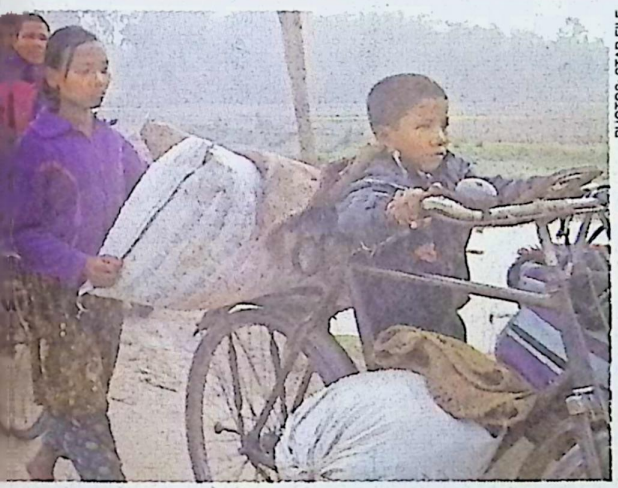




PHOTOS: STAR FILE

Communal repression results in forced migration.

this regard advocate Rana Das Gupta a senior lawyer and an expert on communalism practices in Bangladesh says, "A separate and independent law has to be promulgated to safeguard the minority groups. Till then, the cases of assaulting minorities should be handled with *Shontrash Domon Ain* (Anti Terrorism Act), *Jononirapotta Ain* (Public Safety Act) and *Druto Bichar Ain*. Not only that an independent and empowered commission has to be formed to handle the issues regarding the religious and ethnic minorities."

Rana Das Gupta also says that political parties have a major role to play. MPs should be made responsible for any occurrence of communal violence in his/her constituency. Political party chiefs should not allow their party workers in the party with any allegation of conducting communal assault.

It is true that despite having a constitution that upholds equality and secularism, now Bangladesh needs a law to prevent the worst form of racism. In many countries racism and communalism have been prevented by separate laws such as Equality Act, 2010 of United Kingdom. The victims of these incidents have also demanded investigations and protection from the United Nations as the national security system has always failed to protect them. Even the conscious Muslims are appalled by the extent of violence.

Jotirmoy Borua, a senior lawyer and activist has put more emphasis on cross religious effort to prevent communal violence. He suggests that a cross religious team, involving volunteers of all religions of the vulnerable area will be responsible to safeguard the properties of the minorities. He also initiated this effort after the Ramu massacre and by this inclusive initiative, security has been ensured in many areas. Alongside the promulgation of a new law and commission to protect minorities this awareness raising approach is essential to prevent violence. This sort of cross religious inclusive approach has to be adopted nationally to make people conscious of other's safety and government's commitment to protect all its citizens.

Preventing communal terrorism requires a national approach. The consequence of communal violence may threaten our national security also. So whether by passing laws or setting up a commission, the crying need is to put a halt to communalism at any cost. ■