



Foreign customers sit inside the newly reopened Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka, Bangladesh. — AP photos



A foreign customer waits at the counter of the newly reopened Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka, Bangladesh.



Dwin Islam Rakib, a survivor of the July 1 attack at Holey Artisan Bakery, works at the reopened restaurant.



Shahriar Ahmed, a survivor of the July 1 attack at Holey Artisan Bakery, works at the reopened restaurant.

## Bangladesh cafe hit by brutal hostage-taking attack reopens

The Bangladesh cafe besieged by militants who killed 20 hostages last year has quietly reopened a few blocks away from its old, bloodied site, which remains taped off by investigating police. For Shahriar Ahmed and the 16 other staffers, some of whom were working during the horrifying siege, the reopening of Holey Artisan Bakery represents hope and a new beginning. "This is beautiful to come back here with all my dearest colleagues," Ahmed said while preparing a cappuccino for a customer on Thursday. "Our old, familiar guests are coming and congratulating us, congratulating from their hearts."

The July 1 attack by five young Bangladeshi extremists stunned the nation and drew condemnation from abroad. The attackers held dozens hostage overnight, quizzing them on details of the Quran and killing some of those who failed to answer to their satisfaction. When Bangladeshi police and soldiers stormed the restaurant the next morning, killing all five attackers, they found a gruesome scene of torture and killings. Twenty hostages including 17 foreigners were dead.

The government responded by cracking down on extremist groups in the country, blaming one in particular - Jumatul Mujahedeen Bangladesh - but dismissing claims of responsibility by the Middle Eastern extremist group the Islamic State. It followed several years of smaller attacks targeting scores of individuals deemed by extremists to be enemies of radical Islam, including secularists, writers, religious minorities, foreign aid workers and activists.

The cafe reopened Tuesday in a section of a shopping mall. The new location is smaller, doesn't have a backyard and there's no view of the lake overlooking the Gulshan diplomatic zone that had drawn so many in the past. The previous site remains closed to the public and is under the control of police who are still investigating the attack. The new cafe is already doing brisk business.



Bangladeshi employees work inside the newly reopened Holey Artisan Bakery.

The mood is cheerful, with many customers greeting the waiters with smiles.

"You can't compare it with the old place," one owner, Sadat Mehedi, said while wiping down a tabletop. "This is definitely small in size, but we have the same spirit. It's heartening that our tables are full." He said reopening the restaurant after last year's traumatic attack was "all about hope and aspiration to start again, to keep the spirit up." "We want to grow again, want to create more jobs," he said. As one customer took a seat, a server named Rocky cried, "Welcome back, ma'am! We are ready to serve you." She ordered an ice cream for her daughter, a toddler. "They all know me, we know them all," Rocky explained. "It's lovely to see them again." — AP



Bangladeshi employees work inside the newly reopened Holey Artisan Bakery.



A foreigner walks at the newly reopened Holey Artisan Bakery.