

State Religion Debate and Blogger Killings: current legal and human rights issues in Bangladesh

Presentation and discussion with

SARA HOSSAIN (Lawyer, Supreme Court of Bangladesh, and very prominent human rights activist)

NABA KUMAR RAHA (Director, Gandhi Ashram, Noakhali, Bangladesh)



As the war crime tribunals are still going on, recent developments have again triggered controversy and friction among political and social actors in Bangladesh. These have deepened the impression generated in the aftermath of the Shahbagh movement, namely that Bangladeshi society is being polarized as seldom before, with proponents of secularism on one side and those opting for Islam as guiding principle of state and society on the other. The killings of bloggers propagating secular orientations since February 2015, attacks against religious leaders of minority communities, and the failed petition to remove the declaration of Bangladesh as an Islamic State from the Constitution, are the most prominent recent issues in this regard. How is Bangladesh's government, with its increasingly authoritarian practice in matters of press freedom etc., going to tackle these developments?

In this panel discussion, prominent lawyer SARA HOSSAIN and human rights activist NABA KUMAR RAHA will give introductions to their take on the current state of affairs. This will be followed by an open discussion.

The Guest Speakers

SARA HOSSAIN is lawyer at the Supreme Court, Dhaka, and a prominent human rights activist. After studies in Oxford and Middle Temple, she joined the chambers of her father, the former Minister of External Affairs of Bangladesh, Dr. Kamal Hossain. Much of her work is of a voluntary nature, e.g. directing the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (Blast). A few days ago she received the International Women of Courage Award of the US State Department.

NABA KUMAR RAHA is director of the Gandhi-Ashram in Noakhali (Bangladesh). The founding stone for the trust was laid by M. K. Gandhi during the Noakhali riots after Independence. Communal harmony and Khadi work continue to be priorities of the Ashram. In 2014, Naba Kumar Raha received the "G. Ramachandran-Ikeda Award" from Delhi for his merits.

Ort/Venue: SAI, R Z10

Zeit/Date: Monday, April 11, 2016, 14 Uhr ct/2 pm

Everybody is cordially invited!