

## **Hundreds of Muslims set fire to temples and behead statue of Buddha in protest at Bangladeshi man insulting their religion on Facebook**

- **Attacks triggered by Facebook photograph deemed insulting to Islam**
- **Protesters torch at least four Buddhist temples and 15 homes**
- **Police try to restore peace in the south-east of the country**
- **Buddhist monks across the country stage protests after the attacks**

By Rob Preece

Hundreds of Muslims in Bangladesh have burned at least four Buddhist temples and 15 homes after a Buddhist man apparently insulted their religion on Facebook.

They carried out the attacks in protest at a photograph posted which they said insulted Islam and had been put on the website by a Buddhist.

At least one Buddha statue was beheaded during the attacks, which happened in Buddhist villages in the Cox's Bazar area in the south-east of the country.



Destruction: Buddha statues, including one with its head removed, stand amid the ruins of a Buddhist temple that was torched in Ramu in the coastal district of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh



Aftermath: Bangladesh's Home Minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir (third from the left) visits a burned temple in Cox's Bazar



Burning: Smoke rises from the remains of a Buddhist temple that was torched in Ramu. The attacks were sparked by a photograph on Facebook, which Muslims claimed was insulting to Islam

It follows days of tension after Muslims across the world were angered by an anti-Islamic film made in the US.

Police said they had deployed extra security forces and banned gatherings in Buddhist-dominated areas.

'We brought the situation under control before dawn and imposed restrictions on public gatherings,' said Salim Mohammad Jahangir, district police superintendent for Cox's Bazar. Police had escorted the man accused of posting the insulting photograph and his mother to safety, he added.

Home Minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir described the attacks on temples as a 'premeditated and deliberate attempt' to disrupt harmony.



Ruined: Burnt statues at the temple of Shima Bihar at Ramu, some 216 miles south-east of the Bangladeshi capital, Dhaka



Damage: A Bangladeshi man looks at the torched ruins of a Buddhist temple called Ramu Moitree Bihar



Attacked: People file past the destroyed homes of Buddhists living in Ramu, south-east Bangladesh

Alamgir also promised to rebuild the Buddhist monasteries and temples, and compensate those whose houses were torched.

Muslims in Bangladesh and beyond have also been outraged by violence over the border in Myanmar where members of the majority Buddhist community clashed with minority Muslims this year.

Sohel Sarwar Kajal, the Muslim head of the council in the area, said he was trying to restore peace.

'We are doing everything possible to quell tension and restore peace between the communities,' he said.

More than 100 Buddhists staged a silent protest in the capital Dhaka on Sunday afternoon against the attacks on their temples, witnesses said.





Response: Buddhists hold a rally in protest at the arson attacks on temples and homes



United: Bangladeshi Buddhist monks in Dhaka form a human chain during a protest against attacks on temples and homes



Tensions: A woman takes part in the protest in Dhaka. Police say they are trying to restore peace in the area where the arson attacks took place



Demonstration: Buddhist monks also staged a protest in Chittagong as tensions simmered following the arson attacks in the south-east of the country