

Empowered women can resist violence

It is estimated that one in three women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) or sexual violence at some point in their lives. November 25 marks the beginning of an international campaign "16 Days of Activism" to challenge violence against women and girls. Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, talks to Shagufe Hossain of The Daily Star about the underlying causes behind gender-based violence.

The theme for this year's 16 Days of Activism is "Leave No One Behind: End Violence against Women and Girls." Does violence affect everyone equally? If not, why? Gender-based violence can happen to anyone—rich or poor. It happens in trains, buses, public places and inside homes. It does not have any class boundaries. It is a global pandemic. However, it affects women disproportionately; some women and girls are more vulnerable than others. That is why we have to shine a spotlight on those who are more vulnerable, such as women and girls with disabilities, women from ethnic and religious minorities, migrants or refugees in refugee camps, who often face the highest level of discrimination and are at even higher risk of experiencing violence.

Generally, one in three women are affected by violence. In Bangladesh, it is two out of three. Traditionally, violence has been a private domain. It is positive that the states are recognising that they have a duty of care to those experiencing violence. Gender equality and women's empowerment have been recognised as a Sustainable Development Goal. Issues like early childhood marriage and child trafficking have been introduced into Sustainable Development Goals. So this year's theme also underscores one of the essential principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a commitment to improve the lives of all and address pervasive inequalities and to "reach the furthest behind first."

How, in your opinion, can we end gender-based violence?
The solution should be structured around 4 Ps of violence. 1) Prevention: Through raising awareness and changing social norms



Lakshmi Puri

through education and economic empowerment. A culture must be established where women and girls must be valued as human beings. 2) Protection: How do we protect women who are particularly vulnerable? How is the law enforcement providing protection services for the survivors of violence and ensuring their safety and dignity? Comprehensive, multi-sectoral services (health, justice and policing, social services, etc.) must be made available for victims and survivors of sexual violence.

In some locations, one-stop crisis centres have been seen to be very effective. But also, we have to constantly think about how we can make this system available to the most vulnerable, those that are farthest to reach—for example, when violence happens in private spaces, refugee camps, rural areas, what are we doing about it? These questions must be addressed. 3) Prosecution: There is a gross under-reporting of cases of gender-based violence, particularly when it comes to rape and sexual abuse, because of the stigma that is attached to it. There is a culture of silence and impunity that needs to change. 4) Participation: Everyone has a critical role to play and must participate to create change. We must speak out against harassment and violence in our workplaces, in our institutions, in our social arenas and through our media, popular culture and mass communication channels.

In addition, economic empowerment of women is critical. When women are economically empowered, they are able to resist violence.

Theoretically, yes. But we observe that there is greater gender parity in education and employment. But also, gender-based violence has increased. What is the reason behind this?

Two things need to be kept in mind. Firstly, intimate partner violence is chronically underreported. There are women who do not report domestic violence and abuse for many reasons including fear of reprisal, lack of support and feelings of shame. So how do we know whether it has increased or decreased, if we had no accurate data to begin with? Yes, it is possible that we now see an increase in violence, but also this

could be because the empowered women are now coming out and reporting cases of violence. It is important that the four Ps that I mentioned are met.

Secondly, there has been a shift in gender dynamics. Men are no longer the primary breadwinners. So they are feeling threatened and acting out. We have, for instance, seen this phenomenon in refugee camps, where women are given employment opportunities but men aren't. This shifting power dynamic between genders is causing unrest. But this is no excuse for violence. Women must continue to be empowered.

In recent times, we have come to the realisation that simply engaging women may not be enough. Traditional development interventions have failed to engage men successfully, or deeply enough, in women's rights movements. What can we do, as a society, to ensure that this happens?

It is imperative that we engage men because gender-based violence and gender impunity are based on patriarchy. And patriarchy is pleased with the dominant position of men. Now that this position is being challenged, partnership and solidarity are imperative to ensure that gender impunity is reduced. Various movements like "He for She" has highlighted the role of men and boys in taking leadership in changing gender stereotyping. And in each of the 4 Ps, whether it is prevention, protection, prosecution or participation, it is critical that men and boys are engaged at all levels. Boys should be educated in homes and schools to not think of traditional role models as absolute. In workplaces, a gender-sensitive environment must be ensured. Just as an example, in the

law enforcement, when women are recruited, the men there must be educated so they support their colleagues. These institutions must be made gender-sensitive so that when women go to work there, they are met with empathy.

What are the three things that we can do on a priority basis in the fight against violence against women?

Firstly, let us make sure that laws, policies and measures are in place at the national, local and village levels. Laws, policies and measures must be there so that the architecture of the 4 Ps is put in place.

Secondly, let's have dedicated financing to deal with this issue. Gender-based violence is not only a legal issue. It is also related to development as well as human rights. The cost of violence is huge. And poorer countries, in particular, cannot afford this cost. There must be dedicated resources to support the 4 Ps.

And thirdly, movement building. Exposure and outrage at violence must be channelled through movements. Movements must be led firstly by young people. Young men and women can lead change. Institutional champions must be empowered to advocate for gender equality. Faith groups should be included in these movements as well. Religious leaders can play extremely powerful roles in building a movement because people listen to them. We believe no religion can be used as a tool to propagate gender-based violence. Inclusive movement building must be encouraged and sustained. Only then will gender-based violence see an end.

Shagufe Hossain is the founder of Leaping Boundaries and a member of the editorial team at *The Daily Star*.

Pakistani war criminals must be tried

BRIG RP SINGH, VSM (RETD)

THE Centre for Genocide-Torture and Liberation War Studies (CGTLWS) Khulna, in collaboration with Bangladesh History Congress, is organising an international seminar on "Genocide-Torture and Liberation War 1971" on November 25-26, 2017 in Dhaka. During the seminar, atrocities of the Pakistan army on innocent, unarmed civilians are likely to be highlighted. Millions of Bangladeshis had lost their lives during the war. Hundreds of thousands of women were raped. According to international aid and relief agencies, more than 70,000 war babies were born after the Liberation War. About 10 million refugees had to flee to India to escape the genocide. Old men and women were forced to witness the killing of their sons and raping of their daughters and daughters-in-law. Babies were flung in the air by the Pakistani soldiers and pierced by the bayonets. Valuables were looted and houses torched. The brutalities of the Pakistani soldiers had crossed all limits.

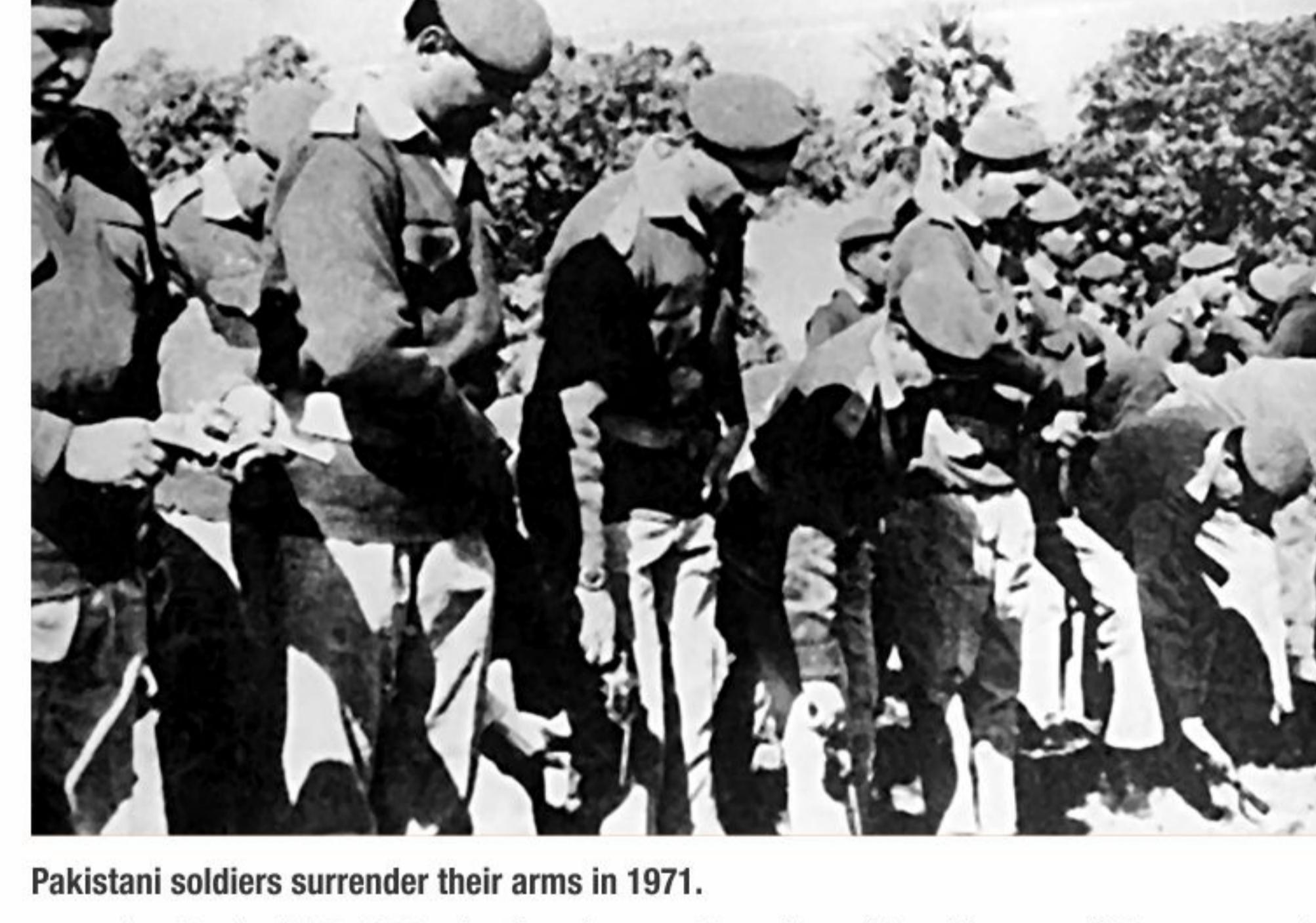
The Pakistani armed forces surrendered to the Joint Command of India and Bangladesh on December 16, 1971. Bangladesh government had identified 194 Pakistan army personnel and three each from its Air Force and Navy as the main war criminals, out of which five POW were let off on humanitarian grounds. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, immediately after his return from Pakistani captivity, initiated a formal process of war crimes trial. On March 29, 1972, the government announced a formal plan to try some 1,100 Pakistani military prisoners, including AAK Niazi and Rao Farman Ali Khan. On June 14, India agreed to initially deliver 150 POWs, including Niazi. On June 19, ten days before the Simla meeting between Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Indira Gandhi, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman reaffirmed his commitment to try the war criminals.

Contrary to what some people believe, the Simla Agreement signed on July 2, 1972 had nothing to do with the Pakistani POW that

Bangladesh wanted to prosecute because it was an issue between Dhaka and Islamabad. But Bhutto played his devilish card by making the 400,000 Bangladeshis who lived in West Pakistan hostage. He wanted to use them as a bargaining chip to free the Pakistani war criminals. Bangladeshi army officers who were serving in West Pakistan were also put in concentration camps.

At a press conference on August 10, 1972, Bhutto said that if Bangladesh believed that "it had a kind of veto over the release of our prisoners, there is a veto in our hands also." He requested China to use its veto power to bar Bangladesh from becoming a member of the United Nations. Beijing cast its first veto in the Security Council on August 25 to bar Bangladesh's membership. Bhutto insisted that Pakistan would recognise Bangladesh only after Pakistani prisoners were released. In November 1972, Bangladesh and India decided to repatriate some 6,000 family members of Pakistani POW. In response, Pakistan agreed to release 10,000 Bangladeshi women and children. However, the fate of most Bangladeshis trapped in Pakistan remained

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Pakistani soldiers surrender their arms in 1971.

uncertain. On April 17, 1973, after four days of bilateral talks, Bangladesh and India announced a "simultaneous repatriation" initiative to end the prisoner deadlock. Bangladesh, however, made it clear that India would not release any of the war criminals that it would try along with their local collaborators.

Bhutto furiously refused Bangladesh's contention of trying the accused Pakistanis in Bangladesh. He threatened that if Bangladesh carried out the trial, Islamabad would also hold similar tribunals against the Bangladeshi trapped in Pakistan. In an interview on May 27, 1973, Bhutto said: "Public opinion will demand trials (of Bangladeshis) here... We know that Bengalis passed on information during the war. There will be specific charges. How many will be tried, I cannot say." To prove that it was not just an empty threat, Pakistan government quickly seized 203

Bengalis as "virtual hostages." Bhutto argued that if Bangladesh tried its POWs, Pakistanis who were already "terribly upset" would topple Pakistan's political leadership. He claimed that his government had already arrested some high-ranking military officials for conspiracy.

On August 28, 1973, India and Pakistan signed the Delhi Accord, which followed the Bangladesh-India "simultaneous repatriation" proposal. This allowed the release of most of the stranded Bengalis and Pakistanis held in Pakistan and India respectively for almost two years. The tripartite repatriation began on September 18. Pakistan and India agreed that the issue of 195 accused Pakistanis would be settled between Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Pakistan kept the 203 Bangladeshi out of the repatriation process. In the last week of April 1973, Pakistan issued a statement saying,

"Pakistani government rejects the right of the authorities in Dhaka to try any among the

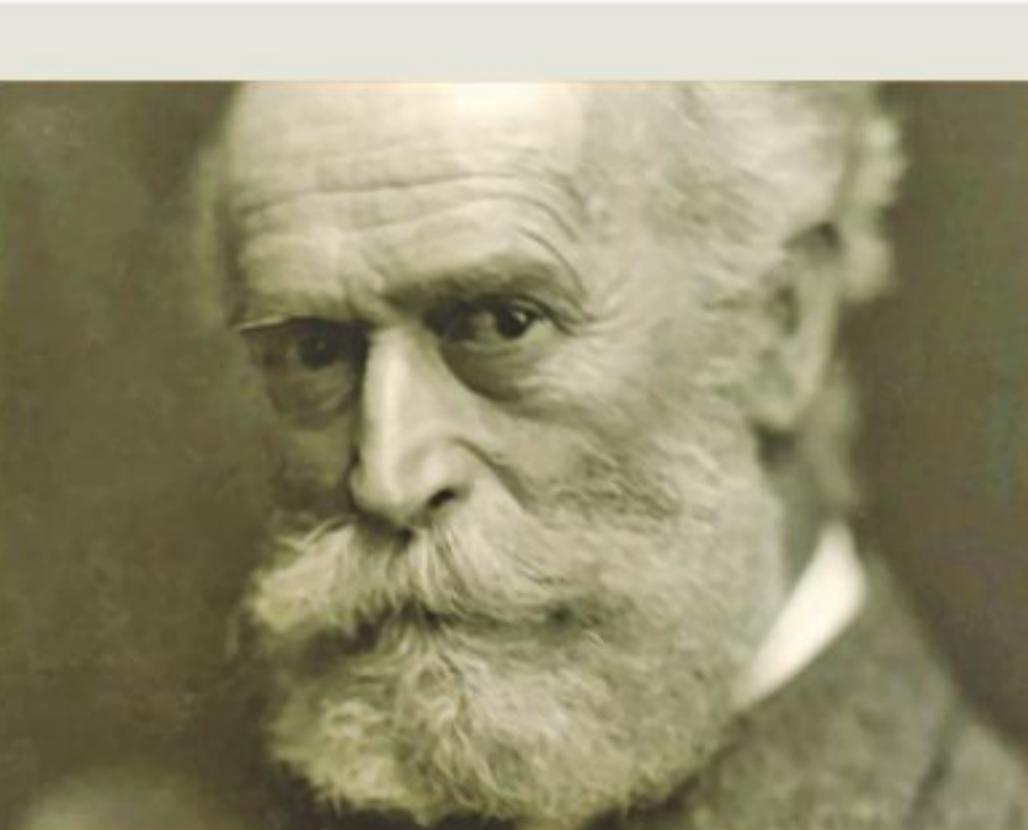
prisoners of war on criminal charges, because the alleged criminal acts were committed in a part of Pakistan by citizens of Pakistan. But Pakistan expresses its readiness to constitute a judicial tribunal of such character and composition as will inspire international confidence to try the persons charged with offenses."

After about one year, Bangladesh finally accepted Pakistan's proposal, fearing for the fate of Bengalis trapped in Pakistan and to gain the much-needed access to the UN. With faith that Pakistan would hold the trial of the Pakistanis involved in wartime atrocities, Bangladesh withdrew its demand for trying the Pakistanis in Dhaka. As part of a formal understanding, the last group of 203 detained Bangladeshis was allowed to return home on March 24, 1974. Bangladesh's position was formalised on April 10, 1974 through a tripartite agreement among Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. Pakistan offered apology to Bangladesh on the same day. The agreement noted that Bhutto would visit Bangladesh and "appeal to the people of Bangladesh to forgive and forget the mistakes of the past in order to promote reconciliation."

Pakistan has not fulfilled its commitment to try the war criminals yet. More than 100 war criminals are still alive and leading luxurious lives on the loot from Bangladesh. It is time for the right-minded citizens to build consensus through different means including social media for starting the trial process for them. Bangladesh government's hands are tied due to the Tripartite Agreement of April 10, 1974. Therefore, the citizens will have to build world opinion. If Nazis could be tried as late as in 2016 and the Japanese could be forced to apologise and pay compensation to Korean sex slaves 70 years after the end of World War II, then a similar trial of the war criminals and apology and compensation to the Bangladeshi victims of Pak genocide just after 46 years are indeed possible. The seminar organised by CGTLWS should initiate the process during its two-day deliberations.

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QUOTEABLE Quote



C. P. SCOTT

FORMER EDITOR OF THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN (NOW THE GUARDIAN)

Comment is free, but facts are sacred.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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চট্টগ্রাম বন্দর কর্তৃপক্ষ পরিচালক (ট্রাফিক) এর দপ্তর বিভিন্ন

চট্টগ্রাম বন্দরের জিসিবি এলাকায় উন্মুক্ত টেক্ডারের মাধ্যমে খালি কন্টেইনার স্থানান্তর কাজের জন্য আহ্বানকৃত দরপত্র দাখিলের জন্য নির্ধারিত তারিখ ও সময় (২৬/১১/২০১৭ইং ও সময়ঃ বেলা ১২.০০ ঘটিকা) অনিবার্য কারণবশতঃ স্থগিত করা হলো। দরপত্র দাখিলের তারিখ পরবর্তীতে জানিয়ে দেয়া হবে।

পরিচালক (ট্রাফিক)
চট্টগ্রাম বন্দর কর্তৃপক্ষ

জিডি-২৫৫২