The Face of Inhumanity



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Sohel Rana has been in the news after April 24. But for all the wrong reasons.

Rana, possibly the most hated man in the country, was responsible for the death of over a thousand workers who lost their lives in one of the worst industrial disasters in recent history. Workers had seen cracks on Rana Plaza in Savar the day before the building collapsed but authorities did not take their fears into account, farcing them to come to work the next day or face serious cuts in their wages. Rana had also told journalists that the cracks were "nothing serious," ignoring the warnings of engineer Abdur Razzak, who repeatedly asserted that the building was unsafe.

What more can be expected out of a man who bullied adjacent landowners, and took their property by force to build this eight-storeyed structure? Rana was a notorious muscleman, a 'mastan', involved in the trading of illegal drugs and guns, and protected by corrupt local government officials. Rana was the joint convenor of the local unit of Awami League's youth wing Jubo League, and would unashamedly brandish his influence in his locality, threatening people and exploiting his political connections for his own gains. His political allies seemed to have been mesmerized by him, as they didn't think twice before giving him a construction permit to build Rana Plaza, despite allegations against him, and even went on to give him a second permit to add upper floors that is said to have destabilized the building.

Rana might be the face of the terrible disaster but he's not the sole villain. Corrupt government officials who protected him and granted him access to build his unstable complex, other owners of factories in the complex who did not care for the safety of their workers, as they continued to violate every code and regulation, the engineer who should have reported the cracks in the building to a higher authority and demanded that the plaza be closed until further inspection – all of them are to be blamed for the death of 1,129 factory workers.

The Rana Plaza tragedy has had long term effects on the country's garment industry - many buyers cancelled orders, with Bangladesh being internationally criticised for its negligence of basic safety codes for workers.

Rana, though far from being the sole culprit, is the symbol of everything wrong with our wealth obsessed, power hungry, political society. Unfortunately, however, our country is overpopulated with countless Ranas, who are willing to risk lives to satisfy their insatiable appetite for wealth. ■