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## [Rubana Huq](#)

# Who dunnit? Or, what dunnit?

May 30, 2012



A couple of journalists along with a few other staff of [www.bdnews24.com](http://www.bdnews24.com) were attacked. *Who dunnit? Dunno.*

All I saw was blood on the floor of the office through a quick footage filed in the virtual site. All I saw, at the hospital the same night, was a smiling face of one of the reporters who had just been attacked. It was as if nothing had happened to him. In spite of the injuries, Rifaat seemed to have a strange calm that could be read as resilience. There was a cleaner of [www.bdnews24.com](http://www.bdnews24.com) on the emergency ward who had suffered slashes on his face and yet was busy greeting every visitor with a smile. It was as though being attacked was just another unpleasant, yet an expected item on their platter...

There were cameras all around the place. Journalists being attacked obviously make substantial breaking news for any channel or newspaper. Meantime, a day later, the two boys who were injured have undergone surgery. They are now reportedly stable. The rest who were hurt have survived the attack. How did it happen though? The incident apparently had begun with altercations between a staff and a local goon and then all hell had broken loose while the local goondas had launched their attack.

Question is, what prompts this rage and who backs this spirit of vengeance? Who is all-powerful in this state? If every neighbourhood turns into a battle field, if second tea-stall turns into a centre of violence, and if a blade can slash journalists in minutes, then how safe are the rest of us, who live in unguarded houses and don't belong to bold media houses or strong political circles?

Police thrashing teachers; police thrashing journalists; human chains throughout the country; protests in every institution; hunger strike of the traders, freedom fighters; open clashes of the workers with the police...none of this smell of good news.

Every conversation turning into a politically heated debate; every head leaning towards a mercurial blame game; every dialogue turning into an accusation; every statement becoming a weapon of slaughter; every glance meaning to be an insult...is this who or what we are turning into?

Or rather, what are we ourselves turning this country of ours into through our constant outrageous expressions of rage? And why? Why is it suddenly that we have started to react to every issue? It's as if we have never had hartals, never had buses burnt, never had opponents injured, never had people disappearing, being picked up, hauled into vans. It's as if we have never given bails, never indulged in mud slinging, never shot filth in the parliament, never had traffic jams, never had power cuts, never suffered inflation, never had liquidity crisis, never had crunches! It's as if we have all fallen from Eden to Hell. With the Awami League in power, Hell seems to have descended on all our own private spaces.

Now, I am not politically affiliated with any party and when it comes to vote, I trust my

instinct and make silly choices every term. (At one point, I even voted for a candidate whose deposit was forfeited as he failed to bag more than 5000 votes. So, please don't trust my taste.)

But I do believe in self-reflection. Can it be that we have just stopped looking at ourselves? Even if we take the post '91 set-up as a benchmark of our democracy, haven't we always been like where we are now? Apart from a few hiccups like 1/11, when have we ever been better? With the two sides swinging from one extreme to the other, all we've done is hang by their rope, being swung to either direction, every five years. This is exactly the tight rope-walking phase that every democracy goes through. As much as the spectators watch the acrobats perform in a circus and pray for a safe passage, the fear of a possible fall also haunts them. But in a democracy, we are not merely spectators, but spect-actors. We watch and we react. That is how the psyche of a voter is formed. While the rope walking is entirely a politician's job, the rope needs to be well woven to help the political feet steady its pace. Now who provides the rope or rather, who snaps it?

After 1/11, we would like to believe that the chain of democracy has just begun to set in, and we have ourselves just started to endorse the process. But ironically with every deviation, we now look for defence and find answer in the process. With every bail denied, we cry, "But it's the law!"; with every arrest, we scream, "But it's the law enforcing agencies!"; with every disappearance, we chant, "Conspiracy!"; with every murder, we claim to sense an unexplained motive and assure fastest justice that eventually never comes through.

I say "we" as representatives who govern the state are chosen and endorsed by us. I say "we" as these representatives also fall prey to our "chamcha-hood". And this is exactly how the most tragic part of power seeps in.

This feeling of absolute Power lends a delusion of immortality. Some form of power must have seduced the elements that had attacked the newsroom journalists and workers. Similarly the one ruling the state also gets addicted to the red high chairs and starts looking upon them as their all-time property; their highflying grasp on authority seems to last forever and worst of all, those in power begin to disbelieve mortality and start believing in "Here Forever". Unfortunately, the sudden stints at power come with no guarantee of eternity.

As a reaction to this arrogance of power, public psyche is seduced by rebellion and led to violence. But then the public too has to be completely seduced to undertake dangerous journeys. Seduction is a politically charged word where control is completely lost along with the sense of dimension, purpose and propriety. One is only seduced when its guards are down and when its defence mechanism is at the lowest because of the lure of the approach.

Point is, who succeeds in seduction? And who ends up being seduced? And what are the tools of seduction that are used on a free liberal democratic civil society? Our civil society, currently, is taking Johnny Cash's advice: Walk the Line. We are all taking risky steps and burning our bridges at both ends. We are the lot who do not want to answer questions but rather wanted answers when we vote. We are the same lot who need not have been seduced by those in power who appease their own desire for approval of their own faction, of their own supporters in us. We are the same people who are witnessing our leaders and establishment subscribing to the lone warrior myth of leadership and heading towards heroic suicide. Our leaders and their loyal followers seem to have forgotten that catalyzing change does not mean becoming a lightning rod in the process. The feeling of extreme power can trickle down to even a sheer student of a local college and a *paan-vendor*. Since as a race, mimicry is our specialty, we learn what we witness the most. Today, we are learning and adapting to violence on a daily basis. Thank you, Politics!

At a point like this, when most things go wrong at the same time, the lights on our shelves and lenses need to be adjusted, for our own sakes. Or shall we turn the lights off and bring upon ourselves misery that sudden eruptions of violent episodes have bred? Or shall we rather carry our own torches and focus on issues with our own private microscope? In the meantime, should we not look towards Media with caution and attention if indeed Media happens to be the strongest tool to shape a nation's psyche? In that case, every headline should matter, every scroll must impact; every breaking-news must create a new tremor. And certainly, in that case, every path in front of a media house needs to be protected; every worthy journalist needs to wear a badge of immunity; every report should go in stark black-and-white and every reader must sense the height of objectivity with every story that is filed.

Martin Luther King made sure that the media was always around wherever he went. If violence occurred, media was there. As a result, King, later on, did not have to be provocative. Eventually, in 1963 it was numbers and not violence. The nation marched on civil rights; 240000 people marched with him and in Washington D.C they finally heard him say: I have a dream.

Well, we have a dream too. And if protecting our journalists ensures our safe passage, so be it.

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[Rubana Huq](#), a poet, columnist, and a researcher.

Tags: [AL](#), [attack](#), [Bangladesh](#), [bdnews24.com](#), [BNP](#), [Democracy](#), [Journalists](#), [media](#)



This entry was posted on May 30, 2012 at 3:52 pm and is filed under [Democracy](#), [Law and Justice](#), [Politics](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed.



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## 17 Responses to “ Who dunnit? Or, what dunnit? ”



[Mozammel Haque](#) on June 2, 2012 at 2:50 pm

Politics is a good work of chance to become rich, to earn capital abroad in commission and in home.

So everyone wants to do it.

But the knowledge of probability is not there.

Because out of 8 crore voters only 350 will get the chance and out of this 350- 45 will get better chance and out this 45- 4 or 5 will get supreme chance of earning.

So our knowledge must be practical and doing the job of politics is merely madness but doing and serving others can be done in any position. So do it and begin it. Amen

Like or Dislike: 0 0

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SR KHAN on June 2, 2012 at 3:07 am

Rubana Huq, you could have written this piece a bit more clearly not just mixed with apples and oranges and then serve in front of the readers. Stop cooking up a dish and just come to the point. We the readers expect more specific pieces – when, why, how, and what?

Like or Dislike: 0 0

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Leila on June 1, 2012 at 4:09 pm

How can Bangladesh recover? Maybe through a revolution, now how can one instigate this? I wish Bangladeshis in BD would realize this and rise up against such misery as pointed out in the article. Look at Egypt and Syria, things are hard but at least people are speaking up!

Like or Dislike: 0 0

[Reply](#)



russel on May 31, 2012 at 3:23 pm

What's our home minister's reaction to this incident? I would say 'heinous'. What are we heading towards?

Like or Dislike: 1 0

[Reply](#)



Asif on May 31, 2012 at 2:57 pm

You know I wouldn't be surprised if someone or a group of people turns out to be like Dexter (The popular American TV series on Showtime). Our young intellectual friends in the intelligence community (DGFI perhaps?).

When I first heard the news I was so shocked. Right after that my head was filled up with blood. You see this kind of incident has a psychological impact on the mass population.

Corruption is an open secret, we know it all. And living in this city for the past 23 years I've grown up with it. This incident also reminds me of the 90's when I was a kid and I saw my neighbours wall being shattered by cocktail (dibba/handmade bombs).



Certainly we do not want those days back. This madness has to stop.

Another Cleansing is needed and this time the people of Bangladesh have to do it for themselves. Frankly speaking '71 means very little to me when I see my Bangladesh being butchered and raped every single second.

[I hope bdnews24 will publish this, this is merely a civilian's reaction to the ongoing issues of our country.]

Like or Dislike:  0  1

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Rezaul Karim on May 31, 2012 at 1:44 pm

Bangladesh is slowly going towards a non-governable status. The country did recover from crisis in earlier times. This time the crisis seems to be more complicated.

Like or Dislike:  0  0

[Reply](#)



Ali on June 1, 2012 at 1:20 am

Mr. Rezaul Karim, well said with a sigh, that the country is getting into a deeper "QUICK SAND", and also becoming 'mindless'.

Wait till SAHARA makes a 'debut' and takes over our LAND in the name of housing and so on. As if we have no clue how to build a City, and we don't have engineers.

250 DU teachers have raised alarming voice and suspicion on SAHARA entry. So, good and prosperous days are ahead of us, courtesy Sahara.



Like or Dislike:  0  0

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Kalam Ahmed on May 31, 2012 at 12:40 pm

Strange article, with confused thoughts linked in a haphazard manner.


Like or Dislike:  0  1

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Freedom Of Speech on May 31, 2012 at 9:03 am

I agree with the author on many points and decry the attack on the journalists. It's an act of totalitarian barbarism that this society has come to. False sense of power by the so-called 'thugs' backed by the government towards news (consequently journalists) that are 'independent' and not 'biased' or 'favoured' towards the government are eliminated in this way. Through this act the barbaric government is saying "Any journalist who say anything against my sarkar will be treated this way, and let this be a lesson to all the wannabe-journalists"! This clearly is not a democratic government but a totalitarian government where there is no independent press, independent law or in fact the independence to live.

Like or Dislike:  1  0

[Reply](#)



[Syed b Alam](#) on May 30, 2012 at 11:08 pm

Sounds like somebody cares! I have read your opinion twice and I enjoyed it. Thank you; our thoughts and prayers for the victim journalists.

Like or Dislike:  1  0

[Reply](#)



[K M Hassan](#) on May 30, 2012 at 10:22 pm





Yes dream on please; looks like it is the only thing left to do for the people who don't want to do anything. The 160 million people are silently going on about their businesses selectively ignoring the tyranny of selected few. You mentioned Martin Luther King; here we do not have a single leader who has the moral authority to lead. The political dynasty that is thriving in this country by collusion of educated elite is leading us towards a precipice. How can we turn back?

We get the government we wanted and arguably that's what we deserve, isn't that sweet? Both major political parties have brains, yet they are incapable of leading the party, bowed before the whimsical bloodlines. Why it is so? Why are we so spineless?

We are still 160 million villagers, far away from calling ourselves something worthy of a nation. And on top of that we also do not have any leaders who can lead us to that direction.

What can we do? Cowards breed only cowards.

Like or Dislike:  0  0

[Reply](#)





Optimist on June 1, 2012 at 1:39 am

“Villagers, Spineless, Cowards” and the like! I have so many times thought that's what our people are unfortunately, and politicians also do not want to change and upgrade into today's calibre. These parties seem not wanting real development.....in education, infrastructure, population planning etc. But are BUSY with ELECTION and accusation. So, how will development work take place?

So, it is status quo for sine die, unless a sea change is shaping up. We shall still remain villagers, spineless cowards.

But may be SAHARA Pariwar can come to our rescue and make us all housed, yet jobless and finally landless! Please wait, our national interest has to be upheld firmly, nevertheless.



Like or Dislike:  0  0

[Reply](#)



Golam Arshad on June 1, 2012 at 10:50 am

Why not you take the lead brother? We are with you!The Will in Change in Me will turn CHANE in ME! Just do it!!



Like or Dislike:  0  1

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Golam Arshad on May 30, 2012 at 9:17 pm

Rubana: The Government has failed miserably in protecting its citizens! Will the Home Minister and the Police chief quit??



Like or Dislike:  0  1

[Reply](#)



Tony on May 30, 2012 at 6:23 pm

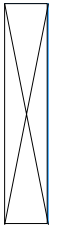
When I walk the streets of Dhaka, no matter if it is day or night there are always lots of people everywhere. Drinking tea, talking or just walking from point A to B. So how can it be that this fight started on the street and no one helped? What was it 15-20 goons that attacked these reporters? I bet there were many more onlookers watching what happened. You wrote that 240000 marched with Martin Luther King. Yes them and him had a dream. Here in Bangladesh you are 160 million. Let the world know you also have dreams. You fought so bravely 41 years ago for your freedom. Do not let a few black sheep take that freedom away from you again.

Like or Dislike:  3  0



[Reply](#)



Zulfiker on May 30, 2012 at 9:15 pm



Well said...Thanks for your comments.

Like or Dislike:  1  0

[Reply](#)



Syed Imtiaz Ali on May 30, 2012 at 5:57 pm



I didn't have time to read all of it, but could figure it out like the author and millions more, that all is NOT WELL! I have never seen so much of human blood splattered this way! It is blatantly shocking! (at bdnews24 premises).

As the number of crimes committed in the last three years have astronomically increased there should have been a few EXEMPLARY PUNISHMENTS meted out to the hardcore criminals for the would-be's to stay away out of FEAR! If that is done for sure crime will be substantially reduced.

Many thanks, Ms. Rubana for your sensitivity to the state of affairs prevalent nowadays.

Where do they get this license of couldn't-care-less freelancing?

I had started to think that the 1/11 in our lives had given us an opportunity to cleanse ourselves to a sane, near-balanced and tolerant society. But Alas not! Is anybody home?

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