamic Militancy and for those arrested on false charges

*Text of the speech by Shahriar Kabir presented at the press conference held at Dhaka Reporter's Unity Club auditorium on 16 March 2006, organized by Nirmul Committee (Forum for Secular Bangladesh)*

Under the growing consensus and rage among the people as well as pressure from the development partners from the west against the Islamic militancy, the incumbent 4 party alliance Government was forced to apprehend Shayakh Abdur Rahman, Bangla Bhai and few other leading members of 'Jamiatul Mujahidin', 'Harkatul Jihad' and 'Jagroto Muslim Jonota' and to ban the activities of four militant organization. The apprehension of Abdur Rahman-Bangla Bhai-Mufti Hannan et al evidences the falsification of the claims by the Government, especially by the Amir of Jamat-e-Islami and minister of commerce & industry Motiur Rahman Nizami about the existence of the afore-said Islamic militant network as imaginary, fictitious and creation of media.

The country acknowledged for the first time about the existence of a big Islamic militant network in 1999 when few members of 'Harkatul Zihad' were apprehended in an attempt to murder the eminent

poet Shamsur Rahman. It was published in a leading news paper that 'Harkatul Zihad' recruited around 25000 militants all over the country. The involvement of Jamaat-e-Islami and some members of the incumbent Government in a series of actions i.e. installing explosive in the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina's meeting, bomb attack in Udichi congregation, Chhayanot gathering, Baniarchar Church, CPB meeting, Cinema Halls, Fairs and later grenade attack at Sheikh Hasina's meeting in August 21st, grenade attack and killing of Ex finance minister and Awami League leader Dr. Kibria, attack and killing of Prof. Humayun Azad, Prof. Mohammad Yunus and so on and so forth was claimed and was endeavored to bring into Government's notice. Instead Government always put the blame onto the Awami League, India and the secularist, progressive intellectuals.

Abdur Rahman has admitted the responsibility of attacks on poet Shamsur Rahman, Professor Humayun Azad and Professor Mohammad Yunus. He also admitted the responsibility of the other attacks on Cinema, Theatre, Mazar (Shrine) and other places. He admitted that on approval of Jamaat-e-Islami they started the explosive attack all over the country. Abdur Rahman mentioned the name of three cabinet members of BNP, the mayor of the Rajshahi city corporation, members of the parliament and few other Government officials who have cooperated with them. He also mentioned about their alliance with other India, Pakistan and Afghanistan based militant organizations.

During the interrogation Abdur Rahman also informed about the involvement of Islamic Bank in their monetary transaction. Evidences have been found in support of Rahman's statement after the investigation in different branches of Islamic Bank taken place. In 14th march Islamic Bank, which is conducted by Jamat-e-Islami has been show caused by the Bangladesh Bank for their alleged involvement in monetary transaction with Islamic militancy.

Though the apprehended leading members of JBM along with Abdur Rahman admitted the responsibility of all the explosives attack in the past time and revealed the information about their domestic and international network, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is still accusing Awami League and India in her speeches in public meetings for the militancy. We believe such dissemination of lies stemming from the Prime Minister herself may hinder the overall investigation process. We also suspect that if the patrons (names that came out from the apprehended JMB leaders) of the Islamic militancy within the Government are not arrested, they might try to destroy the evidences/proofs of their involvement and thereby impede the normal investigation process. We were informed from different news papers and several other sources that the remnant of the JMB cadres are still dominating and intimidating the general people in different parts in North Bengal. The victims of JBM cadres are still at their mercy and are greatly susceptible to their future potential attack.

Dears Friends, Information that we have received about the statements of Abdur Rahman and other leading JMB members in the interrogation through news media this is quite evident that,

(A) The investigation process would not be uninterrupted and transparent unless the chief patrons of JBM are not arrested

(B) As long as the financial sponsor of the Militant organizations such as Islamic Bank and other Islamic NGOs are operational the militant situation will remain as it is.

(C) If the militant organizations from the neighboring countries continue to pour money, arms and ammunitions into Bangladesh, the strength of Islamic militancy in Bangladesh will keep rising.

The victims of the Islamic militancy and their family members are present at today's press conference. The journalists, politicians, professors, those of whom were deliberately blamed and were falsely implicated in several incidents and tortured by the Government out of their vengeance are also present here. On behalf of the conscious citizens of this country we would like to demand to the Government the followings:

(1) The patrons and collaborators of the militants; ministers, members of the parliament, district level leaders of the BNP-Jamaat alliance, those who are yet not arrested need to be arrested soon.

(2) The Government has banned only four militant organizations. We have got to know from the reports of the leading news papers that at least 98 of different sizes militant organizations are active in Bangladesh. Among all these Hizbut Tahrir is the biggest one. They claim that the circumference of their net work permeate in around hundred countries. Though their activities are banned in Middle East, Central Asia and even in Pakistan, they are well organized in Bangladesh and running their activities without any hindrances. The arrested militant leaders also admitted the involvement of Ahle-Hadith with them. We demand the ban of all the activities of Hizbut Tahrir and Ahle-Hadith and other militant organization. At the same time we demand the ban of communal politics of Jamaat-Shibir, the originator of militancy in Bangladesh.

(3) We demand the ban of all the banks including sharia based Islamic bank run by Islamic fundamentalists and militant organizations. The officials of those banks who were involved in monetary transactions with the militant group will have to be brought into justice. At the same time the

activities of all the Islamic NGOs who extend financial support to the militant groups for terrorist activities will have to shut down.

(4) The Madrassas that were used as recruiting and training camp of the militants, the teachers and the directors of those Madrassas should also be brought into justice. The Madrassa education system needs reform in its structure and needs to be rearranged in such a way so that they are not used as factories to produce militants any more.

(5) Those who were the victim of the explosive attack and those who were tortured and assaulted by the Government putting into jails under false implication will have to be compensated financially and the Government should seek apology for denying the existence of the militants intentionally.

(6) If the Government is truly eager to investigate the militant issue and to ensure the transparency then the interrogation of the apprehended militant leaders should be dealt under the supervision of the United Nation's International Investigation Team.

To uproot the regional net work of the militant organizations we believe a regional consortium should be created by Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Myanmar.

We hope that the Government through meeting our demands will prove that they are not the patron of the militant and are sincere to eradicate terrorist activities of Islamic militants in Bangladesh.\*

***Shahriar Kabir***

Acting President

Forum for Secular Bangladesh

General Secretary

South Asian People's Union Against Fundamentalism & Communalism

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\* The press conference was presided over by Prof. Kabir Chowdhury, while addressed by the victims of the four party alliance govt. include poet Shamsur Rahman, Prof. Muntassir Mamoon, journalist Enamul Haque Chowdhury, Latifa Kohinur (wife of slain writer Prof. Humayun Azad of Dhaka University), Rehana Khatun (wife of slain Prof. Muhammad Younus of Rajshahi Uninersity), Principal Motiur Rahman Chowdhury, Abu Abbas (student leader) and Advocate Mahbube Alam, (president of Supreme Court Bar Association). More than 60 victims from different parts of Bangladesh attended the press conference.

**Appendix-2**

**List of the Islamic Militant groups of Bangladesh**

Following names appeared in daily new papers on different occasion from 20 January 1999 to May 2007. In 2003 we found only fifteen names of Islamic militant organizations. Every year the number is increasing. Most of these organizations are underground or semi-underground.

This list does not include main stream Islamic political parties like Jamat-e-Islami, Islami Oikyo Jote, Islamic Shashantantrik Andolan, Zaker Party etc. that take part in electerol process. Students and other front organizations, which are officially linked with these parties like 'Islami Chhatra Shibir' also excluded from this list. Some of these organizations are not active anymore. Some are not directly linked with militancy but in favor of introducing Sharia law.

1. Jamayatul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB)
2. Harkatul Jihad al Islami Bangladesh (HUJI B)
3. Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB)
4. Al Qaida
5. Hijbut Tahrir
6. Hijbut Taohid
7. Hifajate Khatame Nabuwat
8. Al Jajira
9. International Khatme Nabuwat Movement
10. Amra Dhakabashi
11. Ahle Hadis Andolan Bangladesh
12. Jayshe Mostofa
13. Al Jihad Bangladesh
14. World Islamic Front for Jihad
15. Jayshe Mohammed

16. Warat Islamic Front
17. Jamat-as-Sadat
18. Al Khidmat
19. Shahadat-e-al Hikma
20. Al Harat al Islamia
21. Al Markajul al Islami
22. Jamayatul Falaiya
23. Taohidi Janata
24. Bishwa Islami Front
25. Jummatul al Sadat
26. Shahadat-e-Nabuat
27. Hijbullah Islami Somaj
28. Muslim Millat Saria Council
29. Hijbul Mahadi
30. Bangladesh Santrasbirodhi Dal (Basbid)
31. Al Islam martyrs' Brigade
32. Araakan Rohingya Force
33. Islamic Solidarity Front
34. Araakan Peoples Army
35. Liberation Myanmar Force
36. Araakan Mujahid Party
37. Rohingya Independents Force
38. Rohingya Independents Army
39. Rohingya Patriotic Front
40. Rohingya Solidarity Organaigetion
41. Rohingya Islamic Front
42. Jamiatul Ehhia-ut-Turaj
43. Hayatul Igasa
44. Satyabad
45. Ahle Hadis Jubo Sangha
46. Anjumane Talamije Islamia
47. Tahfiye Harmine Parishad
48. Aiammah Parishad
49. Al Harmaine
50. Khedmate Islam
51. Young Muslim
52. Islami Jihad Group
53. Islami Soinnya
54. Ahale Hadis Tablige Islam
55. Islahul Muslemin Parishad
56. Kalemar Jamaat
57. Far East Islami Sangathan
58. Al Tanjib
59. Bangladesh Islam Raksha Parishad
60. Tanjim Bangladesh
61. Iktadul Tulah Al Muslemin (ITM)
62. Amanatul Forkan Al Khayriya
63. Ibtadatul Al Muslemin (ITM)
64. United students Association of Arakan Movement (USM)
65. Lujna Mecca Al Khayeriya
66. Al Sayeed Mujahid Bahini
67. Taamir Ud-Deen
68. Allahr Dal
  - a) Allah'r Dal Brigade
  - b) Ahsab Bahini (Suicide squad)
  - c) Shahid Nasrullah Al Arafat Brigade (Suicide squad)
69. Al Islami Sanghati Parishad Bangladesh
70. Arakan Liberation Front (ALF)
71. Arakan Rohingya National Organization (ARNO)

72. Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF)
73. Arakan Liberation Party (ALP)
74. National United Party of Arakan (NUPA)
75. Arakan Army (AA)
76. Democratic Party of Arakan (DPA)
77. Jamate Mudarressin Bangladesh (JMB)
78. Islami Prochar Media
79. Muslim Mujahidin Bangladesh (MMB)
80. Amirate Din
81. Islami Liberation Tiger of Bangladesh
82. Sahaba Sainik Parishad
83. Islami Biplab Parishad
84. Al-Islah
85. Kolemar Daoat
86. Hikmatul Jihad
87. Mujahidi Taiab
88. Mujahedin
89. Chhatra Jamiyat
90. Al Harkat Al Islamia
91. Muslim Raksha Mujahidin Oikya Parishad
92. Al Hikma
93. Jamiyatul Islam Mujahid
94. Jagrata Janata
95. Jagrata Muslim Bangla
96. Hijbul Mujahidin
97. Jamiate Tulaba
98. Afghani Parishad
99. Hikmatul Jihad
100. Mujahidi Tayab
101. Majlishe Tahaffuze Khatme Nabuwat
102. Ansarul Moslemin
103. Lashkar-e Tayaba
104. Harkat-e-Islam al Jihad
105. Islami Sacheton Nagarik Andolan
106. Islami Gana Jagaran Andolan
107. Islami Khelafat Movement
108. Islami Gana Sacheton Andolan
109. Jadid Al Qaida

### **Appendix-3**

Leaflet of Jamatul Mujahideen issued on 17 August 2005, distributed just after 500 bomb blast in Bangladesh

In the name of Allah the most magnificent and the most kind  
On behalf of the Jamatul Mujahideen Bangladesh

#### **A CALL FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF ISLAMIC LAWS**

All praises be to Allah and all salutations and prayers be for Muhammad (Sm). I bear witness that there is no Allah but Him and Muhammed (Sm) is his apostle. In the holy Quran Allah has revealed:

No one but Allah can make laws. (Sura Yusuf- 40)

Hear ye! It is for Him to create and give orders. (Sura A'araf-54)

To execute the laws of Allah a group of My creatures will always carry out armed struggle (jihad). They will be harsh on their enemies, who will oppose them but fail to cause them any harm. They will continue to wage the war till the day of resurrection. (Sahi Muslim hadis)

**Call to People**

Assalamu Alaikum, dear Muslim brothers and sisters of the country, Allah has created us as his representative on earth only so that we serve and worship Him solely. He sent to us His last messenger Muhammad (Sm) so that we may learn to avoid Tagut in our belief and action Allah says, "I despatch apostles to all people with the responsibility to ensure devotion to Allah alone and rejection of Tagut." (Sura Nahl – 36)

If a human being worships someone other than Allah, serves or owes allegiance to him or makes Allah his partner then such a partner lord is called Tagut. A powerful Tagut is an oppressive ruler who alters Allah's laws, that is he makes laws approving impiety. For example, he approves of rape, interest, drinking of alcohol and obscenity; or he puts up hindrance to jihad. Similarly if a ruler forsaking Allah's laws follows laws made by him or other non-believers he is also a powerful Tagut.

In a Muslim country there can be no laws other than the laws of Allah. But it is a matter of great regret that in a land inhabited by 90 percent Muslims the laws of Allah are not enforced in Bangladesh. On top of it from the districts to the capital city in the courts of law justice is dispensed according to laws based on a man-made constitution. This constitution has been framed by some sinful learned men. Whereas men should serve Allah and follow His laws they have instead put forward a challenge by framing a constitution of their own.

The state powers in the country are wielded by a junta inimical to Allah. Because the process under which the head of the state or other rulers are elected is totally anti-Islamic. The Quran or Hadis do not recognize any democratic or socialist system that is enacted by infidels and non-believers. These systems are in direct contravention of Allah's laws. The laws of the land are the brain-children of infidels, non-believers and Jews precisely to destroy Muslim mores and faith. It is time for the Muslims to stand up and react.

Jamatul Mujahideen discards the existing judicial system of the country and they stand for the demand for upholding Allah's laws and faith in Allah. At the same time it rejects the constitution that conflicts with Allah's laws and calls upon all to abandon the so-called election process and run the affairs of state according to the laws of Allah and the traditions of the prophet. JM is firmly committed to establishing Allah's Din in this land of Allah. As long as the laws of Allah are not enforced, please cease invoking the courts of Tagut laws. Instead seek solutions to your legal issues according to Allah's laws from Khatibs (sermonizers) of mosques, Muhaddeses ( hadis experts) of Madrassas or experienced Alems (learned men). Neglecting the Tagut laws seek justice from Allah's laws.

Allah has revealed:

"Do they seek judgment on the basis of laws of Jahiliya (Ignorance)? Is there anybody other than Allah who can resolve issues better? (Sura Maidah – 50).

"Shall I look for another judge other than Allah?" (Sura Aanam -114)

"Have not you seen those who claim that they brought faith that was given to them before? They want to establish Tagut although they have been asked to defy Tagut. (Sura Nisa -60)

### **Call to Bangladesh Government**

Salute to those who are willing to listen! Once you have been admonished you cannot turn back to sin and darkness. Allah sent his apostle with true faith as a messenger of good news and warning to people. Those who responded to his call, Allah has guided them well. But those who turned away, the prophet fought them. Thereafter they followed Islam willingly or otherwise. Therefore, Bangladesh government is called upon to enforce the laws of Allah. We shall cooperate with you. We are not after power. We want the rule of Allah's laws and not of Tagut.

The workers of Jamatul Mujahideen in Bangladesh are soldiers of Allah and they have taken up arms to enforce Allah's laws as did our prophet, his companions and all fighters of Islam from time to time. Jamatul Mujahideen wants to put an end to irreligious activities and anti Islamic beliefs and customs and secure Allah's pleasure by firmly establishing Tawhid or faith in one Allah. This they believe will bring in happiness for you in both this life and afterlife.

JM has asked Bangladesh government twice before through leaflets and publicity materials to establish Islamic rule. Each time the government has arrested their workers but JM did not retaliate. This is the third call of JM for Islamic rule in Bangladesh. This time if the government does not establish Islamic rule and instead arrest Muslims for seeking Allah's laws and suppresses ulemas (learned in religion) the JM will go into action against concerned people and authorities.

### **Call to the treasury and opposition benches**

The democratic system under the dispensation of infidels divides the nation into various parties by creating treasury and opposition benches. They cause harm to people by hartals and blockades simply

for gaining power. It is within constitutional right to hold people hostage simply to protest the misdeeds of some person or some coterie.

Those who want to strengthen institutional democracy must give up partisan politics and government as well as opposition parties must join hands to seek relief from Islamic rule. Abandoning Tagut laws they must enforce Islamic laws to get rid of irreligious activities, anti Islamic beliefs and customs and obscenities and allow people to follow Islam properly. If you are afraid of Bush-Blair coalition and do not want to set up Islamic rule you better leave Tagut politics altogether. Insha Allah under coordinated efforts of learned religious scholars and Islamic thinkers and leaders, the people will establish Islamic rule in the country.

### **Call to bureaucrats and judicial officers of the government**

If the government does not establish Islamic rule please desist from administering Tagut laws and justice. By cooperating with establishing the laws of Allah glorify your life with Allah's pleasure. Members of all law enforcing agencies –Army, BDR, Police, RAB –should be up and doing in protecting Allah's laws rather than Tagut laws. Do not obey Tagut laws but follow Allah's laws. Do not fight Allah's soldiers for Tagut laws. Give up serving Tagut laws and turn into Allah's soldiers. Those who will not leave Tagut service, Insha Allah action will be taken against them under Allah's laws. Allah says, “ The believers carry on armed jihad for Allah's glory while the infidels fight for Tagut. You are bound to fight against the followers of Satan. Verily Satan's circle is very weak” (Sura Nisa -76)

### **Call to Muslim world**

In the world of today George W Bush is the greatest terrorist. He is carrying out terrorist attack on Muslims and trying to take away their faith by imposing infidel's constitution on Muslim land. He wants to establish the infidel system of democracy all over the world and in the name of the new world order seeks to bring the world under his zone of influence. It is like the wish of new Feruun. But Allah's soldiers will not allow this wish to be fulfilled, nor will they allow the success of the infidel concept of democracy. Democracy is a Tagut invention and the most important weapon for establishing Tagut rule. Those who seek to establish Tagut rule are terrorists and militants. But Allah says, “Ye believers, pick up your arms and spread out in separate or joint formations. “ (Sura Nisa - 71)

We call upon the world Muslims to compel all your governments to enforce Islamic rule. In all Muslim countries establish Islamic rule through armed jihad and banish Tagut rule. Leave the United Nations of the infidels. Set up a Muslim United Nations and strengthen the followers of Islam all over.

### **Warning to the infidels and non-believers**

All rulers including Bush Blair administrations are hereby warned to give up their occupation of Muslim countries. Do not try any further to patronize Muslim countries. Muslims all over the world have woken up. Please stop persecuting the Muslims or else you will not be safe anywhere in the world. The anti-Islamic NGOs are also being warned to stop their action programmes directed against the Muslims or else Insha Allah they will be completely uprooted.