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**Rubana Huq**

## Grief of silence

October 9, 2011



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A slender sword of steel is ready to hit the kneeling figure in white. The kneeler's neck remains exposed. The man in a flowing white robe, dishdasha and a red-checked head cloth lowers the blade to hit the condemned's neck; the victim's body sways forward, snaps up, and collapses to the right. A physician sews the head back to the body and within five minutes, the body gets removed and the only one in the 'Chop Chop' square is the janitor cleaning the granite. Rest are all gone and the rest is history.

This is how they killed eight of our own men.

This is Saudi Arabia where two other Saudi nationals were executed in the northern city of Tabuk, bringing the total number of executions on the 7th of October, 2011 to 10, including 8 Bangladeshis being beheaded, charged with murder of an Egyptian security guard and of having robbed a warehouse. This is Saudi Arabia, where the authorities executed Fawza Falih, a Saudi woman in account of practicing witchcraft, while official reports in April 2011 stated that she had died in jail in 2010 after choking on her food.

I looked for YouTube videos of the events and found none. Limited media coverage made it impossible for an amateur techno-geek like me to get access to sites beyond those commonly available. But what is common knowledge is that at any time until the sword strikes, a victim's family can pardon the condemned — usually for a cash settlement of at least two million riyals (\$690,000 or so) from the convict's end.

Most of the websites and sources reveal that the beheading happens without informing the embassies so that there is no scope of the last minute diplomatic attempts 'hindering' the process. While we measure the world being economically dependent on this nation, we also tend to forget that more than two million Bangladeshis work in Saudi Arabia and that the migrant workers form the backbone of the Saudi economy.

This is Saudi Arabia where Shariah rules. This year alone the number of executions has risen to 58 including 20 foreigners in the list. Saudi Arabia has executed almost 2000 people between 1985 and 2011. While we exhaust ourselves critiquing Afghanistan every time the Taliban close one school after the other in Swat, while we shriek our lungs out at the slightest mention of violation of human rights, Amnesty is the only institution that hosts news of this sort.

It is time to realise that with the activists gathering in front of the Wall Street today, the world must wake up to a new uprising that will not only sweep a few of the Arab states, but engulf all the lands that preach and practice violence. Most of all, we must all agree that no country should ever be allowed to continue using their vaccine of insensitive immunity...

Strangely, the world seems unsure and divided on the concept of peace. On one hand, three outstanding women have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their contribution to the non-violent movement in their countries: Liberia and Yemen, and on the other hand, eight of us have just been beheaded in the most violent manner in Saudi Arabia.



While Saudi Arabia seeks to secure justice through capital punishment in its soil, the Nobel committee has commended these three women for strategically voicing out their protest. Point is, when will the world wake up to shun the violent governments and when shall we all stand united on the idea of peace, the chimera of our modern times?

The Yemeni Tawakkul Karman, one of the winners of the Peace Prize took off her veil in front of television cameras five years ago, and said: "There is some thing I have to do first," and then, shocking many, she removed her veil. She said, "I thought before I spoke my mind I should show you my face. This is who I am," and then she started her presentation without any break. Tawakkul had broken a barrier and this, in Yemen, says a lot.

Ms. Tawakkul Karman is the first Arab woman to win the peace prize in a land where women are literally unseen and unheard. Under Tawakkul's leadership, ten thousand women marched down a six-lane motorway in April voicing their protest. She is visibly a downright critique of the current President of Yemen, Ali Absullah Saleh.

This year, over hundred protestors have been killed so far and therefore, Karman often camps in Change Square strategising over modes and forms of protests. Above all, Karman does not have the habit of striking deals of compromise with her own party: Islah. Last year Karman opposed marrying girls off under the age of 17 and was vastly criticised by her own members. But that too left her more resolved and undaunted.

Ms. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a 72 year old woman, Africa's first democratically elected female president of Liberia, a country which was created to settle freed American slaves in 1847, has just won the Nobel peace prize amidst a lot of controversy. On the 7th of October, 2011, some 200, 000 supporters of the main opposition Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) brought the city to a standstill with leader Winston Tubman urging the people not to be overwhelmed by her Peace Prize.

On Tuesday, the 11th of October 2011, 1.8 million Liberians go to vote. But Liberia is a hungry country. Can peace thrive when most Liberians go hungry? And was it right to have chosen Sirleaf as the peace prize winner especially when she has been criticised over the lack of reconciliation with regard to rival ethnicities and specially when she has been facing controversy over having briefly supported the president Charles Taylor?

The third winner of the Peace prize, Leymah is also from Liberia. A mother of six who had brought an end to the Second Liberian Civil War in 2003, is also the author of the new book: "Mighty Be Our Powers: How Sisterhood, Prayer and Sex Changed a Nation at War." In 2002, Leymah Gbowee was one of the leading women who was praying and singing in a fish market for peace.

In another occasion, under her leadership, the Liberian women managed to force a meeting with President Charles Taylor and obtained a promise from him to attend peace talks in Ghana and finally silently protested outside the Presidential Palace, Accra, lettering an agreement during the stalled peace talks.

In spite of any shroud of doubt that may engulf any one of them winning the prize, one cannot belittle the tireless achievement of these women who have led their lives with a positive focus negating violence and promoting peace.

If Leymah can bring the women of the Liberia together to kneel down and pray for peace, if Johnson Sirleaf can manage Liberia to be forgiven for billions of dollars worth of Liberian debt and can alter the nation's brutal image in the international arena, if Karman can continue in her tent, raging protests against the current authorities and rebel, who has the power to stop the women of Bangladesh from waking up from our slumber of complicity?

Should we not forever celebrate that there are millions of women in this land who stand empowered in the factories? Should we not celebrate their courage and be touched by their conviction by tailoring our elite idealism and coming out on the streets stating what we believe in, living for what we consider the truth and shunning what leaves a bad taste in our mouth? Can anyone of us truly shun the bubble and pledge to attack any hand, any



institution, any form of practice that butchers our brothers and our children in our lands and in lands that protect their own laws?

Perhaps we can; perhaps we will...someday, before the butchers take a swing at our necks, before we run out of time and breath...

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[Rubana Huq](#), Managing Director, Mohammadi Group

Tags: [Bangladesh](#), [Beheading](#), [Nobel Peace Prize](#), [Saudia Arabia](#)

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#### 44 Responses to “ Grief of silence ”



[Miad](#) on October 13, 2011 at 4:50 pm

This is really unfair.

[Reply](#)



sarvesh on October 13, 2011 at 2:29 pm

Indeed very tragic and unfortunate end to eight human lives, my condolence to the grieving family members. I know that Saudis treat South Asians as dirt, nothing more nothing less and the execution of eight Bangladeshi men in most violent way is manifestation of their arrogant behaviour.

Though, there are several commentators in this forum who are criticising the execution, there are people who are putting the entire blame on the West.

[Reply](#)



Rahman on October 12, 2011 at 2:27 pm

How long does it takes to do the ‘moderation’ of a comment?

[Reply](#)



Lopa on October 13, 2011 at 12:50 pm

Apparently at least 24 hours. I guess they wait a day for the accumulation of comments and then moderate them. It's too slow for web standard. But then again they might have staff shortage; just guessing.

[Reply](#)



Arif on October 11, 2011 at 1:15 pm

Millions of innocent die, no one cries, a few criminals die, you start crying. Shame on you all!

Thousands have been killed by the West in the name of War on Terror. Where is human rights for that?

Please write on that about a million pages before you justify anything as regards the land of laws or above all laws of Sharia.

[Reply](#)



G F Hamim on October 12, 2011 at 11:19 am



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Mr Arif, I feel sorry for you. You cannot see the other side of this barbaric act. How are you so sure that all of these poor Bangladeshis were justified to be beheaded? How do you justify eight killings for one murder? What West is doing in the name of War on Terror is another issue. Don't mix it up with this one.

As a Bangladeshi, I personally feel ashamed of our government that they could not initiate appropriate judiciary process to ensure justice, didn't even show any courage to ask for any clarification from the Saudi Government. In similar incidents, there are evidence that other countries at least had shown the guts to demand an explanation from the Saudi Government.

[Reply](#)



zaj on October 13, 2011 at 8:23 am

So you are saying Bangladesh Govt. is also (partially) to blame for these eight beheading?

[Reply](#)



Lopa on October 13, 2011 at 11:43 am

Perfect reply; thanks Hamim. 'War on Terror' is just a red herring in this discussion!!

[Reply](#)



G F Hamim on October 11, 2011 at 10:20 am

This is a barbaric act in the name of their so-called 'Sharia' law. How dare the Saudi government carry out such brutal execution on our own people? Because we are a poor country?

Does true Islam allow this kind of barbaric act? It is time to stop sending our people to these uncivilised countries. Can our foreign ministry give us any clarification on the matter?

Thanks to Rubana Huq for her write-up.

[Reply](#)



f ahmed on October 13, 2011 at 12:06 pm

You need to be civilised first.

[Reply](#)



Lopa on October 13, 2011 at 11:46 pm

And you need to know G F Hamim in person, before making such a terrible comment.

[Reply](#)



[Junaed Khan](#) on October 11, 2011 at 12:18 am

Really, Arabians seem like a crazy lot. My earnest sympathies to the families of those Bangladeshis and all other Bangladeshis who work in those far away lands and send lucrative foreign currencies back home.

I salute them...

[Reply](#)



shiplu on October 10, 2011 at 11:45 pm

I support Sharia law 100percent. But Saudi Arabia is not an Islamic State but Muslim majority kingdom. And we have to remember that all countries are not like Bangladesh. Whenever, however and whoever you want to kill or do harm you can do it so easily...



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throw acid and burn a face and what not.

[Reply](#)



joena ahmed on October 10, 2011 at 10:11 pm

The barbaric Saudi regime is engaged in an orgy of murder of poor Bangladeshi workers. This is a regime where they still practice primitive laws and jurisprudence which does not include a due process of "beyond reasonable doubt". It is time that the world demanded this barbarism to stop.

[Reply](#)



G F Hamim on October 11, 2011 at 10:24 am

I fully agree.

[Reply](#)



f ahmed on October 13, 2011 at 12:09 pm

When Bangladeshi people kill their own brothers by logi-boitha you remain silent.

[Reply](#)



Lopa on October 13, 2011 at 11:42 pm

I've been following your comments here, F Ahmed. You seem to be a little disoriented, to say the least. What makes you think the commenter above is silent in case of Bangladeshi crimes? And how is that even relevant in this discussion? What exactly is your objection in questioning Saudi barbaric execution system?

[Reply](#)



Rayyan on October 10, 2011 at 7:28 pm

Thanks to Rubana for an excellent post.

It's certainly a brutal act, to behead in public. No credit for the Arabs. But, do we have that credibility to question them?? I doubt. We have public executions almost everyday in Bangladesh! Lynching people to death out of mere suspicion, abusing and killing domestic help to death, throwing acids, political killing, extra-judicial killings, so on and on. So let us fix our society first before we criticise others!

[Reply](#)



russel on October 11, 2011 at 1:57 pm

But Rayaana, blood for blood method is really barbarian.

We are just talking about execution system as it is not the same like that of international standard.

"Public execution" is a system that was created by agitating people. Though we have good trial system, we have great deficiency in showing respect to our system. So it is our negligence. You can't compare it with KSA. Blood for blood in the name trial is barbaric. And it should change. Get it?

[Reply](#)



f ahmed on October 13, 2011 at 12:10 pm

Better killer should be freed to kill more people....

[Reply](#)





Mew on October 11, 2011 at 8:04 pm

Cool write-up. In the name of Islam, Saudi, a yes-man of USA, a no-more an Islamic state, is carrying out such heinous crimes. It has to be ostracised.

At the same time, we need to give a thought about our own modern (!), secular Bangladesh where we are on the verge of forgetting the fact that murder, rape and robbery are actually CRIMES, thanks to the countless rape and murder news everyday and the free roaming of criminals on bail.

[Reply](#)



Duke on October 10, 2011 at 6:49 pm

Let the oil from the middle east dry down and let more vehicles and industries emerge which will be independent from oil as its source of fuel and let us make our nation more educated and technically equipped so that we will use our brains as our resource, not physical labour.

Then a new sun will rise, the Bedouins will go back to their camels and we will move forward as a developed nation.

[Reply](#)



[russe](#) on October 10, 2011 at 12:01 pm

Very good write -up by Rubana Huq. Though we live in 21st century, we are very much removed from civilisation. Islam means "peace". It doesn't support violence. The Saudi authority should at least follow legal system that's followed in majority nations.

Shedding blood at a public place is really inhuman. No sane person can support it. This nation appears completely insane. They maintain a dogmatic view very much similar to medieval age.

How can beheading be the only way of execution? Why are they different from rest of the world? Beheading in public can only be termed "despicable".

Saudi Arabia is an insular nation. But they don't seem to care.

[Reply](#)



Ali on October 11, 2011 at 1:34 pm

They (KSA) would only care if they were from any Western or a powerful country. They are indeed very scared of the West, and the powerful, especially the fair-skinned. It is absolutely true and only one who had lived there would be able to support this view.

KSA decision makers are absolutely discriminatory!

For one murder (?) Arab Origin = EIGHT MURDERS of Miskeens! Their life is so cheap that they can be equated as above. That too done publicly. It is HORROR unleashed! KSA should wait to see their own horror in and around soon. Wake up, World!

And Hello, World! If you are reading this, where is the HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS, where is the civilised world today? Cameron and Sarkozy both Rushed to Libya to ensure Cheap Oil for them and an obedient servant at the helm. Can they not condemn this barbaric act? Shame on the so-called sane and civilised people, including our own inactive lot.

They may have committed the robbery and murder out of suppression and oppression which is condemned worldwide and deserve punishment. But this is absolutely disproportionate and BARBARIC!

Our Govt must take pre-emptive and aggressive diplomatic moves to STOP further executions, as we understand five more are on the list.

Now what happens to the families? Any compensation for them from any quarters? Does the UN have a special fund to cater to? If not there should be one. The UNSC permanent members have some questions to answer to the conscience of the world as regards this public beheading. Our Govt should not accept this method of maligning of Bangladesh, only because we are poor and powerless.

Thank you for raising the issue and making us all aware of the misdeeds carried out in the name of Islam.



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Lopa on October 11, 2011 at 11:56 pm

Thank you for your post Ali. I couldn't have said it so well.

[Reply](#)

Sini on October 10, 2011 at 10:44 am

Amazing article.

People need to wake up and rise against violence.

So much violence is already going on in Bangladesh itself. The media never covers the human rights violation that goes on in the CHT.

Rubana, you may be interested in it. You should look at this website (these news are never published in Bengali newspapers): [https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1309950437&ref=notif&notif\\_t=friend\\_confirmed#!/chtnewsupdate](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1309950437&ref=notif&notif_t=friend_confirmed#!/chtnewsupdate)

[Reply](#)

Rima Khan on October 10, 2011 at 7:53 am

Enjoyed the reading. Nice formulation of thoughts 😊 )

[Reply](#)

Ali on October 11, 2011 at 1:38 pm

So you like to read horror stories? But this is a FACT that has happened on us.

Please read again and make a come back. Please.

[Reply](#)

Mizan on October 10, 2011 at 7:18 am

While we do not know how the trial progressed, it seems like the investigation and trial took about two years to complete. Nobody should be punished without a fair trial. The fact is, we just do not know what had actually happened.

On the other hand, (excuse me), who is the "victim" here? The person who were beheaded by the Saudis or the Egyptian guard who was killed by these people (allegedly)? Murders, looting etc. are increasing because we are not punishing the criminals.

About the Yemeni Nobel peace prize winner, it is her choice to take hijab off. Fine. But how about the French women who would like to put on hijab and the government is intervening in their personal choice? Where is your voice for right to personal choice? Other than tuning your fork to Western distorted voice, look around and write a balanced version of the story. Thanks.

By the way, as regards hajj, it is not because of allegiance to a country, no matter whether you love or hate a country, hajj is an independent activity.

[Reply](#)

Riaz Quadir on October 10, 2011 at 6:06 am

This country, Saudi Arabia, is the darling of the "civilised" West and protégé of the US of A. And countries like Bangladesh are the "miskeen" nations begging and scrapping of the titbits that fall off from the tables of these arrogant rich. Guess all is as it should be, everyone getting what they aim for.

The truth is either we have a strong streak of subserviency running in our veins in Bangladesh or we have a superhuman tolerance threshold for injustice; why else have we and are we, continually being treated like this the world over? Have we sold our pride and dignity along with our souls for a few dollars and riyals? Prove me wrong and announce the moment for a Bengali Spring, what?



[Reply](#)

Omar Alam on October 10, 2011 at 3:26 am

I am wondering what is the take-out message of this article. Does the author want the Bangladeshi women to wake up? Or the Saudis to stop chopping heads? This article is all over the place and I cannot connect its bits and pieces.

[Reply](#)

Kajol Ahmed on October 10, 2011 at 9:43 pm

Agree with Omar Alam: the writing veers wildly from one theme to another. It begins sensationally with the beheadings, then off to the women, then Wall Street, and then back to Saudi Arabia, and the end result is... mass confusion. It would have made more sense to stick to an examination of what modern day application of Sharia law means in the hands of the Wahabi kingdom, and the racism that the leader of the Muslim world displays towards Islam's 'lesser' and 'converted' peoples.

[Reply](#)

Omar Alam on October 10, 2011 at 10:52 pm

Correction: Tawakkul Karman did not take off her Hijab. She chose not to wear Niqab (which is a valid option in Islam). She is a member of Al-Islah movement in Yemen, which is an Islamic movement and aspires to implement the Islamic law and code in the country. Hope that the author is careful to verify what she writes next time.

Omar

[Reply](#)

Syed Imtiaz Ali on October 10, 2011 at 1:12 am

There are huge anomalies in judgement of social issues in KSA. And there are much discrimination as per the 'nationality' of the allegedly accused. No option for legal defence is allowed.

No respect for life, no research on social issues and happenings done. It is out of this world scenario! Yes, we could not defend our people. Alas!

The juxtaposition of awarding of Nobel peace to three women for their roles and the execution are so ironical.

The piece is really thought provoking and nicely elucidated.

Let there be some head rolling and introspection for a change in the pattern of happenings.

Now where is the hue and cry of the self-titled guardians of human rights? They are turning a deaf ear and a blind eye to this barbaric incident! But the spring will surely spring up soon!

[Reply](#)

Ahmed on October 9, 2011 at 10:08 pm

What's so "barbaric" about it? America has the death sentence, too. What did they expect, if they murdered the security guard? Flowers? This is the absolutely right way to deal with armed robbers. Maybe if Bangladesh also had such strict laws we would not have been such a lawless country.

[Reply](#)

Saddened on October 10, 2011 at 11:32 pm

Yes, you're right Bangladesh should also change the law and start lashing women for driving!!! Shame on you for suggesting public beheading is not barbaric!



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I for one is proud to be a Bangladeshi! We might be poor and might have social injustices but at least we don't call 7th century barbarism as the law of the land. Shame on Saudi Arab!!!

[Reply](#)



Rahman on October 11, 2011 at 6:59 pm

It is the "public beheading" Mr. Ahmed — not the death penalty per se. Do you see it now? No country in the world, having death penalty, executes people publicly in such a humiliating way. The process has absolutely no regard for human life and its dignity. Even the animals (sorry for the comparison — no offence meant to the animals) are not slaughtered in such inhuman and cruel way.

By the way, the land of Saud is as lawless a country as Bangladesh — if you knew — where crimes of the royal family members go unpunished. We have many other better examples in the world than to follow the barbaric Sauds on any thing.

There are also several incidents, discovered years later, where people were executed wrongly for their alleged crimes. Once we kill somebody, we cannot bring him/her back to life. In case of prison sentences, we can always apologise and release the person if found not guilty at a later date.

I sincerely thank the author for penning such a strong article. It needs a hell lot of courage and conviction to do this when all 'habitual and all-righteous human rights defenders' in Bangladesh appeared to have lost their steam. I would also like to have the author's views on death penalty.

[Reply](#)



sajjad on October 9, 2011 at 9:22 pm

Thanks for coming out so strongly and accurately.

This land named after a family remains a land that lives in 7th century, and millions of people rush there every year in spite of the brutality they face. For Hajj, for jobs, etc.

Shame on us!

[Reply](#)



Amin Ahmad Chaudhury on October 9, 2011 at 11:56 pm

USA, UK and the entire European Union is doing the same while encouraging the terror groups to destabilise Muslim countries. Afghans, Iraqis are still being killed by them. East Timor was cut out of Indonesia, South Sudan created. If you call these liberation why not the seven provinces of India seeking independence get the same treatment?

SHAME ON YOU Sajjad, Shame on those who opts for USA, UK and the European Union.

[Reply](#)



Saddened on October 10, 2011 at 10:57 pm

Your observation is incredibly flawed. "USA, UK and the entire European Union are doing the same"? Really!! They are beheading people in public? You must be referring to the so-called War on Terror, right? I agree on that.

But how US drone attacks or other things can be a justifiable excuse for Saudi's brutal and savage judicial system? What kind of distorted logic is that? Why can't we condemn an atrocity independently?

Yours is a typical response of people who are under the impression - "Muslims can never go wrong, it's always the fault of others"! Wake up and smell the coffee – many Arab countries follow 7th century practices which can only be termed as 'barbaric'!

So shame on you to try to deflect the main issue and make apologies for uncivilised judicial system!

[Reply](#)





Saddened on October 11, 2011 at 1:14 am

I want to make a little correction of my above comment. I meant to say 'But how US drone attacks or other tactics can be a justifiable red herring in the discussion of Saudi's brutal and savage judicial system?'

Not 'But how US drone attacks or other things can be a justifiable excuse for Saudi's brutal and savage judicial system?'

Thanks.

[Reply](#)



Ali on October 11, 2011 at 8:09 pm

As Israel was carved out of Palestine/Arab land, also to be added to the catalog of 'carved out' countries, both the UN and the "Civilized" West see a Rush in Committing all these CRIMES of being king makers/country makers and shutting out the General Assembly...a mere Lower House, not to be taken seriously.

Will any of the permanent members speak out and refute the allegations, please?

Unless there is muscle power (originating from brain power), there will be no respite! So, SPRING UP, and shine!

[Reply](#)



Saddened on October 10, 2011 at 1:31 pm

Thank you Rubana Huq for speaking up against the savagery that passes for justice in the land of Saud!

Also agree with the above commenter, shame on us!!

[Reply](#)



harold on October 10, 2011 at 6:04 pm

My sympathies for the families of those Bangladeshis. However, I think it's the law of the land that matters. Changes will happen but if the people of the land see that they have been robbed by outsiders they will not agree to the change.

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