

# Call for Khilafah - A look into Hizb-ut-Tahrir Bangladesh

by SHAFIQ RAHMAN

Hizbut Tahrir believes one day it will establish the Khelafat State in Bangladesh, not through elections but through a mass movement.

Hizbut Tahrir is a political platform professing absolute faith in the rule of Islam. It hasn't been that long in Bangladesh, but has already evoked a lot of criticism. The mainstream media has also raised questions about Hizbut Tahrir's objectives and activities.

Hizbut Tahrir activists are not sitting idle hoping that some day the Khelafat State will somehow be established in Bangladesh. They are very active and are carrying out mass contact programmes extensively. The organization is banned in a number of countries of the Middle East, Central Asia and Europe, but has managed to spread its roots quite firmly in Bangladesh. In fact, the party has earned acceptance among many, including in the educated and civil society.

Chief Coordinator and Spokesman of Hizbut Tahrir's Bangladesh chapter Mohiuddin Ahmed says that the organizational network of the party has not yet found a firm footing all over the country. Other than in Dhaka, there are one or two members of Hizbut Tahrir in Comilla, Sylhet and Chittagong who are organizing the party programs there, Ahmed says. Hizbut Tahrir's activities also run in some 17 more districts, but there is no organizational network there as yet. "We are going slow," Ahmed says.

Hizbut Tahrir Bangladesh's media and publicity secretary Mustafa Minhaj says, "We will not be surprised if a Khelafat State is established in one or two countries in the world including Bangladesh. Prevailing global circumstances have all indications of this," he observes.

## Hizbut Tahrir in Bangladesh

The word Hiz means 'party' and Tahrir means 'freedom'. Hizbut Tahrir means "the party for liberation".

Takiuddin Annabahani of Palestine's Al Quds formed this political party in 1953. Things were going pretty bad for the Muslims then. Since 1948 the Jews had started to establish their homes in Palestine and Muslims were being subjected to oppression. Within a very short time the philosophy of Hizbut Tahrir -- 'fighting for freedom' -- spread across Europe and Asia. The objective of the party was to establish Khelafat State, not through any democratic process, or election or violence, but through mass movement. The organization holds meetings, seminars and discussions to spread their philosophy and ideology.

In 1992 a teacher of Dhaka University's Management Department, Syed Golam Mowla, went to the UK for higher studies education on a Commonwealth scholarship. In 1993 Mowla first heard of Hizbut Tahrir from two MBA students studying at the same university. After a few days Hizbut Tahrir's London Imperial College of Science and Technology chapter organized a seminar at the college auditorium. Mowla took part in the seminar. "I was greatly attracted to the organisation's ideology and expressed my interest to join their next seminars. Since then I have attended many seminars," Mowla reminisces.

On his return, Mowla shared his newly acquired knowledge with others and discussed about Hizbut Tahrir. Since 1996 Mowla's home at Dhanmondi turned into a favourite haunt for many civil society members who came there and discussed Hizbut Tahrir's aims and objectives, its potential, etc. "Then in 2001 I organized a seminar titled 'Clash of Civilization' at Dhanmondi's BETS Centre and through that Hizbut Tahrir Bangladesh chapter formally emerged," Mowla says.

Hizbut Tahrir Bangladesh Chapter's chief coordinator and spokesman Mohiuddin Ahmed says he had just completed MBA when one day he took part in a discussion at Dr Syed Golam Mowla residence. "There my main attraction was the subject of iman. I realized that it is not possible to change the country in a way that Allah has dictated unless the society is changed. And to change the society we need an organization like Hizbut Tahrir," Ahmed says.

Other Islamic parties also wanted to establish Islamic rule and run the country on the lines of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah. However, they have not made much progress. Why should Bangladesh need a party like Hizbut Tahrir, a party that is widely criticized all over the world? "We have extensively studied the works of other Islamic parties. Our ideology does not match theirs. Their idea of Khelafat is not clear. And the politics of almost all those parties are virtually the same as the politics of Awami League or BNP. In reality they do not want to establish Khelafat," Ahmed explains, distinguishing Hizbut Tahrir from other Islamic parties.

## Hizbut Tahrir's operations in Bangladesh

Hizbut Tahrir activists attach highest importance to organizing seminars and informal discussions. It also has a clear stand concerning conventional elections. Ahmed points out, "The elections in our country do not bring about any radical changes. It brings corrupt people simply to power. We want to offer the people a choice. So we are holding seminars and discussions in a bid to create mass awareness."

Hizbut Tahrir follows a four-pronged approach to advance their cause: a) earning people's confidence through a continuous political process, b) mobilizing people's movement in a disciplined way, c) toppling the existing system of governance along with the people with it, and d) electing Khalifa following the Khelafat system through the participation of the people.

Ahmed adds that they have tremendous response from all around the country. "Initially Syed Golam Rabbani, Dr Syed, Md Ijaz, Md Rakib and myself were there, but now we have some 10,000 members and 50 per cent of them are activists," Ahmed claims.

### **Countries where Hizbut Tahrir is banned**

The organization is active in some 40 countries in the Middle East, Central Asia and Europe either under the name of Hizbut Tahrir or in groups based on Hizbut Tahrir's ideology. But in 20 of those 40 countries Hizbut Tahrir is banned. The organization's provocative speeches and instigating leaflets led to the ban of the party. The Muslim states that once were part of Soviet Russia like Uzbekistan, Kirghizstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan have banned Hizbut Tahrir. Besides these countries, Denmark, Holland, France, Sudan, Qatar, Turkey, Oman, Libya have also banned the party.

Admitting that Hizbut Tahrir is banned in a number of countries, Ahmed clarifies that nowhere has Hizbut Tahrir been banned for terrorist activities. The Arab countries that banned Hizbut Tahrir do not have democracy, while the Central Asian counties that have banned the party are ruled by people who were once communists and the communists cannot tolerate any opposition parties, he explains. And as far as Pakistan and Afghanistan are concerned, the governments in these countries are virtually puppets of the US, he adds.

When asked about their criticism of the country's democracy, judiciary and Constitution, Mohiuddin says, "Discussing the Constitution does not mean we are opposing the Constitution." He observes the people of Bangladesh are religious minded. "They have Islam and political capitalism, but they don't have political Islam. But then we are not imposing anything on them," he comments.

Dr Syed Golam Mowla says, "Islam is the greatest ideology and we are working on the basis of this ideology. The change that our society needs can take place only when people's ideas and thoughts are changed. We are trying to change people's ideas."

### **Hizbut Tahrir funds**

Hizbut Tahrir spends around Tk 60,000 per month on seminars, discussions, leaflets, posters and other organizational activities. Where do the funds come from? "It's true that we don't have a fixed source of income, but our leaders and activists have been providing the funds for the party's activities. We also seek financial assistance from the people on various issues," Ahmed explains.

Media and Publicity Secretary Mustafa Minhaj says, "People who are with us have come mostly from solvent families. They don't find it a burden to bear such trifling amounts." Golam Mowla says, "People contribute because they enjoy doing those things. If we are happy to spend a certain part of our income for the party, no one should have any problem there."

### **Profiles**

#### **Dr Syed Golam Mowla**

Mowla was born in Comilla sadar in July 1958. He stood first in the Comilla Board SSC examination in 1973. He once again stood first in HSC examination from Chittagong Commerce College. He then took admission at Dhaka University's Management Department and stood first class first in both Honours and Masters. In 1983 he joined DU as a lecturer. He then won a Commonwealth Scholarship in 1992 and did PhD in International Business. The founding coordinator of Hizbut Tahrir in Bangladesh, Mowla is at present an advisor to the party.

#### **Mohiuddin Ahmed**

Mohiuddin Ahmed was born at Bhawal Rajbari in Sripur under Gazipur district in 1975. He passed his SSC from Uttara Civil Aviation School in 1990 and HSC from Notre Dame College in 1992. He then did BBA and MBA from Dhaka University's IBA and then joined IBA as a lecturer in 2001. At present he is the chief coordinator and spokesperson of Hizbut Tahrir in Bangladesh.

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