



Christian Conference of Asia

an organ and fellowship of churches and ecumenical councils in asia for initiating and facilitating dynamic christian witness and action

Religious minorities in Bangladesh victims of intolerance and persecution, observes CCA's pastoral solidarity visit team



The CCA pastoral solidarity team's visit to the Bangladesh Islamic Foundation (BIF).

“Bangladesh’s religious minorities have been facing attacks since the 2014 national election. During the elections, minority-dominated villages were the worst attacked places, where individuals and groups associated with pro-Islamist parties looted and burned properties and residences owned by members of Hindu, Christian and Buddhist religions in different parts of the country. Some political parties deliberately used the religious sentiments of ordinary people to intensify communal and religious tensions and polarisations for political advantages,” a pastoral solidarity team of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) was told by representatives of different religious groups in Bangladesh.

“In the last two years alone, at least eight secular bloggers, publishers and rights’ activists have been killed for writing about freedom of thought, religious harmony, communal tolerance and political accountability,” told civil society organisation representatives to the CCA team.

The CCA organised a Pastoral Solidarity Visit from 7 – 11 May 2017 to accompany the churches and communities facing religiously motivated violence in Bangladesh. The solidarity team consisted of Rev. Dr. Henny William Booth Sumakul, Head of the Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa (Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa) – GMIM, Indonesia and a member of the CCA Programme Committee and Dr. Reynaldo Racaza Ty, CCA Program Coordinator for Prophetic Diakonia and Advocacy.

During the four-day visit, the solidarity team engaged in interactions with various civil society organisations, representatives of minority religious groups, churches, ecumenical organisations and social and human rights activists in the country.

Members of the solidarity team were told that minorities in Bangladesh live in the midst of terror and fear. Extremist violence has been a recurring problem in the country, where religious minorities are intimidated, threatened, assaulted and killed by Islamic extremists' intent on silencing dissenting voices.

Out of the 169 million people in Bangladesh, 90 percent are Sunni Muslims; 9.5 percent of them belong to the Hindu religion; and all other faiths, including Christians, Theravada Buddhists, Shi'ite and Ahmadi Muslims, account for less than 1 percent of the total population.

As a direct result of the frequent spate of attacks by extremist groups in the country, religious minorities in Bangladesh are also vulnerable to illegal land grabbing. At least 431,000 people continue to live in displacement as a result of past conflicts and ongoing violence in the country. Indigenous people and religious minorities have been disproportionately affected by this violence and the resulting protracted and new displacement.

Ecumenical and church leaders in Bangladesh echoed their concerns over the troubling rise in violence in the country and informed the members of the CCA solidarity team about the plight of the suffering communities. [Read More...](#)