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AFRICAN TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT LINK

UPR BANGLADESH

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to stand before you to speak about my country. The Government of Bangladesh is resolutely committed to fighting terrorism and protecting minorities. As part of its efforts to fight terrorism, and curb the extremist groups, the Bangladesh government has banned the Islamic outfit Jamaat- i-Islami, which is more of a fundamentalist organization, in the garb of a political outfit. The ban on the Jamaat is justified as the manifesto of the party violates the constitution of Bangladesh.

The Jamaat-e-Islami is a right wing fundamentalist party in Bangladesh. Established by controversial theologian Abul Ala Maududi in 1941, Jamaat was banned twice, in 1959 and 1964, for its communal role. It got banned again just after the country's independence in 1971, but was allowed to resume politics during the tenure of late president Ziaur Rahman.

Many of its leaders have been indicted of war crimes during the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war by the verdicts of the Bangladesh Supreme Court. Besides, two international crimes tribunals, set up to deal with war-time offences, through several verdicts put the spotlight on Jamaat-e-Islami's role in 1971. Bangladesh says up to three million people died during the war, mostly in massacres by the Pakistan army and their local Islamist allies, the Razakar and Al-Badr forces. Bangladesh's largest Islamist party, the Jamaat-e-Islami, is alleged to have been behind the creation of Al-Badr, providing it with leadership, recruits and inspiration.

On 21 January 2013, a court in Bangladesh sentenced Abul Kalam Azad - a well-known Muslim cleric associated with Jamaat - to death for crimes against humanity during the country's 1971 independence war. Abul Kalam Azad was found guilty of torture, rape and genocide during the war for independence from Pakistan in 1971. Azad, a former member of the Jamaat-e-Islami, was accused of collaborating with Pakistani forces in the murder of Hindus, a minority in the majority-Muslim state. In one case, he was accused of killing at least 12 Hindus while shooting indiscriminately along with Pakistani soldiers.

On 5 February 2013, Abdul Qader Molla, Jamaat's main leader, was sentenced for life for crimes against humanity during the 1971 war. He was found guilty of charges including murder, rape, torture and arson. On 17 September 2013, Molla became the first Jamaat leader to be found guilty by the Bangladesh Supreme Court after it overturned an appeal to acquit him of all charges

On 28 February 2013, Delwar Hossain Sayeedi, vice president of Jamaat was sentenced to death as he was found guilty of mass killing, rape, arson, and religious persecution. During the war he formed a small group to loot and seize the property of Bengali Hindus and those who supported independence. The tribunal found Sayeedi guilty of eight out of the 20 charges leveled against him. These were murder, torture, rape and forcibly converting Hindus to Islam.

Mr. President, the other key members of Jamaat were involved in war crimes include Ghulam Azam- charged with genocide, murder, and abduction, Ali

Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid- secretary general of the Jamaat responsible for the killings of pro-independence Bangladeshi leaders- Muhammad Kamaruzzaman - assistant secretary general of the Jamaat accused of slaughtering 120 unarmed farmers in remote northern village of Sohagpur, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury charged with genocide, persecuting people on religious and political grounds, abduction and committing atrocities against Hindus, and Motiur Rahman Nizami, accused of setting up the al-Badr group, an auxiliary force which helped the Pakistani army identify and kill pro-independence Bengali activists. Ghulam Azam has been sentenced 90 years of imprisonment. Muhammad Kamaruzzaman and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid have been given death sentences by the war crimes tribunal. The verdicts on Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury and Motiur Rahman Nizami are still awaited.

According to BBC News dated 21 January 2103, most observers in Bangladesh agree that there is widespread public support for the trials, which kicked off in 2010 when the first tribunal was set up. The verdicts of the war crimes trials mark a watershed in Bangladesh's tortuous history, where for 40 years families of victims have campaigned relentlessly to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Mr. President it is time now that justice should prevail.

Thank You,