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To,

H.E. Mr Andrew Rosindell

Hon'ble Chairperson of APPG (andrew.rosindell.mp@parliament.uk)

H.E. Mr David Lammy

Hon'ble Foreign Secretary (david.lammy.mp@parliament.uk)

H.E. Ms Catherine West

Hon'ble Indo-Pacific Minister (catherine.west.mp@parliament.uk)

Hon'ble Members of Parliament, the House of Commons

Subject: *Tendentious comments made by Hon'ble MP Rupa Huq regarding the APPG report on Bangladesh prepared based on the evidence submitted by stakeholders that can stand any judicial scrutiny and request to the APPG and the British Government regarding human rights situation in Bangladesh*

Excellencies,

We are writing pertaining to the objections raised by Hon'ble MP Rupa Huq regarding the report, “*COUNTRY REPORT - THE ONGOING SITUATION IN BANGLADESH*”, November 2024” prepared by the Commonwealth All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG). While it is the prerogative of the APPG to deal with its report, since Ms Huq cast aspersions on the stakeholders who provided incontrovertible evidence that can stand any judicial scrutiny, the Rights & Risks Analysis Group (RRAG), one of the stakeholders who submitted evidence, considers it important to bring the truth out before the British Parliamentarians in the light of the reportage in [The Guardian](#)¹ yesterday (19 January 2025).

The contentions raised by Ms Huq are not corroborated by the facts or realities on the ground but appear to be based on [oral complaints](#) by Chief Advisor of the Interim Government of Bangladesh Dr Mohammed Yunus made during her meeting in Dhaka on 5th January 2025².

¹. UK MPs withdraw report criticising current Bangladesh regime over 'bias', The Guardian, 19 January 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jan/19/uk-mps-withdraw-report-criticising-current-bangladesh-regime-over-bias>

². CA reiterates 2 possible polls timelines, The Daily Star, 5 January 2025, <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/diplomacy/news/ca-reiterates-2-possible-polls-timelines-3791661>

The RRAG makes the following submission for consideration of Your Excellencies to show that the evidence provided to the APPG by the stakeholders can stand any judicial scrutiny and therefore, the contentions of Hon'ble MP Ms Rupa Huq are tendentious.

ARRESTS AND POLICE ACTION FOLLOWING 5th AUGUST

The APPG report refers to the submission of the RRAG based on the news report of [*The Daily Star*](#)³ that claimed over 194,000 persons belonging to the Awami League (AL) were accused and these include 26,268 people named and around 168,000 unnamed persons". The RRAG had further submitted that it has become the trend in Bangladesh to file cases against hundreds of unnamed persons in one complaint to persecute the political opponents.

In this regard, the RRAG states that the pattern of filing against hundreds of persons continues as on date. As late as 6th January 2025, a petition was filed by Aladul Islam, a garments worker, before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka [against ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and 344 former members of parliament \(MPs\)](#) for allegedly attempting to kill him during a student-public protest against discrimination.⁴

Any student of administration of criminal justice will be aware that 344 MPs cannot be part of the conspiracy to kill a garment worker who was participating in a protest along with thousands of others. The principle of command responsibility given under international humanitarian laws including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court also cannot apply to these 344 MPs with respect to the use of force by any law enforcement personnel regarding the attempt to kill a garment worker in a mass protest.

Yet, process is the punishment. Since the case been registered under the order of the Chief Judicial Magistrate, the police are duty-bound to investigate and actually summon each of the 344 MPs who have been accused in the complaint.

There were cases of arbitrary arrest and detention including under false cases under former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. However, this scale of weaponisation of the law remains unprecedented.

ARREST OF JOURNALISTS

The APPG report highlighted the submission of the RRAG that "*media freedom has increased for the opponents of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. While this is welcome after learning this was not the case under the previous administration, journalists that were favourable to the last Government are now facing the risk of arrest and detention. We have been told that as of 22 October, at least 54 journalists perceived as supporters of the previous government led by Sheikh Hasina were charged for various offences including for genocide and crimes against humanity, while at least*

³. 1.94 lakh sued in 268 cases since the fall of AL govt: MSF, The Daily Star, 31 August 2024 <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/194-lakh-sued-268-cases-the-fall-al-govt-msf-3691036>

⁴. Case filed against 344 former MPs, Prothom Alo, 8 January 2025, <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/lj3dpgoplif>

six journalists remained in detention in Bangladesh. The crackdown on press freedom has been widely condemned by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and the Reporters Without Borders which called on the interim government to respect journalists' rights and ensure fair trials”.

The RRAG provided evidence including the names of the 54 journalists. It specifically highlighted that on 29 August, lawyer [MH Gazi Tamim](#) filed a complaint with the International Crimes Tribunal against Sheikh Hasina and 52 people including 32 senior journalists on the charge of genocide during the students' agitation in July.⁵ Assuming without admitting that these accused journalists were mouthpieces of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, can they still be accused of war crimes for merely reporting, without being part of any act of violence or decision making pertaining to the alleged acts of violence?

In this regard it is pertinent to mention that the [Ain O Salish Kendra](#), a prominent Bangladeshi human rights NGO in its annual report published on 31 December 2024 stated that out of the 531 journalists targeted during 2024, about 30 journalists were attacked for performing their duties during controversial 12th General elections **while criminal cases have been filed against 130 journalists in the aftermath of July 2024 anti-quota uprising.**⁶

SECURITY SITUATION

The APPG report rightly recorded that “as of 4th August, the BBC reported that the death toll stood at 280. According to the Health Ministry and Human Rights Support Society this number had risen to over 1000 by the end of August.” There was no underreporting of any death in the protest as alleged by Hon'ble MP Ms Rupa Huq.

In this regard, the RRAG submitted to the APPG “*that by 5 September, [a total of 5,818 weapons](#) were looted in the country.⁷ Of these, [3,933 were recovered while 1,885 arms](#) including rifles, SMGs, LMGs, and pistols, remained missing. Additionally, nearly 300,000 rounds of ammunition remained unrecovered”.⁸*

This particular submission on the looting of weapons was made based on the information provided by the Bangladesh Police and reported in Bangladeshi media. In fact, over 2,000 inmates escaped after 17 jails were attacked during the protests and

⁵. Human Rights Monitoring report AUGUST 2024, Manabdhikar Shongskriti Foundation (MSF), 31 August 2024, https://www.msf.org.bd/press_release_172.php

⁶. Human Rights Situation 2024, Ain O Salish Kendra, Dhaka, 31 December 2024, <https://www.askbd.org/ask/2024/12/31/%e0%a6%ac%e0%a6%be%e0%a6%82%e0%a6%b2%e0%a6%b%e0%a6%a6%e0%a7%87%e0%a6%b6%e0%a7%87%e0%a6%b0-%e0%a6%ae%e0%a6%be%e0%a6%a8%e0%a6%ac%e0%a6%be%e0%a6%a7%e0%a6%bf%e0%a6%95%e0%a6%be%e0%a6%b0-%e0%a6%aa-2/>

⁷. 1,885 Weapons and 300,000 Rounds of Ammunition Still Unrecovered, The Financial Post, 7 September 2024, <https://thefinancialpostbd.com/main/article/3970>

⁸. Report: 5,818 weapons looted nationwide, 3,933 recovered, The Dhaka Tribune, 7 September 2024, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/357584/police-report-5-818-weapons-looted-nationwide>

more than 900 including 70 militants could not be re-arrested by the police,⁹ thereby reflecting a threat to law and order situation.

EXPERIENCE OF MINORITIES

While MP Hon'ble MP Ms Rupa Huq did not raise any specific questions relating to the data presented by the Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist, Christian Unity Council to the APPG that 2,010 incidents, including murder and rape between August 4-20 had taken place, it is pertinent to mention that [on 10 January 2025, the Bangladesh Police claimed that out of 1,769 cases of](#) reported attacks and vandalism, police investigated 1,415 incidents, with 354 cases still under investigation. Among the investigated cases, 1,254 were found to be substantiated, while 161 lacked evidence. Of the verified cases, 1,234 incidents (98.4%) were politically motivated, and 20 cases (1.59%) were communal in nature.¹⁰

In fact, the findings of the Bangladesh Police since the publication of the report by the APPG prove that the submission recorded by the APPG on the religious minorities was the truth.

It is submission of the Rrag that the conclusion of the Bangladesh Police that the attacks on Hindu minorities were politically motivated is nothing but attempt to substantiate the statement of Chief Advisor Dr Mohammed Yunus of 5 September without investigation into any of the acts of violence against the Hindus was due to the fact that [“there is no clear distinction between Awami League supporters and Hindus”](#).¹¹

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The APPG report highlighted the submission of the Global Association for Indigenous Peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (GAIPC) including that *“from 19 September to 1 October 2024, the illegal plain settlers and Bangladesh Army led organized assaults on indigenous peoples in Dighinala and Khagrachari Sadar under Khagrachari district on 19 September, followed by further attacks on Rangamati Sadar on 20 September 2024 and Khagrachari district on 1 October 2024 after an illegal settler was murdered by his own community fellows.”* As recorded by the APPG, *“A number of international organizations such as [Amnesty International](#) on 20 September 2024,¹² the [Minority](#)*

⁹. Bangladesh: 500 Inmates Escape District Jail As Anti-Govt Protests End With Sheikh Hasina's Departure, News18, 6 August 2024, <https://www.news18.com/world/bangladesh-500-inmates-escape-district-jail-as-crisis-ends-with-leader-sheikh-hasinas-exit-8991500.html>

¹⁰. Police investigation: 98% of attacks, vandalism on minorities politically motivated, The Dhaka Tribune, 11 January 2025, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/370547/police-investigation-98%25-of-attacks-vandalism-on>

¹¹. 'Attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh exaggerated': Muhammad Yunus questions India, The Hindustan Times, 05September 2024, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/attacks-on-hindus-in-bangladesh-exaggerated-muhammad-yunus-questions-india-101725527725684.html>

¹². Amnesty International, 20 September 2024, See <https://x.com/amnestysasia/status/1837114994753687692>

[Rights Group International](#) on 24 September 2024,¹³ [International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs](#) on 8th October 2024¹⁴ and the Chairperson of the [United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights](#) on 14 October 2024¹⁵ condemned the attacks and demanded impartial inquiry”.

In this regard, the RRAG submits that on 21 September 2024, [the three Advisors to the Interim government](#) visited the Chittagong Hill Tracts and announced formation of a high-level committee to investigate the recent incidents.¹⁶ On 26 September 2024, the Chittagong Divisional Commissioner formed a [seven-member inquiry committee](#) headed by Additional Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong Mr Mohammad Nurullah Noori to submit the report within the next 14 working days.¹⁷ On 2 October 2024, the Inquiry Committee visited [Larma Square Bazar](#), Dighinala.¹⁸ However, as on date, the Inquiry Commission report headed by Mr Noori has not been made public

RRAG’s request: The need for the APPG and other Members of Parliament to stand up against human rights violations

The above submissions regarding the APPG report establish beyond any reasonable doubt that Hon’ble MP Ms Rupa Huq for reasons best known to her is defending human rights violations under the Interim Government of Dr Mohammed Yunus simply based on the poor human rights records of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as if two wrongs make one right. While human rights violations under former Prime Minister Hasina must be investigated and accountability must be established, it cannot be an excuse to provide impunity to the Interim Government which even barred the police personnel from [arresting or filing cases against anyone involved in the July-August uprising](#)¹⁹ in which at least [44 policemen](#) were killed!²⁰ More importantly, the

¹³. Bangladesh: MRG condemns renewed violence and hate speech against indigenous peoples, Minority Group International, 24 September 2024, <https://minorityrights.org/bangladesh-mrg-condemns-renewed-violence-and-hate-speech-against-indigenous-peoples/>

¹⁴. Joint Statement: Call for Urgent Action on Repeated Violence in CHT, IWGIA, AIPP & CHTs Commission, 8 October 2024, <https://iwgia.org/en/news/5566-joint-statement-urgent-action-repeated-violence-cht.html>

¹⁵. UN bodies urge govt to invite UN to investigate rights violations in CHT, The Daily Star, 15 October 2024, <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/un-bodies-urge-govt-invite-un-investigate-rights-violations-cht-3728076>

¹⁶. Uneasy calm in CHT, advisers visit hills, The Business Standard, 21 September 2024, <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/three-advisers-begin-meeting-local-leaders-orgs-cht-situation-946656>

¹⁷. Khagrachari-Rangamati violence inquiry committee visited Rangamati, The Daily Country Today, 30 September 2023, <https://dailycountrytodaybd.com/story/khagrachari-rangamati-violence-inquiry-committee-visited-rangamati>,

¹⁸. Probe body begins inquiry into recent CHT violence, The New Age, 20 September 2023, <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/246496/probe-body-begins-inquiry-into-recent-cht-violence>

¹⁹. Bangladesh immunity order sparks fears of justice denied, RFI, 28/10/2024, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/international-news/20241028-bangladesh-immunity-order-sparks-fears-of-justice-denied>

²⁰. Bangladesh: 44 Policemen killed during July-August uprising, govt says, ANI, 25 October 2024, <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/bangladesh-44-policemen-killed-during-july-august-uprising-govt-says20241025225516/>

Interim Government is no longer acting as the Interim one with the announcement to hold elections by mid 2026²¹ and it would be held accountable.

Hon'ble MP Ms Huq and all those concerned about the human rights situations in Bangladesh must remember the statement made by [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk](#) after conclusion of his visit to Bangladesh on 30 October 2024 that:

“It is key that criminal cases are not filed against individuals solely on the basis of their previous political affiliation, including members or supporters of Awami League..... There are concerns that some charges are not founded on proper investigation, including a large number of murder charges against journalists. It is important not to repeat the patterns of the past.”²²

It would be unfortunate if the APPG does not take the report further or no longer produces country-specific reports exclusively based on the aspersions cast by Ms Huq which on the face of the records being submitted herewith prove to be tendentious, if not malicious, towards all the stakeholders. The stakeholders who made submission to the APPG include the *Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist, Christian Unity Council* whose members face reprisals for merely reporting human rights violations in the country.

The RRAG therefore calls upon the APPG to reconsider its decision for the sake of victims of human rights violations in the Commonwealth and urges the APPG both to take the report further and produces country-specific reports. It would be unfortunate if unfounded aspersions by Hon'ble MPs like Rupa Huq were to restrict the key functions of the British Parliamentarians relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The RRAG also calls upon the British Government through His Excellency Foreign Secretary and Indo-Pacific Minister to not give any leeway to the Interim Government of Bangladesh on human rights violations just because it is headed by a Noble Laureate. Any government whether interim or otherwise, whether Noble Laureate or any Ayatollah must be held accountable for human rights violations without any distinction whatsoever.

Kindly allow us to assure Your Excellencies of our highest consideration.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely

Suhas Chakma
Director

²¹. Election likely by mid-2026, The Daily Star, 17 December 2024,

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/election-likely-mid-2026-3777971>

²². UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk concludes official visit to Bangladesh, OHCHR, 30 October 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/10/un-high-commissioner-human-rights-volker-turk-concludes-official>