

**Association of Young Generation of Urdu Speaking Community  
(AYGUSC) & Council of Minorities**

**Individual Community based Submission By**

**Association of Young Generation of Urdu Speaking Community  
&  
Council of Minorities**

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**Inhuman Camp life of Bihari Urdu speaking linguistic minority of Bangladesh:**

Patterns of inequality, discrimination, political and social marginalization of affected Bihari Urdu Speaking community in Bangladesh.

**UPR Bangladesh 2012**

**Introduction:**

One hundred and sixty thousand Urdu speaking Biharis are living in 116 inhuman camps in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh they are identified in the local society by different nomenclatures, such as non-Bengalis, Biharis and Urdu speaking etc. Actually they are linguistic minority in Bangladesh so that their nomenclature should be Urdu Speaking Bangladeshi.

In 1947 Sub-continent created two historical events, creation of India, Pakistan and mass migration of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs comminutes. When India was divided and creation of Pakistan forced the Indian Muslims to migrate from their original homeland to East and West Pakistan. Most of immigrants from the Indian States of, Bihar, UP and west Bengal came to East Pakistan. The majority of them were Urdu Speaking. They were called as "Mohajirs" meaning refugee, and later they became Biharis and Stranded Pakistani in Bangladesh.

The founder of Pakistan Mr. Jinnah's two nation theory was failed in 16 December 1971. In December 1971; Bengalis won its independence after fighting the nine months war of liberation with the Pakistan Army. During the emergence of Bangladesh a section of Urdu speaking Bihari community opposed the creation of Bangladesh. For that after emergence of Bangladesh in 16 December 1971; the Biharis became once again victims of political. About one hundred thousand Biharis were killed by Bengali freedom fighter. They lost their properties, Services, Jobs, ownerships and became homeless and state less.

During that time Geneva based International Community for Red Cross (ICRC) took the responsibilities to provide them food, health care and build refugees like Camps in different district in Bangladesh and Geneva Camp is one of the first camps.

**Current Situations:**

Bihari camp dwellers are not treated as linguist minority in Bangladesh. Long 40 years of independence of Bangladesh the camp dwellers are staying over three decades are classic examples of subhuman life-style that has hardly any difference with the animal life.

**Atrocious camps situations:**

Most of Bihari camps are smaller and large population. Every hut is 8 to 6 feet in camp and 8 to 10 family members are surviving within that hut with dingy and stinky atmosphere. During the rainy session camps become surrounded like flood and no way to cook and sleep at tiny hut in camp. There is no privacy between parents and others family members. Every day they are living with alarm of ejection of camp, cut out electricity and water facility.

**Water and Sanitations:**

Water and sanitation problem is one of the flaming problems for every camp. Geneva camp is one of the largest camps within 116 other camps. It is located in Dhaka and situated in one hundred twenty three thousand square feet area. Within this territory about twenty thousand people live in inhuman conditions. Only 250 unhealthy toilets are for 22 thousand people and most of open door. Due to clean water children are infecting water diasis; women and girl are also infecting urinary track infections. Poverty and lack of awareness women and girls are facing suffering in their period time. They don't have access to maintain proper hygiene.

**Child Labor:**

Bihari camp dwellers are living under poverty line. Due to poverty and state discrimination they don't have any access to education, health care and economic

development. They have large family members and one or two persons are source of earning so that it is very much difficult to education for their children. Poverty, discrimination, lack of awareness child labor is increasing among the Bihari community. The future generations are going to dark future without education and discrimination.

#### **Language and Culture:**

Urdu language and culture is forgotten in Bangladesh. No access to learn Urdu language those children are getting education they are bound to get education with Bangla language though their mother tongue is Urdu. Most of Urdu poets are practicing in Urdu language and culture but no access to publish their literature in Bangladesh. It is very much atrocious for any community to live without their own language and culture.

#### **Legal Issues:**

Bihari Urdu speaking community is Bangladeshi according to the citizenship law as well as constitutions of Bangladesh and several court verdicts. Their legal issues are very much lawful though state perpetually violating the fundamental, citizenship and human rights of that community. The constitution of Bangladesh said citizenship is considered in two ways—either the persons must be born in the land or his/her parents would be living in Bangladesh and are locals. So Biharis are now citizen of Bangladesh because they came in this territory in 1947 and started living.

#### **Security:**

Issues of insecurity in the camps were also regularly reported by the community. In Dhaka, insecurity took the form of camp gangs, drugs and a lack of police protection, while in Saidpur security issues related to encroachments onto camp land by Bengalis, and the camp residents' inability to complain, appeal or fight against the dominant community. Without legal support the Urdu-speaking community remains vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

#### **Discrimination:**

##### **Passport:**

Now 90% of Bihari camp dwellers are vote and have National ID cards. But after being granted our ID some of the youths tried to get national Passports to go aboard as migrant workers in the Middle East. But we don't have any access to get a Bangladeshi passport. Mustakin, a resident of Geneva camp explained, "Last September, He paid 2000 Taka (USD 30) for a passport but I wasn't given it, even after showing my National ID card to the director general of the department of immigration and passports. He said that his department didn't receive any instruction from the home ministry and relevant authorities on issuing passports to Biharis.

##### **Employment:**

In the fundamental rights of the constitution of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh it says

*"There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in respect of employment or office in the service of the republic".* But I don't feel that this is true if you are Bihari.

Equal access to employment was cited most frequently as the right of the community currently cannot access. Not only are they denied all government positions but due to their camp address and undefined status, wider discrimination in the job market remains a prime concern. Indeed, those who do find formal employment often face wage discrimination and inequality of treatment. As a result the vast majority are

pushed into the formal sector, working as rickshaw-pullers, drivers, butchers, barbers, and mechanics and craft workers, earning meager wages. Bihari camp dwellers are living under poverty line. Due to poverty and state discrimination they don't have any access to education, health care and economic development. They have large family members and only one or two persons are source of earning so that it is very much difficult to getting education for their children. Poverty, discrimination, lack of awareness child labor is increasing among the Bihari community. The future generations are going to dark future without education and discrimination.

### **Education**

Although no formal restriction prevents access to government schools, camp addresses do cause problems for 'Bihari' children seeking admission. Although this appears to be changing, rules vary between institutions, and access is dependent on the attitudes of individuals in charge. More significantly, rampant discrimination within mainstream society as a whole, and continued bullying on the part of teachers and classmates alike continues to discourage attendance. Together with the lack of resources for school fees or materials, educational facilities thus remain inaccessible to the majority. There are no quota for the Bihari for education and public jobs like other minorities and indigenous in Bangladesh.

### **Constant Threat of Eviction**

Despite the overwhelming desire for Bangladeshi citizenship, fear of eviction from the camp if citizenship is formally announced is a very real concern among many residents, and an issue that generates a good deal of confusion among the community. The recent crackdown on illegal property by the Caretaker Government had generated a new set of concerns as many slum-dwellers and some 'Bihari' communities around the country have already felt the brunt of these efforts, posing a new challenge for integration with dignity.

Last month on in August 2012 vested quarter threatened the Biharis camp of Millat Camps & shops Road No.3, at Section No. 11 Mirpur, Irani Camps & shops, New society Market, HID camp, ADC Camp, 2 No. MCC Camp, Road-4, Avenue -3 & Madrasa Camp & shop, Dhaka that they will demolish camps, shops and other structure which the Biharis has build for their family members. if these Biharis are uprooted where will they take shelter with their family members and how they will feed their tiny tots.

### **State policy:**

Even Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Dr. Dipu Moni said, in daily newage published on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2009 she demanded repatriation of millions of Biharis, Stranded Pakistanis from Bangladesh. It is really hopeless, reckless statement by the Minster which has shown the open discrimination with the Bihari camp dwellers. It is very unfortunate Urdu speaking linguist minority's legal status is very much lawful and transparent though state did not recognize to the community as Urdu speaking linguist minority in Bangladesh. The government has initiated various development programmes for poverty reduction in accordance with its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) but these do not address the needs of the Urdu-speaking community. How and when will the poverty-related challenges of this community be incorporated into the PRSP?

### **Civil society's attitude:**

As Biharis, are discriminated against by the government as well as the civil society. They want to be a full part of society with the opportunities available to others. By even though we want to integrate into mainstream society there is no possibility for us to do so because the mainstream Bengali people have no tolerance for the Bihari Urdu speaking community. We are facing intolerant attitudes every day of our lives. Intolerant attitudes and social marginalization is a major barrier to our integration in mainstream society. Intolerance on the part of mainstream civil society has increased the widespread intolerance and the plight of this disenfranchised Bihari community. There has been very little interest amongst the mainstream human rights organizations, legal aid bodies, or women and children's organizations in the 'Bihari' issue. Voices need to be raised and wider society informed if sufficient pressure is to finally force the government to address the issues facing us.

### **Achievement and Good practice**

Recently the election commission has announced that all camp dwellers are Bangladeshi according to the High court verdict and they will enlist in national ID card and voter scheme. Now most of camp dwellers are including in national ID card and voter listing process. However voter enrollment is not sufficient for camp dwellers. They need proper rehabilitation with decorum.

This is too much for us, 40 years suffering of inhuman life. We want to project our self with our own language and culture. Now the time has come to formally recognize that Urdu speaking Biharis are also Bangladeshi and that they have equal rights in Bangladesh. We need to regain our dignity, which is the only way forward for this community's future success. A tolerant attitude is one of the most important elements to reduce the discrimination against the Bihari community. We propose that the government of Bangladesh establish a rehabilitation trust fund to mobilize funding from international Islamic organizations, bilateral donors and other national and international donor agencies in order to ensure a safe and secure future for future generations of Urdu-speakers in Bangladesh. Let's remove the racism; xenophobia and intolerant attitude which will be help full to make our country multi lingual and multi cultural country in the world.

### **Recommendations:**

1. The word "language" should be incorporated in Article 28 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to give a sense of protection to the languages of the linguistic minorities in Bangladesh.
2. The Government and the Civil Society should refrain from calling the Bihari community as non-locals, non-Bengalis or stranded Pakistanis.
3. All the judgments of the Supreme Court should be honoured and implemented by the Government without delay.
4. This linguistic minority should be given equal opportunity to contribute its share in the national development along with other communities. They should be encouraged to study in their mother tongue along with Bangla as the national language.

5. Government should take some necessary action to rehabilitated the Bihari camp people with dignity.