

SPECIAL BRIEFING AND STATEMENT

25 March 2017

ICSF's Roadmap for Global Recognition of 1971 Genocide: 7-prong Strategy for Bangladesh Government

[Access to classified war archives of India -- Engaging with international organisations, foreign governments -- Genocide Risk Education -- Sites preservation -- Knowledge base development -- Supporting citizen initiatives at home and abroad]

The 25th of March 1971 marked the beginning of a nine-month long genocide and other international crimes against the Bengali populace which was perpetrated by the Pakistan Army and its local auxiliaries. The adoption of the recent resolution of the Bangladesh Parliament commemorating 25th March as “Genocide Day” is, therefore, significant because it reinforces the findings of the justice process of the International Crimes Tribunal of Bangladesh (ICT-BD), sets a milestone in honouring the victims of international crimes in 1971, helps regional and international recognition of the Bangladesh Genocide, and instills a greater understanding of the mechanics of genocide in all its forms as a nation-building exercise which may serve as a preventive safeguard against repetition of such atrocities in the future.

International Crimes Strategy Forum (ICSF), an independent global network of experts and activists working in the interest of justice for the victims of international crimes has long campaigned for the recognition of the Bangladesh Genocide. ICSF welcomes the recent resolution of Bangladesh Parliament declaring 25th March as Genocide Day and reaffirms its commitment to stand by the victims and against the perpetrators of genocide, in particular, those who advocate for or is responsible for enacting genocide.

To commemorate the day, ICSF announces to intensify the “ICSF Global Campaign on Bangladesh Genocide”, its flagship campaign for recognition of the international crimes committed against Bengali populace in 1971. As part of this ongoing campaign, ICSF has started to publish in social networks commemorative video messages from victims’ and survivors, freedom fighters, activists and campaigners where participants shared their lessons and pledges regarding 1971 Genocide.

On this historically significant day, ICSF commends the Investigating Agency of the International Crimes Tribunals of Bangladesh (ICT-BD) for completing the investigation against the first military officer of the Pakistani Army who is alleged to have committed international crimes in Bangladesh in 1971. ICSF believes that this is the beginning of an accountability process that will hold responsible all Pakistani military personnel who took part in international crimes in 1971. ICSF demands that similar investigations be geared up so that other members of the Pakistan Army, whether living in Bangladesh, in Pakistan and elsewhere, may be brought to justice before the ICT-BD.

To facilitate the investigation of members of the Pakistan Army, ICSF calls on the Government of the Republic of India to disclose all records concerning the Liberation War of 1971. India, for obvious reasons, is in possession of vital documents pertaining to military

operations led by the Pakistan Army that unleashed genocide on the people of Bangladesh. ICSF urges the Indian Government to follow the footsteps of the United States of America and others countries that have declassified a significant volume of documents relating to Bangladesh's Liberation War. In this regard, ICSF calls upon the Government of Bangladesh to engage with the Government of India to secure these vital documents concerning genocide and international crimes.

ICSF calls on the Bangladesh Government to seriously consider the following seven-prong strategy as part of a broader roadmap towards achieving global recognition of Bangladesh genocide:

1. Engaging with the Indian government regarding access to war-time military records;
2. Actively engaging with the international organisations for acknowledgement of 1971 atrocities as genocide and international crimes;
3. Engaging with other foreign governments and entities with shared, strategic, or mutually advantageous interests involving recognition of 1971 genocide;
4. Implementing 'genocide risk education' in Bangladesh and making it part of the national educational curriculum;
5. Preserving important sites relating to the Liberation War of 1971, and properly investing in their development and maintenance;
6. Investing in steps for knowledge base development relating to 1971 history which includes archiving and digitising documents and making them easily accessible;
7. Extending support to citizens' worldwide initiatives relating to 1971;

Finally, ICSF takes this opportunity to remind the United Nations and other international bodies that they are yet to grant official recognition to the Bangladesh Genocide, and that it is their moral obligation to do so without any further delay.