

Dec. 1, 2008: Hearing on Bangladesh: Religious Freedom, Extremism, Security, and the Upcoming National Elections

Thursday, Dec. 4, 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. *

Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2325

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom is holding a public hearing to focus attention on Bangladesh's upcoming national elections.

Bangladesh's last national elections, in October 2001, were followed by numerous reports of violence against members of religious minority communities, particularly Hindus.

Elections previously scheduled for January 2007 were postponed amid allegations that they would not be free and fair. Since January 2007, Bangladesh has been administered by a military-backed caretaker government, a state of emergency has restricted political rights, and there have been serious human rights violations such as extrajudicial killings and torture.

This hearing will explore the prospects for free, fair, and peaceful elections in Bangladesh, the development of a stable democracy, the threat to democratic values posed by religious extremism, and strategies for the U.S. government to promote democracy and respect for human rights, including freedom of religion or belief.

Confirmed speakers include Rep. Joseph Crowley (D-NY).

Confirmed witnesses include:

Panel I: The U.S. government's promotion of democracy, respect for human rights, and free, fair, and credible elections in Bangladesh

Hon. James F. Moriarty, U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh

Panel II: The role of U.S.-funded institutions in promoting free, fair, and credible elections

Peter Manikas, Regional Director for Asia Programs, National Democratic Institute

Kimber Shearer, Deputy Director for Asia Programs, International Republican Institute

Panel III: Legal, social, and political challenges to human rights under the caretaker government, including freedom of religion or belief; Islamic extremism; recommendations for the U.S. and Bangladeshi governments

Dr. Shapan Adnan, National University of Singapore

Dr. Sachi G. Dastidar**, State University of New York

Sara Hossain, Esq., Kamal Hossain & Associates

Dr. Ali Riaz, Illinois State University

Asif Saleh, Founder and Executive Director, Drishtipat

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*Ending time has changed

**Witness has been added