



MARTYRED INTELLECTUALS DAY 2025

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WHAT WE OWE THE MARTYRED INTELLECTUALS

The systematic killing of intellectuals in 1971—from the night of March 25 through to the war's final hours—was not merely an attack on individuals. It was an assault on the very foundations of a humane society: the capacity to think freely, to question authority, to imagine alternatives, and to dissent.

The Pakistani Army and their local collaborators did not simply wage a war; they sought to mutilate a nation at its core. Killing soldiers may weaken an army, but killing intellectuals cripples a people. The intention was chillingly precise: a Bangladesh without teachers, without doctors, without writers, without scientists—a country hollowed out even in the moment of independence.

The threats once faced by the martyred intellectuals have not vanished. Today, truth is easily drowned by orchestrated noise; misinformation metastasises faster than facts; mobs—digital and physical—can be summoned with frightening ease; and the freedom of press and thought remains vulnerable to both coercion and convenience. These are not new forces. They are the same pressures the martyred intellectuals confronted—sometimes with their writing, sometimes with their teaching, always with their conviction.

If we are to carry their work forward, we must build a society where truth matters, where courage is not punished, and where power—any power—expects to be questioned. Only then can we say their sacrifice continues to speak.

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