



## ICRF's Press release on Stephen J Rapp's comments regarding the International Crimes Tribunal Bangladesh

The US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Criminal Justice, Stephen J Rapp recently made a few comments to the journalists recently regarding the proceedings at the American Centre after visiting the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT). We, the International Crimes Research Foundation (ICRF) find his statements to be an attack upon the jurisdiction of these trials and consider his interference unjust.

According to various sources of the media, Mr. Rapp expressed the following views at a press conference at the American Centre on August 5, 2014 after visiting the ICT, "The United States does not support the trial of Jamati Islami as a 'war-criminal' group." He added, "The system of capital punishment has been prevailing both in the US and in Bangladesh. Death sentences may be passed in crimes against humanity cases when there is enough evidence against the accused. But many countries have dissolved it. This is why one must be certain of guilt when awarding the death sentence."

Since the very beginning of these trials, Stephen Rapp has often gone beyond his own jurisdiction and issued unsolicited, one-sided statements against the Tribunal. As a consummate sovereign state, how Bangladesh decides to try or not try a person or an organisation or whether they can or cannot try a person or an organisation is completely Bangladesh's own internal matter. To make such damning comments during the on-going proceedings of the Tribunal is unjust interference according to ICRF. It is through such statements as made by Stephen Rapp, that demonstrate once again to the whole world the unwillingness of the US to uphold the rule of law and to evade justice.

It is worth mentioning that the US has yet to become a signatory to the 'Rome Statute' of the International Criminal Court. Throughout history, there have been many allegations of war crimes against the US. It is because they have been able to avoid facing justice that they are still able to actively wage war all over the world.

American troops have committed mass genocide year after year in countries like Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq. These allegations have now historically become true in front of the whole world and yet those crimes still remain unpunished. In recent times, the US has expressed its support to Israel carrying out mass genocide in Gaza.

It is widely known that after World War II, Germany's Nazi clan was banned. In addition, UK, Italy, Russia, Germany and Turkey have all banned various organisations being involved with various crimes or for posing a threat to national security. In the UK, organisations like 17th November Revolutionary group, Abdallah Azzaman Brigade, Abu Nidal Organisation, Abu Sayaf Group, and many other organisations have been announced illegal in consideration for the safety of its people.

Every decision taken by the ICT regarding the activities of Jamati Islami as a political party during the 1971 liberation war has been thoroughly researched, analysed and synthesised by an expert panel of judges who have provided detailed description of the role the Jamati Islami played, subsequently declaring it a criminal group. The judgments also clearly indicate the need to try Jamati Islami to allow justice to prevail.

As a sovereign state, Bangladesh has every right within its legal ambit to try an organisation alleged to be a criminal organisation. Historically, Jamati Islami opposed Bangladesh's liberation and collaborated with the Pakistani armed force during the 1971 liberation war in carrying out various international crimes. Accordingly, who the Bangladesh government should or should not try in consideration of the safety and security of its people and in light of the common law, is entirely its very own decision and sovereign right.

The fact that such unsolicited statements regarding whether the US supports the trials or not were made leads the ICRF to conclude that there are hidden agendas behind Rapp's statements. As far as we are aware, the Bangladesh government never asked the US what role it plays or what their stance is with regards to the trials. Therefore, such eager interference without being asked leads us to conclude that the US is not concerned with justice and only wishes to obstruct the course of justice in Bangladesh too. At least Stephen Rapp's statements prove that much.

It is worth noting that an American organisation, The IHS Jane's Global Terrorism & Insurgency Attack Index recognises Jamati Islami's partner organisation, Shibir group, as a terrorist group and announced it as a terrorist group even more dangerous than the Taliban in one of their 2013 research studies. Therefore, Stephen Rapp's statements at a time when preparations are underway to try a terrorist and criminal group comes as deeply conspiratorial and laden with hidden agendas to ICRF.

On the issue of giving death sentences, Stephen J Rapp said that guilt must be proven beyond reasonable doubt before awarding death sentences. Such statement is highly disrespectful as it seeks to dictate the Court. This stands as an obstacle in the way of our legal system carrying out its rightful judicial responsibilities. Every single judgment given by the International Crimes Tribunal so far has been based purely on data collected as evidence. There have been no instances where the Tribunal has passed a death sentence without strictly establishing guilt beyond reasonable doubt. Therefore, ICRF is of the view that Stephen J Rapp's remark was only given in an attempt to not only undermine and dictate the court but, overall to frustrate the general course of its proceedings and justice.

ICRF deeply condemns Stephen Rapp for acting beyond his jurisdiction and making such one-sided statements. ICRF insists that he keeps himself from making such insensitive statements in the future which seeks to undermine our Tribunal and provide scope for controversy.

**International Crimes Research Foundation (ICRF)**  
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