

15 February 2019

Mr Maqbul Ahmed

Ameer

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami

Re: Letter of Resignation

My most respected brother, Maqbul Ahmed,

Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullah.

1. It is with great regret I tender my resignation from Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami with immediate effect.
2. This has been a difficult decision for me. Ever since joining Jamaat in 1986, I have worked towards implementing the party's objectives. Over the last three decades, I have tried my best to fulfil the duties entrusted to me. As Chief Defence Counsel I have defended the top Jamaat leaders to the best of my ability and with utmost honesty and integrity. I have always believed that by serving Jamaat, I would not only be able to discharge my Islamic obligations but also serve my country.
3. Despite its many positive contributions to Bangladesh society such as corruption free politics, intra party democracy, institution building, and creating a vast number of honest, competent and dedicated citizens, Jamaat in the 21st century has not been successful in becoming an effective vehicle for realising its goal of social justice based on Islamic values. It cannot be denied that Jamaat wholeheartedly embraced the independence of Bangladesh, and never took part in any activity - directly or indirectly, covertly or overtly - which is subversive of the state or detrimental to the interest and sovereignty of Bangladesh. Moreover, Jamaat was part of the struggle for the restoration of democracy in the democratic movements in the sixties by participating in Combined Opposition Parties (COP), Pakistan Democratic Movements (PDM) and Democratic

Action Committee (DAC). In the eighties, Jamaat was on the street side by side with the 8-party, 7-party and 5-party alliances against the dictatorial regime. But all these remarkable contributions failed to receive due recognition because of Jamaat's role in opposing the historic struggle for liberation in 1971. 1971 casts a deep dark shadow over all its achievements and contributions.

4. For these reasons, I have always believed and continue to believe that an apology by Jamaat to the nation is not only a moral imperative but also necessary to absolve its post 1971 generation of the stigma. On a number of occasions, I have stressed that Islam and the liberation struggle define and shape Bangladesh politics, culture and society. They are non-negotiable. Yet, in 1971, our predecessors opposed the independence of Bangladesh and failed to publicly protest against the atrocities committed by the Pakistan Army. In the 47 years since independence, successive party leaderships have failed to apologise for the party's role in 1971 or even to explain the party's position on the struggle for independence. Now, more than ever, Jamaat needs to clarify its 1971 stance.

5. Over the last two decades I have been trying relentlessly to persuade Jamaat to have a frank discussion of the events of 1971, Jamaat's role in those events and why it decided to support Pakistan and apologise for that decision. Specifically, I raised the issue on the following occasions:

(a) In October 2001, when Jamaat's Ameer and Secretary General were appointed Cabinet ministers, I strongly advised Jamaat to address the issue of 1971 before the Victory Day celebrations of 2001. A committee was formed, a draft was prepared but nothing further was done.

(b) In 2005, I argued very vigorously for addressing the issue before the working committee; the result was an outright rejection.

(c) In 2007-2008, during the Emergency period, when allegations against Jamaat took a new dimension, I tried my best to convince Jamaat to address the issue.

(d) In the summer of 2011, in the last open session of the Majlish-e-Shoora, I raised the 1971 issue with a special appeal to the young members of the Shoora to come forward and give leadership, only to be rebuffed by a section of the top leadership.

(e) On 19th March 2016, in a 19 page letter to you, I advised Jamaat to address the issue and to make a fresh start in view of the changed circumstances in the world, particularly the Muslim world.

(f) In November 2016, shortly after your election as Ameer, my opinion was sought and I drafted a letter of apology. It was not implemented.

(g) And finally in January 2019, I advised the leadership of the necessity of taking responsibility for its predecessors' role in 1971. In the absence of any better or viable alternative, I also advised to dissolve Jamaat.

6. But all my efforts have been unsuccessful. My decades of advice had fallen on deaf ears.

7. Jamaat's failure to address the 1971 issue and apologise has resulted in a stigma being attached to those who were not involved in the decision. Even those born after 1971 and the many unborn generations who may be associated with Jamaat in future will have to bear this heavy burden. This continuing failure of Jamaat has given further ground for it to be seen as an anti-independence party. The result is dissociation from the people, politics and the country.

8. Time has come for young Bangladeshi Muslim democrats to revisit the old concept of the Islamic State expounded by our predecessors. This is more so because of recent developments in a number of the Muslim majority countries which point to the success of centrist parties with Islamic reference. The new generation should come up with new models in light of the new realities of the post Cold War era, the emerging multi-polar world and the recent upheavals in the Muslim world.

9. Unfortunately, Jamaat has failed to rise to the challenge of representing the young Bangladeshi citizens who are seeking good governance and a principled opposition to corruption.

10. After joining Jamaat, one of my objectives was to reform it from within. And I have been continuously striving to achieve that for the last 30 years. I was for structural reform, and full and effective participation of women. I made my points verbally and in writing. My reformist views are well known within the party. In my letter to you in March 2016, I emphasised the reform agenda by giving it the highest importance. I cited the

successful reform models in certain Muslim majority countries. And finally, I appealed to bring fundamental changes to Jamaat's objects, plans and programs in view of the change in world politics, and particularly, the upheavals in Muslim countries. As usual, there was no response.

11. The young generation of Bangladeshis are educated and enlightened; they are well-read and aware of the recent national and international developments; and above all, they are patriots capable of playing an active role in changing the face of Bangladesh. Their potential may best be utilised through a democratic principled party adhering to Islamic values operating within the secular constitution of Bangladesh. The failure of Jamaat leadership to restructure the party has sadly convinced me that Jamaat will not be able to fulfil this role.

12. On a number of occasions in the past, I had considered resigning but decided not to, and continued my efforts for internal reform, hoping to persuade Jamaat to have an open discussion of its role in 1971 and offer an apology. However, the latest refusal of Jamaat has convinced me otherwise. I have been proven wrong. From now on, I wish to concentrate on my profession and hope to have the opportunity of contributing towards a prosperous Bangladesh.

13. I must put on record my sincere appreciation of the current Jamaat leadership. At great personal cost and unprecedented sufferings they have kept the party together through turbulent times. I have no doubt as to their dedication to the party and the sincerity of their actions.

With warm regards

Yours sincerely,

Ma'assalam



Abdur Razzaq

Barrister-at-Law

Barking, Essex

United Kingdom