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## Genocide by the Pakistani Army in Bangladesh and the New York Times' Reaction (25 March–30 April 1971)

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### ABSTRACT

Never before seen in global history, on March 25, 1971, at midnight, a calculated, merciless act of genocide and slaughter was unveiled against the helpless people of Bangladesh without any prior notice. A military regime that was illegitimate from the beginning and lacked common sense committed this massacre. Everything that transpired in Bangladesh after the military takeover amounted to mass murder and genocide against people who were merely pleading with their fellow countrymen for their rightful compensation. The Pakistani army was eliminating any potential for Bengali leadership and demolishing Bangladesh's infrastructure, including its food supply, housing stockpiles, tea factories, jute mills, and natural gas fields. The New York Times, a well-known American daily newspaper, covered every event leading up to Bangladesh's independence movement and continued to do so after the crackdown on 25 March 1971. The newspaper attempted to depict an unfair war, humiliation, emotion, patriotism, and genocide in a number of essays. This article's primary goal is to conduct in-depth, analytical study on the Pakistani army's killings of Bengalis and its response to The New York Times between 25 March 1971 and 30 April 1971.

**Keywords:** Genocide, Operation searchlight, Pakistani army, Bengali, Journalists, Eyewitness, and Islam.

### INTRODUCTION:

Unprecedented in world history, a premeditated, ruthless genocide<sup>1</sup> and carnage was unleashed against the defenceless people of Bangladesh on 25 March 1971, at midnight, without warning or ultimatum, which is unique and unequalled in world history. Since the military crackdown, what happened in Bangladesh was nothing but a mass killing and genocide against civilians who were only asking their fellow citizens for their just desserts. Everyone in Dacca was surprised and frightened to see the Pakistani troops wreaking havoc. Furthermore, non-Bengali Muslims were

methodically breaking into the quarters of the impoverished and killing Bengalis and Hindus with the help of the army. Hindus and others looking to leave Dacca were swarming the streets. Numerous Bengalis had taken refuge in American homes, with the majority of them offering assistance. At first, the soldiers encountered no opposition in Dacca (Blood, 2017, pp. 213-14).

This slaughter was carried out by a military regime that had no sense of reason and had been illegitimate from the start. By turning attention towards India, the Yahya Khan dictatorship purposefully misled people

throughout the world. It repeatedly accused India of interfering in her internal affairs and ignored the existence of the liberation army by calling them miscreants and Indian infiltrators. The Pakistani military administration attempted to preserve public support for its heinous actions of killing civilians, intellectuals, academics, engineers, physicians, and other high-ranking officials in this way. The New York Times [hereinafter NYT] regularly covered the events in Bangladesh and published articles, special reports, editorials, and opinions about the killings and damages inflicted by the army of Pakistan, despite Pakistan's expulsion of American and other foreign journalists and her strict censorship.

A number of books have already been written on Bangladesh's Liberation War, but it can reasonably be said that only a small amount of work has so far been done, particularly on the connection and interaction between the killings and atrocities committed against the Bengalis by the Pakistani army and the role of NYT during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971. For instance NYT has been used as a source rather than analysed in books such as *The Last Days of United Pakistan* by G. W. Choudhury (2011, Dhaka: University Press Limited), *The Blood Telegram* by Gary J. Bass (2013, New York: Alfred A. Knopf), *The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh* by Archer K. Blood (2002, Dhaka: University Press Limited) and *1971 A Global History of The Creation of Bangladesh* by Srinath Raghavan (2013, London: Harvard University Press).

The goal of this article is to ascertain how *NYT* contributed to expose the genocide in Bangladesh carried out by the Pakistani army. Due to the abundance of news items from NYT, the time period to be taken into consideration in this article is between 25 March and 30 April 1971, even though the genocide and atrocities against the Bengali populace persisted throughout the nine months of the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971.

#### **METHODOLOGY:**

The primary goal of this study is to do in-depth, analytical research on the Pakistani army's killings of the Bengalis and its response to a mainstream American daily such as NYT between 25 March 1971 and 30 April 1971. The basic methodology to be

followed in this article is historical. A historical chronology will be followed while narrating and analysing the events. NYT issues published throughout the aforementioned period will all be considered primary sources. An analysis of the various government documents issued in 1971 by the concerned governments will be an important part of this process. These documents will also be used as primary sources in this article. At the same time, various newspapers, books, and articles will also be used as secondary sources.

#### **The Conflict's Immediate Backdrop**

From 7 December 1970 to 17 January 1971, Pakistan held open elections to choose the parliamentarians who would draft the nation's constitution and set up a domestic system. The Awami League [hereinafter AL] won 298 seats out of 310 in the Provincial Assembly of East Pakistan and 167 seats out of 169 (167 out of a total of 313) in the National Assembly of Pakistan in those elections, giving them the mandate to establish the Provincial and Central Governments (Rahman, 2009a, p. 592). With 88 members in the National Assembly, the left-leaning Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was the second most powerful group. The PPP's chairman, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (henceforth referred to as Bhutto), responded negatively to Bengalis' overwhelming victory. On 20 December 1970, Bhutto made a declaration in Lahore stating that his party will not wait another five years to become the Opposition Party in the National Assembly (Rahman, 2009a, pp. 595-96). The military establishment had anticipated a divided vote from the electorate. They felt that a National Assembly thus divided would make it nearly difficult to draft a constitution in the allotted 120 days, and that a new election would be required. They hoped that since this procedure would recall an official of the martial law administration, martial law would stay in effect indefinitely. Alternatively, force the politicians to reach an agreement with the military about the nature of the next political regime (Raghavan, 2013, p. 34). President Yahya, Bhutto, and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (hereinafter Mujib) met for the first time on 12 January 1971. As they departed Dacca on 14 January 1971, Yahya mentioned Mujib as Pakistan's future prime minister (Choudhury, 2011, p. 151).

The primary cause of contention between the PPP and the AL was the Six-point<sup>2</sup> implementation. The AL had already started preparing a draft constitution based on the six points. During the second round of talks between the PPP and the AL, which took place from January 27 to 30, Bhutto mainly focused on discussing the Six-point insinuations and did not provide any alternative or concrete proposal regarding the nature of the upcoming Constitution of Pakistan. As a result, there was still disagreement between the two parties. After consulting with Yahya three days prior, Bhutto displayed the traits of an unstable and avaricious politician when she announced on 15 February 1971 in Peshwar, that the PPP would not be attending the National Assembly session, which was to begin on 3 March 1971 in Dacca, because they could not travel there merely to support the constitution proposed by the AL. On 28 February 1971 in response to Bhutto's declaration that she would boycott the National Assembly, Mujib stated that he would be open to any constructive suggestion and reassured that the Six-Point Programme would not be forced upon anyone, since it was intended for the people of Bangladesh as well as those of Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, and the North West Frontier Province ('No Imposition,' 1971). Mujib had contacted the United States [hereinafter US] consulate in Dhaka during the first week of February to inquire about the possibilities of the US mediating if the AL proclaimed independence. Archer Blood, the consul general, gently stated that the US was unwilling to become involved in Pakistan's domestic problems and that it wanted Pakistan to remain a single nation. Concurrently, Yahya began laying the diplomatic foundation for a potential invasion of East Pakistan. He spoke with the US ambassador on 25 February and expressed his profound dissatisfaction at the current deadlock. Yahya was understandably thrilled to hear Ambassador Farland properly reassure him of Washington's commitment to Pakistan's integrity (Raghavan, 2013, pp. 41-42).

On 1 March 1971, Yahya broke his pledge to turn neutral and forced Bhutto to accept his decision by postponing the assembly without providing a date for its reconvening. In his speech on March 7, 1971, Mujib expressed his optimism about a political

settlement despite the strong public sentiment for independence. Mujib presented a four-point demand in his speech, requesting that Yahya give it some thought before going to the National Assembly. These were:

1. Martial law to be lifted immediately.
2. Immediate withdrawal of military to their barracks
3. Judicial inquiry into army killing in East Pakistan
4. instantly transferring authority to the people's chosen representatives

In along with these enquiries, a fifth one was eventually added: the army's reinforcements from West Pakistan must stop (Salik, 1997, p. 54). Yahya, his avaricious generals, and Bhutto had no interest in accepting defeat against Mujib and the will of the People, which was what he understood the first, fourth, and fifth demands to entail. In that regard, on 16 March 1971, Mujib and Yahya began their highly anticipated conversation. On 20 March Mujib said he was pleased that they were moving in the direction of a political settlement for the first time (Rahman, 2009a, p. 769).

Following his meeting with Yahya on 21 March 1971, Bhutto landed in Dacca with his aides and declared that all would be well. Before that, on 14 March Bhutto met Yahya in Karachi. According to his own version, Bhutto informed Yahya that while his party supported Mujib's demands for a handover of power and the relaxation of martial law, the specifics of these demands needed to be worked out based on a shared understanding (Raghavan, 2013, p. 46)). The Pakistan Cabinet member G. W. Choudhury, who held the position from April 1969 to February 1971, noted that on the evening of 18 March 1971, he had gotten an unexpected but delightful indication from Yahya's Dacca office that there had been promising signs for a political settlement (Choudhury, 2011, p. 168). The basic points of agreement were:

1. Lifting of martial law and transfer of power to a civilian government by a Presidential Proclamation.
2. Transfer of power in the provinces of the majority parties.

3. Yahya to remain as President and in control of the Central Government.
4. Separate sittings of the National Assembly members from East and West Pakistan preparatory to a joint session of the House to finalize the Constitution (Rahman, 2009b, pp. 21-29).

It should be pointed out that there was still room for uncertainty about Yahya's actions, and it was clear that he was only biding his time rather than trying to make a deal with the AL. The army started getting ready for the military option on February 20th or thereabouts. Plans for contingencies had been created as early as 11 December 1970. On 27 February the first military reinforcements started to arrive in Dhaka. Major Generals Khadim Raja and Rao Forman Ali convened in the GOC's office early on 18 March 1971 to create the fundamental operational plan that came to be known as 'Operation Searchlight.' Witness to it was Siddiq Salik, Public Relations Officer of the Martial Law Administration in East Pakistan (henceforth Salik). He described, 'General Forman wrote down the new plan on a light blue office pad, using an ordinary school pencil. I saw the original plan in General Forman's immaculate hand. General Khadim wrote its second part, which dealt with distribution of resources and the allocation of tasks to brigades and units. The plan christened "Operation SEARCHLIGHT" consisted of sixteen paragraphs spread over five pages' (Haque, 2023; Salik, 1997, p. 63).

It is also noticeable that Mujib and Bhutto had a little area of understanding. On March 24, 1971, Bhutto declared that he would remain in Dacca for as long as it was necessary and that the talks were going well (Rahman, 2009a, p. 781). Tragically, Bhutto and the leaders of his party came to the conclusion that military intervention was required, and on the morning of 24 March 1971, Bhutto told Yahya this (Raghavan, 2013, p. 50). The draft proclamation was provided by the ALrs during their meeting with Yahya's team on 23 March. Despite being genuine, experts from both sides concluded that their disputes could be resolved. In any case, the AL team stated that Mujib and Yahya could still work out a compromise when the presidential team disputed the discrepancies as significant adjustments (Raghavan, 2013, p. 49). The UniversePG | [www.universepg.com](http://www.universepg.com)

planning for a military intervention was far advanced by this point. Yahya made the decision to implement the proposal on 23 March after the meeting with the AL. Yahya left Dacca on the night of 25 March having given the Pakistani army free rein to exterminate every Bengali, while the leaders of the AL were awaiting a last meeting to finalise the draft proclamation. Mujib refused to leave the residence, telling an adviser who evaded capture, 'If I go into hiding they will burn the whole of Dacca to find me,' despite being informed over the phone that Yahya had left Dacca and the army was getting ready for a crackdown (Rahman, 2009a, pp. 788-92). The assault on Dacca involved an estimated three battalions of soldiers: infantry, artillery, and armoured. Just before ten o'clock at night, the Army began to evacuate their barracks and took up positions at several important locations. Just before midnight, the defenceless Bengalis were being genocided. Against the Pakistani state, which was waging war on humanity in the name of maintaining the unity of an Islamic Pakistan, the armed battle for Bangladesh's cause and independence thus began.

### **Genocide and Atrocities on Unarmed Bengalis and the New York Times**

On 25 March 1971, the Pakistani army began leaving their quarters just before ten o'clock at night and took up positions at key strategic locations. Just before midnight, the genocide against Bengalis who were unarmed began. Following the 25th of March, most channels of communication with Bangladesh were severed, and the foreign press was barred from the country. As a result, the Press Trust of India, a consortium of Indian news organizations, became the primary news source on Bangladesh. A portion of the news reported in *NYT* was derived from information obtained over the phone from Bangladesh and from military radio communications that were intercepted on the Indian side of the border. In certain instances, it gathered data from Pakistan Government Radio and 'Swadhin Bangla Betar' broadcasts. In addition, New York Times correspondents risked their lives to gather information by traveling through Bangladesh, along the border between India and Bangladesh. As an illustration, in the first part of April 1971, Sydney H. Schanberg finished a four-day excursion through the aforementioned places. One of the primary sources of

knowledge concerning the genocide against the Bengalis was the eyewitness reports of western evacuees, refugees, and expelled foreign journalists. NYT published different reports on 26 March 1971, that were based on the events that occurred in Bangladesh on 25 March 1971. NYT of 26 March 1971 did not print a detailed account of the massacres and atrocities committed against the unarmed Bengalis on 25 March, due to the time difference between Bangladesh and America. In a brief article published in its 'Late City Edition' on 26 March 1971, it was reported that Yahya had ended the negotiations and that the army had taken over in Bangladesh.

In reference to the announcement of Pakistan Radio, the paper on 26 March 1971 reported on the front page about the Pakistan government's reassertion of control over Bangladesh by banning all political activity. On 26 March 1971, this report was sent from New Delhi. The newspaper further reported that President Yahya had ended his talks with the Sheikh in Dacca the day before the broadcast announcement and had flown back to Karachi with his team ('Pakistan Assert Control,' 1971). In this regard, it is noteworthy that Yahya was held accountable by *NYT* for ending the negotiations. It is also clear from the articles in *NYT* and from other relevant sources that at no stage was there any breakdown of talks or any indication by Yahya that they held a final position that could not be abandoned. In this regard, Tajuddin Ahmed, the country's first Prime Minister, took office on 17 April 1971 stated, 'It must be made clear that at no stage was there any breakdown of talks or any indication by General Yahya or his team that they had a final portion which could not be abandoned' (Rahman, 2009b, p. 26). The information about genocide and atrocities committed by the Pakistani army was published in detail on 28 March 1971 in *NYT*. In this context, the newspaper published a total of eleven different articles, some of which included photographs. Page 2 and 3 of 28 March 1971 issue of *NYT* were full of news of the development of events in Bangladesh. On that day, two different articles were published as lead news under the common title 'Heavy Fighting, Raids Reported In East Pakistan.' In the very first

line of the first article, *NYT* confirmed the atrocities committed by Pakistan army and wrote that the Pakistani army was suppressing the autonomy movement in that 75 million-person province by firing heavy machine guns and artillery against unarmed East Pakistani residents (Schanberg, 1971a). The newspaper reported that many artillery bursts could be heard from the Intercontinental Hotel, and massive fires could be seen in various parts of the city, in reference to the international newsmen who were imprisoned there under threat of death. It called the 'Liberation Force' as 'Sheikh Mujib's Force'. It can be mentioned in this context that the resistance force of Bangladesh against the Pakistani army was initially known as 'Mukti Fauj' [Liberation Army]. In a meeting on 15 July 1971, where 110 members of the National Assembly and 200 members of the Provincial Assembly took an oath of all-out war till victory, it was decided to rename the 'Mukti Fauj' as 'Mukti Bahini' [Liberation Force] signifying the 'advent of the air force and the navy' (Rahman, 2009b, p. 68). *NYT* stated that Mujib was arrested on 26 March, but in order to increase the confidence of the resistance fighters, a directive from him was broadcast on 27 March, where he denied a West Pakistani radio report of his arrest. *NYT* on 27 and 28 March 1971 confirmed Mujib's Proclamation of Independence (Schanberg, 1971a).

The eyewitness testimonies of the newsmen who witnessed all the massacres and horrors from the 10th floor of the Intercontinental Hotel, Dacca, into the wee hours of 26 March 1971, served as the basis for the second lead article published on 28 March 1971. *NYT* wrote that the firing had begun to increase in the vicinity of the hotel and at 1 a.m. it had seemed to become very heavy all over the city. It added that at 1.25 a.m., the phones at the hotels had been shut down by the order of the military guard outside. It included that at 2.15 a.m. a jeep with a mounted machinegun driven by the front of the hotel, turned left on Mymensingh Road and stopped in front of a shopping bazaar with its gun turned on the second floor. While describing the attack on unarmed Bengalis, it wrote, 'From the second floor suddenly came cries of "Bengali Unite!" and the soldiers opened fire with the machine gun' (Schanberg, 1971b). After that, the army

moved down an alley adjacent to the bazaar; the scene was clearly visible because of the soldiers' flash light. While describing the courageous resistance of some unarmed Bengalis near the hotel area on that night, the paper wrote, a group of fifteen or twenty young Bengalis had begun walking along the road from approximately 200 yards away as the soldiers had been firing down alley. They looked to be unarmed and to have empty hands, despite their defiant yells at the soldiers. The machinegun on the jeep swung around toward them and opened fire (Schanberg, 1971b). The transcript of intercepted messages during the Pakistani army operation in Dacca on March 26, 1971, from 2 a.m. to 8 a.m., shows that road bottlenecks in several regions were caused by Bengalis, which the Pakistani army had to clear (Rahman, 2009c, pp. 445-55; Jenkins, 1971). About the unorganized resistance, journalist Symon Dring, in his eyewitness account of 30 March 1971 mentioned, 'Hardly anyone was there evidence of organized resistance. Even the West Pakistani officer scoffed at the idea of anybody putting a fight' (Dring, 1971; Harrison, 1971).

On that night, the Pakistani army burned and destroyed the office and press of *The People*, an English-language daily paper that strongly supported the demands of the AL and ridiculed the army. The foreign newsmen were watching the whole destruction from the hotel, which was an unforgettable play. While describing the annihilation process, NYT wrote:

Shouting in Urdu the language of West Pakistan, the soldiers warned any persons inside that unless they surrounded they would be shot. There was no answer and no one emerged. The troops then fired a rocket into the building and followed this with small arms fire and machine-gun bursts. Then they set fire to the building and began smashing the press and other equipment (Schanberg, 1971b).

The prearranged nature of the operation at The People's office is demonstrated by the conversations that took place early on 26 March between various army squads. One of the teams asked, 'Did you manage to pick up anybody important from the Daily People? ....do as you planning and you are making

excellent progress.' (Rahman, 2009c, p. 449). While setting fire, the Pakistani army was waving their hands in the sky and shouting war cries. NYT wrote in this context, 'They were shouting "Narai Takbir," a Moslem cry meaning "victory for God," and "Pakistan Zindabad!" - "Long Live Pakistan!"' (Schanberg, 1971b). Simon Dring mentioned in his eyewitness account that a Punjabi officer had said to him, 'We are fighting in the name of God and a united Pakistan.' He further mentioned, 'On Friday night [26 March 1971] as they pulled back to their barracks they shouted 'Narai Takbir,' an old Persian war cry meaning 'We have own the war.' On Saturday [27 March 1971] when they spoke it was to shout 'Pakistan Zindabad - Long live Pakistan.' (Dring, 1971) In the early morning of 26 March a message was intercepted passing over the army radio from the army headquarters to unit commanders throughout Dacca city, congratulating them on their night's work and for saving Pakistan (International Commission of Jurists, 2017, p. 30). It is a joke that they killed people in order to defend Pakistan and Islam, and that this occurred on a day that is significant to the Muslims and holy in the Islamic calendar [26 March 1971 was a Friday]. In the guise of Islam and Pakistan, the Pakistani military administration attempted to capture the land, but they failed to take into account the fact that ideas are indestructible and that Bengali nationalism's non-communal ideology is ingrained in every Bengali's heart. NYT described that before 4 a.m., Pakistani journalists in the hotel confirmed in reference to their own sources that two dormitories at Dacca University had appeared to be on fire. Siddik Salik mentioned, 'The tallest columns of smoke and fire emerged from the university campus.... The university building was conquered by 4a.m.' (Salik, 1997, p.76 ). They observed another big fire blaze at 4.45 a.m. in the direction of the East Pakistan Rifles headquarters. NYT reported that six Chinese-made T-54I light tanks and four helicopters patrolled on the morning of 26 March. These helicopters were given to Pakistan by Saudi Arabia for relief work after the November 1970 cyclone. The paper also informed readers that a military vehicle with a loudspeaker had gone through the streets, issuing a warning, and people immediately went to their roofs to remove the black flags that had been one of the symbols of the non-

cooperation movement. During the army operation in Dacca on 26 March at 2 am to 8 am, it was ordered from the control room, ‘... they will keep on saying that all Bangladesh flags will be brought down and any house which has Bangladesh flag – the owner will be responsible for the consequences. There will be no black flag visible anywhere in the city and they are not put down then the consequences will be very very severe’ (Rahman, 2009c, p. 445). Bhutto was watching the entire event from the Intercontinental Hotel while the horrors and savagery were occurring. He was escorted by armed troops to the airport shortly after 8 a.m. from the hotel. Following his return from Dacca, he proclaimed, ‘Pakistan is saved.’ The army also took control of the radio office, which was working under Mujib’s active direction during the non-cooperation movement in March 1971. According to the paper, the radio station of Dacca announced at 7 a.m. that the President would speak to the country at 8 p.m.; at around 8 a.m. radio again announced that anyone who violated the curfew would be shot. It then went off air for an hour and a half, singing off Pakistan’s national anthem in Urdu. The radio broadcast Tikka Khan’s first martial law proclamation, where he said that it was essential because ‘unbridled political activity had assumed an alarming proportion beyond the normal control of the civil administration’ (Schanberg, 1971b).

Although Mujib was arrested early in the morning hours of 26 March, the British Broadcasting Corporation reported at 5 p.m. on the same day that Kolkata had monitored a clandestine broadcast saying that Sheikh Mujib was calling on his people to carry on the fight against the enemy (Schanberg, 1971b). This strategy was taken by the AL leaders to increase the confidence of the Bengalis. From the eyewitness reports, the events on and after the night of 25 March could be described only as a cheerfully coordinated, premeditated attack on a defenseless population attempting to crush a movement whose main tactic was non-violence and non-cooperation. In addition to *NYT*, a few other western newspapers published eyewitness accounts and documented the genocide and crimes committed against Bengalis in the early hours of 26 March 1971. Two of the thirty-five foreign journalists that were kicked out of Dacca were Loren

Jenkins of the *Newsweek* and staff correspondent John E. Woodruff of *The Baltimore Sun*. Michel Laurent, an Associated Press photographer, managed to get around the prohibition by touring the damaged districts of Dacca while international journalists were confined to their hotel. The only British reporter who managed to remain around for a while and provide the horrific tale of the army’s cruelty and ruthlessness was Simong Dring of the *Daily Telegraph* (Woodruff, 1971a; Laurent, 1971; Neeld, 1971). Contrary to all the principles of international press freedom, foreign newsmen were confined by the army for more than 48 hours to the Intercontinental Hotel. On the afternoon of 26 March 1971, the military government ordered that the foreign newsmen be ready to leave by 6.15 p.m. A total of 35 newsmen represented newspapers and alternative news outlets in the US, Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Japan, and Russia. The Pakistani army was not well-mannered and threatened to shoot the newsmen if they left the hotel, from which they could see troops firing on unarmed civilians. *NYT* reported that when a group of newsmen walked out the front door to talk to a captain on the morning of 26 March, he ordered them to back into the building and said, ‘I can handle you. If I can kill my own people, can kill you’ (Schanberg, 1971b). According to the paper, the newsmen packed and paid their bills, and at about 8.20 p.m., just after the speech of Yahya, before the army’s convoy of five trucks with soldiers in front and in back, they left for the airport. The paper reported that on their ride to the airport, the newsmen had seen troops setting fire to the thatched roof house of poor Bengalis who lived along the road and who were some of the staunchest supporters of the self-rule movement. When they reached the airport, firing was going on far away. While in Dacca, foreign newsmen were prevented from filing any dispatches or contacting diplomatic missions. The paper pointed out that at the airport, before they had been board a plane to Karachi, the newsmen, including *NYT*’ correspondent Sydney H. Schanberg were rigidly checked, and their notes, files, and some television films, particularly those of the British Broadcasting Corporation, were confiscated through body and luggage searches (Lichtensten, 1971). Foreign correspondents were given their news films and

documentation back by the Government of Pakistan on 10 January 1972 ('Newsmen's Notes and Film,' 1971).

The primary goal of this deportation was to conceal all of the horrors, murder, genocide, and violence from the world community. Consequently, there would be a news blackout, with Indian news agencies taking center stage as the primary information providers. Pakistan would consequently find it simpler to disregard any information originating from India. NYT rightly pointed out and wrote, 'With the expulsion of the foreign press, the main source of news on East Pakistan was the Press Trust of India, a group of Indian news agencies. Pakistan, protesting what it charged was India's "interference" in her internal affairs, asserted that the Indian news reports were exaggerated and 'design to malign Pakistan' (Lichtensten, 1971). At Colombo, the aircraft transporting the newsmen who were pushed out of Dacca made a fuel stop and the correspondents for the *Times*, the *Washington Star*, the *Newsweek*, and the *Baltimore Sun* were able to telephone a pooled dispatch. The *Times*' managing editor, A. M. Rosenthal, issued a telegraph to the Pakistani government expressing his disapproval of the way Mr. Schanberg and others were treated. The telegram stated, 'They were subsequently expelled from the country after confiscation of their papers and film. Can only believe that this must have been error on part of military authorities. Trust that your government will rectify this situation immediately' (Lichtensten, 1971). NYT was against the killings and atrocities. On 28 March 1971 an editorial was published under the title 'Pakistan Divided' by calling the killings and atrocities 'a tragic mistake,' which would bring new sufferings to the Bengalis and prevent Yahya's goal of preserving a strong and united 'Moslem State' (1971).

As there was a complete news censorship, the Indian news agencies and other sources gave the information of Dacca and Bangladesh by quoting the news broadcast over Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, the army controlled Dacca Radio and Pakistan Radio. In reference to the above-mentioned sources, NYT informed readers on 29 March 1971 that a provisional government 'headed by Maj. Jia Khan,' who had been described as 'Commander in Chief of the forces of Bangla Desh' had been installed. 'Swadhin Bangla UniversePG | [www.universepg.com](http://www.universepg.com)

Betar Kendra' was the real name of the 'Nationalist Radio' that provided the information for the report. Maj. Ziur Rahman's name was misspelt as Maj. Jia Khan in that report as well. On 27 March 1971, he announced Bangladesh's independence on Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's behalf over the 'Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra' (Rahmna, 2009b, p. 2). The paper also gave information on local warfare and resistance in Cumilla, Chattogram, Jashore and Khulna districts of Bangladesh and speculated that several thousand might have been killed. It was also mentioned in that report that the government-owned Pakistan Radio had not mentioned anything about Mujib ('Both Sides,' 1971). One of the army teams which was engaged in slaughter and atrocities on Bengalis at the Dacca University area at the early hours of 26 March informed to the control room over radio that approximately 300 people were killed at the university area (Rahman, 2009c, p. 454). In a telegram to the State Department on 29 March 1971, Archer K. Blood, the Consulate General of US in Dacca, also mentioned about the killing on Bengalis and informed that the army of Pakistan had acted with no provocation (Smith, 2018, document 126). AL supporters were also the target of the Pakistani army, and according to NYT, the military operations drove the AL underground. Because of the news blackout, it was difficult to obtain reliable information. As a result, rumors-including the story of Tikka Khan's death-spread quickly. The Pakistani government retaliated by denying all news reports, according to NYT, and claiming that the nationalist radio program was actually broadcasting from Indian territory, from a ship on the Hoogly River close to Kolkata, rather than from East Pakistan ('Both Sides,' 1971). On 30 March 1971, BBC said in a news programme that Pakistan had been informed that fabricated reports had been delivered from a covert radio station near the mouth of the Hoogly River (Rahman, 2009d, p. 467).

NYT acknowledged the genocide against the Bengalis in an analytical piece published on 29 March 1971. It also said that the army of Pakistan had started executing everyone who had moved through the streets of Dacca or who had yelled defiance out of a window. Maj. Siddiq Salik was quoted in the paper regarding the Pakistani army's involvement in dealing



with recalcitrant citizens in this context. He said, 'When you call in the army, it's a last resort. The army would shoot to kill' (Schanberg, 1971c). Referring the courage and loyalty of the Bengali population the paper warned the military regime and stated, 'It seems certain that thousands of Bengalis will be killed, but their dedication to the self-rule movement and to their leader, Sheik Mujibur Rahman, is deep-so deep that it is questionable whether what is virtually foreign army from a region 1,000 miles away can control East Pakistan indefinitely' (Schanberg, 1971c). NYT reported on 28 March 1971 that the Pakistani army had taken total command over Dacca, and that the fighting, which had spanned one day and two nights, was thought to have claimed the lives of 5,000 to 7,000 people. This information was based on an Associated Press Correspondent named Arnold Zeitlin. While news from Dacca was being censored, Arnold Zeitlin sent the dispatch from Ceylon. It also verified Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's arrest ('Army in Control,' 1971). NYT kept up its reporting on Bangladesh's situation during the war, running a total of five pieces on the subject on 30 March 1971. The first page of the newspaper had an article about the genocide in opposition to the Bengalis and Pakistan's response to the information about the atrocities, accompanied by a picture in the left-hand column. Before the foreign news reporters were banished, Michel Laurent of the Associated Press took the photo on 27 March 1971. This image depicted the devastation caused by the army of Pakistan. In reference to foreign diplomatic sources in Dacca and unimpeachable sources in New Delhi, the paper described the killings of civilians on a massive scale by the Pakistani troops between Thursday night [25 March 1971] and Saturday night [27 March 1971] ('Pakistan Reports Opposition,' 1971). Archer K. Blood on 29 March 1971, in his telegram to Washington wrote in this context, 'Most army destruction nights of March 25 and 26: Lesser on March 27 and 28' (Smith, 2018, document 126).

On 30 March 1971, the newspaper released a separate article about Chattogram, which was the epicenter of the most opposition to the army of Pakistan. The paper explained the reasons behind Chattogram's active resistance and noted that Chattogram had been the center of a strong leftist labor movement and of hard-

core followers of both the AL and the National Awami Party of Maulana Bhasani, one of the most leftist political figures in Bangladesh (Durdin, 1971a). This information has similarity with the information of other sources. Maj. Zia stated in a declaration made over the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra on 30 March 1971 that the Punjabis had been killing civilian strongholds using F-86 aircraft on a large scale. He emphasised that the Chittagong region alone has seen the deaths of thousands of Bengali civilians (Rahman, 2009b, p. 3). NYT also mentioned on the same day that Dacca's two English-language newspapers had resumed publication. Although it made no mention of any name but these two newspapers were the Pakistan Observer and the Morning News as they made their first appearances since 25 March 1971, on 28 March 1971 (Blood, 2002, p. 201). In reference to a precise report sent to New Delhi and from unimpeachable foreign diplomatic sources in Dacca, the newspaper in another report on the same day wrote, 'Tanti Bazaar and Sankhari Bazaar areas of Dacca, inhabited by more than 10,000 people, were surrounded by the army. Houses were set on fire, and people were being butchered. Even residents fleeing the area have not been spared' (Schanberg, 1971d). The identical details were provided by Simon Dring of the *Daily Telegraph*. He said that soldiers with petrol cans on their backs had trailed the lead unit. He continued by saying that those who had stayed had been burned alive and those who had attempted to flee had been shot. Approximately 700 men, women, and children had perished there, he added (Dring, 1971). The genocide in ancient Dacca was also verified by the Secretariat of the International Commission of Jurists. In its *Legal Study*, it stated that everyone had been told to leave the premises and that Shankhari Patti, the street in the old town where the conch-shell artists lived, had been closed on both ends. It went on to say that after the Hindus and Muslims were split up, the Hindus were killed by machine gunfire (International Commission of Jurists, 2017, p. 29). Pakistani authorities believed that Bengali soldiers from the Pakistani army were all hidden in old Dacca, and the AL, as a political party, had some of its strongest support in old Dacca as this area was the residence of a number of poor and Hindu people.

Other international newspapers provided the same information. For instance *The New York Post* in its eyewitness report of 30 March 1971 wrote that the chief targets had been the University, the populous Old city where Mujibur Rahman and his AL had been strongest. The paper also wrote, 'Touring the still burning battle areas Saturday [27 March] and yesterday [28 March], one found the burned bodies of some students still in their dormitory beds' (Laurent, 1971). *NYT* also confirmed by using the same foreign diplomatic source that the offices of the Bengali-language paper, the *Ittefaq* had been burned with 40 people inside. This was also mentioned in Simon Dring's report. In his eyewitness account, Simon Dring stated that when the firing began, around 400 people were said to have sought refuge in the *Ittefaq* office. He said that on Friday, 26 March 1971, around four o'clock in the afternoon, four tanks appeared in the road outside, and by four thirty, the building was engulfed in flames (Dring, 1971).

*NYT* warned readers that there was intense fighting going on in several regions between the army and the civilian resistance forces, citing credible reports from the diplomatic sources in Dacca. It also verified that the army was utilizing heavy artillery and tanks on the ground in addition to aerial strafing (Schanberg, 1971d). There is similarity between the information of this article of *NYT* and the texts of the telegram of Archer K. Blood to Washington. Blood wrote, American priest (protect) in old Dacca report army acted with no provocation on part of Bengalis except barricade creation ... Technique was to set houses afire and then gun down people as they left their homes. Unwilling estimate number of casualties but advised that must be very high... USAID provincial director eyewitness to what appeared to be unprovoked firing by military on children and fisherman afternoon March 28. (Smith, 2018, document 126)

From all the above-mentioned information about genocide and atrocities, it is evident that the Pakistani army's aim was to break the morale of the people of Bangladesh within 48 hours of launching its first

attacks, aborting resistance before it took life. Colin Smith, the first British journalist to visit Dacca since the international press was barred, perfectly stated in this context, 'The day after the slaughter, the city's population of crows-dirty, fat, grey birds seemed to double, and though the bodies were quickly removed the birds have stayed on flopping and cawing above the described streets' (Smith, 1971). *NYT* on 31 March 1971, validated eyewitness claims of civilian atrocities by Pakistani troops in regions around Bangladesh, citing unquestionable independent sources in New Delhi. According to the article, during the initial phases of hostilities, the army shot and dragged senior nationalist movement officials from their homes. The AL leaders were identified as such high-ranking officials by the paper (Schanberg, 1971e). The excerpt of the intercepted signals from the Pakistani army action in Dacca on 26 March 1971, between two and eight in the morning, clearly makes this clear. During that operation, one of the teams said, 'I went specially Dhanmondi to be searched from house to house.' In reply, the control room said, 'you may select the block get hold of people from each house took in them - select if you find anyone you know... you can arrest him and other returns to the house.' Another team concurrently informed, 'This house to house search should be organized very systematically so that nothing is left unchecked. Apart from that you can try and get local people who are reliable enough to help you distinguish them.' The Pakistani army was looking for Tajuddin Ahmed and other AL leaders. They were also given permission to rape. One of the teams was ordered from the control room, '...to start working on a list of prominent people in your area you can get in touch with women you know and a list of all the prominent locals in whom we may be interested' (Rahman, 2009c, pp. 445-55). Local informers were used to identify the houses of the AL leaders and to set on fire. The *Daily Telegraph*, in its eyewitness account of 30 March 1971 wrote, 'The informer would point out the house of the Awami League supporters, the house would then be destroyed - either with direct fire from tanks or recoilless rifles or with a can of gasoline' (Dring, 1971).

*NYT* published an editorial on the overall condition of Bangladesh on 31 March 1971 under the title 'In the

Name of Pakistan.’ The newspaper harshly denounced in the editorial the government of Pakistan’s action; particularly the genocide and other crimes committed in the name of Islam and united Pakistan against the defenseless population of Bangladesh (‘In the Name of Pakistan,’ 1971). In addition to NYT, a few other foreign publications attacked the Yahya regime’s strategy. As an example, the *Guardian* on 3 March 1971, under the title ‘A Massacre in Pakistan,’ stating that ‘...unity can never come through murder ... The fate of Dacca is a crime against humanity and human aspirations’ (‘A Massacre in Pakistan,’ 1971). Other newspapers also denied the possibility of a united Pakistan. The *Baltimore Sun* on 30 March 1971 asserted, ‘After the carnage of the last few days, there can be no hope left of ever achieving a truly united Pakistan again’ (Woodruff, 1971b). The genocide against the Bengalis was continuing to be covered by NYT. In reference to an unidentified Pakistani journalist from Dacca, the paper confirmed on 1 April 1971 that at least 35,000 individuals had perished in the provincial capital after the army had moved in the previous week, and 25 reporters had been shot on 26 March 1971 for defying the curfew in Dacca (‘East Pakistan Said,’ 1971). The newspaper told readers that day that the Dacca Radio, which the army had taken over the night of the crackdown, had returned on the air on 31 March 1971, but that the signal was faint, suggesting that the original transmitter had not been in service. It broadcast Bengali nationalist songs, the article said (‘East Pakistan Said,’ 1971). A few Bengali radio and television personnel attempted to propagate the notion of Bengali nationalism. Siddiq Salik was tasked with reactivating the radio station to broadcast new martial law orders in an effort to maintain the appearance of normalcy following the crackdown. He mentioned in this context,

I thought it is safe to allow them to play instrumental music in intervals between martial law announcements. They began to play dirges, lamenting the death and destruction caused by army action. I ordered them to play Hamd and Na’at instead, to revive the Islamic bonds between the two wings. They clearly put this famous devotional song on the air: Row my boat to the safety of the shores O Ali, my Lord! Incidentally,

the boat was the election symbol of the Awami League. Similarly I asked the television station to produce short plays on the heroes of Pakistan movement ... they selected a prominent name - Maulana Mohammad Ali Jafar and used the occasion to televise a forceful play on the virtues of independence. It called upon all the freedom fighters (Mukti Bahini) to spare no sacrifice for the great cause!’ (Salik, 1997, p. 94).

On 2 April 1971, the genocide against the Bengalis was covered by NYT once more, noting that there were several accounts of extensive deaths committed by West Pakistani troops, many of which were deemed credible by independent diplomatic sources (Sierra, 1971). Besides NYT other newspapers were also publishing news on genocide. On 11 April 1971, the Sunday Times correspondent Nicholas Tomalin wrote an eyewitness account in which he examined the possibility that Bengalis had experienced a violent genocide. He wrote, ‘Genocide is an over-used word. But in the light of these explicit military orders, to West Pakistan troops ... it seems justified. In the light also of my three visits to East Pakistan ... We have seen the massacre with our own eyes’ (Tomalin, 1971). In another article on the same day, the paper reported heavy air and ground attacks by Pakistani troops against the resistance army in many towns and cities (Schanberg, 1971f). The following day, the newspaper reported that the army had moved out of its post two nights prior and had rushed through Jashore, killing a large number of unarmed men, women, and children. The paper further added, ‘Bodies lying in fields and ditches showed evidence of bayonet wounds’ (‘East Pakistanis Hold onto a City,’ 1971). Other international media also published news focusing on Jessore. In a news broadcast on 2 April 1971, British Broadcasting Corporation reported that a BBC special correspondent had just returned from Jessore and that it was evident the Pakistani government was lying about the situation because ... many innocent civilians, including women and children, had been killed (Rahman, 2009d, p 467). There could be no justification or rationale for the thousands of deaths of innocent villagers who had not the slightest idea of the issues involved in the political dialogues.

The various eyewitness accounts of the carnage in Bangladesh, exposed by local and foreign journalists, undoubtedly contributed to the advancement of global public opinion against all the atrocities on the Bengalis during a time when most governments around the world were silent, the US refused to release information about army killings, and foreign journalists were expelled to hide all brutality. *NYT* assisted in the effort by publishing the firsthand reports of some of the 102 Britons on 4 April 1971. The paper quoted a person who was one of 102 Britons who evacuated Singapore by air on 2 April 1971 and an employee of the East Pakistani Provincial Government. He said, 'Each day I could see fresh groups of bodies piled up on the pavements. There were men, women, even babies, with bayonet and gunshot wounds. Some appeared to have been crushed. The deaths were all at the hands of troops from West Pakistan' ('Britons Tell of killings, 1971). In this perspective, the *New Statesman*, a British magazine, can be deeply considered for its comment. It stated in a 16 April 1971 article, 'If Blood is the price of a people's right to independence, Bangladesh has overpaid' ('The Blood of Bangladesh,' 1971). Other international media also reported on the eyewitness accounts of the foreigners. On 7 April 1971, BBC reported in a news programme that a group of individuals arriving in Kolkata from Chattogram had spoken of widespread executions and bodies piled in the streets (Rahman, 2009d, p.470). On the same day, *NYT* published a front-page article based on eyewitness accounts about the Pakistani army's endeavour to repress the independence movement in Chattogram. Eyewitness accounts were taken from more than 100 foreign evacuees who had reached Kolkata on 6 April 1971 after a 34-hour voyage from Chattogram. The newspaper cited Mr. Martinussen, who moved to Chattogram seven months ago with his wife Karen in order to study Pakistani politics for his master's degree programme at Aarhus University in Denmark. He said:

Nothing is calm, and nothing has come back to normal. They systematically burned down the districts of the poor people, apparently because they felt they couldn't search them thoroughly. They seemed to be enjoying killing and destroying everything. Many Bengalis have been killed in the

river just four days ago, you could count 400 bodies floating in one area (Schanberg, 1971g).

*NYT* also quoted the statement of another 26 years old American namely Neil O' Toole, who said that in addition to indiscriminate looting and burning by outsiders, the army of Pakistan was firing at residents (Schanberg, 1971g). The paper concluded the article by quoting the statement of another foreigner named Edward J. McManus, an American engineer from Montrose. His statement was an irony of the Pakistani army's killing in the name of Islam. He said, 'The army was very polite. They drank all my whisky, but they gave me all my glasses back. Very honest' (Schanberg, 1971g). Indicating selective killings, the paper on 8 April 1971 exposed that the Pakistani authorities had begun a campaign to eliminate university professors, students, and all of the region's intellectual elite, who had been held responsible by the Pakistani authorities for the bid of the independence. It stated that it was impossible to even get a rough estimate of the number of casualties because of the news blackout and telephone communication ban ('All Mujib's Aides Reported Seized,' 1971).

On 11 April 1971, the daily published an insightful and perceptive piece outlining the Pakistani government's strategy of blatantly utilising Islam to justify their genocide against the Bengali population. It cited a Yahya regime-supporting Dacca politician's statement that garnered extensive prominence in the local press on 9 April 1971. That politician said, 'Populace take an oath to be valiant soldiers of Allah, to defend our faith and thus establish the dignity and status of Pakistan as the homeland of Islam' ('Pakistan Stresses Islamic Unity,' 1971). Additionally, the Pakistani government disseminated its propaganda through the imams of different mosques. *NYT* stated that in order to support government initiatives, information officers had been dispatched from Karachi to Dacca and the government radio, and that the most effective way to reach illiterate peasants was to emphasise historical animosity between the Hindus and the Muslims ('Pakistan Stresses Islamic Unity,' 1971). Criticism of Pakistan's policy of sanctioning the killings of the Bengalis in the name of Islam and Pakistan came from a few other western newspapers. For instance, the *Baltimore Sun* on 4 April 1971

stated, ‘...the army exercises its authority in the name of “the Islamic state of Pakistan.” Yet burning a human being alive or dead, is unequivocally forbidden by the Mohammedan faith (Woodruff, 1971). Most of the Muslim population in Bangladesh did not support the Pakistani government, despite its attempts to use Islam as a justification for its crimes and murders of the Bengalis. The army’s actions, particularly the policy of collective punitive actions by Lt. General Tikka Khan and Lt. General A. A. K. Niazi, under whom village after village was burned and destroyed, turned the entire population of Bangladesh against the military government. Official historian of the Pakistani army, Maj. General (retd.) Fazal Muqem Khan even considered, ‘The Muslim Population, particularly in the rural areas, had welcomed the troops [Libertion Army of Bangladesh] and were coming forward in large numbers to help them’ (Choudhury, 2011, p. 188). NYT on 12 April 1971 accused Yahya for the killing of unarmed civilians and declared, ‘Yahya Khan publicly announced in Karachi that he had ordered an armed crackdown in the East’ (Durdin, 1971b). Its reporter Tillman Durdin visited both Bangladesh and Pakistan to prepare this article. Yahya had gone on a long mental holiday after ordering the army crackdown on 25 March (Salik, 1997, p. 107). According to another article published on 13 April 1971, Tikka Khan had denied claims that the Hindus had suddenly turned into the main target of attacks in Khulna, the port city, and the surrounding areas, and had instead assured minorities and other people that the administration would take all necessary precautions to protect their lives and property. The article included several slogans uttered in the Chandpur district by proponents of a united Pakistan in light of the available information. They shouted, ‘Pakistan Zindabad, Allah O Akbar, Long Live Pakistan, Allah is Great!’ (‘Pakistan Claims Victory,’ 1971).

When the battle started, there were several missionaries from Europe and America in Bangladesh. Rather than take evacuation planes out, they chose to stay and tend to civilian casualties. The Pakistani army not only killed innocent Bengalis but also a number of American and European missionaries who tried to aid innocent people. On 13 April 1971, NYT noted-citing

the Press Trust of India-that two American missionaries had been slain on 9 April 1971, by Pakistani troops while attempting to prevent the soldiers from shooting civilians (‘Indians Report Perils,’ 1971). The Pakistani army had killed an Italian missionary in Jessore on 4 April 1971 and another priest who had witnessed it had said, ‘They often did it that way’ (International Commission of Jurists, 2017, p. 36).

NYT again on 14 April 1971 described the atrocities committed by the army of Pakistan. While explaining his own experience, reporter Schanberg wrote, ‘This correspondent saw Pakistani soldiers burning villages to deny the resistance forces cover or hiding places. As the smoke from the thatch and bamboo huts billowed up on the outskirts of the city of Comilla, circling vultures descended on the bodies of peasants, already being picked apart by dogs and crows’ (1971h). The paper further added that the army, with the aid of air and naval bombardment, had destroyed food supplies, tea factories, jute mills, and natural gas fields – the economic basis of East Pakistan. Beside the civilian population, the Bengali army officers and their family members were also the target. In this regard, the newspaper said that reputable reports from numerous sources concurred that the death toll of Bengalis was at least in the tens of thousands, if not greater. According to the paper, there was a great fear of retaliation against foreign nationals during that time period. In fact, some British citizens asked Schanberg to withhold their name, fearing retaliation against their relatives in Bangladesh (Schanberg, 1971h). In order to prepare this report, Schanberg had completed a four day trip through the border region of India and Bangladesh, as well as inside Bangladesh. In this backdrop, G. W. Choudhury, (2011) a vocal opponent of Mujib and the AL, wrote, ‘The Pakistan Army’s brutal actions, which began on the midnight of March 25, 1971 can never be condoned or justified in anyway. The Army’s murderous campaign in which many thousands of innocent people including women, the old and sick and even children were brutally murdered while millions fled from their homes to take shelter either in remote places or in India, constituted a measureless tragedy’ (p. 181). In addition to NYT, numerous globally renowned newspapers carried news stories about the genocide against the Bengali

community. The Newsweek published an article on 26 April 1971 about the deliberate killings of Bengalis and the destruction of the economic base of Bangladesh. It mentioned that the Liberation Army had lost 25,000 people ('Vultures And Wild Dogs,' 1971).

On 14 April 1971, NYT claimed that there had been several reports of deaths and damage in East Pakistan, even though Pakistan had tightened its control and expelled American and other foreign journalists (Welles, 1971). On 17 April 1971, it released a piece that was based on the first-hand narrative of Dabir [pseudonym], a 20-year-old second lieutenant in the 53d Field Artillery Regiment at the time. The killings of Bengali army officers and their families in the Cumilla area by non-Bengali army officers-mostly Punjabis and Pathans-were the main topic of this article (Schanberg, 1971i). On 18 April 1971, it published an evaluative article in its weekly special section 'The Week In Review' about the impact of the war on Bangladesh. Referring to Bangladesh's horrific genocide, the paper stated in the very first paragraph of the article that in the three-week-old war between the Pakistani army and the outgunned resistance fighters, there had been only one hell so far: that of the tens of thousands of East Pakistani civilians who had been massacred by the army in its drive to terrorize, intimidate, and crush the Bengali independence movement (Schanberg, 1971j). The paper explained that the Pakistani army was executing a twofold policy: 'Firstly, killing Bengali students, intellectuals, professors, army officers, engineers, doctors and others of any leadership potential. Secondly, destroying food storage, houses, tea factories, jute mills and natural gas fields - the infrastructure of Bangladesh' (Schanberg, 1971j).

According to an eyewitness testimony published in The Times on 13 April 1971, between 300 and 500 students had died at Dacca University, many of them having been lined up against a wall and shot dead by machine guns (Neeld, 1971). In this regard, Tajuddin Ahmed, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, stated in a press release on 17 April 1971, 'Yahya's genocide is thus without political purpose .... In this time he hopes to liquidate our political leadership, intelligentsia and administration, to destroy our industries and public

amenities and as a final act he intends to raze our cities to the ground' (Rahman, 2009b). NYT highlighted the hypocrisy of the Muslim world in an article published on 20 April 1971. At least 17 Muslim or predominately Muslim countries have expressed support for Pakistan's fight to maintain its integrity and unity, according to information received. The article stated that a prominent Palestinian Arab leader and former Jerusalem mufti, Haj Amin el-Husseini, addressed a message to a major Pakistani Muslim. el-Husseini's voice was noted as having weight among many conservative Muslims. The article went on to say that he had denounced what he saw as India's overt meddling in Pakistan's domestic affairs and had counselled Pakistani Muslims to make no compromises in order to protect Pakistan's unity, integrity, and Islamic position (Pace, 1971a). Unfortunately, he did not say anything about the genocide of the Bengalis. In reference to the Indian News Agency, the paper described on 21 April 1971 that West Pakistani army units had shot to death more than 100 civilians in Chuadanga on 19 April 1971 after calling them out of their houses to collect food rations ('Flee by the Thousands,' 1971). The newspaper on 22 April 1971, concentrated on the genocide in opposition to the Bengalis and, like in some earlier reports, cited the words of liberation fighters once more. It quoted two liberation fighters named Yusuf Ghani, a 21-year-old student at Meherpur College, and Abdub Aziz, a 42-year-old grain and jute merchant from Meherpur (Schanberg, 1971k). Schanberg visited a camp of the Liberation Army at Bedai, an Indian border town about six miles from the town of Meherpur. Schanberg and other foreign reporters were being told by the Indian authorities to stay away from the border areas. But he found a way and got permission to go to Tripura where the border patrols were training the 'Mukti Bahini' (Bass, 2013. p. 98).

On 28 April 1971, NYT published an article about the events that were unfolding in Bangladesh. The piece mostly covered the atrocities that befell the Bengali people in the months that followed the December 1970 election. The paper noted that it was often believed among powerful Karachian circles that the majority of the 40,000 Bengalis who were purportedly killed during the East Pakistani crisis were armed irregulars

or members of the Bengali police or military (Pace, 1971b).

### CONCLUSION:

NYT carried several editorials, eyewitness reports, and articles about the genocide against the Bengalis in March and April of 1971. It published some unconventional pieces, particularly those written by Sydney H. Schanberg. He attempted to depict an unfair war, humiliation, emotion, patriotism, and genocide in a number of essays. Numerous articles about the horrors carried out by the Pakistani military in various Bangladeshi villages, towns, and cities were published by it. Aside from that, a number of eyewitness reports were published by NYT to support the strong platform of the genocide allegations. It focused on the genocide and atrocities against the Bengalis on 26, 28, 29, 30, 31 March 1971; 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22 and 28 April 1971. The newspaper established in a number of pieces and editorials that Pakistani authorities had started a campaign to exterminate university instructors, students, and the entire intellectual elite in the area since they were held accountable by Pakistani authorities for the region's aspiration for independence. The newspaper claimed that in this fashion, the Pakistani army was carrying out two policies: first, eliminating any potential for Bengali leadership; and second, demolishing Bangladesh's infrastructure, including its food supply, housing stockpiles, tea factories, jute mills, and natural gas fields. The biggest moment in Bangladeshi history occurred during the freedom fight of 1971. Few nations and countries in the world have had to sacrifice as much human life and misery as the Bengalis did in their extraordinary struggle for independence. The international press, especially in the US and specifically NYT, gave this fight for independence extensive coverage and notoriety, which greatly contributed to the global outpouring of compassion and support for the hardships and struggles faced by the people of Bangladesh.

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The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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#### ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup> According to Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (approved and proposed for signature and ratification or accession by General Assembly Resolution 260(A) of 9 December 1948, entry into force: 12 January 1951), 'Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) killing members of the group; (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.' See United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. (1951 12 January). Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

<https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>

<sup>2</sup> A booklet titled 'Our demands for existence: 6-point program' was published in the name of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and was distributed in the council meeting of the Awami League held on 18 March 1966. These Six points were:

- a) The constitution should provide for a federation of Pakistan in the true sense on the basis of the Lahore Resolution and for a Parliamentary form of Government based on the supremacy of duly elected legislature on the basis of universal adult franchise.
- b) The Federal Government shall deal with only two subjects - defence and foreign affairs - with all residuary subjects vested in the federating states.
- c) There should be either two separate freely convertible currencies for the two wings or one currency with two separate Reserve Banks to prevent inter-wing flight of capital.
- d) The power of taxation and revenue collection shall be vested in the federating units. The Federal Government will receive a share to meet its financial obligations.
- e) Economic disparities between the two wings shall disappear through a series of economic, fiscal and legal reforms.
- f) A militia or para-military force must be created in East Pakistan, which at present has no defence of its own. (Arefin, 2015, pp. 124-33).

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