

PHOTO: STAR FILE

Remains of a massacre.

Ghosts of a Terrible Massacre

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For a moment, she felt her son's presence right there in her room. Kazi Nazma Sultana was sweeping the floor of her flat when it happened. All of a sudden, she could see a trail of footprints almost within her reach. It seemed as if her son had stepped on the floor a couple of moments back. She screamed in joy. Then stopped. Her husband reminded her that all she had seen was an illusion.

"Mine is a body with no soul in it," she muttered. Perhaps she had no better expressions to describe the agony of a bereaved mother. Two years ago, an angry mob killed her child Tipu Sultan and five of his childhood friends on the holy night of Shab-e-Barat.

On July 18, 2011, the mob had beaten them ruthlessly, apparently mistaking them for robbers in the dead of night on the capital's outskirts. The boys begged for mercy, saying that they were students, not robbers. But their pitiful pleas were drowned out by the frenzied shouts of the mob. The beating stopped only when they had gone beyond all pain.

As the dark gave its way to dawn, the spot retained the ominous signs of the that terrible night. Lying there were a red shirt, a pair of trousers of one of the victims and a bamboo stick that the mob used for killing.

"Still in my dreams, I hear my son calling 'Ma'. I wake up right at the moment only to find nobody around," said Beauty Begum, mother of another victim Ibrahim Khalil. "How could a mob turn so violent on the night of prayer?" she kept asking between her sobs.

