

## Is it not yet time for justice?

As a citizen the right to justice is a most basic one. Are we to be denied this right in Bangladesh? I hope that the government will give this issue the importance it deserves, as murder is among the most serious of crimes, and unpunished political murder in particular destroys the integrity of the democratic political system. Punishment of the murderers is important for ending the climate of impunity that prevailed under the BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami government in every sector.

ASMA KIBRIA

**A**LMOST three years have passed without a proper investigation into the brutal killing of my husband Shah A.M.S. Kibria, M.P., in a grenade attack in his Habiganj constituency on January 27, 2005. My nephew, Shah Manzur Huda, and three others were also killed in the attack. Like me, so many wives, mothers and children who have lost loved ones in grenade and bomb attacks still cry in anguish, with the forlorn hope of justice. So many families have been torn apart by these attacks. For these families there can never again be carefree laughter and joy -- the dark shadow of these brutal killings will haunt them for the rest of their lives, a constant source of sorrow and depression. The great shame is that they are even denied the scant consolation of knowing that the killers will be brought to justice.

That is the reason why, with grief that is still difficult to express, I have sat down to write again about the terrible events of the recent past. I cannot remain silent at the injustice being done to me and others like myself. Will the killers go scot-free? Will we never obtain justice in this country?

My husband's assassination was one of the many brutal political killings that took place in Bangladesh under the BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami government. After a carefully limited investigation some local BNP leaders were identified as the culprits. Some other local people -- a night guard, a truck-driver -- were also caught. If these people were involved, they could only have acted on the instructions of much more powerful individuals who could realistically have had a motive to kill someone of the stature of my husband, a former UN under-secretary general and former finance minister and foreign secretary of Bangladesh.

A local BNP leader named Abdul Qayyum was shown as the principal accused. No confessional statement (under Criminal Procedure Code 164 -- confession before a magistrate) was ever taken from him. Do not court records indicate that he wished to make such a statement? Was this request suppressed on the instruction of higher authorities? Did the killers obtain the cooperation of the local administration? Why was there no police security at the political

meeting of a sitting MP? Why, despite the fact that the prime minister herself admitted in parliament that administrative lapses lay behind the killing, was the deputy commissioner rewarded with inclusion in her entourage for an official visit overseas? Was not the charge sheet a misleading document that raised more questions than it answered?

No mention was made of the masterminds behind the killing, or the source of the grenades used in the attack. It was obvious to all except the investigators that this was no ordinary killing and that careful planning and preparation were involved.

As my husband lay mortally wounded, no attempt was made to provide him with even rudimentary medical assistance. In fact, it is reported that the gates of the local hospital were deliberately kept closed as his vehicle approached. No saline drip, no blood transfusion, no proper ambulance was provided, let alone a helicopter. My husband died from loss of blood arising from horrendous injuries (hundreds of grenade splinters all over his body with both his feet virtually blown off), in a run-down ambulance (without any medical equipment), during the four-hour road journey to Dhaka.

The speaker's failure to make any attempt to save one of the MPs whose welfare and security he was responsible for is by now known to most people in Bangladesh. At whose direction did this man take the decision not to provide any help to my husband?

My heart breaks at the thought that a person who was covered by generous UN medical insurance (as a former staff member), that would allow virtually cost-free treatment anywhere in the world, could die in such a way, without any medical treatment whatsoever, in his own country.

After his death, I received no message of condolence from the president, prime minister or, indeed, the speaker. With local BNP leaders quickly identified as being involved, is it not natural to suppose that some central BNP leaders could have been involved? Given the events I have described, is it not possible to conclude that powerful elements in the BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami government itself were involved? Did they not then apparently place the investigation in the hands of those who seemed to be acting to protect the real murderers? Why were the investi-

gators rewarded with a presidential award for a failed investigation?

To seek justice from such a government was too much to expect, but we did believe that a sustained campaign for justice would expose the truth, and supported by family and friends in Bangladesh, the United States and Europe, we began a peaceful program of weekly protests. Time and time again we demanded a further investigation and the involvement of foreign investigators, given that local investigators, whatever their competence, could not be expected to stand up to pressure from powerful quarters in the ruling party.

My husband was an internationally known figure, and from all around the world there were representations to the government to undertake a complete investigation into his killing. The BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami regime rejected all these requests. We then made the same request to the first caretaker government of October 2006, but once again this was ignored.

When the new caretaker government took office on January 11, I was filled with new hope that at last there was a chance of an unbiased and comprehensive investigation of my husband's assassination. I wrote to the chief advisor and was assured that every effort would be made in this regard. I was informed that a 5-member team had been formed to undertake a fresh investigation. However, a few days later I was horrified to read in the newspapers that the same investigating officer (IO) who had been placed in charge of the investigation under the BNP-Jamaat regime had once again been placed in charge of the "new" investigation.

A new IO has since been appointed, but valuable time has once again been lost. We believe that the eyewitnesses to the attack, as well as those responsible for security and administration at the time of the killing, should have been questioned in depth. To the best of our knowledge, this has not been done. Most disturbingly, there seems to be a concerted effort to pin the blame on Harkat-ul-Jihad (HuJ) operations. Is this not a blatant attempt to deflect attention from the BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami regime? From the numerous press reports of the HuJ bombers caught so far, they have admitted to many killings and assassinations but have always expressed their lack of knowledge of the Kibria assassina-

tion.

As my husband's murder took place during the BNP-Jamaat regime, they must bear some responsibility, given their total control over the administration and security apparatus. There were obvious political motives behind the assassination. Perhaps it was done to push back the opposition campaign for election-system reforms that would have interfered with the BNP-Jamaat's election rigging plans. It is now widely recognised that the falsification of the voter rolls was a key element of their strategy (although the perpetrators of that crime go unpunished). My husband was very concerned about this issue, as can be seen from the paper on election reforms he was to have presented on January 30, 2005.

A second motive relates to electoral advantage -- both nationally and locally. My husband was a key strategist of the Awami League. Across the nation, his exceptional skills as a macroeconomic manager were increasingly recognised, and he will be remembered for having delivered strong growth with low inflation, as well as undertaking important structural reforms in the financial sector during his period as finance minister. Also, his constituency was the heart of an Awami League cluster of four seats. It was expected that with his death these seats would be captured by the BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami.

It is not, therefore, surprising that most people believe that the local BNP party men identified as being involved in the attack were hired agents of higher-level leaders.

In early 2004, a huge shipment of arms and explosives was intercepted at Chittagong port and released (to persons unknown). There is still no information available as to whom these explosives were handed over to, but the fact that the type of grenades the shipment contained matched those used in various political killings (mainly of opposition figures, mainly belonging to the Awami League) is a continued source of unease in Bangladesh.

These weapons are still largely unaccounted for, and the presumption is that, as they were used under the BNP-Jamaat regime, they will be used again. Do not these weapons represent a source of strength for the BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami and the extremist forces they nurtured? And are they not a threat to the holding of any elections free from fear? As a concerned citizen, I would request the government to look into this matter. The public seeks assurance that these weapons did not fall into the wrong hands.

There have been such a large number of bomb, grenade and other attacks in recent years that it may be useful to list at least some of them: the Udichi bomb-blast; the suicide bombing at Ramna; the grenade attack on the Awami League meeting of the August 21, 2004; the killings at Rajshahi and Khulna, the attack in Sylhet on the British High Commissioner; the murder of Ahsanullah Master, MP, the assassination of Shah Kibria on January 27, 2005; the bombings at Netrakona and Gazipur; the synchronised bombings of August 17; and the murder of the judges at Jhalukati. Almost all these attacks took place under the BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami government.

The case of the Jhalukati murders has been concluded, in the Ahsanullah Master case some lower-level BNP operatives were convicted, and a charge-sheet has been submitted in the case of the attack on the British high commissioner. However, in virtually every other case, the victims' families still await a full investigation, and the identification and punishment of the killers. On behalf of all the victims' families, I would urge this non-party government to give priority to ensuring that the justice denied for so many years is finally assured through the initiation of proper investigation into each incident.

As a citizen, the right to justice is a most basic one. Are we to be denied this right in Bangladesh? I hope that the government will give this issue the importance it deserves, as murder is among the most serious of crimes, and unpunished political murder in particular destroys the integrity of the democratic political system.

Punishment of the murderers is important for ending the climate of impunity that prevailed under the BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami government in every sector.

Given the extreme partisanship of the BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami regime -- a partisanship that was undermining most of the institutions of the country -- a full and impartial investigation of my husband's assassination was not possible during the their rule. That is why we demanded that foreign investigators be invited to assist the local team. This could be done through a UN Commission of Enquiry (as in the Rafik Hariri case in Lebanon), but only at the request of the government.

The failure of the current investigation into my husband's killing -- despite the fact that a neutral regime is in power -- would suggest that BNP-Jamaat loyalists who still remain active in the administration may have been able to stifle any efforts to find the real masterminds.

It is true that the FBI briefly came to help, but it must be remembered that they left when they realised that they would not receive the full cooperation of the authorities. It is not that I doubt the competence of local agencies and investigators -- I just doubt that they are capable of withstanding political pressure. I believe that events over the last three years have borne out our family's concerns in this regard.

I still cannot accept that my husband was targeted to be so

brutally murdered. He was an honest and deeply patriotic individual who gave up a life of ease and comfort (on a United Nations pension) to serve his country. At every point in the nation's history he demonstrated his courage and commitment to the nation -- from going to jail during the Language Movement of 1952 to joining the Liberation Struggle of 1971 as a diplomat who quit the service of Pakistan to support the efforts of the Mujibnagar government.

In his lifetime he never received any recognition of his many contributions to the nation. That is why when, after his death, there was a petition by many eminent citizens of the country to rename a portion of the Satmasjid road (in front of our house) as "SAMS Kibria Avenue" we were hopeful that this would be done. However, we have received no reply from the city authorities, perhaps because they are still dominated by the BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami's loyalists.

Shah Kibria was even-tempered and moderate in his statements, and focused on policies rather than on individual failings. He spoke on the important issues of the day in a firm but gentle voice, demonstrating that strength in parliamentary debate lay not in the loudness of one's voice but in the clear articulation and conviction of one's views. Was just being in the opposition his "crime"? This is possible, given the murders of numerous opposition figures during the BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami years -- in sharp contrast to the previous Awami League gov-

ernment of 1996-2000 during which not a single opposition figure of national stature was assassinated.

After my husband's death, I had undertaken various peaceful protest programs calling for an investigation into all the killings and an end to political violence. These programs included an international signature campaign with a stitched together a signature sheet stretching about one mile, with tens of thousands of signatures, that was displayed in front of parliament on March 31, 2005. Our weekly program of silent vigils at dusk ("Blue for Peace") every Thursday (the day he died) in different locations is now well-known throughout the country, largely due to the coverage of a sympathetic media.

I received much support from ordinary citizens and will be forever indebted to those who joined our family in these programs. I don't know what effect all this had on the government, but perhaps we were able to stir the conscience of the nation. Our activities have been suspended since January 11, as we have not received permission to hold any protests under the emergency regulations that remain in force.

However, our resolve to seek justice remains undiminished. We hope that the people of Bangladesh realise that it is important, not just for the victims' families but for the entire nation, that the killers are punished and the era of routine political violence is brought to an end.



COURTESY: BLUE FOR PEACE

## Foot-dragger? No, a fighter: Interview with IPCC head, Rajendra Pachauri

In 2002, when Rajendra Pachauri was named to head the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Al Gore criticised him as the "let's-drag-our-feet candidate." But the crusading ex-veep was quickly proven wrong: Pachauri has loudly campaigned for changes in environmental policies, and the series of voluminous IPCC reports released this year have essentially put an end to the scientific debate over global warming. Soon after his organisation won the Nobel Peace Prize with Gore, Pachauri spoke with Newsweek's Fareed Zakaria.

Zakaria: There are still people who say that the science on global warming is unclear. How do you react to that kind of talk?

Pachauri: Well, the calculations are so simple that even a high-school kid can do them. The 20th-century sea-level rise was about 17 centimeters. Our predictions for the end of this century are 18 to 59 centimeters.

So even if we end up somewhere in the middle, we have a pretty serious crisis on our hands.

What is the cost involved in doing something about this -- is it too great?

We have completely debunked this fallacy. If you want to stabilise the concentration of greenhouse gases at the level that will limit temper-

ature increases to 2 degrees to 2.4 degrees Centigrade, the cost to the global economy in 2030 will be less than 3 percent. Now, that really means that the level of prosperity that we are going to reach in 2030 may, at best, be postponed by eight or nine months. That's certainly not a high price to pay.

What about the issue of coal? At

the end of the day, the single largest contributor to CO2 in the world is coal, and it's cheap and plentiful. As far as coal is concerned, we really need technological innovation. There are things like gasification of coal that could improve the efficiency of the whole (sector). What's happened, unfortunately, since 1985, when oil prices crashed, R&D expenditure on alternatives also crashed correspondingly. I suppose the private sector will invest in these things if you have a price on carbon. Do you think that if you had a carbon tax, the West would need to subsidise clean coal or alternative energies in places like China?

I think that if there was a means by

which you could facilitate a low-carbon future in China and India, you'll get desirable results. That hasn't happened so far.

The United States is the largest consumer of coal, but there'll be

650 coal-fired plants built

between now and 2012 in China and the emissions of those will be quite substantial. I believe that China and India have to chart a new path. The developed-country experience has proved disastrous for a variety of other reasons: energy security for one thing; local pollution, another. But I think in both countries, there is now a serious debate. In India I can see it for sure because the prime minister is quite concerned about this issue. There's now a serious effort to look at a low-carbon economy in China. But they are not talking about sacrificing growth. They are finding that the impacts of climate change are pretty serious for China. It's affected their agriculture, it's affected their precipitation levels -- floods, droughts, a whole range of other impacts are taking place. They also realise, for reasons of energy security, they cannot continue on this path.

And what about the United States -- do you feel this administration is still a laggard?

No, I would say there's clearly a very detectable shift on the part of

this administration. If one looks at their statements -- it would've been hard to imagine two years ago they would be saying the kinds of things they're saying today. Irrespective of who's in the White House, I think the next administration will have to be far more proactive on climate change than we have seen so far. How important do you think adaptation is -- recognising these changes are afoot and trying to mitigate them?

When one talks about adaptation, one talks about accepting the reality of these impacts and putting in place technological and policy measures by which we're able to manage the problem. That's absolutely essential. The fact that the Nobel Prize committee has awarded this prize to the IPCC for peace is a clear recognition of (the fact) that if we allow things to run out of hand, it can lead to conflict. Where you have water scarcity, you obviously have conflict. Where you

have floods and droughts, obviously there will be hardship and that can lead to conflict. If the sea level rises and people are displaced, they will overrun political boundaries and that will lead to conflict. We have to adapt to these impacts. Even if we were to stabilise the concentration of greenhouse gases today, the impacts of climate change will continue for several decades. So we'd better learn to live with them. At the end of the day, are you optimistic or are you very, very worried?

Well, I'm very optimistic because the extent of awareness has increased over the last eight or nine months -- ever since our reports started coming out. This gives me hope that maybe the tide is turning.

Fareed Zakaria is Editor of Newsweek International.

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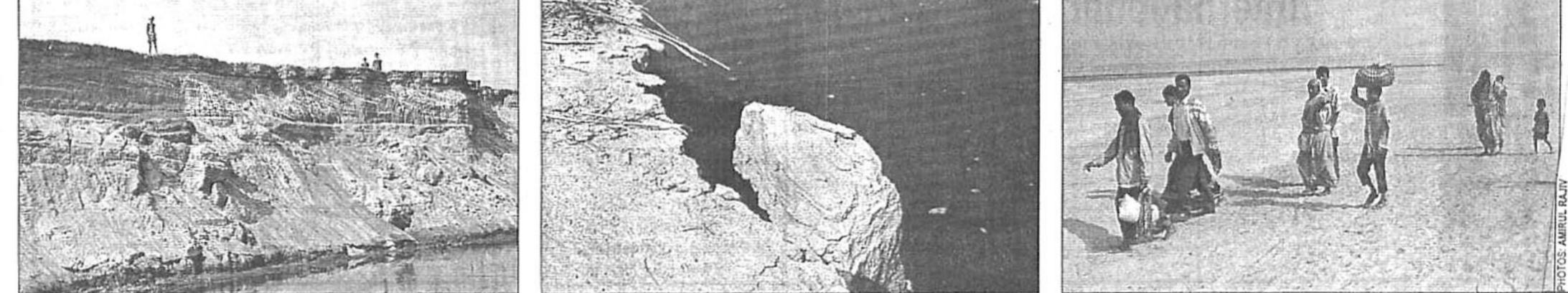


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