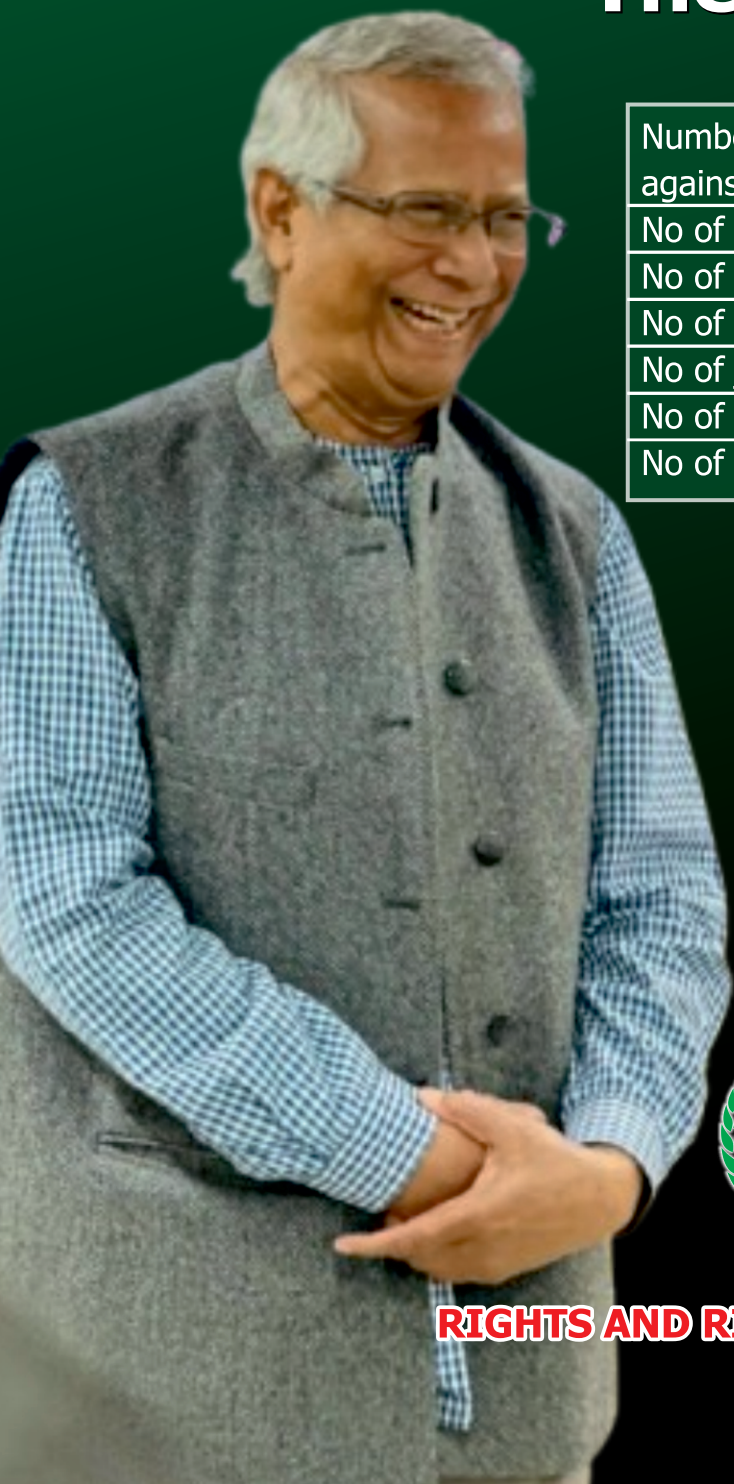




# One Year Reign of Dr Mohammad Yunus: Bangladesh Turned Into The Land of Anarchy



Number of political opponents against whom cases filed	5,16,327
No of attacks against journalists	878
No of cases under Cyber Security Act	51
No of attacks against minorities	2,485
No of judges forced to resign	21
No of mob lynching death	637
No of NHRC members forced to resign	All



**RIGHTS AND RISKS ANALYSIS GROUP**

# One Year Reign of Dr Mohammad Yunus: **Bangladesh Turned Into The Land of Anarchy**



Rights and Risks Analysis Group (RRAG)

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Bangladesh Turned Into The Land of Anarchy**

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## 1. Executive summary

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After the fall of the Awami League government headed by former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 5 August 2024,<sup>1</sup> an Interim Government headed by Nobel Laureate Dr Mohammed Yunus was sworn in on 8 August 2024.<sup>2</sup> Dr Yunus was expected to usher Bangladesh into a new era for democracy, rule of law and further hold free and fair elections.

The human rights situations have deteriorated as Bangladesh has turned into a land of anarchy and Dr Mohammed Yunus appears to have surpassed records of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during his one year reign from August 2024 to July 2025.

On arbitrary arrest and detention for political repression, criminal cases were filed against a total of 5,16,327 persons including 79,491 persons named and 4,36,836 persons unnamed, were accused in about 1,567 cases by 31 July 2025.<sup>3</sup>

If reforms were meant to bring an end to persecution of the journalists in Bangladesh, Dr Yunus has failed abysmally. After 15 years, media feared Hasina while Dr Yunus created the same fear in the media in a systematic way within one year. From August 2024 to July 2025, a total of 878 journalists were targeted under Dr Mohammed Yunus led Interim Government. A comparative analysis of the data on the attacks on journalists and media houses from August 2023 to July 2024 under Sheikh Hasina (383 attacks) and from August 2024 to July 2025 (878) show that the attacks on journalists under Dr Yunus increased by about 230%.

The Interim Government continues to abuse the Cyber Security Act of 2023 and a total of 51 cases were filed while 39 persons were arrested from August 2024 to July 2025<sup>4</sup> with no signs of repealing the Act. In March 2025, Nahid Hasan Knowledge, a human rights defender active in advocacy for marginalized communities in Bangladesh, was formally charged under the Cyber Security Act, 2023. On 15 March 2025, the Detective Branch (DB) raided his house in Chilmari in an attempt to arrest him.<sup>5</sup>

There is no right to freedom of association and assembly for the Awami League and its affiliate organizations, indigenous peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and the Hindu minorities. While the Interim Government has banned the Chhatra League on 24 October 2024<sup>6</sup> and the Awami League on 11 May 2025<sup>7</sup>, indigenous peoples were attacked by the illegal plain settlers<sup>8</sup> and Bangladesh Army at Dighinala and Khagrachari Sadar under Khagrachari district on 19 September, followed by further attacks on Rangamati Sadar on 20 September, for organising the March For Identity on 18 September 2024. Hindu priest Chinmoy Das has been charged with sedition and subsequently for murder

for organizing a peaceful protest of the Hindus at the Lal Dighi ground, Chittagong on 25 October 2024.<sup>9</sup> Chinmoy Das has been in jail from 25 November 2024.<sup>10</sup>

A total of 2,485 incidents of violence against religious and ethnic minorities from 4 August 2024 to July 2025 are illustrative of the violence against religious minorities. These acts of violence included 2,442 attacks from August 2024 to June 2025<sup>11</sup> and 43 incidents during July 2025.<sup>12</sup> Out of these cases, the highest number of incidents of violence against minority occurred between 4 August and 20 August 2024, with a staggering 2,010 cases.<sup>13</sup>

Reforms under the Interim Government have become means to cling onto power and exclude the indigenous peoples and religious minorities. The Constitutional Reform Commission did not include any member of indigenous peoples or religious minorities<sup>14</sup> and the result of the Constitutional Reforms Commission was the recommendation for removal of “secularism” in the Muslim majority country,<sup>15</sup> thereby removing equal protection of the religious freedom of the religious minorities in the country.

The justice system in Bangladesh has collapsed and the Interim Government played a key role. Without following any procedure, 21 Supreme Court and High Court judges were forced to resign by the Anti Discrimination Students Movement. Further, on 7 November 2024, the Government of Bangladesh forced all members of the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh.<sup>16</sup> As on date, the Interim Government has not appointed any member of the NHRC.<sup>17</sup> It is clear the Interim Government is not interested in establishing the rule of law or strengthening any rule of law institution.

Not surprisingly, mob justice has replaced the rule of law justice system in Bangladesh. At least 637 persons, including 41 police officers, were reportedly lynched to death under the interim government from August 2024 to July 2025.<sup>18</sup> During 2023 under Sheikh Hasina, about 51 persons were lynched to death<sup>19</sup> i.e. increase of mob lynching death by 1,250%! Bangladesh has become the land of anarchy.

The anarchy in Bangladesh is all set to increase in the coming months leading up to the promised elections and poses threat to regional peace and security in South Asia.

International community ought to take note seriously and take requisite measures. Any blind support to the Interim Government without accountability can be the recipe for wider instability. The time has come for the international community including the United Nations that former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is passé, Dr Yunus’s Interim Government remains responsible and accountable, and the current jaundiced view can push Bangladesh into the further abyss.

## 2. The weaponisation of the justice system: Cases filed against 5,16,327 political opponents

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*“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.”* -UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk in his concluding remarks after official visit to Bangladesh on 30 October 2024.<sup>20</sup>

Dr Mohammed Yunus appears to have surpassed records of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on arbitrary arrest and detention for political repression during her 15 year rule. As per the *Manabadhikar Shongskriti Foundation* headed by prominent human rights activist Sultana Kamal, a total of 5,16,327 persons including 79,491 persons named and 4,36,836 persons unnamed, were accused in about 1,567 cases by 31 July 2025.<sup>21</sup>

Out of the 79,491 persons named, about 13,468 persons were arrested as of December 2024.<sup>22</sup> These arrests are mostly arbitrary as per “Category III” of arbitrary detention as defined by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention i.e. *“When the total or partial non-observance of the International norms relating to the right to a fair trial, spelled out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the relevant international instruments accepted by the States concerned, is of such gravity as to give the deprivation of liberty an arbitrary character”*.<sup>23</sup>

As late as 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025, the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka directed to investigate ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and 344 former members of parliament (MPs) for allegedly attempting to kill one Aladul Islam, a garment worker, during a student-public protest against discrimination.<sup>24</sup>

Any student of administration of criminal justice will be aware that 344 MPs cannot be part of a conspiracy for attempting to kill a garment worker while participating in protests along with thousands of others. The principle of command responsibility under Article 28 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court<sup>25</sup> also cannot apply to these 344 MPs with respect to the alleged use of force by any law enforcement personnel. However, since the attempt to murder case has 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 this complaint.

This case against 344 former MPs accused of hatching to murder one garment worker is not an exception.



## ***2.1 Emblematic cases of false prosecution and the issue of extortion***

A few of the emblematic cases of false prosecution are given below:

On 19 May 2025, the Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate court sent actress Nusrat Faria to jail in a case filed over the attempted murder of one Enamul Haque in Dhaka during the July mass uprising. The police before the court and pleaded to keep her behind bars till the end of the probe. Nusrat Faria was arrested by the Immigration Police on 18 May 2025 from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) while attempting to go to Thailand. She was later handed over to Bhatara Police Station, where Nusrat was shown arrested in the attempted murder case following primary interrogation. According to the case documents, Enamul Haque joined the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement on 19 July 2024 in the Bhatara area. The rally came under attack and he was shot in the leg. Enamul was rushed to the nearby hospital, where he received treatment. Enamul Haque filed the case on 3 May 2025 against 283 people, including ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.<sup>26</sup>

Mr Z I Khan Panna, senior Supreme Court lawyer and chairperson of the human rights organization *Ain o Salish Kendra*, was himself involved in the legal struggle for students' demands and against their leaders' arrests. He was implicated in an attempted murder case filed by Mohammad Baker, a 52-year-old vegetable vendor in the Banasree area regarding an attempt to kill his son Ahadul Islam, 25 years, by shooting, at Khilgaon police station on 17 October 2024. Mr Panna was named as an accused. Mr Baker later clarified that he did not know how Panna's name had appeared in the list of accused and requested the police to relieve the lawyer from the case.<sup>27</sup>

On the murder of Abdul Motalib, 14 years, from Moneshwar Govt Primary School after being shot on 4 August at Jigatola, Dhaka, his father, Abdul Matin, filed a murder case at Dhanmondi police station on 26 August against 20 accused persons. However, in the same case, Hazaribagh police registered a murder case as per court order pursuant to the complaint filed by one Sheikh Md Masum Billah against victim Abdul Motaleb Munna, aged 12. The victim, Abdul Motalib, had no connection to the complainant Sheikh Md Masum Billah. Motalib hailed from Begumganj, Noakhali while Masum Billah hailed from Ulipur, Kurigram.<sup>28</sup> Sheikh Md Masum Billah had no *locus standi* to file a criminal complaint but such cases have been filed across the country.

In the killing of Mirajul Islam, 21 years, in police firing on 5 August on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway, his father, Abdus Salam, filed a murder case at Jatrabari police station on 28 August 2024 accusing 40 persons, as well as 300 unnamed individuals. The accused are all from his home district of the complainant, Lalmonirhat, and most of the accused are associated with the Awami League. Salam, who is a CNG-run auto rickshaw driver, could not justify why so many from his home district were on the list of accused but said they were connected to local and national politics.<sup>29</sup> It is clear that cases have been filed to settle political vendetta.



On 24 November 2024, as per the *Reporters Sans Frontières*, a murder complaint was filed against 14 journalists in Khulna, along with 315 other individuals. The RSF alleged that all of the defendants were accused of orchestrating a student's murder in connection with recent protests. However, the victim's father stated that he had never filed the complaint, and that his name had been used without his consent. The death certificate states that the victim died from electrocution.<sup>30</sup>

A large number of these false cases have also been filed for political vendetta, rivalry, and extortion and it became obvious very soon. As early as 11 September 2024, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Chairman, Anti-Corruption System Reform Commission of the Interim Government warned that partisanship, illegal occupation and extortion betray the vision of a "New Bangladesh".<sup>31</sup>

On 13 November 2024, an attempted murder case linked to clashes during the student movement was filed at Mohammadpur Police Station, implicating 76 officials and six employees of the Department of Agricultural Extension, among 265 accused. Many of the accused stated that they were being pressured to leave their projects or pay bribes.<sup>32</sup>

In December 2024, it was reported that Sub-Inspector Anup Biswas, injured during the 18 July Rampura protests, learned he was falsely implicated in an attempted murder case while hospitalized. He claimed extortionists demanded Taka 1,00,000 (one hundred thousand) or face the risk of being implicated in a murder case. Some other accused police officers in the case told *The Daily Star* that the extortionists were demanding Taka 2,00,000 (two hundred thousand) from inspectors, Tk 1,00,000 from sub-inspectors and Tk 50,000 from assistant sub-inspectors.<sup>33</sup>

### ***2.2 Abuse of the discredited International Crimes Tribunal by the Interim Government***

The International Crimes Tribunal established by Bangladesh has been severely criticized during former Prime Minister Hasina's tenure for vendetta politics.<sup>34</sup> It is now being abused by the Interim Government for the same vendetta politics against Sheikh Hasina and those associated with her. On 14 October 2024, the government reconstituted the International Crimes Tribunal by appointing two High Court judges and a retired District and Sessions judge<sup>35</sup> and started hearing the cases filed over the killings and massacre during the Anti Discrimination Students Movement from 15 October onward.<sup>36</sup>

More than 80 complaints of crimes against humanity and genocide have been filed against Sheikh Hasina and her party leaders by the ICT and the prosecution team as on 4 November.<sup>37</sup> On 17 October, the International Crimes Tribunal had issued an arrest warrant against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina along with warrants for 44 others including Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader.<sup>38</sup>

The absences of compliance with human rights standards raised against the International Crimes Tribunal during former Prime Minister Hasina's tenure remain valid under the Interim

Government. These concerns include serious procedure flaws at all stages: pre-trial release has been routinely and arbitrarily denied; witnesses intimidated influenced and intimidated; collusion between the Government, prosecutors and judges; denial of due process and fair trial rights to all suspect including the right to an public hearing before a competent, independent and impartial tribunal; the right to be tried in one's presence; the right to counsel and the right to a full defence etc.<sup>39</sup>

### 3. The status of freedom of expression: Cases filed against 878 journalists

From August 2024 to July 2025, a total of 878 journalists were targeted by Dr Mohammed Yunus. A comparative analysis of the data on the attacks on journalists and media houses from August 2023 to July 2024 under Sheikh Hasina (383 attacks) and from August 2024 to July 2025 (878) as collated by two prominent Bangladeshi human rights organizations, Ain O Salish Kendra and Manabadhikar Shongskriti Foundation, show that the attacks on journalists under Dr Yunus increased by about 230%.

The comparative data of the attacks on journalists and media houses from August 2023 to July 2024 under Sheikh Hasina and from August 2024 to July 2025 under Dr Yunus is given below:

**Table 1: Number of journalists targeted under Dr Muhammad Yunus**

Month/ Year	No of journalists against whom cases were filed <sup>40</sup>	Acts of violence & criminal intimidation against journalists <sup>41</sup>	Denial of accreditation to journalists <sup>42</sup>	Inquiry against journalists by the BFIU <sup>43</sup>	Total number of attacks on journalists
Aug-24	39	37			76
Sep-24	73	17			90
Oct-24	25	19	20	28	92
Nov-24	27	27	147	10	211
Dec-24	14	13		12	39
Jan-25	2	21		35	58
Feb-25	1	38			39
Mar-25	1	34			35
April-25	4	62			66
May-25	6	101			107
June-25		32			32
July-25	3	30			33
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>878</b>

**Table 2: Number of journalists targeted under Sheikh Hasina<sup>44</sup>**

Month/ Year	Case filed against published news	Attacks on journalists				
		Attack by Law Enforcement Agency	Attack while performing duty	Attack by political parties	Others	Total number of attacks
August 2023	13	2		5	21	41
September 2023	4		9	1	18	32
October 2023	3	1	27	3	9	43
November 2023		6	2	4	4	16
December 2023		6	2	4	4	16
January 2024		1	31	1	5	38
February 2024			4	4	8	16
March 2024		1	17	2	7	27
April 2024	7	3	7	4	3	24
May 2024	2	4	17		6	29
June 2024			7	1	3	11
July 2024	6	3	75	2	4	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>383</b>

The above data show that under Dr Mohammad Yunus, a total of 878 journalists were targeted during the period August 2024 to July 2025 in comparison to targeting of 383 journalists under former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from August 2023 to July 2024 i.e. an increase of attacks by 230% under Dr Yunus. While 35 cases were filed against journalists under Hasina, about 195 cases were filed under Dr Yunus i.e. an increase of 558% cases. While Hasina's regime was not known to have denied any accreditation to journalists, Dr Yunus used accreditation as an instrument to punish the journalists allegedly associated with the previous regime and denied accreditation to about 167 journalists. In 2023-2024, Hasina's regime was not known to have used the Bangladesh Financial

Intelligence Unit (BFIU), anti money laundering agency of the country against the journalists but Dr Yunus let loose the BFIU against the journalists and the DFIU issued notices to 107 journalists silencing the prime media houses and journalists. Finally, while 348 journalists faced acts of violence and criminal intimidation under Sheikh Hasina's regime, mostly during the July 2024 uprising, about 431 journalists faced acts of violence and criminal intimidation under Dr Yunus.

If reforms were meant to bring an end to persecution of the journalists in Bangladesh, Dr Yunus has failed abysmally. After 15 years, media feared Hasina while Dr Yunus created the same fear in the media in a systematic way within one year.

The situation of the media continues to deteriorate. On 25 June 2025, journalist Khandaker Shah Alam, a correspondent of *Daily Matrijagat*, was murdered at Nabinagar Upazila, in Dhaka's northeast, in a targeted retaliation by Babul Mia, known locally as 'Tiger Babul Dakat' after he was released from prison.<sup>45</sup> On 27 July 2025, the Cyber Tribunal of Dhaka issued arrest warrants against former four journalists, Bangladesh Pratidin Editor Naem Nizam, its publisher Moynal Hossain Chowdhury and news portal Bangla Insider's Chief Editor Syed Borhan Kabir under the Digital Security Act<sup>46</sup> despite a declaration by Law Adviser Asif Nazrul on 27 June 2025 that all cases under the DSA had been withdrawn.<sup>47</sup> On 21 April 2025, Kongkon Karmaker was dismissed by The Daily Star as Dinajpur correspondent after two decades for reporting the death of religious minority Bhabesh Chandra Roy which was picked up by multiple Indian media outlets and India's Ministry of External Affairs.<sup>48</sup> While the family members of Roy alleged foul play, police claimed it as natural death.<sup>49</sup>

In order to silence the media, Chief Advisor of Bangladesh Dr Mohammed Yunus found a disingenuous way and established "*CA Press Wing Facts*". Across the world, Fact Checking Units of the governments have been declared as instruments to violate freedom of opinion and expression.

The "*CA Press Wing Facts*" has become the unit to manufacture the government version of the truth and intimidate the media houses and NGOs including the Rights & Risks Analysis through certification. No media in Bangladesh can dare to be certified as false by the "*CA Press Wing Facts*". It has become the *de facto* censorship authority of the Interim Government.

The apparent financing of the "*CA Press Wing Facts*" by the British FCDO is therefore deeply concerning. The FCDO had approved £474,468 for Canadian firm, Alinea International Ltd<sup>50</sup>, "*Support to the Office of the Chief Adviser aims to strengthen the Office of the Chief Adviser's (OCA) capacity on reform management and strategic communications*" under its "*Bangladesh-Collaborative, Accountable and Peaceful Politics (B-CAPP) Programme*"<sup>51</sup>. "*Strategic communications*" has come to mean CA Press Wing Facts controlling the press freedom through acts of intimidation, vilification and censorship by other means including hurting the business.

International community including the United Nations and the United Kingdom needs to review support to the Interim Government and consider withdrawing bilateral cooperation programmes. In a year's time Dr Yunus's Interim Government has suppressed the freedom of opinion and expression including by using non-state actors to such an extent that no critical reporting on the Interim Government, or activities of the Awami League can be reported. Dr Yunus's template is a risk to the free world.

### ***3.1. Prosecution of the journalists***

After the fall of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2024, the Interim Government, the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement and anyone who had a grudge unleashed attacks on the journalists including through the registration of false cases. The compliant police registered First Information Reports including for war crimes for merely reporting the events during the July-August uprising. Many journalists were arrested. From August 2024 to July 2025, about 195 cases, mainly false, were filed against the journalists. The details of some of the cases filed are given below:

On 22 August 2024, a murder case was filed by Kamrul Islam, father of a student Nayeem Howlader who died during protests at Jatrabari in Dhaka against former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and 192 others including seven journalists. The accused journalists are Mozammel Haque Babu, Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief of *Ekattor TV*; Syed Ishtiaque Reza, former Chief News Editor (CNE) of *Ekattor TV*; Ahmed Jobaer, a Director of *Somoy TV*; Munni Saha, former CNE of *ATN News*; Farzana Rupa, former Principal Correspondent of *Ekattor TV*; Shakil Ahmed, former head of news at *Ekattor TV*; and Nayeemul Islam Khan, former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Press Secretary. Among them, journalist couple Shakil Ahmed and Farzana Rupa were sent for remand for four days in another murder case filed at Uttara East Police Station. They were arrested at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport<sup>52</sup> and remain in jail as on date.<sup>53</sup>

### ***Journalist Farzana Rupa under detention from 25.08.2024***

On 16 April 2025, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Minhazur Rahman approved the arrests of journalist couple Shakil Ahmed and Farzana Rupa in two separate murder cases related to the anti-discrimination protests in Jatrabari during August 2024. Mozammel Haque Babu was also shown arrested in one of the cases. The Court's decision came after a hearing on the investigating officer's petition. Shakil and Rupa were linked to the murders of Imran Hasan from Kutubkhali and Madrasa student Syed Muntasir Rahman from Dania, both shot dead during protests on 5 August 2024. Imran's mother, Kohinur Akter, filed a case on 6 September 2024, naming 297 people including former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Similarly, Muntasir's father, Syed Gaziur Rahman, filed another murder case on 11 September 2024, naming 157 people, including Hasina. Following their arrest, the couple has since been remanded multiple times in various cases.<sup>54</sup>

### **Case against 32 senior journalists before the International Crimes Tribunal:**

On 29 August, lawyer MH Gazi Tamim filed a complaint with the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) against Sheikh Hasina and 52 people including 32 senior journalists on the charge of genocide during the students' agitation.<sup>55</sup> The accused journalists include Mozammel Babu, Saiful Alam, Noyeem Nizam, Farida Yasmin, Shyamal Dutta, Abed Khan, Prabash Amin, Farzana Rupa, Shakil Ahmed, Mithila Farzana, Zayedul Ahsan Pintu, Nabanita Chowdhury, Subhash Singh Roy, Ahmed Zobair, Tushar Abdullah, Monjurul Islam, Ashish Saikat, Manash Ghosh, Pranab Saha, Masuda Bhatti, Munni Saha, J.E. Mamun, Swadesh Roy, Soma Islam, Shyamal Sarkar and Ajay Das.<sup>56</sup> According to the complaint, lodged by Abdur Razzak, father of Nasib Hasan Riyan, a student killed during the protests, the accused journalists were "sycophants" of the Awami League government and published false news to instigate the genocide and crimes against humanity committed by the then government and law enforcers, thereby giving legitimacy to those crimes.<sup>57</sup> Out of these journalists, Farzana Rupa, Shakil Ahmed, Mozammel Babu and Shyamal Dutta were already in jail in connection with two murder cases during mass protests.<sup>58</sup>

The complaint is currently progressing through the investigative phase. On 19 April 2025, Chief Prosecutor of the ICT, Muhammad Tajul Islam announced that the probe report in the crimes against humanity case against former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and others is nearly complete and expected to be filed within a week or two. During a hearing, he requested a two-month extension to finalize the report. The ICT tribunal granted the plea and set 24 June 2025 as the deadline for submitting the report. The prosecution cited the need to incorporate findings from a recent UN OHCHR fact-finding report on the July-August 2024 mass uprising.<sup>59</sup>

### ***Journalist Shahriar Kabir under detention since 16.09.2024***

On 16 September 2024, Shahriar Kabir, a prominent Bangladeshi journalist, human rights activist and former President of the *Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee*, was arrested at his residence in Dhaka's Banani area by the Detective Branch of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police.<sup>60</sup> Following his arrest, Kabir was placed on a seven-day remand in connection with the death of housemaid Liza Akter, a case filed with Ramna Model Police Station.<sup>61</sup> Subsequently, he was shown arrested in two additional murder cases related to the deaths of Rafiqul Islam, a trader, and a madrasa student during the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement in Dhaka's Jatrabari area in July 2024.<sup>62</sup> Kabir was also named in a complaint filed with the International Crimes Tribunal, accusing him along with former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and others, of committing crimes against humanity and genocide during the 2024 student protests.<sup>63</sup> He remained in detention.

### **Other cases:**



On 11 September 2024, a murder case was filed against former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, 25 journalists and 139 others over the death of a 31-year-old man at Bhasantek in Dhaka during the mass uprising.<sup>64</sup> The case currently remains under investigation.

On 18 October 2024, journalist Raihan of daily *Samakal* was sent to jail after being arrested in a murder case related to the Anti Discrimination Student Movement in Habiganj.<sup>65</sup>

On 22 October 2024, journalist Pranab Barua Arnab was arrested in four cases filed with Patia Police Station in Chittagong. Police claimed that Pranab Barua was trying to flee to India through Akhaura.<sup>66</sup>

On 25 October 2024, Pradip Chowdhury, the President of the Khagrachari Journalist Union and a district correspondent for the daily *Samakal*, was arrested by police in Khagrachari. After the fall of Sheikh Hasina government five separate cases were filed against him at Khagrachari Sadar, Manikchhari, Panchhari and Dighinala police stations by the BNP leaders and activists, accusing him of various offenses including attacks on BNP leaders and vandalism of BNP offices. He was also named in a case related to a clash with anti-discrimination student protesters on 4 August. Apart from Pradip Chowdhury, six other journalists from Khagrachari were also implicated in these cases.<sup>67</sup>

On 9 October 2024, a case was filed against Sajjad Hossain, Mirzapur upazila correspondent of *Dainik Jugantar* newspaper before the Tangail Additional District Magistrate Court No-168/2018 in connection with the case against about 100 people including the then OC of Mirzapur police station, Awami League leaders and 500 persons regarding one Himel losing his eye during the anti-discrimination student movement in Tangail's Mirzapur. Thereafter, in October 2024, another fresh case was filed against journalist Sajjad Hossain. It is alleged that Sajjad Hossain had filed a case before the Tangail Additional District Magistrate Court No-168/2018 seeking 25 percent of a land which is continuing. In order to prevent Sajjad Hossain from appearing in the court in the hearing of this case, lawyer Abdur Rauf, without the knowledge of the plaintiff, filed a case against Sajjad Hossain.<sup>68</sup>

On 13 November 2024, a criminal case was registered against *The Daily Post* reporter Al Ehsan by the Uttarra West Police on 13 November 2024, two months after publishing tax evasion reports within 'Dhaka Cotton' and sister cotton companies in September 2024. The case was registered without issuing any prior written notice; a case was filed in secret under Sections 500/501 of the Penal Code 1860 in the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court. Journalist Eshan published an article titled "Dhaka Cotton evades tax despite collecting from staff" on 18 September 2024 alleging staff of 'Dhaka Cotton' were declined income tax invoices from the Dhaka Cotton Authority. Ehsan noted receiving thirty staff member salary documents worth more than BDT 79 lakh (approximately USD 64,250), revealing the company had provided no compensation to its employees or



suppliers. Managing Director of Dhaka Cotton, Sheikh Muhammad Samiul Islam, had reportedly threatened Ehsan and staff members of a legal notice for fake allegations.<sup>69</sup>

On 18 January 2025, BNP supporter Belal Hossain filed a case against 189 people, including the former State Minister for Primary and Mass Education and three journalists, in Roumari, Kurigram, for obstructing, beating, and robbing the 2018 parliamentary election campaign.<sup>70</sup>

On 22 January 2025, two journalists from Gobindaganj, Raihan Mohammad Mostafa Kamal and Nur Mohammad Raihan Farhad were denied anticipatory bail regarding a case filed under the Explosives Act and the attempt to murder Jamaat leader Taharat Tanvir Pradhan in 2014 and the case filed in November 2024 i.e. about 11 years after the 2014 incident. The journalists appeared before the court and applied for bail. The court rejected their bail and sent them to prison.<sup>71</sup>

On 22 January 2025, Social Welfare Officer Arifur Rahman filed a case with Kotwali Police Station against 19 journalists, including Rangpur Press Club President Monabbar Hossain Mona and General Secretary Merina Lovely. After the fall of the Awami League government, the expelled members of the club, along with some named journalists, complained to the social service against the Press Club in the name of the anti-discrimination journalist movement against the Press Club. The Social Service Officer thereafter sent a show-cause notice to the press club alleging that the registration was not renewed for nearly 32 years.<sup>72</sup>

On 13 February 2025, poet Sohel Galib was arrested from Fatullah, Narayanganj by the Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Lalbagh Division) under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Sohel Hasan Galib had written a book titled “Amar Khutba Guli” containing poems the authorities alleged to be “offensive to religious sentiments”. He was sent to judicial custody.<sup>73</sup> Human rights defender Rakhal Raha faced an investigation over a Facebook post questioning free speech restrictions in Galib’s case.<sup>74</sup>

### ***3.2. Cases of acts of violence, criminal intimidation against journalists***

The non-State actors especially the political parties i.e. Anti Discrimination Students Movement and the Bangladesh National Party continued attacks on the journalists. At least 431 journalists faced acts of violence in the first eight months of Dr Yunus’s Interim government.

On 29 September 2024, journalist Sayedul Islam Farhad of *Dhakapost.com* was assaulted and had his phone stolen by unknown assailants outside the Deputy Commissioner’s office in Cox Bazaar. Sayedul stated “I went there for some information for my professional reasons. Suddenly, some men attacked me and snatched my phone”.<sup>75</sup>

On 9 October 2024, Hossain Shahid, a journalist with *Jamuna Television* and cameraperson Delwar Hossain were assaulted and sustained severe injuries after they were attacked with an iron rod by a man identified as Alif Imran at Patgodam Railway Crossing in Mymensingh city. They were on their way to Bangladesh Agricultural University to cover a story when the attack occurred. Shahid received first aid, while Delwar sustained a fracture in the right hand.<sup>76</sup>

In November 2024, Shahidul Islam, staff reporter for *Khulna Gazette* and District Correspondent for *News21 Bangla TV*, was attacked twice in Khulna district. Islam was first assaulted by a mob of about 30 unidentified persons armed with locally made weapons in Rupsa upazila in Khulna district on 8 November. He sustained serious injuries in the assault. Islam had reported on environmental matters, including the coal-making processes of Goalbari Poramanik Bari temple in Rupsa upazila. During his coverage, Islam had identified and reported individuals illegally burning wood and making coal stoves nearby the temple. On 15 November 2024, Shahidul Islam was again attacked at Pogaldigha College/ while covering a Student Union conference. Despite identifying himself as a journalist, the group of assailants assaulted him with sticks.<sup>77</sup>

On 17 November 2024, journalist Mohammad Junayed Sheikh of *Kaler Kantho* was assaulted by members of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) at Jagannath University campus in Dhaka while he was recording a clash between students. Sheikh alleged that a number of people associated with the JCD attempted to snatch his phone and assaulted him, despite identifying himself as a journalist.<sup>78</sup>

On 22 December 2024, Sohel Talukdar, the Tangail correspondent of *DBC Television*, was attacked during a live broadcast by a group of protesters after he referred to them as “Pro-Zubair”, supporters of Maulana Zubair Ahmad. The protest was held to demand the arrest and ban of followers of Maulana Saad Kandhalvi from the Tabligh Jamaat faction. Other journalists who tried to intervene were also assaulted.<sup>79</sup>

On 24 December 2024, a gang of Bangladesh student protesters led by Hasnat Abdullah, Convener of the Anti Discrimination Students Movement, entered the offices of the City Group, who invest in *Somoy Television* and accused it of “spreading propaganda, twisting my comments, and accommodating the views of a fallen political party”. Immediately, five journalists including one Omar Faroque, a senior editor, were terminated from job without any reason because of the intimidation from the students led by Hasnat Abdullah.<sup>80</sup>

On 25 December 2024, four journalists of *The Janabani* newspaper, including Editor Shafiqul Islam, Managing Editor Raju Ahmed Shah, Special Correspondent Bashir Hossain Khan and Online Editor Aatur Hossain were attacked by 20–22 unidentified assailants in Dhaka’s Bangla Motor area. The attack appeared to be pre-planned, as the assailants asked for their names before launching the assault. A man named Ramzan had allegedly threatened the Janabani staff earlier. The injured journalists were treated at Dhaka Medical College Hospital and later discharged. A case was filed at Shahbagh Police Station.<sup>81</sup>

On 16 January 2025, police attacked Sheikh Ferdous, a photojournalist for the daily *Shomor Alor*, during a protest by ethnic minority students in the capital, Dhaka.<sup>82</sup>

On 27 January 2025, Education Board Chairman Professor Rezaul Karim insulted *CVOICE24* reporter Sharmin Rima while performing her professional duties at the Chittagong Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board. A general complaint was filed with Pantlaish Police Station in this incident.<sup>83</sup>

On 28 January 2025, *Prothom Alo*'s Narail correspondent Raju Sheikh filed a complaint against threatening him for publishing news in Lohagara, Narail. On the morning of 25 January, a memorial monument located at Narail Government Victoria College and a mural next to the east gate of the college was vandalized. Raju Sheikh sent the news with statements from everyone involved in the incident. The news was published in the online version of *Prothom Alo* at around 10:30 pm. Then, at 11:25 pm, an unknown person from an unknown mobile phone number abused Raju Sheikh in foul language for publishing news of the vandalism and threatened to implicate him in a false case.<sup>84</sup>

On 3 February 2025, Shohag Khan Sujon, a correspondent for the daily *Samakal*, was attacked with a hammer and stabbed in the back after reporting on medical negligence at a clinic in Shariatpur district. According to Sujon, the clinic owner restrained him while a group of men struck his ear with a hammer before stabbing him. Three other journalists - Nayon Das (*Bangla TV*), Bidhan Mojumder Oni (*News 24*), and Saiful Islam Akash (*Desh TV*) - were also injured when they attempted to intervene.<sup>85</sup> The journalists were attacked in front of the Shariatpur District's Deputy Commissioner's Office in Dhaka.<sup>86</sup>

On 3 February 2025, masked attackers armed with bamboo sticks and firearms assaulted four newspaper correspondents in Laxmipur district i.e. Md Rafiqul Islam (*Khoborer Kagoj*), Abdul Malak Nirob (*Amar Barta*), Md Alauddin (*Daily Amar Somoy*), and Md Foysal Mahmud (*Daily Alokito Sakal*). The journalists had gone to cover a land dispute.<sup>87</sup>

On 5 February 2025, several journalists including Zabed Akhter, reporter with *ATN News*, were allegedly attacked by members of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party on the premises of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh in Dhaka while they gathered for a press release concerning a High Court verdict acquitting previously convicted individuals in a 1994 alleged assassination attempt against then-opposition leader and ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. When BNP activists began causing a disturbance, *ATN News* reporter Zabed Akhter protested. In response, BNP activists began beating him. When some journalists tried to rescue him, they were also attacked. At least ten journalists were injured in the attack, while Zabed Akhter was seriously injured and admitted to Islami Bank Central Hospital in Kakrail.<sup>88</sup> On 6 February 2025, another group of protesters assaulted Mohammad Omar Farok (*Independent24 TV*) and Syed Mainul Ahasan Maruf (*Ekattor TV*) while they covered the destruction of a museum linked to Hasina's family. The police did not intervene.<sup>89</sup>

On 5 February 2025, Zahirul Islam Miron, a correspondent of *Banglavisision*, Kuakata and former General Secretary of Kuakata Press Club, was attacked and severely injured by a group of unidentified people outside his house in Kuakata town in Kalapara upazila. Police stated that Miron got off a bus near his home in Tulatali around 12:30am when the attackers, who were lying in wait, launched a sudden attack with sharp weapons, leaving him seriously injured. Miron was admitted for treatment of the injuries at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barishal.<sup>90</sup>

On 9 February 2025, six journalists covering a student protest in Dhaka were beaten, punched, and kicked by the Bangladesh Police. The victims—Kawser Ahmed Ripon (*The Report Live*), Asif Uz Zaman and Muhammad Mahadi (*Kaler Kantho*), Azhar Rakib (*Bangladesh Pratidin*), Mohammad Redwan (*Jaago News*), and Shimul Khan (*Breaking News*)—were targeted despite showing press credentials.<sup>91</sup> They were attacked while performing professional duties during the protests of the students.<sup>92</sup>

On 20 February 2025, the BNP activists attacked journalist Abdullah Al Mahmud, a representative of Nasirnagar Upazila of *NTV Online*, after a video of a banned Chhatra League activist on the Shaheed Minar in Nasirnagar upazila of Brahmanbaria. The attackers broke the camera of the journalist and took away his cellphone.<sup>93</sup>

On 3 March 2025, editor-in-chief of the daily *Bhola Times*, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, alias Rajib, and editor of the online news portal *Bhola Prakash*, Bijoy Bain, were attacked while covering clashes on Khalpar Road adjacent to Sheeshmahal Gali in Bhola city around 9 am.<sup>94</sup>

On 19 March 2025, journalist Abdus Salam Biswas captured an altercation of the police officers in front of Badarganj police station in Rangpur. ASI Rabiul Alam, constables Al Amin Hossain, and Mojibur Rahman snatched the mobile phone, pushed him to the ground, and punched him.<sup>95</sup>

On 21 March 2025, intern doctors and medical students beat up journalists while collecting news about the death of a woman due to wrong treatment. The four journalists beaten up were *Jamuna Television*'s Comilla bureau chief, Rafiqul Islam and camera person Jihadul Islam, and Channel 20's Comilla staff reporter Zahidur Rahman and camera person Belayet Hossain.<sup>96</sup>

On 27 March 2025, two journalists N Amin Russell and Monirul Islam were assaulted near Barishal Court on March 27, whilst three employees of Dhaka Reporter's Unity were left with serious injuries during an armed attack in Dhaka on March 28.<sup>97</sup> They were hospitalised at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College.<sup>98</sup> According to the journalists, the attack was allegedly led by Sohel Rari, Organising Secretary of the Barishal District Chhatra Dal, along with a group of his associates who ambushed the journalists near the main gate of the

District and Sessions Judge Court, set Russell's motorcycle on fire, and accused the journalists of affiliation with the Awami League.

On 28 March 2025, three journalists identified as Zakir Hossain Babul, Zahidul Islam and Robidul Islam of the Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) were injured during two attacks led by local assailants and employees of the Karatoa Courier Service near DRU premises in Dhaka.<sup>99</sup>

On 2 April 2025, a woman journalist identified as Rafia Tamanna working with *New Age* and her brother were attacked after they protested against some youths who were stalking her near their house in Rampura area, Dhaka. According to the journalist, three to four youths came out from a shop, stalked and stood beside her, and when her brother protested against them, they attacked him and started beating him. She was also attacked and beaten up by the group when she tried to save her brother from them. Further, she alleged that local people in the area just enjoyed the incident like audience and no one came forward to save them, and the perpetrators even called more people to create a mob.<sup>100</sup>

The Detective Branch of the Bangladesh Police under Bogura district arrested six members of a teen gang in connection with an attack on three people i.e. Khorshed Alam, northern bureau chief of *The Business Standard*, Asafudoula Neon, staff correspondent at online portal *Bogura Live*, and Taufiqul Islam Nirab in the district's Jaikhana intersection area on 5 April 2025.<sup>101</sup>

On 6 April 2025, Sajedul Islam Selim, Editor of *Daily Prantojon* and a Lecturer at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib College in Chandrakala, sustained multiple injuries during an armed attack in Chandrakala Bazaar while he was returning home after work. A group of unidentified men affiliated with the Bangladesh National Party intercepted Selim near Chandrakala Bazaar, forcibly taking him to a nearby tea stall where they robbed him of his mobile phone and beat him with cricket stumps and bamboo sticks. The attackers also vandalised his motorcycle and threatened him "not to return to the college" before fleeing the scene. Selim was rushed to Sadar Hospital, sustaining multiple fractures to his arms and hands.<sup>102</sup>

On 6 April 2025, editor of *Daily Prantojon* Sajedul Islam Selim sustained multiple injuries after an armed attack in Chandrakala Bazaar.<sup>103</sup>

On 15 April 2025, two journalists in Chattogram have alleged that they were attacked while covering a story related to graft allegations against former foreign minister and Awami League leader Hasan Mahmud in the Dewan Bazaar area of Chattogram near his residence. Hossain Abbas, a staff reporter at the Chattogram-based IP television channel *CPlus*, and cameraman Md Sharif, who also claimed their camera equipment was targeted during the incident.<sup>104</sup>



On 25 June 2025, journalist Khandaker Shah Alam, a correspondent of Daily Matrijagat was violently attacked and killed in Nabinagar Upazila, in Dhaka's northeast, in a targeted retaliation for his reporting against Babul Mia, known locally as 'Tiger Babul Dakat' which led to Mia's arrest. Mia, who is implicated in multiple robbery cases, was released from prison on 25 June. Following a public confrontation between the two, Mia repeatedly punched and kicked the journalist in the chest, leaving him unconscious and finally dead. Mia was apprehended by local residents and handed over to the police.<sup>105</sup>

### ***3.3. Financial Inquiry Against 85 Senior Journalists***

The Interim Government of Dr Muhammad Yunus had adopted a number of tactics to intimidate and silence the journalists such as launching financial inquiries against at least 85 journalists.

The Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU), anti-terror investigating agency initiated inquiries against 85 senior journalists, sending a chilling message to the journalists to remain silent from August 2024 to March 2025 as given below.

On 30 October 2024, the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) directed various banks of the country seeking information about 28 journalists seeking details such as bank lockers, savings cards, credit cards and other financial instruments in their name or whether money has been transacted or not. The journalists whose information has been sought are Naeem Nizam, editor of *Bangladesh Pratidin*; Farida Yasmin, former president of *Jatiya Press Club*; Zayedul Hasan Pintu, head of news, *DBC News*; Subhash Singh Roy, editor-in-chief of *abnews24.com*; Haider Ali, executive editor of *Kaler Kantha*; J.I Mamun of *ATN*; Syed Borhan Kabir of *Bangla Insider Editor*; Shaban Mahmud former Press Minister of Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi; Mirza Mehdi Tamal, City Editor of *Bangladesh Protidin*; Zulkarnain Rono, Chief Reporter; Alamgir Hossain, Editor of *Samakal*; Madhusudan Mandal of *BSS*; Masud Ayub Curzon of *DBC*; Mainul Islam, Executive Editor of *Amader Somoy*; Journalist Faraji Ajmal Hossain; Ashok Chowdhury of *Baisakhi TV*; Rahul Raha, Executive Editor; Rezaul Karim Lotus, Editor of *Daily Sun*; Ashikur Rahman Shrabon, Deputy Chief News Editor of *News 24*; Abdullah Al Mamun, Special Correspondent of *Jugantor*; Rafiqul Islam Ratan, Former Editor of *Swadesh Pratidin*; Sheikh Jamal Hossain, Editor of *Dainik Mukhopatro*; Aditya Arafat, Special Correspondent of *DBC News*; Tauhidul Islam Sourav, *ATN News* Special Correspondent; Sheikh Mamunur Rashid, Special Correspondent of *Jugantor*; journalist Shyamal Sarkar; Abul Khair, City Editor of *Ittefaq* and Santosh Sharma, Editor and Administrator of *Daily Kalbela*.<sup>106</sup>

On 24 November 2024, the BFIU once again directed various banks to provide the accounts details of 10 journalists, including two chief editors and the immediate past president of National Press Club Shafiqur Rahman. These include Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, editor-in-chief of *TV Today*; Abdul Gaffar Khan, chief in editor of *Dainik Amar Somoy*;

Chowdhury Jafarullah Sharafat, acting editor of *Dainik Bangla*; Ashish Gosh Saikat, chief news editor at *independent24.tv*; Naznin Nahar Munni, assignment editor of *DBC News*; Anjan Roy, editor for research of *GTV*; and Komol Dey, bureau chief of Chattogram at *somoynews.tv*; AZM Sajjad Hossain, former minister (press) at the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC; and Raju Ahmed, former Narayangaj correspondent of *The Daily Jugantor*.<sup>107</sup>

On 31 December 2024, the BFIU further sought information about the banks regarding the bank accounts of 12 journalists and their privately owned organisations. The journalists were Subhash Chandra Badal, former managing director of the Journalists' Welfare Trust; Arifur Rahman Dolan, editor of *Dhaka Times*; Nurul Islam Hasib, special correspondent of *Bangladesh Post*; Dwip Azad, chief news editor of *Nagorik TV*; Abul Kalam Azad, former chief news editor of *Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha* (BSS); Md Omar Faruque, deputy chief news editor of BSS; Zafar Wazed, former director general of the Press Institute, Bangladesh; Hosne Ara Mamata Islam Soma, special correspondent of *Channel I*; Obaidul Kabir Molla, deputy editor of *Daily Janakantha*; Abed Khan, editor of *Daily Jagoran*; Ajay Das Gupta, freelance journalist; and Syed Ishtiaque Reza, editor-in-chief of *Global TV*.<sup>108</sup>

On 5 January 2025, the BFIU also directed various banks to provide details regarding 21 journalists including Saiful Alam, editor of the *Daily Jugantor*; Hasan Zahid Tushar, former deputy press secretary to the prime minister; Pranab Saha, head of news at *DBC News*; M. Shamsur Rahman, editor-in-chief and CEO of *Independent TV*; Mamun Abdullah, head of news at *Independent TV*; Animesh Kar, special correspondent of *Independent TV*; Md. Ruhul Amin Russell, Managing Editor of *Bangladesh Pratidin*; senior reporter of *Daily Khola Kagoj* Zafar Ahmed; editor of the *Daily Jatiya Orthoniti* MG Kibria Chowdhury, Chief Reporter of *Amader Somoy* and *Amader Orthoniti* Deepak Chowdhury, Head of Input at *Ekushey TV* Akhil Kumar Poddar, journalist Jhumur Bari of *Ekattor TV*, Ziadur Rahman, Editor of the *Ekushey Sangbad*, Angur Nahar Monti, special correspondent of *Daily Kalbela* and Nasir Uddin Sathi of Chairman of *My TV*.<sup>109</sup>

On 15 January 2025, the BFIU targeted another set of 14 journalists from various media outlets across the country. The letter specified that information, including account opening forms, KYC (Know Your Customer) documents, transaction histories, and related data of the 14 journalists, as well as their spouses, children, and related businesses. Among the journalists whose bank account details have been requested are Julhas Alam, Farid Hossain, Shahjahan Sardar, Ali Asif Shawon, Nadim Quader, Rajib Ghosh, Tahmida Sadeque Jesy, Azizul Haque Bhuiyan, Swapan Basu, Niladri Shekhar Kundu, Nazrul Kabir, Iqbal Karim Nishan, Saju Rahman and Aminur Rashid.<sup>110</sup>



### ***3.4. Cancellation of accreditation to 167 journalists***

The Interim Government has been using press accreditation as a weapon to target journalists for their work. Press accreditation cards are required for access to the Secretariat.<sup>111</sup> The government revoked press accreditation of at least 167 journalists for their alleged links with the previous government including revocation of accreditation of 20 journalists on 29 October 2024,<sup>112</sup> 29 journalists on 3 November 2024,<sup>113</sup> and 118 journalists on 7 November 2024<sup>114</sup> thereby crippling press freedom.

The Interim government altogether suspended journalists' access to the Secretariat on 29 December 2024 following a fire accident at the Secretariat, a move condemned by the Editors Council of Bangladesh.<sup>115</sup>

### ***3.5. Sacking of the journalists for performing their tasks***

Any journalist reporting against the Anti Discrimination Students Movement or the government can be sacked instantly without any explanation as the owners of the media succumb to the pressure. This has led to massive self censorship.

On 24 December 2024, a gang of Bangladesh student protesters led by Hasnat Abdullah, Convener of the Anti Discrimination Students Movement, entered the offices of the City Group, who invest in *Somoy Television* and accused it of “spreading propaganda, twisting his comments, and accommodating the views of a fallen political party”. Immediately, five journalists including one Omar Faroque, a senior editor, were terminated from job without any reason because of the intimidation from the students led by Hasnat Abdullah.<sup>116</sup>

On 28 April 2025, celebrated filmmaker and newly appointed Cultural Adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki organized a press conference at the Secretariat in Dhaka regarding Bangladesh's participation at the Cannes Film Festival. A few journalists posed critical queries surrounding political violence, national unity, and public accountability and about the number of people killed during the July-August political unrest. Thereafter, because of the government pressure Rahman Mizan of *Deepto TV* and Fazle Rabbi of *ATN Bangla* were summarily terminated from their positions while Rafiqul Bashar of *Channel I*, who had questioned the motif behind the use of Sheikh Hasina's image in the Pahela Baishakh parade, was relieved of his duties pending an internal investigation. *Deepto TV*'s Head of News, S.M. Akash, confirmed the suspension of the channel's entire news coverage “until further notice,” citing intimidation and reputational threats”.<sup>117</sup>

On 21 April 2025, Kongkon Karmaker, who had served as The Daily Star's Dinajpur correspondent since 2006, was dismissed via email and WhatsApp for reporting the death of Bhabesh Chandra Roy, a 55-year-old local leader affiliated with the Puja Udjapan Parishad, after reportedly abducted from his home in Biral upazila. The news story published

by The Daily Star on 18 April and was cited by multiple Indian media outlets and India's Ministry of External Affairs reacted sharply on 19 April 2025, leading to his dismissal.<sup>118</sup>

### ***3.6. Chief Advisor's Press Wing Facts: A dangerous precedent to suppress press freedom***

Across the world, Fact Checking by the Government has been considered as a threat to freedom of opinion and expression. In India, the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules of 2023<sup>119</sup> which established "Fact Checking Units" of the government has been held as "*violative of the provisions of Article 14, Article 19(1)(a) and Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution (relating to freedom of opinion and expression) and the Act of 2000*".<sup>120</sup>

Chief Advisor of Bangladesh and Noble Laureate Dr Mohammed Yunus has established "CA Press Wing Facts" and this unit has become a sort of an instrument to manufacture the government version of the truth and intimidate the media houses and NGOs including the Rights & Risks Analysis Group (RRAG) through certification.

Apparently, the CA Press Wing Facts is being financed by the British Foreign, Commonwealth Development Office which approved £474,468 for Canadian firm, Alinea International Ltd<sup>121</sup> under its "*Support to the Office of the Chief Adviser aims to strengthen the Office of the Chief Adviser's (OCA) capacity on reform management and strategic communications*" under its "*Bangladesh-Collaborative, Accountable and Peaceful Politics (B-CAPP) Programme*".<sup>122</sup> Effectively British Government is financing the Fact Checking Unit, a dangerous precedent for restricting freedom of opinion and expression in the world through acts of intimidation and vilification.

The RRAG itself has been a victim of disinformation campaign by the CA Press Wing Facts.

On 3 May 2025, the Rights and Risks Analysis Group (RRAG) published a report, titled "*Bangladesh: Press Freedom Throttled Under Dr Muhammad Yunus*"<sup>123</sup>. The report had stated that 640 journalists were attacked under the Interim Government from August 2024 to March 2025. The figure of 640 journalists was based on (i) 182 journalists against whom criminal cases were filed as per the "Annual Human Rights Monitoring Report December 2024" and monthly data for January-March 2025 published by Manabadhikar Shongskriti Foundation; (ii) 206 journalists who faced acts of violence and criminal intimidation as per the MSF data; (iii) 85 senior journalists regarding whom notices were issued by the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU), the Bangladesh Government's central agency to fight against money laundering and terrorist financing seeking financial details and whose names were provided by the RRAG; and (iv) 167 journalists

whose press accreditation were revoked for their alleged links with the previous Sheikh Hasina government as confirmed by the media reports.

On 3 May 2025, the RRAG's report was among others reported in *The Hindu*<sup>124</sup>, one of the national dailies of India. On 6 May 2025, the CA Press Wing's Facts dismissed the report published in *The Hindu* as "wildly misleading piece of disinformation".

While these are matters of contentions and the RRAG stands by these facts, the CA Press Wing Facts went on to allege that "*RRAG simultaneously launched attacks on fact-checkers, undermining those who challenged its narratives*".<sup>125</sup>

RRAG had not launched any attacks on any fact-checker. The RRAG only urged the DismisLab, one of the Fact Checking NGOs, to correctly reflect the truth in its report, "*From four to a hundred: The politics of disinformation in the Hill Tracts conflict*"<sup>126</sup>, regarding violations of the rights of indigenous peoples in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region of Bangladesh in September 2024. The DismisLab was forced to concede and publish a corrected version. There were internal email communications between the RRAG and the DismisLab which were never made public.<sup>127</sup>

While the statement of the CA Press Wing Facts establishes beyond any reasonable doubt that the DismisLab is one of its outfits that shared internal communications of the RRAG, violating the privacy of the RRAG, the questions remains whether the FCDO or any other government organisation can provide support to the "*Office of the Chief Adviser aims to strengthen the Office of the Chief Adviser's (OCA) capacity on reform management and strategic communications*" to target the NGOs.

In the name of Fact Checking, the British Government funding is helping to silence media freedom. The support to the "*Office of the Chief Adviser aims to strengthen the Office of the Chief Adviser's (OCA) capacity on reform management and strategic communications*" ought to be independently reviewed by the FCDO.

## 4. Continued Abuse of the Cyber Security Act

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The Interim Government has filed 51 cases and arrested 39 persons under the draconian Cyber Security Act of 2023 from August 2024 to July 2025<sup>128</sup> with no signs of repealing the Act.

The Cyber Security Act, 2023 was known for being abused to stifle freedom of expression and suppress dissent under former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Prime Minister Hasina enacted the Digital Security Act of 2018 which she was forced to repeal and enact the Cyber Security Act, 2023.

The Interim Government of Bangladesh despite its promise to repeal the Cyber Security Act, 2023 has failed to take any measure as on date. It introduced draft Cyber Protection Ordinance 2024 and the draft has been condemned by several victims of the Digital Security Act and the Cyber Security Act as “repressive” or similar to its predecessors.<sup>129</sup>

On 24 September 2024, Hafez Md Saifuddin, Joint Convener of Fatikchari Upazila Chhatra Dal filed a case before the Chittagong Cyber Tribunal against Moktar Hossain, a resident of West Nanupur village in Fatikchari Upazila, Chittagong under Cyber Security Act for allegedly insulting the Quran and posting a social media video targeting Chief Adviser Dr Muhammad Yunus, Information Adviser Nahid Islam and the Army Chief. The Chittagong Cyber Tribunal directed the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to investigate the complaint.<sup>130</sup>

In March 2025, Nahid Hasan Knowledge, a human rights defender active in advocacy for marginalized communities in Bangladesh, was formally charged under the Cyber Security Act, 2023. On 15 March 2025, the Detective Branch (DB) raided his house in Chilmari in an attempt to arrest him.<sup>131</sup>

## **5. No freedom of association and assembly for the Awami League, indigenous peoples and religious minorities**

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There is no right to freedom of association and assembly for the Awami League and its affiliate organizations, indigenous peoples of the CHT and the Hindu minorities. While the Interim Government has banned the Chhatra League on 24 October 2024<sup>132</sup> and the Awami League on 11 May 2025<sup>133</sup>, indigenous peoples were attacked by the illegal plain settlers<sup>134</sup> and Bangladesh at Dighinala and Khagrachari Sadar under Khagrachari district on 19 September, followed by further attacks on Rangamati Sadar on 20 September, for organising the March For Identity on 18 September 2024. Hindu priest Chinmoy Das has been charged with sedition and subsequently for murder for organizing a peaceful protest of the Hindus at the Lal Dighi ground, Chittagong on 25 October 2024.<sup>135</sup> Chinmoy Das has been in jail from 25 November 2024.<sup>136</sup>

### ***5.1 The Awami League***

While former Prime Minister Hasina government restricted the activities of the opposition Bangladesh National Party, the Interim Government has banned the right to freedom of association and assembly by banning Chhatra League on 24 October 2024<sup>137</sup> and the Awami League on 11 May 2025.<sup>138</sup>

No political activity of the Awami League and Chhatra League can be organised in Bangladesh.

### ***5.2 Indigenous Peoples of the CHT***

The right to freedom of association and assembly remains effectively banned for the indigenous peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

After Dr Mohammed Yunus took over, on 18 September 2024, the indigenous hill tribe students under the banner of the “*Sanghat O Boishamyo Birodhi Pahari Chhatra Andolan*” (Anti Conflict & Discrimination Tribal Students Movement) organised “March For Identity” at Khagrachari demanding constitutional recognition of the identities of indigenous peoples, inquiry into corruption in the local councils created for the hill tribes, implementation of the 1997 CHTs Peace Accord, etc. About 40,000 indigenous peoples, unseen in the history of indigenous peoples in the region, had participated in the protest.<sup>139</sup>

The participation of about 40,000 indigenous peoples in the March For Identity on 18 September 2024 rattled the Bangladesh Army, who had been given a free hand to run the CHTs region under operation Uttaran.<sup>140</sup>

From 19 September to 1 October 2024, the illegal plain settlers<sup>141</sup> 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, and Khagrachari district again on 1 October. The Bangladesh Army and the illegal settlers specifically targeted shops and other business establishments of indigenous peoples and Buddhist temples. In these attacks by the illegal plain settlers and Bangladesh Army, at least four indigenous persons i.e. Mr Dhana Ranjan Chakma, Mr Junan Chakma, Mr Rubel Tripura, and Mr Anik Chakma were killed, at least 75 indigenous Jumma people were seriously injured while at least 142 houses, shops and other business establishments, properties, Buddhist temples that were looted, destroyed or set ablaze.<sup>142</sup>

A number of international organizations such as Amnesty International on 20 September 2024,<sup>143</sup> the Minority Rights Group International on 24 September 2024,<sup>144</sup> International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2024<sup>145</sup> and the Chairperson of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights on 14 October 2024<sup>146</sup> condemned the attacks and demanded impartial inquiry.

On 21 September 2024, three Advisors to the Interim government visited the region and announced formation of a high-level committee to investigate the recent incidents.<sup>147</sup> 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. On 30 September 2024, Mr Noori while visiting the affected areas at Rangamati told the journalists that he would submit the report to the government within 14 days after finding the root cause of the recent violent incidents, making a list of the victims and informing the government of their losses and making recommendations to prevent recurrence of such violent incidents.<sup>148</sup> On 2 October 2024, the Committee visited Larma Square Bazaar, Dighinala.<sup>149</sup> However, as on date, the Inquiry Commission report headed by Mr Noori has not been made public as the Interim Government led by Dr Yunus remains committed to provide impunity to the perpetrators.

Indigenous peoples also cannot protest outside the Chittagong Hill Tracts because of the attacks from the non-State Islamic fundamentalists. On 12 January 2025, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) of Bangladesh had to remove the image of a graffiti with the word “Adivasi” (indigenous) from the back cover of the ninth and tenth-grade Bangla Grammar and Composition textbook after facing protests from a group of Islamic students.<sup>150</sup> When indigenous students went to protest against the decision of the



NCTB in Dhaka on 15 January 2025, they were attacked by the Islamic fundamentalists, and at least 20 persons were injured.<sup>151</sup>

### ***5.3 Religious Minorities: Silencing Chinmoy Das to send a clear message to not organize protests***

On 25 October 2024, in one the biggest rallies, thousands of minority Hindus gathered the Lal Dighi ground to demand formation of a tribunal to speedily try those involved in minority atrocities, appropriate compensation to victims and their rehabilitation, enacting a minority protection law without delay, formation of a ministry of minority affairs, building of places of worship for minorities in every educational institution and prayer rooms in every hostel, modernisation of Sanskrit and Pali Education Board and a 5-day holiday for Durga Puja.<sup>152</sup> The protest was peaceful and no complaint was lodged.

However, the protest by the minority Hindus rattled the administration and the Interim Government.

On 31 October 2024, one Md Firoz Khan, former General Secretary of Mohora ward of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, filed a private complaint with Kotwali Police Station, Chittagong, accusing Chinmoy Das Brahmachari and 18 others of disrespecting Bangladesh's national flag in Chattogram's New Market area during a rally of the Hindu community on October 25. A bare perusal of the two page complaint (written in Bengali) filed by Md Firoz Khan shows that the entire first page of the complaint pertains to description of the accused. The second page which contains half a page text alleged that "under the instigation of the accused persons, at New Market Zero Point, Chittagong, unknown persons had put up saffron colour flags of the ISKCON over the national flags put by the Anti Discrimination Students Movement. The putting up of the saffron flag is equivalent to challenging territorial integrity of Bangladesh, and creating disturbance and enmity between the communities/groups". The complainant Md Firoz Khan provided no evidence whatsoever to substantiate his allegations. There was no allegation that Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari and other accused were directly involved in the alleged putting up of the ISKCON flag over Bangladeshi national flag. The actual alleged offenders were not named. Most importantly, there is no evidence that those who had put up the alleged flags were even ISKCON activists, and not of any other party or individuals. Even if several flags are put on a pillar, it is natural that the flags move around because of the winds and it can never constitute an offence of sedition. However, as on date Chinmoy Das remains in prison accused of sedition from 25 November 2024.<sup>153</sup>

On 24 July 2025, Chattogram Metropolitan Sessions Judge Court presided by Judge Hasanul Islam denied bail to Chinmoy Das in connection with the murder of lawyer Saiful Islam Alif, alongside four other related cases including sedition and violent attacks.<sup>154/</sup> His bail application was rejected on 3 June 2025, despite a plea citing medical grounds.<sup>155/</sup> Earlier, on 30 April 2025, the High Court granted him bail in the sedition case. However,



the Bangladesh Supreme Court stayed the bail order the same day, after the government immediately filed a petition against the High Court's decision to grant bail.<sup>156</sup>

The only crime Chinmoy Das has committed was to organise a peaceful protest at Lal Dighi ground.

## **6. The status of religious minorities: 2,485 attacks on religious minorities**

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While the religious minorities consistently faced grave human rights violations in Bangladesh irrespective of the party in power, the violations increased manifold with hundreds of acts of violence and religious intolerance after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government on 5 August 2024.

The Hindu minorities faced unprecedented attacks after the fall of Sheikh Hasina regime.

As per the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, a total of 2,485 incidents of violence against religious and ethnic minorities took place across the country between 4 August 2024 and 31 July 2025. These included 2,442 attacks from August 2024 to June 2025<sup>157</sup> and 43 incidents during July 2025.<sup>158</sup> Out of these cases, the highest number of incidents of violence against minority occurred between 4 August and 20 August 2024, with a staggering 2,010 cases.<sup>159</sup>

The acts of violence include murders, violence against women, rape and gang rape, attacks on places of worship, arrests over allegations of blasphemy, forced occupation of homes and businesses, assaults on indigenous communities, forced resignations, etc.

Despite being provided unprecedented security during the Durga Puja celebrations from 1 to 11 October 2024, Inspector General of Police of Bangladesh Police, Md Mainul Islam stated that at least 35 attacks around the Durga Puja celebrations were recorded from 1 to 11 October.<sup>160</sup> Radical Islamist groups had threatened Durga Puja committees and temples, demanding extortion money amounting 5,00,000 (five hundred thousand) Bangladeshi Taka to allow the celebration to proceed or face consequences if they failed to pay.<sup>161</sup>

On 10 January 2025, the Bangladesh Police claimed that 1,769 cases of attacks and vandalism were reported to police, out of which investigation into 1,415 incidents were completed. Of the 1,254 complaints substantiated, 1,234 incidents (98.4%) were politically motivated, and 20 cases (1.59%) were communal in nature.<sup>162</sup> The Bangladesh Police effectively manufactured the justification for the averments made by Dr Yunus earlier. On one hand, Dr Yunus states that the attacks on Hindu minorities are 'politically motivated';

on the other hand, the Interim Government vociferously defends these ‘politically motivated’ cases to deny bail to Chinmoy Das and others. The denial of bail to Chinmoy Das indicates collusion between the Interim Government, prosecutors and judges.

The conclusion of the Bangladesh Police that 98.4% of the attacks on Hindu minorities were “politically motivated” was manufactured to substantiate the statement of Chief Advisor Dr Mohammed Yunus who on 5 September 2024 without any investigation into any of the acts of violence against the Hindus had stated that the attacks were ‘politically motivated’. Dr Yunus had stated that “*there is no clear distinction between Awami League supporters and Hindus*”.<sup>163</sup>

Religious minorities from government service have also been purged. Teachers from Hindu, Buddhist and Christian communities have been forced to resign from their jobs, with the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council reporting that at least 49 teachers were forced to resign between 5 and 30 August.<sup>164</sup> As per verification done by the Rights and Risks Analysis Group, out of the 252 trainee Sub-Inspectors (SIs) at the Bangladesh Police Academy dismissed from service, 99 trainees belonged to the Hindu religious minority communities.<sup>165</sup>

The attacks on Hindu minorities continue to take place on a daily basis but seldom reported in the mainstream media.

## 7. Reforms: Means to exclude religious minorities and indigenous peoples

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The Interim Government launched much vaunted reforms of the Constitution, Electoral System, Police Administration, Judicial Reform, Anti-Corruption, Public Administration,<sup>166</sup> mass media, health, labour rights and women affairs.<sup>167</sup>

Increasingly, these proposed reforms have become means to cling onto power. On 24 January 2025, Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, Senior Joint Secretary General of Bangladesh National Party on Interim Government’s decision to not hold elections till reforms are completed, stated, “*The people expect this government to perform its duties impartially and take steps to strengthen democracy. But when we hear ‘reform first, then elections,’ it sounds like an echo of Sheikh Hasina’s words, ‘development first, then democracy.’ Such statements should not come from any adviser’s mouth*”.<sup>168</sup>

As stated, the Constitutional Reform Commission did not include any member of indigenous peoples or religious minorities<sup>169</sup> despite specific recommendations of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights at the conclusion of his visit to Bangladesh on 30 October 2024.

The end result of the Constitutional Reforms Commission was the recommendation for removal of “secularism” in the Muslim majority country,<sup>170</sup> thereby removing equal protection of the religious freedom of the religious minorities in the country.

## **8. The anarchy: Mob justice replaced the justice system**

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The Interim Government effectively destroyed the justice delivery institutions and established mob rule in the country, through the Anti Discrimination Students Movement.

A total of 21 Supreme Court and High Court judges including for Chief Justice of Bangladesh were forced to resign because of the protests by the students. On 10 August 2024, six judges of the Supreme Court including Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan were forced to resign following protests by the Anti Discrimination Students Movement,<sup>171</sup> followed by barring 12 High Court judges from judicial work because of the protests on 16 October 2024<sup>172</sup> and three judges of the High Court forced to resign by the Anti Discrimination Students Movement on 19 November 2024.<sup>173</sup>

On 7 November 2024, the Government of Bangladesh forced all members of Bangladesh’s NHRC after the NHRC’s monthly report for October 2024 highlighted a rise in crimes such as mob beatings, rapes, and other offences as well as political harassment, assaults on political leaders, and other violent acts.<sup>174</sup> As on date, the NHRC of Bangladesh has not been restored!

Mob justice has replaced justice in Bangladesh. According to a report released on 2 August 2025 by the Global Center for Democratic Governance (GCDG), at least 637 persons, including 41 police officers, were lynched to death under the interim government from August 2024 to July 2025.<sup>175</sup> Furthermore, at least 281 persons sustained injuries during mob violence during the same period, as per prominent Dhaka-based human rights organisation *Manabadhikar Shongskriti Foundation*.<sup>176</sup> In 2023, about 51 persons were lynched to death<sup>177</sup> and therefore, under the one-year rule of the Interim Government, the number of lynching people to death increased by about 1,250% compared to 2023 (51).

On 22 June 2025, former Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda was assaulted and subjected to public humiliation by a mob in Uttara, Dhaka. The members of the mob entered his house, dragged him out, physically attacked him and placed shoes around his neck before handing him over to the police. They threw eggs at him and assaulted him physically in presence of police personnel.<sup>178</sup>

On 18 September 2024, the Interim Government empowered the Bangladesh Army officers to exercise the magisterial powers.<sup>179</sup> This failed to improve the situation.

### Endnotes

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The Rights & Risks Analysis Group (RRAG) is an independent think-tank based in New Delhi. It conducts risks analysis to prevent violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms with a specific focus on the threats to the rule of law and democracy. It provides early warnings on impending conflicts and analysis of policies and programmes of the State and non-State actors contributing to the proliferation or perpetuation of conflicts. Its special focus remains to change the current narrative on counter-terrorism.

The RRAG believes that risks to rights can be addressed through effective engagement with the stakeholders and independent and incisive analysis of the issues and situations for their effective interventions for the prevention of violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.



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