

**ISS Risk Special Report:  
Attack in Sholakia, Bangladesh – Initial Assessment  
9 July, 2016**



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Another terrorist attack took place in Bangladesh on the morning of 7 July, when the entire nation was celebrating Eid festival. The violence began at 0845 (local time) when around seven men, armed with guns, homemade bombs and machetes, attacked the outer police perimeter at the open air Eid congregation in Sholakia, 80 km northeast of Dhaka. Around 200,000 to 300,000 people had gathered at the congregation, which hosts the largest Eid prayer in the nation. The militants launched their attack on the security personnel with IEDs and later used machetes to hack them. The attackers had special pockets made in their dress to hide machetes. Two police officers and one civilian were killed in the attack, while a few others were injured. One of the attackers was killed in the security operation that followed, while another was injured. The authorities have thus far arrested seven suspects in connection with the attack. No group has claimed responsibility for the incident.



Police sources have confirmed that the IEDs used in the incident were similar in composition and assembly to those used during the Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka on 1 July and the attack on a Shia mosque in Bogra in November 2015. Coincidentally, ISIS have claimed

responsibilities for the other two attacks. Consequently, another linkage can be established between this attack and the Dhaka incident. The relationship between the groups involved is now potentially strengthened by these factors, adding weight to the premise that there is central coordination behind the groups.

The authorities have thus far identified two of the attackers. The deceased attacker, as shown in the picture above has been identified as Abir Rahman, aged 22, son of Sirajul Islam, residing at Basundhara in Dhaka and originally from Comilla district. Abir was a student of business administration from the North South University in Dhaka and had gone missing from 1 March, 2016. However, his parents only filed a police case on 6 July.



The militant arrested during the attack was identified as Shafiul Islam alias Abu Mokaddel, aged 19. He had studied in a madrassa in Dinajpur, northern Bangladesh.

The connectivity between the attackers, the North South University and the increase in attacks is something that the authorities need to be looking at seriously and addressing. The evidence speaks for itself, two attacks, days apart in different areas, bearing similar MO's and tactics, the attackers all young, in their early 20's, educated and most from relatively well off or affluent families. An additional factor to consider is the structure of this emergent radical grouping. The Dhaka attack involved at least 6 attackers, this attack some 7 were involved. The support element for both attacks would sit between 30-35 people each. This is indicative of a larger grouping emerging than is being acknowledged, moreover, there is patently central coordination and planning, and these are not merely 'ad hoc' attacks. In both

instances it is now known that some of the attackers disappeared months in advance. This suggests that they were spirited away for sustained training. How many more young affluent students have been spirited away or vanished in the past 12 months may be a telling and salient point to be pursued in respect of a future combat indicators. The North South University may prove to not be new to controversy and could be a breeding ground of fundamentalism.