

# Mujib's confusion on Bangladeshi deaths

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[Ian Jack](#) (21 May) mentions the controversy about death figures in Bangladesh's liberation war. On 8 January 1972 I was the first Bangladeshi to meet independence leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman after his release from Pakistan. He was brought from Heathrow to Claridge's by the Indian high commissioner Apa Bhai Panth, and I arrived there almost immediately.

Mujib was puzzled to be addressed as "your excellency" by Mr Panth. He was surprised, almost shocked, when I explained to him that [Bangladesh](#) had been liberated and he was elected president in his absence. Apparently he arrived in London under the impression that East Pakistanis had been granted the full regional autonomy for which he had been campaigning. During the day I and others gave him the full picture of the war. I explained that no accurate figure of the casualties was available but our estimate, based on information from various sources, was that up to "three lakh" (300,000) died in the conflict.

To my surprise and horror he told David Frost later that "three millions of my people" were killed by the Pakistanis. Whether he mistranslated "lakh" as "million" or his confused state of mind was responsible I don't know, but many Bangladeshis still believe a figure of three million is unrealistic and incredible.

**Serajur Rahman**

*Retired deputy head, BBC Bengali Service*