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## **BANGLADESH | Villagers Injured After Police Attack**

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is calling for an independent investigation after an alleged attack by police officers on a Christian community in Bangladesh on March 24 which left 25 people injured.

The incident took place in Doripara village, near Dhaka which falls under the authority of the Kaliganj police station. On March 24, four plainclothes police officers raided the home of a Christian woman, Mina Does. The police officers did not produce their identity cards or a warrant and took approximately \$53 from her home. Family members, thinking the men were thieves, challenged them to show their identity cards. The men refused and locked the family in a room.

Neighbors rushed to assist the family and started beating the plain clothes officers until a group of 30 policemen from Gazipur district arrived, at which point they shot at and beat the villagers. A number of homes were damaged and approximately 25 people were injured. Five remain in a critical condition. The villagers, fearing for their safety, were reluctant to file a police complaint or First Information Report (FIR), however the police filed an FIR on March 25 against the Christian community.

William Samadder Proloy, Secretary General of the Christian Association Bangladesh, visited Doripara Village on March 25 and expressed his shock at the severity of the attack on the Christian community. He has called for an immediate investigation and justice for victims.

In the past, police have been accused of arbitrary arrests and extorting money from Christian men in Gazipur district who brew alcohol for their own consumption. Christians and other religious minorities continue to face discrimination in the law, in society and in treatment by enforcement agencies in Bangladesh, which CSW highlighted in its 2016 oral statement to the United Nations Human Rights Council. In 2016, CSW interviewed Christian leaders and victims

of land grabbing and violent attacks, who expressed concerns that the police and enforcement agencies are unwilling to file and investigate cases. Some interviewees felt targeted by police and many expressed their mistrust of police.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We are shocked by the nature and brutality of the attack on the local Christian community at Doripara. The fact that this incident was perpetrated by the police is deeply concerning. CSW is calling for an independent investigation into the attack and we urge the government of Bangladesh to ensure that much-needed reforms are made within the police service to root out corruption and abuses of authority."