



THE SPOTLIGHT

দি স্পটলাইট



NEWSLETTER OF THE GLOBAL CENTER FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

BLACK 5TH AUGUST 2024

DEMOCRACY IN EXILE - HUMAN RIGHTS IN PERIL - BANGLADESH IN DANGER

SPECIAL ISSUE

ব্ল্যাক ৫ই আগস্ট ২০২৪

বিশেষ সংখ্যা

নির্বাসিত গণতন্ত্র-ভুলুঠিত মানবাধিকার-বিপন্ন বাংলাদেশ

CONTENTS

THE JULY-AUGUST 2024 MOVEMENT IN BANGLADESH: A DOMESTIC UPRISING OR GLOBAL CONSPIRACY? 3

The authors remain anonymous

FACT-FINDING OR FRAMING? A READER'S REFLECTION ON THE OHCHR 2024 BANGLADESH FACT-FINDING REPORT 6

Dr. Zahir Ahmed

BANGLADESH IN COLLAPSE: LAWLESSNESS, FEAR, AND THE FAILURE OF MUHAMMAD YUNUS 9

Dr Milton Hasnat

SHEIKH HASINA'S LEADERSHIP: DEVELOPMENTAL DEMOCRACY OR FASCISM? 12

Authors unwilling to disclose identities

FROM RED ROSES TO RED FLAGS: HOW THE 'LALBADAR UPRISING' TURNED 1971'S LEGACY INTO A PARODY 15

Dr. Shyamal Das

DEMOLITION OF RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL PROPERTIES AND HISTORICAL PLACES IN BANGLADESH DURING AUGUST 2024 TO

AUGUST 2025 18

Professor Dr Szoha

SABOTAGING SOVEREIGNTY: THE ASSAULT ON BANGLADESH'S ECONOMY AND THE ROLE OF MUHAMMAD YUNUS 20

S M Maruf

HOW "LOOT" IS BECOMING A NATIONAL CHARACTER 23

Dipu Ahkam

THE DOMESTIC CONSPIRACIES BEHIND THE FALL OF THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT DURING THE JULY-AUGUST 2024

MOVEMENT 26

Dr. Hufer T

BANGLADESH WOMEN RISE AGAINST INCREASING INCIDENTS OF RAPE, VIOLENCE AND

HARASSMENT UNDER YUNUS REGIME (AUGUST 2024 TO JULY 2025) 29

The author is unwilling to disclose identity

THE ILL FATE OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS IN BANGLADESH AFTER

5 AUGUST 2024: A SCENARIO 31

Prof. Islam

YUNUS REGIME HAS COMPLETELY CRUSHED THE LOCAL INDUSTRY TO PLEASE FOREIGN MASTERS 34

Dr. T. HuFer

THE CIA-BACKED COUP OF AUGUST 5, 2024 IN BANGLADESH 35

By Anwar A. Khan

THE DIRTY DOZEN DEAL FROM YUNUS 37

Devadeep Purohit

THE POLITICAL ABUSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMES TRIBUNAL FOR THE TRIAL OF THE JULY-AUGUST HAPPENINGS 40

Prof. Dr. Jac C.

MORE CONTENTS INSIDE THIS ISSUE

President's Message Page 2 Editor's Note Page 2 GCDG Press Note 22 World Media Watch Page 45 The Back Page Page 47

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

২১ শ্রাবণ ১৪৩২
05 August 2025

August 5: The Day of Conspiracy and Betrayal

On August 5, 2024, Bangladesh's elected government was overthrown under the pretence of an anti-discrimination student movement. On August 8, 2024, an interim government was formed under the leadership of Professor Muhammad Yunus. After this government took office, the public initially believed or hoped that Bangladesh would see democracy, justice, the rule of law, equal rights for all citizens, secularism, and economic prosperity.

However, the interim government and the student-led organization behind the July-August movement, the National Citizen Party (NCP), have attempted to deceive the people by using reform, justice, and elections as a façade. As time passes, this is becoming increasingly evident to the public.

Bangladesh's economy now faces destruction. The country's GDP has fallen to an all-time low in its 54-year history. A controlled media landscape, dominated by fear and intimidation, is being forced to follow the directives of the government and its supporting party, the NCP.

Mobocracy, extrajudicial killings, bribery, corruption, and extortion have surpassed all previous records. The interim governments announced that certain killings, including police killings, would remain beyond the reach of the justice system—an alarming threat to both justice and democracy.

Hundreds of thousands of students are seeing their education disrupted. Women are being pushed backwards in the name of religion. Religious minorities are facing increasing persecution, with over 2,500 documented incidents so far. The rise of religious extremism is now visible. Bangladesh's culture and the spirit of its independence are being undermined. The credibility of foreign policy has collapsed, overwhelmed by false propaganda and widespread misinformation.

Through both national and international conspiracies, the interim government led by Dr. Yunus is misleading the people with promises of reform and justice. It is delaying democratic elections to prolong its grip on power. The people of Bangladesh have come to realize that a government established through conspiracy and betrayal can never bring true welfare to the nation. Instead of this undemocratic and unpopular rule, they demand a democratic process where all political parties can participate and the people can freely elect their representatives.

*Prof Dr Md Habibe Millat
MBBS, FRCS(Edin)*

President, Global Center for Democratic Governance

EDITOR

Mohammad Abdur Rashid

SUB-EDITORS

Molla Huq

Kamal Khan

EDITORIAL BOARD

A T M Emdadul Haque

Mohammad Shahidullah

Manirul Islam

Shafiqur Rahman Anu

Latiful Kabir

Nazma Kawser

Sharita Hossain

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

58 Leaman Drive

NS B3A 2K9 Canada

Email:

edi-

tor.spotlight@globalcdg.com

WEBSITE

Www.globalcdg.org

ISSN 2819-2311

EDITOR'S NOTE**Black 5th August 2024**

On behalf of the editorial board, I express my congratulations and gratitude to everyone on this occasion of delivering the 8th issue, as a special issue, of the Spotlight to our esteemed readers.

August 5, 2024, is a black day in the long 54-year history of Bangladesh. A democratically elected government of an emerging economy was forced out of power that day by deceiving the people in the name of the quota movement through domestic and international conspiracies. On the anniversary of the change of power, we observe that the law and order system of Bangladesh has deteriorated, the economy is on the verge of destruction, the judicial system is in a bad state, the unemployment problem is becoming evident due to the closure of numerous industries, the sovereignty of the country is under threat, and famine is knocking at the door.

The people of Bangladesh want an end to this situation. They want an end to mob terrorism. They want freedom of speech. They want freedom from killing, murder, extortion, kidnapping and ransom. They want a free media. They want the rule of law. They want free and fair elections with the participation of all people and political parties. They want the return of ownership of the country to the people. In the current situation, holding national elections through a caretaker government is the demand of the hour.

A democratically elected government is needed at this moment if the country's economy, politics, judicial system, law and order situation, and development of production-oriented industries are to be brought back to a fast and stable progress.

May the country be freed from Yunus' misrule. May democracy be freed. May the great moment of dispelling all darkness and building a developed, prosperous, non-communal country with equality, human dignity, and social justice for all the people of Bangladesh arrive with bright feet. The sooner this happens, the better it will be for the country.

Mohammad Abdur Rashid M. Eng., PhD, SMIEE

Editor

THE JULY-AUGUST 2024 MOVEMENT IN BANGLADESH: A DOMESTIC UPRISING OR GLOBAL CONSPIRACY?

The authors remain anonymous

Introduction

The July–August Movement of 2024 in Bangladesh marked one of the most turbulent and violent political episodes in the country's recent history. Initiated by a coalition of opposition parties and student organizations, the movement quickly escalated into a nationwide confrontation that brought cities to a standstill, paralyzed state institutions, and left over 850 people dead [1]. While the declared intent of the movement was to demand a reduction in government job quotas and shift toward merit-based recruitment adding a last moment demand for the resignation of the government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the violent nature of the protests—including arson, armed assaults, attacks on law enforcement, and calls for foreign intervention—suggests a more complex and potentially orchestrated agenda. The scale, coordination, and international echoes of the unrest have led to widespread speculation about external involvement and covert geopolitical maneuvers. In this regard, the statement of the head of the interim government is highly significant. In a commentary published by BD Digest in April 2025, the author cites Yunus speaking at the Clinton Global Initiative meeting in the U.S.: *“It (the protest) was a meticulously designed thing. It just didn’t happen suddenly. Very well-designed. Even the leadership didn’t know (him), so they could not catch him”* [2]. His confession signals the conspiracy behind the July-August movement in Bangladesh.

Violence and Mobilization Tactics

What made the July-August movement extraordinary was the extent and intensity of the violence. Protesters often appeared highly organized, deploying locally manufactured weapons and engaging in direct confrontations with law enforcement personnel [3]. Government buildings were attacked, roads were blockaded, and arson became rampant. While opposition leaders and some international voices framed the response of the security forces as repression, many observers noted that the protests often crossed the threshold from civil disobedience to organized insurgency. The nature of the movement raised pressing questions: Was this a domestic cry for democracy, or was it being used as a proxy battlefield for larger geopolitical stakes?

The Role of International Media

The response of the international media during the crisis was deeply polarizing. Prominent Western outlets such as BBC, DW, CNN, and VOA were heavily criticized for disproportionately broadcasting the narratives of the protesters while neglecting ground realities and government perspectives [4]. Newspapers like The Washington Post and The New York Times were accused of presenting unverified claims from opposition sources as fact, while Al Jazeera’s coverage continued its long-standing critical tone towards the ruling Awami League, reviving themes from its earlier report “All the Prime Minister’s Men [5].” Analysts argued that such coverage shaped an international perception of a brutal, authoritarian regime silencing democratic voices, ignoring the organized nature and provocations of the protesters.

Rights organizations were also accused of selective outrage—highlighting state excesses while remaining silent on the opposition's role in stoking violence. This one-sided narrative, critics argue, skewed global perceptions and added fuel to the movement. At the same time, the unrest unfolded against a backdrop of heightened geopolitical interest in the Bay of Bengal and Indo-Pacific region, where global powers such as China, India, and the United States vie for strategic influence [6]. Some commentators suggest that the July-August uprising became a convenient lever in these larger power struggles.

The Biden Administration’s Strategic Pressure

The United States, under the Biden administration, played a controversial and possibly pivotal role in shaping the events that unfolded. While Washington never officially endorsed regime change, a series of policy moves appeared to embolden opposition groups and undermine the Hasina government. On May 24, 2023, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced a visa restriction policy targeting Bangladeshi individuals believed to be involved in undermining electoral processes, including vote-rigging, suppression of assembly, and press intimidation [7]. Although framed as a democratic safeguard, the policy was seen in Dhaka as direct interference in domestic politics.

Moreover, the U.S. had already sanctioned Bangladesh's elite paramilitary force, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), in December 2021 under the Global Magnitsky Act, citing human rights abuses [8]. These moves collectively built a narrative of Bangladesh as a rights-abusing state, which opposition parties readily leveraged to gain international sympathy. Sheikh Hasina's growing alignment with China, Russia, and India, and her refusal to join U.S.-led Indo-Pacific alliances like the Quad, were seen by some as catalysts for this diplomatic cold front [9]. Observers argue that the U.S. pressure was driven more by strategic calculations than human rights concerns. The convergence of these geopolitical tensions with internal unrest suggested to some that the protests may have received tacit encouragement from Washington.

United Nations and Diplomatic Maneuvering

During the height of the protests, the United Nations took a highly visible stance. UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for restraint and accountability, urging Bangladesh to investigate violence and protect civil liberties [10]. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk issued multiple statements condemning government crackdowns, internet shutdowns, and arbitrary arrests, particularly those involving minors and journalists [11]. While framed in the language of human rights, these

Continued on Page 4

statements were seen by pro-government voices as encouraging the protesters and delegitimizing state authority. UNICEF joined in, stressing the toll on children and advocating for judicial reform and accountability [12]. The cumulative eff

THE JULY-AUGUST 2024 MOVEMENT IN BANGLADESH: A DOMESTIC UPRISING OR GLOBAL CONSPIRACY?

ect was a narrative that painted the government as oppressive, creating a diplomatic environment that weakened morale within Bangladesh's security establishment. Law enforcement agencies like the RAB and even segments of the military reportedly became hesitant, fearing international backlash and sanctions.

Influencing the Armed Forces

Perhaps most significantly, the UN is said to have applied subtle but effective pressure on the Bangladesh Army. In a BBC HARDtalk interview in March 2025, High Commissioner Volker Türk warned that any military involvement in suppressing protests could jeopardize the country's prized UN peacekeeping status [13]. This cautionary message reportedly resonated deeply with senior military leadership, which values its reputation and international deployment opportunities. Though no official sanctions were declared, the reputational threats acted as a strategic deterrent. Public statements by Guterres and other UN officials further reinforced the notion that any military alignment with the government would be internationally condemned [14].

USAID, Democracy Promotion, and Controversies

Amid the unrest, USAID's role in Bangladesh came under intense scrutiny. The agency's democracy support programs, especially the \$21 million "*Nagorik*" or "*Amar Vote Amar*" project, were perceived by critics as tools for political engineering. Run under the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) through the International Republican Institute (IRI), National Democratic Institute (NDI), and IFES, the initiative funded civic engagement workshops, youth leadership seminars, and voter education programs that reached over 10,000 participants [15].

Although officially intended to support democratic participation, these programs were interpreted by pro-government commentators as fomenting dissent among the youth and opposition-aligned civil society. Former State Department official Mike Benz added fuel to the fire, claiming that USAID-backed programs had even sponsored rap music groups and social media campaigns aimed at undermining Hasina's government [16]. Benz further alleged that U.S. plans for a military base in Bangladesh were thwarted by Hasina's administration, leading to retaliatory destabilization efforts.

Yet Bangladeshi government sources found no formal records of the much-discussed \$29 million allegedly routed to obscure entities, casting doubt on the transparency and accountability of these projects. Nonetheless, the perception of covert influence lingered, especially after President Donald Trump publicly echoed these suspicions.

Trump's Provocative Allegations

In February 2025, Donald Trump's remarks at CPAC and the White House Governors Working Session reignited controversy. He accused USAID of channeling \$29 million to an unknown firm in Bangladesh, sarcastically claiming it helped fund "a radical left communist" opposition [17] he mentioned:

"Two people ... I think they're very happy, very rich ... they'll be on the cover ... for being great scammers." "That \$29 million... help them vote for a radical left communist in Bangladesh [18]."

Though lacking concrete evidence, Trump's comments resonated with those already critical of U.S. democracy-promotion strategies. Conservative media outlets and opposition voices to the Biden administration amplified these claims, suggesting a broader covert agenda to topple governments unwilling to toe the Western line [19].

Conclusion

The July–August 2024 movement in Bangladesh cannot be understood solely as a domestic protest against governance. Its scope, timing, and international reverberations point to a confluence of internal grievances and external interests. From strategic U.S. visa policies to UN diplomatic pressure and the controversial role of USAID, the crisis offers a case study in 21st-century geopolitical contestation. Whether one sees it as a popular movement hijacked by foreign interests or a legitimate uprising against authoritarianism manipulated by power politics, the episode underscores the fragile interplay between national sovereignty and international influence in an increasingly interconnected world. It was a broader, meticulously orchestrated campaign involving both domestic opposition and external actors. Several key indicators point toward this. *Firstly*, the sudden coordination of protests across multiple cities, using synchronized slogans and messaging amplified globally by diaspora-led digital campaigns, suggested centralized planning. Social media activity, particularly anonymous accounts boosting anti-government hashtags like #HasinaOut, trended internationally within hours of the protests beginning. *Secondly*, foreign media outlets such as BBC, Al Jazeera, DW, and The New York Times disproportionately amplified protestor narratives while downplaying or omitting reports of violence against law enforcement and public property, raising concerns of selective reporting and potential bias. This media imbalance coincided with earlier U.S. actions such as visa sanctions on Bangladeshi officials in 2023, interpreted by some as attempts to pressure the Hasina government and influence electoral outcomes. *Thirdly*, exiled opposition leaders were also active during this period, issuing calls for international intervention through U.S. and UK-based panels and interviews. Several of these exile groups were connected to organizations that had lobbied for foreign pressure on Bangladesh's internal affairs. *Fourthly*, at the same time, foreign-funded NGOs reportedly received an increase in democracy

Continued on page 5

THE JULY-AUGUST 2024 MOVEMENT IN BANGLADESH: A DOMESTIC UPRISING OR GLOBAL CONSPIRACY?

and governance grants, which critics argue helped lay a soft infrastructure for unrest. The silence of the United Nations and key Western embassies on the deaths and injuries of law enforcement officers during the protests further added to suspicions of partiality. Meanwhile, some multilateral donors delayed financial assistance under the pretext of governance concerns, adding economic pressure on the state. Comments made by former U.S. President Donald Trump in early 2025, where he remarked that “we should’ve pushed harder in Bangladesh,” were seen by government allies as informal validation of Western interference. Additionally, some analysts believe that both China and India had strategic interests in the unrest, aiming to reposition Bangladesh’s foreign policy orientation. Taken together, these developments suggest that the 2024 movement was not merely a reflection of domestic discontent but the result of complex geopolitical entanglements, informational warfare, and externally facilitated dissent.

References

- [1] UN report: 1,400 people killed in July uprising. See: https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/373524/un-report-1-400-people-killed-in-july-uprising?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- [2] Inside Yunus’s ‘meticulously designed’ theory. See: https://en.bddigest.com/inside-yunus-meticulously-designed-theory/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- [3] Professor Mohammad Yunus in his addressing to the UN mentioned that it was a meticulous design to organize the movement in Bangladesh. See: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/yunus-reveals-brains-behind-well-organised-protest-that-ousted-hasina/articleshow/113675382.cms>.
- [4] Some Foreign Media: Spokespersons of Malefactors in Bangladesh! See: https://dailyasianage.com/news/325805/some-foreign-media-spokespersons-of-malefactors-in-bangladesh?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- [5] <https://www.ajunit.com/investigation/all-the-prime-ministers-men/>.
- [6] Al Amin Sino-Indian rivalry in Indo-Pacific and Bangladesh’s geo-strategic hedging in response to its security threats. *Discov glob soc* 3, 15 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44282-025-00144-1>.
- [7] The U.S. Ups the Ante in Bangladesh: A coercive visa policy aims to bolster democracy ahead of the country’s elections next January. See: https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/05/31/us-bangladesh-visa-policy-election-democracy-promotion/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- [8] What the new US visa policy for Bangladesh means by Atlantic Council. See: https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/southasiasource/what-the-new-us-visa-policy-for-bangladesh-means/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- [9] The Bad Blood between Sheikh Hasina and the US. See: <https://thediplomat.com/2024/08/the-bad-blood-between-sheikh-hasina-and-the-us/>.
- [10] HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NOON BRIEFING BY STEPHANE DUJARRIC SPOKESPERSON FOR SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTÓNIO GUTERRES MONDAY, 29 JULY 2024. See: https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/highlight/2024-07-29.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- [11] UN rights chief calls for end to protest crackdowns in Bangladesh. See: https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/07/1152506?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- [12] Statement by Rana Flowers, UNICEF Representative in Bangladesh in response to the OHCHR Fact-Finding Report: Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests of July and August 2024 in Bangladesh. See: https://bangladesh.un.org/en/289170-statement-rana-flowers-unicef-representative-bangladesh-response-ohchr-fact-finding-report?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- [13] UN to Bangladesh Army: Stay Out of July Movement or Lose Peacekeeping Role. See: https://www.thebangladeshexpress.com/dialogues/straight-talks/17612?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- [14] UN alarmed by reports of rights violations by Bangladeshi security forces during student protests. See: https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/un-alarmed-by-reports-of-rights-violations-by-bangladeshi-security-forces-during-student-protests/3289114?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- [15] How USAID Under Joe Biden Funded Ouster Of Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina Leading To Emergence Of Radical Islamists? See: https://news24online.com/opinion/how-usaid-under-joe-biden-funded-ouster-of-bangladesh-pm-sheikh-hasina-leading-to-emergence-of-radical-islamists/481357/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- [16] USAID alleged to have fueled regime change in Bangladesh. See: https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/usaid-alleged-to-have-fueled-regime-change-in-bangladesh/3477789?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- [17] 29m USAID fund went to a Bangladesh firm that nobody had ever heard of: Trump. See: https://viewsbangladesh.com/en/29m-usaid-fund-went-to-a-bangladesh-firm-that-nobody-had-ever-heard-of-trump/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- [18] Ibid.
- [19] Why is no news media talking about USAID's involvement in the Bangladesh’s regime change? See: https://www.reddit.com/r/bangladesh/comments/1in3s4e/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

The authors are Professors of a University



FACT-FINDING OR FRAMING? A READER'S REFLECTION ON THE OHCHR 2024 BANGLADESH FACT-FINDING REPORT

Dr. Zahir Ahmed

Background

The OHCHR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) report, released on 12 February 2025, came after a major political transition in Bangladesh on 5 August 2024 [1]. It makes serious allegations against the security forces and political leaders of the government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Although the report highlights alleged human rights violations, its tone, choice of words, and method of investigation raise questions about fairness, balance, and possible political bias. These concerns are especially important given Bangladesh's strategic role in handling the Rohingya refugee crisis, developing regional transport corridors, and managing international partnerships.

The 5 August 2024 transition was a turning point in the country's democratic history and led to waves of unrest and uncertainty. However, the OHCHR chose to focus only on the violence between 15 July and 15 August 2024. By ignoring what happened before and after that period, the report gives a narrow view of a much larger and more complex situation. As someone who wanted to read the report carefully as a general reader, not as a lawyer or human rights expert, I offer these reflections and questions. Legal professionals and specialists may have deeper insights, but I share these reflections as someone seeking to understand its broader implications.

Methodological Gaps, Purposive Sampling and Access Limitations

The OHCHR report limits its investigation to the period from 15 July to 15 August 2024, despite the fact that the fact-finding team was officially invited only after 28 August. This raises doubts about the report's purpose and fairness, as it omits many important incidents that occurred after mid-August (pt. 1–2). Although the report mentions more than 230 interviews (pt. 5), it does not explain how those people were chosen. There is no information about whether the interviewees reflected a fair mix of political views, regions, or social backgrounds. The report also does not identify the local partners or intermediaries who helped arrange these interviews (pt. 6), which raises concerns that the selection may have been biased or favoured one group.

In pt. 2, the report says the Army and DGFI refused to be interviewed. However, it does not explain why they declined or what steps OHCHR took to ensure their perspectives were still considered. Interestingly, pt. 2 states that multiple state agencies, including the Police, RAB, BGB, NSI, Ministry of Information Technology, DGFI, and Ansar/VDP, submitted written reports to the OHCHR through the interim government. This raises a serious concern: if these reports were coordinated by the interim government, they may not fully reflect the independent views of those agencies. Moreover, pt. 28 confirms that the OHCHR shared its draft findings with the interim government and later made changes based on its feedback. This process raises the possibility that the report's content may have been influenced by the interests of the new administration.

There are also contradictions in how the report describes its access to key individuals. Pt. 8 says that OHCHR interviewed some detained officials, but pt. 9 states that the former Inspector General of Police was not made available. This inconsistency reduces trust in the report's completeness and clarity. In addition, the report does not reveal who was on the investigation team or how it was funded (pt. 2). Without this basic information, it is hard to assess whether the process met the standards of independence and transparency that are expected of international investigations.

Selective Framing of Protest and Repression

The OHCHR report gives limited attention to the widespread and deadly violence instigated by militant groups and coordinated perpetrators who operated under the guise of student protests (pt. 228–242). It largely overlooks the role of organised actors, including individuals allegedly linked to extremist or underground networks, who exploited student-led movements to carry out targeted violence. These groups created an atmosphere of disorder that at times placed security forces in situations where they may have felt compelled to act in self-defence, following Police regulations.

The report entirely omits a series of brutal and well-documented incidents, including the targeted killing of at least thirteen police officers in Sirajganj and the horrifying cases of officers being lynched or publicly hanged in areas such as

Continued on Page 7

FACT-FINDING OR FRAMING? A READER'S REFLECTION ON THE OHCHR 2024 BANGLADESH FACT-FINDING REPORT

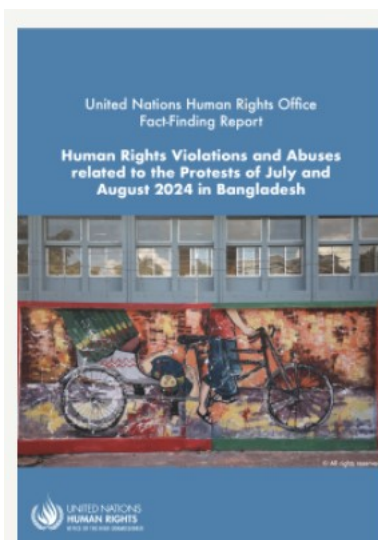
Uttara and Jatrabari. These were not isolated acts of spontaneous outrage but appear to have been orchestrated attacks involving weapons, coordinated mobs, and deliberate brutality. In addition, the report is silent on the systematic arson attacks on police stations, government offices, and public transport—acts that paralysed key services and put lives at risk. Credible national media outlets, video footage circulated online, and eyewitness accounts provide compelling evidence of these events. The Interim Government itself reported that 40 police men were killed during the so-called “peaceful” protests. The complete exclusion of these gruesome and targeted assaults on law enforcement agencies and public infrastructure raises serious concerns about selective reporting, especially when the report devotes extensive attention to alleged state violence while virtually ignoring the organised violence perpetrated by militant groups and protest organisers hiding behind the banner of student activism.

All eight of the report’s “emblematic cases” (pt. 15) focus solely on victims from among the protesters, offering no parallel scrutiny of deaths, injuries, or trauma experienced by the law enforcement officers, pro-government civilians, or neutral bystanders caught in the violence. By framing the protests as largely peaceful, the report misrepresents the reality on the ground, where security forces were confronted with heavily armed or tactically coordinated attacks. This selective portrayal raises doubts about the objectivity of the report’s conclusions.

Pt. 10 acknowledges that Awami League leaders and ministers cooperated with the OHCHR, yet their views are scarcely reflected in the analysis. In contrast, pt. 21 records the refusal of Jamaat-e-Islami and Shibir to participate in the investigation, but this is not treated as a serious limitation or examined further. Understanding the motivations and strategies of these groups, which were central to the protest coordination, is crucial for any balanced account of the unrest.

Government actions such as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s hospital visits to injured civilians and financial assistance to affected families are noted briefly but not integrated meaningfully into the broader assessment of state response (pt. 47). Nor does the report explore whether the use of force by state agencies was triggered by direct threats to life, infrastructure, or national security posed by armed or militant participants. By overlooking the organised and at times militant nature of the protest violence, the report risks presenting an incomplete and potentially misleading narrative, one that may undermine its credibility among both domestic and international observers.

Contradictions in Death Toll and Weapon Attribution



ISSUED BY:

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

The OHCHR report presents conflicting numbers on protest-related deaths. It first states that 834 deaths were verified, but later suggests the number could be as high as 1,400 (pt. 56–64). However, it does not explain how the higher estimate was calculated, who the additional victims were, or whether the total includes casualties from all sides—including police, government supporters, or bystanders. Without disaggregating the data by victim type, time, or location, the report leaves readers unclear about what these figures actually represent.

The uncertainty continues in its discussion of weapons. The report suggests that many victims were killed using military-grade rifles (pt. 51–63), but it does not explain who used them or how this conclusion was reached. Were these weapons fired by the army, unidentified third parties, or militant groups? The report gives no clear answer. Pt. 60 openly admits that many allegations have not been verified. This admission raises further doubts about how confident readers can be in the report’s findings.

These types of gaps are particularly concerning in politically sensitive contexts, where casualty numbers and claims of responsibility can be distorted by all sides. Without clear sourcing, triangulation, and attribution, the report’s conclusions risk being seen as speculative or selective rather than objective and factual. It would have been more credible had it used a transparent method for casualty verification and weapon analysis, and had it included input from security agencies and neutral observers.

Misrepresentation of Political Context and External Influences

The OHCHR report describes the 2024 quota protests as a spontaneous and grassroots youth movement (pt. 19–23). However, it fails to mention that the government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had already abolished the quota system in 2018. That reform was a direct response to earlier student protests and was widely recognised at the time as a democratic decision that addressed public demands [2]. Omitting this important milestone creates a misleading impression that the 2024 protests were a continuation of unresolved grievances,

Continued on Page 8

FACT-FINDING OR FRAMING? A READER'S REFLECTION ON THE OHCHR 2024 BANGLADESH FACT-FINDING REPORT

rather than a complex and politically charged mobilisation.

Further, in pt. 24–29, the report critiques aspects of governance, but it overlooks the significant policy reforms and socio-economic gains achieved over the 15 years under the elected government. International development bodies regularly highlighted improvements in human development indicators and digital innovation in Bangladesh during this time. The absence of such context gives the impression of a selective narrative that may not fully reflect the country's complex political and developmental realities.



More importantly, the report does not assess the possible influence of external actors in shaping or amplifying the protests. Various independent studies and investigative reports have documented the role of foreign-funded media outlets, diaspora-based lobbying groups, and international advocacy networks that aligned with opposition movements. By excluding these external dynamics, the OHCHR report limits its own analytical depth and potentially underestimates the broader geopolitical context in which the unrest took place.

The suggestion that repression was centrally planned and systematically executed (pt. 75) is not supported by clear legal findings or independently verified sources. In an environment marked by deep political division, such generalisations may inadvertently contribute to polarisation rather than promote clarity. A more careful approach, grounded in judicial process and documented facts, would have strengthened the report's reliability and better served its intended human rights mandate.

Concluding remarks

The OHCHR Fact-Finding Report on the July-August 2024 Bangladesh protests raises several critical issues that deserve serious reflection. While it highlights alleged human rights violations, the report's selective framing, methodological opacity, and lack of balance call its neutrality into question. Its narrow time frame excludes key events before and after the selected period. Its reliance on undisclosed sources and lack of transparency in sampling processes weakens the strength of its findings. It gives limited attention to violence committed by militants and coordinated protest actors, while over-emphasising state actions without exploring state responses or justifications.

Moreover, the report presents conflicting data on deaths and fails to provide clear methods for casualty verification or weapon attribution. It downplays the socio-political progress made under the Sheikh Hasina government, excludes the role of external actors, and offers a one-sided picture of a complex situation. The final version of the report was also revised in consultation with the interim government (pt. 18), raising further concerns about its independence.

Credible human rights reporting depends on demonstrable impartiality, transparent methods, and balanced engagement with diverse actors. The issues highlighted in this analysis suggest that the OHCHR report may fall short of these standards. Its perceived alignment with one political narrative, lack of clarity in evidence handling, and selective treatment of events reduce its ability to contribute meaningfully to justice and reconciliation. Unless these concerns are acknowledged and addressed, the report is unlikely to serve as a constructive foundation for national or international discourse.

References

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/bangladesh/ohchr-fftb-hr-violations-bd.pdf>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/country/quota-system-in-bangladesh-scrapped-officially-1642534>

The author is teaching at a university in New Zealand



BANGLADESH IN COLLAPSE: LAWLESSNESS, FEAR, AND THE FAILURE OF MUHAMMAD YUNUS

Dr Milton Hasnat



Bangladesh is in crisis: brutal murders in broad daylight, imams attacked during Friday prayers, political activists slaughtered, extortion and rape are surging across the nation. And at the centre of it all is a Nobel Laureate, now the Chief Advisor of an unelected government, watching in silence as the country burns. Over the past eleven months, the country has witnessed an alarming rise in public violence: murders, attacks on religious leaders, political killings, and terror in the streets.

We ask the question that millions of Bangladeshis are now whispering, some even shouting: *Has Dr Muhammad Yunus, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, become a silent spectator to chaos? Or worse, a willing enabler of the breakdown of Bangladesh?* We examine the sharp and frightening collapse of law and order in Bangladesh under the interim government. We expose the alarming rise of extortion, rape, political killings, and the growing public sentiment that Sheikh Hasina's elected government, once criticised, was far better than the tyranny we now see.

Dhaka: Man Stoned to Death Near Mitford Hospital

Just days ago, in the heart of the capital city, near the historic Mitford Hospital in Old Dhaka, a man was brutally killed. in broad daylight, using stones. His only "crime"? He allegedly refused to pay extortion money to local goons. Eyewitnesses say the assailants showed no fear, no urgency. They attacked with such ferocity that even seasoned emergency workers were shocked by the victim's injuries.

This wasn't a robbery gone wrong. This was an open message. A show of power by those who believe they now control the streets. This was not a one-off incident. It is now the new normal.

Chandpur: Imam Hacked for Friday Sermon

On the same day, hundreds of kilometres away in Chandpur, another deeply troubling incident occurred. During the sacred Friday prayers, a mosque imam was attacked and hacked with sharp weapons simply because someone in the congregation didn't like his khutbah, the sermon.

Yes, you heard that right. A religious leader, delivering a peaceful message during the holiest moment of the week, was attacked inside the mosque. This was not just an assault on a person; it was an assault on the sanctity of religion, on the freedom of belief, and the tradition of peaceful worship in Bangladesh.



🏠 NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL SPORTS HUMAN RIGHTS OPINION

NEWS DESK: REPORTER JULY 12, 2025 7:48 PM

Imam of Chandpur mosque attacked with cleaver during Jumma sermon

The Imam of Baitul Amin Mosque in Professor Para Mollabari area of Chandpur city, Maulana Nurul Amin Madani, was seriously injured when a miscreant attacked him with a cleaver during the Jumma prayer sermon. The incident has sparked tension in the area, with locals expressing strong outrage.



Multiple sources report that on Friday afternoon (July 11), during the Jumma prayer sermon, an individual launched a sudden attack on Imam Maulana Nurul Amin Madani. Locals claim the attacker was displeased with the subject of the Imam's sermon and assaulted him with a cleaver. Maulana Nurul Amin Madani is a respected scholar who completed his religious education at Medina University. He has been serving as the Imam of Baitul Amin Mosque for a long time and is highly revered among the locals.

Khulna: Youth Leader's Tendons Severed

In Khulna, the violence took an even darker political turn. A local political leader, affiliated with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, was attacked and severely injured. *Continued on Page 10*

BANGLADESH IN COLLAPSE: LAWLESSNESS, FEAR, AND THE FAILURE OF MUHAMMAD YUNUS

Party's youth wing, was first attacked, and then his Achilles tendons were slashed. He was left bleeding to death, another reminder that political dissent in today's Bangladesh may come at the cost of your life.

Reports say he was targeted as part of a revenge attack, possibly orchestrated by rival political forces or internal factions. What's clear is that no region, no party, no group is safe anymore.

A Surge in Extortion and Sexual Violence

Across towns and villages, reports of **extortion and rape** are rising at an unprecedented level.

- Local traders are being forced to pay protection money to armed gangs.
- Women are increasingly falling victim to gang rape, with survivors reporting threats and police indifference.
- Human rights groups that once released daily reports have gone eerily silent.

Bangladeshis today fear not only criminals, but also the silence of the state.

The Interim Government's Deadly Silence

At the centre of this crisis is the unelected interim government, formed under the guise of national interest. Its chief advisor is Dr Muhammad Yunus, once celebrated globally for fighting poverty, now accused of failing to protect his people. Despite the bloodshed, Dr Yunus has remained silent, issuing no public statements, implementing no reforms, and showing no accountability. Instead of restoring peace, he is accused of playing political games, delaying elections, and tightening his grip on power.

Delaying Democracy: A Dangerous Game

When this government took over, it promised free and fair elections. But months have passed, and no election schedule has been announced. Political observers say Dr Yunus is deliberately delaying the election to consolidate control. His unelected regime has no mandate from the people and no right to rule indefinitely. Bangladeshis now ask: Was the dream of reform and democracy nothing more than a deception?

Manipulating the Masses: How the Awami League Was Removed

This interim government did not come to power through the ballot box. It tricked the public with promises of reform and fairness, manipulated institutions, and used global allies to discredit the Awami League government, painting it as autocratic. However, many people now claim they were misled. They say Sheikh Hasina's government, though not perfect, was far more peaceful, functional, and accountable than what they are experiencing now. Markets were stable, and Streets were safer. The economy was growing. Under Hasina, you could criticise the government and live to tell the tale. Today, you might not.

The Return of Jamaat and Political Islam?

Some experts also point to the resurgence of Jamaat-e-Islami, the Islamist political party that has historically partnered with BNP and funded student militancy.

The recent violence against an imam may not be an accident. It may reflect deeper ideological rifts between moderate Islam and political Islamism. Bangladesh, a country known for its religious tolerance, is once again facing the ugly spectre of extremism, this time dressed as political opposition.

A Coordinated Pattern of Terror?

These aren't isolated incidents. From Dhaka to Chandpur to Khulna, and other regions across the country, a familiar pattern is emerging:

- Street-level violence
- Public executions
- Targeting of religious and political figures
- The rise of lawless extortion gangs
- And most worryingly, impunity for the perpetrators

Many of these acts are being attributed to factions linked to BNP, Jubo Dal, Chhatra Dal, Jamaat-Shibir, and the newly formed

Continued on Page 11

BANGLADESH IN COLLAPSE: LAWLESSNESS, FEAR, AND THE FAILURE OF MUHAMMAD YUNUS

king's party, the National Citizens Party (NCP), reportedly patronised by Dr Muhammad Yunus. These are political and radical religious groups with long-standing reputations for violence and disruption.

Observers warn that this appears to be an orchestrated campaign to destabilize the country, a return to the dark days of political terror, campus killings, and ideological warfare.

Public Sentiment: A Dangerous Shift

Bangladeshis are beginning to speak out: "We didn't fight for this. We were promised reform, but we got violence." "Sheikh Hasina's era was far better than this. At least there was stability."

The shift in public opinion is growing fast. Dr Yunus, once admired, is now seen as disconnected, unaccountable, and complicit in a political disaster.

The Hypocrisy of the Global Community

And yet, foreign diplomats and international NGOs remain silent. These are the same actors who were once hyperactive under the Awami League:

- Issuing statements for every arrest.
- Condemning police action over minor protests.
- Demanding accountability in the name of democracy.

But now? When people are being murdered, raped, and silenced, they say nothing. Is this silence driven by bias? Or by geopolitical strategy? Whatever the reason, it is hypocritical, unethical, and dangerous.

Collapse of Institutions—A Nation in Freefall

Bangladesh's law enforcement agencies appear paralysed. Either unwilling or unable to respond. The justice system has slowed.

Political thugs roam free. There is no parliament, no accountability, no election schedule, only fear. Bangladesh is now a country ruled by uncertainty and violence, under a Nobel laureate who refuses to act.

What Must Be Done—Urgently:

- Immediate restoration of constitutional order through a transparent, inclusive election under a neutral, caretaker government.
- End to political violence and arrest of all perpetrators, regardless of affiliation.
- Accountability from Dr Muhammad Yunus and his advisors for failing to govern.
- Re-engagement from the international community, not selective silence.
- Revival of democratic institutions and respect for public voice.

Bangladesh today is not what it was promised to be. It is not a peaceful transition. It is not reform. It is fear, it is lawlessness, it is betrayal. Dr Muhammad Yunus has failed the people. And unless action is taken now, the country may fall deeper into darkness.

It is time to speak, time to act. It is a call to accountability. Injustice does not happen in silence; it thrives in it. If we fail to speak now, we will pay the price later, in blood, in trauma, and in the destruction of everything a free society stands for.

We urge the people of Bangladesh: Don't stay silent. Demand safety, demand justice. And to the international community, this is not the time for strategic silence. This is the time to act. Because the truth, no matter how inconvenient, must be told.

Dr. Milton Hasnat, Author, Physician, Public health researcher, Political Analyst.



SHEIKH HASINA'S LEADERSHIP: DEVELOPMENTAL DEMOCRACY OR FASCISM?

Authors unwilling to disclose identities

Introduction

The term "fascism" is often used as a political weapon rather than an analytical concept. In Bangladesh, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's critics, particularly opposition parties, have labeled her rule (2009-2024) as fascist. However, based on theoretical and practical analysis, there's no justification for this accusation. Historically, fascist regimes, such as Mussolini's Italy, Hitler's Germany, and Franco's Spain, were built upon strict nationalism, militarization, suppression of civil liberties, and the centralization of autocratic rule.

Sheikh Hasina's rule, while facing accusations of political dominance, has primarily been guided by economic modernization, democratic processes, institutional development, and regional diplomacy. Her leadership is more consistent with developmental democracy and competitive authoritarianism, rather than fascism. After analysis of the characteristics of fascism, it would be evident that Sheikh Hasina's rule does not align with a fascist framework, and in some aspects, it is entirely contrary to fascist ideas. Instead, her tenure has been marked by economic growth, social progress, and political stability within a complex democratic structure. Our analysis will show that Sheikh Hasina's rule and leadership from 2009 to 2024 is primarily a developmental democracy, with no theoretical basis whatsoever to be categorized as a fascist regime.

Core Characteristics and Theoretical Analysis of Fascism

To assess whether Sheikh Hasina's rule is fascist, we must first understand the academic definition of fascism. American political scientist and historian Robert Paxton (2004) and British historian Roger Griffin (1991) have defined fascism by the following characteristics:

- **Extreme Nationalism and Racial Supremacy:** Fascist governments promote ideas of racial or religious superiority and implement them through aggressive expansionist policies.
- **One-Party Rule and Suppression of Opposition:** Fascist regimes eliminate political pluralism and often suppress opposition parties through violent means.
- **Militarization and War-Centric Policy:** Fascist countries use war and military expansion as political weapons.
- **Economic Corporatism and State-Controlled Economy:** The merging of the state and corporate institutions is used to suppress labor movements and civil society.
- **Cult of Personality and Unconditional Loyalty:** A fascist leader typically presents themselves as the savior of the nation and demands absolute loyalty.

Absence of Fascist Ideology in Sheikh Hasina's Rule

1. Political Pluralism and Presence of Opposition Parties

One of the defining characteristics of a fascist regime is the complete elimination of opposing political parties, typically through violent repression, coercion, or outright banning. Under Sheikh Hasina's leadership, Bangladesh has maintained a multi-party democracy with regular elections, active opposition parties (though accusations of repressive behavior exist), and a functioning civil society.

Opposition parties, particularly the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami, face legal and political challenges, but their existence and ability to contest elections contradict a fundamental characteristic of fascism. In fascist regimes, like those of Mussolini and Hitler, opposition parties were banned, dissidents were sent to concentration camps, and independent media was completely suppressed. However, in Bangladesh, there was considerable freedom of the press, with over 80 TV channels and 300+ newspapers actively operating, publishing criticisms of the government, and opposition parties holding various rallies and strongly criticizing the government.

Furthermore, the BNP's strategy of boycotting elections and the resulting political instability, which largely stems from their failure to organize grassroots support, not from government repression, cannot be equated with the destruction of democracy under fascist rule. The strategic failures and organizational weaknesses of an opposition party are never equivalent to a systematic political extermination.

Instead, we observe that under Sheikh Hasina's rule, several new political parties and alliances have been formed, fur

Continued on Page 13

SHEIKH HASINA'S LEADERSHIP: DEVELOPMENTAL DEMOCRACY OR FASCISM?

ther diversifying Bangladesh's political landscape:

- **Jatiya Oikya Front (National Unity Front):** Formed in October 2018, this alliance included the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Gono Forum, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), and Nagorik Oikya. The primary goal of this alliance was to challenge the government and campaign for free and fair elections.
- **Gono Odhikar Parishad (Council for People's Rights):** Established in October 2021, this party was formed based on student movements, advocating for democratic reforms and social justice. Its emergence reflects the dynamism and political activism of Bangladesh's civil society.
- **Insaniyat Biplob Bangladesh (Humanity Revolution Bangladesh):** Established in January 2010 and officially registered in May 2023, this party centers its politics on humanitarian values and has expanded its activities internationally.

The formation and activities of these new political parties and alliances clearly demonstrate the existence of political pluralism, which is contrary to the concept of fascist one-party rule.

2. Secularism and Absence of Ethno-Religious Supremacy

Fascism is typically characterized by extreme nationalism, ideas of ethnic or religious supremacy, and discriminatory policies towards minorities. From Hitler's ethnic cleansing campaigns to Mussolini's nationalist policies, classic fascist regimes implemented repressive measures against ethnic and religious groups to consolidate national identity.

However, Sheikh Hasina's government has pursued a completely opposite policy, strengthening secularism and pluralism.

- **Suppression of Religious Extremism:** Her administration has rigorously controlled the influence of Islamist fundamentalist organizations like Hefazat-e-Islam and Jamaat-e-Islami, which has helped protect the foundation of secularism in Bangladesh.
- **Humanitarian Approach to the Rohingya Refugee Crisis:** Fascist governments typically believe in the expulsion or elimination of ethnic minorities. However, Sheikh Hasina provided shelter to nearly one million Rohingya refugees expelled from Myanmar, which demonstrates inclusive and humanitarian leadership.
- **Protection of Religious Minorities:** Her government has adopted various policies to ensure the safety of Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian communities, which contradicts the divisive and ethnically specific policies of fascist states.

All these measures prove that Sheikh Hasina's leadership is not extremist nationalist or religiously divisive, but rather an example of secular, inclusive, and humanitarian leadership.

3. Economic Modernization vs. Corporate State Control

Fascist states typically follow a corporate economic model where the government merges with large industries to consolidate power, suppress labor movements, and direct the economy towards militarization.

Sheikh Hasina's economic policy has been market-based and development-oriented, which is more consistent with Developmental Democracy rather than a state-controlled fascist economic model. During her tenure, Bangladesh achieved the following economic successes:

- **Consistent GDP Growth:** Bangladesh has maintained an average annual GDP growth of 6-7%, which has elevated the country from a low-income to a middle-income nation. (World Bank, 2023)
- **Infrastructural Development:** The implementation of various mega-projects, including the Padma Bridge, Metro Rail, and Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, demonstrates that her objective was economic development, not political dominance.
- **Poverty Reduction:** The poverty rate decreased from 31.5% in 2009 to 18.7% in 2023 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Additionally, per capita income has increased, \$842 (2009) to \$2738 (2023), reflecting inclusive economic policies.

•

Furthermore, Bangladesh's private sector has expanded significantly, especially the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) industry, which grew from \$12 billion in 2010 to \$46 billion in 2023 (Bangladesh Bank, 2023).

In a fascist economy, the state establishes full control over industries and suppresses competition. However, Sheikh Hasina's government has encouraged private sector development, foreign investment, and a free market economy, which is the opposite of a fascist economic structure.

Continued on Page 14

SHEIKH HASINA'S LEADERSHIP: DEVELOPMENTAL DEMOCRACY OR FASCISM?

4. Absence of Militarization and Abandonment of Expansionist Policies

Fascist regimes typically try to establish political legitimacy through military expansionism and war. Mussolini's Italy attempted to conquer Africa, Hitler's Germany initiated World War II, and Japan's fascist leadership pursued imperialist aggression in the Pacific.

However, Sheikh Hasina's foreign policy has followed an opposite path, based on diplomacy, commercial partnerships, and regional cooperation, rather than militarization. During her tenure, Bangladesh adopted the following strategies:

- **Strengthening International Diplomatic Relations:** Bangladesh has improved bilateral relations with India, China, the United States, and Russia, but has never engaged in military conflict or adopted an aggressive stance.
- **Peaceful Resolution of Border Disputes:** Bangladesh resolved maritime boundary disputes in the Bay of Bengal through the International Court of Arbitration, an example of diplomatic resolution without war or military intervention.
- **Refraining from Military Intervention:** Under Sheikh Hasina's rule, Bangladesh has not engaged in any military aggression or posed a threat to the sovereignty of neighboring countries, which is entirely contrary to fascist expansionist policies.

Sheikh Hasina's demilitarization policy, commitment to regional stability, and peace-based foreign policy clearly demonstrate that her rule has not followed a militaristic or fascist war policy.

5. Institutional Governance, Not Autocratic Dictatorship

In a fascist regime, there is an all-powerful leader whose authority operates without any checks. Typically, in such regimes, government institutions are destroyed or brought under personal rule. However, while Sheikh Hasina is a strong leader, she has not transformed Bangladesh's parliamentary democracy into a personalized dictatorship.

The judiciary, administration, and parliament have functioned effectively, although there are debates about the influence of executive power. This influence of executive power is not personalistic; in many advanced democratic countries, both parliamentary and presidential, the chief executive can be seen exercising extensive power.

Freedom of the press was maintained, although there are occasional accusations of government control. Many new media outlets have been established, and they have criticized Sheikh Hasina's government without hindrance.

An independent business sector and civil society have remained active, which is contrary to the strict authoritarian control of a fascist state.

While there are accusations of media control and political influence, it is by no means completely repressive or akin to a fascist state. During Sheikh Hasina's rule, opposing voices were strongly heard in Bangladesh's educational institutions, media, and civil society. Therefore, this proves that Sheikh Hasina's governance structure lies more within the framework of institutional democracy than fascist autocracy.

Conclusion: Developmental Democracy, Not Fascism

Strong leadership does not equate to fascism. While Sheikh Hasina's rule demonstrated strong leadership, it is not consistent with the core principles of fascism. Instead, her governance has been characterized by economic modernization, regional diplomacy, electoral processes, and institutional development. Analyzing her rule solely through the lens of European fascism, without considering the realities of Bangladesh's political culture, would be misleading.

The term 'fascist' is often used in political discourse to discredit leaders, but theoretical and practical analysis clearly shows that Sheikh Hasina's rule is completely different from fascist states. Her leadership can be classified under Developmental Democracy, where state-led economic growth and efforts to maintain stability are preserved within a democratic framework.

Therefore, labeling Sheikh Hasina as a fascist is theoretically and practically unfounded. Instead, her rule should be evaluated in light of Bangladesh's unique political evolution and the social and economic development achieved under her leadership.

References:

- Paxton, Robert O., Ernst Jünger, Benito Mussolini, and Art Spiegelman. "What is Fascism." *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004) (2004).
- Griffin, Roger. *The nature of fascism*. Routledge, 2013.



FROM RED ROSES TO RED FLAGS: HOW THE 'LALBADAR UPRISING' TURNED 1971'S LEGACY INTO A PARODY

Dr. Shyamal Das

In a provocative and misleading statement, interim advisor Mahfuz Alam claimed that the non-cooperation movement of 1971, the Agartala Conspiracy, and the Bengali-Bihari conflict were all outcomes of a 'meticulous design'—just like the so-called 2024 uprising. This argument seeks to equate Bangladesh's glorious Liberation War with a secret elitist fundamentalist conspiracy. But the reality is: the two events are entirely different in morality, legitimacy, and purpose.

In this article, we will present our views in response to the key points mentioned by Mahfuz Alam and demonstrate that Mr. Mahfuz is comparing apples with oranges; his remarks reflect an ahistorical review and an irrational narrative of imposed authority. He has forgotten that the purpose of our Liberation War was to achieve an independent nation, whereas their purpose is to justify the role of Razakars and Al-Badr during our independence by offering a neo-Pakistani narrative. Hence, the two cannot stand on the same plane—one is built on the blood of three million martyrs and the dignity of two hundred thousand mothers and sisters; the other involves conspiratorial killings, police assassinations, targeted attacks on minorities and Awami League activists, and cultivation of mobocracy.

Below is our response to the issues raised by Mahfuz.

The 1971 Liberation War: A Struggle for Survival and Sovereignty

The non-cooperation movement of March 1971 was a response to the betrayal of democratic elections by the Pakistani military regime. Despite winning the majority, the Awami League was denied its constitutional right to form a government. What followed was the largest peaceful civil disobedience movement in history, praised internationally (Sisson & Rose, 1990).

Although the Bengali-Bihari conflict was tragic, it was an isolated incident which the Pakistani army used as propaganda to justify launching Operation Searchlight. The Hamoodur Rahman Commission acknowledged these distortions (Hamoodur Rahman Commission Report, 2000), stating that the Pakistani junta and military policymakers had intentionally exaggerated the conflict for strategic use.

In contrast, the 2024 'uprising' was neither democratic nor popular. It was a pre-planned elite conspiracy executed by unelected deep state representatives and radical militants, aided by digital mobs, judiciary, and media, dismantling the constitutional process.

The Daily Star

Who were the youths carrying 7.62mm rifles meant for police, Rab?

Asks Home Affairs Adviser Sakhawat



Brigadier General (Retired) Sakhawat Hossain. File photo

He was talking to reporters at Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka after visiting Ansar members who suffered injuries during the mass protests that eventually forced Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to resign.

"I find it very strange. From what I heard, it seems to me that they [Ansar members] suffered less in firings by police, rather than, firings by civilians with 7.62mm rifle in hand," he said.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/who-were-the-youths-carrying-762mm-rifles-meant-police-rab-3675336>

There is ample evidence for this. Several coordinators have admitted it. Moreover, an advisor to the current government confirmed that 7.62 mm bullets—found in victims' bodies—were not issued to police. So where did they come from? Those leading the protests did not allow autopsies of the dead. Why? Because a large number of those killings were carried out by the protesters themselves, backed by external forces with sophisticated arms and ammunition.

In light of these events, we invoke Jean-Paul Sartre's (2007) theory of 'Authentic Revolt.' The 1971 movement was a genuine response to existential oppression—thus, an authentic revolt. The 2024 mobs were a drama staged by fundamentalist elites, lacking any historical necessity or democratic foundation. It was, in fact, a 'Deceived Uprising.'

The Agartala Conspiracy: Anti-colonial Planning, Not Power-Hunger

Mahfuz claimed that the Agartala Conspiracy is comparable to the meticulous design of 2024. Here too, Mahfuz reveals his ahistorical stance. The Agartala Conspiracy was a historic response to West Pakistani repression. It was a struggle to establish the right to self-determination—not a conspiracy to overthrow a constitutional government of an independent country. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Tajuddin Ahmad used this visionary strategy to give birth to a new state.

Mahfuz Alam insults Bangladesh's anti-colonial heritage by comparing this to the court-mediated and foreign-sponsored 2024 uprising. According to Gramsci's theory of 'Passive Revolution,' Agartala was a genuine grassroots struggle. By

Continued on Page 16

FROM RED ROSES TO RED FLAGS: HOW THE 'LALBADAR UPRISING' TURNED 1971'S LEGACY INTO A PARODY

contrast, 2024 was an elite-imposed realignment masked as a people's movement. Its purpose was to establish a new fundamentalist, neo-Pakistani hegemony. This is proven by post-August 5 events: celebration of Jinnah's birthday, attacks on symbols of independence, destruction of landmarks, talk of replacing the national anthem, and threats to rewrite the constitution. This is why we said Mahfuz is comparing apples to oranges.

Foreign Involvement: Then vs. Now

In 1971, India supported Bangladesh's liberation after Pakistan launched a genocide. That role was reactive and humanitarian (Mascarenhas, 1971).

In contrast, Mahfuz denies foreign interference in 2024, although the reality is different. International NGOs, UN mediators, and donor-driven media covertly supported the installation of a technocratic regime. Dr. Yunus's ties with George Soros and USAID mark this soft intervention.

Carl Schmitt's 'State of Exception' helps explain how elites create crises to suspend constitutional frameworks and install emergency rule (Schmitt, 1985). Today, we see this fully in action. The deep state wants to override our blood-earned constitution and replace it with a neo-Pakistani framework. The current government is already advancing corridor, port, and island deals—moves that were not possible under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, hence her removal.

Mobocracy vs. Monitory Democracy

In 1971, we achieved a form of monitory democracy. But 2024 has given us mobocracy. John Keane defines monitory democracy as a structure in which civil society monitors the state peacefully and legally (Keane, 2009).

Examples from 1971–72 Bangladesh:

- A grassroots non-cooperation movement led by Bangabandhu birthed the Republic.
- The 1972 Constitution enshrined nationalism, socialism, democracy, and secularism.
- Citizens could elect representatives and enjoy freedom of expression.

But mobocracy is where loud mobs and violence determine power, not law.

Examples from 2024:

- Courts, digital mobs, and media removed an elected government.
- Attacks on women, minorities, and pro-liberation artists and journalists.
- Demands to rewrite the constitution based on religious ideology.

Hannah Arendt's concept of the "banality of evil" (2006) explains that when violence is carried out in the name of justice, it transforms individuals into guiltless killers (Arendt, 2006). In today's Bangladesh, those who mobilize mobs to torture others operate under the grip of this "banality" or one-dimensional thinking. It resembles what we might call the Eichmann Syndrome in Germany—where members of Hitler's Gestapo or Nazi officials under Eichmann performed their tasks without question. As Arendt's 'banality of evil' describes, when violence is framed as justice, people lose guilt and become tools of oppression (Arendt, 2006). Today's mobs resemble Eichmann-era Gestapo thugs, not the citizens of a liberated democracy. The same pattern of thinking drives those who form mobs in Bangladesh today and commit violence. To them, it's nothing serious—they are just 'following orders.' Such people cannot, under any circumstance, be compared to the free citizens of a liberated Bangladesh.

The Conspiracy to Destroy the 1972 Constitution

The actual goal behind the 2024 uprising is now clear: to dismantle the 1972 Constitution and replace it with a majoritarian, religious framework. This would erase secularism and the legacy of the Liberation War.

According to Bourdieu's theory of 'symbolic violence,' such rewrites suppress national identity by forcibly reinterpreting legal and cultural norms (Bourdieu, 1991).

The US Deep State's Preference for Extremists

Case comparisons:

- Afghanistan: Mujahideen → Al-Qaeda (Coll, 2004)
- Syria: Al-Nusra rebels → ISIS (Hersh, 2014)
- Libya: Islamist militias → Failed state (Cockburn, 2015)
- Iran: MEK (terror group) → Used by US (Carothers, 1999)
- Bangladesh: Technocrat-Islamist alliance (2024) → Anti-liberation rollback

The pattern is clear: The US Deep State prefers obedient extremists to independent democrats. As Galtung's Dependency

Continued on Page 17

FROM RED ROSES TO RED FLAGS: HOW THE 'LALBADAR UPRISING' TURNED 1971'S LEGACY INTO A PARODY

Theory explains, imperial powers use local proxies to control peripheral states (Galtung, 1971). Bangladesh's 2024 coup is part of

this colonial playbook.

The 'Red' Uprising and the Mockery of Color Revolutions

The 2024 'Red Uprising' or 'Lalbadar' mimics global color revolutions. But where Rose and Orange Revolutions aimed for democracy, this red wave seeks to destroy secularism and pluralism.

Comparison flow chart:

- Rose (Georgia): Anti-authoritarian → Red (BD): Fall of elected govt
- Orange (Ukraine): Pro-democracy → Red (BD): NGO-judiciary coup
- Tulip (Kyrgyzstan): Youth-led → Red (BD): Right-wing student-elite mob

This so-called color revolution is a rebranded authoritarian regression cloaked in the people's rhetoric.

Final Words: Historical Parody or Political Fraud?

To compare the 1971 revolution to the 2024 mobocratic coup is not just a distortion of history—it is moral treason and strategic deception. One gave us freedom. The other seeks to destroy it. Accepting this narrative gives Pakistani ideological remnants the chance to rewrite our past.

The non-cooperation movement gave us Bangladesh. The 2024 conspiracy seeks to cover it in red and burn its soul.

Bibliography

- Arendt, H. (2006). *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil*. Penguin.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Harvard University Press.
- Carothers, T. (1999). *Aiding democracy abroad: The learning curve*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Cockburn, P. (2015). *The rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the new Sunni revolution*. Verso.
- Coll, S. (2004). *Ghost wars: The secret history of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden*. Penguin Press.
- Fair, C. C. (2014). *Fighting to the end: The Pakistan Army's way of war*. Oxford University Press.
- Galtung, J. (1971). A structural theory of imperialism. *Journal of Peace Research*, 8(2), 81–117.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. International Publishers.
- Hamoodur Rahman Commission Report. (2000). *Report of the War Enquiry Commission (Classified 1974, Declassified 2000)*. Government of Pakistan.
- Hersh, S. (2014). The red line and the rat line. *London Review of Books*, 36(8), 21–24.
- Keane, J. (2009). *The life and death of democracy*. Simon & Schuster.
- Mascarenhas, A. (1971, May 30). Genocide. *The Sunday Times* (London).
- McFaul, M. (2005). Transitions from postcommunism. *Journal of Democracy*, 16(3), 5–19.
- Radnitz, S. (2006). What really happened in Kyrgyzstan? *Journal of Democracy*, 17(2), 132–146.
- Sartre, J.-P. (2007). *Existentialism is a humanism*. Yale University Press.
- Schmitt, C. (1985). *Political theology: Four chapters on the concept of sovereignty*. University of Chicago Press.
- Sisson, R., & Rose, L. E. (1990). *War and secession: Pakistan, India, and the creation of Bangladesh*. University of California Press.
- Welt, C. (2003). Georgia's rose revolution: From regime weakness to regime collapse. *Peaceworks*.

The author is a Professor of a University, USA



DEMOLITION OF RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL PROPERTIES AND HISTORICAL PLACES IN BANGLADESH DURING AUGUST 2024 TO AUGUST 2025

Professor Dr Szoha

After the fall of the Awami League government of Bangladesh on August 5, 2025, the country is facing plenty of crises across its whole premises with the emergence of the radicalist political powers in Bangladesh led by Dr. Muhammad Yunus, leader of a so-called student-backed government. The long-cherished heritage and culture of Bangladesh are under great threat from every path from the period and have caused many difficulties. The period from August 2024 to August 2025 has been marked by a significant and concerning trend of demolitions and attacks on cultural and historical properties in Bangladesh. This destruction has been driven by a combination of political upheaval, communal sentiment, and a lack of effective legal enforcement. In the wake of recent political changes in Bangladesh, there has been a concerning surge in attacks on Sufi shrines, known as mazars or dargahs and heritage sites. These attacks, which include vandalism, arson, and looting, have been widely reported since August 2024.

Major Incidents and Trends

Following the political unrest in August 2024, there was a widespread campaign of vandalism and demolition targeting around 1,500 sculptures, murals, and memorials across the country [1]. 1,492 sculptures, relief sculptures (figures carved on a wall using ceramic or terracotta), murals and memorials were vandalised, set on fire and uprooted in 59 districts between 5 to 14 August. Most of the destruction and ignition occurrences happened on 5, 6 and 7 August. A total of 1,492 sculptures, relief sculptures, murals and memorials, including 273 in Dhaka division, 204 in Chattogram division, 166 in Rajshahi division, 479 in Khulna division, 100 in Barishal division, 129 in Rangpur division, 49 in Sylhet division and 92 in Mymensingh division have been destroyed, evacuated and blazed [2]. A significant number of these were related to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and the Liberation War, but other cultural icons were also affected, including the statue of 'Venus' at Sashi Lodge, the statue of Lady Justice at the Supreme Court, and the Duroto statue of Shishu Academy. Mohammad Nasiruddin Memorial Bhaban in Old Dhaka, a historic residence that was partially demolished. This was seen as a politically and ideologically motivated effort to erase certain aspects of national history.

The demolition of Dhanmondi 32, the historical house of Bangabandhu and the Liberation War Museum. One of the most prominent incidents was the partial demolition of Bangladesh. The miscreants set fire to the Liberation War Museum of Agar-gaon and caused great loss. Apart from these, they set fire to the Independence Museum of Shurawardy Uddyan and looted the historical valuables. Across the country, the miscreants demolished Mujibnagar independence artifacts in Meherpur district, Bangabandhu's murals and so on.

Attack on Mazar and Shrines

Sufism has a deep and profound history in Bangladesh, playing a central role in the spread of Islam and shaping the region's unique cultural and religious identity. The history of Sufism in Bengal can be traced back over a thousand years, and it remains a vital part of the country's social fabric today. Sufi saints and preachers began arriving in Bengal well before the establishment of formal Muslim rule [3]. The first wave of Sufis came from Central Asia, Arabia, Iraq, and Iran, bringing with them a mystical and compassionate interpretation of Islam, which has great influence on the people of Bangladesh and has hundreds of Sufi shrines and mazars throughout the country. The Sufis' message of love, tolerance, and equality resonated deeply with the local population, many of whom were marginalized under the existing social hierarchies [4]. Their teachings often incorporated elements of local traditions, creating a syncretic form of Islam that was distinct from the more rigid legalism. This is a key reason why Sufism is so central to Bengali Islam. The Sufis established centers of worship and community called khanqahs and dargahs, which served as both spiritual centers and social hubs. The tombs of these saints, known as mazars, became pilgrimage sites and have remained important cultural landmarks for centuries.

Early pioneers include figures like Shah Sultan Balkhi in Bogra, Shah Sultan Rumi in Mymensingh, and Shah Makhdum Ruposh in Rajshahi, Hazrat Shahjalal in Sylhet, Shah Paran and Bayezid Bostami in Chattogram, Shah Ali in Dhaka were often credited with miraculous powers and a deep understanding of local culture, which helped them connect with the populace, which helped the Muslims' political agencies to establish permanent rule in Bengal. With fostering the heritage, Islam raised its flagship during the span from its inception, and we are now in this spot. But after the turmoil changes occurred in 2024 in the country and the rise of the radical extremist group, the syncretistic nature of Bangladesh has been endangered due to attacks on several shrines and mazars in Bangladesh since August 2024 and have major threat to its populace [5]. According to a police report from January 2025, for example, it documented 44 incidents of violence on 40 shrines since August 4, 2024 [6]. A Sufi organization named 'Global Sufi Organization' has claimed a higher number of attacks, stating that as many as 80 shrines have been targeted and attacked by the miscreants. Due to political and ideological motivations, many of these attacks have been carried out. Following the ouster of the previous government, religious hardliners have been emboldened, and some have targeted Sufi shrines, which they often view as promoting 'un-Islamic' practices due to their use of music (qawwali), offerings, and the veneration of saints. The attacks have affected a wide range of shrines, including both centuries-old and more recent ones. Specific incidents reported include: Hazrat Shah Paran Mazar Sharif in Sylhet [7], Buchai Pagla Mazar in Dhamrai, Dhaka [8], the shrine of Hazrat Syed Kalu Shah in Mymensingh, Shah Sufi Fasih Paglar Mazar of Gazipur was re

Continued on Page 19

DEMOLITION OF RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL PROPERTIES AND HISTORICAL PLACES IN BANGLADESH DURING AUGUST 2024 TO AUGUST 2025

portedly attacked and its valuables looted [9].

It was reported that miscreants carried out attacks at on the shrines including Goribshah Babar Mazar in Jashore, Fakir Charu Mizi Shah (R) in Noakhali, Baro Awlia in Chattogram, Dargah Mazar at Parulia of Palash in Narsingdi, Khazababa Shahsufi Abul Hasan Chisti Rawja sharif at Tarepukur in Khulna, Shah Sufi Hazrat Abdul Quayum (R) in Sylhet, Noor Isar Darbar Sharif at Goripur in Mymensingh, Tetua Rawshan Shah Mazar, Goni Shah Mazar, Subedar Abdur Rahim Mazar, Abdul Jalil Mazar, Chandpur Darbar Sharif, Malek Shah Darbar in Cumilla, and Abul Kashem Hiajuri Mazar in Cumilla, Borhanuddin Biran Shah at Tejgaon Colony Bazar in Dhaka, Golap Shah Fijuddin Paglar Bari at Raipur in Narsingdi, Haider Ali Shah at Hazaribagh in Dhaka, Oli Pagla Mazar at Kazipur in Sirajganj, Syed Reza Sarwar Rajaji Chisty Mazar at Rupganj, Bhabbe Jannat Dewan Bagi in Narayanganj, Aynal Shah Mazar at Sonargaon in Narayanganj, Bibi Sokhinar Mazar in Thakurgaon, Altaf Shadhu Mazar at Shialkol in Sirajganj town, Bibi Sakhinar Mazar in Thakurgaon, Wasia Darbar Sharif in Manikganj, Al Jahangir Mazar at Daluar Char of Polash in Narsingdi, Akkel Ali Shah Mazar in Narsingdi, Koppa Paglar Mazar at Parulia of Polash in Narsingdi, and Hanif Shah Mazar at Monohardi in Narsingdi and Ashed Paglar Mazar in Shariatpur are among the shrines attacked. Threats and fears continuously exist to the mentioned Sufi shrines in Bangladesh, though some of the organizations (Ganatantrik Bangladesh) and people have protested against the vandalism and miscreants' activity already occurred [10].

Prof Muhammad Yunus, chief adviser of the interim government, on Saturday, announced strict legal action against any hate speech and attacks on religious and cultural places and Sufi shrines [11]. The interim government has stated that it has a 'zero-tolerance policy' towards these attacks and advisor Mahfuz Alam also stated government position regarding in favor of existing Sufi shrine in Bangladesh. Police have been ordered to take stringent action, and reports indicate that legal actions, including the filing of cases and the arrest of suspects, have been taken in many of the incidents and arrested 23 miscreants in those attack [12]. The government has also initiated measures like arranging peace meetings and community policing efforts to address the issue locally but Attacks on shrines continue amid protests [13]. Another attack was happened by the Towhidi Janata (Monotheistic Mass; those people who are engaged in protests, demonstrations, and political violences, centered around religious issues at various times in Bangladesh.) has set fire to a shrine after vandalising at the "Ismail Shah Baba" mazar in Barguna's Amtali Upazila [14]. Rahim Shah Baba Bhandari Mazar, Dinajpur was set fire by the organization of 'Siratul Mustakim' on 1 March 2025 [15].

The political transition in August 2024 created a vacuum that religious hardliners have exploited to challenge and attack this deeply rooted cultural heritage. The crisis is not just a series of isolated incidents but a systemic threat to Sufi identity and practices. The attacks have been a significant blow to the country's syncretic cultural heritage, where Sufi traditions have historically coexisted with other religious practices. These incidents not only damage historical sites but also threaten the safety and freedom of worship for devotees who follow Sufi traditions. Some shrines have been forced to cancel annual events or traditional practices, such as devotional music programs, due to threats from extremist groups. The attacks have created an atmosphere of fear that has led to the cancellation or modification of traditional Sufi and folk festivals. Some shrines have been forced to cease their devotional music programs (qawwali) under duress. This has a scary effect on cultural expression and erodes a key component of Bangladesh's national identity. In summary, while cultural properties have been a cornerstone of Bangladesh's pluralistic identity for centuries, it is now facing a severe crisis. The recent attacks on historical sites, cultural properties and shrines, and the rise of religious hardliners pose a direct threat to the safety of devotees and the preservation of a unique and cherished part of the country's cultural heritage.

References

- 1 Prothom Alo English, 21 August 2024, Retrieved from: <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/ext2ewhp81>; The Business Standard, 6 February 2025, Retrieved from: <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/murals-hasina-mujibliberation-war-sculpture-vandalised-across-jashore-1062496>
- 2 The Daily Asian Age, 29 June 2025, Retrieved from: <https://dailiasianage.com/news/339485/around-1500-statuesand-murals-demolished-since-august-2024>; Prothom Alo English, 21 August 2024, Retrieved from: <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/ext2ewhp81>
- Abdullah Al Masud, Md. Faruk Abdullah and Md. Ruhul Amin, The Contributions of Sufism in Promoting Religious Harmony in Bangladesh, Journal of Usuluddin, Vol. 45 (2), 2017, pp. 105-121
- 4 Obaidullah, Md. Abdul Momin and Mohammad Mahmudul Hasan khan, The Contribution of Sufi Saints to the Propagation of Islam and Socio-Culture in Bengal: A Review in the Light of Archaeological Data, International Journal of Social, Political, Economic Research (IJOSPER), Vol.11, Num. 2, 2024, pp.66-88.
- 5 Iftekharul Bashar, The Rise of Radicalism in Bangladesh: What Needs to Be Done, 23 December 2024, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore, Retrieved from: <https://rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/the-rise-of-radicalism-in-bangladesh-what-needs-to-bedone/>
6. The Times of India, Jan 19 2025, Retrieved from: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/actiontaken-in-all-44-vandal-attacks-on-mazars-bangladesh/articleshow/117365335.cms>; The Daily Star, January 19 2025, Retrieved from: <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/40-shrines-attacked-over-5-months380211>
- 7 The Daily Sun, 15 September 2024, Retrieved from: <https://www.daily-sun.com/printversion/details/767088>

Continued on Page 20

DEMOLITION OF RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL PROPERTIES AND HISTORICAL PLACES IN BANGLADESH DURING AUGUST 2024 TO AUGUST 2025

8 The Daily Star, 16 September 2024, Retrieved from: <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/no-stepstaken-over-vandalism-two-shrines-dhamrai-3704051>

9 Dhaka Tribune, 13 September 2025, Retrieved from: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/358382/shrine-vandalized-in-gazipur>

10 The New Age, 12 September 2024, Retrieved from: <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/245137/attacks-onshrines-trigger-protests>; The Daily Sun, 15 September 2024, Retrieved from: <https://www.dailysun.com/printversion/details/767088>; The New Age, 14 September 2024, Retrieved from: <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/245226/attacks-on-shrines-continue-amid-protests>

11 The Daily Star, 16 September 2024, Retrieved from: <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/nosteps-taken-over-vandalism-two-shrines-dhamrai-3704051>; BSS, 18 January 2025, Retrieved from: <https://www.bssnews.net/news/239280>

12 The Times of India, Jan 19 2025, Retrieved from: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/actiontaken-in-all-44-vandal-attacks-on-mazars-bangladesh/articleshow/117365335.cms>

13 The New Age, 14 September 2024, Retrieved from: <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/245226/attacks-onshrines-continue-amid-protests>

14 bdnews24.com, Retrieved from: <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/03e327b9d7b4> 15 Kalbela News, 1 March 2025, Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWdHfq0at90>

The author is a Professor of a University



SABOTAGING SOVEREIGNTY: THE ASSAULT ON BANGLADESH'S ECONOMY AND THE ROLE OF MUHAMMAD YUNUS

S M Maruf

Over the past fifteen years, Bangladesh has achieved significant progress in promoting local economic growth. Through a mix of government-supported infrastructure projects, SME financing, and focused industrial policies, the country proved that self-reliance was achievable. It became a real possibility. However, that progress is now being systematically undermined. The ongoing attack on Bangladesh's economy is not due to random unrest or natural market corrections. Instead, it results from deliberate interventions, both domestic and international, aimed at preventing the country's move toward economic independence. While foreign influence has historically shaped Bangladesh's development, what we observe now is not just influence — it is active sabotage.

To fully understand this unfolding crisis, we must examine both the colonial past and its modern-day extensions. The British Raj devastated Bengal's economic autonomy by forcibly integrating it into an exploitative global supply chain. Bengal's renowned muslin industry—famous for its craftsmanship and global demand—was destroyed through policy, taxation, and, in some cases, violent suppression. The British flooded the local market with cheap industrial textiles from Manchester, effectively killing indigenous textile production. By the time the British left in 1947, Bengal had shifted from a prosperous manufacturing hub to a raw material supplier and consumer market for foreign goods (Roy 2011).

This colonial blueprint never truly disappeared. Instead, it evolved. In the post-independence period, Bangladesh entered the global economic order under structurally disadvantageous terms. Neoliberal policies, imposed through conditional loans and trade agreements, prematurely and indiscriminately opened Bangladesh's markets. Domestic industries that were still in their infancy were forced to compete with subsidized imports. At the same time, institutions such as the IMF and World Bank pressured successive governments to adopt fiscal austerity, resulting in cuts to public investment in sectors that could have nurtured local industry (Sobhan 2002).

Amid this context, Muhammad Yunus's microcredit model gained international fame. Promoted as a grassroots revolution in development, microfinance in Bangladesh was portrayed as the antidote to poverty. However, numerous empirical studies have since dismantled this myth. Microcredit rarely funded business expansion or industrial growth. Instead, it concentrated on consumption-based lending—small-scale borrowing that maintained subsistence but did not transform it (Bateman 2010). Most recipients were trapped in high-interest cycles, borrowing from one institution to repay another, and often using loans for basic needs rather than productive investment (Karim 2011).

The true utility of microcredit was geopolitical. It served as a convenient narrative for the West. Rather than supporting Bangladesh's industrial autonomy or demanding structural reform in global trade, Western donors and institutions could point to Grameen Bank and say, 'development is happening.' In truth, microfinance deflected attention from the urgent need to build local factories, improve supply chains, and support national entrepreneurs. Yunus, willingly or not, became the poster figure of this diversion. His alignment with foreign media, corporate philanthropy, and even private sector giants allowed microcredit to flourish while local industry withered.

By the late 2000s, a new developmental model began to emerge under Sheikh Hasina's administration. For the first time, pub-

Continued on Page 21

SABOTAGING SOVEREIGNTY: THE ASSAULT ON BANGLADESH'S ECONOMY AND THE ROLE OF MUHAMMAD YUNUS

lic policy prioritized local industrialization. Bank interest rates for SMEs were reduced to single digits. State-owned banks like the Employment Bank and Agricultural Bank started disbursing loans to rural entrepreneurs. Cold storages were built, river dredging improved logistics, and digital payment systems expanded financial inclusion. Between 2009 and 2023, the share of domestic manufacturing in GDP increased steadily, while extreme poverty rates (national) dropped from 31.5% in 2010 to 18.7% in 2022 (World Bank 2024).

This shift directly challenged the microcredit orthodoxy. Yunus's model, based on atomized lending and donor mediation, was being overshadowed by an industrial-capital logic. And with it came friction. International praise for Yunus grew louder just as his domestic credibility started to decline. The confrontation between Yunus and Hasina's government in courts and political debates signaled not just a personal feud, but a clash over conflicting visions for Bangladesh's future. One (Yunus) vision relied on fragmented, donor-managed poverty relief. The other (Hasina) focused on large-scale employment, industrial production, and economic self-determination.

In July 2024, amid political uncertainty, violence erupted across key industrial belts. What began as protests over student quotas transformed into coordinated assaults on garment factories, plastic manufacturers, and pharmaceutical units. The showroom of YELLOW—a prominent local apparel brand—was vandalized, along with RFL's manufacturing plants in Comilla and My-mensingh. Gazi Tyres' production line in Narayanganj was halted after its factory was attacked. Footage from these events shows not spontaneous mobs but trained actors executing targeted destruction. These attacks bore the hallmark of sabotage, not protest (Daily Star 2024).

Following Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's abrupt departure on August 5, 2024, the violence escalated further. By mid-September, hundreds of thousands of workers across industrial and service sectors had lost their jobs. The garment sector—Bangladesh's lifeline—was paralyzed. The World Bank slashed the country's growth projection for FY2025 to 4.0%, citing 'industrial unrest' and 'supply chain collapse' (World Bank 2024). But these were not economic accidents. They were engineered events. They followed a clear pattern: destabilize local industry, create financial panic, undermine consumer confidence, and shift control of markets back into foreign hands.

It is within this context that Yunus's legacy must be critically reevaluated. He did not invent poverty, nor did he single-handedly suppress industry. But his model served to normalize a low-ambition development strategy—one that emphasized survival over prosperity. As Bangladesh moved away from that model toward one grounded in production, sovereignty, and self-reliance, the institutions that had once celebrated Yunus began to resist. Their support shifted toward destabilization. And Yunus, instead of defending local industry or condemning foreign interference, remained curiously silent.

The economic wounds inflicted in July and August 2024 will take years to heal. They are not just numbers in a GDP report. They represent ruined factories, unemployed workers, and the shattered momentum of a national project that dared to envision independence beyond flags and anthems. Rebuilding will require more than investment. It will demand the courage to name collaborators, reject models of managed poverty, and reclaim Bangladesh's economic narrative. The time for passive applause is over. What is needed now is decisive, nationalist, and production-led reconstruction.

References

Bateman, Milford. *Why doesn't microfinance work?: The destructive rise of local neoliberalism*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010.

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). "State of the Bangladesh Economy in FY2023-24: Third Reading." Dhaka: CPD, 2024. <https://cpd.org.bd/publication/state-of-the-bangladesh-economy-in-fy2023-24-third-reading/>

Daily Star. "Workers Bear the Brunt of Politically Motivated Attacks on Businesses." The Daily Star, August 12, 2024. <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/workers-bear-the-brunt-politically-motivated-attacks-businesses-3688326>

Karim, Lamia. *Microfinance and its discontents: Women in debt in Bangladesh*. U of Minnesota Press, 2011.

Roy, Tirthankar. 2011. "Where is Bengal? Situating an Indian Region in the Early Modern World Economy." *Past & Present*, 213(1): 115-146. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtr009>

Sobhan, Rehman. "The political economy of the state and market in Bangladesh." *Center for Policy Dialogue. Dhaka. Bangladesh*. Sobhan 344 (2002). https://bea-bd.org/assets/articlesPhoto/VolNo_20230404134108.pdf.

World Bank. "Bangladesh Development Update: October 2024." Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, 2024. https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/publication/bangladesh-development-update-october-2024_en.

The Author is a PhD Researcher and Assistant Professor at a University



GCDG PRESS NOTE



PRESS NOTE

Date: July 27, 2025

Contact: **President, Global Center for Democratic Governance (GCDG)**

Email: president@globalcdg.org

Address: 58 Leaman Drive, Dartmouth, NS, B3A 2K9, Canada

Website: www.globalcdg.org

GCDG Condemns Gopalganj Massacre and Calls for International Accountability

The Global Center for Democratic Governance (GCDG) unequivocally condemns the brutal crackdown on civilians in Gopalganj, Bangladesh. This violence culminated on July 16, 2025, when military and police forces opened fire with live ammunition, killing four civilians on the spot: Dipro Saha (25), Ramzan Kazi (18), Emon Sheikh (24), and Sobel Molla (41). A fifth person, Ramzan Munshi (32), later died from injuries sustained during the same incident.

These killings were preceded by a campaign of terror launched days earlier under the pretext of securing the area for a rally by the pro-government National Citizen Party (NCP). The violence involved widespread arrests, torture, and live-fire assault on unarmed civilians. Over 500 people were arrested, and hundreds were injured, many critically. Victims were denied access to medical treatment, and families were barred from funeral rites, post-mortems, and the issuance of death certificates.

Gravely disturbing is the arrest and detention of 18 children, including a child member of a family who simply went out to purchase milk, who remain in custody, subjected to degrading treatment. These actions amount to grave breaches of international human rights and humanitarian law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ICCPR.

The GCDG also expresses serious concern over the loss of the Bangladesh Army's non-partisan status, as it appears to have acted in coordination with police and administrative forces to target civilians. This militarized suppression follows threats involving the demolition of the mausoleum of the father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and further escalated community unrest.

GCDG calls on the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Procedures Mandate Holders, democratic governments, and global civil society to:

- Urgently investigate the Gopalganj massacre
- Secure the immediate release of detained children and civilians
- Hold accountable those responsible for extrajudicial killings and torture
- Issue emergency communications to halt ongoing violations

"The Gopalganj massacre is a crime against humanity. We demand justice for every child, every tortured soul."

We remain committed to pursuing justice through every available international mechanism.

For media inquiries or detailed reports, contact: contact@globalcdg.org

contact@globalcdg.org

+19024491316

www.globalcdg.org

58 Leaman Drive, Dartmouth, NS, B3A 2K9, Canada.
Incorporated in Canada, Number- 1679529-3



HOW “LOOT” IS BECOMING A NATIONAL CHARACTER

Dipu Ahkam

The First Wave of Terror

In the afternoon of August 5, upon news of Sheikh Hasina's departure from the country, in celebration, the demonstrators marched towards the Prime Minister's Office, the Ganabhaban (Prime Minister's official residence), and the Parliament complex. During this time, a large number of people entered these buildings and carried out widespread vandalism and looting. They took away whatever they could lay their hands on—furniture, televisions, refrigerators, clothes, frozen fish, ducks, chickens, goats—and emerged rejoicing. Many were even seen uprooting trees and shrubs from the gardens. Some brandished saris and undergarments in triumph. It was a vivid display of mass looting.

Circulated Videos on social media revealed that many of the looters belonged to the educated sections of society. Among them was former footballer Kaiser Hamid, who was seen carrying away items along with his wife and daughter. One army personnel was spotted leaving with a laptop. The army members deployed for the security of the Ganabhaban did not attempt to stop the pillage. After the looting, the Ganabhaban was set on fire.

This incident set in motion an unchecked wave of looting that spread from the capital to the remotest corners of the country.

Around 4 p.m., an attack was launched on the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum housed in the three-storied residence of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Dhanmondi 32. Every floor—laden with the memories of Bangladesh's struggle and Liberation War—was ransacked and then set ablaze, destroying priceless historical relics. Simultaneously, looting occurred.

That same day, Sheikh Hasina's late husband Wazed Miah's residence Sudhasadan in Dhanmondi, several official residences of ministers and state ministers in Minto Road (known as the “Ministers' Colony”), as well as the residences of the Attorney General and several judges were vandalized and plundered.

On August 5, homes of various ministers, MPs, and political leaders across the country were attacked, vandalized, looted, and set on fire. Among the most notable targets were the residences of former President Md. Abdul Hamid, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Local Government Minister Tajul Islam, Public Administration Minister Farhad Hossain, Land Minister Narayon Chandra Chanda, and Social Welfare Minister Dr. Dipu Moni.

In Bajitpur of Kishoreganj, MP Afzal Hossain's “MP Market” and the market owned by his nephew, Gazirchar Union Parishad Chairman Jewel Miah, were attacked and looted. The duplex residence of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, MP for Narail-2, and the two-storied house of Subash Chandra Bose, President of Narail District Awami League, along with properties of many local leaders were vandalized and robbed.

In Sherpur District, the Sadar Police Station, the magistrates' dormitory of the district administration, the Shreebordi Upazila Council office, various Union Parishad buildings, Awami League offices, and the residence of Sanuar Hossain Sanu, MP and General Secretary of Sherpur District Awami League, were all subjected to vandalism, looting, and arson.

In Araihaazar of Narayanganj, the residence of Whip Nazrul Islam Babu in Krishnapura, the textile mill and home of municipal councilor Jahangir Hossain, and the houses of three MPs in Lalmonirhat were attacked and looted. Similar destruction and arson occurred at the residences of Munshiganj-3 MP Mohammad Faisal Biplob, State Minister Shafiqul Rahman Chowdhury, and MP Ranjit Sarkar in Sylhet, where two pharmacies were burned and a fashion house looted.

In Rajshahi's Ranibazar, the political office and residence of City Mayor and Awami League leader AHM Khairuzzaman Liton were attacked. In Dinajpur, the home of District Awami League President and MP Bir Muktijoddha Mostafizur Rahman Fizar met the same fate.

In Mymensingh's Trishal, homes and offices of the MP and several Awami League leaders were vandalized and plundered. In Taraganj, Rangpur, attackers stormed the fertilizer warehouse of Awami League President Atiar Rahman and looted 460 sacks of fertilizer.

On August 6, homes of at least 20 MPs, including recently ousted Religious Affairs Minister Faridul Haque Khan, Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder, and State Minister Zunaid Ahmed Palak, were vandalized, looted, and set ablaze.

In Bagerhat District, at least 100 Awami League and affiliated offices, residences, and businesses were attacked in the same manner. In Barguna, the scale of violence against Awami League offices, homes, and businesses was immense, along with the looting of over a hundred ordinary traders' establishments.

At a press conference on August 11 in Barguna Press Club, businessmen alleged that after the fall of the government, they were extorted for huge sums of money. Upon refusal to pay, their shops were attacked and looted of millions of takas in merchandise.

In Khoromopotti of Kishoreganj town, the offices and community center operated by the Freedom Fighters were heavily vandalized, set on fire, and looted, causing losses of nearly 100 million takas. On August 5, every floor of the three-storeied building was ravaged. The Sadar Upazila Freedom Fighters' tin-shed office was looted as well. Seven air-conditioners, forty ceiling fans, a computer, a laptop, a laser machine, a camera, a photocopier, a generator, furniture, kitchenware, doors, chairs, carpets, basins, and stair railings were all stolen.

At noon on August 5, the Army Chief assured the nation in a speech that the military was assuming responsibility for citizens' safety. Three days later, an interim government was formed under Chief Adviser Dr. Muhammad Yunus.

While many blamed the immediate anarchy and the fragile state of the police for the looting, vandalism, and arson during the transfer of power, the second wave of destruction six months later disproved this notion. Some had warned from the outset that this was organized, structural terror, and subsequent events validated their claims.

Continued on Page 24

HOW “LOOT” IS BECOMING A NATIONAL CHARACTER

The Second Wave: Bulldozer Terror

On February 4, 2025, the verified Facebook page of Bangladesh Chhatra League announced that Sheikh Hasina, residing in India, would address the students via an online speech.

On February 5, at noon, the verified Facebook page of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement—which had led the anti-Hasina protests and was known as the interim government’s “powerhouse”—posted:

“If any media broadcasts the speech of this killer, genocidal, fascist Hasina, it must be ready to face the consequences.”

Later, at a press conference, the group’s convener Hasnat Abdullah stated that any media airing Hasina’s address would be deemed her accomplice. That evening, at 6:25 pm, he posted from his verified Facebook account:

“Tonight, the sacred land of Bangladeshi fascism will be liberated.”

Throughout the day, numerous activists had declared on social media that a “bulldozer march” towards Dhanmondi 32 would be organized. Around 9 pm, the July Revolutionary Alliance also announced a program heading for Dhanmondi.

On the afternoon of August 5, 2024, this historic residence and memorial museum had already been vandalized, looted, and set on fire. Again, on February 5, 2025, at around 8 pm, a group of violent individuals stormed the premises shouting slogans. They began vandalizing the property. Around 8:45 pm, they set the house ablaze.

Meanwhile, another group set fire to Sudha Sadan, the Dhanmondi residence of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina. Police were seen stationed on Mirpur Road near the entrance to House No. 32, while later, around 9 pm, army personnel arrived on the street. Neither the police nor the army intervened.

At approximately 10:45 pm, a bulldozer (excavator) was brought to demolish the house. Throughout the night, it was used to tear down the structure. By morning, a large portion of the front three stories had been demolished. Journalists present were informed that work would continue until the remaining structure was flattened.

That same night, in Khulna, the three-storied home of Sheikh Hasina’s paternal cousins—known locally as Sheikh Bari—was razed by bulldozer. In Kushtia, the house of Mahbubul Alam Hanif, Awami League’s Joint General Secretary and former MP, was bulldozed. In Cumilla, the house of former MP A.K.M. Bahauddin Bahar and the Awami League’s metropolitan office were vandalized and set on fire—properties that had already been looted on August 5.

The residence of Advisory Council Member and former Minister Tofail Ahmed, the former MP of Bhola-1 (Sadar), was attacked and torched. In Pirojpur, the house on Parerhat Road belonging to District Awami League President A.K.M.A. Awal and his brother, former municipal mayor and district Vice President Habibur Rahman Malek, was vandalized and set alight. Later, Malek’s filling station in the city’s New Bus Stand area was ransacked. The residence of Akhtaruzzaman Fulu, Joint General Secretary of District Awami League, in Khamkata village of Sadar Upazila was also set ablaze.

In the morning of February 6, the Noakhali District Facebook page of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement posted:

“Revolutionaries of Noakhali, be ready with bulldozers. March to Kauwa Quader’s house! Today at 11 am.”

Subsequently, the ancestral home of Obaidul Quader, Awami League General Secretary and former Minister, located in Mia Bari, Bororajapur village of Basurhat Municipality, Companiganj Upazila, was attacked, vandalized, and set on fire.

That same day, in Bagha’s Arani Municipality of Rajshahi, the residence of former State Minister for Foreign Affairs and MP Shahriar Alam was set ablaze. In Narundi, the ancestral home of Awami League leader Mohammad Ali, father of actress and filmmaker Meher Afroz Shaon, was set on fire.

In Khoromopotti of Kishoreganj town, the house of former President Abdul Hamid was also attacked and set ablaze. In Bogura, the offices of District Awami League and District JASAD (Inu) were demolished. Later, the Awami League office was mockingly declared the “Awami Abu Jahl Toilet” and the JASAD office was labeled the “Abu Sayeed Grand Mosque.”

In Savar, a “March to Manjuri” was proclaimed. Attackers stormed “Raj Manjuri,” the ancestral residence of Manjurul Alam Rajib, General Secretary of Upazila Awami League, and his brother Fakhrul Alam Samar, Joint Secretary. Local resistance prevented them from setting it on fire.

On February 7 at 10 pm, a group calling themselves “Student Public” attacked and began looting the home of former Liberation War Affairs Minister and Gazipur District Awami League President A.K.M. Mozammel Haque in Ward 31 of Dhirashram, Dakshinkhan, Gazipur. Announcements were made via mosque loudspeakers calling on people to intervene, claiming a robbery was in progress. Locals surrounded the property. As the attackers fled, fifteen were caught, beaten, and injured. Army personnel later rescued them and transported them urgently to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College Hospital.

The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, supporting the interim government, claimed the attackers as their own members and announced a nationwide protest against the injuries inflicted on what they called “innocent students,” alleging they were assaulted by Awami League “terrorists.” Subsequently, cases were filed against 239 Awami League members, and large-scale arrests ensued.

That night, the ancestral house of former Army Chief Moeen U Ahmed in Begumganj Upazila of Noakhali was attacked, vandalized, and burned.

The Third Wave of Terror: The Gaza Pretext

Another wave of vandalism and looting unfolded in the first week of April. Under the banner of *Tawhidi Janata*, protests were announced nationwide on April 7 to condemn Israeli genocide in Gaza.

From one such demonstration in Sylhet city’s Mirboxtula area, a mob attacked and ransacked a KFC restaurant and a newly

Continued on Page 25

HOW “LOOT” IS BECOMING A NATIONAL CHARACTER

opened hotel. One after another, outlets of Bata, Unimart, and several other prominent brands were looted and smashed.

At around 12:30 p.m., in Cox’s Bazar’s Sugandha area, a group of young men vandalized KFC, Pizza Hut, and Pansi. Between 12:30 and 1 p.m., in Bogura’s Satmatha area, the Bata shoe store was attacked by the *Tawhidi Janata*. In Gazipur’s Boardbazar, the Bata showroom met the same fate. Around 4:15 p.m., in Chattogram’s GEC intersection, KFC and Pizza Hut were vandalized. For many years, Bangladeshis have demonstrated in solidarity with oppressed Palestinians, but never before had such protests turned into systematic looting and destruction.

More Than Political Revenge: A Social Affliction

Immediately after the change of power on August 5, looting reached even the remote river islands (chars) of Mehendiganj and Hizla upazilas in Barishal, which are cut off from the mainland. Criminal gangs arrived in trawlers to steal hundreds of cattle and buffaloes grazing openly on hundreds of acres. They also seized the farmers’ harvests.

In Kainagar of Chandpai Union, Mongla upazila of Bagerhat, the home and shrimp enclosure (gher) of Hashem Fakir were attacked and looted. The attackers occupied his 156-decimal shrimp farm.

In Charghat upazila of Rajshahi, government water bodies were indiscriminately seized, and their fish were stolen. Continuing this spree, in the first week of March 2025, at least 10 fisheries in Sunamganj’s Shalla, Derai, and Jamalganj upazilas were looted. The legal leaseholders, who paid the government enormous revenue, were left penniless as millions of takas worth of fish disappeared.

In Rupdia Madhyapara of Jessore Sadar, 14 homeless families had been sheltered for over 50 years by landowner Sayeed Box. After his death, Jamaat leader Khabir Khan and his followers began claiming ownership. Though they failed in court, after August 5, they renewed threats to seize the land. On the morning of April 13, 2025, 60–70 armed Jamaat activists attacked, demolished all 14 homes, and beat men and women. Victims alleged that the attackers looted everything before leaving. Although police arrived, they did nothing, and the residents reported receiving new threats of another attack.

Seizing the opportunity created by the power vacuum, within hours in Sylhet’s Gowainghat and Companiganj upazilas, enormous quantities of stones—worth hundreds of crores of takas—were looted from the famous “white stone” areas of Jaflong and Bholaganj. From the evening of August 5 through the afternoon of August 6, hundreds of small boats carried away stone without obstruction.

In Jaflong, Awami League activists’ homes and businesses were also looted and torched. From Jaflong, Bholaganj, and Lovachhara—and all Sylhet’s quarries—the mass plunder continued unabated.

According to a report in *Prothom Alo* on June 10, 2025, in the 10 months following August 5, nearly 20 billion takas worth of stone had been looted—more than the total amount stolen over the prior 15 years combined.

Looting, vandalism, arson, and land-grabbing have grown into a form of nationwide anarchy, not merely an act of political revenge. Nor have only Awami League leaders, workers, and supporters been the victims. Rather, through the government’s inaction and tacit approval, this disorder has spread across society, harming countless apolitical citizens.

In the 54 years since the Liberation War of 1971, Bangladesh had not witnessed such mass lawlessness.

As part of their effort to unseat the uncompromisingly nationalist Awami League government, the US- and Euro-centric powers engineered a “Color Revolution.” One of its key tactics was to destabilize society and perpetuate that instability.

Marie Masdupuy, the French ambassador to Bangladesh and a prominent figure behind this Color Revolution conspiracy, compared the occupation of the Ganabhaban to the storming of the Bastille fortress. On July 12, while speaking at France’s National Day reception in Dhaka, she remarked:

“You have occupied the Ganabhaban as the symbol of a hated regime. Nearly a year has passed, and you will soon commemorate August 5. The values you are fighting for are very familiar to us.”

One day, I hope to be able to tell the French ambassador: those values may be familiar to you, but they are not ours. Unlike the French, we did not colonize nations around the world, nor did we enrich ourselves by plundering others’ resources. That is why we do not glorify looting.

The epidemic of looting that began on August 5 with the Ganabhaban was not spontaneous; it was planned. One day, we will surely defeat these international looters and their local collaborators.

Daily Prothom Alo, Samakal, Dhaka Tribune, BBC, Voice of America, Deutsche Welle, along with various national and international media outlets. Daily Prothom Alo, Samakal, Dhaka Tribune, BBC, Voice of America, Deutsche Welle, along with various national and international media outlets.

1 | <https://tinyurl.com/4wzpbcbz>

2 | <https://tinyurl.com/y6sukycc>

3 | <https://tinyurl.com/msufureb>

4 | <https://tinyurl.com/4m4wt8z7>

5 | <https://tinyurl.com/ybhmwvad>

6 | <https://tinyurl.com/ynh35dc7>

7 | <https://tinyurl.com/3cz59m45>

8 | <https://tinyurl.com/5ydjse4a>

9 | <https://tinyurl.com/577x45bh>

10 | <https://tinyurl.com/2s3u8hzb>

11 | <https://tinyurl.com/bd34tx82>

12 | <https://tinyurl.com/2rwhdmu8>

13 | <https://tinyurl.com/9ahxur6u>

The author is the writer of the book “101 days of Bangladesh 2.0



THE DOMESTIC CONSPIRACIES BEHIND THE FALL OF THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT DURING THE JULY-AUGUST 2024 MOVEMENT

Dr. Hufer T

After a year of the fall of Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government, now, it is completely evident that several vested quarters of Bangladeshi society were involved in different levels of conspiracies after the general election held in January 2024, along with US-deep state involvement.

It is known that all aggrieved groups came under a single covered issue, which is 'Quota Reform', in the July 2024 Movement. Be it political parties like BNP-JAMAAT with their old adversaries, be it a section of civil society who are employed in different NGO's or be it Dr. Yunus, the Chief Advisor of the Current Interim Government, with his legal cases or personal grudge with Sheikh Hasina.

However, a few organizational drawbacks of Awami League government also led the people of Bangladesh to participate in the July-August 2024 movement. One of the major components was that the Awami League was unsuccessful in establishing an effective link with the Dhaka-based urban middle class and upper middle class.

Though these sections are not directly involved in politics, they have the power to influence others. It is an educated section who are employed in different NGO's, UN based organizations, English Medium Schools and Private Universities etc.

Another failure is a lack of effort in monitoring international media and their activities. Many media persons received foreign funds to run blatant lies against Sheikh Hasina relentlessly for the last 2-3 years. For example: Tasnim Khalil, Devid Bergman, Kanak Sarwar, who once worked for Bangladeshi media houses, received funding from USAID to run Netra News through YouTube.

As an organization, the Awami League did not try to develop young and dynamic leaders who could connect with the new generation. This major failure, along with the conspiracies of vested quarters, led to the instigation of people against the elected government.

in this write-up, we would like to focus on some key issues that were capitalized by all groups to dethrone the Awami League from power.

A "meticulously designed" plan indeed.

Reinstatement of Quota System and the Role of the Attorney General's Office of the GoB

The spark was ignited as the verdict came in June 2024 from the High Court of Bangladesh about the reinstatement of the Quota System. This quota was abandoned by the Sheikh Hasina government in 2018. But mysteriously, the attorney general's office of the Government of Bangladesh did not respond at the very beginning of the hearing appropriately.

Notably, the Supreme Court Lawyers of Bangladesh had their representative election only few months back before the quota-related judgement came in June 2024. It raises a lot of questions about the implications of such a directive given by the court. The merit of the judgement creates a lot of confusion among the government job seekers as it contradicts the government's previous position.

The High Court comprising Justice K. M. Kamrul Kader and Justice Khizir Hayat gave the verdict to reinstate the previous quota system, which sparked ill-motivated conspirators to mobilize students and bring the students for street agitations [1].

Later, the Supreme Court scrapped the previous verdict given by the High Court, but it was too late. Students already took to the streets to prolong the movement, demanding that the government fall [2].

Legal Cases of Dr. Yunus and Deep State Involvement

It is clear from various sources and news that Dr. Muhammad Yunus continuously attempted to overthrow the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government to fulfil his own political and business ambitions. As he had to leave his Managing Director (MD) post in the Grameen Bank when he lost the legal battle, his revenge came into being in a great manner that led to the July-August 24 movement under the cover of the Quota Reform Movement.

He was charged with several tax-fudging cases previously too

The first verdict of his conviction for tax evasion came in January 2024. At that moment several other court cases against him related to tax evasion were underway. As a Nobel Laureate and because of his global image as the pioneer of micro-credit, he exploited his reputation and connection to manipulate the local politics of Bangladesh. He attempted the same in 2007-08 during Fakhruddin Ahmed and Moeen U Ahmed-led government. But failed due to mass protest.

But in 2024, he, along with other vested quarters, grabbed the power of Bangladesh and became Chief Advisor of the country with aid from USAID-funded NGO's.

Hill Tract and Quota System Grievances

Interestingly, not much clarification is given in the verdict about the reinstatement of 1% quota for tribal, small race and ethnic minority groups in government jobs. The honorable court only mentioned that small ethnic groups are still an economically

Continued on Page 29

THE DOMESTIC CONSPIRACIES BEHIND THE FALL OF THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT DURING THE JULY-AUGUST 2024 MOVEMENT

backwards class, so a reservation is required for them.

But, in the petition, no representatives from the tribal group or small ethnic minority group appeared in court, demanding such quota reinstatement. So, the question arises when such reinstallation of quota for ethnic minorities came as a verdict.

A few days later, it became more ambiguous when another verdict came from the Appellate Division of the Bangladesh Supreme Court. In the latter one, directive for all sort of reservations was given including to the small ethnic group quota while no one from the small ethnic minority appeared before court.

Here, we should highlight the fact that unrest has erupted in the Chattogram Hill Tract (CHT) area for the last couple of years. A few militant camps were also found in different parts of Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban with arms and ammunition.

News of deadly clashes between different ethnic groups also appeared in the media regularly but it remained unnoticed among the urban elites. Discussions regarding it in the public sphere were also absent.

Remarkably, in 2024 national assembly election, voter turnout remains absolutely zero in many polling centers located in the hilly areas [3].

Many link these clashes and grievances of ethnic minorities to the sudden abundance of their quota for government jobs in 2018.

Tax on Private Universities

Private Universities in Bangladesh were established under the Private University Act 1992. The act was amended in 2010. From its inception, several BNP-JAMAAT-affiliated businessmen were pioneers in establishing private universities. Currently, Bangladesh has around 108 private universities. Many Board of Trustees (BoT) members of these universities have direct link with BNP-Jamat.

After the Holey Artisan Café attack in 2016, many private universities came under scrutiny. Some measures in terms of monitoring were taken to curb the eruption of Islamic Militancy in these universities. However, after COVID-19 and the economic turmoil due to the Russia-Ukraine war, relaxation emerged in this monitoring process.

On the other hand, private universities, especially their BoT, became direct adversaries when an order came from the Appellate Division of the High Court regarding imposing VAT on these private universities. A long legal battle, which started more than a decade ago, came to a finishing end through such an order.

The way the National Board of Revenue (NBR) has frozen the bank accounts of different reputed private universities such as North South University (NSU), Independent University of Bangladesh (IUB) etc, particularly before Eid-ul-Fitr of 2024, created huge grievances among the BoT members and private university authorities.

Details of the scuffle between NBR and private universities can be found in this link

<https://www.dhakapost.com/economy/281183> [4].

The involvement of BoT members in the July-August 2024 movement is exposed when all the authorities organized a programme to mark one year of the so-called 'July Revolution' this year.

Curbing Militancy and Trial of War Criminals

There is no doubt that the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government earned huge success in terms of curbing Islamic Militancy in the country. Neighboring country India hailed her several times for uprooting the insurgency along its eastern border. The seven states of India (known as the Seven Sisters of India) were relatively stable. Separatist groups like Ulfa's activity was very limited during her regime.

The trial of War criminals of 1971 was also another success of her regime. The government executed 11 convicted war criminals to death. Several were given life imprisonment along with other punishments. As the auxiliary forces of the Pakistani Army, most of the convicted war criminals were connected politically with the Jamaat-e-Islami. So, the political rivalry against Awami League played the key role in last year's July-August Movement.

No Monitoring in Madrassas and Religious Schools

During the last couple of years, several thousand Madrassas were established in different parts of the country, specifically in the entry points of the capital like Jatrabari, Gabtoli, Uttara etc. Several Madrasas were also established in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Most of the Madrassas provide food and daycare facilities if the parents send their children to them.

This facility is considered a blessing as a huge number of female workers are employed in the Ready Made Garments Sector of Bangladesh. These female workers send their children to the madrassas in order to avail of day care facilities as well as religious education. But in the name of religious education, tender kids were given the lesson of radical Islam and commando training to establish footprints in society.

Unfortunately, effective monitoring was completely absent in Madrassas. Reports also emerged regarding the recovery of arms and ammunition from Madrassas located at different parts of the country [5][6]. These students and weapons were used during the July-August movement of last year.

Continued on Page 30

THE DOMESTIC CONSPIRACIES BEHIND THE FALL OF THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT DURING THE JULY-AUGUST 2024 MOVEMENT

False Image of the Awami League in the Media

Though Sheikh Hasina led-government passed the bill of Right to Information Act in 2011, has given license to several private television channels and newspapers during both her 1996-2001 and 2009-2024 regime, an image was created intentionally by several agencies that she wanted to control the media, that her government does not permit investigative reports, news etc.

The Digital Security Act was introduced during her regime but it was portrayed negatively. A perception was developed among the commoners that the Awami League government has its own media people; other than that, it does not allow any other media person or newsman.

No Monitoring in the Judiciary System

The judicial system is one of the important pillars of Democracy. Lawyers play a vital role in upholding the rule of law.

Unfortunately, lawyers with a background of BNP-Jamat affiliation are in leading positions in the judiciary. The party affiliation of lawyers played a very crucial role in July-August conspiracy. Regionalism also prevailed in the legal system, which ultimately demeans the spirit of the constitution of the country.

Lack of Monitoring NGO Funds

It is revealed that several development agencies such as USAID, UKAID, DFID, CIDA, etc, along with the World Bank, ADB, gave direct funds to several NGO's (Brac, Grameen, CPD, Democracy Watch, etc) of Bangladesh to research social issues. Through such funding, a network has been developed among local Bangladeshi people.

Several academicians of public and private universities were involved in these NGO's and development agencies as consultants and advisors. These academicians played a crucial role in last year's July-August movement, especially in shaping public opinion.

As the President of the United States of America shuts down the activities of USAID worldwide, many vocal academicians are now completely silent on the current economic and deteriorating situation of law and order in Bangladesh [7].

Anti-India Propaganda

A vested quarter in Bangladesh ran a smear campaign against India for the last 3-4 years. According to them, current Modi government of India is looting and colonizing Bangladesh at its maximum extent, which the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government completely failed to counter confidently with facts and true information.

Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government created a friendly environment for both countries, where both the neighboring countries were enjoying a peaceful environment, ensuring regional security. In her regime, she signed the Land Boundary Act (LBA) with India, sorting out a long-withheld problem of enclaves of the two countries. She signed a helpful trading deal like "Transshipment" and imported electricity from Adani Group's power station, located in Jharkhand.

Without Realizing Global Crisis, False Allegation of Price hike

Since 2020, the world has gone through Pandemic of Covid-19. Economy of the entire world was in peril due to successive lock-down, purchase of vaccine etc. The scenario turned into worst followed by Russia-Ukraine war. Several economic sanctions and counter sanctions were imposed on Russia by USA and several NATO countries and vice versa.

Without understanding the global crisis, a vested quarter in the country tried to portray this as the fault of the ruling party Awami League.

Apart from the given reasons, several reports related to corruption published in the media went unchecked and without any rebuttal.

Therefore, public perception among the core-supporters of Awami League also got confused and diverted.

Reference:

- [1] <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/court/352095/hc-releases-full-verdict-on-quota-reinstatement>
- [2] <https://images.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/sc-verdict-govt-jobs-93pc-merit-7pc-quota-3660211>
- [3] <https://bangla.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/election/national-election-2024/news-560516>
- [4] <https://www.dhakapost.com/economy/281183>
- [5] https://www.huffpost.com/entry/bangladesh-madrasa-found_n_178654
- [6] <https://en.parbattanews.com/illegal-weapons-and-ammunition-used-by-tribal-terrorists-recovered-in-rangamati/>
- [7] <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/trump-usaid-fund-dhaka-should-clear-the-air-3833021>

The author is an Associate Professor of a University



BANGLADESH WOMEN RISE AGAINST INCREASING INCIDENTS OF RAPE, VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT UNDER YUNUS REGIME (AUGUST 2024 TO JULY 2025)

The author is unwilling to disclose identity

The increasing violence against women in Bangladesh has shocked the nation and sparked protests across the country. From January to June (2025) of this year alone, 481 cases of rape involving women and girls have already been reported. Of these, 345 involved children. In the past six months, reports of violence against 1,555 women and girls have been published. Among the rape cases, 106 victims were subjected to gang rape. Of these, 17 were murdered after being raped. Following rape, murder was the most frequently reported form of violence. According to published reports, 320 women and girls were killed. Additionally, 51 women and girls were subjected to sexual harassment, and 34 were victims of stalking.

Last year, the media reported the killings of 528 women and girls. Furthermore, 181 were subjected to sexual harassment, and 43 were victims of stalking. There was also a significant number of reports involving mysterious deaths, suicides, physical abuse, cybercrimes, and violence or killings related to dowry.

From January to June 2025, a staggering 1,555 women and girls in Bangladesh were subjected to violence. Among them, 481 were raped, including 345 minors. Even more horrifying, 106 victims—including 62 girls—were gang-raped, and 17 women and girls were brutally murdered following assault. These are not isolated cases; they are part of a relentless pattern. In just six months:

- 51 women including 35 girls faced sexual harassment,
- 34 women including 25 girls were stalked or verbally abused, and
- 320 women were murdered, including 61 girls.

The data, presented in Figure 1, reveals a particularly chilling reality: minor girls are excessively affected by rape and sexual violence compared to adult women. These grim figures are drawn from the January–June 2025 report by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, the country's oldest and most respected women's organisation.

Behind these statistics also lie real human tragedies. For instance, in March 2025, during the sacred month of Ramadan, an eight-year-old girl from Magura Sadar Upazila was raped by a man who was—her sister's father-in-law. She later died from her injuries in a military hospital at Dhaka. This monstrous act shocked the nation and triggered mass protests, especially among students. Public outrage was fierce, but justice has yet to be delivered. No trial. No accountability. No closure yet.

In response to public pressure, the government moved swiftly—but superficially. Amendments were made to the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000, with promises of harsher penalties. When examined closely, these legal changes reveal a disappointing truth: the reforms are cosmetic, not corrective. Take the revision of Section 9(2). Before the 2025 amendment, this section mandated:

If the victim of rape dies as a result of the rape or from any act following the rape, the offender shall be punishable by death or life imprisonment, and liable to a fine not less than one lakh taka, with no upper limit. This meant judges could impose significant financial penalties—potentially millions of taka—based on the circumstances of the crime and the economic status of the offender. Further, the minimum penalty was one lac taka in any case. However, the March 25, 2025, amendment replaced this provision with “...the offender shall be punishable by death or life imprisonment, and liable to a fine not exceeding twenty lakh taka.”

The consequences of this revision are alarming:

- No minimum fine is now required, meaning the court can technically impose zero financial penalty.
- The maximum fine is capped at twenty lakh taka, removing the court's discretion to impose a harsher penalty, even in egregious cases.

In short, what was presented as a stricter law is, in fact, a dilution of justice. The government's response to the rape and death of a child was not bold reform—it was bureaucratic appeasement. While people marched on the streets demanding justice, the legal amendments quietly weakened the very tools meant to protect women and girls. In a country where violence against women is a daily reality, symbolic gestures are not enough.

This isn't just a legal issue; it's a societal crisis rooted in patriarchy, impunity, and a dangerous willingness to prioritise appearances over action. We must demand more than performative amendments. We need:

- Laws that deliver real justice, not loopholes.
- Courts that act with urgency, not delay.
- Leaders who listen to survivors, not silence them.

Until we treat violence against women and girls as the national emergency it is, more daughters will be buried, more families shattered, and more perpetrators emboldened.

Continued on Page 30

BANGLADESH WOMEN RISE AGAINST INCREASING INCIDENTS OF RAPE, VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT UNDER YUNUS REGIME (AUGUST 2024 TO JULY 2025)

A 35-year-old housewife from the Hindu community in Tala, Satkhira, has alleged that she was raped. The incident took place on the night of January 5. The woman is currently staying at home. She said that she had gold jewellery, important documents, and money in the house. An eight-year-old girl is in critical condition after being raped while visiting her sister's in-laws' home in Magura "some time between the night of 5 March and the following morning". "It is suspected that her sister's father-in-law committed the crime because we later learned he had a previous accusation of raping another girl. He also reportedly attempted inappropriate behavior with my elder sister, his son's wife, two to three times."

Violence against women is becoming a concern in Bangladesh. In just nine days, 24 women and children were raped in Bangladesh. Calling it a "pandemic-level crisis," At least 24 rape cases were reported in Bangladesh between 20-29 June 2025, according to Dhaka Tribune. Government adviser calls violence against women a pandemic-level crisis. Root causes include politics, drugs, technology, and social degradation

Universities in Dhaka and other parts of Bangladesh reverberated with collective chants against rape and sexual violence, with women students leading the charge. Women held midnight torch rallies inside Dhaka and Jahangirnagar Universities. The students of thirty graduate colleges in Dhaka blocked the historic Shahbagh junction, and many tried to break a police cordon to submit a memorandum to the Chief Advisor to the interim government, Prof. Muhammad Yunus, at his residence.

Women students in Bangladesh universities are no strangers to protests against rape and other forms of sexual violence, since sexual harassment continues to be rampant within and outside campus, and is hardly ever taken seriously. Female students of Dhaka University chanted, 'Tumi ke ami ke? Asiya Asiya' ('Who are you, who am I? Asiya Asiya') — the eight-year-old girl whose rape galvanised them to return to the streets.

In April, two women were attacked in Lalmatia, Dhaka, because they were smoking in public. A mob surrounded them, harassed them, and even physically assaulted them. Instead of punishing the attackers, some officials tried to justify the attack, saying smoking in public is "wrong" for both men and women. But does that give anyone the right to attack women in the streets? The public responded with protests in Asad Gate, Dhaka, demanding justice. Women's rights activists say this attack proves that certain groups now feel powerful enough to police women's actions in public.

The government says it does not support mob attacks or harassment. Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan stated that the government is against "moral policing" and that people need to be more aware. But is awareness enough? If women are being attacked in broad daylight and their harassers are getting bail, the problem is not awareness — it's a lack of consequences.

One of the biggest problems is victim-blaming. When a woman is harassed or attacked, people often question her clothes, behavior, or why she was outside at night. Instead of holding the criminals accountable, society makes excuses for them. This attitude makes it difficult for survivors to speak out.

Women students in Bangladesh universities are no strangers to protests against rape and other forms of sexual violence, since sexual harassment continues to be rampant within and outside campus, and is hardly ever taken seriously. Women in Bangladesh have been hitting the streets, protesting an increasing number of instances of rape and violence against women across the country. An absentee funeral for an eight-year-old girl was, for example, held at Dhaka University, in continuation of students' protests against the rape of women and girls across Bangladesh. The actual funeral was held in her hometown, Magura, amidst tight security, after she succumbed to the injuries of a violent rape earlier in March. In the first two months of this year, 298 women and children were reported to have been the targets of sexual violence. Of these, 98 women, including 44 children, were raped. Other forms of violence, especially mob violence, have been rampant.

Inside Dhaka University, a female student was harassed for not wearing a headscarf and for not being 'modest' enough. When the police detained the accused, a huge mob, including leaders from different student organisations, forced the police to release him. In another instance, two women smoking near a tea shop in Lalmatia were physically harassed by a mob of locals, following which the Advisor to the Home Department, Lieutenant General (Retd.) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, instead of calling for the perpetrators to be punished, suggested that both men and women should refrain from smoking in public, as it was a crime.

While there was a 60% quota for women in government primary school teacher recruitment, the provision was recently scrapped. This move is inconsistent with efforts to empower women and ensure their advancement.

The Muhammad Yunus government has failed miserably in checking incidents of rape and sexual violence against women. Women are being publicly humiliated over their attire, appearance, and mobility. Women are subjected to physical and verbal harassment in public spaces, while social media is being used to spread hate and issue threats against them. Such unchecked misconduct is encouraging perpetrators, further threatening women's progress.

References

1. <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/259585>
2. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/amp/bangladesh/nation>
3. <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country>
4. <https://www.indiatoday.in/amp/world/story/bangladesh->
5. <https://www.thekalbela.net/news/bangladesh>
6. https://www.itvbd.com/women/225623/%E0%A7%AC-%E0%A6%AE%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B8%E0%A7%87-%E0%A7%AA%E0%A7%AE%E0%A7%A7-%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%80-%E0%A6%A7%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%B7%E0%A6%A3%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%B0-%E0%A6%B6%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0-%E0%A6%B9%E0%A6%A4%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%AF%E0%A6%BE-%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%B0%E0%A6%BE-%E0%A6%B9%E0%A7%9F%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%9B%E0%A7%87-%E0%A7%A9%E0%A7%A8%E0%A7%A6?fbclid=IwQ0xDSwLR4gZlchRuA2FbQlXMQABHj6-W3zkCWf3cD2gVH8SWHRonRsjdw6gDV0YhTkxQSN0wNg7bvghScoiWBwF_aem_8g6zqllRcjEp7Cn-PRMPg

The author is a Professor at a university

THE ILL FATE OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS IN BANGLADESH AFTER 5 AUGUST 2024: A SCENARIO

Prof. Islam

Introduction

In Bangladesh, the teacher-student relationship holds deep cultural and emotional significance, rooted in respect, discipline, and moral guidance. Traditionally, teachers are revered almost like guardians, and their words carry considerable weight in shaping students' values and aspirations. While modern education has introduced more formal and institutional settings, the bond of mutual respect largely endures, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. However, growing commercialization of education, political influence in academic spaces, and rising generational gaps have somewhat strained this traditional connection. The quota movement and its aftermath of one point movement of ousting the Sheikh Hasina government has created a complex scenario in Bangladesh where teacher student relationship is in peril and very bad in shape.

The Background: Student Movement and Teacher Role

The student movements of 2024 in Bangladesh, particularly the quota reform protests, have significantly reshaped the teacher-student relationship, moving it from a traditionally hierarchical model to one based more on solidarity, empathy, and shared values.** During the height of the protests, especially in July, many university teachers stood beside students—not just symbolically, but through active participation in rallies, public statements, and legal support. Many other teachers also supported mentally when their movement was in the line of quota reform. Teachers from institutions like Dhaka University and Jahangirnagar University condemned the repression of students and formed advocacy groups, such as the University Teachers' Network against Repression, demanding justice and accountability. This visible support deepened students' trust and emotional connection with their teachers, fostering a bond rooted in shared struggle for justice. However, the political tension, arrests, and disruption of academic activities also strained the teaching environment. Delays in classes and exams created anxiety, and in some cases, confusion and mistrust. Yet, out of this turbulence emerged a new form of dialogue—one where teachers were not just educators but allies in the democratic and civic awakening of students.

Misperception about the Faculties of Pro-Awami League

The post 5 August 2024 scenario in Bangladesh brought a visible shift in the teacher-student relationship, marked by tension, mistrust, and emotional distance, especially in public universities. After the crackdown on student protestors, mass arrests, and reported custodial torture following the anti-quota movement's climax, many students felt abandoned or betrayed by those faculty members who remained silent or distanced themselves from the unfolding crisis. This led to a rupture in the trust that had been building between progressive teachers and their students during the peak of the protests.

While some teachers had stood in solidarity earlier, the perceived silence or caution from broader academic leadership post 5 August was seen by students as complicity or cowardice. In campuses like Dhaka University, Rajshahi University, and Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, students began expressing frustration that their struggles for justice, representation, and fairness were not fully backed when it mattered most. Simultaneously, teachers also felt increasingly constrained, with surveillance, administrative pressure, and fear of reprisal impacting their freedom to speak out or support students openly. This was happened when the student's movement was backed by political parties such as BNP and Jamat-e-Islami, and their student wings. Then, the pro-liberation teacher forces doubted that their intention was to oust the government, not only the reform of the quota. Thus, many of the university teachers kept silent when the government took initiative to suppress the movement.

This created a polarized environment where the earlier alliance of trust began to fracture. Many students now question whether the teacher-student relationship is one of genuine care or merely professional duty. However, the moment has also sparked a broader conversation in academic spaces about the role of educators—not just as transmitters of knowledge but as moral agents with a responsibility to speak against injustice.

Post 5 August Steps by Some Quarter of Students

The post 5 August scenario in the university was horrible which was never seen earlier in the history of Bangladesh. The pro-Islamic wings and pro-BNP student wings categorially targeted the teachers of all universities who were appointed by the previous government. These students created mob and forced all vice-chancellor, deans, and senate and syndicate members to resign from their posts. They even created panic situations and blockade the office and assaulted them to resign from their position. This was done systematically so that their like-minded teachers can hold the positions. According to the Daily Star reporting, students identified around 100 professors across multiple departments who were declared "unwanted" due to alleged support for the previous regime and suppression of the student protest. These teachers were temporarily barred from leading classes or participating in exams for several months [1]. The Daily Star reports that across the country, at least 150 teachers were forced to resign in the aftermath of Sheikh Hasina's removal on August 5, often through public pressure and humiliation. Many belonged to educational institutions nationwide universities.

Continued on Page 34

THE ILL FATE OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS IN BANGLADESH AFTER 5 AUGUST 2024: A SCENARIO

Table: List of Teachers Affected

Dhaka University

Action	Individual affected
Boycotted by the students of Shibir and Chatrodol	103 faculties in different departments
Issued letter for permanent termination	02 faculties in Institute of Education and Research
Called by anti-corruption	30 faculties who were in different position during the previous government
Case filed	20 Faculty members
Case on attempt to murder	25 Faculty members
Arrested and in jail	04 faculty members
Total case filed	104 University teachers
Illegally removed from Dean offices	10 elected Deans
Illegally removed from the post of Syndicate	06 elected syndicate members
Illegally removed chairman either by mob or by executive order	10 chairman of different Departments

Chittagong University

Action	Individuals Affected
Promotion Suspended	Assistant Professor Kushal Chakraborty
Forced Resignation	Assistant Professor Rontu Dash

Jahangirnagar University, Savar

Category Affected	Number of Individuals
Teachers suspended	9
Additional teachers investigated	10
Students expelled/suspended	289
Officials with revoked pensions	Former VC & Registrar

Rajshahi University

Institution	Affected Personnel	Nature of Disciplinary Action
Rajshahi University	2 associate professors	Suspended; possible termination
RUET (Rajshahi)	4 staff/faculty	Dismissed for alleged suppression roles

Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur

Category Affected	Number
Suspended and case file	07 faculty members
Suspended and case file	09 administrative officers

Jagannath University, Dhaka

Category Affected	Number
Suspended and case file	13 faculty members
Suspended and case file	10 administrative officers
Salary suspended	06 Faculty members

Continued on Page 31

THE ILL FATE OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS IN BANGLADESH AFTER 5 AUGUST 2024: A SCENARIO

Psychological Trauma of Affected Teachers

The psychological trauma and family destabilization faced by teachers who have been suspended, harassed, sacked, or publicly humiliated after the events of 5 August 2024—are serious and far-reaching. Based on human rights reports, media coverage, and precedent cases in Bangladesh and beyond, the consequences have manifested in several overlapping areas:

Anxiety and Depression

Teachers subjected to suspension, show-cause notices, and expulsion without due process reported extreme emotional distress. Many faced clinical depression, panic attacks, and sleeplessness, fearing surveillance, arrest, or job loss. Some were forced into isolation, fearing backlash even from colleagues or students.

Public Humiliation and Shame

When university administrations publicly condemned or suspended teachers, often without proven misconduct, the stigma caused deep humiliation. Social media campaigns labeling them as "anti-state" or "anti-national" worsened the impact.

Loss of Professional Identity

Academics build their self-worth around intellectual freedom and their status in the university. Being removed from that environment triggers a profound identity crisis, causing long-term psychological harm. Many senior faculty, especially women and those from minority groups, were devastated by what they saw as betrayal of institutional ethics. Some of the faculty members mentioned that they are in house arrest because they can't come outside due to fear of mob and arrest.

Family Destabilization

Economic Hardship

Sudden loss of salary, housing (in public universities), and job security left families in financial distress, especially for those supporting children's education or elderly parents. Teachers blacklisted from other institutions struggled to find alternative employment. One female teacher of Jagannath University mentions that she has three daughters of age group of 5 to 10. Her salary is suspended by the university authority. Thus, she cannot buy milk and food for her children.

Social Stigma and Isolation

In many communities, especially rural or conservative ones, losing a respected university post is considered dishonor. Spouses and children have faced social exclusion. In extreme cases, children were bullied at school, and spouses had to quit their jobs due to reputational fallout. A faculty of Dhaka University has resigned from his job because his daughter has been insulted in her school. The family has left the country and now settled in Australia. The son of the Ex-vice chancellor has also left the studentship and got admission in Australian university. There are numbers of examples of these kind of family embarrassing, insulting and harassment occurred after 5 August 2025.

Forced Migration or Exile

Some affected teachers reportedly left Bangladesh to seek temporary academic refuge abroad. Others moved to remote areas or changed professions, leading to family separation and alienation.

Gendered Dimensions

Female teachers faced additional trauma—such as online abuse, sexualized rumors, and disproportionate targeting. In some cases, working mothers were accused of neglecting family duties due to their involvement in protests or solidarity actions.

Case Examples (Reported or Alleged)

At Dhaka University, several prominent professors were mobbed by student wings, had their offices vandalized, and received anonymous death threats. One senior academic reportedly developed severe hypertension and PTSD symptoms.

At Rajshahi University, a teacher suspended for "disciplinary violations" was evicted from university housing within 48 hours, forcing his family into temporary shelter.

One Jahangirnagar University faculty member resigned after months of pressure, reporting that her teenage son had been targeted with hate speech on social media.

Quotes from Testimonies (Media Reports & Anonymous Accounts)

"They took my job, but more than that, they stole my dignity in front of my students." — --A senior professor, University of Dhaka
"I have no strength left to fight. My children ask me why the neighbors call me a traitor."

- A suspended lecturer, Rajshahi University

"We had to move out at midnight. No severance pay. My wife is clinically depressed now."

-A faculty member removed from Chittagong University

Conclusion

The trauma faced by these educators goes far beyond professional punishment—it reflects a broader collapse of institutional protections, academic freedom, and democratic norms. Without restorative justice, counseling, and institutional acknowledgment, these wounds risk lasting for generations—not just among faculty, but across their families and communities.

[1]https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/education/376673/backing-awami-league-during-uprising-over-50-du?utm_source=chatgpt.com "Backing Awami League during uprising: Over 50 DU teachers still barred from classes"



YUNUS REGIME HAS COMPLETELY CRUSHED THE LOCAL INDUSTRY TO PLEASE FOREIGN MASTERS

Dr. T. HuFer

The key condition for any business to flourish is a stable environment and improvement in law and order. However, such an environment has been completely absent in Bangladesh over the past year. Since the so-called quota movement began, garment factories in Ashulia and Savar have been severely affected. After Sheikh Hasina was forcibly exiled on August 5, these attacks intensified.

Factories have been vandalized in numerous places: RFL's plastic goods factory in Comilla and Mymensingh, Gazi Tyre's manufacturing unit in Narayanganj, and several pharmaceutical factories. Even the showroom of the clothing brand Yellow was vandalized—not merely out of resentment toward Salman F Rahman.

At first glance, these incidents may seem like public outrage or spontaneous acts, but in reality, they were part of a deeply rooted conspiracy—a long-term plan to cripple Bangladesh economically. The consequences of this are slowly becoming visible as institutions like the World Bank and others begin to forecast a downward GDP trajectory for Bangladesh. It is essential to understand why local brands and factories were targeted in such detail.

To fully grasp this issue, we need to look at the colonial strategies of the British Raj—their methods of imperial expansion, financial exploitation, and the ongoing effort to hinder the growth of local industries.

The British East India Company and various Arab, Dutch, and Portuguese navigators repeatedly came to the Indian subcontinent because of its strong economy, largely based on agriculture, including spices, rice, wheat, cotton, vegetables, etc. Due to fertile soil, a livable climate, and abundant water, crops flourished with little effort. The proverb “granaries full of paddy, barns full of cattle” didn't arise by chance. Being a tropical region, we don't need much electricity to stay warm, and sunlight is available year-round. Most activities in our riverine region centered around fishing. Our pride—the globally renowned muslin textile industry—was part of this heritage.

By the time the British left in 1947, they had brought all of this to the brink of destruction. For instance, the muslin and handloom industries were systematically ruined. We are aware of the forced indigo farming and the rebellions that followed. Indigo cultivation rendered fertile land barren, and farmers lost their capital. It is worth noting that Mahatma Gandhi's Swadeshi movement started with spinning wheels and Khadi cloth in protest against British exploitation.

The two World Wars of the early 20th century were financed largely by exploiting the Indian subcontinent, leading to famines, many of which were intentional, as some economists have demonstrated.

After independence from the British, India was divided into East and West Pakistan. Following World War II, the U.S. emerged as a new global player, bringing agricultural technology and advanced weaponry developed over the past 150 years. These were exported worldwide. In West Pakistan, this contributed to the rise of the “22 elite families.” However, the economic gap between elites and the masses only widened.

As a result, America quickly captured the market. Bangladesh was born in 1971 through a bloody war for independence. But even before the country could stand on its own feet, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was kept preoccupied and then assassinated in 1975, before necessary infrastructure and education could be developed to support local industry.

From 1975 to 1990, Bangladesh went through a dark era with almost no industrial progress. Then, in 1991, without any preparation, Bangladesh entered a free-market economy. Foreign products flooded the market, and VAT was introduced.

What was needed was an industry-friendly budget and easier access to loans—neither of which were pursued. Instead, a new global system called “microcredit” was introduced, supposedly to alleviate poverty. However, without state support, microcredit cannot eradicate long-term poverty, as has been shown. Yet, since this idea came from the West, countries like ours found it hard to challenge.

It was only during Sheikh Hasina's administration (2009–2024) that interest rates on bank loans for local industries were reduced to single digits for the first time. Though some mismanagement occurred, local entrepreneurs were able to access loans under favorable conditions. Through the Employment Bank, Agricultural Bank, and others, the general public received loans. Local supply chains were established. Cold storage, roads, and infrastructure improved. Regular dredging ensured the easy movement of goods. Farmers received fair prices, and workers earned fair wages. With more cash in hand and a fast money turnover rate, the economy remained active. Social safety nets enabled savings, which later returned to the economy as investment.

The majority of the population had escaped the vicious cycle of microcredit dependency. This is exactly why the former colonial powers were enraged.

Thus, just before and after Sheikh Hasina's departure, they struck precisely at this progress. Almost all major local brands developed over the past 15 years were attacked. An unstable environment was created. Investment and capital were aggressively targeted. Millions of workers have now become unemployed.

Will these wounds ever truly heal?

The author is an Associate Professor



THE CIA-BACKED COUP OF AUGUST 5, 2024 IN BANGLADESH

By Anwar A. Khan

The stark and unfiltered truth is that it has unleashed far-reaching and deeply destabilizing consequences in Bangladesh.

In the darkened recesses of geopolitics, the United States, cloaked in the illusion of democracy, wears a mask of hypocrisy, wielding its influence with cold, calculated selectivity. Behind this veil of liberty, its foreign interventions continue unabated, leaving a trail of blood, instability, and broken sovereignties. And once again, the CIA, that harbinger of foreign manipulation, has set its sights on Bangladesh. A nation born of sacrifice and the dream of freedom, now caught in the jaws of betrayal, crushed by forces that should have been its allies.

The year 2024 would mark a tragic milestone—August 5, a date when the history of Bangladesh's struggle for independence was sullied. That fateful day, a CIA-orchestrated coup, backed by treacherous local conspirators, toppled the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The steady hand that had steered the nation through waves of prosperity and development was now silenced, sacrificed to foreign whims.



Bangladesh Coup: Successful attempt by CIA, Bharat needs to be more cautious and alert

The favourite playbook of the CIA 'Student Protest' brought down the democratically elected government in Bangladesh. The unrest originated from student demands to remove a controversial government job quota system and escalated into ouster of a democratically elected Sheikh Hasina

WEB DESK - Aug 6, 2024, 08:00 pm IST in News, World, Analysis, Asia, International Edition



NEW DELHI: The recent upheaval in Bangladesh, marked by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation, has ignited intense debate over its implications for democracy, regional stability, and international politics. Critics argue that this crisis is part of a broader pattern of American interventionism and geopolitical maneuvering.

<https://organiser.org/2024/08/06/250582/world/bangladesh-coup-successful-attempt-by-cia-bharat-needs-to-be-more-cautious-and-alert/>

BNP, ISI, and other right-wing jihadist groups.

Bangladesh, once a proud testament to victory in the face of oppression in 1971, now finds itself ensnared in another web of foreign manipulation—this time, spun by the very powers that once stood against its liberation. The CIA's reach, long outstretched, once again jeopardizes the tenuous democracy forged by the blood of martyrs.

In 1971, Bangladesh had risen from the embers of colonialism, defeating the combined forces of Pakistan, the United States, and China, aided by India and the Soviet Union. The victory was a triumph of resilience and determination, and the nation stood as a beacon of freedom. Yet, in 2024, those same forces—the U.S. and its allies—returned with a vengeance, conspiring to unravel the very fabric of Bangladesh's independence.

This coup, like the ones before it, was no accident. It was the fruition of years of silent plotting. The so-called "anti-quota movement," masquerading as a student protest, was a mere pretext. Manipulated by extremist forces, these so-called students were mere pawns in a game orchestrated by the CIA and local allies, bent on creating chaos, weakening the government, and installing a puppet regime in its place.

At the core of this conspiracy stood Dr. Mohammad Yunus, a man with deep ties to the West. His rise to the position of Chief Advisor in the interim government of Bangladesh—following HPM Sheikh Hasina's forced, illegal, unlawful and unconstitutional exile in India—was the culmination of a covert operation to replace a government of the people with one loyal to foreign interests. This "interim" government, with Yunus at its helm, was no product of democracy—it was the result of a coup, facilitated by the CIA and backed by extremists like Jamaat-e-

The coup itself was executed with the precision of a military operation. As protests erupted and violence escalated, the real perpetrators remained in the shadows. Thousands of innocent lives were lost—lives sacrificed by extremist forces, including the so-called "Anti-Bangladesh Liberation Forces." These forces, with foreign backing, terrorized Dhaka, murdering civilians and protesters alike in their quest for power skillfully shifting the responsibility on the shoulders of HPM Sheikh Hasina.

Bangladesh, born from the crimson sacrifice of its people—of every faith—was meant to be a sanctuary of peace and unity. But now, that dream has been desecrated, stolen by those who opposed the very essence of liberation. The collaborators of the 1971 genocide—those monsters who sided with the brutal Pakistani army—now thrive once again. Jamaat-e-Islami mass-murderers

Continued on Page 38

THE CIA-BACKED COUP OF AUGUST 5, 2024 IN BANGLADESH

of 1971, their modern descendants, groups like Hizbut Tahrir, Ansarullah Bangla Team, Khelat-e-Majlish, Dhaka cantonment born illegitimate political squad BNP, et al, flourish under a government now installed by foreign interests.

More than eleven months have passed since the unconstitutional overthrow of Sheikh Hasina. Since then, Bangladesh has descended into chaos, its streets filled with lawlessness. Yunus, who ascended to power through a dark alliance with these very forces, took the reins on August 8, 2024. His government—comprised of thugs, mullahs, and a demoralized military—has plunged the nation into a pit of violence. Rapes, mob justice, and brutality have become the order of the day. The minority communities have been under their incessant assaults.

Once a shining example of hope and progress, Bangladesh now lies in ruin. Under Sheikh Hasina, the nation had flourished with monumental development projects, but today it has been ravaged, its future uncertain. The cost of living has spiraled out of control, forcing the people into despair. Factories have shuttered, plunging thousands into unemployment. The women workers, once the lifeblood of the nation's industries, now struggle to survive in a land that has forgotten them.

For over eleven months, Bangladesh has been shackled by fear and oppression. The nation has bled and burned since the coup, yet the money lender who now sits at its helm remains indifferent to the suffering of his people. His callousness deepens the darkness that envelopes the land.

In July and August of 2024, nearly 98% of the murders—the deaths of madrasa students, street children, and the destitute—were orchestrated by these same dark forces, who cleverly pinned the blame on Sheikh Hasina. Their aim was clear: to manipulate public sympathy, to flood the media with cash, and to seize the power they craved for their personal benefits.

Under this brutal regime, justice has become a hollow word. Bangladesh is ruled by jungle law, where the killers roam free, their crimes unpunished. The international community—embodied by the United Nations and its High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk—has turned a blind eye. Despite promises of investigations into the deaths of 2024, he fell prey to those dark people, prepared and released a concocted report on 12 February 2025 on their dictations. The Yunus government, with its puppet masters, seeks to protect the perpetrators, granting them immunity from prosecution. This "indemnity" is a deliberate attempt to shield the criminals who orchestrated the violence from the truth.

The Western media, which often claims to champion human rights, has remained eerily silent. Rather than expose the coup and the atrocities that followed, they have parroted the false narrative spun by the Yunus government and its CIA handlers. This selective outrage—the double standard—is a stark reminder of the hypocrisy that runs deep within the international community. It is a world where crimes are excused when committed by allies, while those committed by adversaries are condemned.

What is clear now is that the actions of the CIA and its local collaborators have resulted in a profound betrayal of the Bangladesh's people. The promises of democracy, freedom, and self-determination that were so hard-won in 1971 now seem like distant dreams, drowned by the machinations of foreign powers and their puppets in Dhaka.

Yet, despite all this, the spirit of Bangladesh's liberation remains unbroken. The people who fought for independence in 1971—who gave everything for freedom—will not stand idly by as their nation is sold out by the forces of imperialism and extremism. The struggle for justice is far from over. The criminals who have desecrated Bangladesh's sovereignty will one day be held accountable.

The people of Bangladesh, united in their resolve, will rise again. The day will soon come when the bare-faced truth is revealed to the full, when the perpetrators of the coup are exposed, and when the nation reclaims its rightful place as a beacon of freedom. Until that day, the struggle continues.

In the end, tyranny must fall, and the light of truth will pierce the darkness. The people of Bangladesh will rebuild our nation—not under the shadow of foreign powers, but in the spirit of the freedom fighters who gave their lives in 1971 for a better tomorrow.

Anwar A. Khan, a 1971 freedom fighter and advocate for justice, remains committed to writing on politics and international affairs



THE DIRTY DOZEN DEAL FROM YUNUS

Devadeep Purohit

Millions of Bangladeshi people had welcomed Muhammad Yunus as the chief adviser of an interim government with much fanfare last August – after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government – as they expected a "new deal" from the Nobel laureate economist.

Yunus, a favourite of the US establishment, grabbed the opportunity as it offered him a chance to be Franklin D Roosevelt – the American president who laid the groundwork to steer America out of the crisis after the Great Depression of the 1930s – of Bangladesh. The former professor of economics at Chittagong University, who perfected the art of PR in the latter half of his life, lived up to the initial expectations by announcing plans to reform the judiciary, police, finance, and public administration.

The man known as the poor man's banker also took a pledge to revitalise the economy and dismantle the "corruption-soaked network" created by "Hasina's Fascist regime" from the country's political and economic fabric. The world – especially the Westerners, generally oblivious of the realities of this sub-continent – saw a messiah in Muhammad Yunus.

He flew in from Paris to fill the leadership vacuum in Dhaka and proudly announced: "If action is needed in Bangladesh, for my country and for the courage of my people, then I will take it."

Cut to August 2025. The goodwill that greeted Yunus has retreated as ordinary Bangladeshis are openly voicing their utter disgust with Yunus and his regime. More importantly, some opinion makers of Bangladesh – weather cock, according to a veteran journalist – who had backed Yunus just a year ago are now singing a different tune.

Take, for instance, the recent comments of Debapriya Bhattacharya, economist and distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) in Dhaka. Last year, Yunus reinstated Bhattacharya in public life by entrusting him with the responsibility of preparing a white paper on the economy. The PhD in economics from erstwhile Soviet Union was singing Yunus's tune till a few months ago, giving sound bites on how Bangladesh shifted from crony capitalism to kleptocracy under the Hasina regime.

He has begun talking more about the lapses of the new regime these days. Last week, he stressed that the time has come for the interim government to define a clear "exit policy."

Such dramatic volte-faces have become common in today's Bangladesh, and most people blame Yunus and his cronies for the 180-degree shift in their opinions.

Against this backdrop, it is pertinent to assess some of the key elements of the Yunus regime's new deal for Bangladesh.

1. The economy shattered

The Yunus government organised an investment summit in April 2025 with a pledge to turn the country into a globally competitive and investor-friendly economy by 2035. Several tall claims – like \$150 million investment agreement with China and huge growth in employment – were made after the three-day conference.

These claims have remained only on paper as an unprecedented phase of economic hardship has hit the country, which had grown at a stellar pace during the time of Hasina. Persistent high inflation and a lack of employment opportunities have dealt a deadly blow to ordinary people. Bangladesh's banking sector is on the brink of collapse due to unsustainable proportions of non-performing loans, which have crossed Tk 5.3 lakh crore, about 30 per cent of total loans.

The future looks bleak due to political uncertainty and mismanagement by the Yunus regime. The World Bank has predicted a 3.3 per cent growth in GDP in FY25, reducing it from its earlier projection of 4.1 per cent, made in October 2024. The IMF has cut its growth forecast for FY 2025 from 4.5 percent (made in last October) to 3.7 percent.

2. Media silenced

The Bangladeshi media has faced systematic and organised repression since the change of guard in Dhaka in August 2024, though Yunus publicly advocated for press freedom. "Write as you please. Criticize," he said.

"Unless you write, how will we know what is happening or not happening?"

The reality, however, is different. Reports suggest that criminal cases have been filed against 182 journalists, about 206 others are implicated in cases of violence, accreditation of about 167 journalists has been cancelled, and inquiries have been initiated against 85 senior journalists by the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit, the anti-terror and anti-money laundering arm of the Bangladesh government.

The system is so oppressive that bail pleas of senior journalists like Mozammel Babu, Shyamal Dutta, Farzana Rupa and Shakil Ahmed, who have been languishing in jail on fabricated murder charges for about 11 months, are not even taken up for hearing.

"Press freedom has been under threat for years, but it has never been like this... Journalists have become favourite punching bags in the country, where so-called student revolutionaries have sweeping powers to harass anyone. So, media organisations have adopted self-censorship to be in the good books of the government and the notorious student vigilantes," said a veteran journalist.

Continued on Page 38

THE DIRTY DOZEN DEAL FROM YUNUS

3. Extortion culture

The fact that The Daily Star – a newspaper that had been a cheerleader of Yunus for years – commented on the rising trend of extortion across Bangladesh in a recent editorial makes it clear that the situation is grave.

The comment piece mentioned the gruesome murder of scrap metal trader Lal Chand alias Sohag in Dhaka's Mitford area by men linked with the BNP. The case of Abdur Razzak Riyad, a leader of the Students Against Discrimination (SAD), who extorted an ex-MP's family and pressured another ex-MP into signing cheques worth crores, also featured in the piece.

These two incidents are just the tip of the iceberg in a country where extortion has become a social culture, and some of the student leaders, who were at the forefront of the movement against Hasina, have become millionaires in just a few months.

Given the spread of the extortion economy – in the absence of normal economic activity – some commentators have sarcastically suggested that the government declare a National Extortion Development Policy.

4. Mobocracy boom

Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), one of the leading human rights and legal aid organizations in Bangladesh, brought out a recent report that claimed at least 179 people were killed in mob attacks between August 2024 last year and June 23 this year.

The Yunus regime – by giving impunity to people who ran amok last July and August – has encouraged mobocracy to such an extent that a mob has the power to assault a former chief election commissioner, who was also a valiant freedom fighter.

Following the attack on K.M. Nurul Huda, 30 eminent citizens, in a joint statement, expressed deep concern over the rising trend of mob violence in the country and urged the government, law enforcement agencies, and political parties to firmly oppose such acts of lawlessness.

Unfortunately, no visible action has been taken in Yunus's Bangladesh, where Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Dhanmondi-32 residence was demolished by a mob in the presence of men in uniform.

5. Academics affected

As the twenty-something new generation of leaders – products of last year's anti-Hasina protests – call the shots in Bangladesh and organise various programmes to decry the "former Fascist regime", the next generation of learners suffer the most.

The sudden rise of the student leaders as national heroes and policy makers has the potential to disincentivize excellence, said a professor.

"We were taught that academic excellence is the key to success... The new generation of leaders has turned that doctrine upside down by reaching the top by leading violent street protests. They are glorifying violence, carrying arms and also minting money through extortion," he explained.

"Some of the top student co-ordinators are not even college pass-outs. They are bad examples for our next generations. Yunus should be held responsible for destroying the Bengali culture, where pursuing academic excellence was always held in high esteem," he went on.

Besides, regular incidents of unrest in academic institutions and attacks on teachers under any pretext have cast a shadow on the country's education system.

6. Women subjugated

Gone are the days when high participation of women in the Bangladeshi workforce became a topic of discussion at seminars. Following the change of guard in Dhaka, atrocities on women in Bangladesh are drawing the world's attention, as there has been a phenomenal rise in crimes against women in Bangladesh.

Islamist radicals, who strongly back the Yunus regime, recently hit the streets demanding the trashing of a Women's Reform Commission report that recommended equal rights for women in matters of inheritance, divorce, property, and marriage. Videos of Islamist radicals stripping a woman's effigy and beating it with shoes went viral after the protest rally.

According to a report by Dhaka Tribune, more than 24 cases of rape were reported in the country between June 20 and June 29 this year. Even insiders in the Yunus regime have described the sexual violence as a 'pandemic-level crisis.'

7. Minorities petrified:

A sharp rise in violence against Hindus, since the deposition of Hasina in August 2024, has raised serious apprehensions regarding the status of religious minorities in Bangladesh. The brazen rape and public humiliation of a married Hindu woman in Bangladesh's Cumilla region in June brought into focus how insecure minorities are in the nation.

Continued on Page 39

THE DIRTY DOZEN DEAL FROM YUNUS

The last few months have seen instances of brutal attacks on minorities for allegedly hurting religious sentiments or attacks on places of worship. India has repeatedly taken up the issue of “systematic persecution” of minorities with the Yunus regime, but Dhaka has been in a state of denial.

8. Rising fundamentalism

A streak of Islamic extremism that had long lurked beneath Bangladesh's secular facade is now out in the open, with Jamaat-e-Islami playing a key role in national politics since August 2024.

Several radicals and terrorists, including ABT (Ansarullah Bangla Team) Chief Mufti Jashimuddin Rahmani and several of his aides, either escaped or were released last August, which paved the way for the regrouping of the organisation.

The Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HuT), a pro-Caliphate transnational radical Islamic outfit, which played a key role in the regime change, has become active across campuses. There are also reports that the JMB (Jama'at Mujahideen Bangladesh) has enhanced its organisational activities, which increases security risk for the entire sub-continent.

Do not forget the presence of over 1.4 million Rohingya refugees, who are prone to radicalisation and recruitment by terrorist groups. This means the Yunus regime has created a perfect ecosystem to ensure the consolidation of Islamic radicals.

9. History rewritten

The interim regime dropped the title "Father of the Nation" from a key law honoring the country's freedom fighters in an attempt to erase Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from the narrative of the Liberation War. Yunus has cancelled eight national holidays associated with Bangabandhu and the War of Liberation that led to the founding of the nation in 1971. His cronies are also busy trying to pit 2024 against 1971, which indicates a meticulous plan to rewrite the country's history.

Under Yunus, Bangladesh even saw the release of convicted war criminal ATM Azharul Islam and attacks by Jamaat-Shibir on rallies that were organised to protest the verdict.

A peaceful rally by the Democratic Student Alliance at Rajshahi University, on May 27, was attacked for protesting the impunity given to Islam. In protest, another rally was held on May 28 at Chittagong Press Club, which also came under attack by Islamists, who came under the banner of the “Anti-Shahbagh Unity.”

10. Brain-drain hastened

Against this backdrop, bright young minds are leaving the country in droves as they do not see a future in Bangladesh.

"I can't be an extortionist... I don't have any hope in this country. I will finish off my plus-two level studies and go to England," said a student of XIth standard, who is waiting to run away from Bangladesh.

11. Distressed diplomacy

Yunus may have been a world-renowned figure, but Bangladesh's diplomatic ties have been badly hit since he took charge in August.

Not only did he embarrass the foreign service officers of Bangladesh with his comments on India's north eastern states, but his failure to rein in his cronies from making inappropriate comments about the neighbouring country has pushed India-Bangladesh ties to a nadir.

"His so-called state visit to England was a huge mistake as his pleas for a meeting with Keir Starmer went unheard.. It was a major embarrassment," said a source in Dhaka.

12. Goebbelsian culture

The Achilles' Heel of the Yunus regime will be its denial to admit mistakes and learn from them. Instead of admitting mistakes, the Yunus regime has adopted tactics used by Nazi Germany's minister of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels.

So, mobocracy is justified as effervescence of revolution, attacks on Hindus are referred to as attacks on the discredited Awami League and atrocities on women are called stray incidents.

Yunus's spin doctors swat away questions on economic mismanagement, lawlessness and the rise of fundamentalist forces as Indian media's propaganda.

Such deception and manipulation may deflect attention for a few months, but there is little doubt that the clock has started ticking

Devadeep Purohit, senior Indian journalist



THE POLITICAL ABUSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMES TRIBUNAL FOR THE TRIAL OF THE JULY-AUGUST HAPPENINGS

Prof. Dr. Jac C.

In a dramatic turn of events on 05 August 2024, ousted former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and several of her close allies now face serious criminal charges under the *International Crimes Tribunal Act of 1973*. The allegations are grave: aiding and abetting a brutal and systematic assault on unarmed students [1]. These alleged accusations, if proven, signal a troubling abuse of power within echelons of government. However, the most pressing question remains — have these allegations already been substantiated? This query is crucial as the integrity of our government institutions *should* depend on transparency and accountability. Further, it is imperative that we seek the truth to determine whether those in positions of authority are held responsible for their actions.

Criminal Charges against the Ousted Political Party: A Political Vendetta?

Accusing ousted political governments, however, isn't an isolated incident in Bangladesh's turbulent political landscape. Prosecution of former heads of State has, regrettably, become a recurring chapter in the nation's history. For instance, former President H.M. Ershad was convicted in the high-profile Janata Tower corruption case and initially sentenced to seven years in prison — a verdict later upheld and modified by the High Court Division [2]. Similarly, former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia was convicted in both the Zia Orphanage Trust and Zia Charitable Trust cases, receiving sentences of five and seven years' imprisonment for corruption and abuse of power [3]. While these cases may seem like a step toward accountability, they also raise important questions about the consistency, timing, and motivation behind such prosecutions. Are these efforts genuine attempts to uphold the rule of law, or are they politically charged instruments used to discredit rivals and silence dissent? As Bangladesh stands at yet another crossroads, the stakes are high—not just for those facing charges against political crackdown, but for the integrity of the nation's democratic and judicial institutions. Justice must be served, but it must also be seen to be fair, impartial, and free from the shadow of political vendetta. However, are the current allegations against ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina an unprecedented event or a part of our political legacy?

The Legacy of Political Crackdowns in Bangladesh: A Retrospect

As reported in contemporary media and newspaper reports on 14 February 1983, students and other ordinary people, including children, protested against a new education policy that allegedly discriminated against and commercialised students' right to education [4]. At least 10 people, mostly students, were killed in that crackdown nearly a year after the former military dictator Ershad seized power [5]. In another crackdown organised by the 21-party alliance on 24 November 1987, more than 1500 political leaders and workers were arrested, and at least 10 people, including two police officials, were killed in the crackdown [6]. Finally, during the mass upsurge from 10 October to 4 December 1990, around 100 protesters sacrificed their lives to mark the starting point to restore parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh [7]. However, *no officers were ever charged with Noor's murder. No officers were charged during all of Gen Ershad's time in power, despite hundreds of protesters being killed by police* [8].

Political violence in Bangladesh did not end with the fall of military rule — it persisted during the democratic era, particularly under the Government led by the former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. Between 2002 and 2006, during the BNP-led regime, the country witnessed a sharp increase in extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and unlawful detentions. One of the most controversial initiatives during this period was Operation Clean Heart, which mobilised over 40,000 members of the military, police, and paramilitary forces to carry out so-called crime prevention operations across the country [9].

In an alarming move, the BNP-Jamaat alliance Government passed an indemnity bill shielding all security personnel involved in the operation from legal accountability for actions committed between 16 October 2002 and 9 January 2003 under the "Operation Clean Heart" program. However, in a landmark judgment on 13 September 2015, the High Court Division declared the bill unconstitutional and illegal [10]. Crucially, the Court ruled that any individual harmed by "Operation Clean Heart" has the right to seek compensation from the Government [11], underscoring that the ultimate responsibility lies with the State, which commands and controls its security forces. Further deepening the culture of repression, the BNP-led Government established the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) on 26 March 2004. While initially portrayed as an elite force for combating serious crime, RAB quickly gained notoriety for widespread human rights violations. Between 2004 and 2008 alone, at least 1,062 people were reportedly killed in extrajudicial encounters [12]—a staggering toll that sparked national and international condemnation.

Politicised Prosecution: A New Phenomenon or Historical Parallels in Bangladesh?

The discussion so far makes one thing clear that alleged political crackdowns and systematic repression of opposition parties are not new phenomena in Bangladesh. Such tactics have been used repeatedly over decades to suppress dissent. What is unprecedented, however, after the political unrest of July–August 2024 is the extraordinary legal manoeuvring by the student-backed interim Government led by Professor Dr. Muhammad Yunus. For the first time in the nation's history, political protest of a democratic government is being framed and prosecuted as crimes against humanity—a label traditionally reserved for atrocities during war. Although the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act (ICT Act) had already existed since 1973, previous political protests and their resulting crackdowns were handled under ordinary criminal law.

Continued on Page 43

THE POLITICAL ABUSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMES TRIBUNAL FOR THE TRIAL OF THE JULY-AUGUST HAPPENINGS

Punishing without Proof: A Violation of a Cornerstone of the Criminal Justice System

In a dramatic shift, the Yunus-led interim Government amended the ICT Act twice, first on 10 February 2025 and again on 10 May 2025. The second amendment introduced Section 20B, a sweeping and controversial provision that grants the ICT Tribunal unprecedented powers: the authority to ban political parties entirely through the discretionary power of the government [13]. According to Section 20B, the Tribunal may prohibit, suspend, or dismantle any organisation if it appears to the Tribunal that the organisation has committed or supported crimes under Section 3(2) of the Act. This includes confiscating property, cancelling registration, and terminating licenses [14]—actions that go far beyond punishing individual wrongdoing and strike at the very foundation of political pluralism. Pertinently ‘appears to’ [15] does not mean the proof of a crime ‘*beyond reasonable doubt*’, which remains the cornerstone of our criminal justice system. Despite amending the ICT Act to empower the Tribunal, many hoped the Yunus-led interim Government would at least ensure a fair and transparent judicial process before taking any punitive action against the Bangladesh Awami League — the oldest and one of the most influential political parties in the country.

The Due Process Undone: Ban on a Political Party without Trial

Shockingly, instead of allowing the Tribunal to independently assess any alleged crimes, the Yunus-led interim Government bypassed the due process altogether. Even before any formal trial had concluded before the ICT tribunal, through an administrative order (SRO), the interim Government suspended all activities of the Awami League under Section 18(1) of the *Anti-Terrorism Act 2009* (ATA). As mentioned in the SRO, such administrative sanction under ATA 2009 will continue until the trials against the leaders and workers of the Bangladesh Awami League, its allied wings, and its sister organisation are not completed before the *International Crimes Tribunal 1973* [16]. *This pre-emptive ban sets a deeply troubling precedent. It effectively punishes an entire political organisation without a verdict, denying the fundamental legal principle of “innocent until proven guilty.” To make matters worse, the Election Commission followed suit, suspending the Awami League’s registration on the very same day [17], further stripping the party of its political legitimacy before a fair hearing could take place. To inform the readers, Section 20(1) of the ATA 2009 authorises the government to seal offices, freeze bank accounts, and confiscate the property of any banned political party [18]. Yet, applying such extreme measures to a political entity still under investigation—not conviction—is not only disproportionate but also in clear violation of Section 6(1) of the Political Parties Ordinance 1978 (PPO). This ordinance explicitly safeguards the operational rights of political parties, ensuring they cannot be arbitrarily dismantled by executive action.*

Superseding the Political Parties Ordinance 1978: A Violation of Legislative Precedence?

Under the *Political Parties Ordinance 1978* (PPO), if the government believes that a political party is engaged in activities threatening the sovereignty, integrity, or security of Bangladesh—such as maintaining secret wings or armed cadres—the law explicitly mandates that the matter must be referred to the High Court Division for a decision [19]. This is not optional; the use of the word “shall” in the statute confirms the compulsory nature of judicial oversight in such matters. This clear procedural safeguard directly contradicts Section 18(1) of the *Anti-Terrorism Act 2009* (ATA), which allows the government to unilaterally ban an organisation based on allegations of terrorist activities, without any prior judicial review. While deciding on such legal conflicts, courts usually apply principles of statutory interpretation to determine which law prevails. One such principle, *lex specialis derogat legi generali*—meaning the specific law overrides the general one [20] — is particularly relevant here. Although the ATA 2009 was enacted after the PPO 1978, the PPO is a special law crafted exclusively to regulate political parties, whereas the ATA is a broader anti-terror law. Therefore, in matters relating to political party regulation, the PPO 1978 must take precedence.

As such, any attempt to ban the Bangladesh Awami League through an administrative order under the ATA 2009, bypassing the High Court Division, constitutes a blatant violation of due process and legal safeguards enshrined in both the PPO 1978 and the Constitution of Bangladesh. Article 31 of the Constitution provides that every citizen has the inalienable right to the protection of the law and must be treated strictly in accordance with the law [21]. It further prohibits any action that harms a person's life, liberty, property, or reputation unless it is carried out in full compliance with legal procedures [22]. Thus, even if the Yunus-led interim Government framed its allegations under the ATA 2009, the interim Government's failure to seek judicial determination as required under the PPO 1978 renders its actions unconstitutional and legally untenable. Upholding the rule of law means respecting not only the outcome of legal processes but also the process itself, especially when fundamental rights and democratic institutions are at stake.

Blanket Bans on Constitutional Rights: Is it Criminalising Support and Silencing Our Voices?

The relevant provisions of ATA 2009, therefore, are applied to ban political parties without trial, which suffers from Constitutional validity. Enshrined in Part III of the Constitution of Bangladesh, this right forms the bedrock of a democratic society. At the very outset of this part, Section 26(2) declares unequivocally: “*The State shall not make any law inconsistent with any provisions of this Part, and any law so made shall, to the extent of such inconsistency, be void*” [23]. This clause ensures that no legislation can unduly override or erode the fundamental rights of citizens granted in the Constitution. Yet, the Yunus-led interim Government, by amending the *Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) 2009* and applying it to ban political parties, has not only ignored this constitutional safeguard—it has

Continued on Page 44

THE POLITICAL ABUSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMES TRIBUNAL FOR THE TRIAL OF THE JULY-AUGUST HAPPENINGS

escalated the violation of core democratic freedoms. A couple of provisions in the amended ATA 2009 may now infringe upon freedom of thought, conscience, and expression, rights guaranteed to every citizen, regardless of their political affiliation.

When we read Sections 20(1) and 20(1)(e) of the original ATA 2009 together, the consequences become starkly clear. These provisions articulate that if a person or organisation is banned under Section 18, the government may go further to prohibit the publication, printing, or circulation of press statements, public speeches, or even press conferences made by or in support of the banned entity [24]. In effect, this creates a blanket censorship regime, one that criminalises speech, opinion, and public discourse, even among individuals who have no direct or indirect ties to any political group. Such a sweeping restriction undermines the right to free speech and imposes an authoritarian model of information control that is incompatible with the Constitution of Bangladesh.

Silencing a Nation: How the ATA Undermines Our Constitutional Freedoms

Alarming, the 2025 amendment to the *Anti-Terrorism Act* 2009 (ATA) significantly expanded the scope of State power, imposing broad and unprecedented restrictions on two of the most essential democratic freedoms: freedom of expression and freedom of assembly [25]. These rights are not privileges granted by the government—they are fundamental guarantees under the Constitution of Bangladesh and form the cornerstone of any functioning democracy. As amended, Section 20(1) read with Section 20(1)(e) of ATA 2009 authorises the government to go far beyond banning a political entity. It empowers the State to prohibit the publication or printing of any press statement made by, on behalf of, or even in support of a proscribed organisation. The ban extends to all forms of media—print, digital, social media—as well as public demonstrations, press conferences, processions, and speeches [26].

As previously noted, Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) No. 137-Law/2025, issued by the Yunus-led interim Government on 12 May 2025, declares that the ban on Bangladesh Awami League—along with its affiliated and sister organisations—will remain in effect until the trial of Bangladesh Awami League—along with its affiliated and sister organisations are completed before the International Crimes Tribunal [27]. This open-ended restriction, grounded in mere accusations rather than convictions, sends a chilling message not only to political actors but to ordinary citizens across the country. In such a climate, even expressing an opinion online—on platforms like Facebook or Instagram—could be seen as dissent, leaving citizens fearful of surveillance, harassment, or even legal repercussions.

As mentioned on the SRO, this approach of the interim Government rests on a statutory presumption embedded in Section 18(1) of the ATA 2009: that if not banned, the removed party could endanger national law and order [28]. But this presumption replaces evidence-based justice with executive speculation, effectively punishing without proof [29]. Such an assumption flips the burden of proof, violating the constitutional right to a fair trial, as enshrined in Article 32 of the Constitution of Bangladesh: “No person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty save in accordance with law.” Alongside this, Article 31 affirms that every citizen has the inalienable right to the protection of law and must be treated strictly “in accordance with law, and only in accordance with law.”

To interpret the power of these constitutional provisions meaningfully, we may draw insight from *Bailey v. Alabama*, where the U.S. Supreme Court warned against the dangers of legal presumptions that undermine due process. The Court held, “a constitutional prohibition cannot be transgressed indirectly by the creation of a statutory presumption any more than it can be violated by direct enactment. The power to create presumptions is not a means of escape from constitutional restrictions” [30]. Similarly, in Bangladesh, if the government can restrict the liberty of individuals or political groups based solely on projected threats without fair adjudication, then the rule of law itself stands at risk.

Retrospective Criminal Effect: A Dangerous Precedent for Democracy

Eventhough the Yunus-led interim Government manages to suppress public sentiment by invoking the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) 2009, and ultimately succeeds in banning a political party under the newly added Section 20B of the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act 1973, such an action would constitute a direct and undeniable violation of the fundamental rights guaranteed under Part III of the Constitution of Bangladesh. As discussed, the amendment to the ICT Act on 11 May 2025, and (SRO) No. 137-Law/2025 signals a clear intent to prosecute the Bangladesh Awami League—the country’s oldest political party—and its members for alleged actions that occurred on or before 5 August 2024. However, this raises a serious constitutional red flag. Article 35(1) of the Constitution states unambiguously:

No person shall be convicted of any offence except for violation of a law in force at the time of the commission of the act charged as an offence, nor be subjected to a penalty greater than, or different from, that which might have been inflicted under the law in force at the time of the commission of the offence.

This Article enshrines the principle against retroactive criminal legislation—a cornerstone of any fair legal system. By seeking to apply newly enacted or amended laws to past actions, the Yunus-led interim Government is attempting to criminalise conduct that was not legally punishable at the time it occurred. This is not only unconstitutional—it is a betrayal of the very foundations of justice. Retroactive application of law, particularly for political purposes, opens the door to authoritarian abuse, where laws are weaponised not to protect society, but to eliminate opposition. In such a system, no individual or group can feel secure, not because they are guilty, but because guilt becomes whatever the State retroactively defines it to be. Upholding Article 35(1) is therefore not just about protecting

Continued on Page 45

THE POLITICAL ABUSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMES TRIBUNAL FOR THE TRIAL OF THE JULY-AUGUST HAPPENINGS

one party (whichever it may be)—it is about protecting the rule of law itself, and the rights of all Bangladeshis.

Is Law Defending Our Rights or Destroying Our Democratic Voices?

In any constitutional democracy, fairness in process is just as important as fairness in outcome. Replacing trials with assumptions and rights with restrictions paves a dangerous road toward repression, not justice. By circumventing due process and weaponising counter-terrorism laws for political ends, the Yunus-led interim Government risks eroding public trust, undermining democratic institutions, and creating a dangerous precedent for the selective suppression of opposition voices. Such legal overreach sets a **dangerous precedent**, where political conflict, as took place many times earlier, is redefined as criminal atrocity, and where dissenting parties risk extinction through judicial fiat rather than democratic process. Last but not least, in a democracy, laws should serve to protect rights, not to silence opposition.

References

1. Crime and Justice, *The Daily Star* (Online, 1 June 2025) <<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/what-are-the-five-charges-against-hasina-ict-3908696>> accessed 6 July 2025
2. 'Hussain Muhammad Ershad' (*Wikipedia*, 9 July 2025); <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hussain_Muhammad_Ershad> accessed 7 July 2025
3. Shakhawat Liton, Chaitanya Chandra Halder, 'Zia Charitable Trust Graft Case: Khaleda jailed for 7 years', *The Daily Star* (Online, 30 October 2018) <<https://www.thedailystar.net/politics/news/zia-charitable-trust-case-supreme-court-bangladesh-directs-dhaka-court-deliver-verdict-bnp-chairperson-khaleda-zia-1653295>>
4. '1983 Anti-Majid Khan Education Policy movement', (*Wikipedia*, 9 July 2025); see also, 'Autocracy Resistance Day: What happened that day' (original in Bangla), (*BBC News Bangla* 14 February 2017) <<https://www.bbc.com/bengali/news-38965401>> accessed 8 July 2025
5. Tribune Online Report, 'Valentine's Day overshadows anti-autocracy martyrs', *Dhaka Tribune* (Online, 14 February, 2017) <<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/politics/14457/valentine%E2%80%99s-day-overshadows-anti-autocracy-martyrs>> accessed 8 July 2025
6. 'Bangladesh crackdown aimed at breaking strike' (Reuters, 25 November 1987) <https://www.csmonitor.com/1987/1125/ofill25.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com> accessed 7 July 2025; see also, Rone Tempest, 'Bangladesh Orders Crackdown to Stall Protest' (*Los Angeles Times*, 10 November 1987) <<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987-11-10-mn-19965-story.html>> accessed 8 July 2025
7. Rahman, Muhammad Habibur (2016). *Bangladesher Rajnoitik Ghotonaponji বাংলাদেশের রাজনৈতিক ঘটনাপঞ্জি ১৯৭১-২০১১* (*Bangladesh Political Events Timeline, 1971-2011*) (Prothoma, 2016, 82)
8. 'Noor Hossain and the image that helped bring down a dictator' (BBC, 6 December 2020) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55177686>> accessed 7 July 2025
9. Bangladesh Winds Down Crine Fight, (*BBC News Archieve*, 9 January 2003) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2643529.stm> accessed; see also, 'Operation Clean Heart' (*Wikipedia*, n.d.) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Clean_Heart?utm_source=chatgpt.com#cite_note-2> accessed 8 July 2025
10. Star Online Report, 'Operation Clean Heart Indemnity Law Illegal: HC' *The Daily Star* (Online, 13 September 2015) <<https://www.thedailystar.net/country/news/operation-clean-heart-indemnity-law-illegal-hc-142468>> accessed 8 July 2025
11. *ibid*
12. 'Extrajudicial killings: 51 die in three months' *Dhaka Tribune* (Dhaka, 19 March 2017)
13. 'ICT ordinance gets clause, section to try, punish political parties', *Dhaka Tribune* (Online, 11 May 2025) <<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/government-affairs/380939/ict-ordinance-gets-clause-section-to-try-punish>> accessed 8 July 2025
14. *ibid*
15. If you say that something appears to be the way you describe it, you are reporting what you believe or what you have been told, though you cannot be sure it is true. See, 'Definition of 'appear'', *Collins Online Dictionary* <<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/appear>> accessed 20 July 2025
16. Public Security Department, Political Wing-2, 'SRO no. 137-Law/2025' (Ministry of Home Affairs, Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, 12 May 2025) <www.dpp.gov.bd/upload_file/gazettes/57493_68017.pdf> accessed 11 July 2025
17. Election Commission Secretariat, 'Order no. 17.00.0000.025.50.023.12-124', (Bangladesh Election Commission) accessed 10 July 2025
18. Anti-Terrorism Act 2009, s 20(1) <https://www.satp.org/satporgrp/countries/bangladesh/document/papers/AntiTerrorism_Act2009.pdf> (translation in English) accessed 8 July 2025
19. The Political Parties Ordinance 1978



THE POLITICAL ABUSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMES TRIBUNAL FOR THE TRIAL OF THE JULY-AUGUST HAPPENINGS

20. Silvia Borelli, 'The (Mis)-Use of General Principles of Law: Lex Specialis and the Relationship Between International Human Rights Law and the Laws of Armed Conflict' in Laura Pineschi (ed.) *Principles of Law The Role of the Judiciary* (Springer, 2015) 265, 266;
21. Constitution of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh, art 31
22. Ibid, art 32
23. Ibid, art 26(2)
24. Anti-Terrorism Act 2009, above n. 17, sec 20
25. Shakib Ahmed, 'Govt Issues Ordinance Amending Anti-Terrorism Act ', Daily Observer (Online, 11 May 2025) accessed 8 July 2025
26. Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division, 'Anti-Terrorism Act 2009 (Amendment) Ordinance' (as amended till 11 May 2025) (original gazette in Bengali), Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh < https://www.dpp.gov.bd/upload_file/gazettes/57492_60241.pdf> accessed 8 July 2025
27. Public Security Department, n 15
28. Anti-Terrorism Act 2009, sec 18(1)
29. A constitutional prohibition cannot be transgressed indirectly by creating a statutory presumption any more than by direct enactment, and ... While States may, without denying due process of law, enact that proof of one fact shall be prima facie evidence of the main fact in issue, the inference must not be purely arbitrary; there must be rational relation between the two facts, and the accused must have proper opportunity to submit all the facts bearing on the issue. According to sec, a banned political party can make such appeal to the government authority issued such sanction.
30. *Bailey v. Alabama*, 219 U.S. 219 (1911) (JUSTICE US Supreme Court, nd) accessed 20 July 2025

Dr. Jac C. is a Professor at a University

WORLD MEDIA WATCH

Manirul Islam

Shortfalls of the UN Report on Bangladesh Protests: A One-Sided Narrative?

On 12 February 2025, the United Nations released a report on the mass protests that shook Bangladesh between July and August 2024. It attributed the deaths of approximately 1,400 people over 46 days (late June to August 15) to security forces under the command of the Hasina government. However, the report fails to account for numerous disturbing developments, including violence, particularly after the fall of the government on August 5, exposing significant gaps.

Chronological Gaps and Misplaced Attribution

The UN report spans 46 days, including 10 days after the fall of the Hasina administration, yet attributes all violence to that government. Key questions remain unanswered:

- Who was responsible for violence on and after August 5?
- Why are no new actors investigated?

Why does the report ignore power vacuums and post-regime chaos?

This one-sided attribution undermines the credibility of the report and overlooks the likelihood of opportunistic and politically motivated violence following regime change.

Missing Evidence of Coordinated Destabilization

Eyewitnesses and local sources reported that, during unrest, unidentified snipers using military-grade weapons fired into crowds — a pattern suggesting efforts to escalate unrest and manufacture outrage. These attacks, likely aimed at framing state forces and justifying regime change, are unmentioned in the UN report.

Arson and Sabotage Ignored

The report omits large-scale sabotage, including:

- Burning of the National Data Center
- Destruction of Bangladesh Television (BTV)
- Destruction of Metro rail and the Main office of the Ministry of Bridges and Communications
- Attacks on over 400 police stations and looting of arms and ammunition

Prison breaks releasing suspected and convicted extremists

These strategic assaults were likely coordinated and intended to dismantle state capacity, far beyond spontaneous protest behavior.

Unreported Mob Violence and Political Purges

The final days of the unrest saw gruesome lynchings of police officers and Awami League supporters:

- 13 Police personnel on duty killed at Enayetpur Police Station, Sirajgonj District.
- One Hindu Police officer, Santosh Chowdhury, on duty, was handed over by the Bangladesh Army, then in control of the Baniachong Police station, to the frenzied mob. He was publicly lynched, and his corpse remained hanging in the Police Compound for days
- Uniformed police personnel lynched, burned, often in the presence of the Army and corpses publicly displayed in Dhaka and other cities

Awami League activists burned alive, mob-lynched or publicly forced into hiding, internally displaced

The Interim Government's first act on August 8 was an ordinance indemnifying such killings. Yet the UN report conceals or generalizes these deaths, portraying them as casualties of state repression under the Hasina Government

Implications of a Biased Narrative

By ignoring post-regime violence and selectively attributing blame, the report:

1. Normalizes political violence as a form of justice
2. Undermines inclusive transitional justice

Damages the UN's neutrality in a fragile context

A Call for Comprehensive Inquiry

An impartial investigation must address:

- Who controlled the violence post-August 5?
- Who orchestrated sniper and arson attacks?
- What motivated targeted infrastructure sabotage?

What justice is afforded to police, civilians, and political victims alike?

The crisis involved multiple actors. The current narrative fails to account for them, risks entrenching impunity, and impedes peacebuilding.

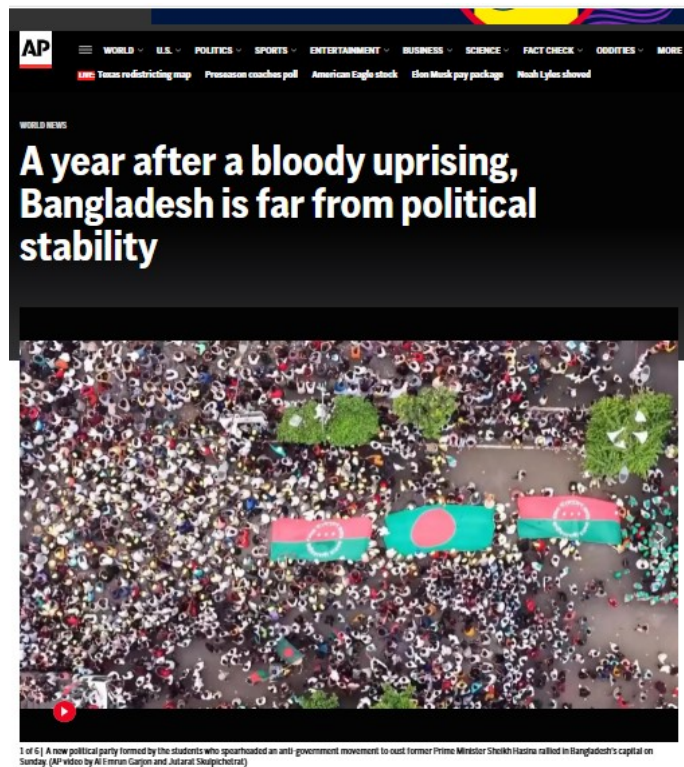
Continued on Page 47

WORLD MEDIA WATCH

Conclusion

While highlighting state abuses, the UN report's omissions and selective framing distort the truth. If Bangladesh is to move toward democratic recovery, international assessments must prioritize accountability for all parties, not just a fallen regime.

Original UN Report : <https://share.google/6b1h0MFJnkCPAEac2>



<https://apnews.com/article/bangladesh-yunus-hasina-zia-politics-uprising-jamaat-f68cacfad0cfd31e33cccb497a564228>

The Daily Star

ow Reads Sports Business Entertainment Life & Living Tech & Startup M

Govt failed to stop authoritarian practices: TIB

Iftekharuzzaman says new parties on self-destructive path



The interim government's failure to curb persistent malpractice in politics, governance, and society stands in the way of dismantling the authoritarian system, says Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).

"We overthrew an authoritarian regime, but unless we reform these authoritarian practices, we cannot really create a new Bangladesh," said TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman at the launch of a report at the TIB auditorium in the capital yesterday.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/govt-failed-stop-authoritarian-practices-tib-3955136>

THE SPOTLIGHT Editorial Policy

- Ensure that all reporting in THE SPOTLIGHT is accurate and not misleading or false. If errors arise, they will be corrected promptly and appropriately.
- Authors should be bound by accuracy, fairness and balance, should not deliberately mislead or misinform readers by commission or omission, and should be respectful to the privacy of persons, space and personal information.
- Distinction should be drawn between factual information and comment or opinion, which should be accurate and should be presented as such.
- Letters for publication should be guided by fairness, balance, and public interest.
- Headlines, sub-headings, and captions should accurately and fairly convey the substance or a key element of the article they are designed to cover.
- The authors are to avoid overstepping the bounds of good taste and decency, and the use of offensive language, in a way that is likely to cause significant offense to people.
- We encourage debate around current issues, however, we do not encourage or condone illegal activity.
- Authors must be cautious not to defame any individual, group or organisation.
- We value truthfulness, honest opinion (based on stated facts), and Public interest.
- Contributors may have their content published anonymously or by using a fake name (but the true name is disclosed to the editors) in situations where the publication of their name may cause personal harm.
- All articles and other submissions should be grammar-checked and submitted in Microsoft Word (.docs) or pure text (txt) format. Pictures and diagrams should be separately attached. For reference, APA or, in case of a technical article, IEEE guidelines should be followed.

•**Views expressed in their articles are the authors' own**



Latiful Kabir

GEN Z AND THE JULY ILLUSION: RECOGNIZING MANIPULATION, RECLAIMING PURPOSE

In July and August 2024, Bangladesh witnessed what many initially believed to be a youth-led movement for justice, equality, and democratic reform. Thousands of young people—most of them Gen Z—took to the streets, fueled by social media posts, catchy slogans, and calls for ending systemic discrimination. They believed they were standing on the right side of history.

But as the dust settled, the true architects of the movement began to emerge—not students, but anti-state political actors, opportunists, and global networks with vested interests. What started as a democratic outcry for quota reform was slowly converted into a gateway for authoritarian takeover. The promises of transparency and people's power gave way to suppression, mass arrests, and the silencing of elected representatives.

Gen Z—the very force that lit the flame—was betrayed. So, what now? This betrayal must not be met with silence. Gen Z should respond not with guilt or retreat, but with clarity, learning, and renewed courage. Own the Mistake, but Don't Be Ashamed: Being manipulated doesn't make you weak—it makes you human. What matters is how you rise after realizing the truth.

Ask Who Benefited: Always follow the power trail. If your activism leads to more repression, more inequality, and less freedom, was it ever really your movement?

Demand Transparency from Everyone: Whether it's a politician, influencer, or NGO, make them answer real questions. Slogans aren't policy. Emotions aren't governance.

Reclaim the Values, Not the Lies: Justice, democracy, inclusion—these are still your values. But they won't survive without critical thinking and resistance to manipulation.

Organize with Purpose: The same energy that was misused in 2024 can be redirected. Build movements rooted in truth, data, and ethics—not hashtags and half-truths.

The July Movement was not a failure of youth—it was a hijacking of youth hope. Now is the time to reclaim that hope, sharpen it with wisdom, and use it to shape a future where real democracy is not a slogan, but a lived reality.

Latiful Kabir is a Bangladeshi-Canadian professional engineer.

