

SPOTLIGHT ON YOUTH and R2P



Drivers of Atrocity Promoting Youth-Led Community based Prevention in Bangladesh

Background

The Centre for Peace and Justice, BRAC University completed a project called “Drivers of Atrocity: Promoting Youth-Led Community-based Prevention in Bangladesh”, with support from the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) at The University of Queensland. The aim of the project was to uncover young people’s knowledge of, and attitudes to, atrocity crimes, and to explore drivers and prevention strategies in Bangladesh.

The project recognised that while youth make up over one-third of Bangladesh’s population, they are frequently overlooked in policies to prevent conflict. Identifying young people’s priorities and valuing their views and input was seen as a key part of this project by CPJ.

Focus group discussions and key informant interviews were held with a range of young people including youth from indigenous ethnic communities from Chittagong Hill Tracts and Cox’s Bazar (Rakhine), the Urdu speaking Bihari community, religious minorities, university students, madrasa students, host community youth in Cox’s Bazar, and emerging youth leaders. In total, 71 young people were involved in the focus groups.

The researchers also met several youth leaders, researchers, and academics. They conducted key informant interviews to build a more comprehensive body of evidence on the issue of atrocity crimes in Bangladesh.

How do Bangladeshi youth perceive atrocity crimes?

The research found that Bangladeshi youth are aware of a range of violent crimes, and particularly identified violence against women, murder, political violence, unlawful evictions, cybercrimes, torture, disappearances, and extrajudicial killings as the most prominent forms of violence. The respondents viewed women and people living in poverty as especially vulnerable but were also concerned about their own safety, and feared coercion into crimes due to political preferences or drug use. This view has been supported by findings that suggest political instability and poverty play a pivotal role in making youth more vulnerable to commit crimes. The findings also suggest that while youth are aware of various types of

violence, they have not linked these crimes with potential atrocity crimes, which are less well understood.

Bangladeshi youth highlighted many drivers and the connections between them, including corruption; poverty; lack of education; lack of the rule of law; political competition; lack of social norms/values; lack of awareness; patriarchy; lack of justice; and lack of freedom of expression.

How is this research contributing to the prevention of atrocity crimes?

Two broad areas of interventions were identified. The first relates to knowledge and awareness building around atrocity crimes and their prevention among youth in Bangladesh. Possible interventions include the establishment of youth-led social clubs that would organise various events for youth, such as documentary showings, webinars, seminars, and open discussion on atrocity prevention. Social clubs could be facilitated by university-level students and guided by volunteer mentors and would be inclusive of relevant stakeholders such as youth from local communities in addition to university students. The Peace Café initiative of CPJ Brac University provides a model that could be adapted for this purpose.

The second intervention would aim to provide technical and knowledge support for young people, including fellowships and capacity-building programmes on atrocity prevention. Additionally, the development of academic courses on the topic of atrocity prevention at Brac University may be of benefit.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the knowledge and attitudes Bangladeshi youth hold towards atrocity crimes, their drivers, and prevention. Via focus groups and key informant interviews, CPJ was able to collect information on how young people in Bangladesh perceive violent crime and the concept of atrocity prevention. The research revealed that while youth have a strong foundation in understanding the drivers of violence, knowledge

of atrocity crimes and their prevention was lacking. The project identified two possible interventions at the Brac University level; the development of a youth-led atrocity prevention forum for education and awareness; and provision of technical and knowledge resources to support youth peacebuilders in atrocity prevention.



ASIA PACIFIC CENTRE FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

Building 39A

School of Political Science
& International Studies

The University of Queensland,
St Lucia Brisbane QLD 4072

P +61 7 3346 6435

E: r2pinfo@uq.edu.au

W: www.r2pasiapacific.org