



BANGLADESH HINDU PERSECUTION ANNUAL REPORT - 2022

Published by
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31 March 2023

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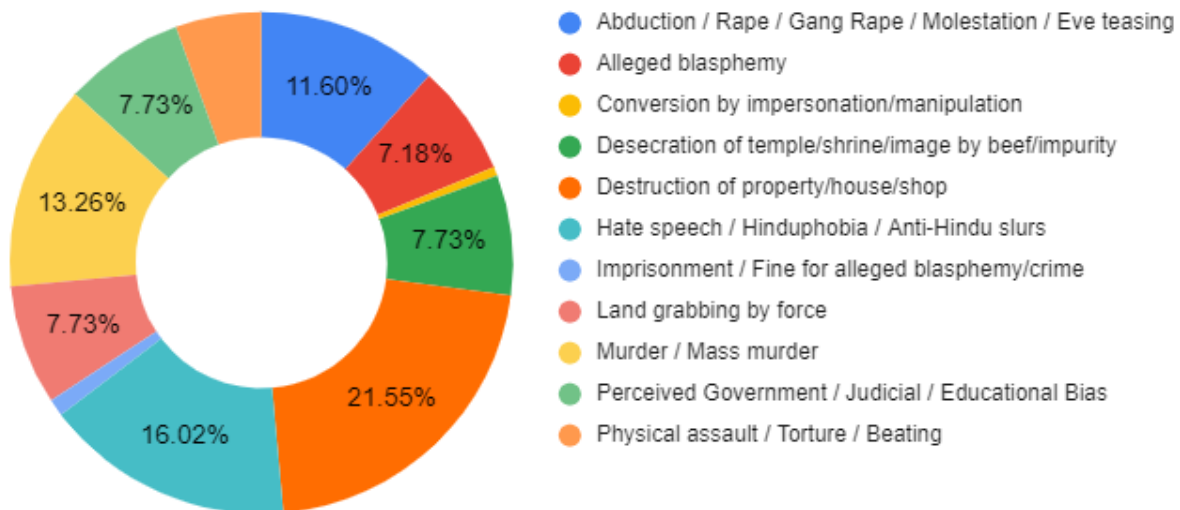
Overview

Sriti O Chetona (SoC) has compiled a list of incidents of minority persecution in Bangladesh in the year 2022 from the various news portals and social media handles and analyzed the data by multiple metrics, including the following:

- Type of persecution
- Collective identity of victims
- Faith of victims
- Division of Bangladesh
- Month of year

It is to be noted that a single incident can consist of multiple types of persecution, e.g. an incident involving hate speech can also include physical abuse and property destruction. Also, we do not claim the list we compiled to be comprehensive, as a large number of incidents are not reported in the news or social media. Below are the list of categories we deduced that best fits majority of incidents and data compiled by us by persecution type:

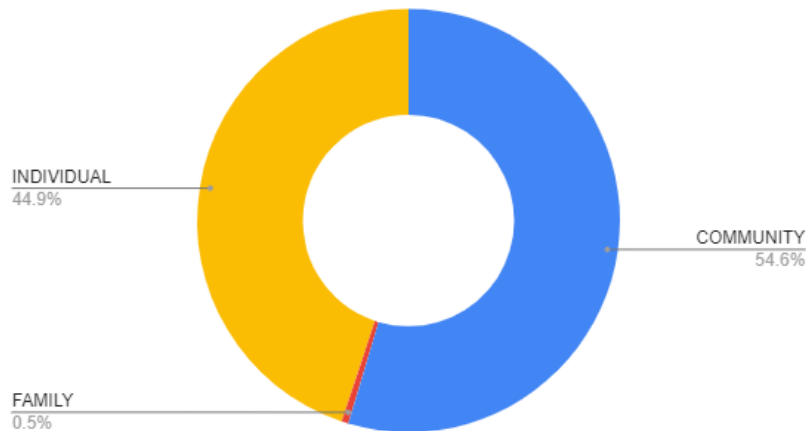
Primary Persecution Type



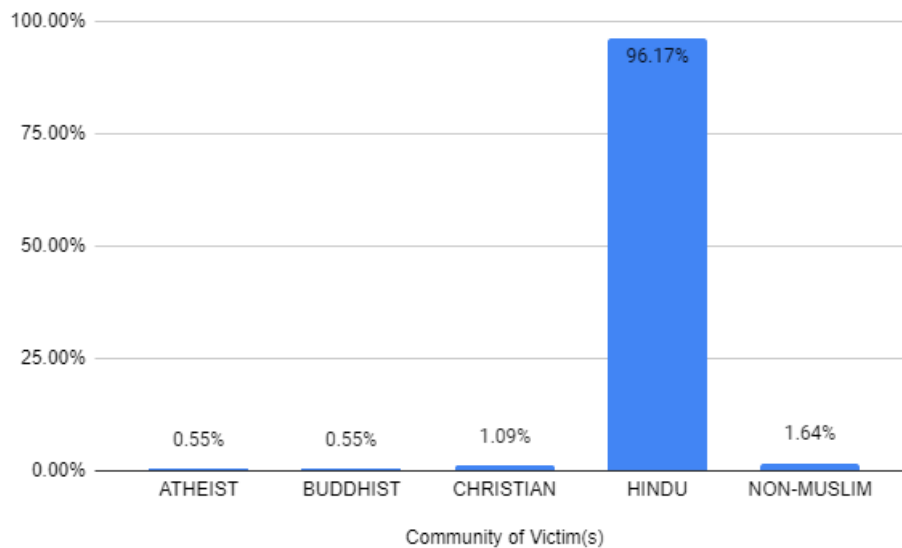
We also analyzed the data by collective nature of victim(s) from the incidents we compiled and found majority is against the community (e.g., Hate speech, temple desecration, land grabbing, arson, destruction of community property etc) followed by individual (e.g., rape, murder, accusation of blasphemy, abduction of minors and women etc). Most of the accusations of

blasphemy were against Hindu teachers in school and colleges, and multiple teachers were murdered in 2022.

Collective Nature of Victim(s)



When we look into data by religious affiliation, the vast majority of victims are Hindu. This trend concurs with the religious minority demographics proportion, where Hindus constitute almost 90% of religious minority population. According to the 2022 census data of Bangladesh, Hindus constitute 7.95%, Buddhists 0.61%, Christians 0.30% and others 0.12% of the population. We have categorized victims as “Non-Muslim” when religious affiliation of the victim could not be identified with certainty.



Please note that we have not analyzed the data by gender or age of the victims. This type of granular data can only be ascertained by investigating the police report and other government issued documents (e.g., birth certificate), which we were not privy to. Also, that information can only be used in the case of individual victims, not when a community is attacked (e.g. temple desecration). Hence, we made a conscious decision not to analyze data by the above two metrics.

The next metric we analyzed was by geographical hierarchy. We collected data by Division, District, Upazilla/PS. However, information at lower granularity was not always available, so we decided to investigate the data by Division. Bangladesh is divided into eight Divisions - Barisal, Chittagong, Dhaka, Khulna, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Rangpur, and Sylhet.

From our analysis by geographical hierarchy, Dhaka and Chittagong Divisions accounted for almost 50% of the incidents in 2022, and Barisal, Mymensingh and Sylhet being comparatively safe for minorities. The higher percentage of incidents in Dhaka and Chittagong may be contributed to higher population density, and relatively larger Hindu population around the capital, Dhaka.

2022 Persecution Incidents By Division

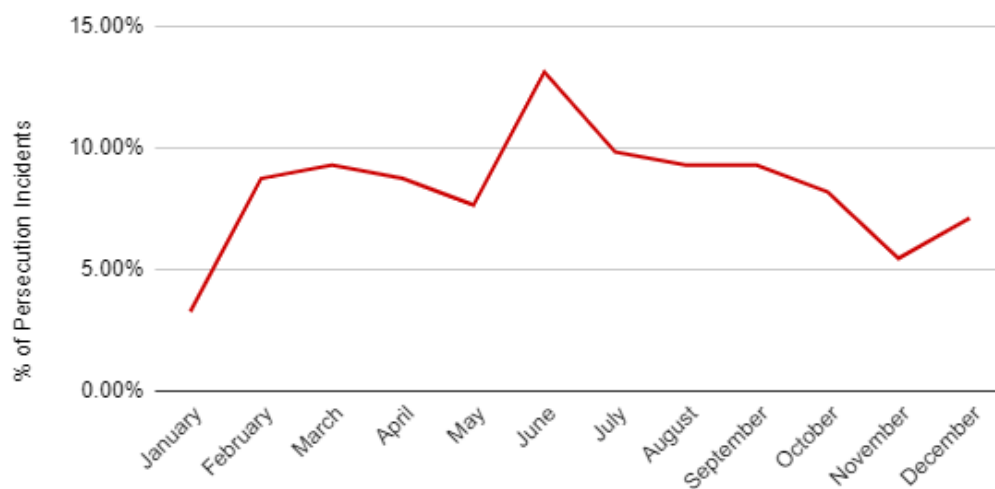


Note: Shade of color indicates % of persecution incidents

Detailed Analysis And Trends

We found often there is uptake in hate speech and severity of persecution depending on what is happening around the world, especially in India. At the beginning of the year, a large amount of hate speech was targeted towards Hindu minorities due to the hijab controversy in Karnataka, India. There were ample rumors spread that gave justification to create more anti-Hindu riots, e.g., in May 2022 rumor spread that a pro-hijab Indian Muslim girl Muskan was killed and Muslims were encouraged to spread anti-Hindu riots in the country. This is particularly worrisome as we have seen in the past that the precursor of 1946 October Noakhali riots were anti-Hindu rumors of them killing Muslims in Kolkata that hardened the minds of ordinary Muslims against their Hindu neighbors. The chart below shows the monthly trend in persecution incidents, showing more than 50% increase between May and June, following alleged blasphemy of Nupur Sharma, an incident that was promoted and instigated by a popular social media personality from India in Twitter. That incident had led to six known beheadings in India, and a number of murders in Bangladesh.

2022 Persecution Incidents % by Month



One of the most brutal incidents happened in Nilphamari in February, 2022, where a Hindu married woman was found murdered by hanging from a tree after an announcement by Islamic leaders that Hindu women would not be allowed to wear marriage signs in Bangladesh if Muslim girl students are not allowed to wear hijab in college. Her body was found hanging from a tree near the railway line in Puthihari village of Sonaray Union, Nilphamari district, Rangpur Division.



A Hindu married housewife found hanging after an announcement Hindu women will not be allowed to walk on the streets with sindoor (a dot on forehead for Hindu married women).

While the Muslims in Bangladesh demanded Muslim school students be allowed to wear hijab in India, religious minorities in Bangladesh are often forced to follow the dress edicts of the majority population. Some of the incidents that denied the religious minority females freedom to dress as per their religious/cultural norms included:

- Married women not being allowed to bangles (*shakha*) and a dot of *sindoor* on the forehead (*bindi/teep*) in examination centers
- Hindu female students in Ad-din Sakina Medical College, Bangladesh are required to wear hijab
- Hindu women workers in Dhaka International Airport being forced to wear hijab as part of dress code
- Teacher in Dhaka harassed for wearing *bindi* (dot on the forehead)

The next wave of anti-Hindu persecution followed the comments of Nupur Sharma in an Indian TV debate. It was undoubtedly the most brutal wave of persecution in 2022. The alleged charge of blasphemy opened a floodgate of abuse, hate speech, arson, property destruction, temple desecration, and murder. A young Hindu pregnant woman Nupur Saha (25) was raped and murdered in June 2022. It is presumed that she was killed for sharing the same name as Nupur Sharma from Delhi, India.



Villagers discover dead body of Nupur Saha

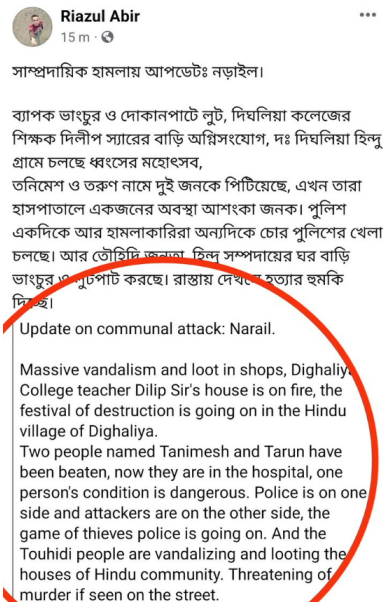
There was a series of attacks on Hindu teacher community, and multiple of them were killed, or publicly humiliated. Some of the teachers affected were Hridoy Kumar (arrested for alleged blasphemy), Amodini Pal (accused of blasphemy). Parimal Bhowmik (accused of anti-hijab stand and blasphemy), Swapan Kumar Biswas (humiliated by being forced to wear garland of shoes in presence of police, later arrested), Utpal Kumar Sarkar (murdered), Joy Chatterjee (murdered), Milton Talukder (murdered).



Swapan Kumar Biswas is forced to wear garland of shoes in Bangladesh in presence of police

Another major incident of atrocity happened in July 2022, where 200 houses of Hindu community in Narail, under Khulna Division were set on fire. This incident happened after 1000+

Muslims gathered in Dighalia Bazar of Lohagara Upazila of Narail District over alleged issue of insulting Islam and called for Hindu genocide.



Narail arson and riot condemned in social media

The majoritarian intolerance was not limited to Hindu minority, it also affected other religious groups. In January 2022, a Buddhist monk named Bishuddha Mahath, the principal of Gugurachhari Dharmasukh Buddhist monastery in Khagrachhari Sadar was hacked to death. Around Christmas in December 2022, a Muslim youth put a copy of Holy Quran in a church to instigate riots similar to what happened during Durga Puja 2021.

Religious minorities also face bias in government, judiciary and educational domains. Teaching hatred against religious minorities has become a staple of school textbooks. Couple of incidents in 2022 highlight the issue of normalization of Hinduphobia in education system:

- Students at Hathazari Madrasa in Chittagong are taught slogans against Hindus in school
- In 5th grade Islamic Studies textbook it is written that Non-Muslims are greedy, liars and inferior to animals
- Bangladesh Ministry of Education scheduled SSC examination during Durga Puja, the biggest festival of minority Hindus

There were multiple encouraging incidents, which truly demonstrate the empathy of the majority populace irrespective of religious affiliation, and optimism for upholding the secular nature of the country. In June 2022, ISKON organized a food donation among flood victims in Sylhet. It is to

be remembered that ISKCON was severely attacked during October 2021 riots during Durga puja that resulted in death of one devotee inside their temple complex.



ISKON distributing food to flood victims in Sylhet

In February 2022, a peaceful protest march against hate speech by an extremist pir was organized. The Charmonai Pir had declared a ban on *dhoti* (garment for lower body) for Hindu men and *sindur* (vermillion dot on the forehead) for Hindu women. Hindus in Bangladesh wore *dhotis* in the march to protest against such dress edict.



Hindus organized peaceful protest against call for banning their traditional attire

In March 2022, ISKCON devotees and United Hindus of USA organized a peaceful protest march in Jackson Heights, Queens, New York against the attack on ISKCON Radhakanta temple in Dhaka.



Hindus organized peaceful protest against attack on Dhaka Radhakanta ISKCON temple

In April 2022, multiple secular organizations representing teachers, students, cultural activists and social organizations demanded immediate release of Hriday Chandra Mondal, a school teacher who was arrested on March 22 in Munshiganj on charges of hurting Islamic religious sentiments.



Multiple secular groups organized peaceful protest against arrest of Hriday Mondol

Amnesty International also published an article on this issue demanding release of the victim. In view of the continual atrocities against religious minorities and steady attrition of Hindu

population, it is encouraging to see people of all backgrounds and human rights organizations have stepped up upholding human rights for the religious minority population of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh: School teacher detained for discussing the difference between science and religion must be immediately released

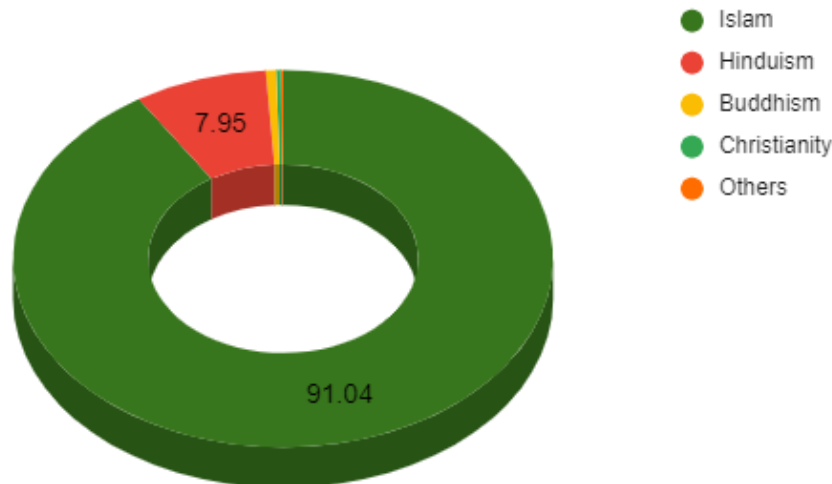
Bangladeshi authorities must immediately and unconditionally release Hriday Chandra Mondal, a schoolteacher who was arrested on charges of “hurting religious sentiment” after he discussed in the classroom the distinction between religion and science, Amnesty International said.

In the discussion at school, where teachers should be free to discuss any ideas or facts without fear of reprisals, the teacher argued that “religion is a matter of faith” while “science looks at evidence”, according to a recording that was filmed by [a student/someone in the class and?] shared on social media. In the audio recording [accessed](#) by Amnesty International, the teacher said: “There is no evidence in religion. Religion in the end says God will take care of everything. Religion offers memorized words whereas science shows evidence”.

Amnesty report on the arrest of school teacher Hriday Mondal

Recommendations

As per the latest 2022 census, the total population of Bangladesh is 165.16 million. Religious minorities constitute about 8.98% of Bangladeshi population, constituting 14.83 million. Hindus are the biggest religious minority group, with 88.5% of total minority population.



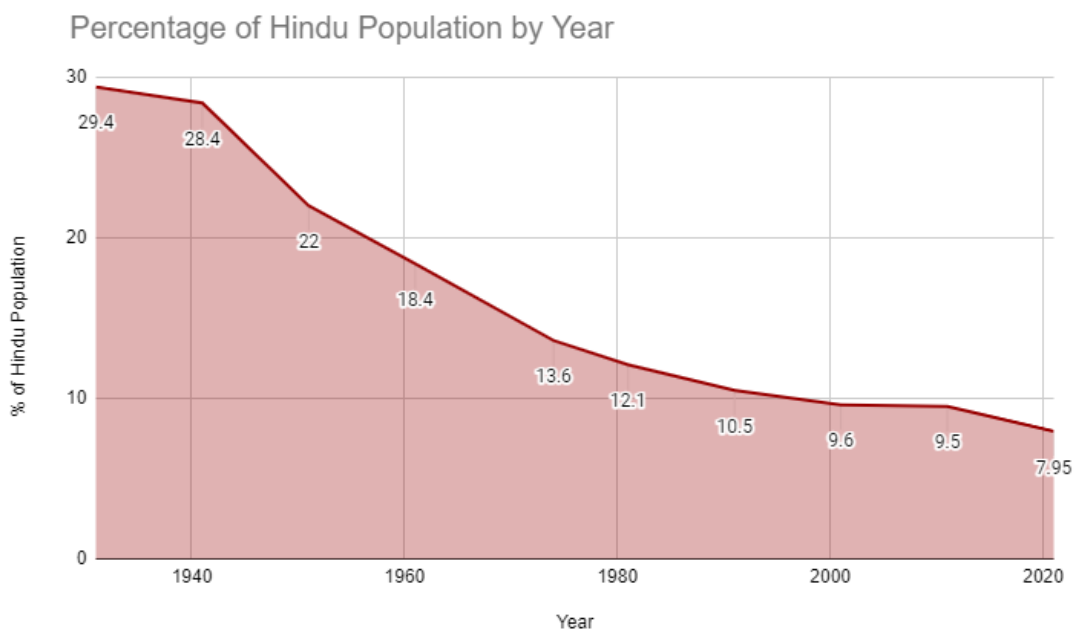
Religions in Bangladesh (%) - 2022 Census Data

Since the 1947 partition of India, Hindu population in East Pakistan/ Bangladesh is continuing to decline. The persecution of Bengali Hindus under the Pakistani regime is well recorded, especially during the Bangladesh war of independence. It is estimated that Hindus were about 20% of the population during that time, but the overwhelming majority (~80%) of the victims of Pakistani brutality. From 1947 to 1971, Hindu population fell from approximately quarter of the population to mere 13.5%.

1971 heralded a new hope among Bangladeshi Hindus under a secular constitution drafted by Sheikh Mujibar Rahaman's govt. However, the hope was short lived and Hindus faced hardship by Islamists under political aegis of various governments. It is also to be mentioned that General Ershad, who assumed power through a military coup, amended the constitution in 1988, to add Islam as the state religion. In the post-independence period, the first major anti-Hindu violence occurred in 1989-1990, following the Babri Mosque-Ram temple conflict in India. There was widespread destruction of temples, arson, looting and violence against Hindus. Another major anti-Hindu attack happened in 2001, following the election of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) government led by Ms. Khaleda Zia. According to judicial enquiry by Bangladesh government in 2009, more than 18,000 rapes of Hindu women happened during the riots. In 2021, a frenzied coordinated communal attack happened all over the country

following rumors of Quran desecration, which was later found to be done by a Muslim. More than 50 temples were vandalized and at least eight people were killed.

Since independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the Hindu population in Bangladesh fell from 13.5 to 7.95% in 50 years, a trend not very different from previous 25-year Pakistani rule of 1947-1971. The fall in minority population can be attributed to multiple causes - religious riots, election violence, exodus due to religious persecution, forced eviction, conversion under duress or enticement, economic hardship, less access to resources, political duress etc. The fall in Hindu population is often justified by Muslims stating lower Hindu birth rate compared to the majority population, which absolutely cannot justify the precipitous drop. From the last census of 2011, Hindu population has dropped by 1.55% in the 2022 census, a drop that cannot be justified by birth rate alone. Whatever the reason may be, Hindus and other religious minorities are vanishing at a very alarming rate from Bangladesh.



It is a matter of grave concern and surprise that this constant decline in Hindu population from Bangladesh has not been raised by neither the media, international human Rights and religious freedom organizations. This is a trend that is not endemic to Bangladesh only, but seen in other countries in South Asia.

In Pakistan, the Hindu population has fallen from 15% in 1947 to 2%. Every year, it is estimated that 1000+ Hindu and Christian minor girls are abducted and married to older Muslim men. In Malaysia, Hindus population has fallen to 6%. Hindus (mostly Tamils, constituting 9% of

population) face constitutional discrimination, and children of parents converted to Islam are automatically converted, Hindu children in orphanages are converted to Islam by government authority.

In 2021, in the “Dismantling Global Hindutva” conference, the speakers openly called for dismantling Hinduism, not just Hindutva or political Hinduism. Hindu festivities like Holi have been politicized and “Holi Against Hindutva” events organized in multiple US campuses. Often protests against political parties are morphed into anti-Hindu rhetoric. In the United States, Hindu American Foundation (HAF) was attacked for using the term “Hinduphobia” and ridiculed for fear mongering stating nothing like “hinduphobia” exists. Hindu based human rights or political organizations or ordinary Hindus are frequently accused of fake victimization and bigotry.

Given the fact that media and power centers around the world are dominated by people educated on Abrahamic concepts, one wonders, is the indifference of the media and human rights organization to the plight of Hindus due to subconscious bias against “idol worshiping” or “pagan” people? Idol worship is forbidden in all Abrahamic faiths, including Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In Islam, idol worship is the most serious crime, worse than even murder or rape. Do average Abrahamic consider Hindu life of lesser value as people of monotheistic faith? There is a need for introspection and investigation about anti-idolatry bias. We urge the media and human rights organizations to actively remove any anti pagan or anti idol worship bias, if it exists. Media houses with a large Bengali audience or readership, like BBC Bangla can become a valuable tool to educate the world community about the plight of Hindus and suggest corrective measures for minorities to live in their motherland without any fear.

Media houses in India seem to have an unofficial censorship on news pertaining to minorities in Bangladesh. However, the events in India, which Bangladeshi Hindus have no control over, are often used to instigate anti-minority attacks. Media houses and social media influencers from India should report in a neutral manner, and not fan the already turbulent situation.

Hindus are considered a captive vote bank for Awami League, and often face wrath of political parties opposed to Awami League. The 2001 anti-Hindu violence after the Bangladesh Nationalist Party came into power speaks volumes in this regard. However, recently there have been incidents of Awami League party workers abusing Hindus, forcibly evicting them and misusing the trust Hindus have in the party. Bangladeshi Hindus need to align with all political parties and not blindly vote for a specific party, but vote for political parties that enact policies and action taken to protect the minorities and create a secular humanist environment in the country.

The activism of native Bangladeshi Hindus is extremely commendable. They, along with secular Muslims and humanists of the country, continue to support the religious minorities in an increasingly hostile environment, where Islamist power is on the rise. People of Bangladeshi origin, irrespective of religious affiliation and country of residence can help by amplifying the voice of secularism and moderation in the country.

The US State government, in their human rights reports has from time to time reported the hardships minorities face in Bangladesh. However, the reports have not touched up the everyday hardship faced by minorities and investigation of the root cause behind attrition in the minority population. The reporting by foreign government and human rights organizations, like US human Rights Reports, Amnesty International, UN Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, EU Annual Reports on Human Rights and Democracy can help the cause of lessening the atrocities against minorities by regular reporting and suggestions for remedial actions by the government. Finally, if the attrition of religious minorities does not stop, we request that the United States and European nations provide refugee status to the violence affected minorities in Bangladesh.

Appendix

In February 2023, Bangladesh [Jatio Hindu Mahajot](#) (JHM) in a press statement signed by the organization's Secretary General Govinda Chandra Pramanik published a detailed report on minority persecution in Bangladesh in 2022. Please note that the Sriti O Chetona (SoC) team has no connection with JHM and only provides the information without any revisions as an addendum.

Following is the summary of data provided in the [Jatio Hindu Mahajot](#) press conference for 2022 minority persecution in Bangladesh. For any questions or concerns, please contact the [Jatio Hindu Mahajot](#) team directly.

Persecution	Count
Murder	154
Attempted Murder	424
Physical / Muder Threat	849
Missing	62
Grievously Injured	360
Women Raped	39
Women Gang Raped	27
Women Killed after Rape	17
Attempted Rape	55
Women Forcibly Converted	152
Temples Destroyed/Vandalized	128
Temple Deity/Murty Vandalized	481
Temple Deity/Murty stolen	72
Forced to convert to Islam	40
Abduction	127

Forcible Beef Consumption	333
Temple Desecration with Beef	179
Temple Land Grab	51
Temple Loot	319
Family Home Torched/Destroyed	519
Families Attacked	891
Hindu Family Land Grabbed	8,990 acres
Santal/Hill Tribe Land Grabbed	6,550 acres
Families Threatened to be Evicted	35,818
Families Evicted from Ancestral Land	572
Families threatened to leave Bangladesh	11,115
Families Forced to leave Bangladesh	445
Attack on Durga Puja (biggest religious celebration of Bangladeshi Hindus)	35
Durga deity/murty destroyed/ vandalized	91
Hindu families surveyed who feel insecure in Bangladesh	196,000



Sriti O Chetona stands for 'memories and consciousness' - memories of the once vibrant Hindu life and culture in East Bengal and the consciousness about the present plight of Hindus in Bangladesh. Sriti O Chetona is a not for profit project that regularly monitors and reports the ongoing incidents of persecution of Hindus in Bangladesh.

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