

Gun culture, rights violations rampant in Bangladesh: Amnesty

Bangladesh has been overrun by 'gun culture' with the state machinery and religious fundamentalists unleashing attacks on human rights defenders, including journalists and voluntary organisations, said Amnesty International here Monday.

Releasing its report on Bangladesh, titled 'Bangladesh Human rights defenders under attack', ahead of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit in the Indian capital next week, the international rights organisation demanded that Dhaka set up an independent and impartial commission to look into cases of human rights violations.

It said that agents of the state such as police and the army as well as 'non-state actors' like religious fundamental groups, criminal gangs or political parties were perpetrating attacks.

'Hundreds of human rights defenders have received death threats. Scores of them have been attacked. Several journalists have had their fingers or hands deliberately damaged so as not to be able to hold a pen,' it alleged.

The report said the rights violations had occurred in the background of a deep-rooted political polarisation in Bangladesh, which it said, 'has divided the entire society into camps primarily associated with one or the other of the main political parties - the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Awami League - or with smaller political groupings'.

Bangladesh is currently under a caretaker government with the elections, earlier due in January, indefinitely postponed.

'The prevalence of armed criminal gangs and the failure of all governments and the main political parties to disband them has provided impetus to a culture of gun violence against which abuses against human rights defenders occur,' it said.

The international rights group has asked the country's government to make a public commitment to ensure protection of human rights defenders.

(© IANS / India eNews)