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Non-Bengalis kept apart in Bangladesh

The Biharis, Moslems like most Bengalis, flocked to camps by the tens of thousands during and after last December's India-Pakistan war that created Bangladesh in the former eastern wing of Pakistan. They feared Bengali reprisals.

Under the former Pakistani rulers, the best jobs and the best training went to the Biharis, a minority of fewer than 3 million in a land of 75 million.

Biharis migrated to East Pakistan in 1947 when the Indian subcontinent was partitioned, opting for the Islamic government in preference to the Hindu-dominated government of India. Most speak Urdu like the Punjabi majority in West Pakistan, but many young Biharis were born in East Pakistan, speak Bengali and were

educated in Bengali-language schools.

Various Biharis who talk with visitors to the camps say their lives in Bangladesh are irretrievable and they want to migrate to Pakistan.

The conditions in which they live continue to be a festering sore on the independence of Bangladesh, although in truth their caged lives are easier than those of many Bengalis. The Red Cross and other relief agencies provide food, while outside the camps millions of Bengalis scrape for subsistence.

The government also is housing the Biharis, but at New Geneva, a community of 32,000 created when the government expropriated a Bihari school where the refugees had huddled for six months, the stench is abominable. Garbage piles and

drinking water share an area of 40 square feet.

The Biharis claim 40 to 50 people share each hut of 375 square feet.

Tanks supplied by the Red Cross provide running water and crude latrines. But the Biharis cannot forget the fences. As an American newsmen walked around the compound, a woman brought forward a crying child whose head was bleeding. She said the child had been hit by a brick tossed over the fence from outside.

A disgusted Bengali civil servant said such occurrences are commonplace.

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