

Heartless, hateful against Hindus

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massacred in the 10-and-a-half-hours raid.

They killed widely respected philanthropist Natun Chandra Sinha when he was offering morning prayers. They abducted Sheikh Mozaffar Ahmed, founder of the Awami League in Chittagong, and his son Sheikh Alamgir from road and killed them in a Pak army camp.

Forty-four years later, justice finally caught up with the self-declared brigadier of Chittagong as he walked the gallows early today.

He was executed three days after the Supreme Court dismissed his petition to review his death sentences, handed down by a special tribunal in 2013.

Narrating Salauddin's brutality in its judgment on July 29, the SC said: "Accused Salauddin Quader Chowdhury has committed crimes with highest ruthlessness and extreme atrocity. He persecuted civilian and unarmed people, tortured them to death, caused disappearance of innocent people and helped in disappearing people in collaboration with the occupier Pakistani Army."

The accused also rampantly looted and assisted in plundering people's property, it said in the judgment written in English.

"The offences were not the one envisaged in the penal laws of any country, the accused in committing those crimes in the synchronised plan and design that were developed and

put into execution with cool blood.

"Salauddin Quader Chowdhury persecuted, killed and caused disappearance of civilian people solely on religious and political grounds. He had direct involvement in the killing of innocent people.

"The prosecution has been able to establish clearly that he had thoroughly designed plan and common objectives to commit those crimes, especially he had done all these brutal offences with specific intention to exterminate the Hindu religious community and his political opponents from that locality," added the SC bench headed by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha.

Investigators and witnesses said Salauddin carried out all those atrocities largely because of the high-voltage 1970 general election in which his father Fazlul Quader Chowdhury, a top politician of the then East Pakistan, lost his Raozan constituency to an Awami League candidate.

They blamed the defeat on the Hindu community.

Also, his families conviction for Pakistan's unity drove them to join hands with the Pak army to execute the latter's plan to annihilate the Hindu population or to forcefully convert them to Islam or drive them from the country, according to the prosecution.

On April 13, 1971, Salauddin along with his accomplices and the Pak army raided five villages -- Maddhya Gohira Hindupara, Gohira, Jagotmallopara, Sultanpur Banikpara and

Unasattarpara -- with the intent to destroy the Hindu community in whole or in part.

All these villages were located around Gohira Chowdhurypara, Salauddin's ancestral home.

The attacks took place between 6:30am and 5:00pm.

Salauddin's men called the people out of their homes on the pretext of holding a meeting and assembled them in a place. They then lined the people up before the Pakistan army opened fire.

Once done with killing people, they also looted and torched homes and destroyed the neighbourhoods.

The terror of the raids forced thousands of survivors of the villages to flee to India as refugees.

The marauders, guided by Salauddin, first attacked Maddhya Gohira Hindupara around 6:30am and killed five of a Hindu family, including a woman.

They then went to the house of Natun Chandra in Gohira village between 9:30am and 10:00am. The army men stormed the house and found septuagenarian Natun, owner of herbal medicine manufacturer Kundeshwari Owshadhaloy, offering his morning prayers at a temple inside the compound.

They had a brief conversation with him and left. Natun resumed his prayers.

But Salauddin and the Pak soldiers returned there in a while. They dragged

Natun out of the temple.

He cried out in protest but in vain.

"I have an order from my father to kill you," shouted Salauddin, whose father Fazlul Quader was the chief of Convention Muslim League that actively opposed the Bangalee's struggle for independence.

The soldiers then opened fire on Natun. But he was not dead yet.

As Natun was groaning in excruciating pain, Salauddin shot him two to three times to make sure his death.

The raid on Jagotmallopara village began between 10:30am and 11:00am. Thirty-two villagers were massacred and their houses torched.

Salauddin, his men and Pak soldiers swooped on Sultanpur Banikpara around 1:00pm. They looted and destroyed houses there.

The last place Salauddin and his gang attacked was Unasattarpara. They reached the village between 4:00pm and 5:00pm and killed 70 people there.

On April 17, 1971, Salauddin with some Pakistan army personnel stopped the car of Sheikh Mozaffar Ahmed when he along with his family was returning from Raozan to his home in Rahamatganj.

They picked up the AL leader and his son from there.

Later, the family members came to know that the two were taken to a nearby army camp and killed.

The family did not even get the bodies back for burial despite repeated requests.

Sick-brain behind intellectuals' killing

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were the killings that many of the bodies were found mutilated beyond recognition at different killing fields.

Al-Badr Bahini, comprised of leaders and activists of Jamaat-e-Islami's then student wing Islami Chhatra Sangha, also dumped scores of bodies in unknown locations.

The cold-blooded savagery left a deep scar on the newborn country, which is struggling to recover from the loss even 44 years after its independence.

Much to the disappointment of the victims' families and relatives, Mojaheed had eluded justice for more than four decades.

Not only that, he re-emerged on Bangladesh's political scene after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975.

He gained immense political clout and went on to become a minister during the 2001-2006 tenure of the BNP-led four-party government.

But finally, the Jamaat secretary general paid for his crimes against humanity as he walked the gallows early today, three days after the Supreme Court dismissed his petition for reviewing the death penalty handed down by a special tribunal in 2013.

He was the first war crimes convict to have been executed for the killing of

intellectuals in 1971.

In its order on Mojaheed's review petition, the apex court said, "... We held that petitioner's [Mojaheed's] ruthless Badr Bahini being instigated, suggested, provoked and incited by the petitioner had kidnapped and killed the intellectuals which was cold blooded savagery.

"Such barbaric gruesome brutal crimes which are comparable with the Hitler's Gas Chamber Genocide or Jalilianbag massacre.

"The barbaric gruesome and heinous crimes which under the petitioner's leadership his Badr Bahini committed is a revolt against the humanity," it said.

Mojaheed, who was from Faridpur, was president of Dhaka city Chhatra Sangha from January to July, and then became general secretary of the organisation's East Pakistan unit. He was made its president in October 1971.

Islami Chhatra Sangha was turned into Al-Badr Bahini in 1971, and Mojaheed, being the top leader of Chhatra Sangha, became the chief of the ruthless militia, show war crimes documents.

During the nine-month war, Mojaheed visited many districts and held meetings with his followers, encouraging them to kill freedom fighters and pro-liberation people.

"Al-Badr is a name! A wonder! Al-Badr

is a commitment! Where there is a so-called freedom fighter, there is Al-Badr. Where there is a miscreant, there is Al-Badr. For the 'Indian agents' or the 'miscreants', Al-Badr is the Azrail [angel of death] incarnate," he said at a meeting with leaders and activists of Jamaat and Chhatra Sangha in Mymensingh on April 22, 1971.

Jamaat's mouthpiece Daily Sangram ran a report two days later, quoting from his speech.

Mojaheed did not limit himself to giving such speeches only. He along with his associates and Pakistan army officials devised an evil plan to eliminate the intelligentsia of the soon-to-be born Bangladesh.

Sensing an imminent defeat, Al-Badr picked up intellectuals and professionals from their houses and took them to the Al-Badr headquarters at Mohammadpur Physical Training Centre mostly from December 10 to 15 in 1971.

Mojaheed used to visit the camp regularly, according to witnesses.

The victims, who were among the best minds of the nation, had to endure brutal torture before being killed. Their bodies were dumped in different killing fields in Rayerbazar and Mirpur.

The martyred intellectuals include Dhaka University teachers Prof Mofazzal Haider Choudhury, Prof Munier Chowdhury, Prof Giasuddin

Ahmed, Prof Anwar Pasha, and Prof Santosh Chandra Bhattacharyya; journalists Serajuddin Hossain, Syed Najmul Haque, ANM Golam Mostafa, Nizam Uddin Ahmed, Selina Pervin, Shahidullah Kaiser, and physicians Fazle Rabbee and Alim Chaudhury.

The bodies of scores of victims were recovered from the killing fields while those of many others could not be traced.

Just two hours before Pakistan army's surrender on December 16, Mojaheed gave a speech at the Al-Badr headquarters, terming the day painful and the surrender a tragedy.

He urged Al-Badr members to spread out without being "ashamed" of their deeds, according to a book titled "Al-Badr" by Selim Mansur Khalid. The prosecution used this book as evidence.

Every year, the nation observes December 14 as Martyred Intellectual Day with the victims' family members and relatives voicing demand for trial and punishment for the perpetrators.

In its order, the apex court touched on the long, agonising wait of the bereaved family members for justice.

"While awarding the sentence, the court must take into consideration the unbearable pains, tears rolling down the cheeks and sufferings of the widows and children of the victims who cried for getting justice for about 43 years," it said.

Arrogance, their middle name

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national elections, he said, "The constitution does not support the demand. Besides, there are no war criminals in Bangladesh."

He added, "It is the imaginary and self-created bizarre idea of those talking about war crimes ... there are no anti-liberation forces in Bangladesh."

Asked about his party's role in 1971 Liberation War, he said, "These accusations are all false and ill-motivated."

The Jamaat leader was arrested in June 2010.

In 1971, Mojaheed and Salauddin led their armed gangs and abetted Pakistan occupation forces in massacre of peace-loving and freedom-seeking Bangladeshis during the war.

Salauddin's father Fazlul Quader Chowdhury was the president of Convention Muslim League while Mojaheed's father Maulana Abdul Ali was the ameer of Faridpur Jamaat-e-Islami during the Liberation War.

Both Jamaat and Muslim League stood against the Liberation War.

Abdul Ali, a member of Pakistan provincial assembly in 1962-64, was one of the top leaders of Shanti Committee, an anti-liberation organisation, in Faridpur.

Fazlul Quader, witnesses said, formed auxiliary force Al-Shams in Chittagong in 1971.

Their sons followed in their footsteps.

Mojaheed was the central president

of Jamaat's erstwhile student wing Islami Chhatra Sangha.

He became the chief of the infamous Al-Badr Bahini, the ruthless force responsible for the mass extermination of intellectuals towards the end of the war.

Salauddin led the Al-Shams Bahini in different operations in Chittagong.

Immediately after the nine-month war, Abdul Ali and Fazlul Quader were arrested for their anti-liberation roles. Ali was released later, but Fazlul died in jail in 1973.

During the war, Mojaheed visited many districts as the chief of Chhatra Sangha and Al-Badr. He held meetings with the Sangha activists and instigated annihilation of freedom fighters as well as pro-liberation people.

"Al-Badr is a name! A wonder! Al-Badr is a commitment! Where there is a so-called freedom fighter, there is the Al-Badr. Where there is a miscreant, there is the Al-Badr. Al-Badr is the Azrail [angel of death] incarnate for the Indian agents or the miscreants," Mojaheed was quoted by Jamaat's mouthpiece Daily Sangram on April 24, 1971.

"These traitors and Hindustanis [terms he used for freedom fighters] are to be hunted down and killed. Those who fight against the Pakistani army and the Al-Badr will be killed," freedom fighter and prosecution witness Zahir Uddin Jalal quoted Mojaheed as saying

on December 4, 1971.

Those were no empty threats. Mojaheed's Al-Badr Bahini killed intellectuals and professionals days before the December 16 Victory Day to cripple the soon-to-be independent Bangladesh intellectually.

Salauddin carried out atrocities in his home district Chittagong.

Though not directly involved in party politics, he actively took part in his father's election campaign in 1970, several prosecution witnesses said.

Angered by the defeat of his father in the 1970 election, Salauddin along with his accomplices and Pakistan army launched attack on five Hindu-dominated villages in Raozan to kill 111 Hindus, as they believed Hindu people did not vote for his father.

His brutality was manifested when he shot Natun Chandra Sinha, a social worker and philanthropist, who was already groaning in excruciating pain from bullet injuries inflicted by Pakistani army men.

Salauddin fired two to three shots to ensure Sinha's death.

In the last week of July 1971, Saleh Uddin, who later became the vice-chancellor of a public university, was brutally tortured on the instructions of Fazlul Quader.

"He is not even shedding tears. What sort of beating have you given him?" Salauddin Quader told his accomplices during the torture at his

Goods Hill residence, according to Saleh Uddin's testimony before a tribunal.

After independence, Mojaheed and Salauddin succeeded to dodge arrest.

Following the murder of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and a bloody political changeover in August 1975, the two started to re-emerge in politics.

Mojaheed became Jamaat's secretary general on December 8, 2000, and social welfare minister of the BNP-led four-party government in 2001. He served as a technocrat minister until 2006.

Having survived an attack by the freedom fighters, he fled to Pakistan in September 1971 and from there he later went to London. He returned to Bangladesh in 1974 but remained in hiding until the assassination of Bangabandhu.

In the 80s, he became a minister under Ershad's military regime. He was elected lawmaker several times.

During the BNP-led four-party rule from 2001 to 2006, Salauddin, a standing committee member of the party, was the parliamentary affairs adviser of the then prime minister Khaleda Zia and enjoyed the status of a minister.

After 44 long years, justice finally caught up with these two arrogant and powerful men at 12:55pm today.

ted pleas for presidential clemency through the magistrates."

On the other hand, Salauddin's son Humman Quader Chowdhury said his father did not seek presidential clemency.

"We have asked him whether he had sought presidential clemency. He wanted to know who are talking such rubbish," said Humman after meeting his father. "My father didn't seek presidential mercy."

After meeting Mojaheed, his son Ali Ahmed Mabur said his father told them that he did not seek the clemency.

Brussels on lockdown over terror threat

Metro closed, alert raised to highest level fearing Paris-style attack

AFP, Brussels

Brussels was on terror lockdown yesterday, with a gunman still on the run after the Paris attacks which have rattled nerves throughout Europe.

The Belgian capital closed its metro system and shuttered shopping centres as a terror alert was raised to its highest level over reports of an "imminent threat" of a gun and bomb attack similar to the horror seen in Paris last week.

Brussels-based jihadists are increasingly at the heart of the Paris investigation and police have multiplied raids in the city's poorest districts in a rush to round up suspects before they disappear or launch fresh attacks.

Investigators are working around the clock to track Salah Abdeslam, one of the gunmen who is still on the loose after a coordinated wave of attacks on Parisian nightspots that left 130 people dead on November 13.

Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel said authorities feared a "Paris-style" attack "with explosives and weapons at several locations" despite the hundreds of soldiers patrolling Brussels that is also home to the EU and Nato.

The carnage in Paris has put all of Europe on edge as it emerged dangerous jihadists slipped between countries unnoticed, with France extending a ban on public gatherings until November 30, the start of a UN climate summit.

Turkey has detained a Belgian citizen of Moroccan origin, Ahmet Dahmani, 26, who is believed to have helped choose the sites for the Paris attacks, the Dogan news agency reported on Saturday.

The UN Security Council on Friday authorised nations to "take all necessary measures" to fight Islamic State (IS) jihadists and other extremist groups after a wave of attacks across the world left hundreds dead in a matter of weeks.

The UN resolution came after jihadist gunmen with an al-Qaeda branch run by a notorious one-eyed militant besieged a luxury hotel in the Malian capital of Bamako, holding hostages for nine hours and killing 19 people, including two Belgians.

Mali was struck a week after Paris and Beirut -- where 44 people were killed in IS bombings -- and three weeks after IS claimed to have downed a Russian plane in Egypt's Sinai peninsula killing all 224 on board.

In their final hours

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They then had a simple meal -- rice, vegetable, chicken and pulse -- provided by the jail authorities around 9:00pm, said prison sources.

Later, Dhaka Civil Surgeon Abdul Malek Mridha checked their health.

Moulana Monir Hossain, imam of Dhaka Central Jail Mosque, first administered tabwa (pardon) to Salauddin and then to Mojaheed.

The hangmen handcuffed the two and put nooses around their necks at the condemned cells.

Around 12:50am, Salauddin and Mojaheed were brought to the gallows from their cells.

It took them a few minutes to reach the gallows where 12 armed prison guards had already taken position.

A hangman was waiting there for the jail super's nod to pull the levers to part the scaffolds.

As the clock struck 12:55am, Senior Jail Super Jahangir Kabir gave the nod by dropping a handkerchief from his hand. The hangman immediately pulled the levers.

In grieving Paris, citizens defiantly poured into the streets and on to cafe terraces Friday night to mark one week since the carnage, with a noisy minute of non-silence as urged by several artists in the country.

The country has been shaken to its core by a dramatic week which began with the attacks and saw a violent shootout on Wednesday between police and jihadists holed up in a Paris apartment.

Suspected attack ringleader Abdelhamid Abaaoud was killed in the police assault along with his cousin Hasna Aitboulhacen and an unidentified suicide bomber.

Police on Saturday released seven people arrested during the siege, but kept hold of d Jawad Bendaoud, who has admitted lending the apartment to two people from Belgium "as a favour".

Abaaoud was a notorious Belgian jihadist thought to be fighting in Syria and his presence in Europe raised troubling questions about a breakdown in intelligence and border security.

The European Union agreed Friday to rush through reforms to the passport-free Schengen zone by the end of the year and immediately tighten border controls.

Prosecutors said Friday that two of the three men who blew themselves up near the Stade de France stadium -- the first of the wave of attacks -- may have entered Europe through Greece, posing as refugees fleeing the Syrian war.

Seven attackers were killed or blew themselves up during their assault on Paris.

Another, Salah Abdeslam, is believed to have fled to Belgium and a huge manhunt is under way to find him. His brother Brahim blew himself up outside a Paris bar.

Both grew up in the poor Molenbeek district of Brussels, described as an extremist hotbed, before going to join the Islamic State group in Syria.

Belgium's OCAM national crisis centre raised its alert level to 4 early Saturday, "signifying a very serious threat for the Brussels region".

The centre urged citizens to avoid crowded areas such as concerts and transport hubs in Belgium's capital and recommended that authorities in the Brussels region "consider cancelling major events" in order to free up police.

Khaleda back home

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Water canons, riot cars and fire brigade vehicles were deployed at different points of entrance to the airport. Joint forces of Rab, Armed Police Battalion, police and Ansar were seen deployed at different intersections from the airport to Banani.

Commuters, especially elderly people and children, faced untold sufferings as transport communications were snapped on the airport road stretching from the Airport Intersection to Hotel Radisson for at least one and a half hours since 5:37pm.

Public vehicles were seen stranded on the road for hours since Khaleda came out of the airport to go to her residence at Gulshan-2 at 5:37pm forcing many to go to their destinations on foot.

The law-enforcement agencies forced outgoing passengers to leave CNGs and other hired vehicles at the Airport Intersection although many were carrying heavy luggage.

"I have three pieces of big luggage in addition to other small bags. How will I take those to the terminal alone?" Md Selim, an Oman-bound expatriate, told The Daily Star after being forced to leave his vehicle by the law enforcers.

Several other outgoing passengers were seen facing the same difficulties on their way to the airport.

The two were kept hanging from the noose for around 20 minutes, said jail staffs.

After that, the civil surgeon checked the bodies and declared them dead.

The bodies of Mojaheed and Salauddin were taken out of the jail by two ambulances around 2:50am.

FAMILY MET THE CONDEMNED

Around 8:00pm, the prison authorities asked the families of the two convicts to meet them for the last time. Eighteen members of Salauddin's family reached the jail gate around 9:00pm and entered the prison at 9:30pm.

After meeting his father, Hummam Quader Chowdhury, eldest son of Salauddin, said, "My father's last words were that he would be killed because he had remained undefeated in elections."

Later, at least 20 members of Mojaheed's family entered the jail around 11:00pm.

Mojaheed's brother Ali Afzal Mohammad Khalef said his brother sought blessings from the countrymen.

Govt, family versions contradict

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On Wednesday, the Supreme Court dismissed the review petitions of the two. Their death sentences handed down by the International Crimes Tribunal thus remained upheld.

The copy of the SC order was sent to jail on Thursday through the tribunal. Around 2:45pm yesterday, Law Minister Anisul Huq confirmed that the two had sought presidential mercy.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, too, said both Mojaheed and Salauddin in the presence of two magistrates conveyed their decision to seek mercy.

The mercy petitions reached his desk around 2:30pm, the minister told this newspaper at 4:55pm.

He said the petitions, labelled "Appeal for mercy" on top, were then sent to the Prime Minister's Office to be forwarded to the president.

In the meantime, families of both the war criminals held separate press conferences.

At one press conference, held at Supreme Court Bar Association auditorium around noon, Mojaheed's family members indirectly requested the president to halt the execution until the end of the trial

of August 21 grenade attack case, in which the Jamaat leader is accused.

Salauddin's family members said he would convey his decision on seeking presidential clemency only when he would meet his lawyers.

When the media reported that Mojaheed and Salauddin had sought clemency, family members expressed doubt. Jamaat-e-Islami in a statement, termed the news "absolutely untrue and confusing."

Contacted, the home minister around 5:00pm said, "They [Salauddin and Mojaheed] would have been hanged by now if they had not sought mercy. The duo has submit-