



THE SPOTLIGHT

দি স্পটলাইট



NEWSLETTER OF THE GLOBAL CENTER FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

CONTENTS

BANGLADESH'S ELECTION CRISIS: EXCLUDING THE AWAMI LEAGUE COULD DESTABILISE SOUTH ASIA

The interim government's ban on Bangladesh's largest political party undermines democracy, empowers extremists, and threatens the region's fragile stability

Prof. Dr. Md. Habibe Millat

As Bangladesh heads towards a national election, political uncertainty and unrest are intensifying. What should have been a routine democratic exercise now risks becoming a turning point with profound consequences, not only for Bangladesh's internal stability, but also for the geopolitical balance of South Asia.

For the first time since independence in 1971, an unelected interim government, lacking constitutional legitimacy, has banned the activities of the Awami League, the country's oldest and largest political party, and suspended its registration. The move has stunned observers both at home and abroad. In any democracy, banning a mainstream political party is indefensible and sets a dangerous precedent.

P3

MINORITY AND WOMEN RIGHTS DURING THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT

The authors remains anonymous

More than-one year on, the initial euphoria of the 2024 Gen-Z students' apparent vision for a more equitable and just society has given way to a palpable sense of anxiety, particularly among religious minorities and women. The movement was stolen by the Islamist and vested interest groups who vandalized all established institutions that represent the symbol and spirit of liberation war. Despite the movement's lofty goals, there is a growing perception that the country is losing its secular fabric, and the human rights situation for vulnerable groups has not seen the transformative improvement many had hoped for. This paper argues that the failure to institutionalize the gains of the 2024 movement has led to a continuation, and in some cases an exacerbation, of the very discriminations the protesters sought to eliminate, resulting in a crisis of confidence that is driving skilled minority citizens to emigrate.

P05

HOPE HIJACKED: BANGLADESH'S DESCENT INTO DARKNESS

The authors remains anonymous

Bangladesh, a nation born from the secular ideals of its 1971 Liberation War, now finds itself at a precipice. What began as a student-led movement for equitable quota reforms in government jobs has been systematically hijacked by anti-liberation forces—both domestic actors and foreign-backed elements—transforming peaceful demands into a nationwide crisis. The country that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina elevated to middle-income status, with landmark achievements in digital governance and women's empowerment, now resembles a fractured state. Under the interim administration of Dr Yunus, whose takeover was described by himself as “meticulously designed,” Bangladesh has spiraled into lawlessness, institutional collapse, and communal violence. the very fabric of the nation.

Page 11

MORE CONTENTS INSIDE THIS ISSUE

President's Message Page 2 Editor's Note Page 2 Media Watch Page 14 The Back Page Page 30

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

১০ অগ্রহায়ন ১৪৩২

25 November 2025

Welcome to Issue 13 of the Spotlight . This edition comes at a critical time for Bangladesh, as the nation faces a deepening political crisis, widespread repression, and increasing threats to democratic participation. Minority communities, in particular, are facing heightened vulnerability, underscoring the urgent need for stronger protections and international vigilance.

We remain deeply concerned about the direction of the interim government and its implications for human rights, regional stability, and the everyday lives of citizens. The analyses in this issue remind us that safeguarding justice, inclusivity, and fundamental freedoms is essential for Bangladesh's future and for the conscience of the global community.

Thank you for your continued support and solidarity in advancing democracy and human dignity

Warm Regards.

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

S 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

The death sentence handed down by the illegally constituted International Crimes Tribunal of Bangladesh on 17 November 2025, against Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has been met with serious negative reactions from various international circles. Never before has the judiciary of Bangladesh faced such questions in the international arena. The reactions expressed against this judgment, which is methodologically wrong and legally extremely weak, from organizations ranging from the United Nations to Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, etc., stating that the law has not been properly followed, have never happened before.

By overthrowing an elected government through a conspiracy, destroying all the achievements of the Liberation War in the name of criticizing that government, forming a government by taking an oath under the constitution but disobeying the constitution, and allowing only 23/24 parties (most of whom are in name only and have almost no supporters) out of more than 50 registered political parties, excluding more than fifty percent of the population who support the Awami League and its 14 partner parties from this ill-conceived election, the vile plot of the election so meticulously designed will not benefit Bangladesh in any way.

We reject and strongly protest this verdict of the International Crime Tribunal of Bangladesh. If necessary, we want a fair trial under a completely impartial tribunal with international standards and international mandate. We want this ill-conceived election to be canceled and a new, inclusive, participatory and transparently competitive election to be organized through the formation of a new, impartial election-term government.

We believe that a people's government based on the results of such an election is the only aspiration of the people of Bangladesh at home and abroad at this time. We hope that the current interim administration will show good sense in this regard. And at the same time, we hope that the international community, which respects the rule of law and is committed to democracy, will offer timely support and take initiatives in this regard..

I wish the readers a pleasant reading of the issue.

Mohammad Abdur Rashid, PhD

Editor

১০ অগ্রহায়ন ১৪৩২ / 25 November 2025

BANGLADESH'S ELECTION CRISIS: EXCLUDING THE AWAMI LEAGUE COULD DESTABILISE SOUTH ASIA

The interim government's ban on Bangladesh's largest political party undermines democracy, empowers extremists, and threatens the region's fragile stability

Prof. Dr. Md. Habibe Millat

As Bangladesh heads towards a national election, political uncertainty and unrest are intensifying. What should have been a routine democratic exercise now risks becoming a turning point with profound consequences, not only for Bangladesh's internal stability, but also for the geopolitical balance of South Asia.

For the first time since independence in 1971, an unelected interim government, lacking constitutional legitimacy, has banned the activities of the Awami League, the country's oldest and largest political party, and suspended its registration. The move has stunned observers both at home and abroad. In any democracy, banning a mainstream political party is indefensible and sets a dangerous precedent.

A Blow to Democracy

Bangladesh's political history is marked by alternating periods of civilian and military rule, both often marred by corruption, repression, and human rights abuses. Those responsible for wrongdoing should indeed face justice, but justice must be applied individually, not collectively. Punishing an entire political party for the alleged actions of some of its members through an ordinance is an act of political vengeance, not the rule of law.

Ironically, while the Awami League, which led Bangladesh's independence struggle and laid the foundations of the modern state, has been sidelined, the interim regime has reinstated the registration of Jamaat-e-Islami, a party long associated with atrocities committed during the 1971 Liberation War. Jamaat and its auxiliary militias, Razakar, AlBadr, and Al-Shams, directly aided Pakistan's army in the killing of three million people and the sexual violence against more than 200,000 women.

Rehabilitating such a party while outlawing the one that led the independence movement defies both logic and morality.

Political Engineering and Rising Extremism

The Bangladesh Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) have long been the country's two dominant political forces, with smaller parties such as the Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, and Islami Andolan Bangladesh playing secondary roles.

By seeking to hold an election without the participation of the Awami League, the Jatiya Party, and the 14-Party Alliance, the interim government risks turning the vote into a managed exercise, an attempt to manufacture consent rather than reflect it.

Jamaat-e-Islami has never been a significant electoral force, rarely winning more than a handful of parliamentary seats. Yet the BNP's internal divisions, combined with the Awami League's exclusion, have created a political vacuum that Islamist groups are now attempting to fill.

Under new electoral rules that prohibit coalition parties from using a shared symbol, smaller religious parties could gain a disproportionate advantage. The BNP has already left 63 of the 300 parliamentary seats open for its allies, many of whom lack voter recognition.

In the absence of the Awami League, Jatiya Party, and the 14-Party Alliance, Jamaat-e-Islami will be in an advantageous position in these constituencies due to the BNP's decision to nominate weak candidates, and its number of seats in Parliament is likely to increase. Jamaat is also reportedly urging the interim government to introduce a proportional representation system in future elections, a change that could further boost its parliamentary presence.

Such manoeuvring could enable Jamaat and its affiliates to re-establish themselves as a parliamentary force, effectively reviving religion-based politics that Bangladesh has worked for decades to contain. The outcome would erode the secular foundation of the Bangladeshi state and empower groups whose ideologies are incompatible with the pluralism on which the nation was founded.

Regional Implications

Bangladesh's democratic backsliding would have far-reaching consequences beyond its borders. The country occu-

Continued on Page 4

BANGLADESH'S ELECTION CRISIS: EXCLUDING THE AWAMI LEAGUE COULD DESTABILISE SOUTH ASIA

pies a strategic position between India, China, and the Bay of Bengal, and its stability has long been a cornerstone of regional security.

An election held without the participation of major political parties would lack legitimacy and credibility, potentially triggering widespread protests and economic turmoil. Such instability could create openings for extremist networks, undermine counterterrorism cooperation, and disrupt vital trade and supply routes across South Asia.

For India, political disorder in Bangladesh could heighten cross-border tensions and complicate security coordination. For China, which has invested heavily in infrastructure, prolonged chaos could threaten ongoing projects and weaken Dhaka's reliability as an economic partner.

For the United States, the European Union, and Japan, Bangladesh's democratic decline would erode investor confidence and complicate engagement with one of the region's fastest-growing economies. A politically fragile Bangladesh would also become more vulnerable to external manipulation, undermining its ability to balance the competing interests of New Delhi, Beijing, and Washington.

The Return of Religion-Based Politics

The growing assertiveness of Jamaat-e-Islami and allied Islamist movements has been evident in their recent "March to Dhaka" demonstrations, which have demanded five significant changes, including the introduction of a proportional representation system and the banning of the Jatiya Party and the 14-Party Alliance.

These groups present themselves as defenders of democracy, but their ultimate objective is to restore religion-based politics in Bangladesh's secular system. Excluding the Awami League from the political process would grant such forces a legitimacy they could never achieve at the ballot box. It risks transforming Bangladesh from a model of secular democracy in the Muslim world into a state vulnerable to religious nationalism and extremism.

What the International Community Must Do

The United Nations, the Commonwealth, and Bangladesh's democratic partners must not remain passive. A free, fair, and inclusive election under a neutral and credible caretaker government is crucial to restoring public trust and ensuring long-term stability.

Diplomatic engagement, not quiet observation, is needed. Without it, an exclusionary election will legitimise authoritarianism and embolden extremist forces, undermining democracy not only in Bangladesh but across South Asia.

A Critical Juncture

More than five decades after independence, Bangladesh stands at a crossroads. The ideals of secularism, democracy, and justice that inspired its birth are once again under threat.

The participation of the Awami League in the upcoming election is not merely a political question; it is a prerequisite for Bangladesh's democratic legitimacy, internal peace, and regional stability.

South Asia cannot afford another crisis born of exclusion and extremism. The world must act before it is too late.

Prof. Dr Md. Habibe Millat is a Bangladeshi political analyst, Medical professional, and former Member of Parliament, Bangladesh, specialising in governance, democracy, and regional stability in South Asia

MINORITY AND WOMEN RIGHTS DURING THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT

The authors remains anonymous

Introduction

More than-one year on, the initial euphoria of the 2024 Gen-Z students' apparent vision for a more equitable and just society has given way to a palpable sense of anxiety, particularly among religious minorities and women. The movement was stolen by the Islamist and vested interest groups who vandalized all established institutions that represent the symbol and spirit of liberation war. Despite the movement's lofty goals, there is a growing perception that the country is losing its secular fabric, and the human rights situation for vulnerable groups has not seen the transformative improvement many had hoped for. This paper argues that the failure to institutionalize the gains of the 2024 movement has led to a continuation, and in some cases an exacerbation, of the very discriminations the protesters sought to eliminate, resulting in a crisis of confidence that is driving skilled minority citizens to emigrate.

Understanding the Gap between Aspiration and Reality

The trajectory of the 2024 movement can be analyzed through several sociological and political theories. According to Social Movement Theory, the Gen-Z movement fits the model of a "new social movement," focused on issues of identity, democracy, and quality of life rather than traditional class-based economic conflicts. Its decentralized, leaderless structure, powered by social media, was a source of strength during the protests but became a weakness in the post-movement phase. The lack of formal leadership or a political party to translate demands into policy left a political vacuum, allowing traditional power structures to reassert themselves.

According to the Concept of "Majoritarian Ethnic Democracy" states maintain a democratic framework for the majority group while systematically marginalizing minorities. Despite its secular founding principles, Bangladesh has shown tendencies toward majoritarian nationalism, where the identity and interests of the Muslim-Bengali majority are often privileged in state policy and public discourse. The 2024 movement challenged this but did not dismantle the underlying institutional and ideological structures. Instead, the rightist and Jamat has had it momentum to get political power and imposing the Sharia-based law in the country which will undermine the aspiration of the minority and progressive women in the country.

The Plight of Minorities: A Legacy of Insecurity Persists

The promise of "The Country for All" rings hollow for many in the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, and indigenous communities, who continue to face persecution in many parts of the country. Bangladesh Awami League holds its political philosophy of political pluralisms and secularism. However, after the ousting Sheikh Hasina, the interim government has provided every scope to the fanatic groups to carte mobs and vandalize the places of sufies, peer and other progressive people in the country. Meenakshi Ganguly, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch mentions. "The interim government appears stuck, juggling an unreformed security sector, sometimes violent religious hardliners, and political groups that seem more focused on extracting vengeance on Hasina's supporters than protecting Bangladeshis' rights." Indeed, thousands of incidents against the minorities and women have been directed that has eroded the spirit of liberation and secular society. Key Incidents and Trends (Post-2024) can be presented as follow:

Communal Violence:

During this interim government period, Bangladesh witnessed a disturbing rise in attacks on religious minorities. Rights groups and local media documented widespread incidents of vandalism, arson, and physical assaults targeting Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian communities across the country. The Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council reported 2,442 incidents of attacks on minorities between August 2024 and June 2025, including killings, sexual assaults, temple demolitions, and destruction of homes. In

Continued on Page 6

MINORITY AND WOMEN RIGHTS DURING THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT

the first few weeks after the interim government was formed, at least 205 separate incidents were recorded across 52 districts. However, Bangladeshi police claimed that of 1,415 verified complaints, roughly 1,234 were politically motivated rather than purely communal, and only 20 cases were confirmed as explicitly communal attacks. This discrepancy highlights the difficulty of distinguishing between political retaliation and religious hatred in a highly polarized context. The following are the incidents directed against the minority people during this interim government:

- Minority-owned houses and temples were attacked and looted in several districts, with Hindu families reporting forced displacement.
- In Narayanganj and Chattogram, mobs set fire to shops and desecrated religious sites, prompting emergency deployments of security forces.
- Social media played a role in spreading rumors and inflammatory content that fueled panic and violence.

While large-scale pogroms have decreased, incidents of temple vandalism, land grabbing of minority-owned properties, and intimidation during religious festivals continue to be reported by organizations like Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) and Odhikar. On July 26 and 27, a mob damaged at least 14 homes belonging to members of the Hindu minority in Rangpur district, and there are continuing violations against minority communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Another report says, Following Hasina's resignation, rioters attacked her supporters, including Hindus, Ahmadi Muslims, and ethnic minorities, resulting in violence that killed over 200 people. Criminals and opposition supporters attacked shops, homes and places of worship. Many Muslims protected minorities and criticized the attacks. The Hindu report that 258 communal attacks in Bangladesh in the first half of 2025 which is seriously alarming. Civil society groups like the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC) have claimed that attacks against religious minorities in Bangladesh have continued under the interim government.

Targeting the Hindu Community

The Hindu community, in particular, continues to describe targeted violence and fear since the July 2024 protests. In November 2024, an estimated 30,000 Hindus protested in Chattogram, calling for the interim government to offer protection from attacks and harassment. Protestors additionally urged the government to drop sedition charges against 19 Hindu leaders, whom authorities accused of disrespecting the Bangladeshi flag during a previous protest in October. Among those accused is Hindu priest Krishna Das Prabhu, also known as Chinmoy Das, who was arrested in November 2024 and denied bail in January 2025, leading to renewed protests and clashes that resulted in the death of a Muslim lawyer. Following the killing of the Muslim lawyer, reported incidents of intimidation and attacks in Hindu neighborhoods increased. In May 2025, the Supreme Court granted a stay on a High Court order granting Das bail. Some notable incidents against the Hindu communities are as follow:

- According to BHBCUC in the first three months of 2025, a total of 92 incidents took place targeting religious minorities. This includes 11 murders, three rapes, 25 attacks on temples, and 28 instances of vandalism.
- Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), a Bangladeshi human rights organization, reported a total of 48 attacks against religious minorities from January to April 2025, including 25 attacks against Hindu statues.
- Hindu women have stopped wearing bangles and bindis to avoid being harassed. Bangladeshi media sources also continue to report some instances of violence, vandalism, and harassment against religious minorities.

Digital Vigilantism and Hate Speech:

Social media platforms are increasingly used to target religious minorities with hate speech and false accusations of blasphemy, often leading to real-world violence and police complaints under the Digital Security Act. After the July 2024 protests, misinformation and disinformation saturated the news environment, particularly related to attacks against religious minority communities, which have created a climate of fear. Such disinformation falsely claimed that certain Hindu temples were attacked, circulating fabricated videos of arson or Hindu women being attacked. Human rights organizations similarly say that social media and misinformation continue to contribute to attacks against religious minorities. Additionally, journalists in Bangladesh reporting on religious freedom issues expressed concerns about harassment from mobs and

Continued on Page 7

MINORITY AND WOMEN RIGHTS DURING THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT

more conservative Islamic groups. In November 2024, for example, a mob accused news sources like the Daily Star of promoting ideals they considered “contrary to Islam,” including secularism and women’s rights. The attackers demanded that these newspapers be closed if they did not apologize for their “anti-Islamic positions.”

Systemic Disenfranchisement:

Discriminatory laws and practices, such as the Vested Property Act (a continuation of the earlier Enemy Property Act), continue to be used to dispossess Hindu families of their land, undermining their economic security and sense of belonging. Between August 6 and September 25, 2024, police lodged cases against 92,486 people, most of them related to murder. Nearly 400 former ministers, members of parliament, and other Awami League officials have been named in over 1,170 cases, which also include hundreds of unnamed individuals. The report by RRAG identified serious violations, noting that more than 272,000 individuals—primarily political opponent—have been implicated in 1,598 criminal cases within the first 100 days of Yunus' administration. The organization reported that between September 19 and October 1, at least four Indigenous people were killed, and more than 75 others were injured. Leaders of the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council claims that 2,010 incidents of communal violence took place across the Muslim-majority country between Aug. 4 and 20, 2025. The Yunus-led government disputed the claim, saying that most of the incidents were caused by “political reasons” and not by communal issues. However, different sources confirmed that most of the cases were directed against the minority and opposing political people.

The Status of Women and girls: Progress and Peril

The Gen-Z movement was notably inclusive of young women, who were at the forefront of the protests. However, the broader landscape for women's rights remains complex and troubling. Bangladesh is currently facing a grave escalation in gender-based violence, marked by a surge in rape and sexual assault cases. This trend has intensified under the administration of the constitutionally illegitimate interim government, where legal accountability has weakened, and institutional safeguards have deteriorated significantly. Bangladesh grapples with shocking surge in sexual violence:

- According to verified media reports, from January to June 2025, a total of 481 cases of rape were reported nationwide. Among these:
- 345 victims were children, highlighting a disproportionate targeting of minors
- 106 cases involved gang rape, indicating the organized and aggravated nature of many assaults.
- 17 victims were murdered following the assault, illustrating a pattern of extreme brutality and intent to eliminate evidence or silence survivors.
- 1,555 women and girls were reported to have experienced violence in the first half of the year alone, encompassing both physical and sexual abuse.

The Human Rights Congress for Bangladesh Minorities (HRCBM) mentioned that Bangladesh is facing an alarming wave of sexual violence, particularly targeting women and children from minority communities like Hindus, Christians, Buddhists and others. According to the Rights Body, the violence has reached pandemic proportions under the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government. HRCBM noted that “342 rape cases were officially recorded in less than three months during the first quarter of 2025, with 87 per cent of the victims being girls under 18 years of age”. According to the rights body, these horrifying figures represent only the tip of the iceberg, and the true number runs into thousands, which is hidden by silence, fear, and state inaction. The following table shows the scenario of women rights violation during this interim period.

Continued on Page 6

MINORITY AND WOMEN RIGHTS DURING THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT

Violence against Women and Girls in Bangladesh: Key Statistics (2024 – Mid-2025)

Category / Period	Key Statistics	Specific Details & Breakdown	Source / Reference
March 2025 (General Violence)	442 women & girls faced violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 125 girls and 38 women were raped. • 36 were gang-raped (including 18 girls). • 2 girls were raped and murdered. • 55 girls and 15 women survived attempted rape. 	Human Rights Organizations' Compilation
First Half of 2025 (Trend)	Sharp increase in reported cases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan-Apr 2024: 5,795 cases. • Jan-Apr 2025: 7,028 cases. 	Bangladesh Police Records
Full Year 2024 (Rape)	558 total rape victims.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 284 victims (approx. 51%) were minors. • 130 victims were gang-raped. • 40 victims were killed after rape (including children). 	Human Rights Society of Bangladesh (hrssbd.org)
Jan-Oct 2024 (General Violence)	2,197 women & girls subjected to violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included 830 rape incidents nationwide. • 39 women were killed after rape. • 7 victims died by suicide as a result. 	Human Rights Organizations' Compilation
2024 (Bangladesh Mahila Parishad Survey)	364 rape cases analyzed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 220 victims (majority) were minors. • Gang rape victims: 49 minors & 99 adults. 	Prothom Alo
October 2024 (Monthly Snapshot)	Over 200 women & girls were tortured.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44 rape cases (including 14 minor girls). • 4 dowry-related murders. • 4 incidents of child marriage. 	Dhaka Tribune

Political Participation vs. Social Reality

While Bangladesh has had a female head of state for decades, this has not trickled down to empower most women at the grassroots level. In addition, over 8,600 people were reportedly arrested in a crackdown in February called “Operation Devil Hunt,” many of them allegedly Awami League supporters. BBC news reports that “There is no law and order. And Hindus are being targeted again”. The religious minority people hardly get any scope to participate in any procession and inform their conditions to the authority. The media is also controlled by the Islamist groups that hinder presenting the information of minority repression.

The Burden of Digital Laws

The Digital Security Act (DSA), despite its intended purpose, has been used to harass and imprison women who speak out online against harassment or injustice, creating a chilling effect on freedom of expression (Amnesty International, 2024).

Continued on Page 9

MINORITY AND WOMEN RIGHTS DURING THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT

Table 2: Selected Indicators on Women's Security (Based on Secondary Data)

Table 2: Selected Indicators on Women's Security (Based on Secondary Data)

Indicator	Pre-2024 Trend	Post-2024 (Initial 12 Months)	Observation	Source
Reported Rape Cases	Consistently high (~1,000+ per year)	High in increase before the previous regime		ASK, 2024 Annual Report
Use of DSA against Women	Increasing	Continued use to silence female activists and victims		Amnesty International, 2024
Women in High-Level Govt. Posts	Stable but limited	The condition is deteriorating, not improving as promised.		Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
Economic Participation Rate	Slowly increasing	Structural barriers remain and increasing		World Bank, 2025

Position of Women and Minorities in Government Position

Based on recent reports and surveys, it is evident that both women and minority groups in Bangladesh have been systematically marginalized in political participation and social protection under the current interim arrangements. For example, in six major reform commissions formed between 2024–2025, out of fifty total members, only five were women, representing merely around 10 percent participation, and no members were drawn from religious or ethnic minority communities. This exclusion highlights how decision-making spaces remain dominated by male and majority voices, with women and minorities sidelined from shaping key reforms. Although the Women's Reform Commission proposed progressive measures such as expanding parliament to 600 seats with directly elected reserved constituencies for women and ensuring that each political party nominates at least 7 percent female candidates in general seats, the structural underrepresentation persists. The situation of minorities has been even more concerning in terms of security. According to the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, from August 4 to August 20, 2024, there were over 2,010 incidents of communal violence, followed by 174 more incidents between late August and December, which included 23 deaths, sexual assaults, arson, and widespread vandalism. Despite these alarming figures, a VOA survey found that while 64.1 percent of respondents believed the interim government provided better protection to minorities compared to previous administrations, 33.9 percent of minority respondents felt that their safety had actually deteriorated. This paradox underscores both the heightened vulnerability of minorities and the uneven perception of security improvements.

Together, these statistics illustrate how women continue to be underrepresented in formal political structures while minorities remain vulnerable to violence and exclusion, leaving both groups cornered in a fragile socio-political landscape. Moreover, the government systematically ignored the women and minority political leaders while discussing political issues. The interim government vehemently emphasizes on Islamic political parties where women and minority representation is nil.

Conclusion: A Crossroads for the Nation

The 2024 Gen-Z movement was a watershed moment that revealed a deep-seated public desire for a Bangladesh that truly lives up to its founding promise of secularism and equality. The slogan “The Country for

Continued on page 10

MINORITY AND WOMEN RIGHTS DURING THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT

All” was a powerful articulation of this vision. But it was a device by the vested interest group to divert the attention of the mass-people who came outside and protested against the government of Hasina. Now, they have understood their mistake that it was a movement of Jamat and Shibir to fulfil their long desire of capturing political power and work for pro-Pakistani motive. During this one year of the movement much has been cleared to the people that it was not a honest movement, but was a deep conspiracy against Sheikh Hasina.

One year later, the nation stands at a crossroads. The anxiety among minorities and women, coupled with the emigration of skilled citizens, is a stark indicator that the movement's aspirations have yet to be translated into tangible institutional and social reform. The “secular flavor” of the nation is indeed under threat, not necessarily from a single policy, but from a persistent culture of majoritarian impunity and a state apparatus that has been slow to protect its most vulnerable citizens.

For “The Country for All” to transition from a slogan to a reality, sustained political will, legal and institutional reforms to protect minority rights and women's safety, and a conscious effort to promote a national identity based on civic rather than religious nationalism are urgently required.

The authors remains anonymous



HOPE HIJACKED: BANGLADESH'S DESCENT INTO DARKNESS

The authors remains anonymous

Bangladesh, a nation born from the secular ideals of its 1971 Liberation War, now finds itself at a precipice. What began as a student-led movement for equitable quota reforms in government jobs has been systematically hijacked by anti-liberation forces—both domestic actors and foreign-backed elements—transforming peaceful demands into a nationwide crisis. The country that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina elevated to middle-income status, with landmark achievements in digital governance and women's empowerment, now resembles a fractured state. Under the interim administration of Dr Yunus, whose takeover was described by himself as “meticulously designed,” Bangladesh has spiraled into lawlessness, institutional collapse, and communal violence. This article dissects the multidimensional crisis unfolding since mid-2024, exposing how the erosion of democracy, rule of law, and social cohesion threatens the very fabric of the nation.

Collapse of Law and Order: A State in Anarchy

The unraveling began in July 2024, when protests over quota reforms escalated into coordinated attacks on state institutions. Within weeks, the police force—once praised for counterterrorism successes—became a target itself. 5,829 firearms and 600,000 rounds of ammunition were looted from police armories, with less than 20% recovered. The Home Ministry's directive to halt prosecutions for crimes committed during the unrest effectively granted impunity to perpetrators, including those responsible for the deaths of 44 police officers.

The vacuum was filled by armed gangs and 700 escaped prisoners, many linked to opposition factions. Crime syndicates, now better equipped than local law enforcement, drove a 300% increase in kidnappings and a 178% spike in armed robberies (Bangladesh Police Bureau, 2025). Political violence became endemic. More than 246 Awami League (AL) leaders and supporters have been killed in mob attacks, 460 police stations were burned or vandalized, and former ministers were ambushed while traveling to court. This was not mere chaos but a calculated dismantling of state authority—a pattern echoing the 1975 coup that killed Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Human Rights Catastrophe: Minorities, Women, and Dissent Under Fire

Communal Targeting

Post-August 2024, 2184 documented attacks targeted Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian communities. In one emblematic case, a Hindu temple in Narail was razed while police stood idle. The toll: 9 killed, 4 women raped as communal weapons, 69 temples and 1,200 homes destroyed. The last few months have seen instances of brutal attacks on minorities – for allegedly hurting religious sentiments – and places of worship.

Weaponized Justice

The judiciary has become a tool of repression. Over 2337 politically motivated cases implicated 1.1 million AL supporters, with 430000 detained—including elected officials and teachers. The amended Anti-Terrorism Act suspended AL activities, a move the UN called ‘a blatant criminalization of opposition’.

Gender Apartheid

The UN documented that state-coordinated sexual violence has occurred against female protesters. Survivors reported rape threats by security forces during arrests. Meanwhile, 87.5% of 2025's rape victims were minors (ASF Report, 2025), reflecting a society where impunity empowers predators. Islamist radicals, who strongly back the Yunus regime, recently hit the streets demanding 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.

Media silenced

Bangladeshi media is facing serious suppression and systematic repression. Although it promised press freedom, the reality, however, is different. Reports suggest that criminal cases have been filed against 432 journalists, the accreditation of about 168 journalists has been cancelled, and inquiries have been initiated against 73 journalists by the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit, the anti-terror and anti-money laundering arm of the government. More than 41 imprisoned journalists are not getting bail, even though it's the right of the citizens.

Continued on page 12

HOPE HIJACKED: BANGLADESH'S DESCENT INTO DARKNESS

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 BNP and NCP people are heavily involved in extortion. People of all quarters are victims of massive extortion.

Institutional Sabotage: From Courts to Classrooms

Institutions are dead now. The Supreme Court was gutted and 13 High Court judges, including Chief Justice were removed via opaque 'disciplinary proceedings'. In a grotesque irony, courts expedited appeals for war crime convicts while denying bail to AL members. Education has turned into a battleground. Universities, once hubs of pluralism, are now dominated by Islamist factions. All public university VCs have been forced to resign. More than 200 secular professors have been barred from teaching, and 230950+ students are deprived of their basic rights for opposing extremism.

Security Meltdown and the Militant Resurgence

The interim government's appointments of dual-citizen officials to key security posts raised alarms. Meanwhile, 312 convicted militants have been released, including Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (JMB) operatives; 70 militants escaped prison, joining 382 already at large. Report says, looted police weapons appeared in 12 extremist attacks in 2025. Intelligence reports confirm collaborations between escaped prisoners and Rohingya insurgents—a transnational threat in the making. Rising fundamentalism in Bangladesh has surged since August 2024, with Jamaat-e-Islami, Hejot-e-Islami, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, and others extremist political parties taking a prominent role in politics. The escape or release of radicals has enabled extremist regrouping.

Cultural Genocide: Erasing the Liberation Spirit

The assault on Bangladesh's secular heritage has been systematic and increasing day by day. More than 1500 sculptures, murals, statues and monuments have been destroyed across the country. At least 63 attacks have been reported on cultural activists and 22 art academy have been attacked across the country. More than 107 Sufi shrines were attacked, vandalized, looting and arson have occurred which is a clear targeting of pluralistic Islam and due to the obstruction of the extremist groups 321 annual festival has been banned. This isn't mere vandalism but an ideological purge, mirroring the Taliban's destruction of Bamyán Buddhas.

Economic Paralysis: From Growth to Grief

The economy is very gloomy. The IMF's \$4.7 billion loan failed to stem the collapse. GDP growth has dropped to less than 4% (from 7.2% in 2023). Inflation has already hit 11.3%, with rice prices doubling. As of today, 1.8 million jobs have been lost, mostly for women in garments. The informal sector—80% of employment—faces starvation-level wages. 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.

Conclusion: A Nation at Crossroads

Bangladesh's crisis is neither accidental nor spontaneous. It's the culmination of a 50-year ideological war between secular nationalism and religious revanchism. The Yunus interregnum, far from being a corrective, has accelerated state capture by extremists.

The authors remains anonymous

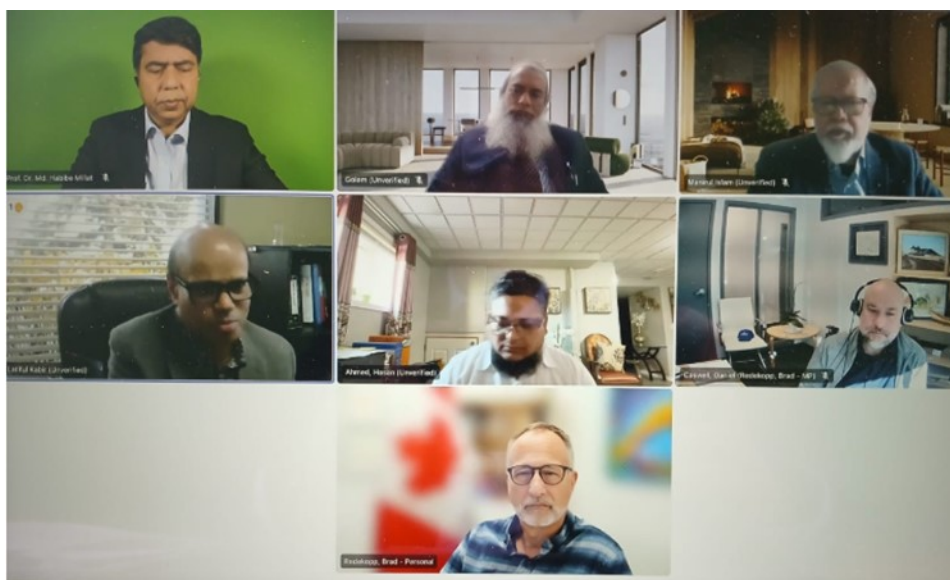
GCDG TEAM VIRTUALLY MET HONORABLE BRAD REDEKOPP MP

On 12 November 2025 at 10:30 a.m. Saska time, the Global Centre for Democratic Governance held a courtesy virtual meeting with the Canada–Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship Group Chair and Member of Parliament for Saskatchewan West, Honorable Brad Redekopp.

During the meeting, GCDG presented concerns regarding human rights violations committed during the tenure of Bangladesh's interim government, and discussed the need for an inclusive parliamentary election with participation from all parties in the interest of restoring the rule of law, improving law and order, and rebuilding democracy in Bangladesh.

Mr. Redekopp expressed his willingness to extend support on these matters and to raise them in various forums.

Representing GCDG at the meeting were the organization's President, Professor Dr. Md Habibe Millat; Executive Director, Golam Kibria Talukdar; Director of Finance, Engr. Monirul Islam; and Director, Engr. Latiful Kabir. The meeting was moderated by Hasan Parvez.



WORLD MEDIA WATCH

Commentary by Manirul Islam

From War Crimes Tribunal to Political Weapon: The ICT's Fall in the Sheikh Hasina Case

The Sheikh Hasina Judgment is composed of selective justice and flawed evidence, which plunges a nation into risk. The death sentence handed down to Sheikh Hasina by the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) marks a profound subversion of the tribunal's original mandate and a serious miscarriage of justice. Established in 1973 as law, endorsed by the then Parliament, to try collaborators and war criminals of the 1971 Liberation War, the ICT has now been politically repurposed to prosecute a former prime minister in a trial widely criticized for due-process failures, the absence of the accused, and heavily contested evidence. Central to the prosecution's case was the widely cited figure of **1,400 deaths** during the 2024 uprising, drawn from an OHCHR report. Yet the report failed to provide any disaggregated breakdown of casualties - whether fatalities were caused by security forces, by unidentified snipers, or by protesters themselves. This omission is particularly striking given that, on **12 August 2024**, the current Home Affairs Advisor publicly acknowledged the "mysterious presence of snipers armed with 7.62 mm rifles" who killed numerous demonstrators. Such ambiguities in the casualty data cast significant doubt on the factual foundation of the charges used to justify the tribunal's harshest possible sentence.

Compounding these flaws, the tribunal ignored the extensive and documented violence committed by frenzied mobs during the uprising, including the **attack or burning of 400+ police stations**, looting of armories, killing and lynching of police officers, jailbreaks that released extremist detainees, and coordinated assaults on critical infrastructure such as the metro rail system, the national data center, and state television facility. Instead of ensuring accountability, the interim government led by Dr Yunus issued a **blanket indemnity** shielding protesters from prosecution, even for acts covered in the same period assessed by the UN report. This selective justice, combined with sweeping amendments that expanded the tribunal's jurisdiction and prosecutorial reach, underscores the political motivations behind the case. Far from upholding the rule of law, the verdict against Sheikh Hasina exposes the ICT as a tool of retribution, threatens Bangladesh's political stability, and raises grave concerns about whether the death sentence represents justice or the culmination of a deeply compromised and weaponized legal process.

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/article/bangladesh-plans-to-execute-its-former-leader-theres-one-big-thing-in-the-way-india/>

https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/11/17/bangladesh-hasina-found-guilty-of-crimes-against-humanity?utm_source

China has lent more to US than any other country since 2000, report finds

South China Morning Post

Author: Ralph Jennings, published: 21 Nov 2025

China's lending has been 'vastly' larger and far more skewed towards developed countries than previously assumed, AidData study finds. A new report by AidData reveals that China has lent **nearly US\$202 billion** to the United States from 2000 to 2023 more than it has to any other country. Over that same period, China's "official sector" including its policy banks, state-owned companies, and the central bank disbursed a massive **US\$2.2 trillion** globally.

Much of the lending to the U.S. has gone toward **critical infrastructure** (like LNG pipelines, power lines, and airport terminals) and helped Chinese firms acquire American **high-tech companies**, according to the report. The data drawn from over 246,000 sources suggests a striking shift in China's lending strategy: instead of focusing predominantly on developing countries, Beijing is increasingly directing capital to **wealthier nations**, especially in strategic, technology-driven sectors. ([aiddata.org](https://www.aiddata.org))

China's large-scale lending to the U.S. expands its role from a lender to developing states to a **global financial power**, giving Beijing wider geopolitical reach. By investing in advanced economies and strategic sectors, China gains influence over global economic norms and supply chains, complicating Western narratives about its intentions.

For China-U.S. relations, this financial interdependence cuts both ways. It can **moderate conflict** by raising the economic costs of escalation, but it also fuels **strategic distrust**, as Washington worries about Chinese leverage in infrastructure and technology. The result is a tense mix of dependency and suspicion that neither fully stabilizes nor fully worsens the relationship but makes it more complex and politically sensitive.

https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3333569/china-has-lent-more-us-any-other-country-2000-report-finds?utm_medium=Social&utm_content=visual-style&utm_source=Facebook

Murder, Money, and Manipulation: The Weaponized Gen Z Rebellion in Mexico

Before the dust could settle, the questions swirls in the opaque air of Mexico – is it a Youth Rebellion or a Political Coup with the Hidden Agenda! Mexico's recent "Gen Z uprising" mirrors a growing global trend in which youth-led protests, often sparked by genuine grievances, become rapidly amplified by powerful internal and external networks. While the murder of Uruapan Mayor Carlos Manzo ignited widespread anger, investigations revealed that the mobilization was far from spontaneous. Infodemia and independent investigators found that oligarchs, influencers, and right-wing power brokers covertly injected millions of pesos into organizing and promoting the protests — all under the guise of a grassroots youth rebellion. Their objective was clear: destabilize the country's first left-wing female and progressive Jewish president, Claudia Sheinbaum, and channel public outrage into a coordinated effort to undermine her administration.

According to the Council on Foreign Relations, Gen Z movements worldwide increasingly operate within this hybrid space of authentic discontent and sophisticated funding networks. Social media allows these protests to spread at extraordinary speed, giving them the capacity to shift political landscapes — as seen recently in Bangladesh, where youth-driven mobilization helped topple the left of center secular government of Sheikh Hasina. Yet CFR emphasizes that while these uprisings excel at disruption and regime pressure, their long-term democratic outcomes remain uncertain. Mexico's experience underscores this tension: a movement triggered by a real tragedy but weaponized by hidden interests, capable of reshaping national politics before the public fully grasps who is steering it.

WORLD MEDIA WATCH

The Grayzone - <https://share.google/bjW6tw4TK6FPvLZNf>



Council on Foreign Relations

<https://share.google/ORMzDEKz5JyZBCKw>

Leading lawyers condemn ‘contrived’ Bangladesh trial of former UK minister

Exclusive: High-profile lawyers suggest ex-City minister Tulip Siddiq has not enjoyed basic rights during her trial in absentia

Support the Guardian Fund independent journalism with 50% off [Claim discount](#) Print subscriptions Search jobs Sign in

News Opinion Sport Culture Lifestyle

World Europe US news Americas Asia Australia Middle East Africa Inequality Global development

Bangladesh

Leading lawyers condemn ‘contrived’ Bangladesh trial of former UK minister

Exclusive: High-profile lawyers suggest ex-City minister Tulip Siddiq has not enjoyed basic rights during her trial in absentia

Tulip Siddiq, who resigned from the UK government in January, is due to receive her verdict and sentence in absentia soon. Photograph: Sean Smith/The Guardian

Most viewed

- I love my country. I don't want to leave: readers reflect on the exodus from New Zealand
- Live** Hong Kong fire latest: rescue crews search for survivors after 55 killed and hundreds reported missing
- How the Hong Kong fire unfolded - visual guide
- I didn't even know this type of attack existed: more than 200 women allege drugging by senior French civil servant
- Rachel Reeves targets UK's wealthiest in £26bn tax-raising budget

Daniel Boffey Chief reporter

Tue 25 Nov 2025 10.00 GMT

Share

The trial in Bangladesh of the former UK City minister **Tulip Siddiq** has been “contrived and unfair”, leading lawyers including a former Conservative justice secretary have told Bangladesh’s ambassador before Thursday’s verdict. Siddiq, who resigned from the UK government in January, is due to receive her verdict and sentence in absentia, with the prosecution seeking a maximum life sentence term. The Labour MP for Hampstead and Highgate is the niece of Sheikh Hasina, the former prime minister of Bangladesh, who was **given a death sentence** last week over charges of crimes against humanity relating to last year’s crackdown on student-led protests.

In a letter to Abida Islam, Bangladesh’s high commissioner in the UK, a group of high-profile lawyers including Robert Buckland KC, who was justice secretary under Boris Johnson, and the former Tory attorney general Dominic Grieve, suggest Siddiq has not enjoyed basic rights during her trial, including knowledge of the charges against her or access to legal representation.

The group of lawyers, which also includes Cherie Blair KC, Philippe Sands KC and Geoffrey Robertson KC, further claim that a lawyer she instructed to represent her was put under house arrest and faced threats to his daughter.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/nov/25/uk-lawyers-condemn-bangladesh-trial-london-labour-mp-tulip-siddiq>



The author is an Engineer, currently residing at Toronto, Canada

BACK PAGE শেষের পাতা

The Trial That Shaped a Nation: Why Gen Z Must Re-examine the Sheikh Hasina Verdict

Latiful Kabir

The trial of Sheikh Hasina in the International Crimes Tribunal of Bangladesh is one of the most polarizing political and legal events in recent history. For a generation that did not witness the upheavals of the 1980s, the restoration of democracy in the 1990s, or the turbulent politics from 2007 to 2024, the trial has appeared through a fragmented lens—mostly filtered through social media, partisan information, and geopolitical opinion. Yet the trial, and the global debate surrounding it, carries profound implications for young Bangladeshis who will shape the country's democratic future.

1. Why Gen Z Must Care

Gen Z in Bangladesh is the most digitally connected generation the country has ever produced. They consume information rapidly—on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook Reels, and YouTube shorts. But the danger of this environment is that complex political events are often reduced to catchy slogans, memes, or emotionally charged narratives. The Sheikh Hasina verdict represents the kind of national issue that cannot be understood through sound bites.

The controversy around the trial is not just about one leader. It is about the rule of law, due process, democratic stability, and how political narratives can be weaponized. For Gen Z, who will inherit the consequences of these political decisions, understanding the deeper context is essential.

2. What Was This Tribunal and Why Was It Contentious?

Although referred to as an “international” tribunal, the court itself operated under domestic jurisdiction. The charges brought against Sheikh Hasina were tied to events occurring in a deeply polarized political environment. Supporters viewed the trial as politically motivated, arguing that its objectives aligned with efforts to delegitimize a long-standing ruling party. Critics, meanwhile, insisted that no leader should be above legal scrutiny. For Gen Z, the issue lies not in choosing sides but in examining **how** a national justice process becomes entangled in political power struggles. The debate highlights key questions:

- Were legal standards of evidence, transparency, and procedure met?
- Were international norms of criminal justice followed?

Did the trial occur in a politically neutral environment? These are the questions an informed generation must ask.

3. Why the Verdict Sparked Global Concern

The verdict became a point of global contention for several reasons. International legal bodies and human rights organizations raised concerns about due process, speed of proceedings, transparency, and whether the political climate allowed for an impartial trial.

Governments, diplomats, and global media outlets were divided. Some saw the trial as a legitimate judicial process; others argued it was a tool to reshape Bangladesh's political landscape. Questions about judicial independence, political pressure, and international influence dominated the discourse. For Gen Z, this global debate matters for two reasons: First, it shows how Bangladesh's domestic politics are embedded within a larger geopolitical contest. Second, it highlights how international perception can shape national legitimacy.

4. How the Verdict Was Used in Domestic Politics

The trial became a catalyst for a new political narrative. Opponents of Sheikh Hasina used the verdict to frame her government as corrupt and authoritarian. Supporters argued that the tribunal was an instrument of regime change, accelerated by external pressure and internal manipulation.

Social media played a massive role in shaping perceptions. Misinformation, selective narratives, and emotionally charged propaganda targeted the youth directly. For many Gen Z activists, their political awakening occurred during this moment—often shaped by whichever side dominated their digital space.

Understanding how these narratives are constructed is essential for a generation that values justice, transparency, and truth.

5. What This Trial Means for the Future of Justice

The debate around the Sheikh Hasina verdict is ultimately a debate about justice itself. When trials become political battlegrounds, trust in the legal system erodes. For Bangladesh, still fighting for strong democratic institutions, this erosion has long-term consequences. Gen Z stands at a critical crossroads. They must demand justice that is fair, transparent, and free from political influence—whether it applies to a former prime minister, a dissident student, a journalist, or a marginalized citizen. Justice cannot serve political goals; it must serve the people.

6. A Message for Gen Z: Look Deeper, Ask Harder Questions

This moment offers a lesson that Gen Z cannot afford to ignore: history should not be consumed passively. It must be questioned, studied, and understood. The Sheikh Hasina trial is not just a legal case—it is a test of Bangladesh's democratic resilience. For the next generation, the responsibility is clear:

- Resist over-simplified narratives.
- Evaluate sources critically.
- Demand transparency from all sides.

Understand the past to shape a more just future.

Bangladesh's youth have the power to redefine justice, democracy, and national identity. But only if they look beneath the headlines—and beyond the hashtags.

Latiful Kabir is a Bangladeshi-Canadian professional engineer.