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The year in Bangladesh began with national elections on 5 January. Tensions in both the build-up to and aftermath of the elections, described by HRW as 'the most violent in the country's history', led to widespread attacks against minorities, particularly Hindus, who have regularly been targeted for their traditional support of the secular ruling Awami League. These elections were especially tense, as the opposition coalition led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) boycotted the vote and attempted to prevent others from voting. Polling stations were attacked and minorities particularly targeted, with hundreds of Hindu homes, shops and temples burned and ransacked, especially in northern and south-western districts. Christians were targeted as well.

Both the Awami League and police blamed the BNP, their coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and their supporters for the violence, though the BNP itself denied any involvement. The Chair of the National Human Rights Commission also accused the government of failing in its responsibility to prevent attacks on Hindus. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said measures would be taken to see justice in these cases, while the prime minister's law affairs officer said that special tribunals would be set up to prosecute offenders under the Terrorism Prevention Act. An independent judicial commission was formed in 2009 to investigate election violence towards minorities in 2001, but none of its recommendations have since been implemented.

The ruling Awami League came to power in 2009 on a platform that included war crimes tribunals for atrocities committed during the 1971 War of Independence, including those connected with violence, mass killings and conversions of Hindus and other minorities. The trials have been highly politicized, further polarizing a society already divided between support for the BNP and Awami League, with many JI leaders convicted for their alleged involvement in the abuses. The trials have been criticized for falling far short of international fair trial standards. In 2014, JI leaders continued to be tried for genocide and crimes against humanity: in December A.T.M. Azharul Islam, assistant secretary general of JI, was sentenced to death on 30 December for the killing of 1,400 Hindus near Jharuarbeel on 17 April 1971. JI organized nationwide protests in response, though these were on a much smaller scale than the demonstrations organized in 2013 against the court rulings, when numerous Hindu temples and homes were attacked.

This unstable climate has also been exploited by certain groups to seize land from minorities and indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), known collectively as Jumma or Pahari peoples, have seen much of their lands settled by majority Muslim Bengalis,

causing continued outbreaks of violence between communities, despite a 1997 Peace Accord securing their land rights. In June, over 250 Chakma and Tripuri people reportedly abandoned their homes and fled to the Indian border at Tripura after clashes with Bengali settlers. In December, around 50 indigenous people in Rangamati district had their homes razed by Bengali settlers in apparent retribution for the destruction of the latter's pineapple and teak saplings. While the Peace Accord called for the demilitarization of the CHT, the area remains highly militarized. State security forces have been accused of conducting attacks against Jumma communities, not intervening in incidents of communal violence and facilitating the influx of Muslim settlers.

Despite implementing legislation such as the Land Commission Act of 2001, no cases of land disputes have yet been solved by the commission and land encroachment continues. Follow-up legislation has been drafted under the CHT Land Disputes Resolution Commission Act (Amendment) but, though approved by the cabinet in June 2013, it had yet to be implemented at the end of 2014. The Peace Accord was further eroded during the year when bills passed on 23 November changed the composition of district councils in three indigenous areas – Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban – from five to eleven members, with three non-indigenous unelected members. The Accord stipulates that the council members must be elected, but the government has instead hand-picked the council members. Indigenous civil society groups demonstrated in Dhaka against the bills, calling for their immediate withdrawal.

Sexual violence against indigenous women in the CHT has been endemic in recent years, perpetrated by state security forces and, increasingly, by Bengali settlers. Rapes and murders of indigenous women and girls have been used to terrorize the whole community, helping to clear the land for more settlers. This trend continued during the year, with 15 cases of violence against indigenous women in CHT reported between January and April 2014 alone, including eight incidents of rape and two murders after rape. The perpetrators of these abuses are seldom, if ever, prosecuted.

Bangladesh continued its attempts to squeeze out its Rohingya refugees and asylum seekers. Between 200,000 and 500,000 Rohingyas, a persecuted Burmese ethno-religious minority who are considered to be Bangladeshi by Burmese authorities, are currently living in Bangladesh in squalid conditions in camps or informal settlements in urban areas. In February, the Bangladeshi government announced a 'new strategy' to address the situation of Rohingya, but neglected to make any details public. In March, plans were released to document, temporarily house and then repatriate all Rohingya. In September, after discussions with Burma over the formation of a joint committee for repatriation, it was announced that over 2,000 Rohingya would be repatriated. In November, the government revealed plans to move 30,000 officially documented refugees to an undisclosed location, causing further concern among Rohingyas in the country.

Bangladesh's Bihari minority – Urdu-speaking Muslims who migrated from Bihar and West Bengal during India's partition – have long been discriminated against for their perceived alliance with Pakistan during the independence war. Many lack formal citizenship and are therefore stateless. Today, about 300,000 Biharis live in 70 shanty towns that were initially temporary relief camps. The largest settlement, 'Geneva Camp', has 25,000 residents: it is estimated that only 5 per cent have formal education. As ownership of the settlements is uncertain and land prices have risen sharply, these areas have become increasingly attractive for investors. Many apparent incidents of communal violence against Biharis are intended to displace them from their land. On 14 June, for instance, a Bengali mob attacked a Bihari settlement on the outskirts of Dhaka after an altercation broke out between communities, resulting in 10 deaths and widespread damage from arson. A local leader alleged that the attack was motivated by the desire of local politicians to evict the community.

Dalits, too, comprise many of Bangladesh's urban slum dwellers. Many live in what are called 'sweeper colonies' as most Dalits here are traditionally employed as manual scavengers or waste collectors. Discriminated against throughout society, it is difficult to find more skilled employment for the educated few, as their housing address on their CVs quickly reveals who they are. Whole colonies have faced multiple evictions over the course of decades, moving between abandoned hospitals and factories after being displaced by 'rehabilitation' or urban beautification. An anti-discrimination law has long been advocated for in Bangladesh, but stalled again in parliament this year. Though there is a paucity of data available on their situation, in May 2014 a seminar organized by Dalit activists highlighted the water and sanitation crisis facing their communities – a huge health risk given the city's vulnerability to flooding, exacerbated by climate change. Dhaka's poorest communities are typically located in the most flood-prone areas of the capital, including Dalit settlements such as the Agargaon Sweeper Colony, where residents live in a series of cramped shelters built on stilts to protect them from the floodwater.

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