

Press Statement

25 March 2021

Discussion and other Events on Securing Global Recognition of Bangladesh Genocide

- Constitutional recognition of genocide perpetrated during 1971 in Bangladesh
- Making “Global Recognition of Bangladesh Genocide” an inseparable part of foreign policy
- Expressing the lessons learned from previous genocides in conducting state affairs

Maintaining a global connection amongst the pro-liberation individuals and organisations is a significant part of International Crimes Strategy Forum’s (ICSF) line of work. ICSF believes Bengali Diaspora residing all over the world can be a formidable force in terms of securing the global recognition of genocide perpetrated in Bangladesh during 1971. Recently, ICSF, along with members of Australian Bangladeshi diaspora, arranged a program to commemorate 50th anniversary of 1971 Bangladesh genocide as well as the country’s independence.

As part of a series of events, ICSF and members of Australian Bangladeshi Diaspora arranged an online discussion programme titled “Global Recognition of 1971 Bangladesh Genocide” on 25th March, the date which has been declared “Bengali Genocide Remembrance Day” by the government. Viewers from at least 26 cities of Bangladesh, Australia, UK, USA, Canada, Malaysia, South Korea, and Japan logged in to participate in the program. The discussion program started at 4 PM Bangladesh time and was broadcasted live through facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

Columnist Dr. Ezaz Mamun from Canberra inaugurated the discussion with his welcome speech. He provided the historical context of 1971 Bangladesh Genocide and its global recognition. It was followed by one-minute silence in remembrance of the victims of genocide, and then a critically acclaimed documentary titled “Creed for Justice” was played. At this point the main discussion began where discussants talked about various dimensions of global recognition of Bangladesh Genocide. Former Chair of Bangladesh Human Rights Commission Prof. Mizanur Rahman moderated the discussion.

At the beginning of the discussion, trustee of ICSF Dr. Rayhan Rashid, expounded on organisational stance on global recognition of Bangladesh genocide. On behalf of ICSF, three specific recommendations were made to the government of Bangladesh: One, genocide perpetrated during 1971 needs to be included in the Constitution of Bangladesh to secure its constitutional recognition; Two, “Global Recognition of Bangladesh Genocide” should be treated as an integral part of Bangladesh’s foreign policy; and three, there should be reflections of the lessons learned from past genocides in conducting state affairs.

In her statement, in reference to ICSF’s first recommendation, Honourable member of Parliament Shirin Akhter acknowledged that the parliamentary resolution taken on 2017 on ‘Genocide Remembrance Day’ is legally non-binding. This is why she promised to discuss with the Prime Minister the point of including the matter of 1971 genocide into the constitution. She also expressed her willingness and resoluteness to work toward global recognition of the Bangladesh genocide along with her like-minded parliamentary colleagues.

Member of Bangladesh Human Rights Commission Dr. Nomita Halder commented that genocide is the highest form of Human Rights violation. She also promised to ask the government through BHRC to get further involved in the work of securing global recognition of 1971 Bangladesh Genocide.

In response to questions/points raised on behalf of ICSF, the High Commissioner of Bangladesh in Australia reassured that Bangladesh Foreign Ministry will certainly work with the diaspora to secure the global recognition of Bangladesh genocide. He further mentioned that all the diplomatic missions of Bangladesh around the globe can work in tandem and utilize their networks to further the cause of this global recognition of Bangladesh genocide.

Professor Emeritus of Macquarie University echoed ICSF's proposal in saying that it is especially important for the issue of global recognition of Bangladesh genocide to become a part of Bangladesh's foreign policy. He also stressed the importance of quality academic research work on Bangladesh genocide.

Another trustee of ICSF, Dr. Ahmed Ziauddin said that to secure global recognition, we will have to talk about our own genocide, do our own research, and continue the movement. No one else will do it for us.

Among the members of the Bangladeshi Australian diaspora, Mr. Lilac Shahid, Dr. Kamal Uddin, Dr. Abu Taher Mollick, and Mr. Ignatius Rozario also spoke during the discussion. The moderator took questions from Facebook, Zoom, and other social media platforms throughout the program and had relevant discussants respond to them.

After the discussion, moderator Prof. Mizanur Rahman provided a summary and said, "till now, 1971 Bangladesh genocide has failed to get recognition. We do not want to understand politics; we do not want to become a part of geopolitics and its myriad equations; we just want justice for the crime and savagery perpetrated on our people, on our country, on our motherland."

Towards the very end, former faculty member at Queensland University Dr. Mohammad Alauddin thanked all the organisers, volunteers who worked behind the scenes, and all the people who actively asked questions and made comments. He also expressed his optimism as he concluded the program.

Apart from the discussion, ICSF arranged a couple of other events to commemorate 25th March: Genocide Remembrance Day. One of them was a call to don profile picture on social media platforms with hashtags #recognise1971genocide and #recognisebangladeshgenocide to bring people together to demand global recognition of Bangladesh genocide. The other one was a virtual candlelight vigil – a call to post a short video clip or a still of a candle at the first hour of 25th March to commemorate the genocide and show respect to the martyrs. Thousands of Bengalis responded to this call from all over the world.

International Crimes Strategy Forum (ICSF) is an independent global network of experts and activists operating in the interest of justice for the victims and a long-time campaigner for recognition of international crimes committed against the Bengali populace in 1971.