



Research Article

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Humanitarian Crisis After Liberation War in Bangladesh: The Case of Cumilla Sadar**Md. Razibul Islam**

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Abstract: The independence achieved through the war of liberation is the best achievement of the Bengalis. Its range is wide and multidimensional. Crisis such as looting, arson, murder, genocide, torture, oppression of women, occupation, forced to emigrate, conversion, etc. are discussed facts about liberation war. However, about the post-war humanitarian crisis, the number of studies is low. This paper discusses the post-conflict humanitarian crisis of Cumilla Sadar, in Cumilla a traditional district of Bangladesh. Humanitarian crises such as war-related deaths, paralysis, food insecurity, mental imbalances, social harassment of heroines, refugee resettlement problems, mental anguish, etc. are directly and indirectly caused by war. This article represents post post-liberation humanitarian crisis not only particular area of Cumilla but also whole of Bangladesh.

Keywords: Humanitarian Crisis, Liberation War, Social Harassment, Mental Imbalance, Refugee.

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INTRODUCTION

The Bengali nation had to jump into an unexpected war to get rid of the discrimination between East and West Pakistan. It was an unequal war imposed by the West Pakistani rulers on the people of East Pakistan.¹ On the night of March 25, 1971, the massacre of innocent and unarmed Bengalis began. The father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman formally declared independence on March 26, and it turned into an armed liberation struggle. After nine months, the war ended with the unconditional surrender of the Pakistani invading forces on 16 December. The war ends but its impact remains. The red sun of freedom rises in our sky, leaving various hardships behind. This suffering is not only for nine months, this suffering is for a long time, and some of it is for a lifetime. Even after the war, the consequences of the humanitarian crisis are noticeable. In all the unions Cumilla Sadar² in several cases, the consequences of the war-related crisis are so significant. These consequences include death and mutilation in various ways, inability to earn due to torture, starvation and starvation, as well as social marginalization of brutally abused women.³ Bangabandhu said about post-war Bangladesh:

We have a mountain of problems before us today. We are at the tipping point of the Great Tribulation: one crore refugees returning abroad, two crore homeless people in the heart of the country, the dilapidated and dysfunctional port of Chittagong, a chaotic commercial supply system, broken roads,

bridges, and a disconnected communication system, poverty, malnutrition, rising commodity prices, and unattractive land all in one. We inherited it (Chowdhury 2015: 59).

RESEARCH AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

The aim and objective of the article are to determine the form and nature of the post-liberation humanitarian crisis.

To achieve the objective, 13 unions of Cumilla Sadar (Adarsh Sadar and Sadar South Upazila) of Cumilla district have been selected as research area.⁴ Due to the lack of secondary sources related to the wartime humanitarian crisis in the research area, more importance has to be given to the verbal commentary of eyewitnesses, victimized, informed family members of martyrs. In this case, data has been collected through personal (single) and group interviews of individuals over 60 years of age. Data collected from primary and secondary sources are used in the study through descriptive analysis.

Wartime Cumilla and Context of Creation of Post-Liberation Humanitarian Crisis

Cumilla is one of the ancient educational, culturally rich and traditional districts of Bangladesh. Most of the geographical part of the Cumilla district was under Sector No. 2 in the military division by the Mujibnagar Government (Hossain 2008: 432).⁵ The very important cantonment (Cumilla cantonment) of East

Pakistan is located on the outskirts of Comilla city. Besides, the Cumilla region was very important for both the Freedom fighters and the Pakistani forces as the border region and the capital Dhaka were in the same sector. The political awareness of the residents of the pioneer district in education is also evident. On the night of March 25, 1971, Cumilla was attacked like other places in the country. around 10:30 PM. Pakistani infantry and artillery units left for Cumilla town and attacked the police lines at midnight. It was not just an attack; it was a campaign of genocide (Siddiqui 2018: 9-19; Kasem 2019: 41-47; Ridoy 2011: 45-52).⁶ Such massacres lasted from March to December. As planned, the invading forces fell behind the police lines, the Rammala Survey Institute, Ansar Training Center and occupied the telephone exchange. The arrest operation started the next day. Senior politician Dhirendranath Dutta, Superintendent of Police Munshi Kabir Uddin, District Commissioner AKM Shamsul Haque Khan were arrested and killed within a few days. The members initially physically and mentally torture the persons they capture and later kill most of them. When raids were conducted in various places to prevent the activities of freedom fighters, many people were killed together. Initially, the number of massacres discovered in Cumilla district was 74 (Siddiqui 2017: 185) but the actual number is much higher. Notable massacre sites in the study area and institutes are Police Lines, Cumilla Cantonment, Ispahani Public School and College, Shalukmura, Tailkupi, Kaikar Char, Sadar Rasulpur, Ghilatali, Krishnapur-Dhananjay, Rupban Mura, Bangladesh Survey Institute, Dishaband, North Rampur, C&B Dak Bungalow, Shivpur; Dharmapur, Chowara Bazar etc.

Every camp built by the invaders becomes a torture cell. In addition to genocide, incidents of violence against women also happened equally. After March 25, young and middle-aged women who were arrested from different areas were detained in the cantonment area, Ispahani Public School and College and various torture centres and brutally tortured day after day, month after month. Due to unbearable physical pain and mental suffering, many heroines committed suicide by hanging themselves with the clothes they were wearing. As a result, they were kept naked in the torture centre. When Cumilla was freed from the enemy, approximately seven hundred helpless women were rescued by the Freedom fighters and the allied forces (Ridoy 2011: 158). The horrific devastation wrought in wartime Bangladesh is rare in the history of any war. Cumilla was no exception. By setting fire to government warehouses, invading forces destroyed stored seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and damaged agriculture by destroying deep tube wells. They damaged the educational sector by setting fire to homesteads, hut markets, school-college and madrasa buildings. In Comilla alone, 1,460 (Khan and others 2016: 359) educational institutions of various kinds were destroyed. The destruction of railway and road bridges resulted in the breakdown of the communication system.

The eastern part of Cumilla district borders the Indian state of Tripura. The people of other upazilas of Cumilla and nearby districts have used Cumilla district as a relatively safe route for receiving training for participation in the liberation war on the one hand as refugees. At this time, the people of the bordering unions cooperated as much as possible. As the level of killing and torture increased in various places, the number of refugees also increased. The number of refugees sheltered was almost equal to that of Tripura residents. The compassion, solidarity and hospitality of the people of Tripura became one of the assets of the freedom struggle of Bangladesh (Quader 2016: 4).

The guerrilla activity started in April to rid the country of the enemy. The frontal battle also started in May and gradually took shape. The frontal battles organized in the research area include airport attack, Jangalia ambush, Cumilla circuit house attack, Battle of Shahpur, Bijoypur bridge ambush, Fakirhat railway station attack, Dhanpur ambush, Bhatpara ambush, Kattack Bazar battle, Suvarnapur ambush, Battle of Dhananjay-Krishnapur, Bibir Bazar War, city attack etc.⁷ Apart from Sadar, many fierce battles were organized in other upazilas of Cumilla. By the last week of November, several places along the border came under the control of Freedom fighters. Jagannath Dighi of Chaudagram is the first enemy-free area of Cumilla. The Jagannath Dighi EPR (East Pakistan Rifles) camp was liberated on November 28. Meanwhile, the authority of Freedom fighters was established in many regions of the country. According to Weekly Aamod:

On the morning of Wednesday, December 8th, the people of Cumilla should see the city light, clear and holy, and in a moment know that the city is free from the enemy and that the liberation and allied forces are reaching the city of Cumilla. In this joy, the people began to hug each other with joy and shout Joy Bangla (Ridoy 2011: 94).

76 Pakistani officers, 175 JCOs (Junior Commissioned Officers) and 3,978 soldiers from Cumilla Cantonment surrendered (Kasem 2019: 202).

Forms and Nature of Post-War Humanitarian Crisis

The war is over. Free country! endless joy, a different feeling! but this joy was not equal for all. Even after the departure of the Pakistani military,⁸ many families have suffered many calamities. Although not damaged during the war, many suffered the ultimate loss after the war. Death, mining, social marginalization of heroines and social stagnation directly and indirectly cause disaster.

Death

Golapi Begum (Bijoypur Union)

Golapi Begum is a resident of Rajarkhola village of Ward No. 1 of Bijoypur Union of Cumilla

Sadar South Upazila. Age approx 55. Her husband Abdur Rahman died before the war of Independence. Three months after the end of the war, she was preparing for boiling paddy on a winter morning. However, the place has been cleaned with dung the previous afternoon. Small children in the house are also prohibited from running on the paved area. She placed three pieces of the iron piece under the grains of the paddy. Each piece of iron was a bomb. There is no way to know for Golapi Begum. These iron pieces were brought from the nearby Chowdhurykhola⁹ Pakistani camp. When she boiled paddy sweat appeared on her forehead of her even on a winter day. Suddenly a loud noise! There is no Golapi Begum! There is no paddy pot! The pot fell about two hundred yards away and the Golapi begum at least twenty yards.¹⁰ Three bombs exploded simultaneously. There is no flesh in most parts of the body, the cloth is covered most of the parts of her body. She has turned into flesh in the heat. Besides the death of Golapi Begum the skin of Dulal Hussain her child, who was far away from the pot is hanging off his body. White areas are visible under the skin. The boy was admitted to Cumilla General Hospital. The seriously injured Dulal Hossain recovered after long treatment.¹¹

Bachchu Mia (Barpara Union)

Hanif Mia's house in Bara Dharmapur village of Ward No. 7 of Barpara Union. Son Bachchu Mia is a 30-year-old. A large wartime bomb fell next to the house. Bachchu has talked many times about the bomb for moving but other members of the house have been coming repeatedly. Bachchu goes to remove it one day without telling anyone. Out of ignorance, it explodes there. Immediately, Bachchu's various organs are dismembered and fall away from the body. Bachchu died a few hours later. Various parts of Bachchu's body were collected and placed on the north side of the house.¹²

Saleh Ahmad (Chowara Union)

South Rampur is the Village of Ward No. 3 Chowara Union. Due to the war, Eid-ul-Fitar could not be celebrated on November 20. First Eid-ul-Adah of the independent country. On 1st or 2nd February 1972, cows (symbol of sacrifice) were bought for Eid al-Adha despite the economic crisis. Saleh Ahmad tied the cow next to the house. Many people gathered to see the cow in the afternoon. A short distance away was a bunker built by the Pakistani Army. The hole is often closed. When Saleh Ahmad went there in the evening, suddenly there was an explosion. Saleh Ahmad was seriously injured and died.¹³ On the eve of Eid, such an accident prevented the joy of Eid in his family and villagers.

Shamsul Haque and Others (Jorkanan East Union)

Jagpur is a village in Ward No. 2 of Jorkanan East Union. The village is bounded by Mathurapur to the north, Kumaradoga (presently under Chauddagrapur upazila) to the south, Lalbagh to the west and Rajeshpur to the east.

After independence, this house no longer had the joy of freedom. A wartime bomb fell near to Chan Kazi's house. In the local language, the bomb is called 'Rocket Bomb'. The bomb did not explode. Later the bomb was shown to BDR (Bangladesh Rifles, now Border Guard Bangladesh) members who arrived in the village. They said this bomb is no longer fresh. It contains precious metals. Ali Akbar's son Shamsul Haque was only 16 years old. Enthusiastic Shamsul Haque mentally prepares to break the bomb and extract the precious metals. To break the bomb collect the hard iron used in the yoke of bullock carts at home. Everyone goes to the open area on the east side of the house so that the parents do not see. People gather to see what is inside, especially small boys and girls. There were some adults too. Bomb blasting started with great joy. A few blows with the iron caused a massive explosion. Neighbours came forward at the sound of the explosion. As soon as the generated smoke subsides, ten to twelve people are seen falling and moaning. Some of them are in critical condition. Three people died in a short time. The victims are 1. Md. Shamsul Haque (16), father: Ali Akbar 2. Kamal Haque (10), Father: Abdul Malek 3. Gedu Mia (10), father: Ramiz Ali. Another one died on the way to the hospital, her name is Fatema Akhter (8), father: Ismail.¹⁴ All four are buried together in the family cemetery next to the house. Several people were injured in this incident. The injured are 1. Abdul Karim, Father: Junab Ali 2. Rehan Uddin, Father: Ambar Ali 3. Abdul Khalek's wife and Gedu Mia's brother Salim Mia 4. Adu Mia. The injured recovered after long treatment but Adu Mia accepted the paralysis.

Fazlul Haque (Jagannathpur Union)

When the liberation war ended, the brave freedom fighters returned home. The joy of freedom is in their eyes. Fazlul Haque a brave freedom fighter of Jagannathpur Union Ward No. 9, Kattack Bazar has returned.¹⁵ The freedom fighters knew where the hideouts of the invaders were, where there might be mines. Fazlul Haque was called when mines were found in different places. Similarly, he lifted and defused all the mines found in Kattack Bazar to Lakshipur or Buara Bazar. After deactivation mines were kept in Bibir Bazar Freedom fighter's camp. While defusing a mine in front of Comalla Government Primary School the mine accidentally exploded. He was seriously injured by an exploded mine and was taken to Sadar Hospital.¹⁶ Hospital authorities advised them to rush to Dhaka for better treatment but he died. Many fellow soldiers rushed to the hospital after hearing the news. His first Namaz Janazah was held at Cumilla Town Hall and the second at his village. Later he was buried in his village Kattack Bazar.

Syed Ali (Kalir Bazar Union)

Syed Ali (45) died in a landmine blast approximately 15 days after the country's independence in Hatigara village of Ward No. 8 of Kalir Bazar Union. His father's name is Suryat Ali. While cutting grass for

the house's cattle, the landmine exploded a short distance from the house. Syed Ali's explosion caused grief in the area. Eyewitness Alhaj Habibullah said, 'His body could not be looked at. The skin was removed from the whole body'.¹⁷ He was buried in the family graveyard.

Jamal and Quader (Galiara North Union)

A few months after independence, a terrible accident took place at Koneshtala Oliullah 's house in Ward No. 9, Goliara North Union. Jamal is the son of this house. Age approx 11 years, played next to the house and picked up a small tin pot. At first, he played by himself but later he called Abdul Quader, the son of Ibrahim who was nearby. Abdul Quader was the same age as Jamal. First, they put the pot in the rat hole. Then brought out again. Out of curiosity to see what was inside it, it struck the stone with its sharp blade to break it. The bomb exploded in a massive explosion. Jamal and Abdul Quader died on the spot.¹⁸ Both were buried in their respective family cemeteries.

Ali Azgar Majumder (Amratali Union)

The Pakistani forces also arrested Sujat Ali Majumdar's son Ali Azgar Majumdar (50) during the operation in Palpara of Amratali Union. Ali Azgar Majumder was involved in construction work in his professional life. After the arrest, he was taken first to Banashua and then to the Cumilla cantonment and tortured for several days. Being associated with the contracting profession, he was brought out by contacting various persons. As a result of excessive torture, he was seriously injured. He used to lie in bed all day. All possible treatment has been done even in war situations. Unable to withstand the pressure of torture, he died tragically after being under treatment for three months.¹⁹

Paralysis

Abdul Majeed (Durgapur North Union)

Abdul Majid, son of Mr. Abdul Sattar of Bara Dail village. Majid was approximately 9 years old in 1972. Two months after independence, early in the morning he found a clock-like device in front of his grandfather Lal Mia's house. His aunt took the device from his hand and hid it again in the ceiling. After about 7-8 months he brought it down again and tried to see what was inside. For this, he started poking with a pair of scissors from his grandfather's house to open it. No one was hurt as the other members of the house were away at home. Abdul Majeed said about the incident:

*It looked like a clock. I was playing with it. My aunt took it from my hand and kept it in my grandfather's house. I saw where it was kept. After about seven or eight months I think about it. Go and see where it was. When it was brought from there and opened with the grass cutter of my grandfather, there was an explosion.*²⁰

While others were unharmed, Majid's left eye was destroyed as well as his left elbow and entire part of his right arm severed from his body. Many soldiers from the cantonment came to know the incident due to the loud noise caused by the explosion. He was later treated at the cantonment hospital in Cumilla.

Ali Ahmad (Durgapur North Union)

Ali Ahmed (25) is the son of Safar Ali in Bara Dail village. He used to help his father in the household. Their house is half a kilometre east of the Cumilla Cantonment. In April 1972, he was returning home after collecting firewood for his family's fuel needs. As he approached the house, his foot fell on a mine. The mine exploded immediately, Abdur Rahman an eyewitness to the incident said:

*He was returning with firewood through the road next to the house. No one knew that there were mines under the ground. While returning, the mine exploded as soon as he stepped on it. Sand and wash become monotonous. Hearing the sound, many soldiers of the cantonment came to see the incident.*²¹

Ali Ahmad lived with lameness for a long time. He died around 2016-17.²²

Shamsul Haque (Barpara Union)

The name of the village is Bara Dharmapur located in Ward No. 7 of Barpara Union. Fajar Ali lives in this village. His family consists of nine people including five sons and two daughters. Two younger children Shamsul Haque and Manwara Begum are close in age. In the afternoon the siblings were playing next to the house. At present, it is the police firing squad. Another person from Hajiganj was with him. His name is Hussain Ali, came to visit with his mother. Among the three, Hussain Ali is a little older. While playing, suddenly a mine exploded under the grass in the field. They had no idea about mine. Shamsul Haque said about the incident:

*I used to play with three people. Bending over the grass, taking one paw in front and two at the back, I am pushing one another with my paws and gurgling. It is falling on top of the mine.*²³

Shamsul Haque suffered the most damage in the blast. The fingers are separated. Later, even the wrist had to be amputated in the hospital. The accompanying younger sister Manwara Begum was also physically injured. Shamsul Haque is paralyzed and fighting death after a life of struggle.²⁴

Creation of Mental Imbalance

Members of the Pakistani invasion forces used to establish camps at their convenient locations and conduct operations at various locations. As a result, sometimes there was news that the military was coming.

The news that 'Military is coming' from Banashua railway bridge and Sadar Rasulpur railway station was heard from time to time in different villages of Amratali Union. After the Palpara raid, widespread fear spread among the villagers. Besides, Muktal Hossain of Palpara village lost his mental balance after learning about massacres in Shalukmura, Kaikarchar, Taikupi etc. He was about 60 years old during the war. According to family sources, he always comes to say that military! Even after independence, he did not recover. He always used to go out of the house to chase away the military with a stick.²⁵

Marginalization of Heroines

Every union of Cumilla has incidents of violence against women. Even the villagers know it more or less. In many cases, the number is mentioned but the name and identity are not mentioned. The wife pleaded with the invaders to save her husband in Goregaon village of Jorkanan south in Sadar.

The invading force did not heed any request. They shot her husband and humiliated her. On the other hand, Mubarak did not accept the abused wife at Bakhrabad in Kalir Bazar Union. In Hatigara, Raicho village 6 women were victims of torture. In addition, villagers said that 8 women were tortured in Haripur and neighbouring villages of Jagannathpur Union. A Hindu woman was tortured in Durgapur village of Ward No. 6 of Durgapur North Union. Many women take shelter in local Muslim homes. Besides, Hindu women were subjected to torture in villages like Dighalgaon of Barpara Union, Taltali of Chowara Union. Hazera Begum of Madinagar was subjected to torture day after day while detained in the cantonment. Numbers are only an apparent measure of violence against women. In most cases, these women are taken home by their families through village arbitration. In a real sense, the word 'Virangana' is a mental breakdown. Bangabandhu used the term to commemorate the contribution of women in Bangladesh who were simultaneously oppressed, abused and raped. But it is this word that separates them from the bulk of the freedom fighters and over time makes them objects of pity, neglect and hatred (Kabir 2010: 29).

Refugee Return and Resettlement Issues

Soon after learning about the massacre at Cumilla Police Lines, people started looking for safe shelter. Kalir Bazar, Durgapur North, Durgapur South Unions are adjacent to the cantonment while Amratali, Jagannathpur, Panchthubi Jorkanan East, Goliara North and Goliara South Unions are adjacent to the Indian border. Among the villages adjacent to the cantonment, the residents of Alipur, Dhanuakhola, Hatigara villages usually took refuge with their relatives in Gwalia, Kentani, Jangalia, Nawabpur, Manshasan etc. villages in the west. The members of most of the villages of Jagannathpur Union crossed the border and took shelter in the houses of their relatives in Srimantpur, Murapara, Tongi City, Durgapur, Bakchar, Rabindranagar in

India.²⁶ Residents of Bijoypur and Barpara Union usually stay in camps like Sonamura and Kanthalia, Jatrapur, Machima etc. The people of Haripur village of Jagannathpur union took shelter in places like Shahpur, Rabindranagar, Singarpard Noabazar etc. on the Indian border. The heads of many families of the bordering unions used to leave the women, children and old people of the house and come to the village secretly and return after making inquiries about the house. Many people were in danger while coming or returning quietly, some were martyred due to the cruelty of the invading forces or their allies. Almost everyone who stays in India eventually joins some refugee camp for food. Many died of disease due to the mismanagement caused by the overwhelming pressure of the refugees. Many families who sought refuge could not return home with all their members.

After independence, people started returning in droves. Resettlement of returnees again creates a stalemate. Martyr AHM Kamaruzzaman went to various refugee camps and assured them that the revolutionary government would guarantee their livelihood. All arrangements will be made for rehabilitation. The money required for rehabilitation was not in the hands of the then government. The invading force left everything empty. Most of the houses of the Hindus were occupied by the 'Rajakars' and their brokers. The occupiers quietly relinquished their occupation when the freedom fighters and the Indian army began to roam the entire country. During the war, they took refuge in the houses of various relatives. Many of them return home at the instigation of their relatives sell their belongings at a low price and leave the country quietly.

Creating Food Insecurity

The geographical boundaries of the study area include urban areas as well as extensive crop fields. Crop production in the villages increased in the 1960s when Dr. Akhtar Hamid Khan started the village reform program. Through the Cumilla model, firstly, at the local level especially in the present study area, an incredible improvement was achieved in the field of agriculture.²⁷ It was here that the use of modern agricultural implements first began. But as soon as the war began, great uncertainty began. At that time, the people of Durgapur North, South Union did not cross the border in large numbers but they were staying at their relatives' houses for safety. So, it was not possible to take care of the crops. As a result, field after field crops were lost. On the other hand, most of the people of Jorkanan East Union risked their lives to harvest, but due to the severity of the war, the crops were not taken home. The crops of some fields have been cut by Rajakar's group. Some came across the border to see the crops and were shot by the invaders.

A government warehouse in Jorkanan Eastern Union was blown up with dynamite by wartime invading forces. Agricultural materials including stored crop

seeds, fertilizers, pesticides are destroyed in it. The ultimate consequence is food scarcity. Food warehouses located in the city were destroyed due to shelling by freedom fighters. Many could not cultivate the land due to the looting of cattle used for farming. Crop production was not possible in this region as there was always a terrible situation due to the presence of the defence camp of the invaders through Aranyapur of Jagannathpur Union to Buara Bazar and the location of the brave freedom fighters along the border of Bibir Bazar. The agriculture of our country suffered greatly. Many were martyred in the nine months of armed struggle. Especially during the attack of the invading forces, the heads of the family were busy ensuring the safety of others. It would have endangered his life. Most of the martyrs in Tailkupi village of Amratali Union of Adarsh Sadar are over 30 years old and the only earners of the family. Because of the self-sacrifice of the heads of these families, most of the wives and children have spent their days starving and half-starved.

South Noapara village of Goliara South Union is locally known as Jolai Noapara. Akmat Ali lives in this village. Age approx. 45 and a farmer by profession. There are six members in his family daughter Roshanara, Khorsheda; two sons Mustafa and Hashem Ali. Farmer Akmat Ali is very poor. Before the war, he used to earn his living by working as a day laborer in various places. There was no work in wartime. The children's cries made him more distressed. The hardship of not being able to provide food made him weaker. wartime uncertainty always made him think. He is not supposed to know when the war will end. Whether the country is free or not, Akmat Ali looked for the easiest way to be free through death. He committed suicide by hanging himself from the nearby jackfruit tree to get rid of this torment of the world. Death liberates Akmat Ali, but mother Achia Begum has to suffer day after day; month after month and year after year with her children.²⁸

Mental Suffering

Farid Uddin Mazumder saw his father being taken away in front of his eyes in North Rampur village near Padua Bazar Highway.²⁹ Maina Begum of Kazi Bari of Amratali Union had to give her life to save her husband. A pregnant wife had to give her life while saving her husband in Gargaon village. Ashraf Master of Bijoypur has to bear the pain of not being able to protect a neighboring Hindu woman from the invaders.³⁰ Not only that, Hiran Miah³¹ of Majhigacha village is the only person alive after losing 15 members of the same family, Manuja Begum of Krishnapur Khandkar Bari lost 8 members of the same family.³²

Kazi Abul Basar, the brave freedom fighter of Rajganj is the best example of mental suffering. During the war, the invading forces abducted his two brothers from their residence in Rajganj. Their names are Kazi Abdul Malek and Kazi Hasanuzzaman Manik. Not finding Abul Bashar, who had joined the liberation war,

captured and killed his two brothers. Hasanuzzaman Manik was the elder. He had three sons and one daughter. Eldest sons Kazi Humayun, Kazi Nazrul Islam and Kazi Zahirul Islam and only daughter Kazi Jasmine Akhtar. All of them died within a short period, except for his father Kazi Nazrul Islam. Brother Kazi Malek got married but no post-marriage celebrations were held. The new bride was no longer brought to the Kazi house. She got married elsewhere.³³ Many families of martyrs could not bury their loved ones on their soil. As seen in the Shivpur massacre (Barpara), most of the members were buried in the relatively safe houses of close relatives. Many martyrs are buried in the border unions. Today, most of them do not even have a trace.

Socio-Economic And Political Condition of The New State

The economic system collapsed as the wartime foreign reserve quota reached zero. According to an estimate of the United Nations, the economic loss of Bangladesh during the liberation war was about 1.2 lakh billion US dollars (Khan and others 2016: 425). Severe crop losses threaten many lives due to malnutrition. Weapons came into the hands of many during the war. Although the brave freedom fighters laid down their arms, the arms remained in the hands of the opponents directly and indirectly. Armed robberies, looting, muggings, etc. increased drastically. The law-and-order situation in the country has seriously deteriorated. The administration showed inefficiency in dealing with it. After independence, the overall reconstruction of the country required skilled and experienced administrators, engineers, agriculturists, bankers and experienced businessmen. Experienced workers were also needed in factories, railways and postal services as these were controlled by non-Bengalis during the Pakistan period. As the newly independent government had no constitution, the colonial-era legal system prevailed. Drafting the constitution in a short time was a difficult task. The lack of a strong legal system leads to increased terrorist activities.

The secret organizations of the pro-China left called the War of liberation an unfinished revolution and these organizations, who did not believe in parliamentary politics, started secret activities in the name of creating free zones inside the country. As a result, the path of the newly independent state began with thousands of problems.

CONCLUSION

Like other districts of Bangladesh during the Liberation War, Cumilla also became a pile of ruins. Almost all communication systems of the country were damaged by the invading forces. The freedom fighters also had to do various infrastructural damage as a strategy of war. Schools, colleges and other educational institutions, factories, houses, food warehouses, and village markets were destroyed or partially destroyed. The news of Pakistan's surrender caused a wave of joy

across the country but it was somewhat incomplete in Bangabandhu's absence. However, after the war³⁴, the domestic and foreign opposition forces created during the liberation war failed to prevent the rise of Bangladesh and engaged in internal and international conspiracies against the Bangabandhu government. Insiders started doing various subversive activities to disrupt the production and proper distribution system. Mainly during the armed struggle (25 March 1971-16 December 1971) by the invading forces and their local allies, looting, arson, physical and monthly torture, women torture, murder-genocide, conversion, forced emigration, destruction etc. Unexpected deaths, mining, war-torn economies, presence of anti-national forces, rise of reactionary groups, refugee resettlement issues directly and indirectly create humanitarian crisis in normal public life arising from various ancillary events of war.

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Notes

¹ According to the Lahore Resolution (1940 AD), a federal system of government was introduced in Pakistan, but the policy of inequality was followed in various areas at the center and provinces. Inequality in the distribution of power, absence of democratic governance, influence of military rule, discriminatory policy of West Pakistan towards East Bengal (later East Pakistan) were the administrative and political nature and natural features of the state of Pakistan. There was a reaction in East Bengal against such policies of the Pakistani ruling class. Although it started as a language movement as well as a cultural movement, the movement gradually acquired a political character and strengthened Bengali nationalism. Ignoring the just demands of the Bengalis, the rulers unleashed the armed forces trained with intellectual, administrative and military training against the common people of East Pakistan. Formulating the blue print of killing Bengalis called 'Operation Searchlight', on the night of March 25, 1971, they went out from all the cantonments simultaneously and started mass killings and arson in the main cities and thereby imposed an unequal war on the unarmed Bengalis.

² Due to the location of Cumilla cantonment, data has been collected from two upazilas of Comilla district namely Adarsh Sadar and Sadar South Unions. Unions of two upazilas are: Adarsh Sadar-1. Kalir bazar 2. Durgapur North 3. Durgapur South 4. Amratali 5. Panchthubi 6. Jagannathpur and Sadar South-1. Bijoypur 2. Barpara 3. Chowara 4. Jorkanan East 5. Jorkanan West 6. Goliara North and 7. Goliara South.

³ Women in Wartime Bangladesh are physically and mentally abused by anti-liberation forces. The article uses the word 'brutal' to refer to a rape victim which is an overt sexual violence.

⁴ Due to the location of Cumilla cantonment, border area, political awareness of the people living there, economic prosperity, active participation of people in central politics etc.

⁵ Cumilla district up to Noakhali, Akhaura, Bhairab railway line, Habiganj of Sylhet district, some parts of Dhaka and Faridpur districts comprise sector 2. A part of Cumilla district was also in Sector No. 3. [Note: Abu Mohammad Delwar Hossain, *Bangladesher itihash 1905-1971 [History of Bangladesh 1905-1971]*. Dhaka: University Publications, 2008, p. 432.]

⁶ Detailed note on the Cumilla attack: Mamun Siddiqui, *Cumilla police lines ganahatta [Cumilla Police Lines Genocide]*. Khulna: Center for Research on Genocide-Torture and Liberation War, 2018, Pp. 9-19; Abul Kasem, *Muktijuddhe Cumilla [Cumilla in the Liberation War]*, 4 vols, second edition. Dhaka: Gatidhara, 2019, Pp. 41-47; Abul Kashem Ridoy, *Muktisangarame Cumilla [Cumilla in the Liberation Struggle]*. Cumilla: Cumillar Kagaj Publications, 2011, Pp. 45-52.

⁷ Interview: Freedom Fighter Shafiul Alam Babul (66), Rammala, District Freedom Fighters Commander, Cumilla. Place and Date of Interview: District Freedom Fighters Commander Office, Chhatipatti, 8 March 2019.

⁸ Pakistani soldiers are commonly referred to by locals as Military, Meletari, Punjabi, khan sena, Army etc.

⁹ The Pakistani invasion force had set up a camp in the hill basin of the nearby Chowdhurykhola village. They left many things behind— water bottles, cigarettes, tea mugs, netted helmets, some Pakistani coins, wallets without money, iron balls and some scrap iron. Almost everyone in the village brought many things from the camp. Small children preferred iron pieces. Some of the elders used to buy pieces of iron from the younger ones with some money.

¹⁰ Interview: Dulal Hossain (58), Rajarkhola, Agriculture. Place and Date of Interview: Rajarkhola Munshi bari, 19 August 2019.

¹¹ Group Interview: Attendance-1. Md. Shafiqur Rahman (68), Rajarkhola, social worker 2. Abdul Matin (70), Rajarkhola, Businessman 3. Sultan Ahmad (75), Rajarkhola, Agriculture 4. Abdul Mannan (70), Rajarkhola Agriculture 5. Suruj Mia (61), Rajarkhola, Agriculture 6. Muharram Ali (60), Rajarkhola, social worker. Place and Date of Interview: Rajarkhola Bazar, 19 August 2019.

¹² Interview: Md. Babul Hossain Bablu (65), Bara Dharmapur, Business. Place and Date of Interview: Lalmai College, 1 April 2019.

¹³ Interview: Motaher Hossain (57), South Rampur, Service holder; Kazi Mohammad Ali (58), South Rampur, social worker. Place and Date of Interview: Home, 11 September 2019.

¹⁴ Interview: Abul Kalam Azad (64), Jagpur, Agriculture. Place and Date of Interview: Home, 10 July 2020.

¹⁵ Fazlul Haque was a very brave freedom fighter. While in India, he once infiltrated the Suaganj raider camp and managed to capture a Pakistani soldier alive and take him to the freedom fighter camp in India. When this incident became known, his reputation as a brave freedom fighter spread.

¹⁶ Interview: Freedom fighter Abdul Latif Khandkar (65), Rajmangalpur, Service holder (Retd.); Masuk Mia Sardar (62), Rajmangalpur, social worker. Place and Date of Interview: Kattack Bazar Port, 5 March 2020.

¹⁷ Interview: Alhaj Habibullah (120), Hatigara, Agriculture. Place and Date of Interview: Hatigara Chowmuhan Bazar, 8 January 2020.

¹⁸ Interview: Freedom fighter Ali Hossain Majumdar (74), Md. Jamal Uddin (60), Meruali, social worker. Place and Date of Interview: Koneshtala High School, 2 July 2020.

¹⁹ Interview: Ali Ahmed Majumdar (73), Palpara Majumdar House, Service holder (Retd.); Ali Ashraf Majumdar (60), Palpara, Business. Place and Date of Interview: Palpara Bridge Premises, 17 January 2020.

²⁰ Interview: Abdul Majeed (59), Bara Dail, Business. Place and Date of Interview: Banglabazar, 5 August 2020.

²¹ Interview: Abdur Rahman (70), Bara Dail Dakshin Para, Agriculture. Place and Date of Interview: Bara Dail Bazar, 5th August 2020.

²² Group Interview: 1. Abdur Rahman (70), Bara Dail Dakshin Para, Agriculture 2. Abdur Rahman (70), Bara Dail Dakshin Para, Agriculture 3. Siraj Mia (70), Anandsar, Agriculture 4. Abdul Quader (60), Krishnapur, Business 5. Md. Salim (60), Anandsar Paschimpara, Agriculture 6. Md Hossain (60), Bara Dail Dakshinpara, Agriculture. Venue & Date of Interview: Bara dail Bazar, 5th August 2020.

²³ Interview: Md. Shamsul Haque (70), Bara Dharmapur, Business. Place and Date of Interview: Home, 15 February 2019.

²⁴ Interview: Md. Babul Hossain Bablu (65), Bara Dharmapur, Business. Place and Date of Interview: Lalmai College, 1 April 2019.

²⁵ Interview: Ali Mia (75), Palpara, Business; Muharam Ali (60), Palpara South Rasulpur, Service holder (Retd.). Place and Date of Interview: Palpara Bridge Premises, 17 January 2020.

²⁶ Bangladesh's relationship with India's northeastern border state of Tripura is historic. Out of Tripura's total 917 km border, 839 km is with Bangladesh. The Chittagong-Cumilla-and Brahmanbaria border was the primary address of the freedom fighters, and the organizers and directors of the liberation war. On the other hand, Cumilla was geographically a part of Tripura. The country was divided by the geographical partition of 1947. People had kinship relationship even before partition. Demarcation fences after the partition of the country could not sever ties.

²⁷ Under the patronage of Akhtar Hamid Khan, the Jatrapur Farmers' Cooperative Society cultivated land the first with a tractor.

²⁸ Interview: Khorseda Khatun (62), Jolai, housewife. Place and Date of Interview: Home, 27 July 2020.

²⁹ On April 30, Pakistani forces attacked North Rampur village near Padua Bazar and captured Farid Uddin Majumdar's father along with many others. It is believed that the father was killed at the Dishaband airport camp. The neighbor grabbed Syed Ali but luckily, he survived.

³⁰ When the war broke out, Rishikar Chakraborty of Bijoypur village brought a female relative from Barura. Ali Ashraf, a Muslim neighbor, was kept in the master's house to protect him from the invaders, but he could not be saved from the invaders. [Note Interview: Haji Sultan Ahmed (66), Bijoypur, social worker. Place and Date of Interview: No. 1 Bijoypur Union Parishad Office, 19 August 2019.]

³¹ Interview: Hiran Mia (58), Majhigacha, auto driver. Place and Date of Interview: Home, 20 April 2019.

³² On September 11, 1971, a gruesome massacre took place in Khandkar's house in Krishnapur-Dhananjay village of Panchthubi Union. Hiran, who took shelter in that house, luckily survived, but 15 members of the clan, including his mother and younger brother were martyred. According to various sources, 37 people were martyred in the massacre.

³³ Interview with the freedom fighter Kazi Abul Basar [Quoted in: Motahar Hossain Mahbub, *Juddhdiner Katha* (Cumilla: Cumillar Kagaz Prakashani, 2020), p. 238; Apan Batayne (Cumilla: Binoy Sahitya Sangsad, 2019), p. 96.]