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**TEXT OF
EDWARD M. KENNEDY'S SPEECH
AT DHAKA UNIVERSITY**

FEBRUARY 14, 1972

U.S. Senator Edward M. Kennedy delivered the following remarks at Dhaka University on February 14, 1972 when he visited the war-torn Bangladesh.

(Begin text)

I have come to Bangladesh to bring you the prayers and hopes of millions of people of the United States of America, and I'm proud to stand here at Dacca University, long the symbol and focus of the Bengali struggle for self-determination, and the first target of those who have sought to repress that freedom.

It is in the finest tradition of America to embrace the cause of freedom, wherever it may be found.

The American people are proud to stand with those who struggle for liberty, for human dignity and for the noblest aspirations of man.

You know that while some governments do not yet recognize you, the people of the world do recognize you, and they recognize all you have accomplished here in the name of freedom from tyranny and oppression.

We are brothers in liberty, and no man no policy, no government can change that fact. I have come to Bangladesh as one who has tried to be with you in your struggle. A few months ago in August, I walked among the living and the dying in your refugee camps in India. I saw children starving and families destroyed by the ravages of war.

I hoped to come to Bangladesh as well, but I was turned away by the Government of West Pakistan, a military government afraid for the world to see inside its borders. I was

troubled, as the world was troubled by the suffering of your people, and now I rejoice, as the world rejoices, at the bright new chapter you have written in the history of liberty on earth. The prayer of Bengal's great poet and philosopher has been answered: "Where the mind is without fear", said Tagore, "and the head is held high", "Where knowledge is free, into that heaven of freedom, my father, let my country awake."

Freedom is yours and the future belongs to the people of a new Bengali nation. For generations to come, the story of Bangladesh will be a lesson to the world. The birth of the Bengali nation will be an inspiration to other people in other lands, a symbol to all who share your love of life and the spirit of your courage, but who did not yet share your freedom.

There are many parallels between the United States and Bangladesh. Two hundred years ago, in America, ten thousand miles from where we are today, there were other people who followed the star of freedom; our beginning was no more auspicious than your ones. Like you a powerful and established Government was determined to deny us freedom. Like you our early leaders endured terrible adversity before their cause prevailed. Like you once the new American nation was born, there were those who said that such a weak and impoverished country could not survive in the modern world. They thought our great experiment in freedom would surely fail.

And yet we confounded all their wisdom. We were poor in everything but hope and courage.

We had no wealth, but we had resources far more valuable and important. We had people with the energy and commitment to make our nation strong, and leaders with the vision to see the way, and help the people build their future.

The revolution in America did not end in 1776. It did not die with Washington and Jefferson. It lives today in our efforts to fulfill the goal of liberty and equality for all our citizens, black and white alike. And it lives as well in the hopes we share for those who are oppressed in other nations.

That is why the struggle of the people of Bangladesh has deeply touched the conscience of America. It evokes the greatest memories of our past and demonstrates that our love of freedom transcends all thought of race or colour or religion or nationality.

The people of America were with you in recent months, although our government was not. We are with you now in spirit, and the leaders of America will not be far behind.

The real foreign policy of America is citizen to citizen, friend to friend, people to people, foreign bonds of brotherhood that no tyranny can diminish. For in a sense, we are all Bengalis, we are all Americans and we all share the great alliance of humanity. For those who doubt that freedom and self-determination are the most powerful forces at work in the world today, let them come to Bangladesh.

I have come here to say that America cares. I have come to learn from the father of your country, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I have come to talk again with those who suffered so much in the refugee camps and to ask that my fellow countrymen and I can do to cease the pain of those who have survived and have done so much to preserve freedom.

If any words of an American can help to heal the wounds you have endured, to reconcile those who live among you and who now must live together, they are the words that Abraham Lincoln spoke a century ago as we neared the end of our own great Civil War.

“With malice toward none”, said President Lincoln, “with charity for all: with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and for his orphan; to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.’

In the spirit of the best in America in the spirit of our constitution, and our declaration of independence, I salute your great new birth of freedom, and I say *Joi Bangla*, victory for the nation of Bangladesh.

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***(From: *Morning News*, 15 February 1972)**

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