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## Ramharitaluk Genocide

### Introduction

Bangladesh emerged through a bloody war in 1971, although the creation of this nation was rooted in a long history of struggle spanning hundred of years. The state was founded upon the principles of nationalism, democracy, socialism, and secularism. Undoubtedly, the Liberation War is the most significant event in the history of the Bangali nation. From a characteristic perspective, the Liberation War of Bangladesh possesses multidimensional aspects, among which crimes against humanity occupy a major position. Within those crimes, genocide stands as the most horrific manifestation.

Although the circumstances and struggles varied across different regions of Bangladesh during the war, crimes against humanity were perpetrated in every district. Like many other districts, Noakhali also witnessed widespread atrocities, including mass killings. Within a span of less than nine months, numerous crimes such as murder, rape, looting, forced religious conversions, and arson were committed in this district. One such tragic incident was the Ramharitaluk Genocide.

While collecting data regarding the Ramharitaluk Genocide, the researcher obtained diverse information from multiple sources. These pieces of evidence were cross-checked to ensure the accuracy of the findings. However, there was consensus among all informants concerning the number of martyrs in this genocide. Due to local dialectal variations, there were minor differences in the recorded names of the martyrs, yet all sources agreed that nine individuals were killed in the incident. It is worth mentioning that on 13 September 1971, the Pakistan

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army entered the village for the first time. Therefore, this was the first and only genocide that took place in Ramharitaluk. Along with the killings, large-scale looting and arson also occurred on that day. Although no evidence of sexual violence was found in Ramharitaluk itself, reports indicate that such crimes were committed by the Pakistani forces in the nearby area of Khalifarhat.

This research has primarily been conducted using the field investigation method. The researcher visited the execution sites and the homes of the martyrs to conduct interviews. A structured questionnaire was also used to collect information about the genocide and the victims. Additionally, relevant photographs were taken. Various tools—such as cameras, mobile call recordings, locally written books, and other published sources on the genocide in Bangladesh—were utilized to strengthen the study. The research was later organized following a specific structure.

Two major aspects are highlighted in this study. First, the participation of ordinary villagers in the Liberation War; and second, the current socio-economic condition of the families of the martyrs. The study was completed through interviews with eyewitnesses and the relatives of the martyrs. These interviews revealed the profound emotional trauma of the villagers who lost their loved ones. The depiction of the martyrs' families' enduring hardships even fifty years after the Liberation War adds a new dimension to this research.

### **Geographical Location**

The place named Ramharitaluk is located in the Kaladaraf Union of Sadar Upazila in Noakhali District. Historically, the present Noakhali District was part of a larger region that included the areas now known as Feni, Lakshmipur, and Noakhali, collectively referred to as Greater Noakhali. The ancient name of Noakhali was Bhuluya, and the original name of Noakhali Sadar Police Station was Sudharam.

Following the fall of Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula and the establishment of British rule, Bhuluya was recognized as a district under the Fort William Proclamation in 1787. Later, in 1821, it was officially declared a district, having previously been a *pargana*. In 1868, the ancient name *Bhuluya* was replaced with Noakhali.

Noakhali is unique among the districts of Bangladesh as it does not have a city sharing its name. Its district headquarters is located in Maijdee, which became the administrative centre after the original district town was engulfed by the Meghna River in 1948. The headquarters was temporarily moved about eight kilometre's north to Maijdee in 1950, where the British planned and established a new town. The offices and courts from the submerged town were relocated to this area, which was then mostly paddy fields and open land.

Economically, Noakhali District is primarily agriculture-based. Nearly 40% of the regional GDP is derived from agriculture, and about 80% of the population is engaged in this sector. Among all agricultural activities, fisheries and fish cultivation dominate. Boat building and repair, fishing, fish processing, transportation, dried fish production, and net maintenance employ 60–70% of the working population. Owing to its low-lying topography, aquaculture plays a crucial role in the local economy.

The Kaladaraf Union, where Ramharitaluk is situated, belongs to the Sadar Upazila, which is the second largest sub-district of Noakhali in terms of both area and population. Established as a police station in 1861, it was originally known as Sudharam Thana, named after Sudharam Majumdar, a wealthy businessman and philanthropist. In December 1983, the name was officially changed to Noakhali Sadar Upazila. The upazila now comprises the following unions: Andarchar, Ashwadia, Binodpur, Char Matua, Dadpur, Dharampur, Eozbalia, Kadir Hanif, Kaladaraf, Niyazpur, Noakhali, Noannai, and Purba Char Matua.

## **The Condition of the Area in 1971**

Ramharitaluk, situated in the Kaladaraf Union of Sadar Upazila in Noakhali District, was, at that time, a distinctly rural area. The primary occupation of the villagers was agriculture, although a considerable number of people earned their livelihood as day labourers. Most of the population remained deprived of education, and a large portion lived below the poverty line. The majority of the houses were made of thatch and straw, while only a few were constructed with tin sheets. The area was predominantly Muslim-inhabited, with only a negligible number of people from other religious communities.

Ramharitaluk village is located to the west of Datterhat Bazaar and maintained normal communication with the surrounding villages. It was also situated quite close to Majdee, the main urban centre of Sadar Upazila. In 1971, all the roads in the area were unpaved, unsuitable even for rickshaw movement. The villagers used bullock carts, bicycles, or simply walked. The people of the village led simple and modest lives, and except for a few, most were politically naive. Due to their low income, the standard of living remained underdeveloped.

Before the Liberation War, the area had a strong presence of anti-liberation political forces. A large number of residents in Ramharitaluk were supporters of Jamaat-e-Islami. Although Awami League candidate Abdul Malek Ukil won in all constituencies of Noakhali District during the 1970 general election, he lost in the Ramharitaluk constituency, where Jamaat-backed candidate Maulana Nurul Amin Atik Ali secured victory with a large margin.

At that time, there was no marketplace near the Ramharitaluk School. The large road that now runs in front of the present market was then merely a narrow earthen path. The villagers traveled to Majdee mostly on foot, or by boat during the rainy season. Boat routes connected Khalifarhat to Datterhat, from where people would proceed toward Majdee.

Overall, Ramharitaluk in 1971 represented the quintessential picture of a rural, agrarian, and socially conservative community, modest in lifestyle yet deeply rooted in its traditional structure and values.

### **Surrounding Environment**

Ramharitaluk is located approximately 12 kilometres west of Noakhali Sadar. The road to the village branches off from Dattabari Mor, extending westward. The mass killing site (Badhyabhumi) is situated beside the Ramharitaluk Government Primary School, adjacent to the village itself.

Although Ramharitaluk is relatively close to the main town, the majority of its residents still live below the poverty line. The village, surrounded by lush greenery, presents a serene rural landscape. During the Liberation War of 1971, most houses were built with thatch and straw, while only a few were made of tin sheets. The area was, and remains, predominantly Muslim, with a small number of people from other religions. Even today, the entire village is recognized as a Muslim-inhabited area.

Despite the passage of many years since independence, transportation and communication facilities in the village remain inadequate. Being situated somewhat away from the urban center, the village still retains a traditional and somewhat outdated rural environment.

The genocide spot, now clearly identified and demarcated, was once used as a Board Office during the war period. In the present day, a new school building stands at that location. The genocide spot is surrounded on three sides by residential areas, with a local market located on the other side. To reach the site from the main road, one must travel along a narrow pathway that only allows access by rickshaw, motorcycle, or bicycle. During the rainy season, however, the site becomes inaccessible except on foot. Although the nearby residents are aware of the historical significance of the genocide site, there remains a general indifference toward its preservation. This lack of conservation

efforts reflects the broader neglect of local genocide heritage, despite its profound historical importance.

### **Background of the Genocide**

On 1 March 1971, President Yahya Khan announced via radio that the National Assembly session scheduled for 3rd March was cancelled and postponed indefinitely. In response to this undemocratic move, a nationwide strike was observed on 2nd March across Bangladesh.

On 3 March, a meeting was held at the Noakhali Town Hall under the chairmanship of Abdus Sobhan, Vice-President of the Noakhali District Awami League. In that meeting, a nine-member All-Party Action Committee (Sangram Parishad) was formed. The members were: Abdul Malek Ukil (Convener), Nurul Haque (Secretary), Azizul Haque, M.A., Shahid Uddin Iskander, Abdur Rashid, Professor Md. Hanif, Sakhawat Ullah, Haji Idris, Abu Sayeed, and Khaja Ahmed (Feni).

In this tense political climate, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered his historic speech on 7 March 1971 at the then Racecourse Maidan (now Suhrawardy Udyan), where he indirectly gave directives for a struggle for liberation.

Following Bangabandhu's declaration of independence on 26 March, a meeting was convened at the DC Circuit House in Noakhali with local dignitaries and leaders. During that discussion, the participants affirmed their allegiance to Bangabandhu's call for independence. Among those present were Abdul Malek Ukil (later Speaker of the National Assembly), Shahid Uddin Iskander, and other political leaders and activists.

The meeting concluded with a resolution to defend the country, urging everyone to take up whatever arms they possessed and join the liberation struggle. Both Abdul Malek Ukil and the then Deputy Commissioner delivered motivational speeches, calling upon all patriots to fight. Responding to their call, police officers Lutfor Rahman Chowdhury, Sadeq Khan Chowdhury, Nur

Ahmed Chowdhury, Aoub Ali, Sirajul Haque, Kamal Uddin, and many others joined the movement.

On the same day (26 March), under the leadership of Commander Rafiq Ullah, members of the Army, Ansar, Police, EPR (East Pakistan Rifles), Awami League, Chhatra League, and the All-Party Student Struggle Council gathered at the Majjdee Town Hall to form a united liberation force — the first organized group of freedom fighters in Noakhali.

Prominent figures such as Subedar Lutfor Rahman, Rafiq Ullah, and Mujib Ullah Khandaker, along with other retired members of the army, navy, police, and Ansar, played a crucial role in organizing and leading the local resistance. Control rooms for coordination were established in several key areas, including Majjdee Town Hall, Kankirhat in Senbagh, and Laxmipur.

The local administration of Noakhali extended full support to the freedom fighters, greatly facilitating their operations. Initially, arms were supplied from the Majjdee Police Lines, and retired and on-leave military personnel conducted training sessions for the fighters. To facilitate recruitment, MP Nurul Haque Mia was provided with a jeep by the administration.

Training camps were set up at the Primary Teachers' Training Institute (PTI) in Majjdee, Mizan Maidan and Madrasa in Feni, and the Feni Pilot School. These camps were supervised by Subedar Lutfor Rahman, then Officer-in-Charge of Feni Police Station Mohammad Ali, Captain Enamul Haque, and P.O. Zainal Abedin, among other distinguished individuals.

The Pakistan Army entered Choumuhani in greater Noakhali on 22 April 1971. However, as part of the initial resistance, the freedom fighters destroyed several key bridges — including the Shubhopur Bridge in Feni, the Shahebzada Rail Bridge north of Sonaimuri, and both the road and rail bridges at Bogadia, south of Sonaimuri — in an attempt to halt the enemy's advance.

As the invading Pakistani forces proceeded, fierce armed confrontations erupted between them and the freedom fighters at

various locations, marking the beginning of Noakhali's active resistance in the Liberation War.

### **Description of Genocide and Atrocities**

On 13 September 1971, a genocide took place in the courtyard of Ramharitaluk Government Primary School, located in Ramharitaluk village under Kaladaraf Union, about 12 kilometers south of Noakhali Sadar Upazila. In this genocide, nine people were killed.

After the outbreak of the Liberation War, Noakhali district remained free from enemy control for about a month. The Pakistani army entered the district for the first time on 22 April 1971, establishing their main base at the Begumganj Technical High School. From there, they organized Razakar's, Peace Committee, Al-Badr's, and Al-Shams forces to assist their campaign to eradicate 'miscreants'. A few days after 22 April, the Pakistanis also set up another camp at the Maijdee Primary Teachers' Training Institute (PTI), from which they conducted genocide s in various areas of Sadar Upazila.

Their first major operation took place in Shripur village, adjacent to Sonapur, located on the eastern side of the Maijdee–Sonapur road. On 15 June 1971, around 110 innocent villagers were brutally killed there. After this, genocide began to occur systematically across different parts of Sadar Upazila, including Ramharitaluk village, as part of the broader genocidal campaign.

By late May 1971, the Ramharitaluk Government Primary School field had become a training centre for local freedom fighters. Training was conducted under local initiative by Mofiz Uddin (a member of the Pakistan Army at the time), Nodor Uzzaman (a member of the East Pakistan Rifles), and Jakir Hossain (a police officer). Around 200 freedom-seeking young men received training there.

However, local Razakars, upon discovering the training activities, informed the Pakistani army stationed at the Maijdee

PTI camp, falsely claiming that a large stockpile of weapons was being kept at the Ramharitaluk camp. Acting on this information, in the early hours of 13 September 1971, just after the *Fajr* [morning] prayer, Pakistani soldiers, with the collaboration of Razakars, surrounded and attacked the village.

The attack was launched from three directions:

- one group entered from Kalitara Bazar via the DB Road toward the southeast,
- another from Datterhat–Khalifarhat to the west,
- and the third from Kalitara Bazar, moving west through Karmulla Bazar.

Guided by local Razakars, the army entered the village shortly after dawn. They raided homes and dragged away most of the male villagers, taking them to the Ramharitaluk Government Primary School. There, with the help of Razakars, the freedom movement organizers and prominent villagers were separated from the rest. The nine captives were lined up with their hands tied behind their backs and shot dead.

The remaining detainees were subjected to various forms of torture before being released — some were forced to stand holding their ears, others were submerged in water, while a few managed to escape unnoticed. On that same day, the army arrested local chairman Aman Ullah and his cousin Shamsuddin, taking them to the Maijdee PTI camp. Aman Ullah was physically tortured for five days before being released. Shamsuddin, because of his friendship with a Razakar, narrowly escaped death.

Among the martyred organizers, Momin Ullah was one of the most prominent figures. He had taken the initiative to establish the freedom fighters' training camp in Ramharitaluk. His son, Manjur Kader, was an eyewitness to the genocide. On that morning, as he left home to study the Qur'an, Razakars surrounded their house. His father hid in the pond behind the house, but was captured by Razakars, taken to the school ground, and executed along with eight others. When Manjur's two cousins

went to rescue his father, they were identified by Razakars as freedom movement organizers and were also shot dead.

During the arrest, Momin Ullah's lungi tore slightly, prompting a domestic helper to bring another one for him. The Razakars accused the helper of being a collaborator in the liberation movement, and he too was executed with the others.

Another victim, Ramzan Ali, had returned home from the training camp on 12 September. The next morning, as he set out for training with his 18-year-old son, Abul Kalam, Razakars captured them near the Ramharitaluk bazar and brought them to the school ground. The soldiers released the son but tied the father's hands with his own cloths before shooting him dead.

Shafiq Ullah, another martyr, was a government ration dealer. Though he could not engage directly in Awami League politics due to his government position, he secretly supported the cause of independence. He donated money and food to the freedom fighters and inspired villagers to join the struggle. When the Razakars learned of his activities, they reported him to the Pakistani army, making him one of their primary targets.

That day, the invaders killed villagers indiscriminately — some were dragged from their homes, some from roads, others from the training site. Alongside the killings, the Razakars carried out widespread looting, which continued until December 1971. However, no incidents of rape or sexual assault were reported in this particular genocide.

All nine martyrs of the Ramharitaluk genocide were directly involved in the Liberation War, though most were farmers and day labourers by profession. They were, however, politically and culturally conscious individuals. The local freedom fighters could not anticipate such a sudden attack deep inside the countryside, and therefore had no Preparedness to resist. The soldiers entered abruptly, dragged the freedom-loving villagers to the school ground, and executed nine people on the spot.

According to eyewitness accounts and field investigations, the total number of martyrs in the Ramharitaluk genocide was nine, whose identities have been confirmed through interviews and local inquiries.

### **Identity of the Perpetrators**

The Ramharitaluk genocide was directly perpetrated by the Pakistan Army in collaboration with local Razakars. During the Liberation War, the Pakistan Army had established a camp at the Primary Teachers' Training Institute (PTI) in Maijdee. Although there was no Razakar camp in Ramharitaluk itself, a Razakar base was located nearby in Khalifarhat, where the collaborators frequently gathered.

When the Razakars learned that freedom fighters were undergoing training on the grounds of Ramharitaluk Government Primary School, they informed the Pakistan Army. Acting on this intelligence, the army launched a planned assault on Ramharitaluk. During the attack, members of the Razakar forces actively assisted the Pakistani soldiers.

Among the identified Razakars were Commander Bashir, Yusuf Mia, Amir Ali, and Monsur Ahmed, along with several others. Cases against them have been filed with the International Crimes Tribunal, and the trial proceedings are currently underway. These collaborators were directly involved in identifying the nine martyrs who were later executed during the Ramharitaluk genocide.

On that day, many villagers were detained at the school grounds. The Razakars encouraged the Pakistan Army to selectively execute the nine individuals, labelling them as organizers and trainers of the Liberation War. This clearly establishes the direct complicity of the Razakars in the genocide.

Furthermore, in the days following September 13, these collaborators intimidated the local population and carried out widespread looting, spreading fear and chaos throughout the area.

## **Eyewitness Testimonies**

### **Manjur Qader (65)**

Occupation: Retired Government Official, Father: Momin Ullah, Village: Ramharitaluk, Upazila: Sadar, District: Noakhali  
Interview Location & Date: Noakhali District Fisheries Building, 09 August 2021

On 13 September 1971, four individuals from my household, including three family members and one domestic worker, were martyred. They were Shaheed Momin Ullah, Shaheed Nur Uddin, Shaheed Shahab Uddin, and Shaheed Anar Ullah. The three members of my family who were killed were all actively involved in Awami League politics.

Following Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's call to war on 26 March 1971, all members of our family were motivated to join the liberation struggle due to our longstanding association with the Awami League. Towards the end of May, some weapons were brought from the PTI police station in Noakhali to Ramharitaluk for training purposes. Prior to this, my father maintained direct contact with the freedom fighters' camp in Choyani, where he learned how to organize fighters and set up training centres. Subsequently, he established a training centre at Ramharitaluk school ground, where local volunteers were trained by Sergeant Mofiz Uddin of the Pakistan Army, Nuruzzaman of the then EPR, and Police Officer Zakir Hossain. Around 200 young men attended training there every morning.

Local Razakar collaborators informed the Pakistan Army stationed at Maijdee PTI about the camp, reporting that many freedom fighters were present in Ramharitaluk and that if combat occurred, it could last two to three days. Accordingly, the Pakistan Army prepared and advanced towards Ramharitaluk.

On 13 September 1971, after Fajr prayer, the Pakistan Army surrounded our house. That morning, my younger sister and I were preparing to go to the local madrasa for Quran lessons, while my father was having breakfast. At that moment, Shaheed

Shahab Uddin ran to my father and said, “Uncle! The Punjabis have surrounded our house.” My father immediately moved eastward without finishing his breakfast, and I ran behind him crying. Some Razakars entered the house searching for him. My father had hidden under water lilies in the pond near the house. My brother Siraj Uddin was with him, while I stayed on the pond’s bank. The Razakars thoroughly searched the nearby paddy field but could not find him. Eventually, they discovered him under the water lilies. As they attempted to shoot him, my father emerged from the water. The Razakars, shouting “Phaichi re! Phaichi re!” (Got him! Got him!), captured him.

My two cousins, Nur Uddin and Shahab Uddin, tried to follow him to the school ground. I ran further north. Shortly after, I heard gunfire and later learned from villagers that my father, Momin Mia, along with others, had been executed. Our domestic worker, Anar Ullah, had brought a lungi for my father because his was torn when the Razakars captured him. All captives were lined up and shot. After the perpetrators left, I returned home and found the bodies of three family members. We buried my father in our family graveyard.

The attackers did not harm another uncle, who was then the local chairman. He was taken to the PTI station but released after four to five days of torture because he was an elected representative. Another elder cousin, Shamsuddin, was also detained but released due to a personal connection with one of the Razakars. The attackers looted gold, money, and my father’s revolver. Two rifles were hidden underground by relatives were spared.

It is important to note that during the 1970 elections at this same centre, the Awami League lost, which had led to disputes and altercations between my father and Jamaat supporters, creating a longstanding enmity between them.

### **Mohammad Yusuf (70)**

Occupation: Agriculture, Father: Late Idris Mia, Village: Ramharitaluk, Upazila: Sadar, District: Noakhali, Interview

Location & Date: Ramharitaluk Government Primary School,  
07 August 2021

On 13 September 1971, a genocide occurred in the field of Ramharitaluk Government Primary School. With the collaboration of local Razakars, nine villagers were killed by the Punjabi soldiers. All of the victims were supporters of the liberation movement.

On that morning, I woke up and went out for Fajr prayer. After completing the prayer, when I reached the Ramharitaluk market corner, I saw several Razakars carrying rifles on their shoulders and some Pakistan military personnel marching towards the market. Witnessing this, I hurried back home and warned the neighbours. About an hour later, gunfire erupted. After it stopped, I, along with many villagers, went to the school field and saw people crying. I learned that the attackers had shot and killed Momin Ullah and eight or nine others.

Before the killings, the victims were brought from their respective homes to the school field. They were lined up and executed there. Following the genocide, the attackers set fire to several houses and conducted widespread looting. The Razakars specifically looted Momin Ullah's household. The perpetrators had searched the village for other targets, particularly those associated with the Awami League.

After executing the nine victims, their bodies remained in the field. Once the Punjabis left, the families recovered the bodies, performed the burial and funeral rites. The main reasons for these killings were the victims' affiliation with the Awami League, their involvement in the liberation struggle, or their roles as organizers of freedom fighters.

**Abul Kalam (68)**

Occupation: Agriculture, Father: Ramzan Ali, Village:

Ramharitaluk, Upazila: Sadar, District: Noakhali

Interview Location & Date: Ramharitaluk Market, 07 August 2021

My father, Ramzan Ali, responded to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's call during the Liberation War and devoted himself as a freedom fighter. Unfortunately, on 13 September 1971, he was shot and killed by Punjabi soldiers at the field of Ramharitaluk School, along with eight others.

My father was a farmer, but we did not own much land. He often stayed with the then local chairman, Aman Ullah. Under Aman Ullah's guidance, by the end of May, he began conducting liberation war training at the Ramharitaluk school. On one occasion, he returned home briefly for a personal matter but left early in the morning of 13 June, heading back toward Ramharitaluk school. I accompanied him. A little before reaching the school, the Punjabis surrounded us. Both my father and I were taken to the school field. I was released, but my father had his hands tied behind his back with a towel and was shot dead.

Before being killed, my father asked me for water. I went to bring water from my sister's house near the school. Upon returning, I saw him shot in front of me. He was shot on the left side of his chest. Among the nine people executed in the school field that day, my father was the last. After his killing, several villagers and I took his body home and buried him there. Our economic situation was so poor that we could barely afford a proper burial. The local chairman assisted us.

After my father's death, our family had no one to take care of us, so we were sent to an orphanage. We had no land of our own. During the war, the government gave me 2000 Taka and some corrugated tin sheets. However, my father was never officially recognized as a freedom fighter. Being poor, we did not know how to apply for recognition, and we did not receive further assistance.

In our area, there was a freedom fighter commander named Momin Mia. My father and others trained under him. After my father's death, we faced extreme hardship. My sisters still struggle and work in other people's houses. I have no land and

live working in someone else's household. After the death of the chairman, we received no support, although we occasionally received help while he was alive.

On that day, the Razakars looted many houses in the area. Afterward, they returned several times to loot again. They were armed, so the villagers lived in constant fear. They also set fire to a few houses. However, there were no reports of sexual violence in our area; such atrocities occurred in Khalifahat.

### **Marfat Ullah (70)**

Occupation: Agriculture, Father: Shahajul Haque (martyred),

Village: Ramharitaluk, Upazila: Sadar, District: Noakhali

Interview Location & Date: Ramharitaluk Market, 07 August 2021

My father, Sirajul Haque, was a peace-loving man who supported the cause of the liberation war. On 13 September 1971, he was shot dead by the attackers at the training camp in Ramharitaluk Primary School. He could not survive the encounter with the Punjabi soldiers.

My father ran a small business to support the family and was very devoted to his country. Following the guidance of Chairman Aman Ullah, he had helped organize training for freedom fighters since May. On the day of the genocide, the Punjabis captured my father from the training camp, lined him up along with others, and shot him. Hearing the gunfire, villagers ran to the school field and witnessed the killing.

Afterwards, we brought my father's body home for burial. Our family was extremely poor and could barely manage the funeral. The chairman provided financial help for the burial.

On that day, the attackers also captured my elder brother, Chowdhury Mia. They forced him into the pond to search for rifles, then made him climb a coconut tree to fetch coconuts. Even after these humiliations, they bound him in front of the execution and killed my father in front of his eyes. My father was around fifty years old. After his death, our family of three

children became destitute. We had to work in fields and other people's houses to survive.

After the country's independence, we received little to no assistance. My father's death left our family helpless, and our daily life remained extremely difficult.

**Mohammad Ullah (65)**

Occupation: Agriculture, Father: Mofiz Ullah, Village:

Ramharitaluk, Upazila: Sadar, District: Noakhali

Interview Location & Date: Rampura, Dhaka, 29 August 2021

On 13 September 1971, Rajakars and Punjabi soldiers together executed nine people in our village. I witnessed this genocide firsthand. The event occurred between 7:00–8:00 AM at the Ramharitaluk Primary School field.

I was fifteen years old at the time. I ran a small shop in front of the school, selling essential goods. During the war, schools were closed, and under Chairman Amin Ullah and Momin Ullah Mia, a training camp was set up in the school field for freedom fighters. Momin Ullah had learned techniques from the Chiayani camp. Shafik Ullah Dealer provided food and funds. Members of EPR and the army conducted training sessions, with around 200 trainees participating daily.

On 13 September, early in the morning, the village was surrounded by Punjabis and Rajakars from three sides. They arrested freedom fighters and Awami League activists from their homes and brought them to the school field. Around 30 people were detained, and nine freedom fighters and organizers were singled out and executed by firing squad. Among the victims were Momin Ullah, Nur Uddin, Shahab Uddin, Ramzan Ali, Zulfikar Ali, Henju Mia, Shafik Ullah, Ana Mia, and Sirajul Haque. The local Rajakars directly assisted the Punjabis in the genocide.

The bodies were left on the school field, and families later retrieved and buried them. Of the 30–35 people initially captured, two were taken to the Majjdee Punjabi camp, tortured for five days, and then released.

The local Rajakars involved included Commander Bashir, Yusuf Mia, Amir Ali, Mansur Ahmed, among others. After the genocide, the attackers looted and set fire to several homes, including my shop in front of the school, which was my only source of income. They frequently returned to the village with arms, intimidating and looting residents. The attacks caused many Hindu families to flee the area permanently.

### **Eyewitness Testimonies of Martyred Families**

#### **Jalil Kader (60)**

Occupation: Business, Father: Momin Ullah (martyred),  
Village: Ramharitaluk, Upazila: Sadar, District: Noakhali  
Interview Location & Date: Ramharitaluk Market, 07 August 2021

My father, Momin Ullah, along with my two paternal cousins—Nur Uddin and Shahab Uddin—and another person from our household, were captured by members of the Pakistani army on 13 September 1971. My father had been working at the Chittagong Court Building before the war, but upon hearing Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s speech, he returned home.

At home, he established a temporary training camp for freedom fighters at Ramharitaluk Primary School. While conducting training there, the Punjabi soldiers attacked our area and executed nine people. All nine were killed together.

My father provided financial support to freedom fighters in the Sadar-West region and also helped organize them. He was directly involved as a local organizer of the liberation movement. Although nine people were executed, several others were detained and tortured at Ramharitaluk Primary School. Some managed to escape in fear. The attackers specifically selected these nine because they were organizers—they trained freedom fighters, collected important information, and procured food supplies. Local Rajakars assisted the Punjabi soldiers in carrying out this genocide, identifying these nine as central to the training operations.

The bodies of my father and the other two martyred family members were brought home and buried together in the family graveyard. We

are grateful to the government that we received official recognition and regular pensions. Among the nine martyred, only three families—including ours—received government assistance. The others could not maintain proper documentation or apply correctly, which caused difficulties in recognition.

The local Rajakars involved—Yusuf, Bashir, and Abul Kalam—are currently facing trials for crimes against humanity. These Rajakars directly assisted the Punjabis in executing the nine martyrs, believing that sparing them would allow the number of freedom fighters in the area to grow.

### **Chan Mia (65)**

Occupation: Day labour, Father: Zaherul Haque (martyred),

Village: Ramharitaluk, Upazila: Sadar, District: Noakhali

Interview Location & Date: Ramharitaluk Market, 07 August 2021

My father, Zaherul Haque, was martyred in the Ramharitaluk genocide on 13 September 1971. He was a day labour, and we came from a very poor family. My father always followed the instructions of the local chairman, Aman Ullah.

When the training camp began in May, under the chairman's direction, he participated in the training. Until the day he was martyred, my father was mostly at the camp and rarely at home. He not only participated in training but also helped oversee the camp. On 13 September, he was at the camp during Fajr (dawn) prayers when the Punjabi soldiers attacked from three directions. They entered the village, conducted house-to-house searches, and brought many people to the Ramharitaluk Primary School field.

At that time, my father was captured at the camp. The Rajakars, under the direction of the Pakistani soldiers, made him stand in line with eight others. Then, following the Rajakars' orders, my father, along with the other eight, was executed. He supported his family as a day labour, working at other people's homes. At Ramharitaluk school, he was shot along with the other eight, despite the attackers being armed with machine guns. My father was always respected in the community.

After this genocide, my family received no assistance. Among the nine martyrs of Ramharitaluk, only three families received pensions. We did not have proper documents and did not fully understand the process. When my father was killed, we were so poor that we could not afford a proper burial. Villagers provided cloth for the shroud, and the chairman contributed money. After the war, we received some help once through the local chairman, but otherwise, we have received no support. Our family remained destitute, and even now, we struggle to live properly.

**Mohammad Jasim Uddin (60)**

Occupation: Agriculture, Father: Shafik Ullah (martyred),

Village: Ramharitaluk, Upazila: Sadar, District: Noakhali

Interview Location & Date: Ramharitaluk Market, 07 August 2021

My father, Shafik Ullah, was martyred by Punjabi soldiers on 13 September 1971. He served as an organizer and financial supporter of the freedom fighters' camp at the Ramharitaluk school field. Additionally, he was a respected businessman in the area.

At the end of May, with efforts from Momin Ullah Mia, Aman Ullah Mia, my father, and a few others, a training camp for freedom fighters was established at Ramharitaluk school field. Around 120–130 freedom fighters received training at this camp. Momin Ullah and my father's plan was to provide short-term training here before sending the trainees to India for full preparation. The camp's training was conducted by Havildar Mofiz Uddin of the army, Nuruzzaman of the then EPR, and Zakir Hossain of the police. They stayed at Momin Ullah's residence at night, where they ate and rested. My father and Aman Ullah Mia bore almost all the financial costs for the freedom fighters, including food, clothing, and other necessities. Truly, it was because of a local representative like Aman Ullah that many people from this area joined the liberation movement.

On 13 September, after Fajr, Punjabi soldiers and Rajakars attacked our area while training was ongoing at Ramharitaluk Primary School. The Rajakars guided the Punjabi soldiers to our

homes. My father was taken from our house to the school field, where the Rajakars identified him along with eight others as leaders of the freedom fighters. The invaders then lined up the nine men and executed them.

My father was a government dealer, distributing government rations. Although his government position prevented him from openly engaging in politics, he quietly supported the independence of Bangladesh. He provided funds, food, and support to freedom fighters and acted as an organizer, which made him a target for the Pakistani army.

My father has received official recognition as a freedom fighter, for which we are grateful. During the liberation war, the area's political awareness was limited, but some people supported independence, including my father and a few others, as well as the family of Chairman Amin Ullah, who lived near the school. However, the opposition was stronger and mainly facilitated this genocide.

### **Humain Kabir (70)**

Occupation: farmer, Father: Badli Mia, Village: Ramharitaluk, Upazila: Sadar, District: Noakhali

Interview Location & Date: Ramharitaluk Market, 21 August 2021

On 13 September 1971, Rajakars and Punjabi soldiers attacked our area. They shot and killed nine people in the school field. Several others were captured and taken to Maijdee, where they were tortured and later released. Additionally, there was extensive looting in the area.

At the outbreak of the war, I was twenty years old. By the end of May, Aman Ullah Mia and a few others had established a freedom fighter training camp in our area. Prior to this, a training camp for freedom fighters had already been operating in Maijdee in April, and some locals were also connected to it. Among them was Momin Ullah, the chairman's brother. When the Ramharitaluk camp started in May, many locals enrolled as freedom fighters, mostly following the instructions of the chairman and his brother because the chairman was very popular among ordinary villagers.

Before 13 September, we did not anticipate that the invaders would attack this area because the village was almost isolated from the town, and the road conditions were very poor. On that day, early in the morning, Punjabi soldiers and Rajakars attacked the village from three sides. There was no confrontation with freedom fighters because the attack occurred very early, and the trainees had already returned home after completing their training.

The invaders went from house to house and brought the villagers who supported the Awami League to the school field. Among them, they singled out nine key figures and executed them by shooting. The martyrs included Momin Ullah, Nuruddin, Shahabuddin, Ramjan Ali, Zulfikar Ali, Henju Mia, Shafik Ullah, Ana Mia, and Sherazul Haque. However, none of their names were officially recorded in the freedom fighter list because the families were very poor, illiterate, and did not maintain any documentation. Many families of the martyrs continue to live a very struggling life even today.

Several others were taken to the Punjabi camp in Maijdee, where they were tortured but eventually released. After the genocide, the martyrs were buried in family graves. On that day, there was widespread looting: houses near the school, houses near the market, and even a shop in front of the school were set on fire. After the genocide, the Rajakars continued to harass people, threatening them with guns and looting their valuable possessions.

### **Lives and Struggles of Martyred Families**

Hundreds of thousands of people who lost loved ones in the Liberation War of 1971 continue to live with the wounds of that loss in their hearts. Many families were left destitute after witnessing the killings of their relatives. Even 50 years after the Ramharitaluk genocide, the tears of those who lost their loved ones have not dried. Martyr families are still living with the pain of losing their dearest ones.

Like other regions of Bangladesh, the genocide in Sadar Upazila of Noakhali District on 13 September 1971 severely impacted

the lives and livelihoods of ordinary people. After the genocide, the Rajakars looted houses, set fire to homes and businesses, and destroyed property. Many villagers fled their homes in fear. In this genocide, the primary earners of the families were killed, leaving the households destroyed. In many cases, post-war generations have not been able to recover from the losses, and the struggle of these families continues to this day.

In the Ramharitaluk genocide, martyr Ramjan Ali was a day labourer who cultivated paddy on land owned by the then-chairman Aman Ullah. During the war, under the chairman's instruction, he began conducting freedom fighter training. After he was martyred in the genocide, the family did not even have the resources to provide a proper burial. The local chairman arranged the burial. After this atrocity, there were no earning members left in the family. As a result, Ramjan Ali's son, Abul Kalam, grew up in a local orphanage. For the motherland, he had to leave his home and upbringing behind. Fifty years ago, Ramjan Ali worked as a day labourer, and fifty years later, his son Abul Kalam is still working as a day labourer in others' homes. Even after half a century, the family has not been able to rebuild its life.

Chaan Mia, another member of a martyr family, remains haunted by grief and loss from 1971. His father, Zahirul Haque, was killed by the Pakistani forces in the Ramharitaluk genocide. While recalling that day, Chaan Mia repeatedly breaks down in tears. His father was the only male member of the family who worked as a day labourer to support the household. They did not even own land. He spent his days at the training camp for freedom fighters. After Zahirul Haque was killed, the family continues to survive by working in other people's homes. Although they received 2,000 Taka and some corrugated tin sheets as post-war government aid, they have not received any support over the past fifty years. Even though he participated in direct training during the war, his father's name was never officially recorded as a freedom fighter.

In the Ramharitaluk genocide, martyr Serajul Haque was a small business owner and the sole earner in his family. When the war began, he began receiving training at a freedom fighter camp in May. After he was killed by the invaders on 13 September, his son, Marfat Ullah, and the whole family were plunged into grief. At that time, Marfat Ullah had no employment. After losing his father and the family business, he began working as a day labourer. Economic hardships made work scarce, and he experienced many days of hunger. Since the war, the family has not received any government assistance as a martyr family. Even fifty years later, his father's name has not been included in the official freedom fighter list.

Research and data collection on the Ramharitaluk genocide consistently reveal similar hardships faced by martyr families. In this genocide, nine people were killed—all of whom were freedom fighters, organizers, financiers, or camp instructors. Unfortunately, except for three, the remaining six never received official recognition as freedom fighters. Among those three, only those financially well-off received support. The other six families remain in a dire state. Even fifty years after independence, the families of the martyrs have not recovered from their losses. It is crucial that both government and local authorities come forward to support these families.

### **Preservation of Memory**

Noakhali holds a glorious history of the Liberation War. During the 1971 war, the atrocities, brutal killings, and inhumane genocide committed by the Pakistani forces left deep scars across the district. Even 50 years later, most of the genocide sites remain unmarked, and those that have been identified are often neglected and poorly maintained.

However, the Noakhali District Administration has identified the site of the Ramharitaluk genocide and erected a memorial there. A tall memorial has been constructed at the site, inscribed with the names of the nine martyrs killed on 13 September 1971. Previously, a small dome-shaped memorial had been built

through local initiatives. Unfortunately, proper measures have not been taken to preserve the current memorial, leaving it exposed to deterioration and neglect.

During the Liberation War, the enemy forces and their collaborators carried out ruthless killings across various locations in Noakhali. Bodies were disposed of in ponds, canals, rivers, ditches, and dense forests. Although the government has policies



*Memorial constructed in remembrance of the martyrs of the Ramharitaluk genocide*

to preserve such genocide sites and mass graves, a lack of initiative and oversight by officials has prevented proper implementation. Moreover, no effective measures have been taken to protect the graves of the martyrs, making it difficult to locate the burial sites today. The memorial erected by the District Council at the Ramharitaluk Government Primary School field is also surrounded by piles of trash and debris, reflecting the neglect.

Besides the Ramharitaluk genocide site, there are many other genocide sites in Noakhali that remain unmarked. It is now imperative to identify these sites and convey the true history of the Liberation War to the younger generation.

### **Evaluation**

During the Liberation War, when mass killings spread across the country, Noakhali district was not spared. The village of Ramharitaluk in Sadar Upazila bore the brunt of this atrocity. The primary planners of this genocide were local collaborators (Razakars), while the execution was carried out by the Pakistani army. Prior to 13 September 1971, Pakistani forces had not entered this area. The village is so remote that without the help of local Razakars, organizing such a genocide would have been impossible. Even 50 years later, Ramharitaluk remains somewhat isolated, with limited transport infrastructure. The narrow roads are so poor that even a CNG cannot pass through easily, which indicates that during the war, entry of enemy forces into this deep village would have been impossible without local assistance.

Several notable aspects can be observed regarding the Ramharitaluk genocide:

- 1. Planned Attack:** The genocide was a coordinated attack by Razakars and Pakistani soldiers. Initially, the Razakars provided information about the freedom fighters' training camp to the Pakistani forces in Maijdi. Subsequently, the Pakistani army attacked the village in collaboration with the Razakars.

2. **Strategic Importance:** The village held strategic importance for both the freedom fighters and the Pakistani army because of the presence of a training camp for freedom fighters. The freedom fighters aimed to protect it, while the Pakistani forces sought to prevent training and any form of organized resistance.
3. **Surprise and Vulnerability:** The villagers could not anticipate the attack beforehand. The remoteness of the village made access by the army seemingly impossible. However, the presence of the Khalifarhat Razakar camp had already instilled fear among locals of looting and attacks.
4. **Targeted Killings:** All the victims were actively involved in organizing the Liberation War. Across Bangladesh, the pattern of genocide by Pakistani forces targeted Awami League members, freedom fighters, and Hindus. In Ramharitaluk, the genocide specifically targeted freedom fighters and organizers. Most male victims were non-political Muslims, indicating the deliberate focus on freedom movement participants rather than religious or political identity alone.
5. **Occupational Background and Socioeconomic Impact:** The victims came from various professions—one small businessman, one merchant, and the rest were farmers, many of whom also worked as daily laborers. Most were uneducated and politically unaware. The loss of the primary earning members left their families destitute, creating a lasting social impact. Many families continue to carry the emotional burden of these losses.
6. **Age Range:** The victims were between 30–50 years old, all supporters of the liberation effort, actively participating in training, and all residents of the same village.
7. **Local Execution:** The genocide took place within the victims' own village. Villagers were rounded up and taken

to the Ramharitaluk Government Primary School field, where the nine victims were executed. Afterward, families retrieved the bodies and buried them in separate graves within the village.

In conclusion, the Liberation War remains one of the most discussed events in Bangladesh's history. Ordinary villagers responded to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's call, leaving urban centres to participate in the freedom struggle. In many cases, their commitment to the motherland surpassed concern for their own families, transforming the war into a people's struggle. To fully understand the history of the Liberation War, the genocide must be highlighted, and mass graves in Noakhali and across the country should be properly identified and preserved. This is the only way to instil a correct understanding of these events among the younger generation.

### **Appendix: 1**

*Below is the list of martyrs who sacrificed their lives in Ramharitaluk genocide:*

<b>No.</b>	<b>Martyr's Name</b>	<b>Father's Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Address</b>
01	Momin Ullah	Haji Fate Ali	50	Politician	Ramhoritaluk, Kaladaraf, Sadar, Noakhali
02	Nuru Uddin	Amin Mia	25	Farmer	Ramhoritaluk, Kaladaraf, Sadar, Noakhali
03	Sahab Uddin	Unknown	30	Farmer	Ramhoritaluk, Kaladaraf, Sadar, Noakhali
04	Ramzan Ali	Unknown	30	Farmer	Ramhoritaluk, Kaladaraf, Sadar, Noakhali
05	Zulfikar Ali	Eshak Mia	28	Farmer	Ramhoritaluk, Kaladaraf, Sadar, Noakhali

No.	Martyr's Name	Father's Name	Age	Occupation	Address
06	Henju Mia	Hares Mia	30	Farmer	Ramhoritaluk, Kaladaraf, Sadar, Noakhali
07	Shafiq Ullah	Anar Ullah	35	Dealer	Ramhoritaluk, Kaladaraf, Sadar, Noakhali
08	Ana Mia	Unknown	36	Farmer	Ramhoritaluk, Kaladaraf, Sadar, Noakhali
09	Serajul Haq	Raja Mia	50	Small Business	Ramhoritaluk, Kaladaraf, Sadar, Noakhali

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2. Mohammad Yusuf (70), farmer, son of late Idris Mia, Ramharitaluk, Sadar, Noakhali. Interview at Ramharitaluk Government Primary School, 07 August 2021.
3. Abul Kalam (68), farmer, son of Shahid Ramjan Ali, Ramharitaluk, Sadar, Noakhali. Interview at Ramharitaluk Market, 07 August 2021.
4. Marfat Ullah (70), farmer, son of Shahid Serajul Haque, Ramharitaluk, Sadar, Noakhali. Interview at Ramharitaluk Market, 07 August 2021.
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