

A Voice for the Violated

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It has happened to many Bangladeshi expatriates. Once the motherland is left behind there is no looking back. Some watch the Bangla news channels on a lazy Sunday morning just so as not to sound too ignorant when a fellow Bangladeshi makes a passing comment about some current political event. Others just couldn't care less. This is the impression most of us have of Bangladeshis residing abroad.

This, as a matter of fact, couldn't be farther from the truth. There are thousands of Bangladeshi expats all over the world who are not only worried about the horrifying human rights situation in Bangladesh but also want to do something to bring about a change and feel helpless to do so from such a distance. This was the basic idea behind forming Drishtipat (www.drishtipat.org), an Internet-based activist organisation for expatriate Bangladeshis to help victims of human rights violations in Bangladesh.

On January 25, 2001 the world was shocked when Tipu Sultan, a journalist from Feni was severely beaten up and left for dead by thugs of the ruling party's MP Jainal Hazari, for revealing Hazari's activities as a godfather of underworld gangs. Asif Saleh (who later founded Drishtipat in April 2001) started a website to collect donations for Tipu Sultan's fund set up by Prothom Alo and Daily Star. "The response was amazing," says Saleh, who is also an Executive Director at Goldman Sachs, an investment bank in the UK, "Within three weeks I got funds of almost 15000 dollars from many different people all around the world. From there we thought of having a permanent organisation to offer concrete help to issues of human rights abuse. Because we were mainly internet driven, it was easy to attract a worldwide membership."

Thus Drishtipat began its journey which now has 25 administrative team members (who are all volunteers) and over a thousand members worldwide and has managed to raise more than 100,000 dollars for different projects in over 5 years (all contributions were made by individual expatriates).

The success of the fund-raising project for Tipu Sultan paved the way for many other praiseworthy achievements. One of them was raising money to help 15 women war heroes who had



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