

Bangladesh: Uphold the Rule of Law to Fight Extremism

(Bangkok/Kathmandu, 7 July 2016) – The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) strongly condemns the killing of 21 people at the Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan, Dhaka, Bangladesh on 1 July 2016.

At around 8:45 P.M., a group of armed assailants entered the bakery, and took the people present hostage, both Bangladeshis and foreign nationals. In the 12-hour siege that ensued, 21 hostages were killed, including nine Italians, seven Japanese, one American and one Indian. This gruesome incident is indicative of a serious lacunae in Bangladesh's security architecture for the protection of life and liberty of the people.

Violent extremism and militancy has been growing in the country for some time now. Writers, bloggers, journalists, academics and members of minority groups have been victims of such extremism. They have been threatened, attacked and even killed. However, the Government of Bangladesh has shown an inability and lack of political will to investigate any of these cases, and establish accountability for those involved. This has fostered a culture of impunity on which this latest carnage builds.

The horrendous incident of 1 July 2016 is a stark reminder to the Government of Bangladesh that it has to promote the rule of law and respect for human rights as an immediate priority to tackle the culture of impunity. As a member of the international community, Bangladesh cannot shy away from its obligations to promote the rule of law and respect for human rights.

As long as the rule of law is not restored and protected in Bangladesh, extremist and vigilante forces will continue to capitalise on the resultant anarchy to impose their dictates. Restoration of the rule of law is not possible as long as the Government of Bangladesh continues to ignore the urgency of combating impunity and fails to create an environment conducive to pluralism and dialogue.

FORUM-ASIA calls on the Government of Bangladesh and the Opposition to work together, along with civil society and in close cooperation with the international community, to find a constructive way to counter the growing extremism in Bangladesh. Sincere efforts must be taken to strengthen democratic institutions and institutionalise democratic values in the workings of the state.

About FORUM-ASIA:

FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 58 member organisations in 19 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas

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of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratisation.

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