



**BANGLADESH HINDU PERSECUTION
REPORT
November 2023**

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In 2023, the situation for minority groups in Bangladesh further deteriorated, particularly affecting Hindus and indigenous tribal populations. They experienced various forms of aggression, including abuse, looting, destruction, kidnapping, rape, murder, eviction, and forced conversion to Islam. The information presented in this report is a compilation of incidents documented by Sriti o Chetona (SoC) using publicly available sources, such as social media and newspapers. The report aims to provide an overview of the atrocities reported or committed against these communities in Bangladesh during October 2023.

Overview

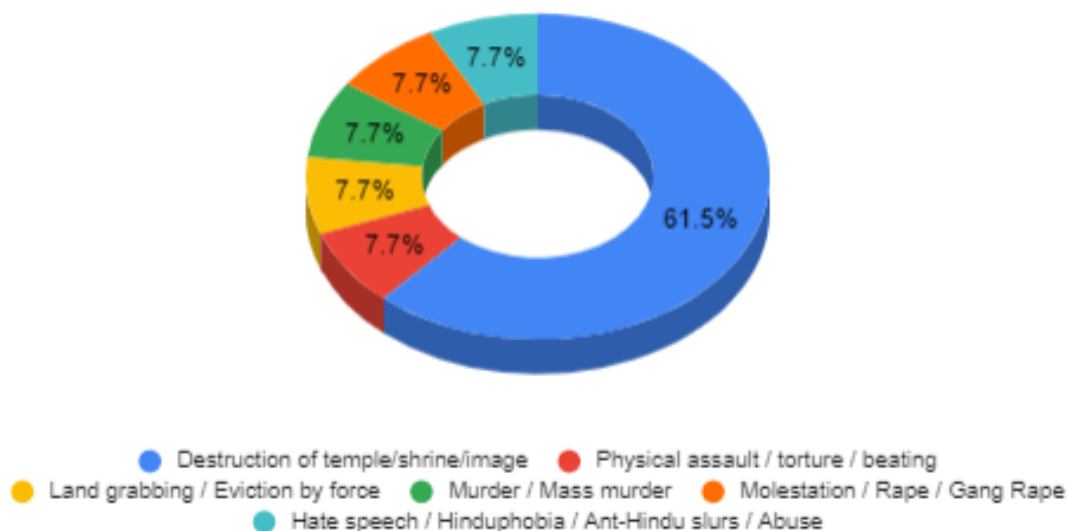
In this report, we analyzed the incidents of persecution primarily by following metrics:

- Persecution category (collated by SoC team)
- Geographical division,
- Victim's social group (individual, family, community)

In addition to the above-mentioned metrics, we will also look into the data by religious belief, gender and age of the victims.

The top categories for October 2023 are “Destruction of temples/shrine/image” (61.5%), “Physical assault / torture / beating” (7.7%), “Land grabbing / Eviction by force” (7.7%), “Murder / Mass murder” (7.7%), “Molestation / Rape / Gang Rape” (7.7%) and “Hate Speech/Hinduphobia/ Anti-Hindu Slurs / Abuse” (7.7%)

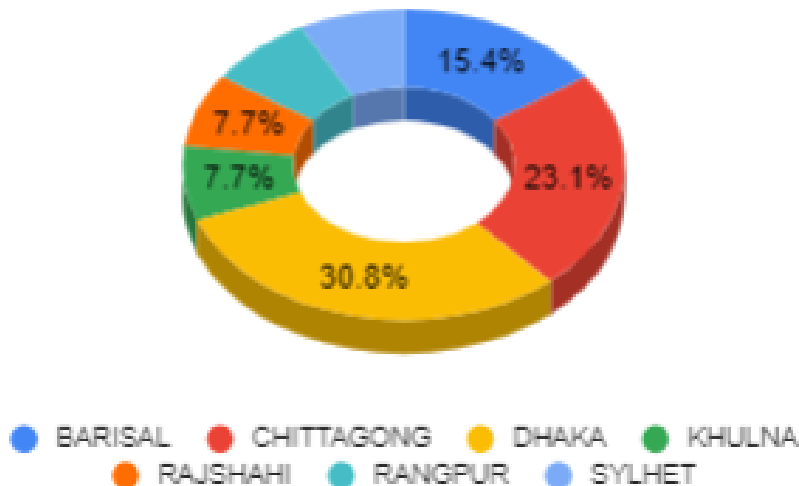
Persecution By Category



The uptake in attack on temples and religious symbols coincided with the most celebrated Bengali Hindu festival of Durga puja (October 21-October 24, 2023). In 2021 there was a countrywide attack on Hindus over false accusation of blasphemy and desecration of Quran, which later on was found out to be done by a Muslim man, Iqbal Hossain. However, he was let free earlier this year because of mental illness.

In 2022 there were 32,168 puja pandals which has risen by 239 this year. To add insult to injury, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan told the Hindus not to increase the number of Durga Pujas. The situation prompts contemplation on the uproar that would ensue if a leader in a Western country insisted that a religious minority limit their religious festivities. Unfortunately, the Hindus in Bangladesh lack the political influence needed to garner support from human rights organizations for their cause.

Persecution By Geographical Division



This month, Dhaka ranks highest with incidents of persecution, accounting for 30.8% of total incidents.

Chittagong division in the south-east adjacent to Myanmar and the Indian state of Tripura, has the second highest number of incidents, accounting for a quarter of incidents.

Similar numbers of incidents were reported from Barisal, Khulna, Rangpur, Sylhet, and Rajshahi divisions.

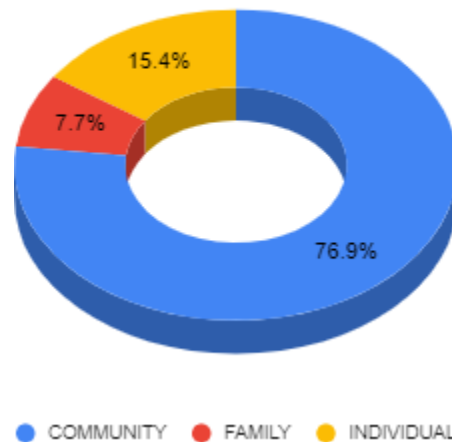
When data is analyzed by the victim's social group, the attacks on temples and other community properties or general anti-hindu slurs, mass threat for conversion, expulsion from the country and abuse are considered affecting the whole community, which accounts for 77% of the victim group in October 2023. For this month, attacks on temples and images have taken an uptick due to the upcoming Durga puja that is celebrated by the Bengali Hindu community.

Most of the individual victims faced abduction, rape, blasphemy and forced conversion in case of women and accusation of blasphemy, physical assault, murder in case of men. Individuals and families consist of about 23% of the victims.

When we analyze data by age, most of the minors are females facing rape and forced abduction for conversion and rape.

Looking into data by gender at birth, female victims of abduction/forced conversion are the most in individual victim groups. The type of persecution varied between males and females. The vast majority of the persecution incidents are targeted against Hindus (almost 100% of incidents recorded this month), Buddhists and indigenous people. Christians, liberal Muslims and atheists are also targeted, albeit less in number, possibly due to smaller demographics.

Persecution By Victim Group



Featured Incidents

At Sriti O Chetona, our goal is to encompass a wide range of stories. Regrettably, due to resource constraints, we cannot cover every incident that occurs. Only a limited number of occurrences make it to publication. This section presents a curated collection of news reports on the persecution of minorities compiled by the SoC team in November 2023.

Jhenaidah: Land belonging to Hindu families illegally acquired by AL leaders



'Mollah Tower' accused by Saha family to be illegally built on their property and Kali temple

November 2023: The residence once owned by the late Satendranath Saha in Sailakupa has been unlawfully seized by Sabdar Hussain Mollah, a prominent figure in the ruling party, along with his son, Shamin Hussain Mollah, who serves as the chairman of the ruling party's youth wing. The Saha family home was dismantled by the duo, and in its place, they erected a multistoried structure named 'Mollah Tower'.

Mallika Saha, the daughter-in-law of Satyendranath Saha, revealed that the accused, Sabdar and Shamin, forged fraudulent land ownership documents, transferring the property to their cousin in 2013, subsequently making an illicit purchase. Upon discovering this, the Saha family sought legal recourse and obtained a court-issued stay order. Despite the court's intervention, the accused proceeded to construct the building in defiance of the order. Mallika Saha further

lamented the loss of not only 24 decimals of land but also the wrongful acquisition of their Kali temple by the accused.

Upon approaching local congressman Abdul Hai, the victims were subjected to mistreatment, and they were informed that possessing legal documents for the land would be of no avail. (‘কাগজপাতি আছে তা আমি কী করব। কাগজপাতি ধুয়ে পানি খা গিয়ে।’). The victims appealed to the prime minister of the country to get justice.

As per information reported by local media, numerous Hindu families, including the Saha family, have experienced the loss of their land and residences, either through forceful eviction, coercion, or illicit methods employed in property court proceedings. Local Hindus have expressed that this pattern of illegal acquisition involving land, temples, and properties from minorities has been ongoing for over a decade, with local politicians playing a role in these activities. The minority communities are uneasy, anticipating further attacks in the lead-up to the upcoming general elections in the country.

Chittagong: Suman Saha (45) lynched by Mamun, Mustafizur and Nur Hasan

November 2023: On the night of November 27, Suman Saha, a businessman specializing in gold jewelry, was brutally lynched in Reazuddin Bazar. The perpetrators, identified as Mohammed Mamun, Mustafizur Rahaman, and Nur Hasan, mercilessly attacked Suman with metal rods, pliers, and pipes. Subsequently, the accused contacted Suman's mother, asserting that Suman had behaved inappropriately, and they had administered punishment.



Suman Saha (45) lynched to death in Chittagong

Nurul Alam Ashik, the in-charge of Chittagong Medical College police station, reported that Suman was brought to the hospital already deceased at midnight. Suman, survived by a pregnant wife and parents, had reportedly endured torture at the hands of the accused before his death. His grieving wife expressed her anguish, calling for severe punishment for the perpetrators.

Jhenaidah: Residential and temple land grabbed using political influence

November 2023: During the night of November 6, unidentified individuals targeted the Kuthibari Kali Temple in Bijulia village, causing damage to the deity inside. Dilip Kumar, the chairman of the temple committee, revealed that his family had been conducting puja at the temple for a

century. The discovery of the broken murti in the morning raised concerns, and Kumar suspected sinister motives behind the incident. He called for justice and requested enhanced security for the temple.

This assault is not an isolated occurrence in the area. On October 6, 2022, Dinar Biswas, the chairman of the Upazila Chhatra League, led an attack on the century-old Kali temple in Dautiya village, resulting in the destruction of the murti. The head of the murti was found near the residence of the temple committee chairman, Sukumar Mondol. The accused in this case is the son of Upazila Awami League chairman Matiyar Rahaman.

Another incident transpired on August 1, 2022, where Awami League leaders, including Shariful Islam, Mohammed, Farid Munshi, Jewel, Ifti, Borhaan, Hamza, Kamal, and about 50 others, armed with locally-made weapons, attacked eight Hindu residences and businesses. The assailants targeted Deb Kumar's business, demanding 3 lakhs (3,000 USD) as protection money (jizya), and robbed 120,000 taka (1,200 USD) from another businessman, Bikash Mondol. Subsequently, they raided eight Hindu households, looting money and jewelry.

Local Hindus allege that individuals with political influence routinely threaten them to seize their land, compelling many to leave the area. Some residents have been forced to sell their property at below-market rates. The local congressman, instead of assisting victims, reportedly subjected them to abuse when they lodged complaints.

On April 1, 2023, local Hindus and the Jhenaidah Puja Committee jointly appealed to the Awami League leadership not to nominate local congressman Abdul Hai, citing his communal, anti-minority, and biased actions.

Barguna: Hindu family home destroyed, looted and occupied by masked miscreants



Uttam Mitra's home and shop attacked and destroyed in Patharghata, Charduani

November 2023: On November 6th, at 2:30 am, the residence and shop of Uttam Mitra, a Bangladesh *muktijoddha* (freedom fighter) in Patharghata, Charduami Bazar, fell victim to an attack orchestrated by masked men and women. The assailants demolished his shop and house, subjecting his wife, Gita Rani, and daughter to physical assault and verbal abuse. Following the destruction, the perpetrators engaged in looting and even erected a new structure on the land after dismantling the existing ones.

Eyewitnesses reported that, in addition to household items, goods from the grocery shop, valued at approximately one lakh taka (1,000 USD), were stolen. The remaining belongings from the Mitra family's home were callously discarded into a nearby pond. A female eyewitness recounted a distressing scene, describing the victims as disrobed and subjected to sexual assault, describing the victims being tossed around like a ball. The miscreants, identified by locals as Musharaf, Zia, and Nasir Biswas, were led by Musharaf, with Zia allegedly identified as the mastermind and a barrister.

Political leaders and police have intervened in the aftermath of the incident, resulting in the establishment of a status quo.

Noakhali: Kali and Viswakarma *murti* vandalized



Viswakarma murti broken during Kali Puja organized by Joy Shiv Rabi Das Sangha Kali Mandir

November 2023: On the evening of November 11, at approximately 6 PM, a group of around 35 individuals led by Sheikh Selim (50) launched an attack on a Kali Puja event held in Chaumuhani, Begumganj. Three female devotees, namely Alo Rani, Lakshmi Das, and Lakshmi Rani, sustained injuries during the assault. The miscreants went on to vandalize the murti of Vishwakarma and pilfered funds from the donation box.

A local Hindu, Rabi Das has filed a police complaint, revealing that the puja had been a tradition for 26 years under the auspices of Joy Shiv Rabi Das Sangha Kali Mandir. The Sangha observes multiple pujas annually, including Kali Puja, Saraswati Puja, and Vishwakarma Puja. Das expressed grievances that Sheikh Selim had a history of creating disturbances during their celebrations.

Jessore: Hindu stabbed and house set on fire by Abdus Samad and his family



Lipika Mondal voices her fear standing in front of her burnt home

November 2023: On November 10, 2023, a dispute arose between Abdus Samad from Sheikhpura and Arjun Mondal from Sadipur village over a banana plant in Jhikargacha. Arjun voiced his objection to Abdus cutting down the plant, leading to a heated verbal confrontation. Subsequently, Abdus, along with his two sons, Allauddin and Salauddin, and his wife Shahida Begum, launched an attack on Arjun. During the altercation, Allauddin inflicted stab wounds on Arjun using a machete. Witnessing Arjun's injuries, his family members—son Apurba, brother Nakul, and wife Lipika—rushed to his aid. The assailants persisted in their assault, injuring Apurba with a machete as well.

Upon Nakul Mondol's complaint, the police arrested the perpetrators. However, they were granted bail on the same day. Disturbingly, at 9:00 pm on November 12, the assailants set fire to Arjun's family home.

Lipika, Arjun's wife, expressed fear for her safety and that of her daughter, emphasizing the physical threat posed by the perpetrators who were still at large and continued to menace the family with the prospect of further attacks.

At the time of the report, Arjun was hospitalized in serious condition, having not yet regained consciousness according to his son.

Nilphamari: Hindus attacked for cultivating potatoes in their ancestral land



Hindu farmer attacked for cultivating potato on his own land

In a shocking incident on Thursday, September 11, 2023, in Dharmapal Dakshin Paitka Para, Jaldhaka, Nilphamari, a group of assailants launched a vicious attack on farmers engaged in potato cultivation on their ancestral land. The assailants reportedly used sticks, soda rods, and sharp weapons during the assault.

Victims, including Shri Chatan Chandra Barman, Aurobindo Chandra Barman, Pratima Rani, and several others, suffered severe injuries in the merciless attack. These injured individuals are currently undergoing treatment at Rangpur Medical College Hospital, highlighting the gravity of the assault.

Allegations have surfaced against several individuals, namely Alim Munshi, Babul Hossain, Shahidul Munshi, Abu Bakkar Siddique, Noor Alam, Hasan Ali, Rabiul, Ashraf, Rafiqul, and others, accused of perpetrating this brutal act. However, the victims express frustration, stating a lack of proper justice despite the harrowing experience.

The aggrieved parties cite discrimination, claiming that their status as a minority has hindered the attainment of fair treatment within the country's judicial system. They adamantly demand a fair trial and justice for the heinous attack they endured while working on their ancestral property.

The incident has not only left several individuals injured but has also stirred concerns about equity and justice within the local community, urging authorities to investigate and address the grievances raised by the affected farmers.



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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