



THE SPOTLIGHT

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NEWSLETTER OF THE GLOBAL CENTER FOR DEMOCRATIC GOV-

COVER STORY

DESTRUCTION OF JUDICIARY, ACADEMIC & JOURNALISTIC FREEDOM, AND REIGN OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMIST-TERRORISTS UNDER CHIEF JUSTICE SYED REFAAT AHMED'S WATCH

The author remains anonymous

When Syed Refaat Ahmed took office as Chief Justice of Bangladesh on August 11, 2024, many hoped that his distinguished academic background and reformist image would signal a new era for the judiciary. The country, still reeling from the fall of the Awami League government just days earlier, stood at a political and constitutional crossroads. Amid demands for justice, accountability, and institutional integrity, the judiciary was poised to play a pivotal role in restoring public trust and protecting fundamental rights. Instead, Ahmed's tenure has been defined by a troubling silence in the face of targeted violence, legal double standards, and a chilling erosion of democratic safeguards.

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LEAD STORY

THEOCRATIC AUTOCRACY AND THE DEATH OF SECULAR DEMOCRACY: NEO-FASCIST DRIFT IN BANGLADESH'S INTERIM GOVERNMENT

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DESTRUCTION OF JUDICIARY, ACADEMIC & JOURNALISTIC FREEDOM, AND REIGN OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMIST-TERRORISTS UNDER CHIEF JUSTICE SYED REFAAT AHMED'S WATCH

This article will demonstrate how, under Chief Justice Ahmed's leadership, the Supreme Court has presided over an alarming slide into selective justice and institutional complicity. From mob assaults on sitting judges and lawyers to politically driven acquittals of powerful elites, the Ahmed court has failed to confront the worst excesses of the post-revolution landscape. Even as journalists and academics face intimidation and reprisals, the judiciary has offered no meaningful refuge. This is not a story of a judiciary leading national reform—it is a record of abdication, where symbolic reform has obscured real, and often violent, breakdowns in the rule of law.

Seizing the Chief Justice's Seat through Religious Extremist Mob Rule

The August 5, 2024, uprising marked a turning point in Bangladesh's political and judicial landscape. What began as a coordinated wave of student-led protests swiftly escalated into a systemic purge of the judiciary. On August 10, Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan abruptly resigned amid accusations that he had attempted a judicial intervention to facilitate the return of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Protesters, some reportedly mobilized through platforms linked to reli-

gious hardliners, accused him of collusion with the old regime and demanded his resignation, setting a 1:00 p.m. ultimatum for him and other senior judges [1].

In rapid succession, resignations followed across the judiciary, particularly targeting judges perceived to be sympathetic to the previous administration [2]. In the wake of this orchestrated exodus, Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed—until then a judge of the High Court Division—was swiftly named the 25th Chief Justice of Bangladesh by President Mohammed Shahabuddin in response to the mob demand [3].

The appointment of Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed was not a routine exercise of constitutional procedure but the culmination of a meticulously orchestrated campaign of mob-led intimidation. The forced resignation of Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan—under explicit threats and time-bound ultimatums issued by protestors—constituted not a voluntary departure but a capitulation to criminal coercion. The simultaneous and systematic resignation of multiple Appellate Division judges further underscores the atmosphere of fear engineered by those mobilizing religious extremist sentiment. In effect, what unfolded was a judicial coup by proxy, executed not through formal state apparatus but through the calculated use of unlawful mob pressure. The elevation of Justice Ahmed, occurring at the precise moment the judiciary had been emptied of dissenting voices, reflects not a coincidence of seniority but a prearranged outcome enabled by the erasure of institutional resistance through criminal force.

Unleashing Mob Violence and Religious Extremism

Under Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed's leadership, the judiciary did not merely fail to contain the rise of religious extremism—it became a silent enabler of it. The power vacuum following the August uprising quickly devolved into a breeding ground for mob violence and sectarian terror [4]. In November 2024, the politically charged arrest of Hindu leader Krishna Das Prabhu on trumped-up sedition charges ignited deadly unrest in southeastern Bangladesh [5]. The clashes—fueled by religious animosity—left scores injured and resulted in the death of Saiful Islam Alif [6]. Yet even as blood was spilled out, the Supreme Court stood idle. Chief Justice Ahmed's court issued no restraining orders, launched no inquiries, and provided no constitutional relief—effectively greenlighting impunity for sectarian thuggery.

But judicial inaction soon turned into judicial endorsement. In a move that defied the memory of Bangladesh's liberation struggle and undermined decades of transitional justice, the Supreme Court—under Justice Ahmed's direct oversight—revived the appeal of Jamaat-e-Islami, a group found guilty of war crimes, genocide,

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Cover Story

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and crimes against humanity [7]. By granting a legal foothold to a party historically linked to mass atrocities and radical ideology, the Chief Justice not only insulted the victims of 1971 but also empowered a new wave of extremist politics. What unfolded was not judicial neutrality—it was a betrayal cloaked in robes, where the highest court in the land became complicit in legitimizing the very forces that thrive on fear, violence, and religious division.

Turning a Blind Eye to Mob Attacks on Accused During Court Transit

Since assuming office on August 11, 2024, Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed has presided over a judiciary that has not only lost control over the rule of law—but has actively abdicated its duty to protect those entitled to constitutional safeguards. Following the toppling of Sheikh Hasina's government, Bangladesh plunged into mob-led retribution, with public fury swiftly morphing into street justice. During this volatile period, individuals accused of affiliations with the former regime—particularly allies of the Awami League—were routinely attacked while in judicial custody or transit to court. Far from isolated incidents, these were recurring episodes of orchestrated public vengeance, often covered extensively by national dailies. One such report, published on September 15, 2024, details an attempted assault on a former cabinet minister en route to a Dhaka court, foiled only by last-minute police intervention.

What stands out with chilling clarity is the complete silence of the Supreme Court under Chief Justice Ahmed. Not a single directive was issued to bolster security protocols for the accused. No *suo moto* rulings. No institutional condemnation of the violence. No warnings to law enforcement for dereliction of duty. This was not mere inaction—it was moral desertion at the highest level of the judiciary. By turning a blind eye to these violations, the Chief Justice permitted mob violence to fester as a substitute for due process, thereby eroding the foundational principle that every accused—regardless of political affiliation—is entitled to a fair trial and state protection. In any functioning democracy, the judiciary stands as a bulwark against mob rule. Under Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed, it became a passive witness to its rise.

Under Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed, who took office on August 11, 2024, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh has been scrutinized regarding its capacity to safeguard accused individuals during their transportation to court in the context of mob violence. This period succeeded the removal of Sheikh Hasina's government on August 5, 2024, characterized by extensive unrest, including assaults on individuals linked to the ousted regime. This analysis utilizes Bangladeshi newspapers in English and Bangla, alongside contextual examination, to assess significant incidents and the judiciary's response, or absence thereof, as of April 3, 2025.

A separate incident pertains to allies of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, although details are less thoroughly recorded. Reports from English outlets such as Dhaka Tribune and Bangla publications like Jugantor indicate that there were sporadic attacks on Awami League affiliates en route to courts during August and September 2024, coinciding with public outrage regarding the actions of the previous regime [8]. On November 30, 2024, it was reported in several national dailies that former cultural affairs minister Asaduzzaman Noor was allegedly assaulted by injured students involved in the July-August movement when he was taken to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) from jail for treatment [9]. Reportedly, no action was taken against the attackers.

What stands out with chilling clarity is the complete silence of the Supreme Court under Chief Justice Ahmed. Not a single directive was issued to bolster security protocols for the accused. No *suo moto* rulings. No institutional condemnation of the violence. No warnings to law enforcement for dereliction of duty. This was not mere inaction—it was moral desertion at the highest level of the judiciary. By turning a blind eye to these violations, the Chief Justice permitted mob violence to fester as a substitute for due process, thereby eroding the foundational principle that every accused—regardless of political affiliation—is entitled to a fair trial and state protection. In any functioning democracy, the judiciary stands as a bulwark against mob rule. Under Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed, it became a passive witness to its rise.

Systematic Denial of Bail to Political Opponents

High Court's Arbitrary Rejection of Anticipatory Bail

In October 2024, the judiciary under Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed revealed its increasing hostility toward legal neutrality when a two-judge High Court bench abruptly abandoned hearings on 789 anticipatory bail petitions—many filed by grassroots leaders and activists associated with the Awami League- the political opposition of the current government [10]. This mass procedural desertion was not just a breach of judicial decorum; it was a weaponization of silence. By walking away mid-hearing, the bench left hundreds of citizens exposed to arbitrary arrest, denying them even a minimal chance at legal protection. These were not faceless figures—they were known political actors caught in the crosshairs of a post-coup vendetta, and their petitions represented a final lifeline in an increasingly lawless system.

Far from upholding institutional integrity, Chief Justice Ahmed responded not with a demand for accountability but with

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

০১ শ্রাবণ ১৪৩২

16 July 2025

One Year of Injustice

Since the political shift in August last year, Bangladesh has seen deterioration across all indicators. A controlled judiciary and the worsening law and order situation have left the people of Bangladesh feeling insecure.

The arbitrary removal of judges, false cases, attacks, harassment, obstruction of bail, and mistreatment in court have pushed the justice system to an unbearable state.

To protect the people from this, it is essential to replace the undemocratic and unconstitutional government with one that is democratically elected through free, fair, inclusive and participatory elections in Bangladesh.

Prof Dr Md Habibe Millat

MBBS, FRCS(Edin)

president, Global Center for Democratic Governance

Editor's Note

On behalf of the editorial board, I express my congratulations and gratitude to everyone on this occasion of delivering the 7th issue of the Spotlight to our esteemed readers.

A significant cover story in this issue was written by a university professor who wishes to remain anonymous. We understand that a mob supported by the Interim Government is now controlling Bangladesh. People with free minds are speechless today, fearing when someone will be arrested, who will be charged with murder and thrown in jail, who will be harassed by creating a mob and causing trouble. Law and order are on the verge of collapse, the rule of law is weakening, and the economy is being destroyed. In such a situation, people are afraid even to open their minds and express their true identity. We want an end to this dark time. Let the country be free from misrule. Let democracy return. Let freedom of speech return. We wish to remind those who created this darkness in Bangladesh, learn from history; history does not forgive anyone.

I wish the readers a pleasant reading of the issue.

স্পটলাইটের সপ্তম সংখ্যাটি সম্মানিত পাঠকদের হাতে পৌঁছে দেওয়ার এই শুভক্ষণে সম্পাদকীয় বোর্ডের পক্ষ থেকে সবাইকে জানাই অভিনন্দন এবং কৃতজ্ঞতা।

এই সংখ্যায় অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ একটি কভার স্টোরি লিখেছেন একজন বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের শিক্ষক যিনি নাম প্রকাশে অনিচ্ছুক। আমরা বুঝতেই পারছি বাংলাদেশে এখন মবের রাজত্ব চলছে। কখন কাকে ধরে নিয়ে যাবে, কার নামে হত্যা মামলা দিয়ে জেলে ভরবে, মব সৃষ্টি করে নাজেহাল করবে, এ ভয়ে মুক্ত বুদ্ধির মানুষেরা আজ বাকরুদ্ধ। আইন-শৃঙ্খলা ধ্বংসপ্রায়, আইনের শাসন নিবু নিবু করছে, অর্থনীতি ধ্বংস হয়ে যাচ্ছে। এমন অবস্থায় মানুষের মন খুলে পরিচয় দিয়ে লিখতেও ভয় কাজ করছে। আমরা এই অন্ধকার সময়ের অবসান চাই। দুঃশাসন থেকে দেশ মুক্ত হোক। গণতন্ত্র ফিরে আসুক। ফিরে আসুক কথা বলার স্বাধীনতা। বাংলাদেশে যারা এই অন্ধকার সৃষ্টি করেছে তাদের স্মরণ করিয়ে দিতে চাই, ইতিহাস থেকে শিক্ষা নিন, ইতিহাস কাউকে ক্ষমা করেনা

Mohammad Abdur Rashid M. Eng., PhD, SMIEE

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

Cover Story

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quiet complicity. His decision to “reconstitute” the bench—without explanation, inquiry, or sanction—functioned as a paper-thin procedural fix designed to deflect scrutiny. Meanwhile, accusations of favoritism, bribery, and deliberate political targeting surfaced among the legal community, leading to open confrontations between lawyers and judges. Yet, once again, the Chief Justice remained silent. His failure to discipline or investigate the judicial misconduct not only emboldened further abuses but confirmed a chilling truth: under his leadership, the High Court had ceased to be a forum for justice. It had become an instrument of political reprisal.

Suspension of High Court Judges

In a move that shattered any remaining illusion of judicial independence, Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed orchestrated the forced sidelining of 12 High Court judges in October 2024, not through formal inquiry or judicial discipline, but in direct response to mob agitation and ideological hysteria [11]. Caving to demands from extremist student groups and politicized civil society outfits, Justice Ahmed placed the judges on “leave” based on vague allegations of affiliation with the previous Awami League government. These so-called charges—corruption, bias, and misconduct—were never tested in any tribunal, never scrutinized by any commission, and never afforded the basic protections of due process.

The situation escalated into a full-scale institutional disgrace when, on October 16, over a thousand members of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement stormed the Supreme Court premises, chanting slogans and demanding the purge of what they called “pro-Awami League fascist judges [12].” A faction of Lawyers also joined in, not to defend the sanctity of the judiciary, but to call for the imprisonment of colleagues tied to the former ruling party [13]. Rather than defending the judiciary from this outright assault on its autonomy, Chief Justice Ahmed capitulated the very next day, banning 12 judges from adjudicating. He offered no defense of judicial impartiality, no safeguard against trial by public frenzy. His actions set a chilling precedent: that judges could be exiled from the bench not through lawful process, but through ideological pressure and mob coercion.

Worse still, while judges were silenced, pro-opposition lawyers—also targeted by the same mobs—were left unprotected, unaddressed, and vilified without institutional defense. In effect, Chief Justice Ahmed sanctioned a political cleansing of the judiciary, allowing street-level radicalism to dictate the bench’s composition and casting a long, dark shadow over the future of Bangladesh’s legal system.

Weaponizing the Supreme Judicial Council

In December 2024, Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed took one of the most dangerous steps yet in consolidating control over the judiciary—he weaponized the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) [14], transforming what was once a mechanism for safeguarding judicial integrity into a covert tool of political retribution. Under his supervision, the reinstated SJC quietly submitted confidential reports to President Mohammed Shahabuddin targeting several High Court judges who had been appointed during the Awami League’s tenure. The language of “impartiality” and “integrity” was cynically deployed to mask what was, in reality, an orchestrated purge of judges viewed as politically inconvenient.

No details of the allegations were made public. No opportunity for rebuttal was afforded to the accused. The entire process reeked of a backdoor inquisition, designed not to preserve the rule of law but to enforce loyalty to the new judicial-political order. The secrecy surrounding the reports was not incidental—it was instrumental. By hiding the contents and recommendations, Chief Justice Ahmed ensured that political motives could masquerade as institutional scrutiny, shielded from public oversight and legal challenge. The Council, meant to uphold the constitution, had under his hand become an instrument of silent intimidation—a velvet noose around the necks of judges who dared to serve under a previous government.

Rather than strengthening accountability, Justice Ahmed has repurposed the Supreme Judicial Council into a judicial guillotine: arbitrary, opaque, and politically loaded. The message was unmistakable—past affiliations would not be tolerated, and the bench would be purged not by evidence or ethics, but by secret memos passed under the table of power.

Orchestrated Attacks on Justice Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik

On August 24, 2024, retired Justice Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik—once a vocal critic of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman and an emblematic figure of the judiciary—was brutally attacked by a politically charged mob while being escorted to court in Sylhet. What began with chants and jeers quickly escalated into a savage assault: he was punched, kicked, pelted

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with eggs and shoes, and dragged up the courthouse steps while bleeding profusely [15]. The attack left him critically injured, including a ruptured testicle that required emergency surgery.

Despite the blatant criminality of this act—an attack on a former Supreme Court justice in broad daylight, on court premises, in front of police officers—there has been deafening silence from Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed. Nearly eight months since the incident, not a single institutional condemnation, protective directive, or inquiry has been issued by the Supreme Court under his leadership. The symbolic weight of this silence cannot be overstated: in the face of a violent lynching attempt on one of its own, the apex court chose not justice, but submission.

Worse still, Justice Manik was promptly remanded to jail by a lower court under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code [16], despite the absence of a formal complaint from the Border Guard Bangladesh—another disturbing sign of a judiciary weaponized against individuals tied to the former regime. That the mob was composed of pro-BNP lawyers and demonstrators who coordinated their presence at the courthouse only reinforces the notion that this was not a spontaneous outburst, but an orchestrated act of political vengeance.

Chief Justice Ahmed's refusal to denounce this atrocity—committed under his watch, within the shadow of the very court he leads—amounts to tacit approval. His silence has emboldened recurring mob justice, compromised judicial dignity, and sent a chilling message to every judge, retired or sitting: allegiance to the rule of law over the government's interest will be punished, and the court will do nothing to protect you.

Egg Assault on Justice Md Ashraful Kamal in Open Court and Impunity for Perpetrators

In an incident that should have shaken the foundations of judicial dignity, High Court Justice Md Ashraful Kamal was brazenly assaulted in open court in November 2024—eggs hurled at him by a group of lawyers enraged by his remarks about former President Ziaur Rahman in a judgment that Ziaur Rahman was a military usurper— which is a true fact [17]. This shocking act of courtroom vandalism took place not in the shadows, but during a live court session, under the gaze of Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed's judiciary.

Yet, despite initial platitudes—Ahmed issued a press note voicing “concern” and pledging “necessary steps”—no concrete disciplinary action followed. As of April 3, 2025, there is no public record of contempt proceedings, bar association sanctions, or even internal investigations against the attackers. The perpetrators, lawyers by profession but vandals in conduct, walked away untouched. The Chief Justice, who once famously issued contempt charges against police for far lesser offences, has now retreated into silence when he is in charge of the entire judiciary.

This abdication of authority is more than procedural negligence—it is complicity by omission. The Supreme Court's failure to respond decisively to an assault on one of its sitting judges has emboldened a culture of impunity within the legal fraternity and sown fear among judges expected to rule impartially in a polarized landscape. The inaction not only violated the sanctity of the courtroom but also undermined Article 35 of the Constitution, which guarantees due process and the right to legal representation—rights now routinely trampled under mob intimidation and selective silence.

Ahmed's retreat into bureaucratic reforms and vague institutional platitudes, while judges are assaulted and lawyers openly threatened, reveals a troubling pattern: symbolic leadership without spine. When faced with a direct test of his commitment to judicial independence, Chief Justice Ahmed blinked.

Politically Motivated Acquittals of Corrupt Elites

During Syed Refaat Ahmed's tenure as the Chief Justice, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh has presided over an astonishing spree of acquittals for high-profile political elites—each case more revealing than the last in its timing, beneficiaries, and implications for judicial integrity. Rather than heralding a new era of accountability, the post-uprising judiciary has become a revolving door of impunity for the politically powerful.

On August 11, 2024—the very day Justice Ahmed was appointed Chief Justice—Nobel laureate and interim Prime Minister Muhammad Yunus was abruptly acquitted in a corruption case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission [18]. The message was clear: elevation to political leadership now guarantees judicial absolution. The pattern deepened in January 2025 when former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia saw her final corruption conviction overturned, erasing a decade-long prison sentence and clearing the path for her political re-entry [19].

Most damningly, the Supreme Court's four-member bench—personally led by Chief Justice Ahmed—suspended the prison sentence of Tarique Rahman, long accused of corruption and criminal conspiracy, along with his associate Gias Uddin Al Manun [20]. This decision, unaccompanied by transparent reasoning or public justification, amounted to a judicial pardon delivered from the highest seat of justice.

Adding to the litany, the High Court also acquitted Lutfozzaman Babor, a former state minister once convicted in a major

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cross-border arms trafficking case [21]. Taken together, these rulings form not a coincidence, but a coordinated rehabilitation of political actors strategically aligned with the current interim government.

Chief Justice Ahmed's tenure has thus far not only normalized selective justice—it has weaponized the judiciary to reward allies and cleanse the reputations of key players in the interim political order. This is not judicial independence; it is judicial surrender dressed in the garb of reform. The court has become less a forum of legal principle and more a stage for political theater, where justice is scripted in backrooms and verdicts serve political agendas

Complicity in Suppressing Academic Freedom at his Own Alma Mater

While Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed parades judicial reform and integrity on the national stage, his silence on the suppression of academic freedom—just steps away from his Supreme Court chamber—speaks louder than any reformist rhetoric.

Since August 2024, scores of academics—many from the University of Dhaka's Law Department, Ahmed's own alma mater—have faced dubious charges ranging from sedition to administrative misconduct. Their real offense? Not joining the coup attempt against an elected government, or their potential ability to criticize the authoritarian excesses of the interim government [22]. Though the specifics remain undocumented in full, faculty and student reports paint a grim picture of retaliatory proceedings that eerily echo the tactics of the very regime Bangladesh claims to have overthrown.

The epicenter of this repression, Dhaka University's Faculty of Law, sits less than a mile from the Supreme Court. And yet, by April 2025, neither a single *suo motu* action nor a public rebuke has emerged from the bench of Chief Justice Ahmed—a man whose own career was built on this very institution's commitment to critical thought and dissent.

Despite touting a “zero tolerance” approach to corruption and hosting international meetings on judicial independence, Ahmed has remained conspicuously unmoved on academic freedom, even as university administrations recycle the same tools of harassment once wielded by the ousted Awami League. No writs. No inquiries. No constitutional safeguarding of Article 39 rights.

This judicial abdication is not merely symbolic; it is systemic. While the Supreme Court managed to prioritize politically convenient acquittals for elites and high-profile bail dramas, it could not muster the will to protect academics facing professional exile. In stark contrast to Ahmed's 2019 human rights advocacy and high-minded lectures, his inaction now serves to normalize administrative vendettas against scholars.

If silence is complicity, then the Chief Justice has chosen a side. And it is not with the intellectuals who once made Dhaka University—and the nation's judiciary—a moral compass.

Endorsing the Violation of Lawyers' Right to Representation

Under Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed's tenure, the judiciary has witnessed a troubling erosion of the fundamental right to legal representation, particularly for lawyers affiliated with the former ruling Awami League. The mass detention of 70 senior lawyers in April 2025, all linked to the Awami League, marks an unprecedented crackdown on legal professionals [23]. These lawyers were made part of frivolous suits and criminal cases filed in the aftermath of the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government.

This incident is not isolated. In October 2024, the legal wing of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee demanded action against lawyers supporting the Awami League, with protest leaders calling for their arrest within 24 hours. Subsequently, in November 2024, a lawyer known for representing Awami League clients was assaulted outside a courtroom, compelling him to temporarily cease his practice.

Despite these alarming developments, the Supreme Court under Chief Justice Ahmed has not issued clear directives to protect the rights of these lawyers or to condemn the extrajudicial methods employed against them. This silence stands in stark contrast to the judiciary's constitutional obligation to uphold the right to legal representation and to ensure that all individuals, regardless of political affiliation, have access to justice.

The judiciary's inaction in the face of mob violence and intimidation tactics has effectively sanctioned a climate where legal professionals are targeted for their associations, undermining the very foundations of a fair and impartial legal system. Chief Justice Ahmed's emphasis on institutional stability appears to have come at the expense of individual rights, raising serious concerns about the judiciary's role in safeguarding democratic principles during this turbulent period. If the judiciary cannot defend the right of even its least popular officers to practice law without fear, what remains of its independence?

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Enabling the Crackdown on Press Freedom

Under the leadership of Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh has remained conspicuously silent amid an unprecedented assault on press freedom following the political upheaval of August 2024. Despite the judiciary's constitutional mandate to uphold freedom of expression under Article 39, the Court has failed to intervene as journalists face harassment, violence, and censorship.

Since the fall of Sheikh Hasina's government, over 350 journalists have been harassed, with 74 cases of violence reported, 113 criminal charges filed, and press credentials revoked for 167 journalists [24]. Media outlets perceived as sympathetic to the former regime, such as *Dainik Janakantha*, *Bangladesh Pratidin*, *Channel 24*, and *Somoy TV*, have been targeted by mobs, leading to assaults, vandalism, and forced closures [25].

The judiciary's inaction is particularly glaring given its proximity to these events and its role as a guardian of constitutional rights. Chief Justice Ahmed, who has publicly advocated for judicial integrity and independence, has not initiated any *suo motu* actions or writ petitions to address these violations. This silence effectively endorses the suppression of dissenting media voices and undermines the judiciary's credibility.

International observers, including the Human Rights Watch [26], have expressed concern over the judiciary's failure to protect press freedom. The lack of judicial response not only emboldens those perpetrating these attacks but also signals a troubling departure from the principles of justice and accountability.

Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed's tenure will likely be remembered for this abdication of responsibility, where the judiciary's passivity contributed to the erosion of press freedom in Bangladesh.

Conclusion

Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed's tenure has unfolded as a paradox: outwardly committed to reform and institutional stability, yet inwardly complicit in the erosion of fundamental rights and judicial integrity. Under his watch, Bangladesh's judiciary has tolerated or enabled mob violence against judges, politically motivated acquittals of elites, attacks on lawyers' right to representation, and a sweeping crackdown on the press. Despite bold rhetoric, Ahmed's court has remained largely mute on violations at his own alma mater, the University of Dhaka, where academics face retribution for dissent. His selective activism—prioritizing structural reforms while neglecting individual justice—has bred a judiciary that appears detached from the lived realities of repression and political vendetta. In failing to respond with urgency to such grave assaults on judicial and democratic norms, Ahmed has cast doubt on his own legacy. His silence, particularly when proximity and power demanded intervention, has transformed the Supreme Court from a constitutional bulwark into an accessory to institutional decay. This moment called for a Chief Justice who would rise above political winds and protect the republic's conscience. What it received instead was a figure of restraint, watching history unfold from the steps of the courthouse.

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Cover Story

DESTRUCTION OF JUDICIARY, ACADEMIC & JOURNALISTIC FREEDOM,
AND REIGN OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMIST-TERRORISTS UNDER CHIEF JUSTICE SYED REFAAT AHMED'S WATCH

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Lead Story 1

THEOCRATIC AUTOCRACY AND THE DEATH OF SECULAR DEMOCRACY: NEO-FASCIST DRIFT IN BANGLADESH'S INTERIM GOVERNMENT

(CONTINUED FROM ISSUE 6)

Ahsan Sayeed

The Future of Bangladesh under the Neo-Fascist Regime: Possible Scenarios

The consolidation of neo-fascist governance structures in post-2024 Bangladesh signals a deeply uncertain and volatile trajectory for the nation's political, social, and economic future. While authoritarian regimes often present an outward appearance of stability, their inner contradictions, repressive practices, and socio-political distortions generate a range of possible outcomes. Drawing upon historical precedents, comparative political analysis, and Bangladesh's unique socio-political landscape, at least four plausible scenarios may emerge.

Entrenchment of Authoritarian Stability: The "Managed Autocracy" Scenario

In this scenario, the interim regime led by Chief Advisor Dr. Muhammad Yunus—sustained by a strategic alliance of Islamist factions, praetorian military elements, and entrenched corporate oligarchs—successfully entrenches its authoritarian rule by systematically restructuring Bangladesh's political landscape into a form of "managed democracy," akin to the illiberal models seen in Putin's Russia or Erdoğan's Turkey (Levitsky & Way, 2010). This consolidation would involve the permanent suppression of secular political forces, particularly the AL, alongside formalized partnerships with Islamist groups such as JeI, IAB and HeI. The regime would monopolize key state instruments—media, education, and religious bodies—to engineer an ideologically conformist populace while militarizing the economy and employing paramilitary organizations like Tawhidi Janata and Inqilab Manch to maintain grassroots social control (Eco, 1995). Though this arrangement may offer superficial stability and economic predictability attractive to foreign actors such as China or elements within the US Deep State, it would inevitably deepen Bangladesh's democratic regression, exacerbate societal divisions, and sow the seeds for future unrest and political volatility (Freedom House, 2025).

Spiral into Violent Instability and Sectarian Conflict: 'Lebanese Model'

Bangladesh may spiral into prolonged instability resembling the Lebanese civil war model, characterized by pervasive sectarian conflict and societal fragmentation. Rising tensions between Sunni Islamist factions, religious minorities such as Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Sufis and Ahmadis, as well as secular and progressive groups, could erupt into widespread violence and targeted persecution. Marginalized ethnic and regional communities—particularly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts—may respond by forming armed resistance movements, igniting localized insurgencies aimed at defending their autonomy and cultural identity (Amnesty International, 2025). Simultaneously, the collapse of central law enforcement capabilities would allow extremist paramilitary groups like Tawhidi Janata and Inqilab Manch to function as de facto local authorities in various districts, replacing state governance with factional rule. This fragmentation of political authority and public order would paralyze governance, deter foreign investment, and trigger a mass exodus of refugees, echoing the tragic state failures witnessed in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan following regime disintegration (UNHCR, 2025).

Civil-Military Showdown and Military Coup (The "Praetorian Correction" Scenario)

As Samuel P. Huntington (1968) cautioned in his analysis of praetorian states, when the military's institutional autonomy is threatened or its core interests are sidelined by civilian authoritarian regimes or encroaching Islamist power centers, the likelihood of military intervention rises sharply. In Bangladesh, a rupture could occur if segments of the army leadership become increasingly alarmed by the erosion of state professionalism and the growing dominance of Islamist factions within governance structures. Economic discontent among the lower ranks—stemming from perceptions of favoritism toward regime-backed Islamist militias—may further destabilize military cohesion. Additionally, sustained international pressure, particularly from India or key Western powers, could encourage the military to reassert control in a bid to avert complete state failure. Such a scenario would parallel the "corrective coups" witnessed in Pakistan (1999) or Egypt (2013), potentially leading either to the restoration of a technocratic-military caretaker administration or, conversely, to the entrenchment of a deeper, more overt military authoritarianism, depending on the motives and unity of the interventionist leadership.

Popular Democratic Uprising (The "Counter-Revolution" Scenario)

Despite the interim regime's severe repression, the possibility of a mass popular uprising cannot be ruled out. Mounting

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public anger, fueled by widespread economic hardship resulting from oligarchic exploitation and the domination of foreign capital (International Crisis Group, 2025), may reach a breaking point. Marginalized groups—including religious minorities, secular youth, progressive activists, and disenfranchised working classes—could unite in resistance against the regime's aggressive theocratic and neo-fascist transformation of the state. Moreover, internal cracks within the regime's Islamist alliances or growing discord among elite factions could weaken the regime's authoritarian cohesion, creating an opening for rebellion. Such an uprising could bear resemblance to Bangladesh's 1990 pro-democracy movement or the mass mobilizations of the Arab Spring, though history warns that these movements are inherently volatile—vulnerable to co-option, suppression, or collapse unless they garner decisive support from key military factions or influential international actors (Bayat, 2013).

A Fragile and Dangerous Road Ahead

The future of Bangladesh under its current neo-fascist trajectory remains precarious and unstable. While the regime may hope for long-term survival through coercion and propaganda, the contradictions of ethno-religious ultra-nationalism, economic exclusion, and the erosion of civil-military balance make such stability unlikely in the long run. Historically, regimes that combine theocratic zeal with military praetorianism and corporate oligarchy—such as Mussolini's Italy, Zia-ul-Haq's Pakistan, or Pinochet's Chile—have faced eventual collapse or violent upheaval. Bangladesh appears to be hurtling toward one of these fates, unless deliberate internal or external corrective interventions reshape its political future.

Conclusion

The fall of Sheikh Hasina's AL government in August 2024 and the subsequent rise of the interim regime under Dr. Muhammad Yunus marked not a democratic transition but a decisive rupture with the secular, pluralist foundations of Bangladesh's statehood. As this report has demonstrated, the regime's ideological trajectory, institutional restructuring, and socio-political practices reflect a profound and dangerous descent into what can only be described as neo-fascism—characterized by the fusion of theocratic autocracy, praetorian militarism, and corporate oligarchy.

The systematic erosion of electoral democracy, the suppression of dissent, the militarization of civil society, and the construction of a mythic ethno-religious nationalism have replaced the constitutional and secular framework that once defined the republic. Inspired by the theoretical warnings of Umberto Eco, Antonio Gramsci, Samuel Huntington, and Noam Chomsky, this report has laid bare how Bangladesh's interim regime replicates the core features of classical fascist and totalitarian systems—though adapted to the local context of South Asian politics and Islamist populism.

The interim government's alliance with reactionary Islamist forces such as JeI, IAB, HeI, HuT and AAI, its patronage of paramilitary and vigilante groups, and its active revision of the country's Liberation War history serve not to renew democratic life but to bury its memory. The destruction of the secular liberation narrative—the very soul of 1971—marks a chilling cultural reprogramming aimed at producing a compliant, religiously homogenized citizenry stripped of historical agency.

Moreover, the regime's economic policies, favoring corporate monopolies and foreign capital at the expense of local entrepreneurship and labor rights, deepen socioeconomic inequalities and heighten public discontent. This combination of ideological repression and economic disenfranchisement renders future social upheaval almost inevitable—whether in the form of mass popular revolt, elite fragmentation, or descent into chronic instability and sectarian violence.

The death of secular democracy in Bangladesh, as this report concludes, is not merely the collapse of electoral institutions but the suffocation of an entire civic and cultural ethos that once held the promise of a pluralist, progressive, and sovereign republic. Unless countervailing domestic resistance, military realignment, or decisive international intervention emerges, the country risks hardening into a theocratic autocracy cloaked in populist rhetoric and sustained by repression—a neo-fascist model with dangerous implications for regional stability, minority rights, and the future of democracy in South Asia.

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Lead Story 2

THE BURNING OF SHRINES: BANGLADESH'S CULTURAL SOUL UNDER ATTACK

Dr. M. R. Islam

In the wake of the political upheaval on August 5, 2024, Bangladesh has witnessed an alarming rise in religious violence that extends beyond minority persecution. While Hindu, Christian, Ahmadiyya, and indigenous communities have faced documented violence and repression, widespread attacks have also targeted sacred sites within the majority Muslim community, specifically Sufi shrines, dargahs, and pilgrimage centers deeply rooted in Bengali spiritual tradition (1).

These assaults, marked by vandalism, arson, and looting, are seen by many as direct attacks on the fabric of Bengali culture and religious harmony. Analyses of these incidents reveal a disturbing trend: most attacks are perpetrated by hardline religious mobs invoking monotheistic purity, attempting to legitimize their violence in the name of Islam (2). Despite the growing frequency and scale of these events, the interim government has yet to take substantive action to halt the violence or bring perpetrators to justice.

For centuries, Bangladesh has been a land of religious coexistence, where Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, and others have lived side by side in mutual respect. The Sufi tradition in particular has played a vital role in shaping the country's spiritual and cultural landscape. However, that long-standing tradition is now under threat.

Since 5 August 2024, attacks on Sufi shrines and sacred sites have occurred with chilling regularity across the country (3). In many cases, the attackers, armed with local weapons, have carried out acts of destruction in broad daylight, sometimes even in the presence of law enforcement officers, who have been widely criticized for their inaction.

In Sylhet, historically revered as a spiritual heartland, the shrine of Hazrat Shah Paran (RA) was attacked (4), along with the grave of his follower Shah Sufi Abdul Qayyum. Graves were desecrated, and the site was left in ruins. In Narayanganj's Madanpur area, the Dewanbagh shrine was torched and looted for hours (5), while the Aynal Shaha Dargah in Sonargaon's Sonmandi Union was similarly demolished.

Further attacks were reported in Noakhali, where the shrine of Fakir Chadu Miji Shah (RA) was vandalized (6), and in Gazipur's Porabari, where the shrine of Shah Sufi Fasih Uddin (RA) was set ablaze (7). In Sirajganj, a wave of coordinated attacks targeted several dargahs, including the Darbar Sharif of Hazrat Baropir Gausul Azam in Sialkol, where graves were desecrated and the complex looted (8).



The demolished shrine of Fakir Chadu Miji Shah

In Thakurgaon's Ranishankail Upazila, extremists destroyed the 300-year-old shrine of Bibi Sakhin and assaulted her followers (9). Similar incidents have been reported in Kazipur (10), where the shrines of Ali Pagla and Ismail Pagla were torn down.

Such acts of religious desecration are not isolated cases. They reflect a broader campaign to erase the syncretic spiritual identity of Bangladesh. These shrines, often built around the graves of Sufi saints and revered preachers, have long been pilgrimage destinations for people of all backgrounds seeking peace, healing, and divine blessings.

The ongoing attacks are being interpreted by many as part of a deeper cultural assault, an attempt by extremist groups to supplant the country's diverse and tolerant religious traditions with a narrow, militant, and imported ideology. The symbolic destruction of shrines and the simultaneous targeting of markets and cultural spaces suggest a coordinated strategy to impose a more radical socio-religious order (11).

What is perhaps most troubling is the silence or failure of the state. The lack of decisive action from the interim government has emboldened extremists and left the general public gripped by fear and uncertainty. Many now believe that unless the state decisively intervenes, Bangladesh risks becoming a fertile ground for Taliban-style fanaticism.

In a nation founded on pluralism and cultural resilience, this wave of extremism poses an existential threat. The urgent need of the moment is that civil society, law enforcement, and spiritual leaders must come together to resist the violence before the damage to Bangladesh's soul becomes irreversible. ■



Ali Pagla's shrine vandalized in Sirajganj

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Lead Story 3

MOB RULE AND MEDIA SILENCE: FASCISM RISES IN BANGLADESH

By Latiful Kabir

Since August 5, 2024, Bangladesh has entered a dangerous phase of authoritarian control under the interim regime led by Dr. Muhammad Yunus. What initially appeared to be a transitional arrangement has rapidly transformed into a state-sponsored machinery of intimidation, suppression, and ideological cleansing. At the heart of this transformation lies a group known as the National Citizen Party (NCP)—an ironically named, state-sponsored mob force responsible for reshaping Bangladesh's political and institutional landscape.

The Rise of NCP: A Manufactured Mob

The NCP did not emerge organically. It was cultivated with strategic intent by the Yunus-led administration to perform tasks that the state could not do legally. Their tactics are straight from the fascist playbook: instil fear, disrupt dissent, and restructure power under the cover of public sentiment.

NCP mobs, largely composed of indoctrinated youth, have been unleashed in educational institutions, courts, and media offices. First came the forcible resignation of all judges from the higher judiciary—a move unprecedented in Bangladesh's history. Then followed a wave of institutional overhauls: the Universities, Anti-Corruption Commission, Election Commission, and Public Service Commission were all targeted, stormed by mobs or “civilian protesters,” paving the way for handpicked replacements loyal to the interim regime.

Media Blackout and Ideological Cleansing

The press, once a battleground of diverse ideas, has now been brought to its knees. While formal censorship has not been declared, an unspoken ban is now in place: no media outlet is allowed to publish articles or discussions related to the Awami League, the Liberation War, or secular nationalism. Editorial boards, once vibrant with political debate, are now paralyzed with fear. Journalists have been threatened and, in some cases, physically attacked by NCP affiliates.

The systematic silencing of voices aligned with Bangladesh's liberation ideals indicates not just a power shift but an ideological purge. It's an erasure of the historical memory that binds the republic together.

Fascist Symptom #1: The Mob as the State's Arm

Classical fascism, as seen in Mussolini's Italy or Hitler's Germany, always deployed paramilitary mobs—Blackshirts, Brownshirts—to execute political violence while the state maintained formal deniability. The earlier version of the NCP operated under the banner of the “anti-discrimination student movement,” which led a violent civil uprising throughout July 2024. It culminated in the so-called ‘March for Dhaka,’ a symbolic show of force eerily reminiscent of Mussolini's ‘March on Rome.’ NCP is the Bangladeshi iteration of that mechanism. It enforces political will through intimidation, especially targeting those who support the Awami League or express secular, pro-liberation views.

Fascist Symptom #2: Gendered Violence and Fear

Perhaps the most horrific dimension of this new order is the surge in violence against women. Under the current regime, rape cases have spiked dramatically, many involving pro-Yunus arms cadres acting with impunity. Women journalists, students, and activists have been disproportionately targeted, reflecting yet another grim marker of fascism: gendered terror as a tool of social control.

In fascist regimes, women are often either hyper-idealized as passive symbols of the nation or brutally punished for dissent. In present-day Bangladesh, we see the latter manifesting at an alarming rate.

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The Final Blow: Banning the Awami League

On June 10, 2025, the interim regime took its most drastic step yet: banning the Awami League, the party that led Bangladesh's independence struggle in 1971. This action marks a defining threshold—the transition from autocratic caretakerism to full-fledged fascism.

This ban not only violates democratic norms but also symbolically declares war on the spirit of the Liberation War

Lead Story 3

MOB RULE AND MEDIA SILENCE: FASCISM RISES IN BANGLADESH

By Latiful Kabir

ELECTIONS TIMELINE FAILS TO EASE POLITICAL TENSIONS AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

The interim government's announcement regarding the election timeline has failed to alleviate political tensions, with some major stakeholders continuing to demand an earlier vote. In addition to dealing with domestic political challenges, the interim government is grappling with growing disputes with neighbouring India, which will likely reject its recent request to extradite former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. On the economic front, the government has sought increased international financial assistance. Yet, systemic issues such as corruption, regulatory uncertainty and disruptions in the garment sector continue to deter foreign investment.

itself. The very ideals that birthed the Republic—secularism, inclusivity, and democratic participation—are now under siege.

Election Without a Deadline—and Without a Major Party

Perhaps the most alarming development is the regime's approach to the upcoming general election. On one hand, the government remains deliberately ambiguous about an election timeline, postponing national polls originally expected by late 2025, now suggesting mid-2026 at the earliest.

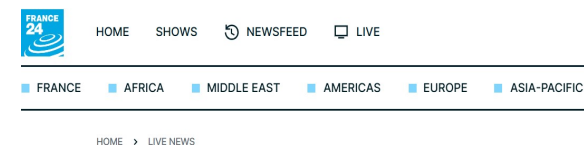
On the other hand, the government has banned the Awami League, the country's most popular and historically significant political party, from par-

ticipating. This means 30–40% of the national electorate has effectively been disenfranchised.

This would be unprecedented in Bangladesh's history—and extremely rare in global democratic practice. Even in authoritarian contexts, elections are often designed to include opposition parties as a façade of legitimacy. To ban a major, liberation-era party outright—while refusing to announce an election date—is a textbook move from fascist regimes past, but one that pushes Bangladesh into uncharted political territory.

The only comparable example might be Pakistan in 1971, where the Yahya regime refused to hand over power to the Awami League despite their electoral majority. The result was the war of independence and the birth of Bangladesh.

To hold a national election that excludes the most popular party and its support base, while suppressing media and deploying mobs to intimidate opponents, would not just delegitimize the electoral process—it would destroy the republic's democratic foundation.



Ban on ousted ex-ruling party divides Bangladesh voters

Dhaka (AFP) – The banning of fugitive ex-leader Sheikh Hasina's party offers a sliver of justice for Bangladeshis demanding she face trial for crimes against humanity but also raises concerns about the inclusivity of elections.

Issued on: 23/05/2025 - 11:47 | 4 min

The Democratic Emergency

What is happening in Bangladesh cannot be understood as simply a crisis of governance or legality. It is a democratic emergency. When the state employs mobs to subvert institutions, suppresses the media, bans opposition parties, and controls election timelines without accountability, it fulfils every warning sign of fascist takeover.

Let us be clear: elections are not inherently democratic. Elections without inclusion, fairness, or freedom are

merely rituals of control. If Bangladesh moves forward with a banned opposition and an open-ended timeline, it risks joining the ranks of historical tragedies, not modern democracies.

Resistance or Ruin?

What happens next will define Bangladesh for generations. A nation that once fought valiantly for liberation, secularism, and people's rights is now threatened by a regime that hijacks legality, weaponizes youth, and rules by fear. The question is no longer whether Bangladesh is drifting toward fascism—it is how far down that road we already are.

History warns us: fascism does not announce itself with fanfare. It arrives with silence, mobs, and laws disguised as reforms. In Bangladesh, the silence is deafening. The mobs are marching. And the constitution is being rewritten—one institution at a time.

Fascism is not coming—it is already here. And we are being asked to normalize it.

Let it not be said that we did not notice.

Continued on Page 15

WORLD MEDIA WATCH

Manirul Islam

HISTORY OF THE METICULOUS PLAN: A DESIGNED FAMINE IN 1974



The photograph of Basanti, wearing a net, floating on a raft made of the trunks of a banana plant, taken by photojournalist Aftab Ahmed, published in Ittefaq on September 10, 1974, spread across the country and abroad as a symbol of the terrible famine. The poisonous propaganda of the newspapers Ittefaq, Hok-katha, Holiday, Gananaktha, etc., had terrified and angered the vast population of the country and had a terrible impact on Bangladesh and the then Government of Bangabandhu. Basanti was a mentally unstable girl from the village of Chilmari in the northern district of Rangpur, one of the worst-hit areas of the monsoon flood that year. In exchange for money, the photographer intentionally took a picture of Basanti wearing a fishing net. This picture played a major role in creating the backdrop for the regime change through brutal carnage in 1975.

Dr. Just Farland, the World Bank's resident chief in Dhaka from 1972 to 1975 and later the Director General of the International Food Policy Research Institute, stated in a 1992 interview that the 1974 famine in Bangladesh was artificial and man-made. He spoke about the direct intervention of the United States, which is hostile to Bangladesh, and the extreme inefficiency in internal food distribution. Despite having a stockpile of 600,000 tons of food grains, this inefficiency in food distribution was intentional, part of a deep conspiracy against the country and its main mastermind was the then Food Secretary, a staunch Muslim League devotee Momen Khan, an EPCS officer from Pakistan who was later rewarded with a ministerial post by Ziaur Rahman, and his son Moin Khan, a minister in subsequent BNP governments and

currently a central leader of BNP.

The New York Times article on Famine 1974: Bangladesh Fears Thousands May Be Dead as Famine Spreads

By Kasturi Rangan Special to The New York Times, Nov. 13, 1974



Photo courtesy: NYT

The article has aggravated the political situation in Bangladesh further and energized the groups opposing the government. The opposition force comprised the eclectic streams from the political Islamist right to Maoist left, civil and military bureaucrats repatriated from Pakistan, the collaborators of the defeated invading army, and a small but firebrand chunk of the disgruntled fighters of the liberation war. The narrative started with the comment of a government bureaucrat painting the current famine situation as doom and gloom, with a conclusive comment surpassing the current crisis: 'the future seems hopeless'. The government had an ambitious plan to open 5000 'gruel kitchens' around the country to feed the famished population. NYT described the situation as, 'Until the end of September, fewer than 3,000 kitchens were functioning, and most of these were not receiving regular supplies. The Government had no stocks of food, and imports were at a low level. For the whole of September, a most critical period, only 20,000 tons of food grains reached the ports. This compares with more than 250,000 tons expected during this month and next.' This quoted text has two factual errors. One, concealing the fact, the Government had food stocks, but the then Secretary of Food Momen Khan had purposely hindered distribution. Two, distorting the stark truth, the USA has purposely stalled the shipment of food during the peak of the famine. Henry Kissinger visited Bangladesh on October 30, 1974. He was the mastermind behind the designed famine in 1974, which could have been easily avoided if the USA had sent food grain which was surplus in its silos. Yet, at the end of his only visit for a day, his notoriously infamous comment branding Bangladesh as 'A Bottomless Basket'

added enormous momentum to the conspiracy against Bangabandhu and Bangladesh. The link to the digitized version of the article is given below. The NYT admitted that during digitization, spelling mistakes occurred inadvertently.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1974/11/13/archives/bangladesh-fears-thousands-may-be-dead-as-famine-spreads-september.html>

John Pilger, a veteran Australian journalist, reported from East Pakistan for the Daily Mirror in 1970 on the cyclone that killed up to one million people and, a year later, on the liberation war that led to its independence of Bangladesh. His dispatches emphasised that Western governments did not wish to upset Pakistan's ruling generals, so their relief efforts were derisory.

'In 1974, when famine hit the country, Pilger returned to Bangladesh to make a docufilm 'An Unfashionable Tragedy'. It contains harrowing scenes of starving children, but also puts the horrors into a geopolitical context. This is Pilger's first documen-

Latiful Kabir

DIGITAL DISSENT: HOW GEN Z CAN BREAK THE WALL OF PROPAGANDA

In a time of silence, your voice is resistance.

Across Bangladesh, propaganda isn't just shouted from rooftops anymore—it's slipped into feeds, trends, and filtered headlines. Under the unelected interim regime of Prof. Yunus, truth has been shackled, rebranded, and remixed into a weapon. But for Gen Z—digital natives, meme-makers, truth-seekers—this is not just a moment of crisis. It's a call to action.

The New Face of Censorship

Censorship today comes in quiet forms: shadowbans, takedowns, ghosted hashtags. The regime blocks political content, silences journalists, and suppresses stories of abuse and injustice. But Gen Z sees through the glitch. You've felt it. Some of you *are* it.

Digital Literacy Is Power

The tools of truth are in your hands—literally. Learn to track sources. Archive what's deleted. Use VPNs. Fact-check. Trace metadata. Follow resistance channels—misinformation crumbles when you post receipts.

From Meme to Movement

When newspapers lie, you post reels. When speeches are censored, you remix them. When stories disappear, you archive. What starts as a meme can become a movement. Your voice isn't just commentary—it's *counter-narrative*.

Rescuing Reality

Propaganda wins when truth is forgotten. But not on your watch. Every tweet, every story, every exposed lie is a brick removed from their wall. Speaking out is more than protest—it's preservation.

Reclaim the Narrative

They control the script. You control the feed. They erase stories. You revive them. They want silence. You bring noise. The wall of propaganda may be built with fear, but you break it with facts.

You are not waiting for change. You are the change.

You are Gen Z.

And the future starts when you press 'Post'. ■

ডিজিটাল প্রতিবাদ: প্রজন্ম Z কিভাবে প্রচারণার প্রাচীর ভাঙতে পারে

যখন চারপাশে নীরবতা, তখন তোমার কণ্ঠই প্রতিরোধ।

বাংলাদেশে এখন আর প্রচারণা শুধু মাইকে ঘোষণা দিয়ে হয় না—এটা তোমার ফিডে ঢুকে পড়ে, ট্রেন্ড হয়ে ছড়ায়, শিরোনামের ভেতর লুকিয়ে থাকে। অধ্যাপক ইউনুসের নেতৃত্বাধীন অগণতান্ত্রিক অন্তর্বর্তী সরকারের আমলে সত্যকে বেঁধে রাখা হয়েছে, পাল্টে ফেলা হয়েছে, এবং অস্ত্র বানিয়ে ব্যবহার করা হচ্ছে।

কিন্তু প্রজন্ম Z—যারা ডিজিটাল দুনিয়ায় জন্মেছে, মিম বানাতে জানে, সত্য খোঁজে—তাদের জন্য এটা কেবল এক সংকট নয়। এটা এক ডাক। পরিবর্তনের ডাক।

সেন্সরশিপের নতুন চেহারা

আজকের সেন্সরশিপ নীরব। কখনো তোমার পোস্ট হঠাৎ হারিয়ে যায়, কখনো হ্যাশট্যাগ চলে যায় 'ভ্যানিশ মোডে'। রাজনৈতিক কনটেন্ট ব্লক হয়, সাংবাদিকদের কণ্ঠ স্তব্ধ করা হয়, বিচারবহির্ভূত হত্যার খবর চাপা পড়ে যায়। কিন্তু প্রজন্ম Z এসব দেখেও না দেখার ভান করে না। কেউ কেউ তো নিজের জীবনেই এটা অনুভব করেছে।

ডিজিটাল সচেতনতা মানেই শক্তি

তোমার হাতেই সত্যের অস্ত্র। সোর্স চেক করো। স্ক্রিনশট নাও। VPN ব্যবহার করো। ফ্যাক্ট-চেক করো। মিডিয়া ট্র্যাক করো। যেটা তারা মুছে দিতে চায়, সেটা তুমি ধরে রাখো। তথ্যের শক্তি তোমার ক্লিকেই।

মিম থেকে আন্দোলন

পত্রিকা যখন মিথ্যা বলে, তুমি রিল বানাও। ভাষণ যখন কাটা পড়ে, তুমি তার সাউন্ডবাইট ঘুরিয়ে দাও। যখন সত্যকে মুছে ফেলা হয়, তুমি তা সংরক্ষণ করো। মিম হতে পারে বিদ্রোহের হাতিয়ার। তোমার কণ্ঠ শুধু মত নয়—এটা *প্রতিবাদী কাহিনী*।

বাস্তবতার পুনরুদ্ধার

তারা চায় আমরা ভুলে যাই। কিন্তু তুমি আছো। তোমার প্রতিটি পোস্ট, প্রতিটি ছবি, প্রতিটি ফাঁস—তাদের প্রচারণার প্রাচীর থেকে একটা একটা করে ইট খুলে নেয়।

বয়ানের মালিকানা ফিরে পাও

তারা স্ক্রিপ্ট লেখে। তুমি ফিড চালাও। তারা মুক্তিসংগ্রামের গল্প মুছে ফেলে। তুমি তা ফিরিয়ে আনো। তারা চায় নীরবতা। তুমি দাও গর্জন। তারা ভয় দিয়ে প্রাচীর তোলে। তুমি তথ্য দিয়ে তা ভেঙে ফেলো।

তুমি আর বসে নেই। তুমি-ই পরিবর্তন।

তুমি প্রজন্ম Z।

আর ভবিষ্যৎ শুরু হয় তোমার এক ক্লিকে। ■