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BANGLADESH | Two Murdered by Extremists

A Christian and a Hindu were murdered in Bangladesh, the latest in a spate of attacks targeting religious minorities in the country.

On June 5, a Christian grocer named Sunil Gomez was murdered inside his shop in a Christian neighborhood in the district of Natore. On June 7, Ananda Gopal Ganuli, a Hindu religious leader, was killed in Jhenaidah after performing his regular religious rites in a temple in the Naldanga area, where he served as a priest.

Attacks on religious minorities by extremist groups in Bangladesh have escalated rapidly in recent months. The perpetrators were allegedly armed with sharp weapons. According to unconfirmed reports, responsibility for the murders was claimed by Daesh (Islamic State).

William Proloy Samadder, Organizing Secretary of the Bangladesh Christian Association, said, “We used to consider such attacks as isolated incidents but now it has become a matter of grave concern. We have restricted our movements.”

Advocate Rana Dasgupta, Secretary General of the Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council of Bangladesh, told Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), “The entire community has been terrorized and are feeling very insecure. We are not seeing any active role by the political parties to find solutions of these problems that we are facing.”

Also killed on June 5 was the wife of a senior police officer, Police Superintendent Babul Aktar, who was well-known for his involvement in the successful arrests of a number of members of the outlawed extremist group, Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). His wife, Mahmuda Aktar Mitu, was stabbed and shot dead in the city of Chittagong as she took her six year-old son to school.

In a speech in Parliament on June 8, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina vowed that those responsible for the targeted killings of religious minorities “will not get away with it.”

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said: "We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of Mahmuda Aktar Mitu, Sunil Gomex and Ananda Gopal Ganuli. CSW is deeply concerned at the continued spate of attacks targeting religious minorities and proponents of liberal thought in Bangladesh. While we welcome Prime Minister Hasina's pledge to hold the perpetrators to account, the government must follow speech with action. Those responsible for these attacks must be arrested and prosecuted to bring an end to impunity and to ensure that justice is upheld for all citizens of Bangladesh, regardless of their religion. We also urge the government to provide security to those individuals and communities who, by nature of their religion, are most at risk of imminent attack."