

STOP KILLING US

ISHRAT JAHAN

This year began with fear and silence enveloping Bangladesh and its streets.

Bombs were hurled everywhere, at everyone – without conscience or consequence – and the victims of these attacks were to become headlines for the next day.

On January 5, two school children were severely injured in a cocktail blast on Trunk Road in Feni. The victims were Minhazul Islam Anik and Ridoy, 15-year-old class X students of Feni Government Pilot High School. Their eyes and faces were burnt in the explosion and locals rushed them to the hospital. These boys neither belonged to any political student wing nor cared about whether democracy had been saved. They had simply walked into the middle of a battle while coming back from their tuition classes. In the next few minutes, for the rest of their lives, they turned into collateral damage.

The cycle of democracy in Bangladesh is such: *We die. We vote. We die some more.*

Here politics is defined by arson attacks, vandalism and 'dialogues' that never take place. Here 'politics' is practiced religiously.

Crude bombs are not a mere weapon for vandalism; it's the prevalent political culture in our country telling us: we have your life in our hands. We have allowed you your peace and your security.

We control you.

We can burn you down. We can burn your

streets and blind your children. And nothing can stop us.

In 2014 alone, incidences of political violence amounted to 558, in which 7204 were injured and 36 deaths were reported (according to Ain o Shalish Kendra). The victims of arson attacks have become nothing more than statistics and numbers to the majority because we have resigned to a fate of persistent political violence.

In most cases the victims are those who cannot afford to lose their livelihoods in the face of hartal and oborodh, i.e. those who hail from the lower strata of society. The question arises: will these victims ever find justice? In all likelihood – no. Because there is no face to put on the violence, the attackers hide under the banners of political parties. They attack because they are told they have to.

Our concerns are no longer bound to whether the political system will find any form of stability. It has now become a question of humanity: are they, the big figures, no longer human enough to stop bloodshed in the name of democracy?

In this bizarre system, the common man becomes nothing more than collateral damage.

The streets belong to those who hold the bombs and the bullets. The country belongs to them. We, the common people, with our homes to run and lives to build – we cannot afford to die any more because the system isn't working for them.

It's not our battle, don't kill us.



RAYAAN IBTESHAM CHOWDHURY

A song means something different to everyone, and our favourite songs have a special connection with us. When we dedicate a song to someone, we are sharing that connection with them, letting them into our lives.

Mix tapes have always been a great way to do this. And in 2015, when blank discs only cost around Tk 50 and almost every laptop comes with a write-enabled DVD drive, making mix tapes is really simple.

A carefully crafted arrangement of Beatles tracks, for example, can work as a makeshift letter, expressing feelings you may be too shy to put into words. If someone you know regularly jogs, making them a compilation of their favourite songs as a workout tape can also be a great gift. And why not give your parents a mix of their favourite songs from back when they were young?

The potential emotional impact a mix tape can have means that when it comes to DIY Gifts, few things can beat it.



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