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AI Index: ASA 13/005/2001 15 October 2001

URGENT ACTION**Bangladesh: Fear for safety, Religious minorities**

PUBLIC AI Index: ASA 13/005/2001

UA 258/01 Fear for safety 15 October 2001

BANGLADESH Religious minorities

Since the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) won a large majority in the general election on 1 October, its supporters have allegedly been attacking Hindus and other religious minorities because of their perceived support for the rival Awami League party. Police have apparently taken no action.

Groups closely linked to the BNP have reportedly driven hundreds of people off their land, and burned their houses. The victims allegedly include women who have been gang-raped. The police have apparently done nothing to stop the attacks or protect the victims.

According to Bangladeshi news reports, the guard of a Hindu temple at Deobhogh has been kidnapped by armed men, who fired shots as they left. Several Hindu doctors from Dhaka Medical College Hospital and Mitford Hospital were also attacked.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The BNP, formerly Bangladesh's main opposition party, formed an alliance with three other parties and won more than two thirds of the seats in the 1 October election. BNP leader Begum Khaleda Zia was sworn in as Prime Minister on 10 October. In the run-up to the elections there were violent clashes between supporters of Khaleda Zia and her main rival, Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina. About 150 people were killed and thousands were injured.



The population of Bangladesh is approximately 87 percent Muslim. The rest are predominantly Hindu.

Urgent Actions

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