

# **The Role of Police in Counter Terrorism: Perspective Bangladesh**

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Terrorism is one of the major problems of current age. From developed country to developing country, no country is free from terrorism. Terrorism is a threat to a stable country, government and most of all to the state. The security of the state can be challenged by the terrorism. Terrorism can bring less sense of security among the people. It brings a chaotic situation to the economy of the country. From the past years, the terrorists are trying to destabilize Bangladesh. Before the Holi Artisan attacks there were attacks on minority, bloggers, different thinkers, religious leaders and so on. Besides this, terrorism is a global problem. We see terror attacks not only in developing countries but in developed countries too. One of the tranquil and secured countries, Norway faced terrorist attacks in 2012 conducted by Anders Behring Breivik. He killed 77 people in two attacks. Terrorist attacks can be held everywhere in every country. So, the role of police and other law enforcement agencies is significant in this regard. Bangladesh Police is working to combat terrorism from the very beginning of the problem. Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has given strong edicts to root out terrorism from the country. Terrorist groups have used violence in the name of religion. These groups have connection with smugglers, drug dealers, hundi businessmen, gangsters, international terrorists, and group members of non-operational terrorist groups. The present government has adopted zero-tolerance towards terrorism and has denied the use of its land for any terrorist groups either inside or outside the country. The government has endorsed the Anti-Terrorism Act 2012 and Anti-money Laundering Act 2012 and has, so far, proscribed five terrorist outfits- JMB, Hizb-ut-Tahrir(HT), Harkat-ul-Jihad, Bangladesh (HUJI-B), Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh (JMJB) and Shahadat-e-al-Hikma.<sup>1</sup> With the steps from the top level of the government, Bangladesh Police have showed its Zero Tolerance to terrorism. The article tries to bring light in to the steps should be taken by Bangladesh Police in combating terrorism.

## **Terrorism at a Glance:**

Terrorism has a long history of its own. Sicarii was the first terrorist organization. It was a Jewish political movement. *Sicarii* derives from the Latin word for knife *sica* and means assassins or murderers. The Sicarii or "dagger men" carried out murders and assassinations with short daggers. They carried out their attacks to the Roman Empire. Their goal was to push

out them from the Holy Land and to end the Roman Rule over the Jews. They conducted their attacks through guerrilla or terrorist tactics. It was the first organized terrorist organization in the history of terrorism movement which was started by a Jewish group, based on Jewish Nationalism.

The Hashshashin was the first Islamic terrorist group to start terrorism. The word assassin derived from the name Hashshashin. The group was a branch of Ismaili faction of Shiite Muslims. After a quarrel about the succession of leadership in the ruling Fatimide dynasty in Cairo around the year 1090, the losing Nizāriyya faction was driven from Egypt. They established a number of fortified settlements in present day Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon under the charismatic leader Hasan i Sabbah. Persecuted as infidels by the dominant sunni sect in the Muslim world, they sent dedicated suicide murderers to eliminate prominent Sunni leaders whom they considered "impious usurpers."<sup>2</sup>

Terrorism was started by both Islamic and Jewish group. However, the rise of terrorism was started in Bangladesh after the killing of the Leader of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and four national leaders in 1975. After the death of Bangabandhu two military governments patronized and facilitated the war in Afghanistan against the Soviet aggression in the country. When the mujahids came from Afghanistan they brought the ideology of Jihadism. Investigation says, Muslim Millat Bahini of Pakundia of Kishoreganj was the first organized terrorist group in the country. Dismissed Major Peer Motiur Rahman established the group. Bangladesh Police was successful in uprooting the group's roots from the area. Two police officers sacrificed their lives in the clash with the Motiur Bahini. Rifles, revolvers, other firearms, bows and arrows, spears, sticks, swords and large amounts of ammunition, khaki uniforms and other equipment were recovered from the camp. Also found 27 passports with visas of various countries. That was the first exposure of armed activities by any religious militant group in the country.<sup>3</sup> Bangladesh Police was successful in combating them. After 1991, the country experienced Bomb Blast at Udichi cultural function, Bomb Plot of Kotalipara-Tungipara, 459 blasts throughout the country, grenade attacks on Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Shah AMS Kibria and so many attacks. However, it is assumed that a group with the linkage of other countries is trying to destabilize Bangladesh. The goal is to make the country a failed state so that foreign aggression can be done. The geographical location of Bangladesh is significant to other countries. So, world powers have an interest in Bangladesh for geo political reasons. The success of Bangladesh Police is noteworthy in this regard.

### **Causes of Terrorism:**

Police is one of the service delivery institutions of the government busy with diversified duties. The role of police consist controlling road to investigation of a murder. A terrorist does not go to terrorism by accidentally. Personal and collective factors lead him/her to terrorism. Homegrown terrorists are responsible for the recent attacks in the country. History, geographic place, religious divisions, social economic situations and demographic components are accountable for the growth of extremist views and terrorism.

They are-

1. **Psychological Factors:** Socialization process, emotional attacks, unhealthful social setting motivates a person to terrorism. For example, members of broken family can go to terrorism for depression.
2. **Political Factors:** Sometimes, political parties try to destabilize the country with terrorist activities. Bangladesh experienced the terrorist activities in 2015 for three months. Few political parties called nationwide blockade in 2015. In that time, hundreds of people were burned to death by petrol bomb throwing.
3. **Development of Information Technology:** There are 62.248 million internet subscribers in Bangladesh till the end of August, 2016. Among them 58.375 million subscribers are using internets through cell phone. Recent trends show terrorists are using secured messaging applications in cell phones. Sometimes, it becomes difficult to trace the message.
4. **Social Injustice:** Sometimes, social inequalities and deprivation lead to terrorism. On the other hand, members of affluent class enjoy everything in a young age. Both groups lead to gloominess to young population.

**Problems of Countering Terrorism:** The countering terrorism is not an easy task for law enforcement agencies. In Bangladesh, terrorists groups recruit their members from different sections of the society. Sometimes, it becomes difficult to identify and target the terrorists for diversified groups and classes. The recruiters motivated the young with Joihadi or Salafism like other terrorist recruiters. Therefore, terrorism is an ideological driven violence. It is not usual crime such as robbery or burglary. When Ideological motivated young goes for terrorism, it becomes challenging for the law enforcement agencies. Recent trends indicate that, most of the terrorists in Bangladesh came from affluent class. They have expensive private university educational background. They are well off, not poverty-stricken madrassa-educated people. There are multi layered problems of countering terrorism. Counter Terrorism analyst Sheru Thapliyal thus said-<sup>4</sup>

“Terrorism is neither definable within geographical boundaries nor is it within traditional moulds of rationality. Modern technology and globalization do not recognize geography. State sovereignty stands diluted; it is easily challenged. Terrorist groups do not owe loyalty to any national flag, religion or even ethnicity. They extinguish innocent lives as legitimate victims and seek ‘martyrdom’ in suicide missions.”

Here we can understand, combating terrorism is not an easy task. Bangladesh Police is facing threats of different groups, ideological violence, use of developed technologies, and use of sleeper cell from the terrorist groups. However, the success of the police is cannot be denied. After the incident of Holey Artisan attack, the Counter Terrorism Unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police has detected several outfits of the terrorist groups. A good number of terrorist leaders and members have been killed in different raids. Some of them have been sent to jail.

**Preparation of Bangladesh Police:** Bangladesh Police is one of the oldest government organizations of the country. It is an inseparable part of the state. It is also an important stem of the Criminal Justice system of the country. As a part of the Criminal Justice System, Bangladesh Police is progressing in a good speed day by day. Counter Terrorism Unit has started functioning. The goal of the unit is to enhance police capability in combating militancy and terrorism. It includes bomb disposal unit, dog squad, crime scene unit, cyber crime unit and Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT). The unit deals with counter terrorism related information, money laundering, transnational crimes, human trafficking, smuggling of drugs and illegal drug business. The government has established The Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) in 2012. The unit is a model of Federal Bureau of Investigation and Indian Central Bureau of Investigation. PBI focuses on criminal intelligence and criminal investigation. The government has taken initiatives to recruit an additional 50,000 policemen. The Present Inspector General of Police A K M Shahidul Hoque is the pioneer of Community Policing in the country. The Community Policing has become a major tool to involve the public with police activities. It helps to combat terrorism from the grassroots level of a society. Bangladesh Police is preparing for a big leap with the help of newly established departments, modernization of existing ones and involvement with public from the grass roots level.

**Few Observations:** Recent targeted killings were started after launching of Gono Jagoron Moncha which was gathered for the capital punishment of Abdul Qadir Mollah, one of the leaders of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami. Online activists Ahmed Rajib Haider was the first target. After that about 70 terrorist attacks were carried out in all over the countries. Bangladesh Police is the core law enforcement agency of the country. It is working bravely to check the terrorism and religious extremism. However, countering terrorism from the perspective of Police should be a comprehensive approach. Steps should be taken from the broader perspective to enable police in countering terrorism. Such as-

- 1. Special Tribunals:** It is said, there are 2.8 million cases are pending in different courts of the country. Article 35 of the Bangladeshi Constitution establishes right “to a speedy and public trial by an independent and impartial court or tribunal for every person.” Bangladesh has a strict Anti Terrorism Act. But, backlogged cases are hindering the overall criminal justice system. So, the government can set up Special Tribunals for terrorist activities to establish speedy and rule law all over the country.
- 2. Modernization of Laws:** Bangladesh Police follows The Police Act of 1861, The Police Regulations of Bengal of 1943, The Penal Code of 1860, The Criminal Procedure Code in 1898, and The Evidence Act of 1872. All of these laws are formulated by the colonial British Rulers. They formulated laws to sustain their power. However, the terrorism is different from other types of crime. Modernized these laws can be helpful for police to fight against the ideological backed crime-terrorism.
- 3. Establishing Public-Police Relationship:** British rulers established police as a force, not as a service. Terrorism demands greater public relationship with the police. Community policing can be an effective tool to involve members of the society with task of police. Thus people can exchange information with the police.

4. **Increasing Police Members:** Bangladesh has one of the lowest public-police ratios in South Asia. Dhaka is a megacity of nearly 18 million people. Bangladesh has only one police officer for about 1200 inhabitants. For better service, the government should recruit more police officers. The distribution of newly recruited officers should be balanced to combat terrorism.
5. **Relaxing Duty Time:** The job nature of a police officer is always challenging. A police officer involves in duty for 16 to 18 hours. He or she has little time for rest. It brings stress among the police officers. A police officer in stress cannot perform duties effectively. A reasonable is needed for effective police service.
6. **Modernization of Criminal Investigation:** The government has established a well equipped cyber crime section for Criminal Investigation Department (CID). However, it is necessary to enhance the forensic logistic support for CID. It is high time to establish a comprehensive forensic laboratory in every division. Related to this, the high ups of Bangladesh Police can recruit forensic experts in every police station with primary forensic tools to collect evidence. Because, the success of proper investigation depends on the first officer getting the crime scene.
7. **Separate Division for Police:** The job nature of a police is always exigent. Sometimes, it is needed to take decision promptly. The administrative decision making is not always speedy. Sarker (2004) says,

“The tendency of most civil servants to preserve the status quo, and, if possible, extend their zone of influence within the public service system, is very much evident in Bangladesh.”

If there is a separate division, it would be able to communicate with concerned authorities directly. We see, it takes few more years after the directives to establish new departments for the police.

8. **Comprehensive Counter Terrorism Strategy:** The threat from extremism will take a new shape in future. Counter Terrorism Strategy brings an effective relationship among the counterterrorist measures. It helps to fight terrorism and extremism more successfully. However, there is no Counter Terrorism Strategy in Bangladesh. Lack of strategy brings a little bit commotion during a terrorist attack. It is highly needed to formulate a strategy for this purpose. During formulating the strategy, the role of premier law enforcement agency should be taken into account.

**Conclusion:** The article brings few suggestions for the authorities for an effective fight against the terrorists group. Terrorism has now reached to transnational stage. New dimensions are added to the field of countering terrorism day by day. Bangladesh Police is performing well against the terrorists. It is more visible after the Holey Artisan Attack. However, terrorism is a global phenomenon; the Police should be proactive for new threats. The action of police cannot be sustainable if there is lack of participation from the people. It is to be noted the counter terrorism task is only for police. Fairly, it is the responsibility of the each and every citizen to assist the police to the counter terrorism task. At the same time, we need to be united to uproot the terrorism from our beloved Bangladesh.

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