



Home Office

# Country Policy and Information Note

## Bangladesh: Political situation

Version 1.0

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# Executive summary

Politics in Bangladesh has historically been dominated by the Awami League (AL) and the Bangladeshi Nationalist Party (BNP). At a local level, support is garnered through auxiliary (often student and youth) groups affiliated with the main 2 parties. In July and early August 2024 widespread protests resulted in the resignation of AL Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the establishment of an interim government on 8 August under the leadership of Muhammad Yunus, who is not from any political party.

The protests which began on 1 July were peaceful, led by students in university towns but turned violent in mid-July 2024. The AL student wing – the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) – alongside other pro-AL groups, aligned with the security forces who used violence and weapons including, rubber bullets, tear gas, batons and, during some protests, live ammunition to disperse and control the crowds.

Sources vary on the total number of people injured but it is thought to be tens of thousands and upwards of 300 fatalities during the protest period. Many AL leaders fled or went into hiding after former PM Hasina left Bangladesh. Most arrests since have been high level including former ministers, members of parliament, top leaders of the AL party and lawmakers for actions that took place during AL's rule and during the protests. Other cases have been instigated against mayors, police officers, Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) officials and members of AL auxiliary organisations.

Leaders, members, and supporters of political groups are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from non-state and/or rogue state actors. Although politically motivated violence occurs, it has generally declined since the July and August protests. The number of people who are affected remains low in proportion to the size of the major parties.

Leaders, members, and supporters of the BNP Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) and their auxiliary (student and youth) organisations are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from the state.

Low-level supporters and members of the AL and auxiliary (student and youth) organisations, including a person who was simply a participant in a protest are unlikely to be of ongoing interest to the authorities.

In general, high profile and senior AL leaders, particularly those who held significant positions in the former government are likely to face prosecution, rather than persecution, on the grounds of the actions committed under the former government, rather than due to their political opinion. The onus is on the person to show that their profile, activities and/or past treatment at the hands of the state are such that the authorities are likely to view them adversely and subject them to treatment amounting to persecution or serious harm.

In general, the state is able to provide effective protection to a person who fears a 'rogue' state and/or non-state actor. The onus is on the person to demonstrate that they would not be able to seek and obtain effective state protection.

A person is likely to be able to internally relocate to escape persecution or serious harm by a rogue state and/or non-state actors, where the threat is localised.

Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

# Assessment

Section updated: 9 December 2024

## About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of whether, **in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by state and/or non-state actors because of their political or imputed political opinion
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- a claim if refused is likely or not to be certified as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

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## 1. Material facts, credibility, and other checks/referrals

### 1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).
- 1.1.4 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person’s claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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## 1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 1.2.2 Under the former government and during the student quota protests (July-August 2024), members of the security forces and Awami League (AL) members and affiliates have been accused of human rights abuses. In September 2024, Bangladesh's interim government listed the AL's student wing, the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) as a terrorist organisation.
- 1.2.3 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.4 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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## 2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Actual or imputed political opinion.
- 2.1.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason.
- 2.1.3 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 3. Risk

### 3.1 Risk from the state

- 3.1.1 Leaders, members, and supporters of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) party and their auxiliary (student and youth) organisations are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from the state.
- 3.1.2 Low-level supporters and members of the AL and auxiliary (student and youth) organisations, including a person who simply participated in a protest are unlikely to be of ongoing interest to the authorities. The onus is on the person to show that their profile, activities and/or past treatment at the hands of the state are such that the authorities are likely to view them adversely and subject them to treatment amounting to persecution or serious harm.

- 3.1.3 The Bangladeshi government has a legitimate right to act against criminal acts and to use all lawful and proportionate means to do so. This includes seeking to prosecute those who have committed human rights abuses. In general, high profile and senior AL leaders, particularly those who held significant positions in the former government are likely to face prosecution, rather than persecution, on the grounds of the actions committed under the former government, rather than due to their political opinion.
- 3.1.4 Those fleeing prosecution or punishment for a criminal offence are not normally refugees. However, prosecution may amount to persecution if it involves victimisation in its application by the authorities; for example, if it is the vehicle or excuse for or if only certain groups are prosecuted for a particular offence and the consequences of that discrimination are sufficiently severe. Punishment, which is cruel, inhuman, or degrading (including punishment which is out of all proportion to the offence committed) may also amount to persecution. For information on the death penalty see the Country Policy and Information Note, [Bangladesh: Actors of protection](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Considering human rights claims](#).
- 3.1.5 To qualify for protection on the basis of a breach of Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights (right to a fair trial), the person must demonstrate a real risk of a flagrant violation of that right. The onus is on the person to do this. For further information see the [Asylum Instruction on Considering human rights claims](#) and the Country Policy and Information Note, [Bangladesh: Actors of protection](#).
- 3.1.6 Bangladesh is a parliamentary democracy. Politics has historically been dominated by the AL and the BNP. At a local level, support is garnered through auxiliary groups affiliated with the main 2 parties, the largest of which are student 'wings' (see [Political system](#) and [Political parties](#)).
- 3.1.7 The protest movement against the job quota system began on 1 July. Peaceful protests led by students in university towns turned violent in mid-July 2024, as the focus widened to incorporate frustrations with the government and economy. Although not initially aligned to any political group, the protests gained opposition supporters mainly from the BNP, its student wing Jatiotabadi Chhatra Dol (JCD) and the Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel) party, a longstanding ally of the BNP. The AL student wing – the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) – alongside other pro-government groups, aligned with the security forces who used violence and weapons including, rubber bullets, tear gas, batons and during some protests, live ammunition to disperse and control the crowds. The government imposed a nationwide curfew, communications blackout, and deployed the army (see [Protests against the job quota system](#)).
- 3.1.8 Sources vary on the total number of fatalities and people injured across the period. Human Rights Support Society reports that between 16 July and 18 August 2024 25,000 people were injured and at least 819 people were killed. The UN, in October 2024 indicated a lower estimate of over 300 people killed during the protests (see [Protests against the job quota system](#)).
- 3.1.9 The number of arrests that occurred during protests and in subsequent raids on university campuses and homes varies between sources, but most

estimate over 2,000 people were arrested up to the 26 July. Targeted state surveillance and threats occurred against BNP and Jel leaders, and student organisers. The interim report from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) noted that from 12 July to 3 August over 450,000 unknown people and 2,000 identified people were registered for offences in at least 286 criminal cases in Dhaka alone. However, as Bangladeshi law allows for anyone to file a case, including against unknown suspects, it is not clear how many of these have proceeded or will proceed to prosecution. OHCHR indicates a number of those arrested were subjected to ill treatment in police custody, including torture. No further reports at the time of writing provide a reliable figure to enable assessment of the scale and extent to which this occurred (see [Arrests and detentions and Arrests of Awami League members and affiliates](#)).

- 3.1.10 The protest movement led to the resignation of AL Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 5 August 2024 and the establishment of an interim government on 8 August under the leadership of Muhammad Yunus, who is not from any political party. It is made up of students, civil society representatives the BNP and members affiliated with Jel. There are no representatives from the former ruling AL party. The interim government dismissed elected city mayors and hundreds of public representatives from local government across the country who were loyal to the AL and replaced them with interim administrators (see [Political impact of the protests and Arrests of Awami League members and affiliates](#)).
- 3.1.11 Many AL leaders fled or went into hiding after former PM Hasina left Bangladesh and travel bans have been placed on former AL ministers, high-level officials, and their families. Most arrests have been high level including former ministers, members of parliament, top leaders of the AL party and lawmakers for actions that took place during the former regime and during the protests. An arrest warrant has been issued in relation to hundreds of cases against former PM Hasina. From sources consulted, it is not yet clear on the progress of the majority of these cases (see [Political impact of the protests and Arrests of Awami League members and affiliates](#)).
- 3.1.12 The interim government has the support of the Army and main political parties (besides the AL) who agree on the need for reform. The interim government have released thousands of prisoners, detained during the protests alongside longer-term political prisoners, and signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances. The interim government has established commissions to reform the election system and public administration which are expected to deliver reports by the end of 2024. The date for national elections has not been announced, but they are expected in the next 18 months (see [Political impact of the protests](#)).
- 3.1.13 Political groups continue to operate. Jel unable to participate in elections and banned as a terrorist organisation on 1 August 2024 under former PM Hasina, had their ban revoked by the interim government at the end of August 2024. Khaleeda Zia, Chair of the BNP – who had been held under house arrest – was freed on 6 August. The AL remains registered with the Election Commission. However, in November 2024, the interim government



labelled them a ‘fascist party’ and said they would not be able to hold political protests in Bangladesh (see [Status and activities of the Awami League and affiliates](#)).

- 3.1.14 Student political wings (which can also include former students), affiliated with the main parties, are active throughout Bangladesh’s educational institutes. They are run at a local or regional level and central leadership of the affiliated party in practice has little active control over activities. In September 2024, in response to violence between factions, Dhaka university banned political activities by the student wings of Jel (the Bangladeshi Chhatra Shibir or Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS)) and of the BNP’s Bangladesh Jatiotabadi Chhatra Dol (JCD). This was done with support from the interim government. The AL-affiliated BCL has been banned under Anti-Terrorism legislation for its role in violence under Hasina’s regime and during the protests (see [Political parties](#) and [Treatment of political groups post August 2024](#)).
- 3.1.15 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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## 3.2 Risk from non-state actors

- 3.2.1 Leaders, members, and supporters of political groups are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from non-state and/or rogue state actors. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.2.2 Although politically motivated violence occurs, the number of people who are affected remains low in proportion to the size of the major parties.
- 3.2.3 Most reports of violence causing injury and death took place during the protests in July and August 2024 and are attributed to the security forces or BCL. According to OHCHR on 16 August 2024 the number of revenge attacks between political groups because of the disorder had yet to be determined. Although there are reports of attacks across university campuses, mob violence, lynchings and arson, political violence has generally declined since the July and August protests. In late October 2024 Al Jazeera reported ‘hundreds’ of AL leaders, members and students had been attacked or killed, however this figure has not been widely reported or evidenced in other sources consulted. ICG noted in November 2024 that the scale of revenge killings has been much lower than expected (see [Violence and fatalities](#), [Violence against Awami League members and affiliates](#)).
- 3.2.4 Intra party violence occurs particularly during periods of heightened political unrest such as during, and because of, the July and August 2024 political protests. Since the formation of the interim government there are reports of violent clashes resulting in injuries and deaths between various factions of the BNP, mainly around control of former AL businesses. The BNP have reportedly taken action against over 1,000 of its leaders and members at various levels, in relation to intra and inter-party conflict, to limit retributive violence (see [Bangladesh Nationalist Party \(BNP\)](#)).
- 3.2.5 In November 2024, after a call from former PM Hasina for the AL to rally, protesters from the BNP and Jel blocked the streets in Dhaka where the AL

were to gather, attacked several AL supporters and detained others before handing them over to the police. Violence by students and political activists against 10 suspected AL members occurred at a rally in Gulistan (see [Status and activities of the Awami League and affiliates](#) and [Bangladesh Nationalist Party \(BNP\)](#)).

- 3.2.6 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 4. Protection

- 4.1.1 A person who fears the state is unlikely to obtain protection.
- 4.1.2 In general, the state is able to provide effective protection to a person who fears a 'rogue' state and/or non-state actor because of their actual or perceived political affiliation. The onus is on the person to demonstrate that they would not be able to seek and obtain effective state protection.
- 4.1.3 Law enforcement agencies have historically been aligned with the AL as the ruling party. Under former PM Hasina's government, there are examples of the security forces ignoring complaints from the opposition, failing to stop violence perpetrated by the BCL, the student wing of the AL, and engaging in human rights abuses, including violence, arbitrary arrest and detention of opposition protesters during July and August 2024 (see [Political environment and Protests against the job quota system](#))
- 4.1.4 The interim government (since its formation in August 2024) has announced a series of reforms. This includes the establishment of commissions on police, the judiciary and anti-corruption. There have been major reshuffles in the police force, and a removal of those loyal to the AL including forced retirement, reinstating, or transferring of police officials, replacement of those implicated in abuses and the arrest of senior officers. The Inspector General of Police and head of the RAB, the paramilitary organisation who have previously been responsible for human rights abuses, and the Supreme Court chief justice who resigned in the wake of the protests have been replaced. Three hundred lower court judges have been transferred or promoted. According to an interview with the International Crisis Group a senior judge noted that there was no longer the level of politicisation and pressure within the judiciary that there had been previously (see [Interim government's mandate](#) and [Reform of the security forces and judiciary](#)).
- 4.1.5 Despite initial instability in law and order, police have now returned to work, police stations are largely manned and functioning in most areas and the army has the power to disperse illegal rallies. The police and the criminal justice system are functioning although their effectiveness continues to be undermined by poor infrastructure, corruption, and bribery. Police announced in September 2024 that mob justice would not be tolerated, and offenders would be prosecuted (see [Under the interim government](#)).
- 4.1.6 Hundreds of senior officials and AL leaders under the former government have been arrested and remanded into custody in relation to deaths that occurred during the protests. Some have been denied legal representation during the process. Other cases have been instigated against mayors, police

officers, RAB, and members of AL auxiliary organisations. Political affiliation or the settling of personal scores may be a motive for filing criminal complaints. This is because Bangladeshi law allows for cases to be filed with the police by members of the public, and the interim government has no legal power to block the process. However, it is not clear how many cases there are and whether they are proceeding to prosecution. The government has a legitimate right to act against criminal acts and to use all lawful and proportionate means to do so, including against those involved in criminal acts during the former regime and the protests (see [Arrests of Awami League members and affiliates](#) and [Law and order](#). See also the Country Policy and Information Note, [Bangladesh: Actors of protection](#)).

- 4.1.7 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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## 5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 A person is likely to be able to internally relocate to escape persecution or serious harm by a rogue state and/or non-state actors, where the threat is localised. This is because in general, there are parts of the country particularly larger urban areas and cities such as (but not limited to) Dhaka and Chittagong (Chattogram) where it will be reasonable to expect them to relocate.
- 5.1.3 Sylhet is located over 230km from Dhaka and over 360km from Chittagong (Chattogram). Dhaka and Chittagong (Chattogram) are the 2 most populous cities in Bangladesh, with populations of 23.21 million and 5.38 million respectively (see the Country Policy and Information Note, [Bangladesh: Internal relocation](#) and, for consideration of the reasonableness of internal relocation for women see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Bangladesh: Women fearing gender-based violence](#)).
- 5.1.4 For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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## 6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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# Country information

## About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated, and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment.

The structure and content follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person, or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **15 November 2024**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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## 7. Historical context

### 7.1 Political environment

7.1.1 The Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) Country Report for Bangladesh, published 30 November 2022 (DFAT Bangladesh report 2022) based on their knowledge and discussions with a range of sources in Bangladesh and overseas<sup>1</sup> noted:

'Bangladesh politics have long been dominated by the Awami League (AL) and the Bangladeshi Nationalist Party (BNP). The AL has traditionally been broadly secular, liberal, rural-based and in favour of relations with India. The BNP has traditionally been broadly more accommodating of political Islam, conservative, broadly against relations with India and urban-based. The relationship between the two parties is characterised by longstanding enmity...'<sup>2</sup>

7.1.2 The European Agency for Asylum (EUAA) noted in July 2024 '...there is deep mistrust and animosity between AL and BNP.'<sup>3</sup>

7.1.3 For brief background on the interparty rivalry between the then ruling Awami League (AL) and its main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), see the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Election Watch: [The Violent Politics of Bangladesh's 2024 Elections](#).

7.1.4 Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, leader of the AL, resigned on 5 August 2024 following nationwide protests, which began early July 2024 to demand fairer access to government jobs<sup>4 5</sup> (see [Political impact of the](#)

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<sup>1</sup> DFAT, [Bangladesh report 2022](#) (1.4), 30 November 2022

<sup>2</sup> DFAT, [Bangladesh report 2022](#) (3.65 to 3.66), 30 November 2022

<sup>3</sup> EUAA, [COI Report – Bangladesh – Country Focus](#) (page 25), July 2024

<sup>4</sup> The Guardian, [Why has Bangladesh's prime minister Sheikh Hasina resigned ...](#), 5 August 2024

<sup>5</sup> ACLED, [Regional overview: Asia-Pacific](#), 8 August 2024

[protests](#)).

- 7.1.5 The CIA World Factbook noted on 30 October 2024 the Chief of State for the Executive branch was President Mohammad Shahabuddin Chuppu (since 24 April 2023) and the head of government was Interim Prime Minister Muhammad Yunus (since 8 August 2024)<sup>6</sup>.
- 7.1.6 For an overview of the political system prior to July 2024 see the Country information section in the archived [Country Policy and Information Note \(CPIN\) Bangladesh: Political parties and affiliation](#) and the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) [COI Report: Bangladesh - Country focus \(July 2024\)](#).

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## 8. Political system

### 8.1 Structure

- 8.1.1 The political structure of the Bangladesh is prescribed in the [Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh](#), which was approved by a Constituent Assembly and came into effect on 16 December 1972<sup>7</sup>. Article 142 provides that the support of at least two thirds of Members of Parliament (MP) is required for an amendment to the Constitution<sup>8</sup>.
- 8.1.2 As stipulated in the Constitution, the Prime Minister is appointed by the President and presides over a cabinet that is collectively responsible to Parliament<sup>9</sup>. Parliament is composed of ministers selected by the Prime Minister<sup>10</sup>. The President may dissolve parliament upon the written request of the Prime Minister<sup>11</sup>. Article 55 of the Constitution entrusts all executive power in the Prime Minister rather than Cabinet<sup>12</sup>.
- 8.1.3 The DFAT Bangladesh report 2022 noted:
- ‘Bangladesh is a parliamentary democracy. The unicameral National Parliament and the largely ceremonial presidency both have five-year terms. Parliament comprises 350 seats, of which 300 are directly elected and 50 are reserved for female members nominated by political parties based on their share of elected seats.... Bangladesh is divided into eight administrative divisions, which are in turn divided into 64 districts headed by a District Council (Zila Parishad). Each district is in turn divided into numerous sub-districts (Upazila, formerly ‘Thana’), and councils at the village (Union Parishad), town (Municipal) and city (City Corporation) levels. Elections to five-year terms on local government bodies are conducted in phases.
- ‘Local governments, even at the Union Parishad level, can significantly influence the day-to-day lives of citizens. They have influence and run programs and departments that deal with matters of community

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<sup>6</sup> CIA, [The World Factbook Bangladesh](#) (Government), 30 October 2024

<sup>7</sup> Bdlaws, ‘[Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh](#)’, 1972

<sup>8</sup> Bdlaws, ‘[Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh](#)’ (Article 142), 1972

<sup>9</sup> Bdlaws, ‘[Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh](#)’ (Articles 56(2) and 55(3)), 1972

<sup>10</sup> Bdlaws, ‘[Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh](#)’ (Article 55(1)), 1972

<sup>11</sup> Bdlaws, ‘[Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh](#)’ (Article 72(1)), 1972

<sup>12</sup> Bdlaws, ‘[Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh](#)’ (Article 55(2)), 1972

development, social welfare and law and order within the limits of their administrative units.<sup>13</sup>

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## 9. Political parties

### 9.1 Role of auxiliary organisations

#### 9.1.1 According to the DFAT Bangladesh report 2022:

‘Both the AL and BNP (and other Bangladeshi political parties) have large auxiliary organisations, including wings for students, volunteers, youth, professionals (such as doctors, lawyers), and labourers. ...sometimes known... as ‘fronts’, ‘wings’ or ‘leagues’. The largest of these are the student wings, of which many former students are still members... ‘[t]he sheer size of the auxiliary organisations means that, in practice, the central leadership of the relevant political party exercises only a limited amount of control over their activities.’<sup>14</sup>

#### 9.1.2 According to the same report:

‘There are strong incentives to join an auxiliary organisation. For student organisations, members have access to better university accommodation, jobs upon graduation or business opportunities. Patronage is an important factor – attending protests or supporting a locally powerful person or politician offers protection. The poor are more vulnerable to these pressures – the rich can get opportunities without such networks. While political patronage and connections can be helpful, it does not guarantee opportunities or services; Bangladesh is a developing country with limited government services and a surplus of graduates for limited graduate jobs.’<sup>15</sup>

#### 9.1.3 The Diplomat, an international current-affairs magazine covering Asia-Pacific<sup>16</sup> noted ‘On September 19, the administration of the University of Dhaka decided to ban all kinds of student-teacher-staff politics on campus. Since the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s autocratic regime ...33 higher education institutes have banned student politics. Among them are 18 government universities, four government colleges, and 10 government medical colleges.’<sup>17</sup>

#### 9.1.4 The same Diplomat report noted:

‘...historically, student groups in Bangladesh have played a key role in movements for justice and social change...parent political parties must take a firm stance against the misuse of student politics for criminal activities. Influential leaders often exploit student leaders and activists for various unlawful purposes. For example, local leaders heavily influence student politics on campuses outside the capital, while central committee leaders control student politicians at Dhaka University and other major institutions.’<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> DFAT, [Bangladesh report 2022](#) (2.28 to 2.30), 30 November 2022

<sup>14</sup> DFAT, [Bangladesh report 2022](#) (3.65 to 3.66), 30 November 2022

<sup>15</sup> DFAT, [Bangladesh report 2022](#) (3.92), 30 November 2022

<sup>16</sup> The Diplomat, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>17</sup> The Diplomat, [Bangladesh’s Student Politics: Storied History, Brutal Violence](#), 25 October 2024

<sup>18</sup> The Diplomat, [Bangladesh’s Student Politics: Storied History, Brutal Violence](#), 25 October 2024.

## 9.2 Awami League (AL) and auxiliary organisations

- 9.2.1 For background information on the AL and affiliated student wings, see the archived 2020 [Country Policy and Information Note Bangladesh: Political parties and affiliation](#).
- 9.2.2 The DFAT Bangladesh report 2022 noted:  
'The Awami League (AL) was established in 1949... It.... [had] been in power since 2009... At the top of the party is the Central Committee, known as the Presidium. There are 15 members of this committee, including the [former] Prime Minister. The Presidium is part of an 81-person Central Working Party and is supported by an advisory committee of technical advisers. Each district and upazila has its own committee and people join political auxiliary organisations and rise up through the ranks... The party engages in recruitment activities throughout the year... there are many benefits to membership, such as political patronage, that mean volunteers are likely to join the party willingly [rather than through forced recruitment].'<sup>19</sup>
- 9.2.3 The DFAT Bangladesh report 2022 noted 'AL's student wing, the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) has millions of members.'<sup>20</sup>
- 9.2.4 The Diplomat, an international current-affairs magazine covering Asia-Pacific<sup>21</sup> noted in its 25 October article:  
'...on October 23, the government banned the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the 76-year-old pro-Awami League (AL) student wing, under the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2009. The decision came after allegations of the BCL's violent role in the last regime and in suppressing student-led protests, including attacks during the July 2024 Movement... over the past 15 years of AL rule, it has become common for the BCL to forcefully take students from the halls to attend political events on significant days.'<sup>22</sup>
- 9.2.5 In relation to support for the party, ICG noted on 14 November 2024 it had weakened over the preceding 5 years<sup>23</sup>.

See also [Anti-quota protests](#)

## 9.3 Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and auxiliary organisations

- 9.3.1 For background information on the BNP and affiliated student wings see the archived 2020 [Country Policy and Information Note Bangladesh: Political parties and affiliation](#).
- 9.3.2 The DFAT Bangladesh report 2022 noted that, at the time of writing the BNP was the main opposition party. The report provided information on its structure: 'The BNP Standing Committee is the top decision-making body of the party. Various 'secretaries' of internal committees have responsibility

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<sup>19</sup> DFAT, [Bangladesh report 2022](#) (3.71, 3.72, 3.75), 30 November 2022

<sup>20</sup> DFAT, [Bangladesh report 2022](#) (3.77 to 3.78), 30 November 2022

<sup>21</sup> The Diplomat, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>22</sup> The Diplomat, [Bangladesh's Student Politics: Storied History, Brutal Violence](#), 25 October 2024.

<sup>23</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (Executive Summary), 14 November 2024

over political portfolios, such as foreign affairs or information. Various committees at the district and upazila level also exist. ...Political Auxiliary Organisations play an important part in the membership activities at the grassroots of the party.<sup>24</sup>

- 9.3.3 Voice7News, a Dhaka based online news agency noted 'Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dol, the youth wing of BNP, is celebrating its 46th founding anniversary today [27 October 2024] . Established on this day in 1978 by the late President Ziaur Rahman, the organization plays a significant role in BNP's political activities and youth engagement.... Over the years, the youth wing has been led by prominent BNP figures such as Mirza Abbas, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, and Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal. Currently, Abdul Monayem Munna serves as the President of Jubo Dol, with Nurul Islam Nayan holding the position of General Secretary. The organization remains committed to promoting BNP's agenda among the youth and supporting the party's broader political movement.'<sup>25</sup>
- 9.3.4 In terms of political allegiance, the Dhaka Tribune reported on 28 October 2024 'BNP senior leader Mirza Abbas on Monday said BNP is willing to rebuild the country alongside its longstanding ally, Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, in the days ahead.'<sup>26</sup>
- 9.3.5 The Foreign Policy Research Institute (FRPI), a non-partisan US based think tank<sup>27</sup>, in its report published 4 November 2024 noted '...the Yunus-led interim government has overseen Dhaka University banning the activities of political party student wings on September 19, 2024, which... includes the BNP....Bangladesh Jatiotabadi Chhatra Dol [JCD]...'28
- 9.3.6 In November 2024, The Business Standard reported on measures the BNP were taking in preparation for the national elections. These included forming new committees in cities and districts including Dhaka and Sylhet, launching a renewed 31-point proposal for governance, and announcing its intention to spend 10% of GDP on health and education if elected, an increase to what the sectors received previously<sup>29 30 31</sup>.

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#### 9.4 Jamaat-e-Islami (JI or Jel) and auxiliary organisations

9.4.1 For background information on the Jel, see the Country information in the archived 2020 [Country Policy and Information Note Bangladesh: Political parties and affiliation](#).

9.4.2 The DFAT Bangladesh report 2022 noted:

'Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) is an Islamist political party that supported the Pakistani army during the independence war in 1971 ...Generally speaking, journalists

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<sup>24</sup> DFAT, [Bangladesh report 2022](#) (3.90), 30 November 2022

<sup>25</sup> Voice7News, [Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dol](#), 27 October 2024

<sup>26</sup> DT, [Abbas: BNP willing to rebuild Bangladesh along Jamaat](#), 28 October 2024

<sup>27</sup> FRPI, [About](#), no date

<sup>28</sup> FRPI, [Beyond the Revolution: Building a New Bangladesh](#), 4 November 2024,

<sup>29</sup> The Business Standard [BNP forms new committees in four city, five district units](#), 4 November 2024

<sup>30</sup> The Business Standard, [BNP will allocate 10%...](#) 11 November 2024

<sup>31</sup> The Business Standard, [BNP plans divisional rallies](#), 13 November



are reluctant to report on the party (see Media) and this limits the amount of information that is publicly available. JI followers generally keep a low profile and they do not campaign actively or publicly, but DFAT understands that they are able to recruit new members, albeit in a clandestine manner through personal connections. The size of the party has shrunk in recent years and many former members instead joined other parties, including the AL, though some have joined other Islamist movements, which may or may not be similar. DFAT understands that the party is still well-organised and has some influence in political circles...<sup>32</sup>

- 9.4.3 FPRI noted Dhaka university, overseen by the interim government, banned the activities of Jamaat-e-Islami student wing Bangladeshi Chhatra Shibir, on 19 September 2024<sup>33</sup>.

See also [Jamaat-e-Islami](#)

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## 10. Protests against the job quota system

### 10.1 Job quota system

- 10.1.1 Bangladeshi English-language daily newspaper, The Daily Star, provided a history of job reservations for the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) since independence<sup>34</sup>. The initial quota system, introduced in 1972, reserved 30% of jobs to freedom fighters from the liberation war. This was later extended to include the children and grandchildren of freedom fighters<sup>35</sup>. As of 2012, 44% of BCS jobs were based on merit and 56% were reserved for specific communities:

- 30% for the children and grandchildren of freedom fighters
- 10% for women
- 10% for residents of 'backward' (poorer) districts
- 5% for Indigenous communities
- 1% for people with physical disabilities<sup>36 37 38</sup>

- 10.1.2 Middle East Eye (MEE), an independent news organisation, reported on 23 July 2024 that 'Many argue that the quota system directly benefits [then] Prime Minister Hasina and her Awami League party which played a major role in helping the country achieve its independence.'<sup>39</sup>

- 10.1.3 In 2018, students and job seekers demanded a reform of the quota system, objecting to the percentage of jobs allocated to descendants of freedom fighters<sup>40 41</sup>. In response, then PM Sheikh Hasina issued an order, which

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<sup>32</sup> DFAT, [Bangladesh report 2022](#) (3.85, 3.86, 3.87), 30 November 2022

<sup>33</sup> FPRI, [Beyond the Revolution: Building a New Bangladesh](#), 4 November 2024,

<sup>34</sup> Daily Star, [History of the quota system in Bangladesh](#), 10 July 2024

<sup>35</sup> Daily Star, [History of the quota system in Bangladesh](#), 10 July 2024

<sup>36</sup> ICG, [Bangladesh on Edge after Crushing Quota Protests](#), 25 July 2024.

<sup>37</sup> Eurasia Review, [Bangladesh Made A Mess Of The Quota System For Government...](#), 21 July 2024

<sup>38</sup> Al Jazeera, [What's behind Bangladesh's violent quota protests?](#), 16 July 2024

<sup>39</sup> MEE, [How Bangladesh student protests sparked broader crisis for Hasina ...](#), 23 July 2024

<sup>40</sup> Eurasia Review, [Bangladesh Made A Mess Of The Quota System For Government...](#), 21 July 2024

<sup>41</sup> Prothom Alo, [HC declares cancelling freedom fighter quota in govt jobs illegal](#), 5 June 2024

scrapped the quota system altogether<sup>42 43</sup>.

- 10.1.4 Following an appeal against the cancellation of the job quotas by a descendant of a freedom fighter and 6 others, the High Court ruled on 5 June 2024 that the 2018 abolition was illegal, thus reinstating the quota system and causing a wave of protests<sup>44 45 46</sup>.
- 10.1.5 MEE reported that 'The [High Court] ruling meant that less than half the jobs were open to people based on merit amid an unemployment crisis. With more than 18 million young Bangladeshis struggling to find work, the quota system infuriated graduates hoping to find stable employment.'<sup>47</sup>
- 10.1.6 On 21 July 2024, the Supreme Court dismissed the High Court ruling and directed that 93% of government jobs would be open to candidates on merit, 5% for descendants of freedom fighters, 1% for ethnic minorities and 1% for third gender and the physically disabled<sup>48 49</sup>.

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## 10.2 Anti-quota protests

- 10.2.1 Protests against the High Court ruling on job quotas commenced at Dhaka University on 1 July 2024<sup>50</sup>. Al Jazeera reported on 16 July 2024 that:

'The protests began on July 1 [2024] after the High Court reinstated the job quota that reserves one-third of civil service posts for children of fighters who participated in the country's liberation movement in 1971 ... Students from government and private universities across Bangladesh are demanding reform in the conventional job quota system, under which more than half of much sought-after government jobs are reserved. The protesters said they are not aligned with any political group and they want a merit-based system that is fair to all. ... The protest movement has come to be known as the Students Against Discrimination movement.'<sup>51</sup>
- 10.2.2 The International Crisis Group (ICG), an independent research and analysis group, reported on 25 July 2024 that 'The protests [come at a time](#) when Bangladesh's economy is struggling, largely due to mismanagement and corruption, leading to fewer job opportunities for young people in the private sector. But there is also growing frustration at the government's authoritarianism, which enabled it to secure a fourth consecutive term in a [stage-managed election](#) in January [2024].'<sup>52</sup>
- 10.2.3 The ICG considered other reasons for the protests beyond demanding changes in the quota system:

'The anti-quota protests drew their size and strength from a deep economic

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<sup>42</sup> USIP, [What's Behind Bangladesh's Student Protests?](#), 22 July 2024

<sup>43</sup> Eurasia Review, [Bangladesh Made A Mess Of The Quota System For Government...](#), 21 July 2024

<sup>44</sup> Prothom Alo, [HC declares cancelling freedom fighter quota in govt jobs illegal](#), 5 June 2024

<sup>45</sup> USIP, [What's Behind Bangladesh's Student Protests?](#), 22 July 2024

<sup>46</sup> ICG, [Bangladesh on Edge after Crushing Quota Protests](#), 25 July 2024.

<sup>47</sup> MEE, [How Bangladesh student protests sparked broader crisis for Hasina ...](#), 23 July 2024

<sup>48</sup> CNN, [Bangladesh has erupted over jobs reserved for the children ...](#), 21 July 2024

<sup>49</sup> Al Jazeera, [Bangladesh top court scraps most quotas that caused deadly unrest](#), 21 July 2024

<sup>50</sup> CNN, [Bangladesh has erupted over jobs reserved for the children of ...](#), 21 July 2024

<sup>51</sup> Al Jazeera, [What's behind Bangladesh's violent quota protests?](#), 16 July 2024

<sup>52</sup> ICG, [Bangladesh on Edge after Crushing Quota Protests](#), 25 July 2024.

and political malaise festering in Bangladesh ... since emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has struggled to manage inflation, in particular high food prices, and found its efforts hampered by economic mismanagement, corruption and cronyism. Several high-profile corruption scandals have surfaced in recent months, stirring widespread anger at a time of deep economic pain for many Bangladeshis ...

‘Corruption also reportedly permeates recruitment for government jobs, meaning the quotas are just the most tangible element of what many Bangladeshis consider a rotten system of preferential state employment. Students perceive that many supposedly merit-based positions go to those with money or connections to the ruling party. At the same time, graduates also face much higher levels of unemployment than the broader population, making competition for these posts fierce.

‘Meanwhile, opinion polls and anecdotal evidence suggest that authoritarian drift under the Awami League government has made it increasingly unpopular... Furthermore, since Hasina won the 2008 election, Bangladesh has not had a genuinely competitive national poll... With no real alternative at the ballot box, discontented Bangladeshis have few options besides street protests to make their voices heard.’<sup>53</sup>

10.2.4 The Guardian reported on 16 July 2024 that ‘Zahed Ur Rahman, a Dhaka-based political analyst, said that the protests had been fuelled by student anger at soaring inflation, a grossly ignored unemployment crisis and frustrations at the crackdown on basic democratic freedoms under Hasina.’<sup>54</sup>

10.2.5 ACLED, a data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping project, reported on events during July 2024 in Bangladesh in its regional overview of the Asia-Pacific region, published 8 August 2024:

‘The protest movement, which began mainly as peaceful protests led by students in university towns, turned violent in mid-July after Prime Minister Hasina referred to the demonstrators as Razakar sympathizers, a highly charged term that refers to collaborators during the 1971 war of independence. Opposition supporters joined students, mainly from the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel)...

‘Even as the Supreme Court struck down the majority of quotas in a verdict issued on 21 July, demonstrations once again erupted in the last week of July, as student demands shifted toward broader issues of justice and accountability for violence against demonstrators. While the government accused opposition parties, mainly the BNP and Jel, of co-opting the student-led movement and turning them violent, the demonstrators blamed police and the then-ruling party for the violence.’<sup>55</sup>

10.2.6 Information obtained using ACLED’s Data Export Tool indicated that, across Bangladesh, there were at least 750 events (protests, riots, and violence against civilians) related to the quota reform movement between 1 July to 28 August 2024 (data as of 4 September 2024), of which 283 were recorded as

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<sup>53</sup> ICG, [Bangladesh on Edge after Crushing Quota Protests](#), 25 July 2024

<sup>54</sup> The Guardian, [Two die and thousands hurt in crackdown on Bangladesh student ...](#), 16 July 2024

<sup>55</sup> ACLED, [Asia-Pacific Overview: July 2024 Bangladesh ...](#), 8 August 2024

‘peaceful’<sup>56</sup>.

See also [Violent response to protests](#) and [Arrests and detentions](#)

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### 10.3 Violence and fatalities

10.3.1 USIP noted the initial protests in early July 2024 were ‘small but persistent’ and were ‘... met with occasional violence from pro-government Awami League (AL) supporters, namely its student wing Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL).’<sup>57</sup>

10.3.2 An ACLED factsheet on the protests, dated 26 July 2024, noted that ‘Though the demonstrations began as a mainly peaceful movement at universities, they descended into violence in mid-July amid clashes between protest groups and police, with international media reporting over 200 fatalities and thousands of injuries.’<sup>58</sup>

10.3.3 The same source noted that in mid-July:

‘Police launched a brutal crackdown, firing both rubber and live bullets at demonstrators. In some cases, the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the AL’s student wing, attacked demonstrators with weapons, further escalating violence... The government accuses the opposition parties of co-opting the student-led movement. It mainly blames the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its student wing, the Bangladesh Jatiotabadi Chatra Dal (JCD); many of those arrested are BNP leaders. ACLED data show that until 19 July, the BNP has explicitly participated in 3% of anti-quota demonstrations, and JCD in 1%.

‘... the demonstrators blame police and the BCL for instigating the violence. The student and youth wings of political parties in Bangladesh wield enormous power. The BCL, in particular, has a history of disrupting anti-government student demonstrations, functioning as vigilante enforcers of the government’s writ. ACLED records show that the BCL was involved in 15% of all political violence events in Bangladesh in the last five years.’<sup>59</sup>

10.3.4 According to The Guardian, reporting on 16 July 2024:

‘At least two people died and thousands were injured after police fired teargas into crowds of protesting students, and paramilitary forces were deployed across the country ... On Monday [15 July] night, the protests turned violent as police and heavily armed members of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of the governing Awami League party, attacked the protesting students.

‘In Dhaka, police fired teargas and charged at the protesters with batons while pro-government groups attacked them with machetes, bamboo rods and hockey sticks, injuring thousands. Paramilitary forces were also deployed across the country. The violence continued to escalate on [16 July] as campuses across the country became battlegrounds, with at least two

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<sup>56</sup> ACLED, [Data Export Tool](#) (Bangladesh: 1 July to 31 August 2024), 4 September 2024

<sup>57</sup> USIP, [What’s Behind Bangladesh’s Student Protests?](#), 22 July 2024

<sup>58</sup> ACLED, [Factsheet](#), 26 July 2024

<sup>59</sup> ACLED, [Factsheet](#), 26 July 2024

deaths confirmed by the Guardian. Local media reported that five people have been killed.<sup>60</sup>

10.3.5 On 22 July 2024 Human Rights Watch (HRW), citing media reports, gave its account of events:

‘On July 15, members of the Chhatra League (BCL), the student group affiliated with Prime Minister Hasina’s Awami League Party, backed by police, [attacked the protesters, killing six people. Protests spread to several cities and universities across the country](#) following the July 15 attack, leading to [deadly clashes](#) between protesters and the pro-government supporters and security forces, with hundreds killed or wounded.

‘Security forces have used live ammunition, tear gas, stun grenades, rubber bullets, and shotgun pellets to disperse protesters. With the internet shut down, reliable information is difficult to get; Agence France-Presse said that police and hospitals had reported 163 deaths, but activists fear the number is much higher ... Several [journalists were injured](#) when assaulted by security forces and Chhatra League supporters.’<sup>61</sup>

10.3.6 The ACLED factsheet noted ‘On 18 July, authorities blocked internet access and the next day implemented a nationwide curfew and deployed the army with shoot-on-sight powers.’<sup>62</sup>

10.3.7 The Guardian reported on 19 July 2024 that ‘Despite the ban on public rallies and gatherings, student groups still took to the streets on Friday [19 July]. The sounds of gunfire and stun grenades could be heard coming from areas close to universities in Dhaka. According to reports, police were seen firing live ammunition to break up demonstrations and protesters accused police of being responsible for a large proportion of the fatalities.’<sup>63</sup>

10.3.8 Netra News, a Sweden-based investigative journalism platform focusing on Bangladesh, reported on 20 July 2024 that ‘Police opened fire on protesters at multiple locations. In Savar, on the outskirts of Dhaka, the police shooting caused at least three deaths and 16 injuries, all from gunshot wounds, according to medical sources.’<sup>64</sup>

10.3.9 Reporting on the continuation of protests on 19 and 20 July, HRW noted that ‘After protesters stormed a jail in Narsingdi district and set fire to the state broadcaster’s offices, the government issued curfew orders and deployed the military.’<sup>65</sup> On 22 July 2024, the Independent reported on the clashes between police and protesters that occurred on 20 July, noting that, according to local media sources, ‘... at least 114 people, mostly students, had been killed.’<sup>66</sup> On 25 July 2024, ICG noted ‘Credible reports put the confirmed death toll at between 190 and 202, and the real figure is likely to be much higher.’<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> The Guardian, [Two die and thousands hurt in crackdown on Bangladesh student ...](#), 16 July 2024

<sup>61</sup> HRW, [Bangladesh: Security Forces Target Unarmed Students](#), 22 July 2024

<sup>62</sup> ACLED, ‘[Factsheet](#)’, 26 July 2024

<sup>63</sup> The Guardian, [National curfew imposed in Bangladesh after student protesters ...](#), 19 July 2024

<sup>64</sup> Netra News, [Key events from a deadly Saturday in besieged Bangladesh](#), 20 July 2024

<sup>65</sup> HRW, [Bangladesh: Security Forces Target Unarmed Students](#), 22 July 2024

<sup>66</sup> The Independent, [Bangladesh’s top court scraps job quotas that sparked mass ...](#), 22 July 2024

<sup>67</sup> ICG, [Bangladesh on Edge after Crushing Quota Protests](#), 25 July 2024

10.3.10 Associated Press (AP) news agency reported on 30 July 2024 that ‘Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan put the overall death toll at 150, while the country’s leading Bengali-language daily, Prothom Alo, said 211 people were killed since July 16. Thousands of [others have been injured](#).’<sup>68</sup>

10.3.11 The ACLED 8 August 2024 report noted:

‘Police launched a heavy crackdown on the demonstrators [in mid-July], leading to heavy clashes that also involved armed members of the Bangladesh Chhatra League, the AL’s student wing. Around half of all demonstrations involved violence between the various protest groups and security forces. While demonstrators vandalized public property and threw stones and brickbats, police responded with live ammunition, rubber bullets, and tear gas shelling. Some reports estimate that at least 400 demonstrators may have died since the protest movement broke out.’<sup>69</sup>

10.3.12 The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) report, Preliminary Analysis of Recent Protests and Unrest in Bangladesh, 16 August 2024 noted:

‘According to available public reports by media and the protest movement itself, between 16 July and 11 August more than 600 people were killed. Of these, nearly 400 deaths were reported from 16 July to 4 August, while around 250 people were reportedly killed following the new wave of protests between 5 and 6 August. The number of reported killings in revenge attacks since that time still remains to be determined...The majority of deaths and injuries have been attributed to the security forces and the student wing affiliated with the Awami League.’<sup>70</sup>

10.3.13 The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees’ (BAMF) weekly Briefing Notes dated 26 August 2024, collated from a range of public sources, reported on the number of people killed and injured during the student protests:

‘The human rights organisation Human Rights Support Society reports that at least 819 people were killed across the country in connection with the student protests from 16.07. to 18.08.24. 311 fatalities in the period from 16.07. to 03.08.24 and 508 in the period from 04.08. to 18.08.24. At least 25,000 people were injured, mainly by rubber and shotgun bullets and tear gas ... The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) declared at a press conference on 21.08.24 that at least 198 of its members had been killed in the protests. According to media reports of 21.08.2014, at least 1,581 AL members, including five former members of parliament, were accused of murder in four districts within a few days. Since the fall of the AL-led government, there has been a flood of charges against its members.’<sup>71</sup>

10.3.14 The UN in their 30 October 2024 news report noted ‘According to reports, more than 300 people were killed, including children, and more than 20,000 injured.’<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> AP, [Bangladesh mourns some 200 deaths](#), 30 July 2024

<sup>69</sup> ACLED, [Asia-Pacific Overview: July 2024 Bangladesh ...](#), 8 August 2024

<sup>70</sup> OHCHR, [Preliminary Analysis of Recent Protests and Unrest...](#) (page 6 and 7), 16 August 2024

<sup>71</sup> BAMF, [Briefing Notes](#) (page 2), 26 August 2024

<sup>72</sup> UN News, [UN rights chief urges Bangladesh...](#), 30 October 2024

## 10.4 Arrests and detentions

10.4.1 According to US broadcaster, CBS News, reporting on 23 July 2024, ‘More than 1,200 people detained over the course of the violence — nearly half the 2,580 total — were held in Dhaka and its rural and industrial areas, according to police officials who spoke to AFP. Almost 600 were arrested in Chittagong and its rural areas, with hundreds more detentions tallied in multiple districts across the country.’<sup>73</sup>

10.4.2 The Guardian reported on 23 July 2024 that:

‘Student activists in Bangladesh have alleged they were abducted and tortured during a violent police crackdown on the protests that have swept the country and led to the arrest of thousands of political opponents and government critics...

‘About 2,000 people have so far been arrested, mostly members and the top leadership of the BNP along with several student organisers, as Hasina’s government is accused of trying to shift the blame for the violence and fatalities away from state agencies. A BNP spokesperson said that about 1,500 party members had been detained.’<sup>74</sup>

10.4.3 AP reported on 31 July 2024 that ‘Media reports said about 10,000 people have been arrested over the past two weeks in relation to clashes at protests and other attacks on state properties. Rights groups have called for an end to arbitrary arrests, and critics accused the government of using excessive force to tamp down the violence.’<sup>75</sup>

10.4.4 The ACLED factsheet on the protests, dated 26 July 2024, noted ‘Police have arrested more than 2,000 people in connection with the violence.’<sup>76</sup>

10.4.5 The ACLED 8 August 2024 report noted ‘During the clashes, the government imposed a nationwide curfew and communications blackout, deployed the army, and arrested thousands.’<sup>77</sup>

10.4.6 OCHCR in their Preliminary Analysis noted:

‘The majority of those arrested were not presented in court within 24 hours, and were denied access to legal representation, while no information of their whereabouts was provided to their families. From 12 July to 3 August, at least 450,000 unknown persons and 2000 identified persons were reportedly registered for offenses in at least 286 criminal cases in Dhaka alone...many members of the opposition reportedly among them. ...8 Reports received by OHCHR confirmed that block raids were conducted in various locations of Dhaka city and near other university and college campuses. During these operations, large numbers of law enforcement personnel surrounded the area in question, prevented anyone from leaving, and conducted house searches based on intelligence information and, in several cases, without presenting judicial search warrants. Law enforcement agencies claimed that

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<sup>73</sup> CBS News, [Bangladesh protests death toll nears 180, with more than 2,500 ...](#), 23 July 2024

<sup>74</sup> The Guardian, [Bangladeshi students allege police torture after protests crackdown](#), 23 July 2024

<sup>75</sup> AP, [Bangladesh mourns some 200 deaths](#), 31 July 2024

<sup>76</sup> ACLED, [Factsheet](#), 26 July 2024

<sup>77</sup> ACLED, [Asia-Pacific Overview: July 2024 Bangladesh ...](#), 8 August 2024

they were arresting individuals involved in violence and property destruction, based on analysis of their social media activity.<sup>78</sup>

- 10.4.7 The same OHCHR report noted ‘Reports indicate that a number of those arrested were subjected to ill-treatment and even torture while in police custody.’<sup>79</sup> The report did not provide further detail on what proportion of the those arrested were ill-treated or whether it had verified the allegations.

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## 11. Political impact of the protests

### 11.1 Resignation of Sheikh Hasina and downfall of the Awami League

- 11.1.1 Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, leader of the AL, resigned on 5 August 2024 following the nationwide student-led protests and after losing the army’s support<sup>80 81 82</sup>. Hasina, the world’s longest-serving female prime minister, initially held the position from 1996 to 2001 before taking office again in 2009<sup>83</sup>.

- 11.1.2 The ICG reported on 7 August 2024:

‘After a month of mass demonstrations against her government’s increasingly autocratic rule, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled the country on 5 August, seeking refuge in neighbouring India as thousands of protesters stormed her residence in the capital Dhaka. ... it was Hasina’s reaction to the protests that was her downfall. She sealed her fate when she decided to crack down rather than pursue dialogue with protest leaders...

‘... Bangladesh’s newly appointed army chief Waker-Uz-Zaman – a distant relative of Hasina’s – made it clear to the prime minister that his troops would not step in to save the government. Hasina was [eventually persuaded](#) to resign, handing power to the country’s figurehead president Mohammed Shahabuddin. She hurriedly flew to New Delhi ... As she was leaving, thousands of protesters stormed the official prime minister’s residence... Meanwhile, the army chief was holding talks with the country’s major political parties – minus the Awami League – and civil society representatives (though not including student leaders). Soon thereafter, Waker addressed the nation, calling for calm and announcing that an interim government would take shape in the coming days.’<sup>84</sup>

- 11.1.3 HRW reported on 6 August 2024: ‘The former prime minister’s rule was characterized by a culture of impunity alongside grave security force abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and enforced disappearances. Those who dared to speak out risked their lives. Sheikh Hasina’s government further [stifled free expression](#) through a series of vague and overly broad laws used to harass and indefinitely detain activists, journalists, and others

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<sup>78</sup> OHCHR, [Preliminary Analysis of Recent Protests and Unrest...](#) (page 7 and 8), 16 August 2024

<sup>79</sup> OHCHR, [Preliminary Analysis of Recent Protests and Unrest...](#) (page 7 and 8), 16 August 2024

<sup>80</sup> Reuters, [Exclusive: Bangladesh army refused to suppress protest...](#), 7 August 2024

<sup>81</sup> The Guardian, [Why has Bangladesh’s prime minister Sheikh Hasina resigned ...](#), 5 August 2024

<sup>82</sup> ACLED, [Regional overview: Asia-Pacific](#), 8 August 2024

<sup>83</sup> The Guardian, [Why has Bangladesh’s prime minister Sheikh Hasina resigned ...](#), 5 August 2024

<sup>84</sup> ICG, [Bangladesh: The Long Road Ahead](#), 7 August 2024



critical of the government.’<sup>85</sup>

- 11.1.4 Bengali-language daily, Prothom Alo, reported on 19 August 2024 that most AL-affiliated local government representatives had gone into hiding following Sheikh Hasina’s resignation and their absence was impeding local government administration<sup>86</sup>. As a result, the interim government removed ‘... all mayors of 12 city corporations and 1,873 public representatives at three other tiers of local government’ and replaced them with administrators as interim management, reported The Daily Star on 20 August 2024<sup>87</sup>.
- 11.1.5 According to Dhaka-based Bangladeshi English-language daily newspaper, Dhaka Tribune ‘The Awami League, one of the largest and oldest parties in the country, was quickly reduced to a scattered organization after Sheikh Hasina ... left... in Dhaka, where the two central offices of the Awami League are located, [the correspondent] observed that they have become deserted.’<sup>88</sup>
- 11.1.6 In October 2024 BAMF, based on various news reports, noted protests calling for the resignation of president Mohammed Shahabuddin and that the protestors ‘...accuse Shahabuddin of being "an ally of the Awami League (AL) and toppled prime minister Sheikh Hasina".’ The report added ‘On 27.10.24 the spokesman of the 12-party alliance - which was established in 2022, one of its aims being to depose the AL government - and the secretary general of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party announced their intention to remove the president from office by way of a constitutional trial.’<sup>89</sup>

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## 11.2 Formation of the interim government

- 11.2.1 Al Jazeera noted that, on 6 August 2024, ‘President Mohammed Shahabuddin ... announced that parliament had been dissolved after assuring earlier that new elections would be held as soon as possible.’<sup>90</sup>
- 11.2.2 The Independent reported on 9 August 2024 that ‘After Ms Hasina’s resignation, army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman announced in a televised address to the nation that an interim government would be formed.’<sup>91</sup>
- 11.2.3 As reported by Reuters on 6 August 2024, Nahid Islam, a sociology student who led the protest that ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said the students would not accept any government led or supported by the army and proposed that Nobel recipient Muhammad Yunus be the chief adviser<sup>92</sup>.
- 11.2.4 Al Jazeera, reporting on 6 August 2024, noted: ‘The leaders of the student protests, the chiefs of the country’s three divisions of the military, and civil society members, as well as some business leaders, held a meeting with the president ... on Tuesday [6 August] to decide on the head of the interim administration. The students had earlier [proposed Yunus](#) and said the 83-

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<sup>85</sup> HRW, [Bangladesh: Prime Minister Hasina Resigns amid Mass Protests](#), 6 August 2024

<sup>86</sup> Prothom Alo, [323 pourashava mayors removed, 61 districts get administrators](#), 19 August 2024

<sup>87</sup> Daily Star, [All city mayors removed](#), 20 August 2024

<sup>88</sup> Dhaka Tribune, [One month after the fall of Hasina, where does AL go...?](#), 5 September 2024

<sup>89</sup> BAMF, [Briefing Notes 2024 \(Bangladesh\)](#), 28 October 2024

<sup>90</sup> Al Jazeera, [Bangladesh protesters want Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus to lead...](#), 6 Aug 2024

<sup>91</sup> Independent, [What’s happening in Bangladesh? Student protest that led to PM ...](#), 9 August 2024

<sup>92</sup> Reuters, [Who is Nahid Islam, student leader of campaign to oust PM Sheikh ...](#), 6 August 2024

year-old microfinance pioneer had agreed. ...student leaders... [were] satisfied...welcoming the decision.'<sup>93</sup>

11.2.5 Deutsche Welle (DW), in its article of 8 August 2024, reported: 'Nobel Peace Prize winner [Muhammad Yunus](#) was sworn in as Bangladesh's interim leader on Thursday [8 August] ...recommended for this role by the leaders of student protests. ... Yunus was welcomed by the country's military chief, Waker-uz-Zaman, and other defense leaders at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka. ... The veteran leader said his priority would be to restore order in Bangladesh and prepare for new elections following weeks of violence.'<sup>94</sup>

11.2.6 DW, further reported in an article dated 9 August 2024:

'Cabinet members — who were given the title of advisors, not ministers — were selected in consultation with student leaders, the military, and civil society representatives. ... Two leaders of the group Students Against Discrimination, which led the weekslong protests, were included in the new cabinet. Nahid Islam will head the country's Telecommunications Ministry, while Nasif Mahmud was chosen to lead the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Prominent rights activist [Adilur Rahman Khan](#), who was sentenced to two years in jail during Hasina's rule, will take the helm of the Ministry of Industries.

'Other members of the new cabinet included a former head of Bangladesh's central bank, a former foreign secretary, an environmental lawyer and a retired brigadier general. The cabinet also includes one member from Bangladesh's minority Hindu community as well as one indigenous person hailing from the Chittagong Hill Tracts.'<sup>95</sup>

11.2.7 On 10 August 2024, the Times of India reported:

'Among the 27 ministries that Yunus has assigned to himself are defence, information, education, energy, food, and water resources. These are in addition to his position as chief adviser, equivalent to interim PM. A surprise inclusion in the "council of advisers" was AFM Khalid Hossain, a former vice-president of the hardline Islamist organisation Hefazat-e-Islam and adviser to Islami Andolan Bangladesh, as the head of religious affairs ministry. Law professor Asif Nazrul, who guided student coordinators during the protests and was vocal against the now-toppled Sheikh Hasina govt, has been given the law ministry, apparently to help the interim govt take legal steps regarding human rights violations and recent killings...

'Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyian, one of the coordinators of the quota reform protest ... [and student of] of Dhaka University, is now the adviser for the youth and sports ministry. Bhuyian...described the new administration as not a caretaker govt but a govt formed through a students' movement and said they were looking to handing over to a govt brought in by a fair election.

'Nahid Islam, another student who led the protests, has been appoined [sic] adviser to the postal, telecom and ICT (information and communications

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<sup>93</sup> Al Jazeera, [Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus to lead Bangladesh interim ...](#), 6 August 2024

<sup>94</sup> DW, [Bangladesh: Yunus becomes interim leader, replacing Hasina](#), 8 August 2024

<sup>95</sup> DW, [Bangladesh's Yunus names student leaders in interim cabinet](#), 9 August 2024

technology) ministries. He said they have decided to appoint students as assistant advisers or to similar positions so that students can have a supervisory role within ministries.<sup>96</sup>

- 11.2.8 ICG in their report *A New Era in Bangladesh? The First Hundred Days of Reform* published 14 November 2024, based on open-source material and interviews with a range of sources including those in the interim government and opposition leaders in September 2024 noted the interim 16-member cabinet appointed by Yunus was ‘...the most diverse government Bangladesh has ever seen, comprising former generals, bureaucrats, academics, prominent civil society figures and student leaders. The cabinet includes four women and two members of minority communities.’
- 11.2.9 The Hindu, an Indian English-language daily newspaper provided [profiles](#) of some of the members of Bangladesh interim government<sup>97</sup>.

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### 11.3 Interim government’s mandate

- 11.3.1 An article published on 20 August 2024 by think tank International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) noted that:

‘The interim government – consisting mainly of civil-society representatives and two student leaders of the protests – is constitutionally mandated for a three-month period and enjoys the support of Bangladesh’s army. The interim government reportedly includes a mix of the main opposition, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and members affiliated with Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel), while the former ruling Awami League party has no representatives.’<sup>98</sup>

- 11.3.2 The same IISS report opined:

‘The government’s priority will be restoring law and order across the country and preparing for general elections, which could take place within 90 days of the dissolution of parliament, though it may take longer. The army will be tasked with ensuring stability across the country to enable the interim government to function. The BNP, along with the Jel party, will be keen to hold elections quickly and perhaps capitalise on the release of former prime minister and BNP leader Khaleda Zia on 6 August after over four years of house arrest. Ahead of elections, the government will seek to conduct “meaningful” judicial, bureaucratic and political reforms to counter the democratic backsliding during Hasina’s term in power.’<sup>99</sup>

- 11.3.3 The OHCHR report noted that, since the formation of the interim government, ‘... thousands of detainees and longer-term political prisoners – including some victims of enforced disappearance – have been released. The Inspector General of Police and head of the paramilitary Rapid Action Battalion have been replaced...’<sup>100</sup> (see also [Law and order](#))

- 11.3.4 ACLED, in its report covering events in August 2024 noted ‘The interim

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<sup>96</sup> The Times of India, [Bangladesh interim govt takes shape, 27 portfolios with ...](#), 10 August 2024

<sup>97</sup> The Hindu, [Bangladesh’s new interim government: know who’s who](#), 9 August 2024

<sup>98</sup> IISS, [Bangladesh: domestic turmoil and regional insecurity](#), 20 August 2024

<sup>99</sup> IISS, [Bangladesh: domestic turmoil and regional insecurity](#), 20 August 2024

<sup>100</sup> OHCHR, [Preliminary Analysis of Recent Protests and Unrest...](#) (page 3), 16 August 2024

government introduced a slew of measures in an attempt to restore political stability, including releasing political prisoners detained during the demonstrations...<sup>101</sup>

- 11.3.5 On 19 August 2024, the interim government dismissed all mayors of 12 city corporations along with hundreds of other public representatives from 3 other tiers of local government across the country<sup>102 103</sup>. Many of the local government representatives were loyal to the AL and had been absent from their offices since Sheikh Hasina's resignation<sup>104</sup>. Administrators were appointed to most posts as interim management<sup>105</sup>.
- 11.3.6 On 27 August 2024, a commission of inquiry was formed to investigate the people who were forcibly disappeared by different law enforcement agencies during the AL government's tenure, from 1 January 2010 to 5 August 2024<sup>106 107</sup>. On 30 August 2024, the Interim Government signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances<sup>108</sup>.
- 11.3.7 The Daily Star reported on 12 September 2024 on Chief Adviser Yunus' address to the nation, in which he announced that 6 commissions had been formed to '... reform the judiciary, election system, [public] administration, police, Anti-Corruption Commission, and the constitution ...' The reform commissions were due to commence on 1 October 2024 and expected to complete within 3 months, followed by a comprehensive consultation with all interested parties<sup>109</sup>.
- 11.3.1 A livestream event held by International Crisis Group (ICG), was held on 4 November 2024, recorded and published on YouTube on 5 November with panellists Tom Kean, ICG's Senior Consultant for Myanmar and Bangladesh, Dr Amena Mohsin, Professor of International Relations at Dhaka University and Zafar Sobhan, Editor of the Dhaka Tribune titled 'Bangladesh Three Months After Hasina's Downfall: Opportunities and Challenges'. The following comments were from Tom Kean based on the transcript issued and CPIT's own viewing of the YouTube video:
- 'A... positive I'd like to point to is the political consensus that quickly emerged after Sheik Hasina... left the country and.... the fact that that consensus has largely held. ...the key political actors (besides the Awami League of course) have agreed on the need for political reform.... Between them there are very significant differences of opinion about what reform should look like ...what the timeline should be but I don't think anyone is advocating for a return to the past and they are giving the interim government some space and time to implement reforms before an election is

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<sup>101</sup> ACLED, [Regional Overview Asia-Pacific August 2024](#) (Bangladesh), 6 September 2024

<sup>102</sup> Prothom Alo, [323 pourashava mayors removed, 61 districts get administrators](#), 19 August 2024

<sup>103</sup> Daily Star, [All city mayors removed](#), 20 August 2024

<sup>104</sup> Daily Star, [All city mayors removed](#), 20 August 2024

<sup>105</sup> New Age, [Govt removes mayors, zila, upazila chairmen](#), 19 August 2024

<sup>106</sup> Prothom Alo, [5-member commission formed to detect victims of forced...](#), 27 August 2024

<sup>107</sup> Daily Star, [Enforced disappearance: Govt sets up inquiry commission](#), 28 August 2024

<sup>108</sup> Amnesty International, [Bangladesh signs UN Convention on Enforced...](#), 30 August 2024

<sup>109</sup> Daily Star, [Yunus charts a path to reforms](#), 12 September 2024

held.’<sup>110</sup>

11.3.2 In the same ICG event, Tom Kean noted

‘[Another] positive is the formation of the reform commissions...there's been some criticism of these commissions but they at least...signpost the priorities for the interim government and also give a rough indication of an initial timeline ....[another] positive... is the interim government still seems to have a reasonable level of domestic support within Bangladesh and this is really crucial because it has no other mandate...it's not elected government and so while it has its shortcomings,...its...seen as honest and committed to real reform ...[which] goes a long way...The level of international support has been very strong [and also] helps...’<sup>111</sup>

11.3.3 In the same ICG event Tom Kean pointed out some of the challenges faced by the interim government included the difficult political environment the council of advisers were operating in and that there were those struggling to manage their portfolios due to a lack of experience, support, resource, and bureaucracy<sup>112</sup>.

11.3.4 The ICG report published 14 November 2024 noted: ‘Yunus has moved quickly to delineate a bold agenda of political, governance and economic reforms...Many Bangladeshis describe Hasina’s downfall as a “second liberation” (a reference to the 1971 independence war), bespeaking the public’s appetite for major change. For now, Yunus and his colleagues have widespread support.’<sup>113</sup>

11.3.5 The same ICG report noted the interim 16-member cabinet appointed by Yunus was ‘...the most diverse government Bangladesh has ever seen, comprising former generals, bureaucrats, academics, prominent civil society figures and student leaders. The cabinet includes four women and two members of minority communities.’<sup>114</sup>

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## 11.4 Elections

11.4.1 For information on the parliamentary elections of 2018, including election-related violence and irregularities, see section 8 of the (archived) September 2020 [Country Policy and Information Note on Bangladesh: Political parties and affiliation](#).

11.4.2 In January 2024 national elections were held, won by the AL with Sheikh Hasina as Prime Minister for her fourth term. The AL and its associates won 225 of 300 parliamentary seats. The elections were boycotted by the BNP amid allegations of vote rigging and inflation<sup>115</sup>. Elections were not considered free and fair and a significant number of opposition members were arrested during the period<sup>116</sup>.

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<sup>110</sup> ICG, [Bangladesh Three Months After Hasina’s Downfall](#), 5 November 2024

<sup>111</sup> ICG, [Bangladesh Three Months After Hasina’s Downfall](#), 5 November 2024

<sup>112</sup> ICG, [Bangladesh Three Months After Hasina’s Downfall](#), 5 November 2024

<sup>113</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (Executive Summary), 14 November 2024

<sup>114</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (Section I.), 14 November 2024

<sup>115</sup> BBC, [Bangladesh election...](#), 8 January 2024

<sup>116</sup> FCDO, [Bangladesh January 2024 election: FCDO statement](#), 8 January 2024

- 11.4.3 Reporting on 27 August 2024, DW noted, regarding future elections, that ‘The primary mandate of Bangladesh’s interim government is to ensure free and fair elections. Chief advisor Yunus’ office has said a free and fair election will take place as soon as reforms are made in the election commission, judiciary, civil administration, and security forces.’<sup>117</sup>
- 11.4.4 The same report noted that:  
 ‘Interim governments in Bangladesh are comprised of “advisors” and cannot pass laws by themselves, but rather will issue “ordinances” that may or may not be ratified into law by an elected government ...  
 ‘Shafi Md Mostofa, an associate professor at the University of Dhaka and a visiting fellow at the London School of Economics, told DW that ... “The interim government’s mandate is to hold elections only. However, if this government considers itself to be revolutionary, then a delay in holding polls should not be a concern,” ...’<sup>118</sup>
- 11.4.5 On 17 September 2024, thousands of BNP activists and leaders assembled in Dhaka demanding a new election<sup>119 120</sup>. Indian English-Language news site, News18, stated in an opinion piece on 23 September 2024 that the BNP’s push to hold elections in 90 days was causing a ‘growing rift’ between the BNP and the Student Anti-Discrimination (SAD) movement, adding that ‘The SAD-backed advisors within the interim government argue that rushing into elections without addressing the deep-rooted issues of corruption, nepotism, and electoral malpractice will only perpetuate the cycle of dysfunctional governance.’<sup>121</sup>
- 11.4.6 On the 24 September global news agency Reuters<sup>122</sup> noted the continued support of the Army, who stood aside during the August 2024 protests leading to the resignation of former Prime Minister Hasina. The report noted ‘Bangladesh’s army chief vowed to back the country’s interim government “come what may” to help it complete key reforms ... so that elections could be held within the next 18 months.’<sup>123</sup>
- 11.4.7 ICG noted ‘...the constitution says the interim government must hold fresh elections within three months, but Yunus and his allies appear likely to be in power for at least another year, due more to public and military support (and backing from political parties) than to any legal basis.’<sup>124</sup>
- 11.4.8 The same ICG report noted: ‘...the interim government is focused on establishing a system for holding credible polls after three national elections marred by irregularities. The task is far larger than overhauling the election commission. Yunus himself underlined that the work of five of the six commissions announced on 11 September are “essential for a free and fair

<sup>117</sup> DW, [Bangladesh: Is the interim government delaying elections?](#), 27 August 2024

<sup>118</sup> DW, [Bangladesh: Is the interim government delaying elections?](#), 27 August 2024

<sup>119</sup> Firstpost, [Leaders, activists of Bangladesh opposition party rally in Dhaka...](#), 17 September 2024

<sup>120</sup> Jurist, [Bangladesh Nationalist Party calls for democratic transition through...](#), 18 September 2024

<sup>121</sup> News18, [Right Word | Growing Rift Between BNP...](#), 23 September 2024

<sup>122</sup> [About Reuters Fact Check](#), no date

<sup>123</sup> Reuters, [Bangladesh army chief strongly backs interim government...](#), 24 September 2024

<sup>124</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (Section I.), 14 November 2024

election”.<sup>125</sup>

11.4.9 At the time of writing in November 2024, a time frame for the next election had not yet been announced by the interim government<sup>126 127 128</sup>.

See also [Interim government's mandate](#)

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## 12. Treatment of political groups post August 2024

### 12.1 Status and activities of the Awami League and affiliates

12.1.1 The Country of Origin Information (COI) Query published by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) on 15 November 2024 based on a variety of sources between 15 May and 31 October 2024 noted:

‘Between August 2024 and October 2024, the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) instructed banks to freeze the accounts of former high-level officials (including former finance minister, former social welfare minister, former director general of the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre) and their family members. In the same period, a Dhaka court issued and imposed travel bans on former Awami League ministers and high-level officials and their families, including former director general of the National Security Intelligence and former chief of the [Detective Branch] DB...<sup>129</sup>

12.1.2 The Print, an Indian media news platform<sup>130</sup> in its article published on 10 November 2024 noted:

‘... former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has urged one of her party leaders stationed in Bangladesh to take to the streets Sunday [10 November] ... this has put Muhammad Yunus-led interim government in a political quandary. The Awami League is a political party registered with the Election Commission...

‘The interim government has banned Chhatra League, the Awami League’s student wing, but its Law Affairs Adviser (Minister) Asif Nazrul reportedly said, “Our constitution gives us the right to organise political parties...[“] The country’s high court has also summarily rejected a writ petition seeking a ban on the Awami League and cancellation of its registration with the Election Commission. Even the Awami League’s major rivals—the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jamaat-e-Islami—do not want see the party’s activities being declared illegal...

‘Legally, the Awami League can hold rallies like the way the BNP did ... But the government appeared to have decided to make the Awami League an exception. In a social media post Saturday, Muhammad Yunus’s Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam wrote that “the Awami League in its current form is a fascist party” and reiterated that there was no way the party would be allowed to hold protests in Bangladesh, adding that “anyone who would try to

<sup>125</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (Section III.E), 14 November 2024

<sup>126</sup> Firstpost, [Leaders, activists of Bangladesh opposition party rally in Dhaka...](#), 17 September 2024

<sup>127</sup> Jurist, [Bangladesh Nationalist Party calls for democratic transition through...](#), 18 September 2024

<sup>128</sup> ABC News, [Thousands rally in Bangladesh capital](#), 8 November 2024

<sup>129</sup> EUAA, [COI Query The protests in July and August 2024 and their aftermath](#), 15 November 2024

<sup>130</sup> The Print, [About](#), no date

hold rally, gathering and processions by taking orders from the mass murderer and dictator Sheikh Hasina will face full force of the law enforcing agencies. The Interim Government won't tolerate any violence or any attempt to break law and order situation in the country (sic)".<sup>131</sup>

12.1.3 AP News reported on events at an AL political rally held in Dhaka on 10 November 2024:

'Rivals of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Sunday thwarted a plan by her Awami League party to hold a rally in Bangladesh's capital, seen as a potential first effort to make a comeback on the streets since she fled the country... On Sunday [10 November], activists of the ...[BNP] and also members of the conservative Jamaat-e-Islami party took to the streets of Dhaka, filling up much of the area where the rally was scheduled to take place. Others, including hundreds of student protesters, also announced that they wouldn't allow Hasina's supporters to stand on the streets and hold the rally... Security was tight in the area, but witnesses and local media said that the protesters attacked several supporters of Hasina when they attempted to reach there... The Awami League party posted a number of videos on Facebook on Sunday showing its supporters being manhandled. Its party headquarters had earlier been vandalized.'<sup>132</sup>

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## 12.2 Arrests of Awami League members and affiliates

12.2.1 The Daily Star reported on 14 August 2024 that an adviser to former Prime Minister Hasina, and a former law minister, were given a 10-day remand by a Dhaka court, in connection with a case over the killing of a shopkeeper on 16 July 2024 during the quota reform protests. According to the report during the court proceedings, pro-BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel) lawyers actively prevented any legal representation for the accused<sup>133</sup>.

12.2.2 Similarly, according to local media, cited by France-based human rights organisation, Justice Makers Bangladesh in France (JMBF), 2 other former ministers, arrested and remanded in connection with a murder, were denied legal representation in Dhaka magistrates court on 20 August 2024, and faced verbal and physical abuse by pro-BNP lawyers<sup>134</sup>.

12.2.3 On 26 August 2024, The Daily Star reported that 'A murder case has been filed against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 192 others, including seven journalists, over the death of a student during protests in Dhaka's Jatrabari on July 19.'<sup>135</sup> According to the same report:

'Multiple former ministers and MPs, mayors, police officers, Awami League leaders, Jubo League [AL youth wing]<sup>136</sup> and Chhatra League members, as well as Rapid Action Battalion officials, 80-90 police officers and members assigned to the Wari Zone on the day of the incident, and 250-300 unidentified individuals, were also accused in the case. Dozens of cases

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<sup>131</sup> The Print, [With chances of Awami League rally in Bangladesh...](#), 10 November 2024.

<sup>132</sup> Ap News, [Rivals of ousted Bangladesh leader ...hold a rally](#), 11 November 2024

<sup>133</sup> Daily Star, [Killing of shopkeeper: Salman and Anisul placed on remand](#), 15 August 2024

<sup>134</sup> JMBF, [STATEMENT: JMBF Condemns Obstruction of Legal Representation...](#), 24 August 2024

<sup>135</sup> Daily Star, [Hasina, 7 journos sued for murder](#), 25 August 2024

<sup>136</sup> IRB, [Bangladesh: The Bangladesh Awami League \(AL\)...](#), 10 February 2020



have so far been filed against Hasina, her party members and law enforcement officers over the killings during the protests.<sup>137</sup>

- 12.2.4 According to the Dhaka Tribune, reporting on 20 September 2024, 'In the last one and a half months, over 150 cases have been filed in Dhaka against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina ... Of these, 140 are murder cases, while 10 involve charges of attempted murder, threats, harassment, and assault.'<sup>138</sup>
- 12.2.5 According to Prothom Alo, reporting on the arrests of former AL ministers, Asaduzzaman Noor and Mahbub Ali on 15 September 2024, in connection with separate murder charges, 'Since the fall of Awami League government in a student-mass uprising on 5 August, at least 27 former ministers, members of parliament and top leaders of the party have been arrested so far.'<sup>139</sup>
- 12.2.6 Also reporting on the arrest of Asaduzzaman Noor, independent Indian news site, The Wire, opined that his arrest was part of a wider campaign, noting that 'A disturbing outcome of the August 5 regime change has been a notable rise in legal actions targeting individuals associated with the Awami League government. While some lawsuits related to alleged crimes during the transition period were expected, many subsequent cases appear dubious, lacking substantial evidence and potentially serving as instruments of harassment.'<sup>140</sup>
- 12.2.7 On 18 September 2024, JMBF described the arrests of Asaduzzaman Noor and Mahbub Ali as 'arbitrary' and 'politically motivated.'<sup>141</sup> JMBF also cited the arrests of other individuals on the 15 and 16 September 2024, including a lawyer and former Railway Minister, a writer and activist, and 2 journalists, and stated that they were all targeted 'solely for their differing political views.'<sup>142</sup>
- 12.2.8 On 19 September 2024 the Bangla Mirror, a UK based weekly news site focused on Bangladeshi issues<sup>143</sup> reported on the arrest of former planning minister MA Mannan from his home in Syhlet<sup>144</sup>.
- 12.2.9 On 7 October 2024, German public, state-owned international broadcaster Deutsche Welle (DW)<sup>145</sup> noted 'After Sheikh Hasina fled to India, other party members were either arrested in connection with the protests or went into hiding.'<sup>146</sup>
- 12.2.10 The Dhaka Tribune reported the arrest of former Awami League lawmaker Shahidul Islam Milon on 3 October 2024 in relation to several cases involving attacks on students during the protests<sup>147</sup>.

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<sup>137</sup> Daily Star, [Hasina, 7 journos sued for murder](#), 25 August 2024

<sup>138</sup> Dhaka Tribune, [Hasina sued in 150 cases in 45 days](#), 20 September 2024

<sup>139</sup> Prothom Alo, [Asaduzzaman Noor, Mahbub Ali arrested](#), 16 September 2024

<sup>140</sup> The Wire, [In Bangladesh, Questionable Arrest of Popular Awami League...](#), 18 September 2024

<sup>141</sup> JMBF, [STATEMENT: JMBF Strongly Condemns the Politically Motivated...](#), 18 September 2024

<sup>142</sup> JMBF, [STATEMENT: JMBF Strongly Condemns the Politically Motivated...](#), 18 September 2024

<sup>143</sup> Bangla Mirror, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>144</sup> Bangla Mirror, [Former planning minister MA Mannan arrested in Sunamganj](#), 19 September 2024

<sup>145</sup> DW, [Unbiased information for free minds](#)v, no date

<sup>146</sup> DW, [Bangladesh: What awaits Ex-PM Hasina and the Awami League?](#), 7 October 2024

<sup>147</sup> Dhaka Tribune, [Ex-Awami League lawmaker Shahidul arrested](#), 4 October 2024

- 12.2.11 New Age, a Dhaka-based leading English language daily newspaper<sup>148</sup> noted on 8 October 2024 ‘Police have arrested four leaders of Awami League in connection with the killing of Sheikh Md Sakib Rayhan [on 19 July 2024], a student, during a protest organised as part of the anti-discrimination student movement in Dhaka’s Pallabi area.’<sup>149</sup>
- 12.2.12 The BBC reported on 17 October 2024 that Bangladesh's International Criminal Tribunal (ICT) had ordered an arrest warrant for Sheikh Hasina and 45 others, including former government ministers who had also fled the country. Hasina was to appear in court on 18 November 2024<sup>150</sup>.
- 12.2.13 On 27 October Al Jazeera, an independent news organisation funded in part by the Qatari government<sup>151</sup> noted:
- ‘...thousands of students formerly affiliated with the AL, whose once-powerful hold over Bangladesh’s campuses collapsed overnight. [They]...now face ...imprisonment for their role in trying to suppress the popular revolt against Hasina and for the rights violations they allegedly committed while she was in power....Shahreen Ariana, a BCL leader from Rajshahi University, was arrested on October 18 on “forged charges,” according to her family... another BCL leader at Rajshahi University, was arrested on the same day. The district police, however, claimed that both faced prior cases, but refused to provide documents to back their claim. ...On October 25, two more BCL leaders ... were arrested while appearing for exams at Dhaka University.’<sup>152</sup>
- 12.2.14 In the ICG livestream held on 4 November 2024, based on the transcript published on 5 November and CPIT’s own viewing of the YouTube video, Tom Kean opined:
- ‘[O]ne area where I think...[the interim government] has really failed is in managing the desire for retribution and making sure that it doesn’t become overly politicised. There have been ...a lot of criminal complaints filed against a whole range of people for alleged involvement in killings and other violence in July and August and it’s really become quite messy. Police are arresting ...a lot of people named in these complaints even when they seem to have no connection to the actual incident...’<sup>153</sup>
- 12.2.15 The Dhaka Tribune reported on 11 November the arrest of 5 leaders of the AL on in connection with 2 separate attacks, including a bomb and the use of gunfire on the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement in July and August resulting in the death of one person and injuring 3 others. All 5 were subject to court proceedings<sup>154</sup>.
- 12.2.16 The ICG noted:
- ‘...a messy legal process is playing out through local police stations and courts. Under Bangladeshi law, police have an obligation to accept criminal

<sup>148</sup> New Age, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>149</sup> New Age, [Four AL leaders arrested in Dhaka in murder case](#), 8 October 2024

<sup>150</sup> BBC, [Bangladesh issues arrest warrant for ex-leader Hasina](#), 17 October 2024

<sup>151</sup> Al Jazeera, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>152</sup> Al Jazeera, [Bangladesh's new outcasts](#), 27 October 2024

<sup>153</sup> ICG, [Bangladesh Three Months After Hasina's Downfall](#), 5 November 2024

<sup>154</sup> Dhaka Tribune, [Five Awami League leaders arrested](#), 11 November 2024

complaints from members of the public, and there are few limits on who can be named in these complaints. For serious offences, police can arrest the accused without a warrant – a power that has been widely misused in the past, particularly to target the political opposition. Hundreds of people connected to Hasina’s administration, including ministers and parliamentarians, have already been arrested on alleged links to the July-August violence, despite often not being present when the alleged incidents occurred. Judges hearing the cases have remanded most of them to custody...

‘The process is open to abuse, and allegations have surfaced that it is being used to settle political scores well beyond the elite. Some complaints list hundreds of defendants, many of them unidentified. In one case, a lawyer who had criticised the interim government on Facebook was named in a murder complaint filed with police, despite the complainant apparently having no idea who he is; the complaint was reportedly prepared with the help of lawyers from the BNP and Jamaat. “Lots of people named in these cases have no connection to the incident”, said a legal expert involved in the process. ...While these cases are widely seen as flawed, the interim government has no power to block them without first abrogating legal rights and practices that were established during the colonial period and have become ingrained.’<sup>155</sup>

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### 12.3 Violence against Awami League members and affiliates

12.3.1 The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), in its 30<sup>th</sup> September Briefing Notes, based on a range of news reports published between 6 August and 30 September<sup>156</sup> noted ‘Since the fall of the Awami League (AL) government on 05.08.24 violent attacks both on Bangladeshi Hindus, who are seen as supporters of the AL... have sharply increased.’<sup>157</sup>

12.3.2 On the treatment of Hindus, ICG noted ‘Members of religious minorities, particularly Hindus, have also been targets, but primarily because of their AL affiliation rather than religion.’<sup>158</sup> ICG provided this assessment based on news reports<sup>159</sup> and explained ‘One organisation reported 205 incidents targeting religious minorities in the days after Hasina’s ouster, including attacks on Hindu temples. Some of the group’s allegations have been disputed, however, with an investigation seeming to debunk its claims that nine Hindus had been killed in sectarian violence. Regardless, Yunus very quickly condemned the attacks as “heinous”, and few have been reported since police began returning to their posts.’<sup>160</sup>

12.3.3 On 27 October Al Jazeera noted:

‘The former powerbrokers on campuses and the AL’s muscle on the streets now face eviction, [and] retribution ... for their role in trying to suppress the

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<sup>155</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (Section A.D), 14 November 2024

<sup>156</sup> BAMF, [Briefing Notes](#) (page 10), 30 September 2024

<sup>157</sup> BAMF, [Briefing Notes](#) (page 1), 30 September 2024

<sup>158</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (Section II.C), 14 November 2024

<sup>159</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (footnote 33), 14 November 2024

<sup>160</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (footnote 33), 14 November 2024

popular revolt against Hasina and for the rights violations they allegedly committed while she was in power...The violence... did not end with Hasina's fall. The former perpetrators of state atrocities became the new targets as hundreds of AL politicians and members, including students, were attacked or killed. Many went into hiding or were detained while attempting to flee....The wave of violence against Awami League-affiliated students has spread across campuses. On the outskirts of the capital, former Jahangirnagar University BCL activist Shamim Ahmed was beaten to death on September 18, while Masud, another BCL leader, was killed by a mob in Rajshahi on September 7. "These are just the reported cases," says Redwanul Karim Sagor, who goes by the name Sujon and was a senior BCL leader who is now in hiding. ... "There have been more killings, arrests and fabricated cases against us, often in areas we've never even visited," he said.<sup>161</sup>

12.3.4 The livestream event held by ICG on 4 November 2024, based on the transcript issued and CPIT's own viewing of the YouTube video published 5 November 2024 panellist Tom Kean noted: '...the first positive...is that there was no massive outpouring of retribution towards Awami League supporters and others associated with Sheikh Hasina's regime after she fled the country. There were some attacks but it certainly...wasn't at the level that we had probably feared we might see ... taking into account the violence that was perpetrated in in July and August, and also before that ...for more than a decade.'<sup>162</sup>

12.3.5 Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called for the Awami League to hold a rally in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka on 10 November 2024<sup>163</sup>. The Business Standard, a news platform based in Dhaka, Bangladesh<sup>164</sup> reported that demonstrators beat 7 people on suspicion of being AL members at the political rally<sup>165</sup>. Bdnews24 reported on 10 November several people were beaten up by students and handed over to police for chanting pro-Hasina slogans during the Dhaka rally<sup>166</sup>.

12.3.6 The Daily Star reported on 12 November 2024: 'Awami League leaders and activists could not hold an event at Zero Point in the capital's Gulistan on Sunday [10 November] amid strong resistance by students, and activists of different political parties, including the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami. The students and political activists beat up at least 10 people, including two women, in the Gulistan area on suspicion that they were members of AL and its front organisations.'<sup>167</sup>

12.3.7 ICG noted:

'The post-Hasina retribution...was more restrained than many observers had anticipated. After fifteen years of extreme repression in which the regime had persecuted many of its opponents, analysts told Crisis Group that they had

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<sup>161</sup> Al Jazeera, [Bangladesh's new outcasts](#), 27 October 2024

<sup>162</sup> ICG, [Bangladesh Three Months After Hasina's Downfall](#), 5 November 2024

<sup>163</sup> AP News, [Rivals of ousted Bangladesh leader ...hold a rally](#), 11 November 2024

<sup>164</sup> The Business Standard, [About Business Standard](#), no date

<sup>165</sup> The Business Standard, [Demonstrators beat 7 people...](#), 10 November 2024

<sup>166</sup> Bdnews24, [People chanting...slogans beaten, handed over to police](#), 10 November 2024

<sup>167</sup> The Daily Star, [Protect rights of all](#), 12 November 2024

feared that thousands, possibly even tens of thousands, might be killed in reprisal. In the event, BNP leaders did what they could to control rank-and-file members to prevent mass bloodshed. Many families also have members on both sides of the political divide, which also helped minimise violence. “I have to give credit to Bangladeshi society”, said an interim government official. “Somehow this revenge killing was avoided. ... We haven’t seen the worst-case scenario”.<sup>168</sup>

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## 12.4 Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

- 12.4.1 Chair of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Khaleda Zia, convicted of corruption in 2018 but released into house arrest in 2020 due to ill health, was freed on 6 August 2024<sup>169 170</sup>.
- 12.4.2 Reporting on 16 September 2024, online regional news service, Benar News noted that factions within the BNP have been involved in violent clashes over control of businesses formerly held by members of the ousted Awami League, following Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation. At least 10 people have been killed and hundreds injured in intra-party fighting since 5 August 2024, as reported by local media and rights groups. BNP leadership condemned the incidents and expelled some leaders and activists<sup>171</sup>.
- 12.4.3 The Dhaka Tribune reported on the 18 October 2024 ‘the BNP leadership has expressed deep concerns over the undisciplined behavior of many of its leaders and activists, which includes incidents of extortion, violence, and other criminal activities. The party is now faced with the critical challenge of restoring discipline and maintaining its public image. Recently the BNP took organizational action against over 1,000 leaders and activists, from top to grassroots levels, in response to various complaints.’<sup>172</sup>
- 12.4.4 In relation to political protests under the interim government, the Dhaka Tribune reported on the BNP rally held in Dhaka on 8 November:  
‘Tens of thousands of supporters and BNP associates carried banners, festoons, and placards at the rally, which was presided over by BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir. They chanted slogans in support of democracy and justice... BNP leaders Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan, Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, and others were present on the stage. After Rahman’s speech, Mirza Fakhrul and other leaders saluted him,...[the rally] proceeded through the capital’s major routes ...[to] the National Parliament.’
- 12.4.5 Reporting on the same 8 November BNP rally, ABC news, a US news channel noted ‘Tens of thousands of activists of ...[BNP] rallied in the nation’s capital on Friday, calling for a new election and quick reforms.’<sup>173</sup>
- 12.4.6 The ICG noted:

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<sup>168</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (Section II.C), 14 November 2024

<sup>169</sup> Al Jazeera, [Bangladesh frees Hasina rival Khaleda Zia from house arrest](#), 6 August 2024

<sup>170</sup> Reuters, [Khaleda Zia, bitterest foe of Sheikh Hasina, freed after Bangladesh PM...](#), 6 August 2024

<sup>171</sup> Benar News, [In post-Hasina Bangladesh, BNP factions are now fighting...](#), 16 September 2024

<sup>172</sup> DT, [BNP worried about undisciplined activists threatening public trust](#), 18 October 2024

<sup>173</sup> ABC, [Thousands rally in Bangladesh capital](#), 8 November 2024,

‘With the AL largely out of play, the most potent threat [to the reform agenda] is the BNP, because of its formidable grassroots network. The party, which is trying to change public perceptions of it as little better than the AL, has issued strong statements of support for the interim government, saying it is willing to give Yunus and his colleagues time to make reforms. BNP leaders have taken commendable steps to limit retributive violence by the party rank and file and to expel members involved in extortion. The party will also make recommendations to the reform commissions. A senior BNP official told Crisis Group that the party recognised politics in Bangladesh had drastically changed...’<sup>174</sup>

See also [Bangladesh Nationalist Party \(BNP\) and auxiliary organisations](#)

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## 12.5 Jamaat-e-Islami

12.5.1 In January 2023, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court upheld a High Court decision of 2013 declaring the registration of Jamaat-e-Islami with the Election Commission to be ‘illegal’, on the basis that Jel was a religiously based political party and this violated the provision of secularism in the Constitution. This ruling prevented Jel from participating in national elections<sup>175 176</sup>. An appeal against the ruling brought by Jel was dismissed by the Appellate Division in November 2023<sup>177</sup>.

12.5.2 On 1 August 2024 the Home Ministry issued a gazette notification banning (proscribing) Jamaat-e-Islami and ‘all its front organisations and entities’ (including Islami Chhatra Shibir), under Section 18 (1) of the Anti-Terrorism Act<sup>178 179</sup>. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her political allies had accused Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir of ‘anti-state activities’, including inciting violence during the student-led mass protests of July 2024 (see section 1 above)<sup>180</sup>.

12.5.3 On 28 August 2024, the interim government revoked the ban on Jel as there was, according to a gazette notification, “no specific evidence of involvement of Jamaat” and its affiliates “in terrorist activities”.<sup>181</sup>

12.5.4 The ICG noted:

‘Sheikh Hasina’s toppling has also increased the influence of Islamists, particularly Jamaat-e-Islami...which now find themselves well placed to help fill the political vacuum left by her abrupt departure. Once despised by many Bangladeshis ...Jamaat now elicits sympathy as one of the Hasina administration’s many victims. In recent years, the party has also focused on providing essential services, such as health and education, in places the state neglected, allowing it to garner grassroots support...

‘[Yunus]... has already had to make compromises to accommodate

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<sup>174</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (Section IV.A), 14 November 2024

<sup>175</sup> AP News, [Bangladesh’s top court upholds decision barring largest Islamist...](#), 19 November 2023

<sup>176</sup> Dhaka Tribune, [Cancellation of Jamaat’s registration: Appeal hearing...](#), 6 November 2023

<sup>177</sup> AP News, [Bangladesh’s top court upholds decision barring largest Islamist...](#), 19 November 2023

<sup>178</sup> The Daily Star, [Jamaat-Shibir banned](#), 2 August 2024

<sup>179</sup> Jurist News, [Bangladesh bans opposition party Jamaat-e-Islami for...](#), 2 August 2024.

<sup>180</sup> AP News, [Bangladesh bans Jamaat-e-Islami party following violent protests...](#), 1 August 2024

<sup>181</sup> Al Jazeera, [Bangladesh’s interim government lifts ban on Jamaat-e-Islami party](#), 28 August 2024

Islamists, including appointing Jamaat-linked lawyers to the ICT... Their highly motivated supporters are a powerful force on the streets, but Jamaat and other Islamist parties – who are in talks about an alliance – pose a limited electoral threat, having never won more than 10 per cent of the ballot. They could, however, prove an essential prop to larger parties when it comes to mustering a majority in parliament.<sup>182</sup>

See also [Jamaat-e-Islami \(JI or Jel\) and auxiliary organisations](#)

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### 13. Law and order

- 13.1.1 For background information, including on the structure and organisation of the security forces see the [Country Policy and Information Note \(CPIN\) Bangladesh: Actors of protection](#)

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#### 13.2 Under the interim government

- 13.2.1 The OHCHR's preliminary analysis of the unrest, dated 16 August 2024, noted that:

'Following the government's resignation, the law and order situation remained unstable across the country, with law enforcement officials retreating from sight in many places, for fear of retaliation...

'... most police stations across the country ceased operating after the fall of the previous government on 5 August and the reported attacks on them that ensued. However, as of 11 August, 599 police stations out of 639 had resumed operations across the country. Of these, 97 police stations out of 110 were functional in metropolitan cities, while 502 out of 529 police stations were functioning in the districts.'<sup>183</sup>

- 13.2.2 As of 13 August 2024, 634 out of 639 police stations had resumed operations, including all 110 metropolitan police stations and 524 out of the 529 district police stations<sup>184</sup>.

- 13.2.3 The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in its travel advice to British citizens updated 27 August 2024 noted 'The recent unrest has had an impact on policing. There has been significant damage to some police stations across the country. Most have re-opened, although not all police officers have returned to duty.'<sup>185</sup>

- 13.2.4 On 18 September 2024, a Home Ministry adviser said that any police officers who had not resumed their duties (after going into hiding) would be unable to return to work and would face disciplinary action<sup>186</sup>.

- 13.2.5 Bangladesh news site, Bdnews24, reported that, on 17 September 2024, the Ministry of Public Administration issued a notification granting the Bangladesh Army the powers of executive magistrates for a period of 60

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<sup>182</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (Section IV.A), 14 November 2024

<sup>183</sup> OHCHR, [Preliminary Analysis of Recent Protests and Unrest...](#) (page 6), 16 August 2024

<sup>184</sup> Business Standard, [Major reshuffle in police high-ups](#), 13 August 2024

<sup>185</sup> FCDO, [Foreign travel advice Bangladesh](#) (Safety and security), 27 August 2024

<sup>186</sup> Business Standard, [Police not resuming duty yet will not be allowed to join...](#), 18 September 2024

days. The orders applied nationwide and gave eligible army officers the powers of arrest and dispersal of illegal rallies as described under relevant sections of the Code of Criminal Procedure<sup>187 188</sup>.

- 13.2.6 According to the Voice of America a US international broadcaster, in its 7 September report: 'On Aug. 18, military authorities announced that they had provided shelter at an army cantonment to 626 persons immediately after Hasina's downfall because "they were scared of their lives." According to the army statement, those who received protection included 515 police officers, 24 senior politicians and five high-profile judges. Almost all of them left the cantonment voluntarily on Aug. 18, after the violence in the country settled down.'<sup>189</sup>
- 13.2.7 Following incidents of mob violence<sup>190</sup>, the Police Headquarters issued a press release on 20 September 2024 stating that mob justice would not be tolerated, and offenders would be punished<sup>191 192</sup>.
- 13.2.8 In the ICG livestream held on 4 November 2024, based on the transcript issued and CPIT's own viewing of the YouTube video published 5 November 2024, Tom Kean opined '...overall let's say the security situation stabilised reasonably quickly given the context ...it's not ...perfect it was far from perfect ....before August 5 but it hasn't degenerated in the way that some might have feared it would.'<sup>193</sup>
- 13.2.9 The ICG noted
- '...the interim government's most pressing challenge when it took office on 8 August was to restore law and order. In the wake of Hasina's departure, many police had abandoned their posts,... Police began returning to work on 12 August and political violence has since subsided, though not entirely. Mob violence, including lynchings, continues to break out, while arsonists have attacked the country's industrial zones. Interim government officials have appealed to citizens not to take the law into their own hands.'<sup>194</sup>
- 13.2.10 AP News reported on events at an AL political rally held in Dhaka on 10 November 2024 which included a photograph captioned 'A police officer shields an Awami League woman supporter from students from anti-discrimination movements in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Sunday, Nov. 10, 2024'<sup>195</sup>

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### 13.3 Reform of the security forces and judiciary

- 13.3.1 The police under the AL government were politicised with at least 117,425 in a police force of around 213,000 having been appointed by the AL government<sup>196</sup>. Following the appointment of the interim government,

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<sup>187</sup> Bdnews24, [Army granted executive magistracy powers](#), 17 September 2024

<sup>188</sup> Dhaka Tribune, [Army gets magistracy power](#), 17 September 2024

<sup>189</sup> VoA, [Fearing reprisals, Hasina's supporters flee Bangladesh](#), 7 September 20-24

<sup>190</sup> Daily Star, [Lynch mobs acting with impunity](#), 20 September 2024

<sup>191</sup> Business Standard, [Police to take stern actions against anyone taking law...](#), 20 September 2024

<sup>192</sup> Dhaka Tribune, [Police HQ: Stern actions to be taken for taking laws into...](#), 20 September 2024

<sup>193</sup> ICG, [Bangladesh Three Months After Hasina's Downfall](#), 5 November 2024

<sup>194</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh? \(The Aftermath\)](#), 14 November 2024

<sup>195</sup> Ap News, [Rivals of ousted Bangladesh leader ...hold a rally](#), 11 November 2024

<sup>196</sup> The Print, [Bangladesh needs big reforms](#), 8 November 2024



national media reported on major reshuffles in the police force, which involved the forced retirement, and the reinstating or transferring, of a number of senior police officials<sup>197 198 199</sup>.

- 13.3.2 According to Prothom Alo, in information obtained from a police headquarters source “We faced stiff challenges at the beginning due to damage to police stations and vehicles. But now the new leadership in the field is overcoming that situation.”<sup>200</sup>
- 13.3.3 CIVICUS, a global civil society network<sup>201</sup> in its 30 October report noted: ‘Since taking office, the interim government has replaced officials who had allegedly engaged in political partisanship, and arrested senior police officers. The Supreme Court chief justice stepped down after protests demanding his resignation.’<sup>202</sup>
- 13.3.4 In the ICG event Tom Kean pointed out some of the challenges faced by the interim government: ‘..there’s been an effort to clear out the most pro- Awami League people from the bureaucracy, the judiciary, some of the security forces but it doesn’t seem to have been done very well and almost seems to have created more resentment and frustration within those institutions [and] that causes more headaches for the interim the government.’<sup>203</sup>
- 13.3.5 ICG noted:

‘During her fifteen years in power, Sheikh Hasina worked assiduously to undermine [Bangladesh’s institutions] their independence so that they would do her bidding. She typically did so by stacking them with supporters, showering them with largesse or cowing their senior officials. Already, the interim government has replaced several senior and mid-level members of key institutions, particularly in the judiciary, bureaucracy and police. Many officials close to the AL remain in place, however. A full clean-out is impractical, and the government wants to give all those who remain a chance to get behind the reform agenda...

‘The interim government has already taken several steps to restore the judiciary’s independence. Under pressure from student demonstrators, the former chief justice resigned shortly after Hasina fled, with a respected jurist, Syed Refaat Ahmed, taking the job. Unjust cases filed against protest leaders in July and August are being dropped; earlier charges against opposition figures are also expected to be withdrawn gradually. On 21 September, the new chief justice outlined judicial reforms aimed at addressing the “crisis of public trust”. His main plan is to abolish the executive’s control of promotion and transfer of judges, creating instead a separate secretariat under the Supreme Court to select the most capable jurists. In the meantime, the interim government has transferred and promoted more than 300 lower court judges. A senior judge told Crisis Group that his colleagues already feel a new freedom. “The biggest change is the

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<sup>197</sup> New Age, [Bangladesh Police administration undergoes major reshuffle](#), 13 August 2024

<sup>198</sup> Daily Star, [Major reshuffle in police force](#), 28 August 2024

<sup>199</sup> Dhaka Tribune, [Bangladesh Police sees another major reshuffle](#), 1 September 2024

<sup>200</sup> Prothom Alo, [Over 7000 arrested across country in one week](#), 8 October 2024

<sup>201</sup> CIVICUS, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>202</sup> CIVICUS, [Bangladesh: Interim government commits to human rights reforms](#), 30 October 2024

<sup>203</sup> ICG, [Bangladesh Three Months After Hasina’s Downfall](#), 4 November 2024

level of politicisation and pressure that we faced before – nothing like that is happening now”, he said.’<sup>204</sup>

13.3.6 In relation to the security forces, ICG noted:

‘...in the words of an interim government official, she [Hasina] turned the force into her “attack dogs”...Over the years, the force was stacked with AL supporters, particularly members of the party’s thuggish student wing, the Chhatra League....

‘Police have gradually returned to duty, and the government has replaced senior officers implicated in abuses under Hasina’s regime. These measures alone are unlikely to be sufficient, however. Trust in the police remains low and morale is poor, with officers worried about being attacked or charged for their role in the crackdown on protesters under Hasina’s regime. A mid-level officer said little had changed inside the force, adding that personnel are upset that the government has taken no action against those responsible for killing police officers in the aftermath of Hasina’s flight. “Protesters hanged our officers in the streets”, he said. “Who asked for justice for the police who were murdered? No one”...Reform of other security agencies is likely to prove even more challenging, in part because they are under military command or include army officers. With the interim government dependent on the army for support, Yunus can ill afford to upset its members.’<sup>205</sup>

13.3.7 The EUAA COI Query published 15 November 2024 noted in relation to judicial reform:

‘On 25 September 2024, the Supreme Court launched a helpline, providing guidance on litigation services and filing complaints. ...on 8 October 2024, the government appointed 23 new judges to the [Bangladesh High Court] HC, raising the number to 101. The new judges took oath on 9 October 2024 and started their tenure. On 16 October 2024, 12 judges appointed under Awami League government were placed on leave by the Chief Justice of HC amidst students’ demonstration on the HC premises.’<sup>206</sup>

13.3.8 The same EUAA COI Query noted in relation to law enforcement reform:

‘...on 22 August 2024 three senior police officers, including two additional inspectors general of police were sent on forced retirement, on 27 August 2024 five police officials sent to retirement by the Awami League government were reinstated. As reported by the Daily Star, the reinstated police officials had been put on forced retirement by the Awami League government citing “public interest.” Established on 4 October 2024, the Police Reform Commission aims to develop a proposal to change the police into a ‘pro-people force.’ The appointed members of the Commission include Chowdhury Rafiqul Abrar, the president of Odhikar, a prominent local human rights organisation.’<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (Section A.1), 14 November 2024

<sup>205</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (Section A.3), 14 November 2024

<sup>206</sup> EUAA, [COI Query The protests in July and August 2024 and their aftermath](#), 15 November 2024

<sup>207</sup> EUAA, [COI Query The protests in July and August 2024 and their aftermath](#), 15 November 2024

## 13.4 Accountability for corruption and abuses

13.4.1 In relation to accountability for corruption and abuses, CIVICUS and ICG noted Bangladesh signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances on 29 August 2024, set up a commission of enquiry into those forcibly disappeared under Hasina's time in government, and invited the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to investigate human rights abuses committed during the July – August protests<sup>208 209</sup>.

13.4.2 The ICG noted:

'The Rapid Action Battalion, an elite crimefighting force whose widespread human rights violations led the U.S. to sanction several of its senior officers, comprises representatives of the military's three branches, as well as the police and two paramilitary forces, Border Guard Bangladesh and Ansar. The Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), the military intelligence service, has also been implicated in a range of alleged abuses, from enforced disappearances to bank takeovers. While the army chief has replaced the heads of these agencies and forced several former officials into retirement – some have even been arrested – there has been little public discussion so far about how to prevent further abuses.'<sup>210</sup>

13.4.3 The same ICG report noted:

'The interim government has regularly highlighted the need for accountability for past atrocities, particularly those committed during July-August... There is intense debate within the Yunus administration as to the most appropriate venue for seeking justice. One source close to the government said most advisers want a degree of international involvement and recognise that the ICT [the domestic International Crimes Tribunal that Hasina established in 2010 to try alleged war criminals], in its current form at least, has little legitimacy. "They know this is a kangaroo court. If you use it to target Hasina some people will be happy, but it could damage the country's international image", the source said.'<sup>211</sup>

13.4.4 In relation to complaints to the ICT, DW noted 'Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) has received several complaints against Hasina and her loyalists, accusing them of murder and crimes against humanity. The ICT has initiated investigations into these allegations...'<sup>212</sup>

13.4.5 The EUAA COI Query published 15 November 2024 noted:

'Since its establishment in August 2024 and within two weeks of operations, the inquiry commission for enforced disappearances received 400 complaints, mostly filed against Detective Branch (DB), Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC). Moreover, the Commission confirmed the location of the detention centre and the Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) known as Aynaghar inside the DGFI headquarters.

<sup>208</sup> CIVICUS, [Bangladesh: Interim government commits to human rights reforms](#), 30 October 2024

<sup>209</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (Section A.3), 14 November 2024

<sup>210</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (Section A.3), 14 November 2024

<sup>211</sup> ICG, [A New Era in Bangladesh?](#) (Section A.D), 14 November 2024

<sup>212</sup> DW, [Bangladesh: What awaits Ex-PM Hasina and the Awami League?](#), 7 October 2024

Run by the DGFI, Aynaghar also referred to as “House of Mirrors” was a detention facility where ‘victims of enforced disappearances’ were held in allegedly inhuman conditions over the last one and a half decades as reported by the Daily Star...

‘In October 2024, the Director General (DG) of the RAB stated that the ‘Rab will never again get involved in incidents such as enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings.’ According to the DG, the ‘RAB will not be involved in [...] any unlawful actions’ and will comply with the existing legal framework, including the internationally recognised human rights standards. Moreover, the DG confirmed RAB’s cooperation with the UN fact-finding team on their ongoing investigation on alleged human rights abuses in Bangladesh.’<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> EUAA, [COI Query The protests in July and August 2024 and their aftermath](#), 15 November 2024

# Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency, and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge, and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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# Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Historical Context:
  - Overview of the political environment prior to July 2024
  - Background on the issues that led to the student protests, including social, economic, and political factors
  - Political system - structure
- Chronology of Events:
  - Timeline of the student protests from July 2024 to the present, including major incidents, protests, and responses
- Government Response:
  - Government's actions in response to the protests, including legislative measures, security crackdowns, arrests, and censorship
  - Documentation of any human rights concerns, including allegations of excessive force, detentions, restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly, and treatment of protestors
- Political Impact:
  - Changes in political leadership, party alliances, and the government's public support
  - Upcoming elections
- Treatment of political groups post August 2024
  - AI – status, activities, arrests, prosecutions, violence
  - BNP
  - Jel
- Law and order
  - Aftermath
  - Reform, accountability, corruption, and abuses

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# Version control and feedback

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **16 December 2024**

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### **Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section**

The information on this page has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

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## Changes from last version of this note

First version

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## Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable, and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

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## Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support them in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures, or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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