

Background of the Peelkhana Tragedy

On February 25-26, 2009, a most barbaric assault took place on Bangladesh's defence forces. At the headquarters of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) at Peelkhana, Dhaka, a group of BDR personnel staged a 'rebellion' or 'mutiny' and committed murder, rape, arson and other heinous crimes against their commanding officers and their families. This was the worst massacre of the armed force officers in the country's history. Victims included 57 serving army officers and 17 other personnel. Other crimes involved widespread looting of properties, arson and stealing of huge quantities of arms and ammunition.

What led to the tragedy?

Some vested groups have claimed that the massacre resulted from the BDR soldiers' long-standing grievances against their commanding army officers for poor pay and service conditions.

But a dominant view is that while these factors may have played a part in motivating the ordinary soldiers to stage a 'mutiny' against their commanders, it alone cannot explain the systematic murder of such a large number of officers of Bangladesh defence forces. They were the cream of the crop and they were butchered. The 'mutiny' must have other dimensions with a hidden agenda to inflict a mortal blow to the Bangladesh defence forces, including those guarding the country's borders.

At Voice for Justice, we demand that the truth be found and the perpetrators and conspirators punished. The longer it takes for the truth to see the light of day, the worse it will become for accountability and rule of law in Bangladesh. Justice delayed is indeed justice denied.