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American Jew fights for Bangladeshi Hindus

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Lucknow: He is a Jew by faith, an American by nationality and is fighting for Bangladeshi Hindus being suppressed by successive regimes. Richard L Benkin from Chicago was in Lucknow University on Wednesday to mobilise support for his cause.

After delivering lectures in the department of journalism and history on various topics, Benkin interacted with students and teachers.

Later, in an informal chat with the reporters, he spoke at length about how the world has kept silent over the atrocities being committed over Hindus in Bangladesh.

"In 1974, Hindus were 18 per cent of the total population of Bangladesh, today they are just 9 per cent. Millions

of Hindus were either forced to migrate to India or convert or became victims of ethnic cleansing. Properties of Hindus were taken over by the government under Vested Property Act," he said.

Benkin taught in various US universities before working as an international correspondent for three Bangladeshi newspapers for several

Now a human right activist, he worked for the release of Bangladeshi journalist, Salah-ud-din Shoaib Choudhury who was arrested and charged with sedition in 2003 for criticising Islamic radicals and advocating equal rights for religious minorities. Salah-ud-din also wanted Bangladesh to recognise Israel.

"I used my contacts in US Congress

to mount pressure on Bangladesh for the release of my friend Salah-ud-din," he said.

Last year a migrant Bangladeshi Hindu living in West Bengal called Benkin for help. Since then, he is building a network in US to bring the issue at international arena.

"Now here I am in India to stand with Bangladeshi Hindus living in exile after facing oppression at the hands of the Bangladesh government," he

He was surprised to see that everyone in India knows that the Bangladeshi Hindus are facing risk of genocide but no one seems to be stopping it.

He also criticised UN and its human rights commission for not taking un the issue

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