

The Daily Star

SPECIAL

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MARTYRED INTELLECTUALS DAY 2020

WORDS OF THE MARTYRED



EDITOR'S NOTE

There are few moments in any nation's history as shameful and devastating as the targeted killings of intellectuals in Bangladesh by the Pakistani army and its collaborators in 1971. Pakistan's genocide against the Bangladeshi people, and the hatred it harboured for the intellectual core of the popular resistance against Pakistan's military junta, began long before the events of December 14, 1971. However, it was on this day 49 years ago that the Pakistani military, staring at the face of a humiliating defeat, decided to commit one last act of unbelievable cruelty—with the help of the militant Al-Badr and Al-Shams groups, they doubled up on their efforts to root out the minds that shaped the spirit of the Liberation War and launched coordinated efforts to massacre Bangladeshi intellectuals, in an attempt to cripple the new nation before it could begin its independent journey.

We now know that their attempt failed. But not before we suffered unimaginable loss. We will never know what our nation might have been like, had our martyred intellectuals lived. We will never understand the barbarism that influenced the Pakistani military and its supporters to drag poets, novelists, playwrights, journalists, academics and doctors out of their homes to murder them in cold blood. But we do know many of the people behind these war crimes and how, despite being tried by the International Crimes Tribunal, they have evaded justice.

In honour of Martyred Intellectuals Day, we bring to you the words of some of our martyrs themselves—in the form of excerpts from their novels, academic writings, diaries and interviews. It is a glimpse into their minds and views about life and a consoling reminder that they will live on forever through their work and the memory of their invaluable contributions to this nation. While we pay homage to their legacies, we must also remember that two of the main accused in the deaths of these intellectuals are still at large—Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin, based in the UK, and Ashrafuz Zaman Khan, based in the US, despite being sentenced in absentia for the murders of Munier Chowdhury, Anwar Pasha, Shahidullah Kaiser and Mufazzal Haider Chaudhury, among many others.

It is our hope that while remembering the martyred intellectuals, our younger generation will dedicate themselves to the pursuit of knowledge and to building a liberal, tolerant and prejudice free society.

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Illustration: Biplob Chakroborty

