



Living on the death river
By Ugo Borga/Echo



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Everyday almost 21600 cubic meters of industrial sewage ends up in the Buriganga river, Bangladesh, and more than 150 tons of solid polluting agents reach its shore. “Pollution of Buriganga river is caused 60% by tanneries, 30% by other government related activities like boatyards and 10% by the people living in the city” says Jamil Sharif, activist and founder of Buriganga River Keeper.

“There is no sign of life in the river anymore, and is getting worse year after year. Buriganga gave life to Dhaka and Dhaka killed it. According to the “Toxic Tanneries” report made by Human Right Watch in 2012, the only independent survey until now, chemical agents such as hexavalent chromium, mercury, sulphuric acid, formaldehyde, toluene, cadmium, chromium acetate are responsible for the death of the Buriganga river and for thousands of cases of severe intoxication, often with fatal consequences for the people who work or live in the surrounding areas. For HRW this is a “systematic violation of human rights”.

In a megalopolis like Dhaka more than 15 million people use the water coming from a poisoned river. But trying to preserve it could be more dangerous than dive into its waters. Aminul Islam, activist, killed in April 2012, on his body clear evidences of torture.

Until date, more than 35 activists have been killed, or simply disappeared, because of their attempt to inform the people about the risk of pollution. The owners of the tanneries are members of the government and the multinational corporations involved in this 400 million dollar business per year are ruthless.

























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