

## **Situation very complex in Bangladesh: US**

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**Washington:** The situation is "very complex" and there is a threat "on the ground" in Bangladesh, the US has said after a series of bloody attacks on secular writers and minorities in the Muslim-majority country were claimed by ISIS and al-Qaeda.

"It is a very complex situation on the ground," State Department deputy spokesman Mark Toner told reporters when asked about the series of killings of activists in Bangladesh.

"What we're asking for is that the government conduct an investigation into these attacks, these brutal attacks and these brutal murders, that identifies who the perpetrators are," Toner said yesterday.

There have been systematic assaults on minorities, secular bloggers, intellectuals and foreigners in Bangladesh in recent months. On Monday, a USAID employee and gay rights activist Xulhaz Mannan was slayed in Bangladesh. A Hindu head priest was on February 21 hacked to death by gun-and-cleaver wielding Islamists.

**Â Â Â In September last, Italian aid worker Cesare Tavella was murdered by unidentified assailants in Dhaka, and within five days of that incident Japanese farmer Kunio Hoshi was killed. al-Qaeda and Islamic State have claimed responsibilities for the killings. But Bangladesh's government denies that jihadist groups have been behind the spate of bloody attacks.**

"There's been various claims of responsibility. We have no reason not to believe those claims of responsibility. But what is clear is that there is a threat on the ground," he said. "I mean, we've seen several now murders, brutal murders, over the past several weeks. We want to see the government there take every step possible to protect its citizens."

A day earlier Secretary of State John Kerry called the Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. "He offered US support for the ongoing investigation into these recent attacks, certainly the one that killed our own employee and human rights advocate, as well as his friend and colleague earlier this week," Toner said.

"The Secretary did urge the prime minister to ensure a thorough investigation into these and other attacks, recent attacks, and to redouble efforts by law enforcement to protect these individuals who we believe are at risk," he said.

- PTI