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CHOWDHURY MUEEN-UDDIN¹

This note summarises the evidence and references published so far to establish that Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin – a citizen of UK, the vice-chair of East London Mosque and Treasurer of Muslim Aid - was involved in war crimes during the 1971 Bangladesh War of Independence.

Background:

After the independence of India in 1947, Pakistan was divided into two wings – East and West Pakistan. The people of East Pakistan - who were predominantly Bengali – increasingly felt economically and culturally oppressed by West Pakistan. In 1970, the political party, the Awami League, which represented the aspirations of those in East Pakistan who sought greater autonomy won the elections for the whole of Pakistan. However, the West Pakistan leaders refused to establish the parliament, and on the night of 25 March 1971 its army initiated a military crackdown named “Operation Searchlight” in Dhaka, killing thousands of people in the city including students in Dhaka University campus.² This was the beginning of the war that resulted in the creation of Bangladesh out of what was East Pakistan. It is known as the Bangladesh Liberation War or War for the Independence of Bangladesh. During the war, there were widespread killings of the civilians and other atrocities.³ Towards the end of the War, a section of the intellectual community of East Pakistan were murdered, allegedly by the AL-Badr force, the militia wing of local collaborators of the Pakistani army.⁴

Chowdhury Mueen- Uddin’s role in Bangladesh Genocide:

In March 1971, Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin, a journalist at the *Daily Purbodesh*, was an active member of the Islami Chaatra Sangha (ICS) – the student wing of the Jammāt-I-Islami which actively opposed Bangladesh liberation war and aided the Pakistani military.

In August 1971, the Jamaat-e-Islami, according to its own newspaper the *Daily Sangram*,⁵ set up the Al-Badr Squad comprising members of the ICS to violently combat the forces supporting Bangladesh’s liberation. Mueen-Uddin became a member of the Al-Badr.

Evidences:

A. In 1995, in a Channel 4 documentary⁶, researchers presented a series of evidence and eyewitnesses that directly implicated Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin as the leader of the gang in at least two disappearances and killings, and one attempted disappearance.

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1. Abduction and disappearance of Mofazzal Haider Chaudhury, Dhaka University Professor of Bengali

A family member present at the scene states: “they stormed into the house brandishing guns and with *gamchas* over their faces. While being taken away, [Prof Chaudhury] pulled down the *gamcha* from one of the men’s faces, I recognised him immediately. It was Mueen-Uddin; I knew him because he used to come to our house to study.”⁷

2. Abduction and disappearance of Serajuddin Hossain, Journalist

Serajuddin Hossain’s wife identified Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin as one of the men who took her husband.⁸

3. Attempted Abduction of Ataus Samad, BBC Journalist

It is known that Mueen-Uddin was involved in attempting to abduct BBC journalist Ataus Samad. Two tenants were woken up by a gang of men and saw the faces of the leader. After independence, when a photograph of Mueen-Uddin’s face was published they both recognised him as the man leading the abductions, that night.⁹

B. Case Filed in Bangladesh with subsequent case statements by the intelligence agency:

Farida Banu, younger sister of Professor Giasuddin Ahmed, filed a case in this connection with Ramna Police Station in Bangladesh on September 24, 1997 against two Al-Badr cadres- -Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin and Ashrafuzzaman- -for killing her brother on December 14 in 1971,¹⁰ resulting in a police investigation by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). The investigation report named Mueen-Uddin as one of the prime accused in relation to abduction and disappearance of eight Dhaka University professors on that night including Prof Ahmed.¹¹ According to the case statement, on 14 December 1971, Al-Badr members Mueen-Uddin and Ashrafuzzaman picked up Giasuddin Ahmed from Muhsin Hall premises, blindfolded him and whisked him in a microbus to an undisclosed location. He never came back.

C. Newspaper reports immediately after the intellectual killings naming Mueen-Uddin as the prime suspect based on confessions by captured Al-Badr leaders.

Bangladesh Observer reported on December 29th, 1971, “Chowdhury Mainuddin, a member of the banned fanatic Jamaat-e-Islami, has been described as the “operation-in-charge” of the killing of intellectuals in Dhaka by Abdul Khaleq, a captured ring leader of the Al-Badr and office bearer of the Jamaat-e-Islami.”

New York Times reports on 2 January 2 1972 – “to his fellow reporters on the Bengali-language paper where he worked, Chowdhury Mueenuddin was a pleasant, well-mannered and intelligent young man...there was nothing exceptional about him except perhaps that he often received

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telephone calls from the leader of a right-wing Moslem political party. But, investigations in the last few days show that those calls were significant. For Mr. Mueenuddin has been identified as the head of a secret, commando like organization of fanatic Moslems that murdered several hundred prominent Bengali professors, doctors, lawyer and journalists in a Dhaka brick yard. Dressed in black sweaters and khaki pants, members of the group, known as Al-Badar, rounded up their victims on the last three nights of the war...Their goal, captured members have since said, was to wipe out all Bengali intellectuals who advocated independence from Pakistan and the creation of a secular, non Moslem state.”

Mueen Uddin’s Post Independence Rehabilitation in the United Kingdom:

Soon after the war, Mueen-Uddin’s involvement in the intellectual killings came to light and several newspapers including the New York Times published articles alleging that he was the Operation-in-Charge¹² of the killings. Although the authorities sought Mueen-Uddin’s arrest in connection with these allegations, he however managed to evade arrest and investigation, and travelled to the UK where he ultimately obtained residence and nationality without disclosing his past antecedents. Once in London, along with other members of the Jamaat-e-Islami who had escaped to London, he set up the **Dawatul Islam**¹³ which was in effect the UK front of the Jamaat¹⁴. A split subsequently took place amongst the leadership of Dawatul Islam, and Mueen-Uddin then established **Islamic Forum Europe**, which continues to be the UK front of the Jamaat-e-Islami.¹⁵ As recently as November, 2007, Islamic Forum Europe invited the head of Jamaat-e-Islami, Matiur Rahman Nizami, another alleged war criminal, from Bangladesh to their events as special guests. Mueen-Uddin’s base was however **East London Mosque** – and he became its Vice Chairman in the 1990s¹⁶. Till this day he is Vice-Chair of this mosque. Mueen-Uddin also became active as Treasurer (former Chairman) of **Muslim Aid UK**¹⁷ [See Annexe-II]; Deputy Director of Leicester based **Islamic Foundation**; and the Special Editor of **Weekly Dawat**.¹⁸ Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin’s rehabilitation continued as Government decided to engage with Muslim Council of Britain in the name of engaging with Muslims. In 2003, Prince Charles visited Islamic Foundation headed by Mueen-Uddin.¹⁹

References

- ¹ Spelling variations: “Choudhry,” “Choudhury” or “Chy”; “Mueenuddin,” “Moinuddin,” “Mainuddin”, or “Moin Uddin.”
- ² Eye witness accounts recorded in the award winning documentary *Tale of the Darkest Night* (2003), directed by Kawsar Chowdhury, produced by Promiti Prava Sruti Obolokan Kendra.
- ³ For a wider picture on the genocide committed by Pakistani army in collaboration with the Al-Badr and Razakars see <http://www.genocidebangladesh.org/> . See also collection of declassified documents published by George Washington University National Security Archive on selective genocide committed in Bangladesh, at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/>. See copy of the “Blood Telegram” sent by US diplomat Archer Kent Blood (Consul General posted in Dhaka/East Pakistan) at that time protesting against the atrocities and selective genocide committed by the Pakistani army: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB1.pdf> . For Pakistani military’s involvements with the collaborating forces (i.e., Jamaat, Razakar, Al-Badr etc) see Siddiq Salik, *Witness to Surrender* (Oxford University Press, 1977 New Delhi). See Brigadier General M Sakhawat Hussain, ‘*Missing Links of History*,’ at http://www.thedailystar.net/suppliments/2004/victory_day/vic12.htm . See *Pakistan Observer* news item dated 4 November 1971 on Pakistani General A K Niazi’s involvement with Al-Badr, Razakar and Al-Shams forces: http://www.docstrangelove.com/uploads/1971/po/19711104_po_gen_niazi_warns_people_against_indian_design.pdf ; also the *Pakistan Observer* item on 8 August 1971 reporting the East Pakistan Razakars Ordinance 1971 and its stipulations: http://www.docstrangelove.com/uploads/1971/po/19710822_po_e_pakistan_razakars_ordinance.pdf . For statistics on death toll, see also: *Death Tolls for the Major Wars and Atrocities of the Twentieth Century* at <http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstat2.htm#Bangladesh> ; http://www.gendercide.org/case_bangladesh.html ; and Rudolph J Rummel, *Statistics of Democide: Genocide and Mass Murder Since 1900* at: <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/SOD.CHAP8.htm> .
- ⁴ See: ‘125 Slain in Dacca Area Believed Elite of Bengal,’ *New York Times* 19 December 1971 (retrieved on 14 March 2008). The newsreport reads: “At least 125 persons, believed to be physicians, professors, writers and teachers were found murdered today in a field outside Dacca. All the victims’ hands were tied behind their backs and they had been bayoneted, garroted or shot. They were among an estimated 300 Bengali intellectuals who had been seized by West Pakistani soldiers and locally recruited supporters.” See: http://www.drishtipat.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2008/03/nytimes_dec_19th_1971.pdf . In the Annexe, see accounts by Jon Rohde, a USAID doctor whose letter is reprinted from the Record of the US Senate as ‘Recent events in East Pakistan’ in Sheelendra Kumar Singh et al. (eds), *Bangladesh Documents* , vol. 1 (Madras: B. N. K. Press 1971), 349-51. See also, Pat Sammel’s account, another American evacuee who wrote in the Denver Post, which was subsequently placed in the House Record by Representative Mike McKeivitt of Colorado on 11 May 1971. Reprinted from those records in, Singh et al. at 357.
- ⁵ See: http://www.nybangla.com/Muktijoddho/Nizami/Nizami_1971_Role.pdf .
- ⁶ Twenty Twenty Television’s documentary *War Crimes File*, directed by David Bergman and produced by Twenty Twenty Television broadcast as part of the Dispatches Series by Channel 4 aired on 3 May 1995—recording eye witness accounts of Mueen-Uddin’s involvement in disappearances of journalists and other intellectuals in December 1971. See also, *Second Report on the Findings of the People’s Inquiry Commission on the Activities of the War Criminals and the Collaborators* (Summary of the investigation published on 26 March 1995 by National People’s Inquiry Commission, Chaired by Sufia Kamal). See: <http://www.secularvoiceofbangladesh.org/Report%20on%20the%20war%20criminals.htm> .
- ⁷ See *War Crimes File*, n.6 above.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ See Ramna Police Station case no- 115/1997. The First Information Report (FIR) was filed on 24 September 1997, under sections: 120(b), 448, 364, 302, 201, 34 and 114 of the Penal Code.
- ¹¹ Shahiduzzaman, Raising Hopes, Only to be Betrayed, *New Age Bangladesh* , 16 December 2007: <http://www.newagebd.com/2005/dec/15/murdered/murdered04.html> . See also: ‘Govts overlooked filing of cases under International Crimes Act’, *Daily Star* 14 December 2007. See: <http://thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=15429> . [These references need replacing].
- ¹² See *Bangladesh Observer* news item on 29 December 1971: http://www.docstrangelove.com/uploads/1971/bo/19711229_bo_absconding_al_badr_gangster.pdf . See also, Fox Butterfield’s report in *New York Times* on 3 January 1972:

http://www.docstrangelove.com/uploads/1971/foreign/19720103_nyt_a_journalist_is_linked_to_murder_of_bengalis.pdf .

¹³ See n.6 above.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ See screenshot of Muslim Aid website describing Mueen-Uddin as former Chairman and as well as present Treasurer at: <http://www.iftwcb.org/wcuk.htm> .

¹⁸ See *Muktadhara* piece on war criminals and collaborators:
<http://www.muktadhara.net/page42.html>.

¹⁹ Prince of Wales Acknowledges Islamic Contribution to Europe -
<http://islamicreliefworldwide.net/submenu/About%20Us/visits/princecharles.htm> .