

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

“The Killing of Bangabandhu: The Conspirators, the Executors and the Ultimate Justice”

EVENT REPORT

Date: 27 August 2022, Saturday

Venue: BILIA Auditorium, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

It has been 47 years since Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with most of his family members were brutally killed on 15th August 1975 at his Dhanmondi residence by few notorious and deviant officers of Bangladesh Army. Only his two daughters – Sheikh Hasina, currently the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, and Sheikh Rehana – survived the carnage. It has been almost thirteen years since November 2009, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh paved the way for the execution of 12 convicted former personnel of the Bangladesh Army for the assassination of Bangabandhu. Among them 6 were hanged to death by far, while one convict met a natural death in Zimbabwe in 2001. However, the verdict is yet to be fully implemented, as it has not been possible to bring back five absconders to face justice. The Government of Bangladesh is making efforts to bring back the fugitive killers, but the laws of different countries are creating complications about their extradition. Even after so many decades of the brutal assassination of Bangabandhu, a long-standing but precious debate keeps cropping up again and again: who were the perpetrators of Bangabandhu’s killing?



In commemoration of the Month of Mourning and the 47th martyrdom anniversary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members, Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA), in collaboration with Bangla Worldwide, organized a round table discussion titled, “The Killing of Bangabandhu: The Conspirators, the Executors and the Ultimate Justice” on 27 August 2022, at 10:30 A.M. at BILIA Auditorium, Dhanmondi, Dhaka.

Some historical figures, freedom fighters, eminent professionals and civil society members participated in the event and expressed their thoughts on Bangabandhu’s Killing and how the absconders could be brought to justice. Moreover, speakers at the discussion also put their emphasis on forming an independent commission and carrying out all the necessary measures to complete the execution of the absconders living abroad. The participants opined that such commission could be formed with retired judges, senior advocates, veteran journalists, and freedom fighters. In his welcome speech, **Professor Dr. Mizanur Rahman**, Director, BILIA, pointed out various historical facts regarding the brutal assassination of the father of nation and his family members and highlighted both national and international conspiracies behind this gruesome act.



In this context, **Justice A.H.M. Shamsuddin Chowdhury** said that “our liberation war had bled in the chests of those Bangladeshis who held Pakistani ideals”. Justice Chowdhury further stated that “Bangabandhu was not killed by his own people rather by the Pakistani collaborators living inside Bangladesh, in fact they are not Bengalis at all”. Regarding General Ziaur Rahman, Justice Chowdhury said that “General Zia was a war criminal under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, because he killed those who were blocking the road to resist the Pakistani army in Chittagong during the Liberation War”. Mentioning Zia as the mastermind of Bangabandhu’s assassination, he recalled different incidents of Zia’s involvement in the assassination and his activities to protect those killers afterwards. Many other killers, who were involved in that killing mission, are yet to be named and tried. Furthermore, Justice Chowdhury said that “the government needs to form a commission to investigate the conspiracy and find out the real perpetrators behind the killing of the father of the nation”. However, he opined that “it is not easy to bring them back from Canada or the United States of America as their individual extradition laws are complicated”. He also added that “International laws are not entirely successful in bringing those criminals back. In this regard, national laws can be an effective means to bring those perpetrators into justice. For this, the most effective way is to have a bilateral extradition treaty between Bangladesh and respective country”. He also observed that there should be a prisoner exchange treaty between Bangladesh and the United States so that the rest of the killers of Bangabandhu and his family, living in the USA, could be brought into justice.



As a distinguished discussant of the event, **Barrister Tania Amir**, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh, talked about the Indemnity Ordinance and remembered late Mr. Abdul Matin Khasru who did not let that Ordinance get the status of an Act. She urged the supporters of the Liberation War to come together to take action against the murderers who took shelter in foreign countries. Barrister Tania Amir further emphasized on the formation of a diplomatic lobbying group, holding negotiations to bring those culprits back home and hanging them for their heinous act of killing the father of the nation. She also remembered the brutal killing of the four national leaders: Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmad, Captain Mansur Ali and A.H.M. Quamruzzaman.



Renowned Bangladeshi historian and scholar **Professor Muntassir Mamun**, raised his concern by saying that “the nexus between the different significant historical occurrences of Bangladesh is necessary to comprehend the actual facts of the history of the land”. He stated that, “there is an unbreakable correlation among the several historical events, such as the Liberation War of Bangladesh, the assassination of Bangabandhu, the Jail killings, and the 21 August Grenade attack”. He further added that “understanding the nexus will enable the people to realize how the history of the liberation of Bangladesh has revolved around Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and how the young Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gradually became the liberator of the Bengali nation”. He ended his speech by saying that “a commission consisting of various eminent professionals should be formed to conduct a thorough study to identify the conspirators of Bangabandhu’s killing and unearth the plot behind it”.



Prominent academician **Professor Harun-Ur-Rashid** began his speech by paying homage to the Liberation War Martyrs. “Bangabandhu’s killing was pre-planned and the masterminds behind this killing needed to be identified as some of them are still alive and working against the spirit of our Liberation War”, he said. To him, “it was Bangabandhu’s dream to build a self-reliant Bangladesh”. Professor Rashid further stated that “Bangabandhu became a victim of the Cold War politics and the forces that were against the independence Bagladesh”. “We must bring back

the culprits living abroad and form a commission inside the country to ensure the execution of the perpetrators”, he concluded.



Director General of the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) **Ali Wazed Zafar** in his discussion unfolded various facts clearly indicating the involvement of many people as informers who were against Bangladesh and behind the heinous killing of Bangabandhu. He further claimed that many small yet important incidents during and post-Liberation period resulted in a dark day like the 15th of August in the history of Bangladesh.

In this roundtable discussion, among the others, eminent security expert **Air Cdre (Retd) Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury**, renowned freedom fighter **Rokeya Kabir**, former Vice Chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) **Professor Dr. Kamrul Hasan Khan**, and UGC Member **Professor Biswajit Chanda** also shared their thoughtful insights pertaining to the topic.



Barrister Amir -UI- Islam, Chairman, BILLIA, presided over the roundtable discussion. In his concluding remark, he thanked all the guests present in the roundtable discussion and for their valuable observations.