Fact-Finding Report

Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests of July and August 2024 in Bangladesh

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Geneva, 2025

I. Executive Summary

At the invitation of the Interim Government of Bangladesh, OHCHR conducted an independent fact-finding inquiry into alleged human rights violations and abuses that occurred between 1 July and 15 August 2024, in the context of the widespread protests roiling the country, and in their immediate aftermath. Based on a thorough and independent assessment of all the information collected, OHCHR finds that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the former Government and its security and intelligence apparatus, together with violent elements associated with the Awami League, systematically engaged in serious human rights violations, including hundreds of extrajudicial killings, other use of force violations involving serious injuries to thousands of protesters, extensive arbitrary arrest and detention, and torture and other forms of ill-treatment. OHCHR has reasonable grounds to believe that these violations were carried out with the knowledge, coordination and direction of the political leadership and senior security sector officials, in pursuance of a strategy to suppress the protests and related expressions of dissent. These serious human rights violations also raise concerns from the perspective of international criminal law, so that additional criminal investigations are warranted to determine the extent to which they may also amount to crimes against humanity and, torture (as a stand-alone international crime), as well as serious crimes under domestic law.

The decision of the High Court on 5 June 2024 to reinstate a quota reserving 30 percent of public service jobs to the descendants of independence war fighters was the immediate trigger of these protests. But there was a deeper set of grievances among various sectors of the population, rooted in destructive and corrupt pathologies of politics and governance, which had failed to address, and indeed exacerbated, deepening economic inequalities and lack of access to enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. Many thousands of Bangladeshis, including women and children, from across diverse socioeconomic, professional and religious backgrounds joined the protests, calling for meaningful social, economic and political reform. In its attempts to stem the growing anger of the public, and to cling on to power, the former Government attempted to suppress systematically the protests, resorting to increasingly violent means.

From mid-July, the former Government and the Awami League mobilized a continuously expanding circle of armed actors. In its initial efforts to suppress the protests, Awami League leaders, including government ministers, incited Chhatra League supporters, who were armed with an array of blunt and sharp weapons and some firearms, to launch attacks on both male and female students exercising their right of peaceful assembly on and around university campuses. Students often defended themselves. In response, the Government resorted to even more serious violence. The Bangladesh Police, operating in close coordination with an array of armed Awami League supporters, violently suppressed peaceful student protests with unnecessary and disproportionate force, including against a major protest held on 17 July at Dhaka University, in contravention of international human rights law.

Following these developments, the student movement issued a call, echoed by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami, for general protests and a complete shutdown of Dhaka and other cities. In response, the then Government further escalated its violence against protestors and protest organisers, leading to violations of the rights to life, peaceful assembly, and liberty and security of the person. While Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and Police helicopters sought to intimidate protesters from the air, Police, RAB and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) on the ground deployed a combination of military rifles and shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets, as well as less-lethal weapons against protesters. Some of those protesters had been trying to obstruct roads and certain installations but had still been conducting themselves peacefully overall. To defend themselves against such attacks, some protesters in turn resorted to throwing bricks and sticks.

In this deteriorating environment and in response to State violence, some elements among the protestors engaged in acts of violence, targeting mostly government buildings, transport infrastructure, and the police. On the evening of 18 July, the Government reinforced orders authorising security forces to resort to lethal force against protestors. From 19 July until the end of the protests, BGB, RAB and Police fired lethal ammunition indiscriminately at protesters in Dhaka and elsewhere, resulting in many extrajudicial killings and injuries, including of journalists covering the protests. In some cases, security forces engaged in summary executions by deliberately shooting unarmed protesters at point blank range.

However, the use of violence against protestors by police and paramilitary forces did not suppress the protests and the growing degree of violent unrest. On 20 July, the former Government imposed a general curfew and deployed the Army. In some instances, Army soldiers shot at protestors who did not present an imminent threat of death or serious injury, resulting in at least one extrajudicial killing. According to some witness accounts, junior officers on the ground increasingly resisted orders to use firearms against civilian protestors, informing the Army Chief during a large meeting held on 3 August that they did not want to shoot at protesters. Despite this, the Army still played an important role in enabling violations by law enforcement officials by providing a physical protective cover to them, which allowed their use of lethal force against protestors without fear of counterattack, including during a brutal clearance of the blockades on the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway where police and RAB shot, killed and injured scores of protesters on 20 and 21 July. In late July, the Army also participated in massive raids, in which Police and RAB arbitrarily arrested large numbers of people to prevent a reignition of mass protests. Testimony by former senior officials also revealed that the Army and BGB took part in developing a government plan to utilise the Army, BGB and Police to stop, including through the use of force, the protesters' March on Dhaka, called for 5 August 2024. Pursuant to that plan, the Police shot and killed many protesters, but the Army and BGB largely stood by and let protesters pass.

The intelligence services – the Directorate-General of Armed Forces Intelligence (DGFI), National Security Intelligence (NSI) and the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC) – and the specialised branches of the Police – Detective Branch, Special Branch and Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit (CTTC) – engaged directly in perpetrating human rights violations to abet the violent suppression of protests. They shared intelligence, including information obtained through surveillance in violation of the right to privacy, to enable the campaign of mass arbitrary arrest that took place in late July. The Detective Branch routinely resorted to arbitrary detention and torture to extract information and confessions from detainees. The headquarters of the CTTC also served as another location where many of those detained arbitrarily, including children, were held. Detective Branch and DGFI colluded in the abduction and arbitrary detention of student leaders and sought to coerce them to renounce the protests. DGFI, NSI and Detective Branch personnel obstructed lifesaving medical care, frequently interrogating patients in hospitals, arresting injured persons and intimidating medical personnel and staff. Neither prosecutorial authorities nor the judiciary took any meaningful action to curb acts and practices of arbitrary detention and torture, or to ensure that any officials perpetrating such acts were held accountable.

The intelligence services were also part of a systematic and organized effort to conceal serious violations. NTMC worked together with the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission to implement ministerial orders imposing strategically timed and targeted Internet shutdowns to prevent protesters from using electronic communications to organize activities, and to limit public access to and the ability to disseminate information on the extent and scale of ongoing violations through Internet and social media. In parallel, DGFI, NSI and RAB pressured media outlets not to report fully and truthfully about the mass protests and

their violent suppression. DGFI joined the Police in intimidating victims, their families and lawyers to ensure their silence.

Based on direct testimony from senior officials involved and other inside sources, OHCHR was able to establish that the integrated and systematic effort using the entire range of police, paramilitary, military and intelligence actors, as well as violent elements linked to the Awami League, to commit serious violations and abuses occurred with the full knowledge, coordination and direction of the political leadership. The then Prime Minister and Home Affairs Minister led parallel efforts to coordinate the security and intelligence apparatus. Both received regular reports on the situation on the ground from multiple sources. According to senior official testimony, reports provided to the Prime Minister by senior officials on 21 July and in early August specifically conveyed concern about excessive use of force. Both political leaders, and the leadership of the Bangladesh Police and the Army, also carried out site visits that would have provided them direct personal knowledge of violations that had taken place or were ongoing. Furthermore, the political leadership issued direct orders and other directives authorising and guiding operations by BGB, RAB, DGFI, the Bangladesh Police and its Detective Branch that involved serious violations of human rights against protestors and other civilians, including extrajudicial killings and arbitrary detention.

In early August 2024, as the former Government was increasingly losing control of the country, crowds engaged in retaliatory killings and other serious revenge violence targeting, in particular, Awami League officials and real or perceived supporters of the Awami League, the police and the media seen as supportive of the Awami League. During and after the protests, members of the Hindu community, Ahmadiyya Muslims and indigenous groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, were also subject to violent attacks by mobs, including burning of homes and some attacks on places of worship. [1] Different and often intersecting motives drove these attacks, ranging from religious and ethnic discrimination to perceived opportunities for revenge against Awami League supporters among minorities, local communal disputes, including about land, and interpersonal issues. Some Jamaat-e-Islami and BNP supporters, members and local leaders were also involved in revenge violence and attacks on distinct religious and indigenous groups. However, the information available to OHCHR has not shown that such incidents were orchestrated or organised by these parties' national leaderships, which also took steps to condemn violence targeting minority groups.

Up to 5 August 2024, the former Government did not appear to engage in any genuine efforts to investigate or to ensure accountability for any of the serious violations and abuses committed by the security forces or Awami League supporters.

Following the fall of the previous Government, the current Interim Government has commenced efforts to ensure accountability for serious human rights violations and abuses. Among its steps, it has brought cases against senior officials before Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), as well as in the regular courts. These efforts have been hampered, to differing degrees, by preexisting structural deficiencies of the law enforcement and justice sectors, established police malpractices such as bringing meritless charges based on mass cases, continued intimidation and evidence tampering by some security officials who face allegations but remain in their positions, as well as other due process concerns related to ICT and regular courts. While the Interim Government has reported to have made 100 arrests in relation to attacks on distinct religious and indigenous groups, many perpetrators of acts of revenge violence and attacks on distinct groups apparently continue to enjoy impunity.

Based on reported deaths compiled by governmental and non-governmental sources, in combination with other available evidence, OHCHR assesses that as many as 1,400 people could have been killed during the protests, the vast majority of whom were killed by military rifles and shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets commonly used

by Bangladesh's security forces. Thousands more suffered severe, often life-altering injuries. More than 11,700 people were arrested and detained, according to information from the Police and RAB provided to OHCHR.

Reported fatality figures indicate that around 12-13 percent of those killed were children. Police and other security forces also subjected children to targeted killings, deliberate maiming, arbitrary arrest, detention in inhumane conditions, torture and other forms of ill-treatment.

Having been at the forefront of the early protests in particular, women and girls were also attacked by security forces and Awami League supporters. They were specifically subjected to sexual and gender-based violence, including gender-based physical violence, threats of rape and, in some documented cases, sexual assault perpetrated by Awami League supporters. OHCHR also received reports of threats of rape and sexual violence committed as revenge violence. Given social and cultural sensitivities and the significant under-reporting of sexual and gender-based violence in Bangladesh, OHCHR believes that it was not able to document the full extent of sexual violence that was perpetrated and considers that further in-depth investigations are required to ascertain the full scope and impact of such acts and to provide the required support to victims.

Violations were enabled and exacerbated by outdated laws and policies, corrupted governance structures, and erosion of the rule of law, which readily facilitated the use of disproportionate force against protesters, the militarization of policing, the politicization of the security and justice sectors, and institutionalized impunity. The former Government had relied on and expanded an elaborate legal and institutional framework to repress peaceful civic and political dissent. This was also a factor that drove some opponents of the Government towards disruptive and, for some, even violent acts of protest.

The magnitude and seriousness of the violations and abuses that occurred during the period covered by OHCHR's fact-finding, and their entrenched root causes, require both urgent measures and significant longer-term reforms so that similar patterns of serious violations do not re-occur. To this end, OHCHR recommends a range of actions, detailed in this report, which include security and justice sector reforms, repeal of a host of repressive laws and policies, amendments to other laws to bring them into line with international human rights standards, institutional and governance sector reforms, and broader changes to political processes and economic governance to address inequalities, promote inclusiveness, and ensure the respect and protection of the human rights of all of Bangladesh's people.

Equally critical in this regard will be to take effective measures to ensure fair and independent justice and accountability, as well as broader forms of redress for victims that will promote national healing. As a starting point, OHCHR recommends an inclusive national dialogue and consultation to develop a holistic, inclusive and context-specific transitional justice process that embeds the pursuit of criminal justice, including for the most responsible perpetrators, in accordance with international standards, within a wider victim-centred approach that redresses legacies of serious human rights violations through truth-seeking, reparation, memorialization, vetting of the security sector, and other measures that will guarantee non-recurrence. Such a process will support social cohesion, national healing, and community reconciliation.

OHCHR recommends further independent and impartial investigations of violations and abuses that have occurred, including in relation to the protests, with a view to supporting accountability. OHCHR stands ready to continue to provide continuing support and technical assistance to Bangladesh, including to facilitate follow-up to and implementation of this report's recommendations.

OHCHR's findings and recommendations are based on more than 230 in-depth interviews conducted in Bangladesh and online with victims and other witnesses. A further 36 interviews were conducted with Government, security sector and political party officials, including many former and current senior officials with direct knowledge of relevant events. Findings were corroborated with authenticated videos and photos, medical forensic analysis and weapons analysis, and other information. OHCHR has made findings to the extent that there are reasonable grounds to believe that an incident or pattern of conduct occurred. This standard of proof is lower than the standard required to establish individual guilt in criminal proceedings but warrants further criminal investigations by the competent authorities.

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1. Introduction

1. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, first proposed a fact-finding mission in a letter sent on 23 July to then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the height of the crisis but received no positive response to that invitation. On 14 August 2024, Dr Muhammad Yunus, Chief Advisor of the Interim Government, requested OHCHR to conduct a fact-finding in a call with the High Commissioner and thereupon extended a formal invitation by letter dated 28 August 2024. Accordingly, and further to the terms of reference agreed with the Interim Government,[2] the High Commissioner deployed a team of OHCHR staff to Bangladesh to conduct an independent and impartial fact-finding into alleged human rights violations and abuses that occurred in the context of the protests that took place between July and August 2024.

2. In accordance with the terms of reference, OHCHR's fact-finding focused on human rights violations and abuses that occurred between 1 July and 15 August, and their root causes. The terms of reference also requested OHCHR to identify responsibilities, offer concrete recommendations for addressing violations and ensuring that they do not recur, and assess steps taken by the Interim Government and the justice system to undertake criminal investigations and provide effective remedies for violations and abuses. The Chief Advisor requested the High Commissioner to keep the United Nations Human Rights Council informed of the process and outcome of the fact-finding.[3]

3. From 16 September, OHCHR deployed a team to Bangladesh, supported by a forensic physician, a weapons expert, a gender specialist, open-source analysts, a media advisor and a legal advisor. The time and resources available allowed OHCHR to document a representative sample of the violations and abuses that transpired, but not to compile an exhaustive account covering all of Bangladesh. OHCHR's fact-finding team visited sites of major protests, including universities, and hospitals in key hotspots of protests in Dhaka, Sylhet, Rangpur and Narsingdi districts. The fact-finding team conducted interviews with victims and witnesses from these locations, and with additional victims and witnesses from Cumilla, Gazipur, Jamalpur, Khulna, Narayanganj, Sirajganj and the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

4. OHCHR expresses its deep appreciation to the Interim Government for the cooperation extended and the access to senior officials and information it provided. OHCHR is grateful to the many Bangladeshi and international civil society organisations, human rights defenders, and experts who supported OHCHR's fact-finding work and provided it with relevant information on this turning point in the country's recent history. Most importantly, OHCHR expresses its profound gratitude to all the victims and witnesses who shared their experiences and accounts, which often involved deep trauma and suffering, with the team.

2. Methodology, Standard of Proof and International Law Applied

5. This report is principally based on more than 230 confidential in-depth interviews, which OHCHR's fact-finding team conducted in Bangladesh and online, with victims, witnesses, student and other protest leaders, human rights defenders, university professors, journalists and other civil society representatives, medical professionals, lawyers, businesspeople, and various other experts and persons of relevance. Among the witnesses and victims are 35 women, two non-binary people and 10 children.

6. In 11 medical facilities, OHCHR's forensic physician conferred with doctors, examined 29 victims and reviewed, with consent, 153 medical case files, including images of injuries. OHCHR's weapons expert corroborated information on the use of different types of firearms, less-lethal weapons and ammunition based on analysis of videos, photos and ammunition remnants provided to OHCHR. Furthermore, OHCHR preserved and reviewed thousands of original videos and photos obtained mainly from witnesses, victims, and journalists, providing direct evidence of violations at the protests, responsible actors involved, their weapons and modes of operation. From 20 July 2024, as protests continued,

OHCHR had already assigned a remote monitoring team to identify and preserve relevant and credible open-source material, including videos and photos. Videos and photos were only relied on for this fact-finding to the extent that their authenticity had been verified in accordance with standard OHCHR methodology.

7. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Home Affairs facilitated interviews with the current Inspector-General of Police and the current Directors-General of Bangladesh's three paramilitary security forces: Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), the Ansar/Village Defence Party (Ansar/VDP) and the Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB). Except for the BGB chief, none of these officials were in their post at the time of the protests, and they conveyed only limited information on the role the respective forces had played during the protests. Despite OHCHR's requests to the Interim Government, meetings with the leadership of the Army or the Directorate-General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) could not be arranged.

8. OHCHR held 32 additional interviews with former and currently serving senior and mid-level officials in the Army, the Police, RAB, Ansar/VDP, intelligence services, political parties and justice system, who had been directly involved in addressing aspects of the protests.[4]

9. Several former senior officials were interviewed during a visit to Keraniganj Central Prison. OHCHR was permitted to hold unsupervised and private interviews with these detainees. Regrettably, OHCHR's request to conduct a follow-up visit and interview the detained former Inspector-General of Police was not accommodated.

10. OHCHR sought interviews with and information from Awami League members and accepted offers to participate in online interviews from four ministers in the Cabinet of the former Government, who each had key roles in relation to the protests. OHCHR also interviewed other senior and mid-level officials of Awami League and the Bangladesh Chhatra League, the student wing of the Awami League.

11. OHCHR interviewed senior officials of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Bangladesh Jatiya Party. OHCHR sought interviews with the leadership of the Jamaat-e-Islami political party, which unfortunately could not make itself available. Requests for interviews sent to Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir, a student organisation generally seen as linked with Jamaat-e-Islami, did not receive a response. However, OHCHR interviewed several Jamaat-e-Islami and Chhatra Shibir supporters.

12. On 12 September 2024, OHCHR conveyed a comprehensive request for written information to the Interim Government.[5] On 9 December, the Interim Government provided some of the requested information, forwarding longer reports from the BGB, the National Security Intelligence (NSI) and the Ministry of Information Technology, and shorter responses from the DGFI, Ansar/VDP and the Coast Guard. On 30 January 2025, the Interim Government shared an additional detailed report from the Bangladesh Police and the RAB. Regrettably, no written information was received from the Army.

13. In response to OHCHR's public call for submissions,[6] OHCHR received 959 communications from individuals and organisations. OHCHR considered each of these submissions, which have also been preserved.[7]

14. OHCHR rigorously assessed each source's credibility and the validity, internal consistency and relevance of the information they provided, in accordance with its standard methodology. Unless otherwise noted, each violation or abuse reflected in this report has been verified based on testimony of victims, eyewitnesses and other credible sources, corroborated by other testimony, authenticated videos and photos, medical information and medical forensic analysis, weapons analysis, or credible open sources. For some instances, precise locations, dates, perpetrator identities or other details that could expose victims and witnesses to a risk of reprisals have been omitted but are known to OHCHR.

15. In accordance with OHCHR methodology, this report contains findings on fact when OHCHR found reasonable grounds to believe that an incident or pattern of conduct occurred. This standard of proof is lower than that required to find an individual guilty of a crime before a competent criminal court. But it is sufficiently high to warrant further investigations of serious crimes by competent criminal justice authorities. Eight cases documented by

OHCHR's fact-finding team are presented in greater detail as emblematic, illustrating larger patterns or directly linked to operational planning, orders and directives involving the political leadership and senior security sector officials.

16. The human rights-related findings flowing from the established facts, whether they concern human rights violations attributable to the State or human rights abuses by non-state actors, are based on analysis of those facts based on international human rights law, including Bangladesh's treaty obligations as a State Party to the United Nations' core human rights conventions.[8]

17. In addition, OHCHR considered the extent to which facts established on a reasonable grounds basis warranted further criminal investigations by Bangladeshi or other competent authorities into the commission of international crimes, including crimes against humanity, as defined in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Rome Statute), to which Bangladesh is a State Party, and torture as a stand-alone international crime. This report does not include findings as to which individuals' conduct should be subject to further criminal investigations, although OHCHR has preserved all relevant information for facilitation of future accountability processes, in accordance with international standards.

18. In accordance with its standard methodology, OHCHR shared this report, prior to publication, with the Interim Government for its comments regarding any factual errors or inaccuracies and integrated relevant comments received.

III. Contextual Overview: An Escalation of Repression

19. On 5 June 2024, the High Court Division of Bangladesh's Supreme Court reinstated a quota system that reserved 30 percent of all public sector jobs for the descendants of the fighters of Bangladesh's struggle for independence in the 1970s. The High Court ruled as unconstitutional a government decision from 2018, through which the Government had sought to abolish the quota system after extensive student protests against it at the time.

20. Students, including some Awami League supporters, perceived such quotas as discriminatory, favouring the grandchildren of independence fighters, over objective, merit-based criteria. Many who benefitted from civil service quotas already came from privileged families with ties to the Awami League dating back to Bangladesh's independence. One student protester explained "*I cannot get a government job since I do not belong to a political party. I am just a village boy*."[9]

21. From the outset, the protest movement was also driven by much deeper grievances about the interplay between the political agenda of the former Government and the denial of economic, social and cultural human rights, as protest leaders and participants explained to OHCHR. These grievances are well-captured in a widely shared song composed by a female protester: "*The ones who are privileged, keep getting more, and everything else fails in front of corruption. The ones who are honest, have nothing to eat*."[10] The protests quickly became a cross-societal uprising as a majority of Bangladeshis shared aspects of these grievances and viewed the country as headed in the wrong direction.[11]

22. In response, the Government escalated its repression of the protests in a progressive, calculated and systematic manner, shifting from initial attempts at intimidation to increasingly more lethal and militarized uses of force that resulted in serious human rights violations.

23. This section examines some of the underlying causes which drove the protests and outlines the escalation of repression in the governmental and security forces' response.

1. Binary politics, corruption and economic inequalities

24. Bangladesh's political parties have been historically dominated by individual leaders who pursued politics of patronage and sought to weaponize the political system against their opponents. The fallout of such practices had been tempered by the people of Bangladesh regularly voting the governing party out of power. This was facilitated by a constitutional

system of temporary caretaker governments that would seek to level the playing field before a new round of elections. After its 2008 election win, however, the Awami League abolished the caretaker system. It won elections in 2014 and 2018 that were marred by reports of irregularities, violence and intimidation by security forces and, in 2014, a boycott by the opposition.[12] In January 2024, the Awami League won another election, in which Jamaat-e-Islami was banned and which was boycotted by BNP after the Government suppressed opposition rallies by force, arbitrarily arresting thousands of opposition activists and intimidating civil society.[13]

25. During 15 years in office, Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League asserted increasing dominance over political institutions, the justice and security sectors, and the wider bureaucracy of government. This capture radiated into the broader economy, in the form of clientelism, crony capitalism and corruption. The former Government frequently prioritized large businesses and export industries, in particular the garment sector, as well as major infrastructure projects, rather than developing a wider industrial basis and fostering smaller and medium enterprises. Despite the Government reporting a doubling of the per capita gross domestic product since 2013,[14] the overall distribution of economic gains was increasingly uneven. Income and consumption inequality, as well as income concentration among the richest five percent in the country, increased markedly between 2010 and 2022.[15]

26. Students and other young people were struggling to find employment in the private sector,[16] leading to grievances among this demographic group, in particular about the quota system's diminution of their access to public sector employment. A government report from April 2024 indicated that the share of youth aged 15-24 years not in education, employment or training had reached nearly 40 percent among all youth and 60 percent specifically for young women and girls.[17]

27. From 2022, mid- and low-income Bangladeshis were also harder hit by food and energy price inflation.[18] To some extent, these were linked to the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine, as well as agricultural subsidy cuts and other austerity measures imposed on Bangladesh as conditionalities for loans of the International Monetary Fund. The State's spending on economic, social and cultural rights was further reduced as increasing amounts of financing were needed to service Bangladesh's debts. The country also has a very low tax base relying heavily on indirect taxes, which burden middle- and low-income Bangladeshis disproportionally.[19]

28. The concentration of economic power and wealth and the related negative impacts on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights have also been driven by large-scale corruption in public procurement and the capture and control of banks, energy providers and other key sectors of the economy by oligarchs close to the Awami League.[20] Several large banks were hollowed out by loan embezzlement schemes favouring politically connected clients, which were massive enough in scale to threaten the country's macroeconomic stability.[21] A considerable part of these and other illegally acquired gains were reportedly transferred out of the country and invested in foreign jurisdiction for the benefit of corrupt Bangladeshi senior officials and Bangladesh oligarchs linked to them.[22]

29. Corruption at the highest levels has been mirrored by widespread corruption and extortion at lower levels of the bureaucracy and security apparatus. Three in every four Bangladeshis (74.4 percent) have been victims of corruption by law enforcement officials according to a recent survey.[23] Many workers, business owners and students who joined the protests shared with OHCHR their frustration about acts of extortion by Awami League officials and Chhatra League members.[24]

2. Government attempts to intimidate and delegitimize the student protest movement

30. According to OHCHR interviews with some of those involved, senior intelligence and government officials personally informed the then Prime Minister early on that the quota protests in the summer of 2024 were becoming a major political threat to the unpopular Government's continued hold on power. They warned that opposition parties were also joining the students. Some of them recommended that the Prime Minister quickly negotiate

a solution to put the issue to rest.[25] The Prime Minister, however, took a firm stance and privately told senior officials that students would learn that they were protesting in vain.[26] On 7 July, she publicly stated: "*After the [High] court's verdict, there is no justification for the anti-quota movement*."[27] Senior government officials started publicly denouncing the student protest movement as being "*infiltrated*" by the opposition.[28]

31. In a meeting with the DGFI Director-General and other senior officials during the night from 10 to 11 July, the Prime Minister authorized the widely feared military intelligence agency to carry out secret negotiations with student leaders, according to former senior officials.[29]

32. On 11 July, Bangladesh Chhatra League President Saddam Hussain issued an apparent threat: "*Some are trying to use the movement politically and the Chhatra League is ready to face them*."[30] The same day, police used force, principally batons and tear gas, against peaceful student protesters near Cumilla University.[31] They also clashed with student protesters at She-e-Bangla Agricultural University in the Shahbagh area, and reportedly in Chattogram.[32] On 13 July, the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police announced a police investigation into the supposed "*infiltration*" of the protests.[33]

33. At a press conference on 14 July 2024, then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina further escalated tensions by stating: "Why do they [the student protesters] have so much resentment towards freedom fighters? If the grandchildren of the freedom fighters don't get quota benefits, should the grandchildren of razakars get the benefit?" [34]

34. Students felt personally addressed by the Prime Minister's reference to *razakars,* a deeply offensive term in Bangladesh, describing persons who collaborated with Pakistan's military during Bangladesh's 1971 war of independence. On the evening of 14 July, large numbers of enraged students protested and chanted "*Who are you? Who am I? Razakar, razakar*." This became a rallying cry for the protest movement, later expanded with the clarifier, "*Says who? Says who? The dictator, the dictator*!" At Dhaka University, hundreds of women broke the night locks of their student dormitory to join the protests.[35]

Image 1: Student protesters on 7 July 2024 in Dhaka.
Image credit: permission on file[36]

35. In response to the students' *razakar* chants, several government ministers signalled publicly that the time to tolerate the students' peaceful protests had passed. On 14 July, then Minister of Education Mohibul Chowdhury stated that "*it is not possible for this state to respect these traitors,*" while also describing the protesters as "*the razakars of this era*." The then State Minister of Information Mohammad Arafat proclaimed that "*no demands will be accepted from those who want to become razakars*." Similarly, the then Minister for Social Welfare Dipu Moni indicated that "*those who introduce themselves as razakars have no right to march with that flag [of Bangladesh] on their foreheads*."[37]

3. Mobilization of Chhatra League, Police and paramilitary forces

36. From the evening of 14 July, senior Awami League officials, including the Awami League Secretary-General and Chhatra League President mobilized and incited Chhatra League supporters to carry out armed attacks on student protesters around several universities over the next two days.[38] Students carried on with their protests and often defended themselves against the Chhatra League, while, according to information provided to OHCHR, the Police consistently failed to intervene. One former senior official explained to OHCHR that "*based on the call of our [Awami League] Secretary-General, our students were supposed to confront the protesters. But what happened was unexpected, the students fought back*."[39]

37. As the Chhatra League alone lacked sufficient strength of numbers to suppress the growing protests, the Police assumed a more forceful role. In various locations in Dhaka and beyond, police used less-lethal weapons such as tear gas and rubber bullets, but also shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets, against protesters, while armed Awami League supporters launched assaults in support of the Police. At least six people were killed on 16 July alone.[40] Among them was Abu Sayed (Case 1).[41] Widely circulated footage of his killing mobilized more protesters, including many students at private universities.

38. Several days before the outbreak of generalized protests and related violent unrest, the Government had started to prepare for a much more militarized approach, as it reinforced the Police with paramilitary forces armed with military rifles. According to a former senior official, the then Prime Minister felt that if they deployed their "*heavy units then only the Jihadists will remain on the streets and other protesters would go home.*"[42]

39. RAB had already been deployed alongside the regular Police from 10 July. During the protests, it deployed all 15 of its battalions throughout the country. At least 14 Ansar/VDP Battalions were reportedly deployed there from 15 July. From 16 July, BGB was also deployed. During the protests, it deployed close to 4,000 border guards in 58 locations across the country. Also from 16 July, six Armed Police Battalions were deployed to reinforce different operations, based on directions from the Inspector-General of Police, and used shotguns and rifles. DGFI was also involved, deploying around 110 officers and 900 field staff for information collection, while another 140 officers and 1,000 staff were managing, processing and disseminating intelligence.[43] On 17 July, for example, RAB and BGB supported the Police in its violent suppression of a large, peaceful protest at Dhaka University (see Case 2). Far from dissuading the protesters, this only bolstered the protests' momentum.

40. To coordinate the various security and intelligence actors, direct their deployment, plan operations, and track the protests and efforts to supress them, the then Home Affairs Minister chaired regular meetings of a body known as the 'Core Committee,' which met at his residence on several evenings during the protests, according to participants and other senior officials.[44] Apart from the Minister himself, participants included the Inspector-General of Police, the Director-General's of BGB, RAB and Ansar/VDP, the heads of the intelligence services (DGFI, NSI, Police Special Branch and often also NTMC), the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner and, from 20 July, a senior general from the Bangladesh Army.[45] In parallel, Sheikh Hasina and several senior officials from her Prime Minister's Office regularly conferred in person and over the telephone with senior security officials to directly supervise and direct their operations, as interviews with former senior officials and call logs provided to OHCHR confirm.[46]

Militarization of policing in Bangladesh

Law enforcement in Bangladesh, including public order management, has seen an increasing involvement of agencies that are more militarized than the Bangladesh Police in terms of their procedures, training, weapons and equipment, and are commanded by military officers seconded from the Armed Forces. These agencies have been prone to readily use lethal force and engage in serious human rights violations. As one senior security sector official testified to OHCHR: "*They shoot differently: one bullet, one man dead*."[47]

The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), established in 2004 to fight serious crime and terrorism, is a paramilitary force composed of officers seconded from the Police, military and other security entities, and equipped with military firearms and helicopters. Although nominally directed by a police official, a seconded Army colonel has controlled RAB operations. Over the course of two decades, RAB established a legacy of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture and other serious violations targeting criminal suspects, opposition politicians, civil society figures and state officials seen as disloyal.[48]

The Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) is even more of a paramilitary force, rather than a civilian agency, in terms of its equipment. From the rank of major and up, it has been commanded by Bangladesh Army officers on secondment. While BGB's main task was control of border areas, the law also explicitly allowed its deployment for maintaining internal law and order. The former Government had continued to build up BGB's riot control capacity, albeit without equipping it with less-lethal weapons.[49] In 2013 and 2018, BGB was reportedly implicated in use of force violations against protesters, including extrajudicial killings.[50] The BGB's own Director-General told OHCHR that the BGB was designed as a combat force and not suited for law enforcement.[51]

Image 2: BGB deployed at a protest at Dhaka University on 17 July 2024.
Image credit: permission on file.[52]

The Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party (Ansar/VDP) are also organized as a paramilitary force and commanded by seconded Army officers. Ansar has, however, often been deployed in law enforcement tasks, such as reinforcing regular police or guarding government buildings.

Going beyond its military intelligence role, the Directorate-General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) became a large-scale apparatus that engages in non-military matters such as gathering intelligence for law enforcement and engaging in surveillance of civilians.[53] While it lacked legal powers of arrest, DGFI reportedly carried out abductions and enforced disappearances, and was also used to intimidate media, business leaders and others.[54] The National Security Intelligence (NSI), and the National Telecommunications Monitoring Centre (NTMC), the electronic surveillance

intelligence agency, were both headed by seconded Armed Forces generals and also provided intelligence to law enforcement.

During the period covered by this report, these agencies were under the direct control of the then Prime Minister and the then Home Affairs Minister, with no institutionalized parliamentary or independent oversight.[55] The Directors General of BGB, Ansar/VDP, NTMC and effectively also RAB, reported directly to the Home Affairs Minister. NSI reported directly to the Prime Minister, while DGFI reported directly to Sheikh Hasina in her capacity as Defence Minister. These control arrangements facilitated their use in serious violations for the benefit of the political party in power.

4. Complete shutdown campaign, generalization of protests and violent unrest

41. In an apparent attempt to mollify the protestors, on 16 July 2024, the former Government filed leave to appeal the High Court's quota decision that had originally triggered the protests. In a public address on the evening of 17 July, the then Prime Minister asked students to patiently await the Supreme Court decision. She further conveyed condolences for the loss of life on 16 July, and claimed that "*police cooperated to ensure the safety of our protesters.*"[56] The Prime Minister's address appeared insincere to protest leaders.[57] Students against Discrimination called for a "*complete shutdown*" of the country, elaborating that "*hospitals and emergency services will remain open, but no other institutions will operate, and no vehicles, except ambulances, will be allowed on the roads*."[58] The leadership of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami called on their followers to support the effort at shutdown.[59]

42. At this point, the Prime Minister designated relevant civilian senior officials to negotiate with the students, namely her Law Minister, Education Minister and State Minister of Information, in addition to the still ongoing efforts of the DGFI.[60] By that stage, however, the students were no longer amenable to negotiations, as they doubted the Government's good faith in light of the recent Chhatra League and police attacks upon them.[61]

43. From 18 July, the general population also took to the streets. Protesters sought to disrupt traffic on key roads. The security forces at this stage switched to a lethal force paradigm. They used rifles, pistols and shotguns, in addition to less-lethal weapons, to disperse peaceful, albeit often disruptive, protests, committing killings in Uttara (case 3) and many other places, while also actively obstructing medical care (case 8) for those injured.

44. As the crowds attending the protests became more heterogenous, some elements in the crowds attacked members of the police, transport infrastructure and government buildings, including the Bangladesh TV building. During the evening of 18 July, the Government ordered the BGB to use maximum force and imposed a complete Internet shutdown on the country that would last until 23 July. On 19 July, the BGB, police, RAB and others shot at crowds in Rampura and Badda (case 4) and in many other places in Dhaka and across the country but were unable to quell either peaceful protest or violent unrest. In the evening, the Prime Minister ordered a national curfew, effective from midnight, and deployed 27,000 Army soldiers.[62] On 20 and 21 July, the security forces carried out major operations, in which they fired military rifles and shotguns to disperse protests and unblock key roads, including a joint operation of Police, RAB, BGB and Army in Jatrabari (case 5) to clear the strategically important Dhaka-Chattogram highway.

5. Ebbing of protests and mass arrest campaign

45. On 21 July, a new Supreme Court decision capped the quota of public jobs reserved for the descendants of independence fighters at a much-reduced level of 5 percent. The Government quickly expressed its acceptance of the Court's view and publicly acknowledged the change. At that point, however, the student movement had already expanded its own demands to include the dismissal of the then Home Affairs Minister and several other senior

officials, as well as insistence on criminal accountability for police officers and Chhatra League supporters who had killed students.[63]

46. While street protests temporarily ebbed, the security forces carried out a mass arrest campaign against students, opposition supporters and others suspected of involvement in the protests, who were often detained without evidence of criminal wrongdoing and in many cases subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment. The authorities arrested and detained six prominent student leaders, according to testimony from senior officials. On 28 July, the head of Detective Branch sparked public outrage when he published a video recording of a coerced statement, in which the six detained student leaders denounced the protests.[64]

47. Then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited a vandalized metro station (25 July) and the burned Bangladesh TV building (26 July), spoke with injured patients at several hospitals where many injured by police and BGB shootings were being treated (26 July), and invited families of killed students to her residence (28 July). On these occasions, she publicly placed all blame for the violence and loss of life on opposition parties.[65]

48. On 26 July, the BNP publicly called for "national unity" among all democratic political parties, social and cultural organizations and other forces, and for them to unite in demanding the fall of the Government.[66] On 30 July, the Government decided to ban Jamaat-e-Islami and associated organisations.[67]

49. All these events contributed to the reignition of mass protests and violent unrest at the beginning of August 2024.

6. Renewed mass protests forcing Sheikh Hasina's departure

50. When protests reignited, the protest movement coalesced around a new, single demand: the resignation of then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Government. Extensive force, including lethal force, was used in response. Concerns related to the security forces' use of force were personally relayed by a senior security sector official and a member of Cabinet to the Prime Minister at the beginning of August.[68]

51. The Army continued to be deployed on the streets, but support among officers and troops for using force against protesters was waning. On 3 August, Army Chief Wakar-uz-Zaman convened a large Army meeting, where junior officers informed him that they did not wish to shoot at protesters.[69]

52. The protest movement planned a mass march into central Dhaka for 5 August (see "March on Dhaka," case 6). On 4 August, the then Prime Minister chaired a meeting of the National Security Council in which the chiefs of Army, BGB, Police, intelligence agencies, and the Ministers of Home Affairs, Education and Foreign Affairs participated, among others. They discussed reimposing a curfew and enforcing it to prevent the march on Dhaka. A second meeting was held in the late evening of 4 August at the Prime Minister's residence. It was attended, among others, by the Minister of Home Affairs, the heads of the Armed Forces, Police, RAB, and BGB. During the meeting, the Army Chief and other security officials reassured the Prime Minister that Dhaka could be held. A plan was agreed according to which Army and BGB would deploy alongside police to block protesters from accessing central Dhaka, if necessary, by force.[70] On 5 August, hundreds of thousands of protesters marched towards central Dhaka. Police and armed Awami League supporters fired at protesters in many locations. The Army and BGB largely stood by and let protesters march, although soldiers did shoot on at least one occasion, namely at Jamuna Future Park (case 7).

53. In the late morning, the Army Chief told the then Prime Minister that the Army would not be able to prevent protesters from reaching her residence.[71] At around 2pm, Sheikh Hasina was flown out of Dhaka by Armed Forces helicopter and then out of the country. Shortly after, protesters stormed her official residence.

54. As Sheikh Hasina was leaving the country, the Army Chief delivered a speech announcing her departure. He promised to appoint an Interim Government and "*bring justice for all the murders,*" while also pleading with protesters not to "*go back to the path of*

violence."[72] Despite this, violent mobs engaged in revenge violence against the Police, Awami League members, media outlets and others perceived as affiliated with the Awami League. Some individuals and groups also engaged in violent abuses against members of distinct religious and indigenous groups.

55. On 6 August 2024, the Army leadership acceded to the student movement's demand to appoint Dr Muhammad Yunus as Chief Advisor to lead the Interim Government, which is composed of prominent civil society leaders, including student protest leaders, lawyers, academics and former government officials.

IV. Estimate of protest-related deaths and injuries, including killings by state forces

56. At the time of the finalisation of this report, the Ministry of Health had recorded 841 deaths related to the protests, among them 10 women, and an additional 12,272 injuries, including 394 suffered by women and four by persons listed as "other."[73] This data is likely incomplete as medical staff were often overwhelmed by the influx of dead and injured, such that a number of cases were not properly recorded.[74] A number of patients also provided no or false names, or were treated without registration to avoid arrests and reprisals by the authorities.[75] Many families quickly collected the bodies of their loved ones to prevent an autopsy and ensure a quick burial, for religious reasons, and out of fear of reprisals for being associated with the protests. In some cases, the health authorities were intimidated to stop them from registering protest-related deaths and injuries. In other cases, the police collected bodies, including of unidentified victims, and it is unclear to what extent the bodies were later handed over to morgues and duly reported to the health authorities.[76]

57. Information provided through the Interim Government also indicates that the Ministry of Health data is incomplete, in particular data on protest-related deaths. Based on intelligence it had gathered and open-source information, National Security Intelligence (NSI), one of the Government's intelligence agencies, provided OHCHR with the names and dates of death for 314 people killed during the protest who, according to NSI, were not included in the Ministry of Health data. These include 40 children between four and 17 years of age (13 percent of the total).[77]

58. To arrive at a more complete estimate of deaths, OHCHR compared the Ministry of Health data with detailed lists of reported deaths compiled by other sources, including civil society organisations, and removed duplicates. Based on this data, OHCHR assesses that there could have been as many as 1,400 protest-related deaths, including at least 13 women, for the period of 15 July to 5 August.

59. The underlying data, including the Ministry of Health data, is unfortunately not consistently disaggregated by age. However, the ratio of children among those killed as per the NSI data (13 percent) tallies with a second much larger sample of deaths received confidentially from another credible source, according to which 12 percent of those killed were children (118 out of 986 reported deaths recorded by that source).[78]

60. OHCHR has not corroborated the reports underlying each of these deaths; nor can it be presumed that each of these deaths can be attributed to the State or amount to an extrajudicial killing. However, as elaborated below, the vast majority of deaths appear to have been caused by firearms, including military rifles and shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets, which are commonly used only by Bangladesh's police, paramilitary and military forces.

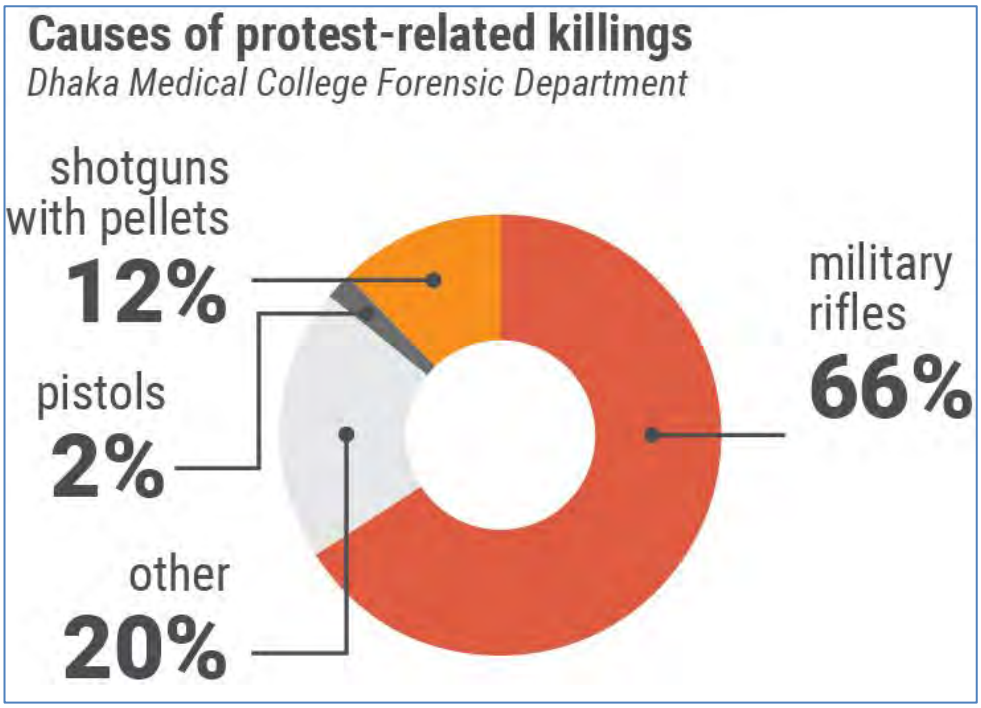
61. Forensic medical information provided by the Dhaka Medical College Forensic Medicine Department, based on its forensic examination of 130 deaths, indicates that more than three quarters (78 percent) of all deaths (which would equate to well over a thousand of OHCHR's estimate of 1,400 overall deaths) were caused by firearms typically wielded by state security forces and not readily available to civilians in Bangladesh. This data indicates that about two thirds (66 percent) of deaths were caused by bullets fired from high powered military automatic and semi-automatic rifles that are the standard issue of BGB, RAB, Army, Ansar/VDP Battalions, and Armed Police Battalions and which were also used by regular

police during the protests.[79] Another 12 percent of deaths were caused by shotguns loaded with cartridges containing lethal metal pellets (conforming to industry standard 'No. 8 metal shot'), another weapon widely used by Bangladesh Police and also Ansar/VDP.[80] These figures are corroborated by another, larger sample of reported deaths and their causes provided by a credible, confidential source.[81]

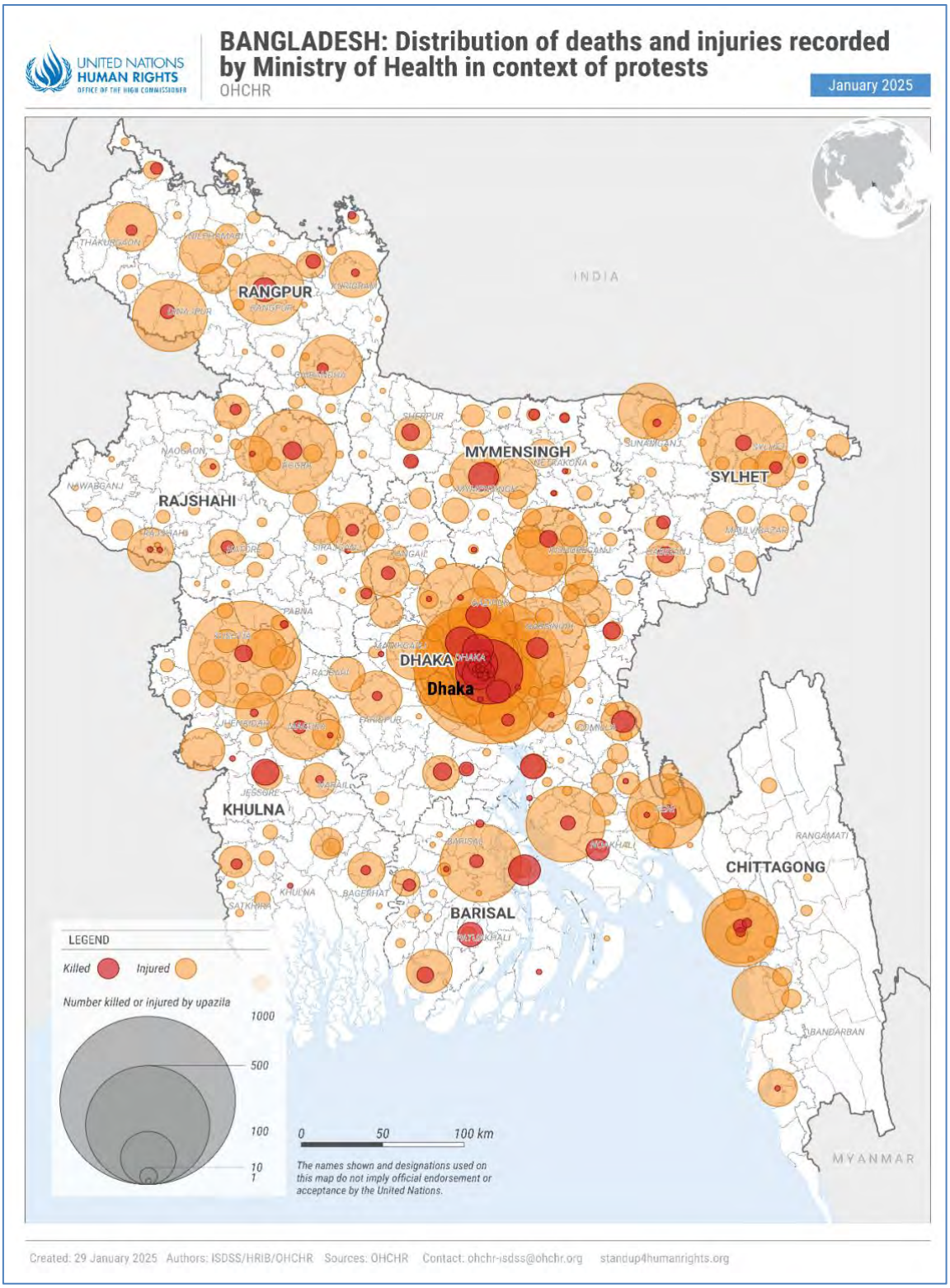
62. Furthermore, these figures tally with other information gathered and analysed by the OHCHR forensic physician and the OHCHR weapons expert showing that victims with bullet wounds were typically struck by projectiles conforming to the standard military issue 7.62x39mm lethal ammunition for rifles that are manufactured by the Bangladesh Ordnance Factory. In some cases, special armour-piercing ammunition of the 7.62mm calibre was found to have been used against unarmed civilians. This is a type of ammunition designed for use in combat situations against persons wearing body armour and not for law enforcement applications. It would normally be available only to the Army or paramilitary forces such as BGB and RAB. This ammunition is not available for civilian purchase in Bangladesh.

63. In video footage and images captured during the protests, Bangladesh Police, BGB, RAB, Ansar/VDP and Army members can be seen wielding SKS, Type 56 and BD-08 rifles that use this calibre of ammunition. These rifles are also produced in the Bangladesh Ordnance Factory.[82]

64. Where firearms were used by civilians, perpetrators were mostly seen with pistols and revolvers, submachine guns, homemade firearms and commercial sporting shotguns. In some cases, especially in early August, civilians were also observed firing tactical shotguns and semi-automatic rifles. Deaths from firearms used by civilians would constitute only a small minority of firearm-related deaths.[83]



Forensic examinations of 130 cases of deaths related to the protests conducted by Dhaka Medical College Forensic Department indicate that more than three quarters of all deaths were caused by firearms commonly used by government forces. **Image Credit:** OHCHR.



Ministry of Health data shows that killings and injuries occurred all over the country. **Image credit:** OHCHR.

V. Violations and abuses during the protests

65. OHCHR has concluded, on the basis of the full range of materials before it, that between 15 July and 5 August 2024, the former Government and its security and intelligence apparatus, together with violent elements linked to the Awami League, engaged systematically in serious human rights violations and abuses in a coordinated effort to suppress the protest movement.

66. Initially, law enforcement officers utilized tear gas, rubber bullets, sound and stun grenades[84] and shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets, which already resulted in serious human rights violations, including the extrajudicial killing of Abu Sayed, who was shot and killed by shotgun pellets despite not posing an imminent threat. As protests grew, the level of force employed quickly intensified to more lethal measures. Security forces employed military rifles and engaged in indiscriminate shooting of peaceful protesters and bystanders, leading to hundreds of fatalities.

67. The former Government's response to protests became increasingly militarized, with BGB and RAB paramilitary forces joining the police in indiscriminately firing at crowds and using disproportionate lethal force against them. Children were among the victims of extrajudicial killings by the security forces. The extent and nature of the patterns of unlawful[85] use of firearms documented by OHCHR suggest that a large percentage of killings and injuries that appear to be attributable to state security forces (see previous section) violated international human rights law. As a result, state security forces were responsible for hundreds of extrajudicial killings and thousands of violations of the right to security of person committed during the period of mid-July until 5 August.

68. In at least three cases investigated by OHCHR, Bangladesh Army personnel fired rifles at protesters posing no threat and committed at least one extrajudicial killing in one of these cases. Army units also supported operations in which police and other security forces committed extrajudicial killings and other serious violations.

69. Armed Chhatra League and other Awami League supporters carried out attacks with blunt weapons, machetes and firearms on protesters, incited by senior officials and often undertaken jointly with the Police.

70. As police and security forces continued to violently suppress protests, medical assistance for injured protesters was routinely not ensured, or even denied. Eyewitnesses accounts corroborated by video evidence revealed that the Police, including its Detective Branch, the DGFI and NSI intelligence agencies and Awami League supporters actively obstructed medical care, including by blocking ambulances, deploying at hospitals to collect information about protesters, arresting patients in need of urgent care and intimidating medical staff. Intelligence and security agencies, including the DGFI and NSI, raided hospitals, seized medical records, and pressured staff to falsify reports or deny treatment. This deliberate obstruction of medical care exacerbated injuries and is likely to have led to preventable deaths.

71. Between 15 July and 5 August, the Police, including its Detective Branch and RAB, arbitrarily arrested and detained thousands of protesters, students, opposition activists, workers and even children. Arrests were made during block raids conducted jointly with the Army. Other arrests targeted injured persons or were guided by information provided by the Detective Branch, DGFI, NSI, and NTMC. In one high profile case, DGFI and the Detective Branch colluded to arbitrarily detain six student protest leaders. The Detective Branch, other Police and DGFI, tortured detainees, including with beatings, electric shocks and threats of execution, to coerce confessions, extract information or intimidate dissenters. Many detainees, particularly those arrested during mass raids, were denied access to legal counsel and were arbitrarily held for prolonged periods without being brought before a judge.

72. DGFI, NSI, the Detective Branch and other Police actively sought to conceal violations by intimidating journalists, while NTMC and BTRC implemented ministerial orders to impose arbitrary Internet shutdowns serving the same purpose. Such shutdowns were implemented without lawful justification or due process, stifled the organization of protests on social media and made it more difficult for activists, journalists, and the general

public to share evidence of the State's violent actions. Six journalists were also killed during the protests and at least 200 injured.

73. Female protesters were subjected to additional sexual and gender-based violence, including gender-based physical violence, and, in some documented cases, rape threats and physical sexual assault by Awami League supporters. Some women were also arbitrarily detained, tortured and otherwise ill-treated. This appeared principally directed at intimidating women from participating in the protests and undermining their role in the movement.

74. Police and other security forces also subjected children to extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrest, detention in inhumane conditions, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, including deliberate maiming.

75. Taken together over the relevant period of time, these patterns of violations disclose a systematic and widespread use of unlawful force, obstruction of medical care, arbitrary arrests, denial of due process and, in some cases, gender-based violence as tools the Government used to suppress dissent and protest. These violations were not isolated incidents, but part of a broader strategy to quell protests, intimidate the public, and prevent political and civic opposition from organizing itself to challenge the political status quo.

1. Incited violence by armed Awami League supporters

76. In an initial attempt to violently suppress students' rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, and in violation of their right to security of person, senior government officials belonging to the Awami League incited armed violence by violent individuals among the members and supporters of the Chhatra League, who were often aided by other violent Awami League supporters. The attackers were consistently allowed to act with impunity by authorities.

77. Based on first-hand testimonies from victims and witnesses and image and videos analysis, OHCHR could ascertain that, as protests expanded, a broad array of armed Awami League supporters acted jointly, or in close coordination, with the Police against protesters, using extensive, unlawful violence supporting the Government's efforts to suppress the protests.

Chhatra League attacks on and around university premises

78. From 14 to 17 July 2024, when protests occurred mainly on or near university campuses, violent individuals among Chhatra League supporters, at times joined by other Awami League supporters, carried out attacks with blunt and sharp weapons, and some firearms, against male and female student protesters.

79. These attacks were incited by senior Awami League and government officials. During the night from 14 to 15 July, Awami League supporters, some of them armed with sharp and blunt weapons according to eyewitness testimony, were transported to Dhaka University and established an intimidating presence around campus.[86] At around 03:00 that night, Chhatra League President Saddam Hussain addressed these supporters at Raju Memorial Statue and stated: "*From Monday [15 July], there will be no razakar on the streets of Bangladesh. This is a clear directive to leaders in every district, city, university, and educational institution, those who seek to create anarchy or mock the martyrs will be dealt with on the streets*."[87] On 15 July, Awami League Secretary-General and Government Minister Obaidul Quader stated that students had "*been arrogant. We are ready to take action.*"[88] He added: "*Chhatra League is ready to respond to the remarks by several quota reform movement leaders. Students chanting slogans related to the identity of razakars on Dhaka University campus is like an audacity to our national sentiment. We will resist any evil force against the spirit of the liberation war with an iron hand.*"[89] Earlier, other government ministers had already added statements that branded the student protesters as traitors or *razakars* with no right to protest, building on the then Prime Minister's introduction of the term in relation to the student protests.[90]

80. In interviews with OHCHR, some former senior officials asserted that these statements were mere "*political rhetoric,"* while other former senior officials expressly

distanced themselves from them, with one former Cabinet member specifically describing Obaidul Quader's statement as a "*mistake,*" acknowledging that "*this should not have been said.*"[91] No Awami League and Chhatra League leaders or other former officials interviewed by OHCHR could point to any public statements or other directives, in which the Awami League leadership sought to walk back or otherwise resile or dissociate itself from these statements, nor to any call on the Chhatra League or other Awami League supporters to stop using violence. This was despite acknowledgement by some of these interviewees that the Awami League in fact had the ability to control when and where armed supporters would deploy, e.g., by calling on them to defend Awami League offices from attacks by rioters.[92]

81. OHCHR was able to attribute a series of attacks on student protesters, which occurred right after the Awami League officials' remarks inciting violence, directly to members and supporters of the Chhatra League. Some witnesses to the cases set out below identified Chhatra League leaders or individual members among the attackers. The attackers often also chanted slogans associated with the Chhatra League. Eyewitness testimony, videos and photos showed that they brandished weapons, wore motorbike helmets, and deployed organized tactics of violence in a way that resembled Chhatra League attacks on past occasions.

82. Chhatra League supporters regularly initiated violence against student protesters. It was often apparent that Chhatra League supporters did not spontaneously engage in violence but had specifically brought along weapons to sites of confrontation and positioned themselves in advance to attack student protesters. However, attacks often turned into fights as some student protesters defended themselves with bricks, sticks and other make-shift weapons. In many cases, protesters outnumbered the Chhatra League attackers, allowing them to prevail in confrontations. In certain instances, clashes also broke out after mutual provocations, or when some student protesters engaged in violence in retaliation for earlier attacks.[93]

83. In the late evening of 14 July 2024, students held a procession on Jahangirnagar University campus, chanting slogans such as "*I asked for rights, I became a razakar*." Later that night, they were attacked by Chhatra League supporters, armed with metal bars and wooden branches. Several male and female students were injured. Several female students were subjected to verbal threats of sexual violence. The next night, a large group of additional Awami League supporters, wearing helmets and armed with cleavers, knives and firearms, were brought in vehicles to the campus, where students were holding a sit-in protest. Students moved in front of the Vice Chancellor's residence to seek protection but were attacked there. Chhatra League and Awami League supporters blocked the gate of the residence and trapped the students inside, before throwing bricks and petrol bombs at them. Terrified students pleaded with the Vice Chancellor to open the residence's door, but they were not let in. The police arrived but made no attempt to stop the violence.[94]

84. During the night from 14 to 15 July, at around 01:30, Chhatra League supporters armed with knives, long rods and sticks carried out an apparently premeditated attack against students protesting at Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur. Several students were injured and two had to be hospitalized. Later in the day, Chhatra League supporters, by then reinforced by other armed Awami League supporters, carried out further attacks against student protesters.[95]

85. On 15 July, the Chhatra League, led by its national President, and Students against Discrimination protesters staged competing protests at Dhaka University. An initial clash occurred in front of Bijoy Ekattor Hall in the early afternoon, when some of the student protesters moved towards the Hall in a procession. An exchange of verbal taunts soon escalated. Chhatra League supporters threw bricks, stones, and bottles from the Hall, while protesters outside threw similar objects. Shortly after, student protesters entered Ziaur Rahman Hall to free fellow protesters that were being held forcibly there by Chhatra League supporters. Meanwhile, Chhatra League supporters, armed with machetes, axes, sticks, motorbike helmets for protection and some pistols, strategically positioned themselves around campus in preparation of a major attack. Anticipating the attack, some student protesters armed themselves with sticks, pipes and bamboo rods. Shortly after 15:00, Chhatra League supporters indiscriminately attacked student protesters, including those who had remained entirely peaceful until then. Female protesters were struck with sticks, crudely

insulted and threatened with rape. Protesters could not flee as Chhatra League supporters took position around key exits; many defended themselves by force. While some police arrived on the scene around 15:30, they made no meaningful effort to quell the violence or to protect students, so that violence continued until late into the afternoon.[96]

Images 3 and 4: Chhatra League supporters participating in the attacks of 15 July at Dhaka University. **Image credit:** permission on file, enhanced by OHCHR digital forensics.[97]

86. A large number of injured student protesters, and also several Chhatra League supporters, sought medical care at the nearby Dhaka Medical College Hospital. In the early evening, hundreds of Chhatra League supporters, some brandishing weapons, forced their way into the hospital. They stormed emergency units and attacked injured students and medical personnel. Several students suffered additional fractures, head wounds, and extensive bruising. Female students also endured verbal and physical intimidation, and some Chhatra League supporters explicitly threatened them with sexual violence.[98] On 16 July, student protesters retaliated by violently ousting Chhatra League supporters from Dhaka University dormitories.[99]

87. At the all-women Eden Mohila College, Chhatra League supporters threatened students not to join the protests. On 14 July, some Chhatra League supporters poured hot water on female students, injuring them, as they headed towards the protests at Dhaka University. On the morning of 15 July 2024, more women from Eden College prepared to join the protests, when they were attacked by a group of about 50 female and male Chhatra League supporters. Several male Chhatra League supporters beat and kicked the women. One victim was placed in intensive care at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, only to find herself attacked again there by Chhatra League.[100]

88. On 16 July, around mid-day, thousands of students protested in the Science Lab area, near Dhaka College. A prepositioned group of Chhatra League supporters and affiliated local workers, armed with pipes, sticks, machetes and some wearing helmets, charged protesters and attacked them with their weapons to disperse them. Students responded with bricks and other makeshift weapons and were able to stand their ground due to their superiority in numbers. The clash continued for several hours with no police intervening.[101] Around the same time, Chhatra League supporters, a dozen among them armed with small pistols, opened fire on students protesting at Bahadur Shah Park in Old Dhaka. At least four students suffered gunshot injuries.[102] In the aftermath of these violent altercations, Dhaka Medical College Hospital witnessed a surge in admissions of protestors suffering from blunt trauma, gunshot injuries, and sharp weapon wounds. The hospital also recorded two deaths, including a 25-year-old man who was reportedly an Awami League supporter.[103]

Coordinated attacks by armed Awami League supporters and the Police

89. As the protests went on, the state security forces increasingly integrated armed Awami League supporters into their efforts to quell the protests.[104] These also included members of the Awami Jubo League, which is nominally the Awami League's youth wing but also includes many middle-aged men who engage in violence.

90. In many operations, armed Awami League supporters lined up along with the police or sheltered behind police lines, before launching attacks timed to support the Police's own efforts to violently disperse the protests. Awami League supporters also stopped and searched people, apprehended protesters and handed them over to the police in an organized, seemingly prearranged fashion. Jatrabari Police Station even had armed Awami League supporters staying there, according to an inside source.[105] This cooperation was facilitated by the politicization of the Police under the former Government, which created deep links between Awami League, Chhatra League and the Police.[106]

91. As protests became more generalized from 18 July, and especially also in early August, armed Awami League supporters mounted large attacks of their own, including with firearms. In this regard, the current Inspector-General of Police informed OHCHR that there had been many anomalies in the issuance of firearms licenses to Awami League and Chhatra League supporters and that many of them had used these firearms for illegal purposes against protesters.[107] Bangladesh Police provided OHCHR with the names and functions of 95 members of the Police, Awami League or Awami League-affiliated organisations whom the Police considered having provided weapons to citizens for use in violent attacks during the protests, including 10 persons who were members of parliament at the time, 14 local Awami League leaders, 16 Jubo League leaders, 16 Chhatra League leaders and 7 members of the Police. The Police also provided the names and functions of 160 Awami League-affiliated political leaders at the national and local level and security sector officials whom the Police considered having incited or ordered violent attacks by citizens against other citizens.[108]

92. Awami League supporters' attacks were consistently carried out in alignment with, and in support of, the security forces' own efforts to suppress the protest movement. Awami League local party leaders and government officials, including members of parliament, led some of these attacks.[109] Based on first-hand testimony, corroborated by videos and other sources, OHCHR was able to document a number of cases around the country.

93. On 19 July, armed Awami League supporters, reportedly led by Awami League officials, shot at protesters near Crescent Hospital in Uttara.[110] The same day, several hundred Awami League supporters, led by a local Awami League official, carried out an attack at Muzahid Nogor Central Mosque in Rayerbag. Two elderly men were killed. Others at the mosque mounted a fierce defence, and some 80 people were reportedly injured, with three persons dying in the clashes.[111] Also on 19 July, Jubo League supporters joined the Police's violent efforts to prevent protesters from peacefully forming a human chain near Parliament, including by Jubo League supporters beating up the protest's main speaker.[112]

94. On 2 August, armed Jubo League supporters attacked protesters in front of Milestone College in support of broader police efforts to violently disperse protests in Uttara. Several women among the victims were hit with iron bars or pistols.[113]

95. On 3 August, armed Chhatra League and other Awami League supporters armed with firearms, machetes and iron rods organized into several attack formations of about 60 men each and attacked a group of male and female protesters in Cumilla. Large numbers of protesters were injured, while seven suffered gunshot wounds. Police made no efforts to intervene. The next day, armed Awami League supporters carried out similar attacks, while also firing from buildings in the area.[114]

96. On 4 August, police and Awami League supporters armed with firearms, among them a member of Parliament, fired lethal ammunition at largely peaceful protesters in Ashulia, Savar district. Three children and four men suffered gunshot injuries.[115] The same day, armed Awami League supporters, led by another member of Parliament, launched an apparently coordinated attack with the police on protesters in Mirpur, including by firing at them from nearby buildings with lethal ammunition. One victim survived a shot to the groin, while another man was shot in the head.[116]

97. On 5 August, protesters in Khulna District were shot at from the house of a local Awami League leader. Seventeen people, including a victim interviewed by OHCHR, suffered gunshot injuries.[117]

2. Use of force violations by Police, RAB and BGB, including extrajudicial killings

98. Based on the material before it, OHCHR has reasonable grounds to believe that police and paramilitary state security forces resorted to use of force violations against protesters, including systematic and widespread extrajudicial killings as part of a coordinated strategy of repression. According to international human rights law, law enforcement agents and other security forces deployed to police protests may only use the minimum force necessary to achieve a legitimate purpose and that force must be proportional. They must also seek to de-escalate situations that might result in violence. Only in exceptional cases may an assembly be dispersed: if the assembly as such is no longer peaceful, or if there is clear evidence of an imminent threat of serious violence that cannot be reasonably addressed by more proportionate measures such as targeted arrests. An assembly that remains peaceful while nevertheless causing a high level of disruption, notably due to extended blocking of traffic, may be dispersed only if the disruption is serious and sustained. If the use of less-lethal weapons becomes necessary, force that causes more than negligible injury should not be used against protesters who are passively resisting. Tear gas, sound grenades and other weapons with wide area impact may only be deployed after giving protesters a verbal warning and adequate time and opportunity to disperse. Tear gas should not be used in confined spaces. Firearms must never be used simply to disperse an assembly. It is never lawful to fire indiscriminately when policing an assembly. Any use of firearms by law enforcement officials in the context of assemblies must be limited to the strictly necessary level and only targeted at those individuals who pose an imminent threat of death or serious injury. Law enforcement officials may only use intentionally lethal force with firearms if it is strictly necessary in order to protect life from an imminent threat.[118] The use of force and firearms by the Police and the RAB and BGB paramilitary forces during the period of 15 July and 5 August systematically failed to adhere to these legal principles, in violation of the rights to life and security of the person.

99. The protest movement strategically sought to create lasting disruption through its road blockades and urban shutdowns, especially from 18 July onwards, and some elements in the crowds initiated acts of violence targeting public buildings, transport installations and the police. Such actions may have justified a measured and carefully targeted use of proportionate force in particular instances. However, this was not the approach that the security forces followed. Based on extensive victim and witness testimony collected in key protest hotspots in Dhaka and other parts of the country, supplemented by analysis of videos and photos, medical forensics and weapons analysis, OHCHR found recurring patterns of security forces using force and firearms in violation of international human rights law. In some situations, police and security forces used force with the aim of directly suppressing the right of protesting crowds to peaceful assembly. In others, they tried to disperse disruptive, yet peaceful assemblies with disproportionate force, in particular by shooting military rifles and shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets. The security forces repeatedly used firearms disproportionally against persons engaged in riot or vandalism who posed no imminent threat of death or serious injury. In the most consequential cases in terms of casualties, they shot firearms indiscriminately at mixed crowds consisting of peaceful protesters, vandals, violent rioters and bystanders. In some cases, documented by OHCHR below, security forces deliberately killed or maimed defenceless protesters by shooting them at point blank range.

Unlawful force, including firearms, to suppress the right of peaceful assembly

100. Less-lethal weapons and firearms loaded with lethal ammunition were unlawfully used against protesters to suppress their right of peaceful assembly. In a number of cases, less-lethal weapons were used in ways that would increase their propensity to severely injure, such as tear gas being deployed in confined spaces or sound grenades detonated directly within crowds. In many cases, there was also an escalatory cycle of violence. Security forces used unlawful force against peaceful protesters, who defended themselves with bricks, sticks and makeshift weapons.[119] This resulted in the security forces using even more unlawful force, including by switching from less-lethal weapons to firearms loaded with lethal ammunition, or further increasing the intensity of their firing.

101. OHCHR also documented cases where individual protesters were killed with targeted shots even though they posed no threat. The extrajudicial killing of Abu Sayed, which occurred on 16 July already, is a particular case in point.

Case 1: Extrajudicial Killing of Abu Sayed at Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur (16 July)

Twenty-three-year-old Abu Sayed was the youngest among five brothers and three sisters. The first in his family to attend university, he took part in the quota movement from its very beginning.

On 16 July, thousands of school and university students (3,000-4,000 according to Police estimates) demonstrated around Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur. Tensions increased as a large group of students gathered at the University's Gate One. According to the Police's own report to OHCHR, clashes broke out between Chhatra League supporters and protesters when the protesters tried to forcefully enter through the gate of the university, and police "*started firing gas shells and blank bullets to disperse the students and crowd.*" The Police further stated, with respect to Abu Sayed specifically, that he was grievously injured and later died at Rangpur Medical College Hospital, with his cause of death reported as "*head injury and gunshot injury*."[120]

Based on reliable and consistent victim and witness accounts and videos, OHCHR has reasonable grounds to believe direct police involvement in, and responsibility for, his killing. Police, in cooperation with Chhatra League supporters, attacked students with batons and sticks. Abu Sayed was among those beaten according to witnesses. The police also fired tear gas and shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets at the protesters. Several students were injured by the shooting, including one protester who was partially blinded.[121] When police started shooting at the crowd, Abu Sayed raised his hands. Videos and eyewitness testimony showed that, while he was holding a bamboo pole in one hand, he did not pose any threat to officers positioned approximately 14-15 meters away. According to eyewitnesses interviewed by OHCHR ,when he shouted at police, "*shoot me*," two police officers shot him multiple times with shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets and aimed directly at his torso.[122] OHCHR examined publicly available videos and images of the shooting, which were originally posted on social media and enhanced by OHCHR digital forensics, to corroborate the testimonies and reconstruct how the killing occurred.[123]

Image 5 shows that Abu Sayed opened his arms and posed no threat when police shot him.

Image 6 is extracted from videos showing that at least two different police officers shot at Abu Sayed.

Geolocation based on image 7 shows that the distance between police and Abu Sayed was about 14-15 m.
Image credit: Google Earth, enhanced by OHCHR digital forensics.

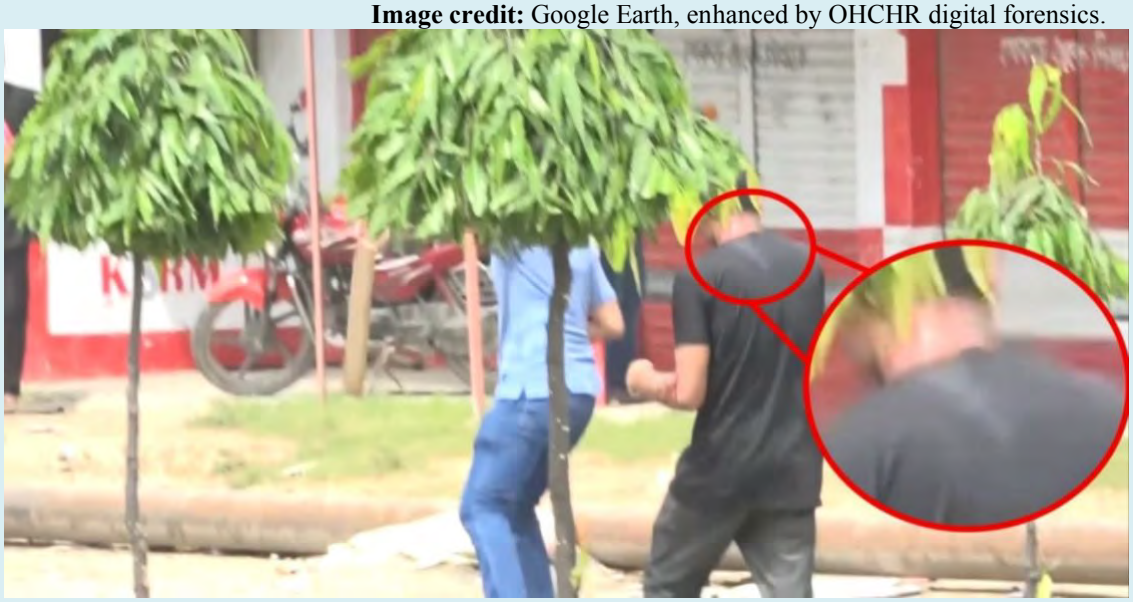


Image 8 shows red coloured lines on his neck and what appear to be blood stains on his shirt.

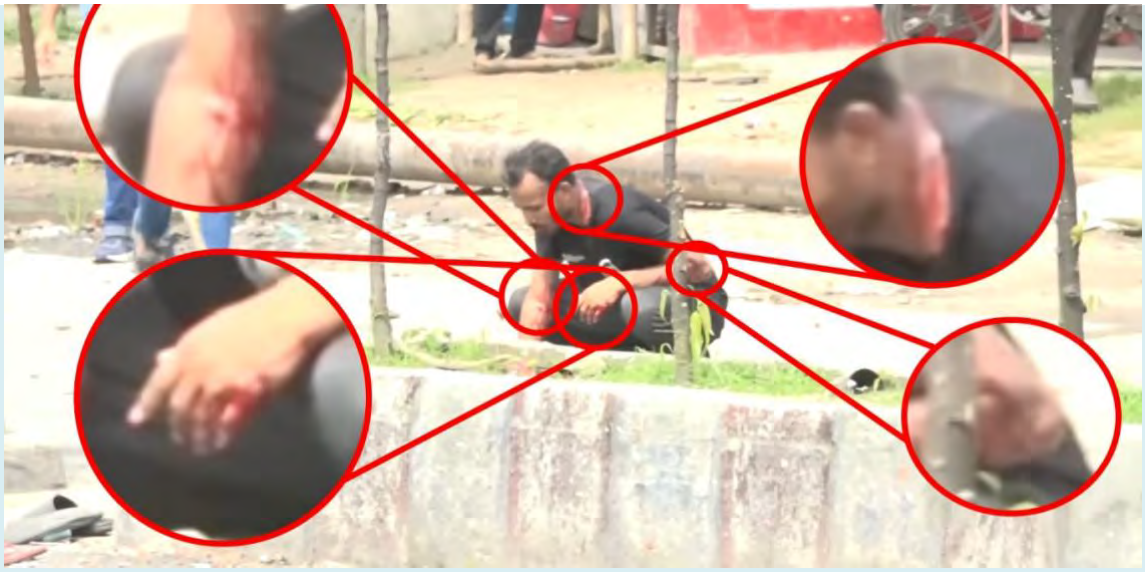


Image 9 shows multiple injuries on his body, including his hand, arms, elbow and neck.

Image 10 shows Abu Sayed spitting out what appears to be blood after he was shot, which corroborates medical information that the shots penetrated his neck and lungs and caused internal bleeding.

According to a witness, Abu Sayed was taken to hospital where a medical professional later assessed that the pellets might have entered Abu Sayed's lungs, causing internal bleeding.[124]

OHCHR's forensic physician examined the medical records available for Abu Sayed's case and found that no proper autopsy conforming to international forensic standards had been performed. The physician's own examination of the medical evidence, including photos of the body, found shotgun wounds, with at least forty metal pellets on the right side of his chest and fifty on the left, including areas around the heart, lungs and abdomen. The forensic analysis concluded that the type and distribution of injuries were consistent with Abu Sayed having been shot at least twice with shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets from a distance of approximately 14 meters. Forensic analysis of the video footage indicated that Abu Sayed being shot led to visible bleeding from his neck, chest, and arms, followed by signs of hypovolemia and dizziness. The analysis found no sign of any severe head injuries that would support an alternative cause of death such as Abu Sayed's head hitting the ground while being carried away to hospital. Despite the absence of a proper autopsy, the documented wounds and the related video footage support the conclusion that Abu Sayed was killed by lethal metal pellets resulting from at least two shots.[125]

Based on the information obtained and analysed, OHCHR has reasonable grounds to believe that Abu Sayed was the victim of a deliberate extrajudicial killing by the police.

Systematic indiscriminate use of shotguns loaded with lethal ammunition

Abu Sayed's extrajudicial killing by shotguns is emblematic of a larger trend of Bangladesh Police systematically firing short-barrelled, stockless shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets at protesters from the early stages of the protests until their very end.

The use of shotguns loaded metal pellets in public order management is not in line with international human rights law.[126] The wide radius of the spreading metal shot makes this combination of firearm and ammunition inherently indiscriminate when deployed in the presence of large numbers of people. They can also not be considered 'less-lethal' given that the pellets penetrate the human body, meaning they will often prove to be deadly. They may also cause blinding and other serious injuries with long-term consequences.

Medical forensic information obtained by OHCHR indicates that some 12 percent of all killings that occurred during the protests resulted from shotguns loaded with metal shot.[127] Thousands are likely to have suffered significant injuries, many with long-term consequences. Many victims were blinded by metal pellets or suffered other serious eye injuries. In Dhaka, the National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital alone treated 736 patients who suffered eye injuries in relation to the protests, 504 of whom required emergency operations. Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital treated 64 metal shot injuries, 36 of which concerned eye injuries.[128]

X-ray images 11 and 12 of victim who suffered eye, head and torso injuries from police firing metal pellet-loaded shotguns. **Image Credit:** Permission on file.[129]

In Bangladesh, shotguns are standard issue weapons in public order management. Police officers bearing them are deployed with ammunition cartridges containing up to two hundred 2-3mm metal pellets and with other cartridges filled with less-lethal ammunition consisting of six to eight larger rubber bullets.[130] In 2022 and 2023, the Police, with the authorization of the Home Affairs Ministry, ordered more than three million metal shot cartridges, more than double the number of rubber bullets ordered during the same period.[131] This is a strong indication of the high level of reliance on, and widespread use of, lethal metal shot by the Police.

Former senior officials explained that shotguns loaded with metal shot were not considered lethal weapons by law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh and could therefore be used when other, less-lethal weapons were ineffective, including to disperse protesters and to protect property against vandalism. They further indicated that ordinary police officers in the field had broad discretion to decide when to deploy metal shot and when to use rubber bullets.[132]

Building on these overly permissive directives, police routinely fired lethal metal pellets from their shotguns to disperse peaceful protesters, stop people from vandalizing property and indiscriminately shoot at mixed crowds of peaceful protesters and violent rioters. In some cases, there was a graduated use of force, where tear gas and rubber bullets were used first. In many other cases the police resorted straight away to firing lethal metal shots.

Videos often showed police firing multiple shotgun rounds in quick succession, pointing at the torso and head level of close-by crowds or, where crowds were further away, shooting at a slightly elevated angle to ensure that the metal pellets would still hit people over longer distances.[133] This mode of use increased the lethality of shotguns and their propensity to injure vital organs and cause blinding. This is also evidenced by forensic medical information provided to OHCHR showing that victims treated for pellet injuries had been mostly hit in the torso and head.[134]

102. Early on, before violent unrest erupted on any major scale, police were already ordered to use unlawful force to disperse peaceful assemblies in pursuance of the former Government's objective comprehensively to quell the protests. One emblematic example is the violent suppression of a major student protest at Dhaka University on 17 July.

Case 2: Suppression of peaceful assembly at Dhaka University (17 July)

On 17 July, Dhaka University students organized a major protest that commenced with ceremonial funeral prayers for Abu Sayed and others killed the previous day. A large number of regular police, reinforced by RAB and BGB members, armed with rifles, deployed against the protest. Additional police positioned outside the university premises forcibly prevented people from joining the protests, while Awami League supporters beat up and apprehended people before handing them over to the police to be arrested.

On the university grounds, security forces did not initially intervene at the beginning of the protest. However, in the afternoon, when students tried to march to the Raju Memorial Sculpture, police and BGB surrounded them and the police used tear gas and sound grenades, fired rubber bullets and attacked them with batons.[135] According to journalistic testimony at the scene, police fired some 100 rounds of tear gas within a span of around 40 minutes, causing many students to scramble to escape the toxic smoke burning their eyes, throats and skin.[136] One female student told OHCHR she was sitting down, feeling overwhelmed, when several police officers approached and kicked, slapped and verbally abused her.[137] The violent dispersal of the protest was carried out on orders coming from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police command, and senior officials were kept abreast of the operation.[138]

Images 13-16 taken at the Dhaka University protest of 17 July. **Image credit:** permission on file.[139]

Contrary to claims later advanced by the authorities[140], the protesters posed no imminent threat at the time. Instead, former senior officials indicated to OHCHR that orders forcibly to disperse the protesters before reaching the Raju Memorial were also given with the intention of preventing the overall protests from gaining larger political momentum.[141]

103. From 18 July onwards, as protests generalized and many protesters sought to disrupt public order by deliberately blocking key roads, the Police, RAB and BGB intensified efforts to put an end to the protests by firing military rifles at protesters, while continuing to use shotguns loaded with metal pellets and less-lethal weapons. OHCHR documented several cases of extrajudicial killings and other unlawful use of force, based on multiple victim and eyewitness accounts, corroborated by authenticated photos, videos, medical forensics and weapons analysis. One particular case, detailed below, documents the killing of Mir Mughdo and others in Uttara.

Case 3: Police, RAB and BGB extrajudicially killing protesters in Uttara (18 July)

Victim and eyewitness testimonies confirmed the use of disproportionate force by security forces to disperse students and other protesters around several locations in Uttara, including the BNS Centre, Azampur, Uttara East Police Station, and Milestone College.[142] On the morning of 18 July, police - reinforced by RAB, Armed Police Battalions, BGB, Ansar and armed Awami League supporters - prepositioned themselves at BNS Centre in Uttara, in anticipation of a major protest that was scheduled that morning. Clashes erupted at approximately 11:30 AM when police and RAB deployed tear gas, rubber bullets and sound grenades to disperse protesters.[143] One account described the situation as "*a combination of sound and smoke.*"[144] OHCHR also received multiple witness accounts of a police armoured vehicle driving at a group of protesters, while officers were shooting at the crowd from the vehicle.[145]

The situation escalated in the early afternoon. Witnesses described police and RAB firing lethal ammunition from military rifles from different locations at protesters.[146] Witnesses and images also confirm the police shooting from the rooftop of Uttara Police Station.[147] Hundreds of protesters suffered gunshot wounds, and several were shot dead. One nearby hospital recorded 91 injured patients and six deaths on that day, out of which five were students. Medical and ballistics information analysed by OHCHR confirmed that victims were shot with lethal ammunition commonly used by the police and RAB. Among those killed was Mir Mughdo, a 25-year-old student who had been distributing water to the protesters. He was shot in the head with lethal ammunition from a rifle towards the end of the afternoon. A video authenticated by OHCHR captured the time and location that Mir Mughdo was shot as approximately 17:50 on Rabindra Sarani Street.

In the same area around the same time, a protest leader was shot in the head. He survived but suffered severe long-term injuries. He was first hit by a sound grenade, then a metal pellet hit the

back of his head, and then two rifle bullets hit him in the face. He was hit in the eyebrow by one bullet, while a second bullet entered next to his nose and exited on the side of his head. The injuries resulted in 95 percent hearing loss in his right ear and a depressed fracture of the right occipital bone. He has irreversible nerve damage.[148]

OHCHR collected several other firsthand testimonies of students who sustained injuries to their eyes, abdomen, back and limbs.[149] One student was shot twice, suffering 42 metal pellet injuries in his upper leg. One pellet penetrated deeper into the skin tissue and was still inside his leg when he spoke to OHCHR about his ordeal. Forensic review of these victims' medical records confirmed that the wounds and scars sustained were caused by No. 8 metal pellets fired from a shotgun.[150] Another student was shot with metal pellets near Uttara East Police Station by a police officer. "*I thought he had shot me in my head, and that's why I could not see. I didn't imagine he shot me in my eye,*" he recounted.[151] The injury damaged his retina, lens and cornea. A third student was shot twice with lethal ammunition near the police station at around 17:30. The first shot injured his right arm, and the second struck his abdomen. He described difficulty breathing and his fear of not returning home. Medical records and photos reviewed by OHCHR's forensic physician indicate that the arm injury was caused by a bullet from a high-powered rifle.[152]

Image 17, taken at 13:00, shows individual shooting tear gas from roof of Uttara East Police Station.

Image 18, taken at 17:33, shows protesters approaching, while police are stationed on the roof of Uttara East Police Station and behind barricades on the highway, next to the police station.
Image credit: permission on file, enhanced by OHCHR digital forensics.[153]

104. OHCHR documented other cases that followed the same apparent pattern of security forces firing lethal ammunition at protesters who did not pose an imminent threat of death or serious injury. In some of these cases, security forces deliberately aimed at and killed protesters who were already injured and incapacitated, including children.

105. In Savar, protesters, some carrying sticks, sought to block an important intersection of the Dhaka-Aricha Highway. Police supported by the BGB were deployed in advance, presumably to prevent the road from being blocked. Awami League supporters armed with machetes, sticks and shotguns, among them local party leaders, lined up in front of the police. One of the local party leaders was armed with a pistol-calibre submachine gun that would ordinarily only be available to State forces. Initially, police fired teargas and rubber bullets and also shot in the air to disperse the protesters, while Awami League supporters assaulted protesters in support of police. After mid-day, protesters tried to regroup on the main roads and alleys around it. Videos and multiple victim and eyewitness accounts show how the police opened fire with shotguns loaded with lethal metal ammunition, severely injuring many protesters that posed no threat at the time.[154]

Images 19 and 20 show police firing at protesters in Savar posing no threat.
Image credit: permission on file.[155]

106. In Azimpur, police attacked peaceful protesters, jointly with armed Awami League supporters, who were led by a local official. Protest leaders were trying to negotiate with police to prevent violence. Without warning, however, police fired shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets at the crowd, injuring a dozen protesters, as established by eyewitness testimony and video footage. Among those struck by metal shot was a 17-year-old high school student. While he was injured on the ground, police officers approached and fired their shotguns from close range at his chest, killing him. Due to police obstruction, his family could not retrieve the body from the hospital for three days.[156]

107. In Rampura and Badda, thousands of students and local inhabitants demonstrated. Police and armed Chhatra League and other Awami League supporters carried out a series of coordinated attacks against them. At BRAC University, police launched tear gas and sound grenades at protesters on the confined university grounds in violation of international standards,[157] while Awami League supporters attacked protesters with blunt weapons. As protesters responded, police started shooting at them with shotguns and rifles loaded with lethal ammunition. When Awami League supporters fled, a group of some 60 police officers found themselves isolated on one side of campus. They retreated and took refuge on the rooftop of nearby Canadian University. Protesters set fire to the lower floors of the building but did not pursue the officers to the rooftop. Police officers kept firing at the crowd until they were evacuated in a RAB helicopter operation.[158]

108. On 19 July, protesters, including members of the BNP and the Islami Andonolon Bangladesh (IAB) political parties, gathered for demonstrations in the vicinity of Baitul Mukarram Mosque in Paltan, Dhaka. According to witnesses observing the protest, corroborated by videos and photos, police and some men in civilian clothes shot at the protesters with lethal ammunition and killed at least one person. Many protesters attempted to flee or shield themselves. Others raised their hands to show they were unarmed, although some also threw bricks at the police.[159]

109. Security forces also used force in violation of international human rights law against protesters in many places outside Dhaka. On 18 July, for instance, a large group of students peacefully protested in Cumilla. In coordinated action, police, supported by BGB, used tear gas, sound grenades, rubber bullets and lethal ammunition against the protesters, while Chhatra League supporters, armed with steel rods, ambushed protesters. They did not spare female protesters among them, some of whom were also sexually assaulted by armed Chhatra League supporters.[160]

110. Also on 18 July, police fired shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets at a crowd of protesters near Narsingdi Central Jail. A 15-year-old boy was among those who were hit. As he lay incapacitated, police officers deliberately shot him again and killed him, according to eyewitnesses interviewed by OHCHR. Many other victims were heavily injured, including a 16-year-old boy. The next day an enraged crowd stormed Narsingdi Jail and set it on fire, enabling the escape of more than 800 inmates and the looting of 85 firearms. Police fired at the crowd with military rifles and shotguns loaded with lethal ammunition, making no apparent distinction between the attackers and others. The local hospital received more than 300 patients over the course of these two days.[161]

Disproportionate and indiscriminate use of firearms in response to violent unrest

111. The police and security forces' unlawful use of force against protesters enraged crowds and fuelled a series of revenge attacks by some elements within the crowds. These targeted mostly police facilities, other government buildings and modern transport infrastructure built under the former Government of Sheikh Hasina. In some of these situations, police officers under attack or people trapped in buildings subjected to arson attacks may have faced an imminent threat of death or serious injury that justified the security forces' targeted use of firearms in self-defence, or defence of others, in those specific situations. In many other situations, however, information and witness testimony clearly indicate that the security forces routinely responded to incidents of violence with a disproportionate or indiscriminate use of firearms.

112. OHCHR had requested information from authorities on what directives, orders and operational plan on the use of force were given to the police and other security forces deployed.[162] In response, the Bangladesh Police provided reference numbers and issuance dates for scores of apparently relevant documents issued during the protest period, albeit without divulging the actual content of these documents themselves.[163]

113. Former senior officials told OHCHR that security forces were authorized to use firearms (i.e. lethal force) to protect property where less-lethal weapons would not suffice. In particular, security forces could use lethal force in the context of the protests where deemed necessary to prevent attacks against government buildings and any other business or installation that fell within the Government's broad understanding of key point installations, regardless of whether the attack entailed an imminent risk of death or serious injury.[164] This was not in line with international human rights law, which only allows the use of firearms in relation to assemblies when their use is to protect against an imminent threat of death or injury, and not solely to protect property.[165]

114. OHCHR documented an apparent pattern of Bangladesh Police, RAB and BGB going even further in their actual conduct on the ground. Information received indicates that when some elements in the crowd engaged in violence, the security forces often fired indiscriminately and extensively at the entire crowd with lethal ammunition, failing to distinguish between peaceful protesters, property vandals and the few individuals on the scene who actually posed a threat of death or serious injury. Bystanders were often among the victims, including young children,[166] a fact further indicating indiscriminate firing.

115. Testimony from involved senior officials, corroborated by information provided by the Interim Government, provide OHCHR reasonable grounds to believe that this pattern was linked to orders from the political leadership provided to senior security sector leaders on the evening of 18 July and reinforced on 19 July.

116. The immediate trigger of these orders seems to have been the attack by a violent mob on the headquarters of Bangladesh TV in Rampura, which took place on the afternoon and evening of 18 July. Significantly outnumbering the police deployed at the TV station, the

attackers stormed the premises, burnt vehicles and set part of the building on fire, while TV staff remained in the building. With the dual objectives of protecting the life of staff and preventing the assailants from taking control of the TV station, the BGB was deployed upon orders directly from the Prime Minister's Office and reaffirmed by the Home Affairs Minister. Senior officials acknowledged that BGB were under orders to use lethal force with firearms to regain control of the TV station.[167]

117. One former senior official related that from the Bangladesh TV attack onwards, the BGB was used as a "*strike force*." On the evening of 18 July, the then Home Affairs Minister chaired a meeting of the "Core Committee," attended by the heads of Police, RAB and BGB and intelligence leaders. At the meeting, the Minister told the BGB Commander, in front of the other senior security sector leaders, to order use of lethal force much more readily, as one of the meeting participants related to OHCHR. Senior official testimony also indicated that, in a meeting held the next day, the Prime Minister herself told security force officials to kill protesters to quell the protests and specifically demanded to "*arrest the ringleaders of the protests, the troublemakers, kill them and hide their bodies*."[168] This testimony is also consistent with Awami League Secretary-General and government minister Obaidul Quader telling reporters on 19 July that security forces had been given orders to "*shoot on sight,*" an instruction manifestly incompatible with international human rights standards.[169]

118. The reinforcement of orders to use lethal force was also rapidly reflected in developments on the ground: the number of reported deaths nearly tripled, according to OHCHR's estimate, from approximately 100 deaths on 18 July, to close to 300 deaths a day later, on 19 July.[170]

119. According to the official report BGB provided to OHCHR, the Home Affairs Minister and, on behalf of the Prime Minister, the Director-General of her Special Security Force and her Military and Security Advisor, provided verbal directives to "*use maximum force.*"[171]

120. BGB also stated in its report to OHCHR that it had directed its troops only to use force in extreme cases of life-threatening situations and that its BGB troops had only fired warning shots, causing no casualties.[172] This position is contradicted by the NSI report provided to OHCHR, which provides details on three killings by BGB and a potential fourth one, attributable either to the BGB or the Police.[173] First-hand testimony collected by OHCHR provided information on many more killings and injuries caused by BGB and Police jointly firing lethal ammunition at protesters, including in Rampura and Badda, near Bangladesh TV, on 19 July.

Case 4: BGB and Police indiscriminately shooting in Rampura and Badda (19 July)

On 19 July 2024, protests in and around Rampura escalated into widespread violence as the security forces were seemingly trying to prevent any protests in the vicinity of Bangladesh TV station. The BGB report to OHCHR acknowledges that "*less than 200*" personnel had been deployed to the area. The report also states that they dispersed some 15,000 to 20,000 "aggressive" protesters by only firing in the air.[174]

Images 21 & 22 show BGB deployed on 19 July in Rampura with military rifles.
Image credit: permission on file.[175]

Numerous witness accounts, medical information, ammunition impact analysis and photos obtained by OHCHR suggest, however, that the BGB and Bangladesh Police shot lethal ammunition with rifles and shotguns directly at crowds protesting and moving around in the area.[176] One witness, for instance, observed a police officer instructing others to "*shoot with [military] rifles*" and also saw police and BGB firing towards the protesters.[177]

One victim was shot before Friday morning prayers in Badda, near Rampura bridge, some 400 meters away from the Bangladesh TV station. He described how BGB and police cornered protesters from three sides and fired simultaneously. "*Bullets were dropping down on us like rain*," the witness recalled, adding that a helicopter hovered above, shooting tear gas, while men on the helicopter appeared to carry guns. The witness reported that approximately 20 people around him were hit, including friends and a 15-year-old boy. Some died on the spot. The witness, struck in the foot by a rifle bullet, lost consciousness and was rushed to a nearby hospital by local residents. As he was being treated, police allegedly intervened, instructing medical staff not to treat injuries related to the protests. His medical discharge paper recorded his wound as a "soft tissue injury," with no mention of the bullet wound.[178]

Another victim raised his hands and pleaded with the police not to shoot, but the police nevertheless fired shotgun pellets at him injuring his chest and arm.[179]

Violence spread across the area, with a witness inside a madrassa (religious school), near Rampura Police Station hearing gunfire around 14:00 and a local resident being fatally shot near the intersection. Moments later, the witness saw a 14-year-old boy with a critical head injury, being carried into a nearby mosque.[180] The wound to the child's head was caused by a high-velocity rifle projectile, according to analysis conducted by OHCHR's forensic doctor, underscoring the lethality of force used against the protesters, including children.
A 17-year-old student described how he was shot around 14:00 in Rampura while attempting to flee from shooting by the security forces. Fellow demonstrators immediately helped and transported him to hospital.[181]

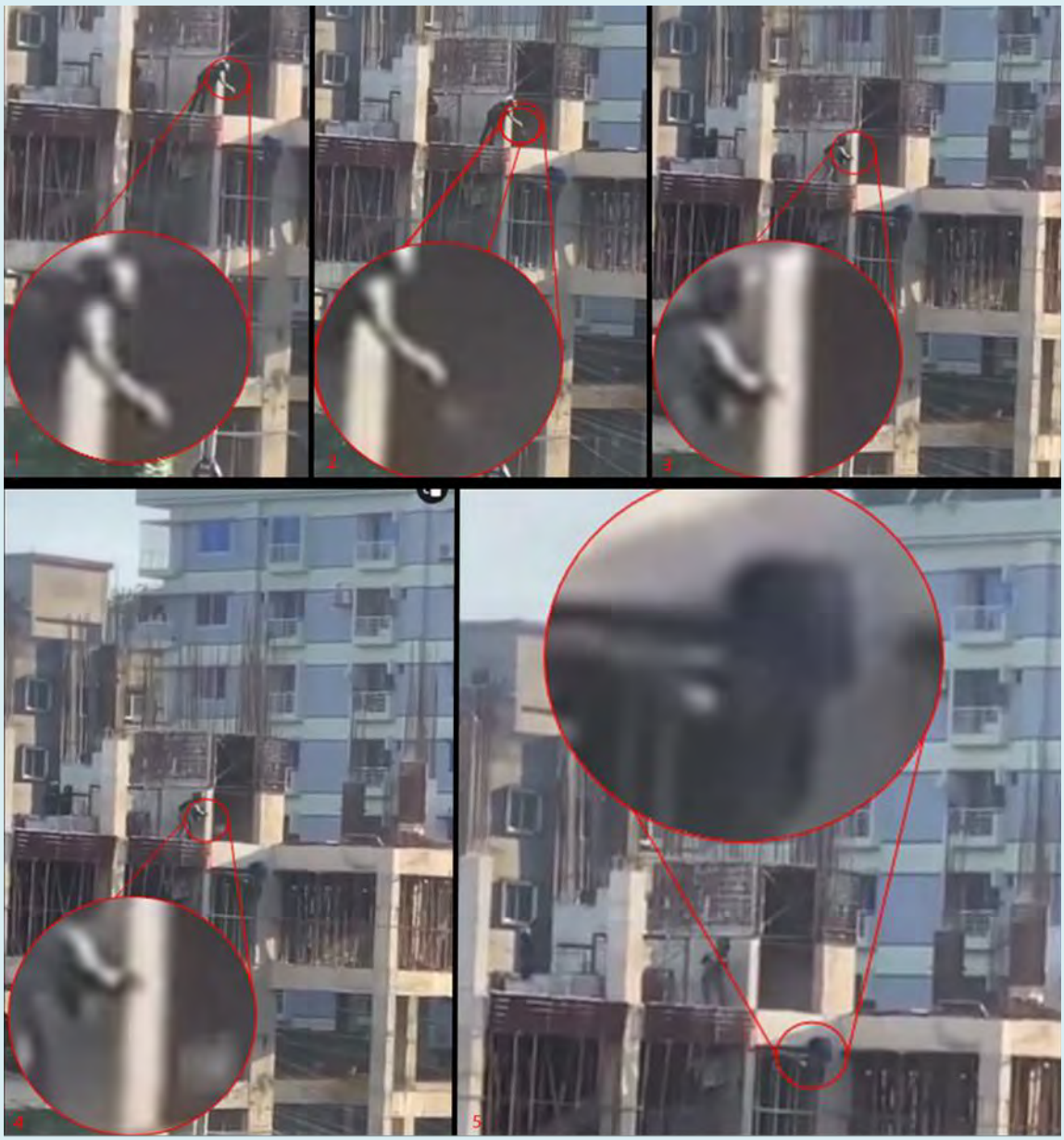
The security forces' apparent indiscriminate shooting also affected civilians in nearby buildings. A shop owner, who had closed his business when gunfire erupted, described how bullets penetrated the walls of his shop causing a head injury to a young boy and killing the boy's grandmother. Both were rushed to a hospital, where the woman, who had been struck in the abdomen, died from her injuries. The damage in the shop observed by OHCHR, including bullet holes and shattered windows, was consistent with high-velocity rifle rounds, supporting the witness's claim of indiscriminate shooting by the security forces. Videos further corroborated the accounts, showing individuals taking shelter in a garage at the time. People can be seen trying to treat the injuries of those who had been shot and assailed by tear gas.[182]

As the day progressed, shootings continued near Banasree A Block, close to the Bangladesh TV station. One woman observed BGB and police present, who were shooting with rifles and shotguns. She stated to OHCHR that she was attempting to assist a child who had been shot in the head, when she was herself struck in the leg by a rifle bullet.[183] A man injured in the same incident observed how another child, no older than nine, was shot in the chest.[184]

Consistent with these testimonies, one hospital in the area received more than 600 injured patients and 20 dead bodies that day and another hospital also treated scores of patients with gunshot wounds, including children as young as 10 years old.[185]

OHCHR also documented one attempted targeted killing by police officers in Rampura. At approximately 3pm on 19 July, a young man was walking in Rampura when he encountered police and BGB units blocking access to the road. Avoiding confrontation, he entered a construction site adjacent to the Rampura Police Station. As he moved to the upper floors, police officers began pursuing him. Cornered, he clung to an iron rod extending from the building's framework, attempting to hide and clearly posing no threat. According to witness testimony, two police officers fired shots at the man from an upper level, while another officer positioned himself below and fired upward. Video footage of the incident corroborates this account and shows several officers firing at the man from very close range.[186]

According to testimony, the officers shouted at the man to "jump," trying to force him off the building, but he held on until they had left, and local residents took him to a hospital. OHCHR forensic analysis of the man's wounds corroborate witness testimony and suggest that the bullets were likely full metal jacket projectiles of 6-9mm. In total, the victim sustained six bullet wounds.[187]



Images 23 to 27, extracted from an authenticated video and further enhanced by OHCHR digital forensics, shows police repeatedly firing at a man clinging to a building in Rampura on 19 July.[188]

121. OHCHR investigators also documented extensive shooting at protesters in other protest hotspots. In Jatrabari, extensive shooting commenced on 17 July, earlier than in other areas, and it intensified when protesters blocked the strategic Dhaka-Chattogram highway. OHCHR established that state security forces carried out a particularly violent operation to clear the highway of protesters. As detailed below, the operation was carried out pursuant to directives of, and with direct oversight by, the political leadership and the most senior security officials.

Case 5: Violent clearance of the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway in Jatrabari (16-21 July)

In Jatrabari, the Police escalated an already tense situation when officers used tear gas and rubber bullets to forcibly disperse protesters on 16 July. On 17 July, armed Awami League supporters joined the police in further attacks against protesters. By the end of the day, police were shooting lethal ammunition from military rifles, and hospitals were struggling to cope with the influx of injured. During the night, some members in the crowds resorted to vandalism and violence, including by burning down a toll plaza on Mayor Hanif Flyover. On 18 July, police at Jatrabari Police Station, which is adjacent to the highway, fired shotguns with lethal metal pellets at mixed crowds, as some people were engaging in violent behaviour such as throwing bricks or vandalising property.[189]

A witness described how the police used an anti-riot vehicle to run over protesters while firing at them.[190] A young woman, interviewed by OHCHR in hospital, recounted how police shot and killed an injured and unarmed young man with a shotgun loaded with lethal ammunition, while she was holding him in her arms. After that, she testified, the police officer shot a second time at her.[191]

These incidents appeared to have resulted in an escalation of the protests and violence. On 19 July, a violent mob beat to death two police officers in civilian clothes who had been identified in the crowd. One of their bodies was hung from Rayerbag bridge. A senior official acknowledged that the lynching put the police in what he described as a "*fighting mode,*" and witnesses noted an increase in police violence subsequently.[192]

From the afternoon of 17 July already, protesters had started barricading a stretch of the vital highway on which important supplies, such as fuel, are brought into Dhaka from the port city of Chattogram. Former senior officials identified the blockade of this "*lifeline*" as a major concern for the Government. According to a senior official, the then Prime Minister personally and directly discussed with senior security officials how to break the blockade. Two participants in the "Core Committee" meetings chaired by the Home Affairs Minister confirmed that plans to unblock the highway were also deliberated in those meetings, which involved Police, paramilitary and intelligence chiefs and, once the Army was deployed, also a senior Bangladesh Army general.[193]

On 20 July, the Government launched a joint operation by the Police, RAB, Army, and in some areas also by the BGB, to end the blockade of the Dhaka-Chattogram highway. During the operation, the Police and RAB systematically used lethal force. Police commanders deployed to lead the operation on the ground were given the order to clear the highway "*at all costs.*" A relevant official confirmed to OHCHR that this meant that the police were authorized to shoot rifles and shotguns loaded with lethal ammunition to unblock the road. This order was also passed on to rank and file police officers. One officer on the scene was specifically told by his commander to "*dispatch*", i.e., deliberately kill, any protesters carrying sticks, machetes or throwing bricks. Over two days, Bangladesh Police and RAB advanced along the highway taking aim at protesters on the highway and in feeder roads leading to it, while Army units followed them and provided coverage protecting against any counterattack. OHCHR verified the incident through testimony from officials directly involved in the operation and other eyewitnesses, and further corroborated it with photos and videos.[194]

Image 28, authenticated by OHCHR, shows police firing SKS rifles at Chattogram-Dhaka highway.[195]

In one incident linked to highway clearing operations on 20 July, police officers took positions near Kajla footbridge and fired at unarmed protesters, several of whom fled into a teashop. Police officers dragged them out of the shop. At gunpoint, they ordered one 19-year-old man to run away and then shot him in the chest, as he was retreating. As the victim was lying injured on the ground, signalling for mercy, one officer fired his shotgun from point blank range into the victim's chest and killed him. Another unarmed protester was shot four times in the back as he ran away but managed to escape and survive despite serious injuries.[196]

Image 29, extracted from authenticated videos, shows the 19-year-old victim of the teashop shooting.[197]

During the period of 17-20 July, a hospital in the area treated a steadily augmenting number of patients. During that period, the hospital received an estimated 1,200 injured victims, among them many with bullet injuries or other serious injuries.[198]

On 20 or 21 July, the then Home Affairs Minister, the Inspector General of Police and the Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police jointly visited Jatrabari. A video taken during that visit, authenticated by two former senior officials, showed a local police commander briefing the Minister and the police chiefs on the security forces' operations in the area by telling them: "*We shoot one dead, or we wound one, and that is the only one who falls. The rest do not budge*."

On 22 July, the Army Chief, accompanied by the Inspector-General of Police and the RAB Director-General, personally visited Jatrabari to confirm that the joint operation had succeeded in unblocking the Dhaka-Chattogram highway, according to two officials and media coverage of the visit.

Meanwhile, the then Prime Minister had been receiving daily reports on protests and related operations from security sector officials and the three intelligence services directly reporting to her (DGFI, NSI, and Police Special Branch), according to testimony provided by former senior officials to OHCHR. On 21 July, at least one of these reports conveyed serious concerns to her that the security forces were using excessive force, according to senior official testimony.[199]

Image 30, extracted from an authenticated video,[200] *shows the Home Affairs Minister being briefed in Jatrabari about ongoing killings by police.*

Unlawful force in the final stages of the protests

122. When protests reignited in early August, police and other security forces once again used unlawful force to disperse them, increasingly resorting to the use of firearms. On 3 August, for instance, the police fired at protesters in Rangpur, killing 7 and wounding at least 15 others. Prior to the shooting, the Detective Branch of Rangpur Metropolitan Police warned people that the police would use force if they protested again.[201] Security forces also

shot at protesters and rioters alike in Mohammadpur and adjacent Farmgate, over the course of several days in August. A 17-year-old boy was among those killed, after being shot in the chest. The police officer who shot the boy was reportedly identified but remains at large.[202]

123. The number of those killed reached a peak on 5 August, the final day of the protests, when hundreds of thousands mobilized for the "March on Dhaka." Based on reported deaths, OHCHR estimates that close to 400 people were killed that day.[203] Many of these killings were linked to a plan the political leadership and the most senior security officials elaborated to stop the March, as elaborated below.

Case 6: Extrajudicial killings to suppress the "March on Dhaka" (5 August)

Public announcements by the protest leaders and information obtained by intelligence agencies gave Bangladesh's political leadership the knowledge that the protest movement was planning a major protest march towards the centre of Dhaka on 5 August. On the morning of 4 August, the then Prime Minister chaired a meeting of the National Security Council in which, *inter alia* the chiefs of Army, Air Force, Navy, BGB, DGFI, NSI, Police and its Special Branch, and the Ministers of Home Affairs, Education and Foreign Affairs too part, according to participants. They discussed reimposing and enforcing a curfew to prevent the "March on Dhaka."[204] After the meeting, the Home Affairs Ministry declared that a strict curfew would continue indefinitely without breaks, while the Prime Minister issued a statement describing the protesters as terrorists and "appealing to our countrymen *to suppress these terrorists with a strong hand*."[205] A second meeting was held in the late evening of 4 August at the Prime Minister's residence, attended by the Prime Minister herself, the Minister of Home Affairs, the heads of Army, Police, RAB, BGB and Ansar/VDP, the Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division and the Army's Quartermaster General, among others. During the meeting, the Army Chief and other security officials reassured the Prime Minister that Dhaka could be held, according to senior officials. A plan was agreed in which the Army and BGB would deploy alongside police to block protesters from accessing central Dhaka, if necessary by force. The Army and BGB were to block access routes into central Dhaka by deploying armoured vehicles and troops and not letting protesters pass, while the police was to "*control mobs,*" according to senior officials who participated in those meetings.[206]

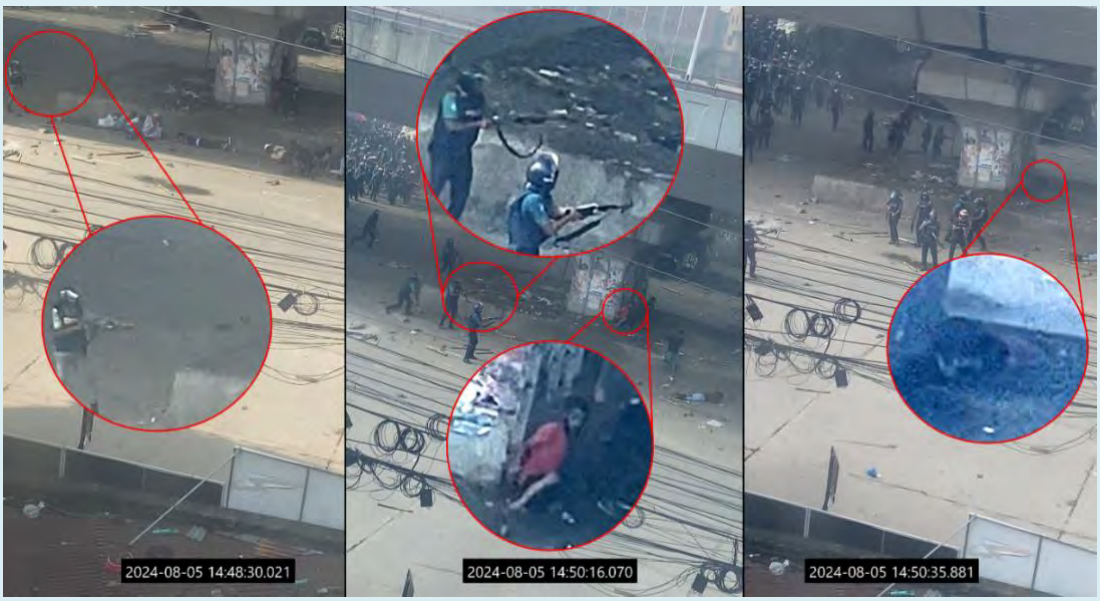
Consistent with these testimonies, at 00:55 am on 5 August, the former Director-General of the Special Security Forces, which was Sheikh Hasina's personal bodyguard force, sent two consecutive WhatsApp messages to the Director-General of the BGB. According to hardcopies of those messages provided to OHCHR, the first message forwarded a broadcast message that appeared to be from protest leaders informing marchers on routes to take into central Dhaka. The second message appeared to contain a video outlining an order of battle, distinguishing a first and second line of defence, a third long-range unit, a backup unit and a rear guard, along with advice from protest leaders on how to circumvent these lines of defence.[207]

On the morning of 5 August, Army and BGB personnel largely stood by and did not implement their assigned roles in the plan. One senior official testified that the Army had not deployed the forces that it promised to deploy, while another noted that BGB let some 10,000-15,000 protesters per hour pass by entry points it was supposed to control. A third senior official recounted how he knew that something was going wrong when he saw CCTV footage showing 500-600 protestors moving from Uttara towards central Dhaka without the Army stopping them. A fourth senior official personally called the Prime Minister to inform her that things were not going according to plan.[208]

The police nevertheless still shot at protesters in many places with lethal ammunition, attempting to stop the "March on Dhaka" and prevent protesters from reaching the centre of the city. One police commander explained that "*[t]he Army knew from early that day that Sheikh Hasina had fallen, but not the police. So the police were out there still defending the Government*."[209] OHCHR documented police shooting in several areas, all following the same pattern. In Chankharpul, for example, Armed Police Battalion officers and other police shot lethal ammunition from rifles and used less-lethal weapons to stop protesters trying to march towards Shahbagh, with one witness

describing that "*police were firing at anyone they saw*."[210] Police also fired metal shot and tear gas at protesters trying to cross Rampura bridge into Badda, injuring student protesters. Several gunshot victims from that area were admitted to hospital during the course of the morning.[211] A 12-year-old boy who was shot by police in Azampur said the police were "*firing everywhere like rainfall*" and described how he saw at least a dozen dead bodies in that location.[212] In Ashulia, Savar district, police had initially set up checkpoints in an effort to deter and detain marchers. When more protesters showed up, the police used less-lethal weapons, at least initially, but then escalated to shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets. One witness was wounded by metal pellets when he tried to aid other injured protesters. Awami League supporters also shot firearms at protesters.[213] Around Savar bus stand, police shot at crowds of marchers, killing and injuring a large number. One journalist talked to several police officers from the area, who told him that senior officers had forced them to deploy, but that ordinary police did not want to cause more casualties. Another witness to shooting in the area also saw the body of a boy who had been killed on 5 August later that day and told OHCHR that 5 August was "*the happiest day for us [protesters], but the saddest for the boy's mother*."[214]

On the morning of 5 August, police and Ansar at the Jatrabari Police Station received orders to shoot at protesters to protect the station and its officers. They fired rifles and shotguns loaded with lethal ammunition from positions within and around the station at large crowds of protesters who had mobilized for the March on Dhaka and were gathering near the police station. Some protesters were throwing bricks at the police, according to officials deployed at the scene. Several protesters were killed, and scores injured. Among the victims was an autistic man who was hit by two bullets. Army units deployed in the area briefly de-escalated the situation in the early afternoon, but then withdrew. Shortly after, police reinitiated confrontations by throwing a sound grenade at protesters outside the station gate and then storming out in formation while shooting their rifles and shotguns. Witness testimony, corroborated by videos, established that police officers intentionally shot and killed several unarmed protesters at close range as they were seeking cover or fleeing, while police were also shooting generally towards the crowd.[215]



Images 31-33 are extracted from authenticated videos showing police in Jatrabari shooting unarmed protesters when police stormed out of Jatrabari Police Station on the afternoon of 5 August.[216]

On the afternoon of 5 August, as crowds of people began celebrating Sheikh Hasina's departure, some police were still shooting at them with lethal ammunition. Among the victims were several young children.

In Uttara, a 6-year-old boy was shot dead when his parents brought him to a "victory march," as confirmed by witness testimony and medical records. Videos and photos showed moments of

jubilation when rumours of the Prime Minister's resignation spread. However, chaos ensued with the sound of grenades and gunfire, causing them to flee. The child was shot in the thigh and later died in the hospital from his injuries. The witness did not see who shot the child but described a chaotic scene with security forces and people who resembled Awami League supporters by their attire throwing sound grenades. There was an Armed Police Battalion station located nearby, and the witness described how the officers had taken positions on the south, east and west of the protest march. He also witnessed other people being injured and collapsing on the street, including another boy who was shot in the head.[217]

In Mirpur, one of those shot by security forces at a celebratory protest was a 12-year-old boy, according to witness testimony and corroborating medical information.[218]

On the afternoon of 5 August in Gazipur, a 14-year-old boy was deliberately maimed - shot in the right hand during a largely peaceful protest of 5,000 to 6,000 participants. Witnesses stated that protesters were unarmed and posed no serious threat. The situation escalated when security forces began firing without warning. The crowd, blocking roads near Ansar Gate, panicked and fled. Forensic evidence shows that the boy was shot at close range with shotgun pellets. The shooter aimed to punish him for allegedly throwing stones, saying, "*You won't use this hand to throw stones again*." The victim suffered severe damage to his right hand, with over 40 shotgun pellets embedded and significant bone and tissue damage.[219]

Another incident occurred in Gazipur, where police officers apprehended an unarmed rickshaw driver and shot him dead at close range. The police dragged the body away and never returned it, leaving the family unable to bury and mourn their loved one. The police officer who shot the man was arrested in September. A family member pleaded with OHCHR: "*I want justice, independent investigations and the return of [the] body*."[220]

In Ashulia, the situation escalated in the afternoon, when protesters targeted the Ashulia Police Station. A large crowd surrounded the station and, despite repeated attempts by the police to retreat, continued to advance, throwing bricks and debris. In response, police fired indiscriminately, using military rifles loaded with lethal ammunition. While the police attempted to clear a path for their exit, the gunfire was random and appeared more aimed at intimidating the crowd rather than specifically targeting violent individuals. This resulted in injuries and fatalities among both protesters and bystanders. A 16-year-old student was critically injured in the spine by a bullet fired at close range, paralyzing him. On the order of senior police officials, police later piled the dead bodies of shooting victims into a van and set fire to the vehicle in the apparent hope that the burning of the bodies would create the false impression that the victims had been killed by protesters.[221]

Images 34-37 are extracted from authenticated videos showing police in Ashulia piling dead bodies on a vehicle and then burning them.[222]

124. OHCHR also received witness testimony concerning killings by BGB outside Dhaka in two further instances that occurred on 5 August and warrant further investigation.

125. In Gowainghat, Sylhet, BGB shot military rifles loaded with lethal ammunition from their compound at a crowd of several hundred people, some of whom carried sticks. Celebrating Sheikh Hasina's departure, the crowd had gathered near the compound. At least five people were killed by the BGB, including a 12-year-old and a 15-year-old boy, while many others were seriously injured. The BGB command confirmed the shooting but claimed that BGB officers feared an attack on the compound since BGB families were staying there and there had been other attacks on security force compounds, without providing further information to substantiate their concern. Eyewitness testimony indicated that no attack entailing an imminent threat of death or serious injury actually occurred. According to the BGB report provided to OHCHR, the BGB did not report a single injury among BGB personnel in relation to that incident.[223]

126. In Sreepur, Gazipur District, a crowd of protesters allegedly stopped and surrounded buses carrying BGB officers. The protesters immobilized some of the vehicles, locked their doors, and attempted to set the buses on fire while BGB officers were still inside. One BGB officer was reportedly beaten to death. According to an eyewitness, BGB shot at the crowd with rifles loaded with lethal ammunition. Media later reported that this resulted in six deaths and over 50 injuries among the protesters, which is consistent with police information received on gunshot-related deaths recorded in the Sreepur area. OHCHR could confirm that one man was shot and seriously injured during the incident when he returned from a shop and passed by the site of the confrontation. In addition, NSI reported to OHCHR that a religious school student from the Sreepur area was "*killed by BGB firing*" on 5 August. OHCHR did not obtain sufficient first-hand information to determine to what extent this incident may have involved justified self-defence by BGB or disproportionate use of force.[224]

Involvement of the Army in use of force violations

127. While some Army officers seconded to paramilitary forces were involved in the shooting of protesters, as also acknowledged by the BGB report to OHCHR, OHCHR cannot conclusively assess the extent to which the Army as such may have been institutionally involved. OHCHR did not receive either requested written information from or requested meetings with the Army. There was, further, a clear sense of fear among witnesses to speak out about any matters involving the Army.

128. OHCHR did, however, document three instances in which Bangladesh Army deliberately shot military rifles loaded with lethal ammunition at protesters.

129. On 20 July, around mid-day, police tried to push back a crowd of protesters in Mohammadpur, who responded by throwing bricks. Without an apparent imminent risk to life, a group of Army soldiers armed with assault rifles assumed firing position. At the order of their commanding officer and a civilian who appeared to be an executive magistrate[225] the soldiers fired several volleys of lethal ammunition aiming directly at the crowd according to eyewitnesses, videos and photos.[226]

130. The same day, Army soldiers deployed with armoured personnel carriers (some painted in white in apparent preparation for their use in United Nations peacekeeping operations) to the area around Bangladesh TV in Rampura, where security forces had already fired extensively the day before. Around mid-day, near Rampura Bazar, the soldiers ordered protesters by loudspeaker to "*evacuate the area,*" threatening that they "*will take action*" if the protesters do not comply. A witness saw and heard an executive magistrate ordering the soldiers to "*shoot to confirm two or three bodies.*" Initially, soldiers fired warning shots, but then took aimed shots at protesters, as can also be seen in images confidentially obtained by OHCHR.[227]

131. On the morning of 5 August, the Army stood by in many places and took no action against "March on Dhaka" protesters. In some places, Army units also separated protesters and police to calm the situation and contain violence.[228] In front of Jamuna Future Park, however, Army units fired at protesters with lethal ammunition and an apparent intent to kill.

Case 7: Army Shooting at Protesters at Jamuna Future Park (5 August)

On the morning of 5 August, at approximately 10:00, hundreds of protesters had gathered in front of Jamuna Future Park, on Progati Sarani Road, near Bashundhara R/A Main Gate. According to witnesses, Army units were already positioned there. Approximately twenty army soldiers assembled in a line, reportedly positioned 30-40 meters away from the protesters.

According to witness accounts, the protests were peaceful. One witness recounted feeling a sense of reassurance "*as the Army had previously promised not to act against protesters*". Another witness said that protesters were "*joyful,*" thinking the Army was there to protect them. Protesters were chanting slogans against Sheikh Hasina and for the establishment of a military government.

At one point, around 11:30, witnesses described the Army personnel advancing towards the protesters. One witness described the soldiers initially firing with their weapons pointed upward. Then suddenly one soldier took aim and fired at a man, shooting him in the head and causing him to collapse to the ground. Witnesses said the soldiers continued firing at the protestors, estimating around 20-25 rounds, while advancing towards them. OHCHR obtained and authenticated multiple videos related to this incident. The metadata was consistent with the date, time, and location described by the witnesses, with OHCHR also geolocating the videos. Neither witness testimony nor videos provide any indication that the protesters were posing threat to Army personnel.

After the shooting, video evidence shows Army soldiers advancing towards the protesters and beating men and women with heavy sticks, causing the protesters to disperse. At this point, the victim who had been shot in the head remained lifeless on the ground, in the same position as he was when he was hit, with a large puddle of blood is right in front of his head. Two men tried to carry him away but were beaten by Army soldiers, who also made threatening gestures towards protesters taking videos and photos of the incident.[229]

Images 38-39 extracted from authenticated videos of the Jamuna Future Park
Image credit: permission on file, enhanced by OHCHR digital forensics.[230]

Based on video analysis, OHCHR estimates that the army soldier shot from a distance of less than 50 meters to the location where the individual is seen on the ground. The soldiers were seen firing the standard Bangladesh Army service rifle, the BD-08, a Bangladeshi licensed copy of the Chinese Type 81 assault rifle in 7.62x39mm. The projectile would have enough energy to kill or seriously injure someone even beyond a 600-meter range. OHCHR therefore has reasonable grounds to believe that the incident amounted to an extrajudicial killing.

132. In a number of other situations and operations, Army units provided a protective cover for other security forces, allowing those to shoot and kill protesters. As one former senior official explained, it was the Army's primary role to "*boost the courage of the security forces at the forefront such as the Police*."[231]

133. OHCHR documented several cases, in which Army personnel stood by and took no action to protect protesters when police were committing use of force violations, only to intervene in the same incident when protesters responded with violence. As noted above, this backup role appeared to be particularly pronounced in the joint operation of Army, Police, RAB and BGB to clear the Dhaka-Chattogram highway around Jatrabari, where the presence of Army units shielded from retaliation Police and RAB personnel who were shooting at crowds.

134. On numerous other occasions, Army soldiers shot lethal ammunition in the air in an apparent effort to intimidate and disperse protesters, notwithstanding the risk to life this conduct posed, especially in a densely populated area with many high-rise buildings like Dhaka. OHCHR found cases of people being killed or injured by bullets that seemed to come from above or hit people standing on high buildings, suggesting they may have been killed or injured by bullets fired into the air that then fell to the ground.[232]

135. In the absence of meeting directly with senior members of the Army or receiving requested written information from the Army, OHCHR had insufficient basis to ascertain the degree to which orders on the use of lethal force were given specifically to the Army, and what rules of engagement were in turn passed on by the Army leadership to officers and troops on the ground at different stages of their deployment. However, witnesses, including serving Army officers, testified that, from the outset of the Army's deployment on 20 July, many junior and mid-level officers were reluctant to shoot at protesters, even though certain Dhaka-based units commanded by officers with an apparent strong loyalty to the Awami League may have taken a more hard-line approach.

136. Tacit resistance among officers and troops against shooting at protesters appeared to have grown as the protests went on. For instance, one mid-level Army commander ordered his subordinate officers to shoot only at "*miscreants,*" vague language providing junior officers with the space to interpret their rules of engagement more restrictively, according to testimony received from one of the officers involved. On 3 August, the Army Chief requested Army officers to join a meeting held at the main auditorium of Army Headquarters, but also accessible online. According to meeting participants, the Army Chief sought to explain the difficult position in which the then Prime Minister had placed him. Several officers took the floor expressing concern about specific incidents in which Army personnel had used force and indicated that they did not want to shoot at their compatriots.[233]

137. The prospect of Bangladesh Army personnel being excluded from United Nations peacekeeping due to involvement in human rights violations, which the United Nations also conveyed to relevant authorities of Bangladesh during the protests,[234] reportedly also contributed to officers of the Bangladesh Army being reluctant to order the shooting of protesters.[235] The United Nations has a policy to exclude candidates who are reasonably believed to have engaged in human rights violations from peacekeeping or other service with the United Nations.[236]

4. Use of helicopters to intimidate and deploy possibly unlawful force

138. RAB, the Police and reportedly also the Army's Aviation Unit deployed helicopters in relation to the protests. In particular, RAB's black helicopters were used to intimidate protesters and deploy force against them.[237] According to senior officials, the then Home Affairs Minister specifically demanded the deployment of more helicopters to scare protesters in the way that RAB had used them, and Army officers were also directly informing the Prime Minister about the deployment of helicopters.[238]

139. According to eyewitness testimony provided to OHCHR, tear gas was repeatedly deployed from RAB or police helicopters against groups of protesters in Mirpur (18 July), Mohakhali (18 July), Dhanmondi (18 and 19 July), Badda (19 July), Mohammadpur (19 July)

and Rampura (19 July), Shahbagh (19 July) and Bashundhara (19 July, 2 and 3 August) and Gazipur (20 July) and Jatrabari (20 and 21 July), as well as sound grenades in Rampura (18 July).[239]

Image 37 shows a RAB helicopter deployed on 19 July in Dhaka
Image credit: permission on file.[240]

140. Witnesses also testified that they saw personnel on helicopters shooting rifles or shotguns loaded with lethal ammunition at protesters during the period of 19-21 July, including in Badda, Bashundhara, Gazipur, Jatrabari, Mirpur, Mohakhali, Mohammadpur, and Rampura.[241] On 5 August, in the Jamuna Park area, one man was hit by a fragment of an armour-piercing bullet that was examined by OHCHR. The victim alleged that he was shot at from an olive-green helicopter.[242]

141. Shooting firearms from a helicopter at crowds of protesters is inherently indiscriminate and therefore in violation of human rights standards since, as also acknowledged by a former senior official,[243] the weapons cannot be reliably aimed at particular individuals specifically posing an imminent threat of death or serious injury.

142. The Inspector General of Police and the Director-General of RAB have both acknowledged that RAB helicopters dropped tear gas and sound grenades on protesters but could not confirm that security forces shot firearms from RAB helicopters.[244] RAB reported to OHCHR that it had fired 738 teargas shells, 190 sound grenades and 557 stun grenades from helicopters, but asserted that had not shot once with rifles or shotguns from helicopters, during the period of 1 July to 15 August 2024.[245]

143. OHCHR has obtained and analysed a number of videos that showed personnel on RAB and police helicopters shooting tear gas from launchers.[246] These launchers can look like rifles or shotguns from a distance, but the tear gas grenade leaves a distinctive white smoke trail when the launcher is fired. OHCHR has not been able to obtain any videos clearly showing shooting from rifles or shotguns from helicopters. However, it should be noted that the shooting incidents reported by witnesses all occurred during periods when the Government had fully shut down mobile and broadband Internet, and circulation of footage on social media or websites was not possible.

144. Based on the information obtained, OHCHR cannot confirm or exclude the shooting of rifles or shotguns from helicopters. It is possible that some victims who were hit seemingly from above by projectiles were in fact hit by rifles fired from elevated positions, by projectiles fired into the air and that then fell down, or by projectiles that ricocheted or fragmented before they hit the victim. The matter requires further investigation, with the full cooperation of RAB, Police and Army, including the personnel they deployed on helicopters.

5. Obstruction of medical care and denial of necessary medical documentation

145. Where law enforcement officials expect to use force, or violence is considered likely, the authorities must also ensure that adequate medical facilities are available. Assistance and medical aid must be rendered to injured or affected persons at the earliest possible moment, irrespective of whether the force used against the person was lawful.[247]

146. During the protests, many of the public hospitals prepared in advance and medical staff worked extensive hours trying to cope with the large influx of injured protesters and bystanders.[248]

147. BGB reported that it ensured medical care for 32 injured protesters of its own accord.[249] This would seem to be an exception to the overall pattern documented by OHCHR, however, which showed that police and other security forces regularly took no action to administer first aid, organize emergency transport or provide other assistance to injured protesters and bystanders, including to victims of their own unlawful shooting. It was mostly left to other protesters and concerned local citizens, including many rickshaw drivers, to provide basic first aid and transport the injured to hospital. These violations by omission on the part of the security forces are likely to have led to preventable deaths among the injured.

148. Victim and eyewitness accounts, corroborated by videos and photos, show instead that police went so far as to deliberately obstruct efforts to provide timely medical aid, including in relation to the death of Shykh Aashhabul Yamin.

Case 8: Obstruction of medical care for police shooting victim Shykh Aashhabul Yamin

On 18 July in Savar, police officers repeatedly shot Shykh Aashhabul Yamin, an unarmed young man, with metal shot-loaded shotguns when he climbed on a blue police armoured personnel carrier (APC).[250] An eyewitness saw the man crossing the road to climb the vehicle. The witness also heard what sounded like warning shots and police shouting urgent warnings that the man might be carrying a bomb.[251] According to another witness, Yamin climbed on the APC and attempted to close the roof hatch of the vehicle.[252]

Videos authenticated by OHCHR investigators showed the APC arriving under the old overbridge in Savar at 13:57. The APC moved back and forth on the main lane for about 20 minutes, firing teargas shells several times. At 14:18, Yamin climbed onto the APC's roof from the rear after crossing the road barrier. A person in a red shirt and bulletproof vest shot once at Yamin with a shotgun. Four seconds later, a police officer in riot gear fired his shotgun three more times at him, and he fell onto the APC. Smoke was visible from the first, second, and fourth shots.

Additional videos and photographs authenticated by OHCHR show that the APC moved along the Dhaka-Aricha Highway with the man lying incapacitated on top of it, but still alive. In video footage, a voice can be heard saying *'Kill immediately, use the pistol and shoot, make sure he doesn't survive*," but no further shooting can be observed at that stage. However, instead of providing first-aid medical assistance to the critically injured man, the officers threw Yamin off the vehicle and his head hit the pavement. Two riot-gear-clad officers then exited the APC, observed the body, and dragged it across the road barrier to the westernmost lane with assistance from the man in a red shirt. Moments later, the APC drove away southward, and all officers retreated, leaving Yamin's body near the barrier. As they withdrew, one officer approached Yamin's body and fired a teargas canister, enveloping it in toxic smoke before departing. In videos, police officers can also be seen firing gunshots towards crowds of protesters who are about 150 metres to the north. This was confirmed by one witness who testified that the police continued to fire from multiple directions. As the haze began to clear, the witness noticed that Yamin was still breathing. None of the videos and witness accounts received by OHCHR indicated that any of the police officers made any attempts to provided necessary medical assistance to Yamin.

Images 38 is extracted from authenticated videos showing police shooting at Yamin.
Image credit: permission on file.[253]

Images 39-41, extracted from an authenticated video show police launching a teargas grenade towards Yamin while he laid injured on the ground. **Image credit:** permission on file.[254]

The victim was taken to two different hospitals by a group of protesters. He died in the second hospital at 14:45. Forensic medical and weapons analysis conducted by OHCHR showed that Yamin was shot at close range with metal pellets from a shotgun. He was likely already at a terminal stage of hypovolemic shock and on verge of death when he was brought to the hospital. OHCHR's forensic physician concluded that the pellet injuries to the left front chest visible on his body, combined with the negative respiratory effect of tear gas chemicals, could reasonably be presumed to be the main cause of death.[255]

While the police officers, in the heat of the moment, may have perceived the man climbing the APC as a potential lethal threat, they failed to provide immediate medical assistance once he lay incapacitated and heavily injured, as would have been required. Instead, they threw him off the vehicle, dragged him across the road and then shot teargas, which engulfed him. This aggravated Yamin's injuries, obstructed other protesters from rapidly providing him with first aid and delayed his transfer to hospital for treatment, giving rise to a violation of the right to life.

149. Yamin's case was not exceptional. OHCHR found several other cases of security forces actively obstructing medical care. On 19 July, a helicopter dropped tear gas shells in front of a hospital, driving away people trying to access it.[256] The same day, tear gas was fired into a garage which was known to the police to serve as an ad hoc medical treatment centre for injured protesters.[257]

150. On 4 August, police shot and injured a 17-year-old boy in the Farmgate area. Subsequently, police officers placed the injured boy on a rickshaw and ordered the driver to take him away. Other police blocked the rickshaw from accessing nearby hospitals. One police officer ordered the driver to throw the injured man in a drain, but finally relented and let him pass. By the time the victim was finally admitted to a hospital, he had died.[258]

151. On 5 August, as police were indiscriminately shooting at protesters around Jatrabari Police Station, they apprehended a local man who was aiding injured protesters. Police officers told him that they would shoot him four times as punishment for aiding their "enemies" and forced him to say where he wanted to be shot. The man pleaded for mercy, but one officer still shot him once in the leg at point blank range. The officers dragged the bleeding man into a gutter and left him there.[259]

152. DGFI, NSI, Detective Branch and other agencies also obstructed medical care when they mounted extensive operations to keep hospitals under surveillance, identify patients with gunshot injuries, interrogate medical staff and injured patients and fingerprinted them. In an apparent effort to identify protesters and to conceal evidence of the extent of violence by the security forces, they also confiscated medical records and CCTV footage in many hospitals, without due process.[260]

153. Medical staff were pressured not to treat injured protesters with the necessary care and not to provide medical documentation properly recording injuries and their causes. Testimony received indicates that this obstruction was undertaken based on orders given at higher levels, including during visits from senior officials to hospitals. The existence of such orders is also indicated by similar types of obstruction involving different security and intelligence forces occurring in a range of hospitals in Dhaka and other parts of the country. In one hospital, for instance, medical staff were pressured by the hospital leadership to record deaths resulting from gunshot wounds as "*accidental*." Staff were threatened that the authorities would bring a criminal case against them if they failed to comply. In another hospital, a doctor was explicitly told by the police not to admit injured protesters. In yet another hospital, an Awami League member of parliament led efforts to intimidate doctors into stopping treatment of injured protesters. Detective Branch arrested at least two doctors who did not comply, forcing other doctors to go into hiding. In a fourth hospital, DGFI and NSI agents intimidated doctors who treated injured protesters, including by taking down their names and interrogating them about their motives. The administration of a fifth hospital treating large numbers of protesters received anonymous phone calls threatening the hospital with closure on 18 July, and from 20 July law enforcement officers prevented the hospital from admitting any more patients.[261]

154. Chhatra League and other Awami League supporters maintained a presence in and around hospital gates and entrances, as well as at checkpoints where they stopped ambulances, private vehicles, and rickshaws transporting injured protesters, often jointly with the police.[262] In the tense overall environment, some protesters accompanying patients also showed aggressive behaviour towards medical staff, which further complicated the provision of timely medical care.[263]

155. Many injured protesters, especially gunshot victims, were denied potentially lifesaving medical care, in particular by private hospitals and clinics that proved to be more susceptible to pressure and intimidation exerted by security forces and intelligence services.[264] In other places, doctors and other medical staff assumed great personal risks to treat wounded protesters based on their urgent medical needs, in many cases for free.

156. According to witnesses, autopsies were often not properly conducted, or not conducted at all, especially from 18 July onwards, contrary to national law and international human rights standards, which require an autopsy whenever a person is suspected to have been killed by another person.[265] In many places, police were no longer coming to the morgue to collect bodies and initiate the autopsy process. One major hospital was instructed by the

Government to hand over bodies to families without autopsy. Some families faced delays in burying loved ones since police were neither themselves performing autopsies, nor allowing families to collect the body without autopsy.[266]

6. Mass arbitrary arrests, detention without due process, and torture and ill-treatment

157. OHCHR found a pattern of arbitrary arrest and detention of individuals by the police, other security forces and intelligence agencies between 15 July and 5 August, in violation of the right to liberty of the person and due process guaranteed under international law. The Police and its Detective Branch tortured and ill-treated both men and women. OHCHR documented arbitrary arrests and detention by the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, its Detective Branch and Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit, RAB and also the DGFI, in several locations in Dhaka district. OHCHR also documented arbitrary arrests and detention in other locations of the country. The victims included peaceful protesters and their leaders, members and leaders of political parties, university and college students, but also bystanders, teachers and daily wage workers such as rickshaw pullers. Victims also included children.[267] One study conducted by a national newspaper found that some 85 percent of those arrested during the mass arrest campaign were students and ordinary citizens, whereas only 15 percent were affiliated with opposition parties.[268]

158. In a number of cases, victims were arrested simply for being in the vicinity of protest areas, possessing phones with photos and videos of the protests, going to hospital, or based on characteristics such as their age - young people were particularly targeted. Individuals were also picked up from the streets, handcuffed and forced into vehicles without being informed of the reasons for their arrest. At times, people who were trying to go to hospitals or were on their way back home were taken into custody.[269] One witness described how a 16-year-old boy was detained because he was picking up a stick.[270]

159. Following long-standing bad practices, police often carried out arrests based on first information reports of criminal cases that listed scores of named and unnamed individuals with no legally relevant connection to the case, or who were even linked to a case that had been entirely fabricated.[271] None of the victims of arbitrary arrest interviewed by OHCHR were informed about charges without delay or were served an arrest warrant. Only a minority were brought before a judge within 24 hours, as required by Section 33 of the Constitution. One student was arrested from his home without being given any reasons, and detained incommunicado and interrogated for three days before finally being brought before a judge.[272] OHCHR did not find a single case in which a judge refused to hold such persons on remand, despite the fact that many of the remand applications were based on mass cases listing scores of named and unnamed suspects that presented little or no evidence linking the listed individuals to any criminal conduct.[273] One former senior official explained that "*if anyone has the remotest link to an incident, judges will grant the application for remand detention because judges are not independent and cannot give a fair decision*."[274]

160. According to figures provided by Bangladesh Police to OHCHR, the police arrested 10,525 men and 25 women, including 63 children, during the period of 1 July to 4 August 2024. The largest number of these arrests was carried out by Dhaka Metropolitan Police (3,083 men, including 24 boys).[275] RAB reported to have carried out additional arrests of 1118 men and 34 women.[276] DGFI, NSI, Ansar/VDP, and BGB reported to OHCHR that they had not carried out any arrests in relation to the protests, although the BGB reported having received verbal orders from the Ministry of Home Affairs "*to do preventive arrests*."[277] According to Bangladesh Police, the arrests were grounded in offenses under the Penal Code and other statutes, namely the Special Powers Act 1974, the Anti-Terrorism Act 2009, the Arms Act 1878 and the Explosive Substances Act 1908.[278]

161. Due to the curfew and Internet shutdown, media and non-governmental organizations struggled to gather comprehensive figures on how many arrests and detentions were arbitrary. However, OHCHR documented scores of arrests without valid substantive grounds and could not itself document a single case where due process was fully respected, suggesting that a

very large portion of the overall number of 11,702 arrests reported by the authorities were arbitrary.

Images 42 show police carrying out arrests in Dhaka on 31 July 2024.
Image credit: permission on file.[279]

Block raids and mass arrests

162. Especially from the imposition of the curfew during the night of 19 to 20 July onwards until the end of July, the Police, RAB and Army jointly conducted raids of entire housing blocks or areas in a neighbourhood, a practice known as "block raids" in Bangladesh. These were a key part of the mass arbitrary arrest campaign that sought to quell protests and wider political mobilization against the Government. Former senior officials testified that such raids were carried out in several locations in Dhaka, including Gulshan Baridhara, Savar, Jatrabari, Badda, Shanir Akhra, Bashundhara, Shahinbarg, Mirpur, Mohammadpur as well as outside greater Dhaka, such as in Rangpur. Police and RAB often carried out these raids, with backup and perimeter security provided by Army units. In late July, for instance, Bangladesh Police, RAB and Army units, each in platoon strength, jointly carried out several block raids in Mohammadpur.[280]

163. Block raids predominantly targeted housing blocks and areas where the authorities assumed that university students, opposition party activists and other potential protestors lived, especially in a number of poorer and middle-class neighbourhoods. Police conducted raids on several student accommodations near the universities, forcing students to go into hiding and repeatedly change locations to avoid arrest. Raids were often carried out at nighttime and police and RAB forcibly entered homes, at times also vandalizing property. [281] One witness described how some 70 officers entered their housing block, discharging their firearms to intimidate residents, breaking down doors and deliberately destroying furniture and televisions. Since they could not find the person, they were apparently looking for, they arrested five other tenants "*because they needed to arrest someone to maintain their reputation,*" according to the witness.[282] Another victim testified about his arrest by the Detective Branch during a block raid that was conducted by some 20 police officers on 23 July. On his way home from a shop, he saw a luxury SUV and a microbus with open doors. Armed men jumped out, and one of them pointed a gun at him, demanding his name, mistakenly calling him by another name. The officers held him down by his head and forced him into the vehicle.[283] A similar bus was used in another block raid in Mohammadpur was carried out on 22 July jointly by Police and RAB, with Army personnel providing perimeter security.[284]

164. In several cases, Awami League officials and Chhatra League activists cooperated with the security forces during the raids. They assisted in identifying the homes of protesters, searching for protestors, including those who were injured, and taking their fingerprints.[285]

165. While the majority of those arrested in block raids were men, some women were also detained. One witness described that, since most of the male adults had fled from his area fearing arrests, law enforcement authorities started to detain women from 23 July 2024 onwards. Several women from his neighbourhood were arrested.[286]

166. This series of mass arrests was carried out with the knowledge, approval and oversight of senior government and security sector officials and were discussed in the "Core Committee" meetings of senior officials, according to testimony from several former senior officials.[287] Furthermore, Bangladesh Police provided OHCHR with the names and ranks of 138 senior Police officials, including the Commissioners of two metropolitan police forces, whom the Police considered to have given "*orders, directives or instructions leading to mass arrests/unlawful arrests and detentions*" during the period of 1 July to 15 August 2024.[288]

167. Former senior officials acknowledged that arrests during block raids were mostly based on general characteristics, without evidence linking individual victims to any particular criminal conduct. For instance, persons were detained on basis of being young and not employed, for not normally residing in Dhaka, for not being able to present an identification card, or for being generally known to local police as criminals. One former senior official estimated that some 70 percent of all arrests were of such general nature, whereas only 30 percent were what he termed "*quality arrests,*" namely arrests based on actual information pertaining to criminal conduct of the specific individual arrested. Former senior officials also testified that targeted arrests were informed by electronic surveillance information, which the intelligence and security forces could obtain through the National Telecommunications Monitoring Centre (NTMC), and other intelligence information provided by DGFI, NSI, Police Special Branch and DMP Special Analysis Division.[289]

168. Arrests, both based on general characteristics and targeted arrests, were also carried out around checkpoints and during ad hoc checks in the street. Intelligence and security officials would force those apprehended to unblock their phones, review them for protest-related videos and photos, and delete data, especially if it suggested violations by the security forces or Awami League supporters. Individuals drawing suspicion were often arrested without informing them of the reasons. In late July, for instance, a married couple was stopped by police in central Dhaka. The husband was threatened, insulted and forced to unlock his phone and delete all photos related to the protests. He conveyed to OHCHR that only his advanced age saved him from arrest.[290] In another incident, a journalist was arrested by Army officers at a checkpoint in Dhaka. After he identified himself as a journalist, he was held for several hours and interrogated about his activities in the area.[291] On 21 July, police arbitrarily arrested a worker at a checkpoint in Rampura because he had a bullet injury, incurred during indiscriminate BGB shooting two days earlier. He was detained at Detective Branch headquarters. During interrogation, he was threatened with summary execution. One detective told him, "*You already have bullet in your leg, we can put another one in your head*."[292] In late July, the Police's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) branch arrested several young people on the street and detained them, along with many others, at its Dhaka headquarters to coerce false confessions about their involvement in vandalism.[293]

169. Police also carried out mass arrests in other parts of the country. In Rangpur, for instance, police arbitrarily arrested hundreds of people they considered to be supporters of the protest movement, based on a false mass case built around the Police's own extrajudicial killing of Abu Sayed.[294]

Arbitrary arrests of injured persons

170. Police and intelligence officials arbitrarily arrested injured persons in hospitals and medical centres or on their way to receive urgent medical care, including by stopping and searching ambulances, or by tracking them down after receiving medical care. Many of these arrests seemed to have been based simply on the fact of the victims' injuries, even though these would not have of themselves shown any criminal wrongdoing on their part, but were indicative, in the eyes of security forces, of their participation in the protests and corresponding exposure to the security forces' extensive use of force. In late July, for instance, one worker was arrested after police had obtained his address from a medical centre

where he had sought treatment after being shot by police during a protest.[295] He was detained and tortured for three days at the Detective Branch headquarters on Minto Road, including by receiving electric shocks, being beaten on his existing injuries and having his fingers broken.[296]

171. Several hospitals were subject to larger raid and arrest operations. In mid-July, for instance, a dozen uniformed and plainclothes security forces conducted extensive searches at one hospital in Dhaka, intimidating staff in the process.[297] In late July, Detective Branch and other police officers raided another hospital in Dhaka, fingerprinted all the patients and arrested several medical staff and patients, while verbally abusing the patients and telling them that injured protesters deserved to die.[298] In early August, a small group of BGB forced their way into a hospital in Dhaka, interrogated medical staff and searched the intensive care unit to find injured protesters.[299]

172. Several witness testimonies confirm that fear of arrest either deterred injured protestors from seeking necessary medical treatment or compelled them to leave hospitals before completing their treatment, leading to untreated injuries and avoidable suffering.

Arbitrary arrests targeting student and opposition leaders

173. OHCHR established that DGFI and Detective Branch took coordinated action to arbitrarily arrest and detain six specific leaders of the Students against Discrimination movement, given their prominent roles, with the view to intimidating and silencing them and quelling the protest: Nusrat Tabassum, Nahid Islam, Asif Mahmud, Abu Baker Majumder, Sarjis Alam, and Hasnat Abdullah. According to witness accounts, DGFI approached student coordinators as early as 15 July, encouraging them to "discuss and negotiate" with the Government regarding their demands. According to witness testimony, during the night from 18 to 19 July, DGFI first took three of these student leaders to a meeting with government ministers. Shortly after, they forcibly abducted two more student leaders from private homes and detained them.[300] The two student leaders were not informed of the reasons for their arrest, nor the locations in which they were to be detained, nor were they given access to legal counsel. They were neither issued an arrest warrant nor brought before a judge.

174. Notably, OHCHR received credible accounts that Nahid Islam, one of the student leaders and now a member of the Interim Government, was abducted by plainclothes government agents and secretly detained in the DGFI's infamous *Aynaghar* clandestine detention centre, where he was also tortured. Upon his release from his first detention, he was left under a bridge in the Purbachal area and taken to hospital to tend to his torture-related injuries. On 26 July, agents identifying themselves as Detective Branch arbitrarily arrested Nahid Islam again at Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital in Dhaka, along with another student leader who was also being treated for torture-related injuries there. An intelligence officer accompanying them threatened at gunpoint a hospital staff member, who tried to prevent the patients from being taken. On 27 and 28 July, four more student leaders were abducted in targeted operations.[301]

175. Authorities used intelligence and surveillance technology to conduct these arbitrary arrests. OHCHR verified, through interviews and other information, that the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC) provided surveillance and intelligence, including by monitoring people's personal communications and supporting arrest and other police operations.[302]

176. According to official information provided by Bangladesh Police to OHCHR, the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police arrested and detained the six student leaders.[303] Former senior officials indicated that the DGFI led the operations against student leaders, despite lacking arrest powers. One former senior official testified that, upon the advice from the Home Minister who warned about negative publicity and while the student leaders were still in arbitrary detention, the then Prime Minister agreed that DGFI's involvement should be concealed with a false cover story that the Detective Branch had taken the student leaders into "protective custody."[304] While in detention, the students were coerced to read out a statement on camera, announcing the withdrawal of their protest programme. The video was published by the head of Detective Branch and sparked public outrage due to the apparently forced nature of the statement. According to another senior official,

on 29 July, the matter was discussed in a meeting of the Cabinet. In light of the negative publicity created by the release of the coerced statement, the Prime Minister ordered the removal of the head of Detective Branch. However, no further investigation into the arbitrary arrest or torture allegations were ordered by her or senior officials in the chain of command.[305] Meanwhile, lawyers petitioned the courts to order the release of the students, but the courts did not provide any judicial relief.[306] Only on 1 August were the six student leaders released.

177. From 19 July, security forces, including Police, Detective Branch and RAB, carried out a series of coordinated arrest operations targeting opposition leaders from BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and the Bangladesh Jatiya Party. Many of those arrested around Dhaka were detained at Detective Branch headquarters. They were extensively interrogated and often subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. In some cases, senior Police officials were directly involved. One BNP leader was arrested on 23 July in a targeted raid led by Detective Branch. He was detained at Detective Branch headquarters alongside hundreds of other detainees, including several senior BNP officials. As soon as a judge confirmed that he should be held on remand, he was severely tortured for several hours a day over a period of five days to make him sign false confession statements. Although he could barely walk due to the torture inflicted, a judge extended his detention on remand, and he was sent to Dhaka Central Jail.[307]

Torture, ill-treatment and inhumane conditions in detention

178. OHCHR interviewed victims and eyewitnesses of torture, ill-treatment and inhumane conditions of detention in various places of detention in Dhaka and other districts. Among the victims were students, student leaders, ordinary workers, opposition party activists, and even children.[308] Victims were often beaten fiercely, including on injured body parts to inflict maximal pain, given electric shocks, and had their fingers broken. One eyewitness saw detainees being blindfolded and taken to an interrogation room at Dhaka Metropolitan Police Detective Branch headquarters. After three to four hours, these detainees were returned to a holding cell, visibly injured, crying and limping from the beatings. Victims were also denied access to urgent medical attention, despite infliction of painful injuries. Some victims were also starved of food for several days. Others were threatened with summary execution.[309]

179. At Detective Branch headquarters at Minto Road, where many of those arrested in Dhaka were brought, torture and ill-treatment was routinely employed to coerce detainees to confess to crimes, to induce them to provide information or to intimidate them.[310] Victims were also subjected to such abuse in ordinary police stations.[311] Torture and ill-treatment were inflicted on male and female detainees, including children.[312] In one case, five women, who had been arrested for trying to join a protest, were beaten with sticks at a police station in Dhaka and suffered bleeding and hematomas. One of the senior officers present took apparent pleasure in severely beating one of the victim's buttocks and also instructed other police officers to specifically hit the women on the buttocks. When one of the other women begged to be let go, a police officer threatened to put a gun in her mouth and kill her, before grabbing her by the blouse and beating her thighs, hands and wrists.[313]

180. Police (including the Detective Branch and CTTC of Dhaka Metropolitan Police) and DGFI officers forced victims to sign pre-written confession statements about their involvement in killings or attacks on State buildings, or to read such confessions out on camera. One victim reported that he was held incommunicado and was only released after signing a statement agreeing not to participate in future protests. Another victim was forced to write and sign a statement acknowledging his role in the protests.[314]

181. Victims gave consistent accounts of inhumane conditions in places of detention. These included being kept in overcrowded facilities, especially at the Detective Branch headquarters and in the central jail in Dhaka, lacking access to safe drinking water or being deliberately denied access to water, bedding and urgent medical care.[315]

182. Despite allegations of torture reported by media and civil society organizations, and the Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police also personally visiting the Minto Road headquarters of Detective Branch during the protests, senior officials launched no investigations to follow up on these allegations.[316]

183. On 20 July, the Home Affairs Ministry issued temporary orders to no longer produce prisoners in court and, on 21 July, it suspended all prison visits by relatives and lawyers. This effectively rendered prisoners incommunicado from that point, substantially increasing their vulnerability to torture and other abuses. While these new rules technically did not apply to police places of detention, lawyers and family members were often unable to visit detainees there either.[317] Supreme Court lawyers challenged the legality of the Ministry of Home Affairs' order of 21 July 2024 through a writ petition. On 14 August, only after protests had ended, the High Court of Bangladesh stayed the order and directed the Government to justify why it would not be illegal.[318]

7. Intimidation and attacks on journalists

184. Between 15 July and 5 August 2024, at least six journalists were killed at or around protests in Dhaka, Sylhet and Sirajganj.[319] Around 200 journalists were injured, according to figures provided by a reputable civil society organisation.[320] In some of the cases below, for which OHCHR obtained first-hand testimony, journalists were victims of security forces indiscriminately firing at protesters. However, in other cases, journalists were directly targeted with violence due to exercise of their profession, including in some cases by protesters. Photojournalists were especially subject to aggressions by different actors who did not wish their involvement in events to be recorded.

185. On 18 July, a journalist was shot and killed by police while he was covering protests in Jatrabari.[321] On 19 July in Sylhet, police fired shotguns loaded with lethal ammunition at a BNP rally. Some of the protesters defended themselves with their flag poles and bricks in response. Among those shot and killed by the police was a journalist who was taking photos at the protest.[322] Recently, on 22 December 2024, the current Inspector-General of Police acknowledged that police had killed the journalist, apologized and promised that the police would seriously investigate this case.[323]

186. Also on 19 July, around Elephant Road in Dhaka, police warned a photojournalist that, if he kept taking photos, he would be shot. A few minutes later, in the same area, several police officers fired shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets at another journalist who was holding a microphone while he stood next to his cameraman. Metal shot injured him in the neck and limbs.[324]

187. The same day in Paltan, a journalist was injured by metal shot when police fired without warning at protesters.[325] At the same event, protesters beat up another journalist, expressing anger that the local media were not sufficiently covering the killing of protesters.[326] In another location, another journalist was also beaten by protesters, who only relented when he identified himself as working for foreign media.[327] At Jahangirnagar university, one journalist was shot by police and another assaulted by Chhatra League supporters.[328]

188. On 2 August 2024, police tried to disperse students protesting in Sylhet with sound grenades and rubber bullets. When some protesters threw bricks in response, the police fired shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets at the crowd. Among those injured was a journalist covering the events, who was hit in the chest, face and head.[329]

189. On 4 August, Awami League supporters shot at a group of journalists who were staying together and had identified themselves as journalists.[330] The same day, a photojournalist was assaulted by protesters in the Farmgate area.[331] On another occasion, two female journalists documenting protests in Shahbagh were threatened with violence by Awami League supporters.[332]

190. The authorities also violated the rights to freedom of expression and media by intimidating and arresting journalists. Journalists testified about a general climate of intimidation and pressure from media owners close to the Awami League who did not allow them to freely report on the protests or the Government's use of force to suppress them. Instead, some media outlets published misinformation that appears to have been fabricated and spread by intelligence and other government officials. Ministry of Information officials and DGFI and NSI agents, including senior officials from the Ministry and DGFI, intimidated

editors and journalists by calling them, coming to their offices and private homes and demanding changes to their reporting and broadcasting.[333] In one case, RAB officers raided a media outlet, assaulted employees and tried to force them at gunpoint to identify a journalist who had obtained information exposing serious violations by military officers. NSI agents issued threats against that media outlet to ensure that this information was not published.[334]

8. Unjustified Internet shutdowns, lacking due process

191. Internet shutdowns (slowing of services, blocking of websites or applications, or the partial or complete disruption of the Internet and communications networks) risk seriously infringing on civil and political rights of large numbers of people, in particular the rights to freedom of expression, information and peaceful assembly. It can also have deeply negative impacts on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. Blanket shutdowns have especially severe consequences and can never be justified. Other forms of network and communications disruptions by State actors are also likely to have indiscriminate adverse effects, rendering them generally disproportionate. Targeted shutdowns of specific communications services provided through the Internet may be considered proportionate and justifiable only in exceptional circumstances, as a last resort when necessary to achieve a legitimate aim such as national security or public order. Internet shutdowns must be grounded in unambiguous, publicly available laws, subject to prior authorization by a court or another independent adjudicatory body, communicated in advance to service providers and subject to meaningful redress mechanisms.[335]

192. Between 15 July and 5 August, the Government imposed Internet shutdowns, without prior announcement, due process or justification, in violation of international human rights law. Based on interviews with senior officials involved and internal communications to service providers obtained by OHCHR, there are reasonable grounds to believe that decisions were taken at the ministerial level and imposed through the National Telecommunications Monitoring Centre (NTMC) and the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).[336] This conclusion is consistent with the findings of a detailed investigation carried out by the Interim Government´s Ministry on Information Technology and shared with OHCHR.[337]

193. During the night from 14-15 July, shortly after midnight, the BTRC instructed mobile operators, in many cases by WhatsApp message, to shut down mobile Internet services around Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University, Chittagong University, Rajshahi University, and Shahjalal University of Science & Technology (SUST). During the night from 15 to 16 July, the order to shut down mobile Internet was expanded to a total of 59 university areas and communicated again by the BTRC. On 17 July, at 23:30, the NTMC ordered operators to block Facebook and YouTube as of midnight. Shortly after midnight, the NTMC further instructed operators to shut down all 4G services and also took technical measures of its own to block mobile Internet. In the evening of 18 July, the BTRC instructed cable companies and Internet gateway providers to cut access to broadband Internet.[338]

194. For five days, the entire country was disconnected from the Internet. People were cut off from banking, health and other essential online services and could often no longer check on loved ones during the ongoing crisis. The shutdown generated enormous losses for the country's fragile economy, which one business group has estimated at USD 10 billion.[339] On 22 July, business leaders complained about the impact of the Internet shutdown in a personal meeting with the then Prime Minister.[340]

195. The next day, broadband Internet was first restored in some areas, and later, across the country. However, social media applications Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp and TikTok continued to be blocked. Mobile Internet was gradually reopened in the afternoon of 28 July, although Facebook and TikTok continued to be blocked. On 2 August, Telegram and Messenger were also blocked upon NTMC instructions. On 4 August, around 8pm, the NTMC ordered the immediate shutdown of mobile Internet at levels higher than basic 2G service. On the morning of 5 August, around 10:30, broadband Internet was shut down and only reopened after Sheikh Hasina fled the country later that day.[341]

196. The Government's shutdown decisions were never formally justified. In public statements, the then State Minister of Post, Telecommunications and Information Technology offered contradictory accounts. He falsely claimed that Internet shutdowns were caused by violent protesters burning down data centres in Dhaka and also had this disinformation deliberately spread by telecommunications providers.[342] His claim is contradicted by testimony provided to OHCHR by other former senior officials and others with inside knowledge, as well as testimonial statements from relevant officials provided to the Interim Government's Ministry of Information Technology.[343] Technical data and pertaining expert analysis obtained by OHCHR also showed that the claim was false, not least since the data indicates that key government installations continued to have Internet access in areas supposedly affected by the burning of data centres.[344]

197. On other occasions, the former State Minister claimed that the Internet shutdowns were a deliberate measure to curb the spread of misinformation, although another former senior official told OHCHR that the shutdowns actually led to the spread of more disinformation.[345]

198. Rather than curbing misinformation, the series of Internet shutdowns instead served to curb the spread of important information in the public interest. The timing and geographic reach of Internet shutdowns consistently tracked the location of major protests and their violent suppression, including between 14-17 July when protests were still overall of peaceful nature. The two full shutdowns of broadband and mobile Internet were implemented just before the Government ordered a strategic escalation of force leading to serious violations described in this report. On the first occasion, the Internet was entirely shut down from the evening of 18 July, just when the security forces were ordered to deploy more lethal force against protesters. The second full shutdown became effective on the morning of 5 August, at the time when Army, BGB and Police were ordered to stop the "March on Dhaka" by force. It therefore appears that the shutdowns principally served the improper and unlawful aim of preventing information about the Government's violent suppression of protests being spread through media and social media.

199. In addition, Internet shutdowns also prevented protesters from organizing themselves via social media. Furthermore, it was indicated to OHCHR by relevant witnesses that shutting down Internet-based services facilitated tracking down and arresting student protesters and opposition activists, as they were forced to communicate via ordinary phone lines, making it easier for the NTMC and other intelligence services to geolocate them and to intrude upon their conversations.[346]

9. Violations and abuses targeting women and girls protesting

200. Female students were often at the forefront of the early protests and their organization, although male-dominated leadership structures had the effect of gradually sidelining them as the protests went on and government repression intensified, a trend that continued after 5 August.[347]

201. Women protesters were not spared from attack by State security forces and armed Awami League supporters. In addition to attacks against female student protesters at Dhaka University and Eden College,[348] female protesters were also among those attacked in other parts of Dhaka, including Jatrabari, Uttara, Dhanmondi, Mirpur, and in other cities such as Cumilla, Savar, Sylhet, and Rangpur.[349] As noted above, women were also subject to arbitrary arrest, torture and other forms of ill-treatment.[350]

202. Violence targeting female protesters was often gender-based in its aims and means, reflecting abusive patterns specifically directed against women and girls. Interlocutors highlighted that it served as a tool to deter women's participation, undermine female leadership within the movement, and reinforce entrenched patriarchal norms. Physical assaults on female protesters often targeted specific body parts such as face, chest, pelvis, and buttocks, as the perpetrators aimed not only to inflict pain but also apparently sought to humiliate and degrade women specifically based on their gender. Physical violence was routinely accompanied by gender-based insults, with female protestors frequently labelled as "whores," "sluts," and "prostitutes," among other such degrading terms. Attackers from

Awami League/Chhatra League and police officers frequently made verbal threats of rape, forced nudity, and other forms of sexual violence against women.[351]

203. OHCHR received credible victim accounts of assaults by Awami League supporters involving physical sexual violence. In one case, that occurred in early August in Dhaka, a group of men armed with bamboo sticks apprehended a woman and questioned her whether she was a protester. After searching her bag and phone and finding a Bangladeshi flag, they physically assaulted her, tearing her hair, ripping her shirt, and groping her breasts and buttocks while scratching her chest and hurling sexualized insults. In another case that occurred in July in Dhaka, two Chhatra League supporters threatened to rape a female protester, her mother, and all the women in her family, and physically assaulted her, including by groping her breasts and genitals while making sexually explicit remarks. After the incident, the victim received threatening calls with further threats of rape against her and other family members. Witnesses also reported Chhatra League supporters assaulting several women in Cumilla, including two female students whom they apprehended and groped before handing them over to the police.[352]

204. Victims of sexual and gender-based violence in Bangladesh often refrain from reporting sexual violence due to the lack of effective state reporting mechanisms, fear of retaliation from perpetrators, especially if they are in law enforcement, and the pervasive social stigma.[353] Victims also often do not receive the medical, psychosocial and legal services they require, and then, if they are willing to report, they are not sufficiently protected, respected and given agency. OHCHR considers it therefore likely that substantially more incidents occurred than could be documented by it, and strongly recommends that sexual and gender-based violence be a particular focus for further, gender-sensitive investigation.

10. Violations and abuses against children

205. Numerous teenage children actively participated in the protests, including high school students from colleges, students at religious madrasas and young workers. Other children observed protests out of curiosity. Street children and others from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (known as *tokai*) were seen among Awami League supporters and among protesters. OHCHR received allegations of both Awami League and opposition parties recruiting and paying such children to engage in violence.[354] Further investigations would be necessary to ascertain the veracity of these reports, as OHCHR did not itself obtained any first-hand testimony of such recruitment.

206. OHCHR documented cases of children killed or seriously injured in the Dhaka areas of Azampur, Badda, Dhanmondi, Farmgate, Jatrabari, Mirpur, Mohammadpur and Rampura and also in other parts of the country, including in Gazipur, Narayanganj, Rangpur and Sylhet.

207. Apart from the targeted killings documented above,[355] security forces also killed child protesters with indiscriminate shooting of rifles and shot guns loaded with lethal ammunition. In Mohammadpur, for instance, police shot indiscriminately at mixed crowds of peaceful protesters and violent rioters, killing, among others, a 17-year-old student with a shot to the head on 19 July, although he posed no threat at the time.[356] On 18 July, a 17-year-old student was killed when police were firing at protesters in Dhanmondi.[357] Another 12-year-old child protester in Dhanmondi died from internal bleeding caused by impact of some 200 metal shot pellets. Other children were maimed for life or otherwise seriously injured. A 16-year-old boy had to have one of his legs amputated after the leg was struck by bullets and metal shot fired by Awami League supporters.[358] A 17-year-old boy was blinded in both eyes when police fired metal shot at protesters.[359]

208. Among those killed were also very young children who were brought by their parents to protests or were shot as bystanders. In Narayanganj, a six-year-old girl was killed by a bullet to the head while standing on the roof of her building, observing violent clashes at a protest.[360]

209. Children were also subjected to arbitrary arrest and often detained in police stations, at Detective Branch headquarters and in prisons, together with adults. They were also

subjected to other violations there, including torture, ill-treatment and coercion to induce confessions.[361] Several teenage boys were detained among large numbers of adults held at the Police's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) headquarters.[362] In Rangpur, a 16-year-old boy was arbitrarily detained for 13 days. The boy and several other children were among the hundreds of persons arrested based on false charges built around the Police's own killing of Abu Sayed.[363]

210. A 17-year-old boy was tortured for two days at Jatrabari Police Station to get him to confess to murdering a police officer, before he was brought to Detective Branch headquarters and tortured there again. Only three days into his detention he was brought before judge who ordered that he be held for a further seven days of remand among adult prisoners, despite his lawyer pointing out to the court that the victim was a child. After extensive media coverage of the case, another judge finally ordered his transfer and continued detention in a child detention facility, where he remained until 6 August.[364]

VI. Violations and abuses in the aftermath of the protests

211. Violent mobs engaged in serious acts of revenge violence, including killings, targeting police and Awami League officials, especially from early August onwards. Some Hindus, Ahmadiyya Muslims and indigenous people from the Chittagong Hill Tracts were also subjected to human rights abuses, including the burning of homes and attacks on places of worship, with different underlying motivations. Authorities in disarray were unable to provide an effective response to protect the human rights of these victims against abuses by non-state actors.[365]

Images 43 and 44, taken on 6 August in Dhaka, showing the aftermath of vandalism and arson.
Image credit: permission on file.[366]

1. Revenge abuses targeting police, Awami League and the media

212. While protests were ongoing, some elements in the crowds committed lynchings and other serious retaliatory violence targeting the police and Awami League officials or supporters, often in apparent direct response to unlawful violence perpetrated by or attributed to the victims. On 19 July, for instance, a crowd in Uttara severely beat the former mayor of Gazipur, and lynched one of his associates, after he and several other armed Awami League supporters had reportedly shot at protesters.[367] The most serious incidents took place from 4 August onwards. As the former Government was increasingly losing control of the country, incidents of retaliatory violence against Awami League and police increased. In Rayganj (Sirajganj district), a large group of men armed with long knives and rods, who, according to witness testimony, looked different in terms of their attire than other protesters in the area, attacked and burned down the local Awami League office. The attackers killed five local Awami League officials and a local journalist. One of the officials was beaten to death after first being publicly humiliated, by being forced to do squats while holding his ears.[368] The same day, a large crowd of young men also attacked Enayetpur Station in the same district. Fifteen police officers were killed in that incident, according to Police.[369] On 5 August,

crowds also burned and looted three police stations in Feni district and assaulted 16 police officers after 300-400 Awami League supporters armed with firearms and other weapons had attacked student protesters in Feni the day before, killing 8 protesters and grievously injuring 79 others, according to information provided by the Police.[370]

213. In Rangpur, armed Awami League supporters, including an Awami League city councillor, opened fire on protesters. A crowd then beat the councillor and one of his associates to death before dragging the councillor's body through the streets.[371] In Narsingdi, a crowd chased down and beat to death six Awami League supporters who had reportedly opened fire on protesters.[372]

214. After Sheikh Hasina left the country on 5 August, revenge violence surged. Violent mobs stormed and burned down numerous police stations. According to Bangladesh Police, 450 out of the country's 639 police stations were destroyed or damaged during attacks.[373] In many cases, the police officers fled or were allowed to leave by their superiors. In others, some officers were lynched or otherwise killed.

215. When Savar Police Station was attacked and burned by a crowd on 5 August, police officers managed to leave, firing shots.[374] In Sylhet, several police stations were attacked and burned down. Police trapped in one of them managed to save themselves through refuge in a local mosque.[375] In Rampura, a local imam guided police officers to a safe place.[376]

216. In response to the police's indiscriminate shooting from Jatrabari Police Station on 5 August, a violent mob from the area attacked the station with petrol bombs, stormed it and then burned and looted the station. The mob killed two RAB officers and at least four Ansar/VDP and police officers. Other RAB and police officers escaped with injuries and were sheltered by local people.[377] Uttara East Police Station was stormed by a violent mob after police had fired indiscriminately at a crowd of protesters. The attackers killed four police officers.[378] In Ashulia, an angry crowd lynched at least three police officers in retaliation for police killing a number of protesters and then burning their bodies.[379] In all three places, the bloodied bodies of slain police officers were strung up in public places.

217. From 5 August, enraged crowds also attacked Awami League officials and offices. In some cases, supporters of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami were involved, according to witness testimony provided to OHCHR. The BNP publicly acknowledged that some of its local leaders and activists, including from its student and youth wings, had participated in revenge violence and reported on 10 August that it had expelled 44 local leaders and activists.[380]

218. One of Awami League's main offices on Dhanmondi road in Dhaka had seen multiple attacks resulting in injuries throughout early August, which were repelled by police, armed Awami League supporters and also BGB troops that had been called in for support. On 5 August, after all staff had left, a crowd stormed the office and burned it down.[381] The same day, an Awami League supporter in Jatrabari was stabbed to death by a group of attackers whom the victim's family identified as BNP members.[382]

219. Violent crowds also vandalized, looted, or burned down official residences, homes and businesses belonging to Awami League leaders, government officials, or their close family members.[383] In one incident, BNP supporters attacked a business of a senior Jubo League leader. According to a witness account, they held his parents hostage, and a local BNP leader allegedly extorted a ransom. BNP supporters took control of the business and assaulted a family member who tried to file a police complaint.[384] In another reported incident, a mob burned down a hotel in Jashore which was owned by a local Awami League leader. Approximately 24 people died in the incident.[385] Crowds that included opposition supporters also stormed and vandalized the Prime Minister's official residence. Another mob looted and attacked with petrol bombs the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum, dedicated to Sheikh Hasina's father as the founder of Bangladesh.[386]

220. One case of apparent revenge violence documented by OHCHR, and based on victim testimony, involved sexual violence. In August, a woman was intercepted by two men who appeared different from students based on their age and attire. They recognized her as being part of Chhatra League. The men insulted her with comments of a sexual nature, grabbed her dress, slapped her face multiple times and punched her chest. A second, more severe attack a few days later against the same woman commenced in a similar manner. The attackers

encircled her, ripped her clothes, groped her breasts and intimate parts, and ultimately raped her. Subsequently, the victim was denied health care at a hospital due to her political affiliation.[387] In other cases, female Awami League and Chhatra League supporters received threats of rape, conveyed verbally and on social media.[388] For the reasons noted above, OHCHR considers it likely that substantially more cases of sexual violence occurred than OHCHR could document.[389] In the aftermath of the protests, some women who had held leadership positions or had visible profiles reported threats or feared reprisals, leading them to cover their faces and hair in an attempt to disguise their identities.[390]

221. In the days after Sheikh Hasina's fall, many police officers feared showing up for work and the police effectively ceased functioning in many places. This facilitated further apparent revenge violence as well as opportunistic crime. While the largest number of incidents of revenge violence seem to have occurred on 5 August and the days immediately after, OHCHR has continued to receive reports about serious attacks by violent individuals and groups against Awami League supporters since the Interim Government came into power on 8 August. On 15 August, for instance, Awami League supporters commemorating the 1975 killing of former President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were attacked, according to some witnesses, by BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami supporters, despite some students trying to intervene. Dozens, including many female Awami League supporters, were injured, and one Awami League leader reportedly died from his injuries two weeks later.[391] On 14 August, a large group of men led by a local BNP supporter attacked a factory owned by a prominent Awami League supporter and assaulted workers to extort money from the owner, according to several witnesses. In a second attack, the factory was burned down. The police neither responded to calls during the two attacks, nor duly investigated them.[392]

222. OHCHR cannot provide its own estimate on the extent of revenge violence, in particular killings of police officers and Awami League members. Awami League provided OHCHR a detailed list with names, dates and causes of killings according to which 144 officials and members of Awami League and its affiliated organisations were killed during attacks that occurred between 1 July and 15 August, including 23 deaths up to 3 August, 35 deaths on 4 August, 68 deaths on 5 August and another 18 deaths between 6 and 15 August.[393] OHCHR was not in a position to verify these incidents independently.

223. According to Bangladesh Police, 44 police officers were killed and a further 2308 were injured during the period of 1 July to 15 August.[394] BGB reported three Border Guards killed and 129 injured.[395] Among Ansar/VDP, three were killed and 63 injured.[396] Two RAB officers were killed and 307 injured.[397]

224. Sources have continued to report revenge violence. Although incidents after 15 August fall outside the temporal scope of this report, OHCHR nevertheless strongly recommends prompt and independent investigations into all reported incidents of this kind, which, if left unaddressed, pose major risks to the country's social fabric, democratic culture and cohesion going forward.

225. Revenge violence also targeted journalists and media outlets that were perceived as biased towards Awami League and supportive of the former Government. On 5 August, shortly after Sheikh Hasina left the country, violent mobs attacked and burned or vandalized several TV stations. One of the stations, Ekattor TV, had already been subject to attack on 3 August by a mob armed with sticks and stones and who looked different from other protesters. On 5 August, several hundred people attacked the station again, eventually forcing their way in, before looting the station and burning it down. Somoy TV was stormed and set on fire by a crowd that reportedly consisted of local people and student protesters. At ATN News TV, attackers physically assaulted two journalists and two other staff, while vandalizing and looting the station. Other attacks on 5 August targeted ATN Bangla, DBC News, My TV, Bijoy TV and Gazi TV. On 7 August, a mob of 200 people, some with firearms, forced their way into Mohona TV station, while chanting BNP slogans. They beat up one of the senior journalists and extorted money in order not to vandalise or burn the station.[398]

226. A considerable number of journalists have been accused of murder and other violent crimes. Several prominent journalists seen as supportive of Awami League have been arrested based on such cases.[399] There have been concerns that these cases have been framed

too broadly. In October, the Interim Government formed a Committee for Monitoring Harassment Cases against Journalists working in Mass Media.[400] In a media interview on 21 November, the Chief Advisor of the Interim Government publicly acknowledged that the murder cases were "*hurriedly done, following the old laws and practices*."[401] In comments provided by the Government of Bangladesh, the authorities emphasized that the cases against journalists were filed by victims as is guaranteed by existing law and that the Government has no involvement in the filing of cases. The Government indicated that investigations will be conducted fairly and will determine the real perpetrators.

227. Since 5 August, many journalists and other civil society observers have perceived a climate of reverse intimidation, where journalists and media outlets are cautious about reporting anything that could be seen as favourable to the Awami League or critical of its political opposition.[402]

2. Abuses against members of distinct religious and indigenous groups

228. Bangladesh is home to diverse communities and groups that are religiously, ethnically or linguistically distinct from the large majority of the population, who are Bangla-speaking Sunni Muslims of Bengali ethnicity. These communities and groups have been subject to structural and ingrained social discrimination, grounded also in historical events and a constitutional framework that, despite prohibitions of discrimination, emphasises the Bengali and Islamic identity of the country. Especially in times of political upheaval, these groups have been the subject of scapegoating and hate crimes. Their genuine concerns have often been the subject of misinformation, distortion and manipulation for broader national and regional political ends not related to their own plight.

229. OHCHR conducted 34 interviews related to attacks on distinct religious and indigenous groups, including with 12 victims of attacks suffered between 1 July and 15 August 2024. In addition, the OHCHR met with representatives of several communities, as well as with civil society, activists, human rights and minority rights' defenders and members of religious organisations, law enforcement officers, and media correspondents. However, detailed information on some alleged cases, including sexual violence in specific regions, remains unverified or requires further investigation. Corroborating the true extent of violence against these groups has proven challenging, especially as reports from advocacy and religious organizations often conflict to varying degrees with those of on-the-ground journalists. In addition, some allegations reported to OHCHR occurred in remote areas and collecting first-hand accounts was not feasible in light of the time and resources available to OHCHR.

230. The information provided by interlocutors nevertheless indicates a broad pattern of violence against specific communities rooted in religious, ethnic, and political biases, with incidents clustering around themes of property destruction and the suppression of diverse identities. The power vacuum created by the unrest and overrunning of police stations led to increased vulnerabilities for distinct religious and indigenous groups, particularly Hindus, indigenous groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), and Ahmadiyya Muslims. Different and often intersecting motives drove these attacks, ranging from religious and ethnic discrimination to perceived opportunities for revenge against Awami League supporters among minorities, local communal disputes, including about land, and interpersonal issues. OHCHR acknowledges that misinformation has clouded the understanding and context of several incidents, emphasizing the importance of verified sources in reporting these events.[403]

231. Despite the above constraints, OHCHR was able to gather sufficient information from which the following key patterns emerge, indicating the need for further investigation.

Attacks on Hindu homes, businesses and places of worship, and related displacement

232. In the aftermath of the former Government's fall, widespread attacks were reported against Hindu homes, businesses, and places of worship, especially in rural and historically tense areas such as Thakurgaon, Lalmonirhat, and Dinajpur, but also in other places such as Sylhet, Khulna, and Rangpur. This destruction was especially prevalent in areas perceived to

be sympathetic to the Awami League, as Hindus have often been stereotypically associated with this political faction.[404]

233. OHCHR interviewed Hindu businessowners and homeowners in some of these areas, who reported that their businesses, houses, land and religious sites had been targeted, while shops owned by Hindus were also looted. The violence often involved property destruction, arson, and physical threats, compounded by insufficient police responses, suggesting systemic impunity and potential political motives.[405] For instance, one interviewee said that Hindu funeral sites and temples were vandalized in Thakurgaon, and other witnesses described that, after attacks on their property, approximately 3,000 – 4,000 Hindus from those villages, fearing communal violence, had sought refuge near the border with India, but were reportedly turned back by India's Border Security Force (BSF).[406] Affected families reported a pervasive sense of insecurity and heavy financial losses, with many losing essential items, livestock, and whole businesses.

234. Witnesses and victims accounts provided to one source indicated that attacks were primarily carried out by individuals involved in "victory processions" celebrating the former Government's collapse.[407] While the identity of the perpetrators in these attacks was not always clear, witnesses to some of the incidents testified that the attackers were local supporters of the BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, and other organized groups. However, there were also interventions from these political parties condemning the violence. After 6 August, there were localized efforts by BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, student groups, and social organizations to protect houses and places of worship of the Hindu community. BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and Students against Discrimination leaders as well as the Chief Advisor of the Interim Government all made public statements condemning the violence.[408]

235. Several allegations were reported of violent mobs coercing Hindu headmasters and teachers to resign. In one such case, local BNP leaders were among the assailants, according to the victim's testimony.[409]

236. National Security Intelligence (NSI) information provided to OHCHR through the Interim Government details 37 violent attacks targeting minorities that occurred between 5 and 15 August. These attacks occurred in Jessore, Noakhali, Patuakhali, Natore, Dinajpur, Chandpur, Shariatpur, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Khulna, Mherpur, Barguna, Barisal, Rajbari, Thakurgaon, Faridpur, Pirojpur, and Netrakorna. Most of the reported attacks involved the vandalising, looting or burning of one or several homes or businesses. Four attacks targeted temples. In some of these cases the victims were physically assaulted, including one woman whose throat was slit and a man who was injured with sharp weapons. Nine of the identified victims were associated with Awami League political activity. In respect of five attacks, the NSI report identified BNP supporters among the attackers.[410] In January 2025, Bangladesh Police published a report that examined 1,769 attacks and acts of vandalism against minorities reported by the non-governmental Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Unity Council that took place in Bangladesh from 4-20 August. According to the Police's findings, 1,234 of these attacks had a political background, 20 were communal in nature and 161 were false claims.[411]

Attacks on Ahmadiyya Muslims

237. The Ahmadiyya Muslim community emphasizes its inclusion within the broader Muslim community, but still experience hostility and discrimination by some adhering to other Islamic schools of belief. This community faced targeted violence in the aftermath of the protests, with seven incidents reported between 5 and 9 August.[412] OHCHR received credible allegations that, on August 5, a group led by religious clerics attacked several members of Ahmadiyya community in Panchagarh district and caused the destruction of 117 houses and a mosque, with significant additional property losses. OHCHR also documented the case of a 16-year-old boy who was severely injured during this 5 August attack in Panchagarh. Following the attack, he had to undergo brain surgery and experienced fluctuating health, later dying from his injuries[413] OHCHR is not aware of any steps taken by the authorities to ensure accountability for these incidents, including for the killing of the boy.

Abuses in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

238. In the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), land conflicts and policies promoting the relocation of Bengalis from lowland areas to the CHT, often with the backing of the military, have marginalized local communities, sparking long-standing struggles. These communities are considered indigenous peoples by United Nations human rights mechanisms.[414] The Government of Bangladesh rejects the term indigenous and recognises these communities as ethnic minorities under the Constitution. A Peace Accord reached in 1997 was never fully implemented, and military presence and internal conflicts persist.[415] In the days following the unrest, indigenous people encountered harassment from Bengalis, amid accusations of loyalty to the former Government. Tensions had been escalating since mid-July 2024, driven in part by protests over the quota system but also misinformation campaigns. These campaigns included a fabricated claim that a Bengali student had been denied admission in favour of an indigenous student, despite both actually being admitted. Such narratives fuelled hate speech and increased intimidation efforts by Bengali groups in CHT, some reportedly linked to the military. During the protests and also after 5 August, activism and graffiti campaigns in the CHT primarily focused on local issues, including demands for demilitarization. The military response centred around erasing the graffiti and detaining activists to suppress dissent.[416] These actions further deterred the community from mobilizing more broadly, as fear of intensified crackdowns kept levels of participation low.[417] According to witness testimonies, on 5 August, violence escalated in Bandarban, where indigenous and Bengali groups converged for protests. Some armed Bengali groups arrived by truck, attacked the residence of a local member of parliament and physically assaulted an indigenous community member.[418]

Attacks on temples, mosques, shrines and other places of worship

239. There has been a longer record of attacks on places of worship, especially temples and shrines, in Bangladesh.[419] In terms of the period under consideration in this report, between 5 and 15 August, media and other local sources reported attacks on places of worship associated with Hindu, Ahmadiyya, Buddhist and Christian communities across several regions. According to information submitted to OHCHR, in Burashardubi, Hatibandha, Lalmonirhat three temples were attacked and set ablaze, along with the looting of approximately 20 houses, reflecting significant levels of community unrest. There was also an arson attack in Meherpur on a temple of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). Specific incidents reported to OHCHR also underlined the complexities surrounding these attacks. For example, the Kali temple in Nandipara was attacked on August 7, but, upon investigation, it became clear that the damage stemmed not from religious intolerance, but rather a local dispute over land ownership.[420]

Allegations of sexual violence

240. OHCHR received second-hand reports alleging incidents of sexual violence targeting women from distinct religious and indigenous communities, particularly after 5 August.[421] Despite extensive efforts, OHCHR was unable to obtain first-hand testimonies, nor corroborate these allegations with additional information, nor could it establish exact dates for the alleged incidents. Safety concerns and the difficulty of accessing remote areas where victims were unwilling or unable to come forward due to fear of reprisals or social ostracism posed significant challenges. In alleged cases involving victims with disabilities or where the primary contacts were close relatives, such as a father or husband, obtaining victims' consent or confidential accounts was nearly impossible, as privacy could not be guaranteed. These obstacles severely limited OHCHR's ability to conduct thorough, trauma-informed interviews that prioritized victims' safety and confidentiality. The recurrence of these allegations nevertheless highlights the significant barriers to reporting such cases to the authorities, perpetuating an environment of wider impunity.

241. The breakdown and continued dysfunctionalities of law enforcement have facilitated attacks and other violations against members of distinct religious or ethnic groups. Law enforcement responses have been widely criticized as insufficient, with complaints often dismissed or inadequately addressed. The Interim Government reported publicly in January

2025 that it had made at least 100 arrests in relation to 115 cases filed in connection with violence involving minorities that took place since 4 August.[422]

242. OHCHR has continued to receive reports about attacks and abuses against members of distinct religious and indigenous communities after 15 August and recommends as a priority that all such alleged incidents are promptly and independently investigated.

VII. Accountability Efforts

243. In accordance with the terms of reference agreed with the Interim Government,[423] OHCHR also assessed accountability efforts thus far to address serious human rights violations and abuses.

244. In line with international human rights law, Bangladesh is under an obligation to provide effective remedies for the serious human rights violations attributable to the State, including by ensuring criminal accountability, providing prompt, adequate and effective reparation to victims of state violations and ensuring that such violations will not recur. Extrajudicial killings, other unlawful taking of life, torture, sexual violence and other serious human rights violations and abuses must be subject to independent, impartial, prompt, thorough, effective, credible, and transparent investigation capable of leading to the prosecution of identified perpetrators. Such investigations must be initiated irrespective of whether the victim or their family issued a complaint (*ex officio*). Whenever state officials use firearms or cause death or serious injury in a law enforcement situation, this must also be duly investigated ex officio, irrespective of whether unlawfulness of conduct is specifically alleged.[424]

1. No genuine accountability efforts up to 5 August

245. Between 1 July and 5 August 2024, OHCHR was unable to ascertain any genuine efforts by the authorities of the former Government to investigate, let alone ensure accountability for, any of the serious violations and abuses committed by security forces and Awami League supporters.

246. Even though these would also have been required under Bangladesh's own domestic laws,[425] former senior officials confirmed that during that period no investigations into the security forces' use of firearms were conducted. Allegations of torture and serious ill-treatment were not investigated either. Former officials cited the pressing security situation prevailing at the time, claiming that no victim complaints were received.[426] However, numerous reports detailing alleged violations published by credible local and international media, and reports issued by human rights groups should have given ample cause to open investigations at their own initiative. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs forwarded to the Prime Minister's Office, as well as the Home Affairs Ministry, information from international human rights organisations about violations. On at least one occasion, the Foreign Minister personally briefed the then Prime Minister about human rights concerns raised by foreign and international leaders. Another senior official also personally raised concerns about excessive force in a meeting with the Prime Minister at the very beginning of August.[427]

247. On 17 July, the then Prime Minister announced the establishment of a judicial inquiry headed by three judges, while blaming all incidents on "opposition instigators" and "terrorists." The inquiry was assigned to investigate the "*incidents of death, violence, vandalism, arson, looting, terrorist activity and damages caused by the quota reform movement,*" suggesting an exclusive and one-sided focus on the acts of protesters alone, leaving to one side the much more widespread violence of the security forces. Moreover, as confirmed by testimony received from a former senior government official and another official, this judicial inquiry never issued any even interim report or findings, nor left behind any other record of its activities when it stopped functioning on 5 August.[428]

248. Rather than taking steps towards ensuring accountability, the authorities appear instead to have made coordinated efforts to suppress the truth about violations that had occurred. DGFI, NSI, Detective Branch, and other police maintained a presence at hospitals

where many victims were treated and also confiscated records with important evidentiary value from them.[429] In some cases, police also took bodies from hospitals, hid bodies from families or burned bodies in an apparent effort to conceal killings.[430] In some cases, projectiles were removed from the bodies of victims in the hospital and handed over to police officers without any record of their provenance.[431] OHCHR also received information about Police and RAB units being given unrecorded allotments of ammunitions, so that their extensive volume of shooting would not be picked up in ammunition expenditure accounts.[432] RAB maintained, in its information provided to OHCHR, that 14 out of its 15 deployed battalions had not shot a single rifle bullet during the entire protest period, which would be entirely inconsistent with the cases of RAB shooting at protesters in different places that were documented by OHCHR.[433]

249. Police and other authorities also intimidated victims, their families, lawyers, journalists and others who called for accountability or otherwise drew attention to killings by security forces. Regarding certain high-profile cases of killings, DGFI agents called or personally visited victim families and their lawyers in an effort to intimidate them.[434]

250. The authorities also sought to conceal violations by the security forces by falsely accusing others. Notably, hundreds of people were wrongly accused and arrested in connection with the emblematic case of the killing of Abu Sayed, even though widely circulating video footage and other information made it evident that police had killed him.[435] In relation to cases of evident killings and injuries caused by the security forces, the then Prime Minister and other senior officials also made public statements falsely accusing BNP or Jamaat-e-Islami members.[436]

251. The National Human Rights Commission, within its own mandate, also failed to hold authorities accountable for human rights violations and protect victims. Apart from a vague statement on 30 July, in which the Commission described the loss of life as "*very unfortunate and a violation of human rights*" and urged the authorities not to make mass arrests,[437] it did not make any further public interventions nor launch any investigations during the entire period up to 5 August, as far as OHCHR could ascertain.

2. Ongoing accountability efforts of the Interim Government

252. The Interim Government has committed itself to ensuring accountability for serious violations. Its efforts to date have primarily focused on expeditiously bringing criminal cases before Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT). The ICT is a domestic court, initially established by Sheikh Hasina's Government in 2009 to prosecute alleged international crimes committed during Bangladesh's 1971 war of independence. The Tribunal's jurisdiction is based on the International Crimes Act adopted in 1973, which was amended in November 2024. In the early 2010s, several leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami were convicted in trials and sentenced to death. Six of the convicted were hanged. At the time, OHCHR and United Nations human rights mechanisms considered that the trials violated due process and fair trial rights in light of the ICT's relevant rules of procedure and the actual conduct of the trials in question.[438] The imposition of the death penalty also runs counter to the United Nation's opposition, as a matter of policy, to the application of capital punishment in any circumstances.

253. On 7 September, the Interim Government appointed counsel of several of those former accused, as the new ICT chief prosecutor. In October, the prosecution indicted former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, 46 former government ministers and other senior Awami League officials, and 17 law enforcement officials for alleged crimes against humanity. Twenty of them have reportedly been arrested, and the ICT has issued arrest warrants for the others.[439]

254. A number of interlocutors, including some public interest lawyers and human rights defenders, have expressed concern about these proceedings based on the ICT's controversial legacy, its legal framework and continuing doubts, notwithstanding the change of government, as to its capacity to conduct genuinely independent, fair and effective proceedings. OHCHR was informed that ICT prosecutors are under pressure to move complex cases forward quickly to respond to public demands for justice, while lacking the capacity and resources to investigate, gather evidence, protect witnesses and conduct fair prosecutions through to judgment. Some interlocutors advanced that a State referral of the

situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague would be preferable to avoid perceptions of partiality and ensure independent and impartial justice.[440]

255. Recognizing a number of due process and fair trial concerns, the Interim Government recently approved amendments to the ICT Act. These amendments address some, but not all, of the concerns raised by OHCHR and others, such as extending the period between the prosecution's disclosure of evidence and the start of the trial. Other concerns, however, remain. The ICT Act still provides, for example, that the Tribunal may at "*any stage of the trial without previously warning the accused person, put such questions to him as the Tribunal considers necessary,*" and then draw inferences from the accused's refusal to respond, in clear contravention of article 14(3) of the ICCPR.[441] The necessary fair trial guarantees related to trials in absentia, which the ICT Act permits, also remain lacking. The amended ICT Act also continues to authorize the Tribunal to hand down the death penalty.[442] Positively, the Government has communicated to OHCHR that it would further amend the ICT Act, if needed. In the terms of reference for this fact-finding, OHCHR communicated to the Interim Government that, building on established United Nations policy, OHCHR cannot assist any criminal justice processes that permit capital punishment or that raise, in OHCHR's view, serious concerns about fair trial, due process or other relevant international human rights standards.[443]

256. Cases against police officers and Awami League officials are pending in the ordinary criminal justice system. Among those arrested were the former Inspector-General of Police, the former head of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police and the former Director-General of the NTMC. No information was received on criminal prosecutions in relation to protest-related violations that are being pursued against any personnel who served with the Army, DGFI or NSI. According to information OHCHR received from the Bangladesh Police on 30 January 2025, 458 police officers, including 259 senior officers, were among the accused in 1181 ongoing investigations. 35 police officers have been removed from their position and 163 had been temporarily suspected from duty.[444] The BGB reported to OHCHR that it had completed departmental investigations into all instances of BGB shooting and that "*prosecutions are underway,*" but provided no further specifics. BGB also reported that two mid-level officers had been removed from their positions on disciplinary grounds.[445] In its information provided to OHCHR, RAB reported that eight RAB officers had been transferred back to the agencies that had seconded them. RAB also indicated that some RAB officers were named as parties in a number of criminal cases, without providing further details and while maintaining that RAB "*did not take part in any activities that might be viewed as illegal or human rights violations*".[446] DGFI, Ansar/VDP and NSI had no investigations or accountability measures to report.[447]

257. According to lawyers and other sources, progress of cases in the ordinary justice system has been slow. Replicating poor practices of the past, victims, often under the reported pressure of political actors, have submitted mass criminal complaints and, in several reported instances, the Police also filed first information reports listing large numbers of people. According to Police, the 1,181 ongoing investigations have a total of 98,137 accused, including 25,033 instances of political party leaders being named among the accused.[448] This would mean that every case encompassed, on average, 84 accused persons, including 21 political party leaders among them. The mass case approach leads to large numbers of people being investigated or even arrested despite having no legally relevant connection to crimes, while scarce investigative, prosecutorial and judicial capacities risk being diverted away from preparing strong indictments against persons with clear legal responsibility for alleged crimes.[449] OHCHR tracked several cases of well-documented police killings that appeared to be blatantly unlawful, in which identified perpetrators were not arrested, or arrested only after considerable delay and public pressure.

258. Public trust in the Police to conduct the effective investigations needed to sustain successful prosecutions remains low. As Bangladesh lacks an effective and independent mechanism to investigate criminal complaints involving police and other security forces, there is widespread concern that Police investigators will not duly investigate cases concerning their own current or former colleagues.[450] Even the ICT's investigation team reportedly relies entirely on serving or former police officers.

259. Many security officials in positions just below the top level, who could be directly affected by investigation and prosecution in respect of criminal conduct detailed in this report, remain in their posts. OHCHR has received information indicating that attempts by security sector officials to tamper with evidence and to intimidate victims, families, witnesses and lawyers have continued, though less overtly than up to 5 August.[451] According to a witness with inside knowledge, security officials have sought to destroy evidence of torture facilities operated.[452] In the aftermath of the protests, the family of one victim killed by police in July received an intimidating visit from a close family member of one of the accused officers, while intelligence officers tried to pressure the family's lawyer.[453] In relation to another police killing, a group of Detective Branch officers came to the home of the victim's family to threaten them.[454] Bangladesh's authorities, including the ICT, continue to lack a witness protection programme, making it easier for perpetrators in the security forces to intimidate victims and key witnesses.[455]

260. There are also concerns about undue pressure on defence lawyers, some of whom were refused access to court, assaulted and threatened, and permitted only limited access to their clients or case files, according to witnesses.[456] The Government also informed OHCHR that many lawyers who would have normally represented defendants linked to the former Government and Awami League had fled or no longer came to court, but that Bangladesh had a legal aid mechanism to ensure representation to any accused who would otherwise not be represented.

261. In accordance with its human rights obligation to protect the rights to life and security of person against real risks of serious abuses by others, the Interim Government must also ensure that violent crimes that have targeted supporters of the Awami League, police officers or members of distinct religious and indigenous groups are promptly and independently investigated with due diligence, and identified perpetrators brought to justice. While the Interim Government has not provided OHCHR with requested information on its accountability efforts in this area, it has publicly reported to have carried out at least 100 arrests specifically in relation to communal attacks on minorities.[457] The Interim Government has not yet published any comprehensive figures on arrests in relation to revenge violence against Awami League supporters or police officers.

262. Many perpetrators of revenge violence and abuses against distinct religious and indigenous groups apparently continue to enjoy impunity. In this regard, OHCHR notes a reported announcement by the Interim Government indicating that it had adopted an order on 14 October 2024, according to which "*students and citizens who put forth all efforts to make this uprising successful will not face prosecution, arrest, or harassment for their acts between July 15 and August 8*."[458] In reference to this announcement, the Government indicated to OHCHR that the violence in question was "*mostly done as desperate self-defence or in response to extreme provocation*" and took the view that its approach aligned with international norms, suggesting discretion in prosecution to stabilize the situation, heal the nation in the post-conflict period and promote national reconciliation.[459] In light of human rights obligations to protect the rights to life, security of person and non-discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity and religion, which require States to also investigate and prosecute intentional killings and other serious violence committed by private persons in their jurisdiction, OHCHR considers that, at a minimum, crimes against life, sexual and gender-based violence, aggravated forms of assault, arson targeting inhabited buildings and any crimes based on ethnic, religious or gender discrimination should not be subject to blanket exclusion from arrest or prosecution. Victims of other unlawful acts such as the damaging and looting of homes or other property should not be deprived of their rights to bring civil claims against perpetrators, as well as against any authorities that wilfully or negligently failed to protect them.[460] Relevant criminal defences such as the right to private self-defence can and should still be considered on a case-by-case basis and would not warrant a blanket exclusion of prosecution. OHCHR also considers that national healing and reconciliation are also better achieved when grounded in an impartial approach to criminal justice.

263. In addition to holding perpetrators criminally accountable, there is an urgent need to ensure full redress for victims of serious human rights violations, including through reparation for serious human rights violations, in part because many victims and their families are in precarious positions as a result of those violations. For example, many families lost

their primary breadwinner, while other victims were permanently incapacitated and can no longer work to make a living. One man, among the many who were blinded by police firing metal pellets, underscored "*we do not want handouts, we want the government to provide employment for us since we lost our jobs when we lost our eyesight*."[461] On 17 August, the Interim Government announced that it would cover the medical expenses of those injured during the protests, although the implementation of this decision has reportedly encountered problems.[462] In September, the Interim Government established the Martyrs' Memorial Foundation to provide support for the families of those killed and injured during the protests. At the end of 2024, it reported having distributed some 480 million Taka (ca. 4 million USD) to families of those killed and to those injured. In January 2025, the Interim Government also announced that it would distribute a further 6.38 billion Taka (ca. 52.5 million USD) in assistance to the wounded and the families of those killed.[463]

264. In addition, the Interim Government has commenced other efforts to memorialize victims, instituting, for instance, a programme to name playgrounds and sports stadiums after those killed during the protests and establishing an Uprising Directorate under the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs to preserve the history and memory of the protests.[464] A number of civil society initiatives to hold memorial art and photographic exhibitions of the protest movement have been actively encouraged. Victims and civil society have also led initiatives such as the establishment of healing circles to address the trauma of protest victims.

265. Finally, the Interim Government has commenced some laudable efforts to address impunity and the legacy of serious violations predating and enabling[465] the violations of the 2024 protests, notably by ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, including enforced disappearance as a crime in the amended International Crimes Act of 1973, and appointing a commission of inquiry to investigate enforced disappearances. On 14 December 2024, the Commission presented its interim report to the Interim Government. Having already verified 758 disappearance cases, the Commission found that RAB, Detective Branch, Counterterrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) branch and DGFI were implicated in enforced disappearances. It recommended, notably, the dissolution of the Rapid Action Battalion.[466]

VIII. Findings on Responsibilities for Violations of International Law and Human Rights Abuses

266. Based on a thorough analysis of all the information laid out in this report, OHCHR has reasonable grounds to believe that, between 15 July and 5 August, the former Government and its security and intelligence apparatus, in coordination with violent elements linked to the Awami League, systematically engaged in serious human rights violations and abuses. Violations were committed with the knowledge, coordination and direction of the political leadership and senior security sector and intelligence officials.

267. Violations attributable to the former Government include violations of the right to life, the right to liberty and security of person, the right to freedom from torture and ill-treatment, the right of persons deprived of their liberty to be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, the right to fair trial, the right to privacy, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right of peaceful assembly, the right to non-discrimination, the right the highest attainable standard of health, the rights of children and the right to an effective remedy for human rights violations.

268. Some local members and supporters of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami opposition parties bear responsibility for human rights abuses committed during revenge attacks, including against members of the Hindu community.

269. The Interim Government has an obligation to ensure effective remedies for serious human rights violations and the revenge human rights abuses committed during the period under investigation, including by fully investigating and establishing the truth about them, holding perpetrators accountable, in accordance with international standards, ensuring that victims receive adequate reparation, and ensuring that such violations and abuses do not recur in the future.

1. Former Government and Awami League

270. The serious human rights violations and abuses committed by the security forces and armed Awami League supporters between 15 July and 5 August stemmed from a calculated effort to retain power at all costs, by employing unlawful means to repress the protests. From the early days of July, the leadership of the former Government and the Awami League considered that the protest movement had been "infiltrated" by its political opposition and understood that the protests could become a serious political threat to the unpopular Government's continued hold on power. Several days before her *razakar* remarks, the then Prime Minister had already privately and publicly signalled that she would take a hardline approach, including by appointing her feared DGFI military intelligence agency as the interface with the student movement. Senior officials in Government and Awami League publicly echoed her approach and started to delegitimize and intimidate the student protesters, laying the ground for the violations that followed.

271. From mid-July, the former Government and the Awami League mobilized a continuously expanding circle of armed actors, using increasingly violent means, to suppress the protest movement through systematic serious human rights violations and abuses, including hundreds of extrajudicial killings, thousands more seriously injured by unlawful force, and infliction of extensive arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other forms of ill-treatment.

Chhatra League and other Awami League supporters

272. The initial effort to suppress protests consisted of brutal attacks by armed Chhatra League supporters against male and female students exercising their right of peaceful assembly on and around university premises. These attacks were orchestrated and incited by senior Awami League officials, including several government ministers. Drawing on offensive terminology introduced by the then Prime Minister in relation to student protesters, the Chhatra League President publicly pledged that no '*razakar will be on the streets'* from 15 July, and he gave a '*directive'* to Chhatra League and other party activists to deal with the student protesters. Obaidul Quader, Awami League's second highest official and a senior government minister, reinforced the call for violence. Three other ministers made inciting statements branding the students as traitors and *razakars* who no longer had the right to protest.[467]

273. As the protests continued, armed Awami League supporters continued to launch attacks on protesters, jointly or in alignment with the State security forces. In some cases, members of parliament and other state officials led the attacks.[468]

Bangladesh Police, RAB, BGB and Ansar/VDP

274. From 16 July, Bangladesh Police engaged in use of force violations to prevent students from exercising their right of peaceful assembly, including by violently suppressing the protest of 17 July at Dhaka University without valid grounds.[469]

275. Well before the protests generalized and related violent unrest erupted, the Government had already been deploying heavily armed paramilitary forces from RAB, BGB, and Ansar/VDP Battalions, with an apparent intention of militarizing its response and using ever more lethal force.[470] To suppress the protesters' attempt to achieve a complete shutdown of Dhaka and other cities, it fully shifted to a militarized approach for suppressing the protests. While helicopters sought to intimidate protesters from above, the police and RAB on the ground used disproportionate force, especially by shooting military rifles and shotguns loaded with lethal ammunition at protesters who were often trying to block roads but did not present an imminent threat of death or serious injury. Many protesters felt compelled to defend themselves.

276. Some elements in the crowds also initiated unlawful violence targeting government buildings, transport infrastructure and police, to which the Government responded with the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of firearms. Having almost lost control of the strategically important Bangladesh TV station during a crowd attack on 18 July, the Government ordered security forces to "*use maximum force*." In line with these reinforced

orders, BGB, Police and RAB, shot even more extensively at mixed crowds of peaceful protesters and violent rioters from 19 July onwards.[471]

277. In some cases, police and other security forces deliberately killed or maimed victims, including children, by shooting them at point blank range.

Bangladesh Army

278. Bangladesh Army soldiers fired military rifles loaded with lethal ammunition at protesters on at least three occasions with an apparent intent to kill, resulting in at least one extrajudicial killing.[472] Army units also fired automatic weapons loaded with lethal ammunition into the air, which is irresponsible and is likely to have led to additional injury and death. Overall, however, OHCHR found fewer instances of Army personnel using unlawful force against protestors, compared to other security forces. OHCHR found this to be linked to officers and soldiers on the ground increasingly resisting the use of firearms. Junior officers went as far as openly telling their Army Chief in the Army meeting of 3 August that they did not want to shoot protesters.

279. However, the Army still played an important enabling role for serious violations by police and paramilitary forces. The Army provided a protective cover shielding the police and other security forces from counterattack, notably during the brutal clearance of the blockaded Dhaka-Chittagong Highway in which police and RAB committed numerous extrajudicial killings in and around Jatrabari.[473] The Army took part in planning the Jatrabari highway clearance operation, deployed troops to it, and the Army Chief personally visited Jatrabari to certify its completion. In late July, the Army also played a strategic role in providing perimeter security and standby capacity during block raids in which police and RAB arbitrarily arrested large numbers of people to prevent a reignition of mass protests. On 4 August, the Army Chief, joined the then Prime Minister, the Home Minister and other senior security officials, in developing and agreeing to a plan that foresaw Army, BGB and Bangladesh Police forcibly stopping the "March on Dhaka" on 5 August. To its credit, the Army, and also the BGB, ultimately largely stood by and did not implement their parts of that plan.[474] The Army facilitated the transition to an Interim Government, but also the moving of the former Prime Minister out of the country and with it the immediate reach of domestic accountability processes.

Intelligence agencies and specialised Police branches

280. The intelligence services – NSI, NTMC and the Armed Force's DGFI - and the specialised branches of the Police – Detective Branch, Special Branch and also Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) – engaged in widespread human rights violations of their own to support the violent suppression of the protest movement. All of them provided intelligence to guide the mass arbitrary arrest campaign in late July, including based on unlawful mass surveillance measures obtained through the NTMC. DGFI, NSI and Detective Branch obstructed lifesaving medical care when they deployed to hospitals to collect information about injured protesters, arrested patients and intimidated medical care providers.[475] The Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police employed arbitrary incommunicado detention, torture and other forms of ill-treatment at its Minto Road headquarters to extract information and confessions from detainees, including from children. CTTC also served as a hub for arbitrary detention, including of children. Detective Branch and DGFI colluded in the abduction and arbitrary detention of student leaders, and efforts to coerce them to renounce the protests, including through torture and other ill-treatment.[476]

281. The intelligence services also played a key role in the organized effort to conceal violations. The NTMC worked together with the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission to impose strategically timed and targeted Internet shutdowns.[477] These served to prevent the public exposure of the ongoing violations via media and social media. The DGFI and NSI, as well as the Ministry of Information and RAB, pressured media outlets not to report fully and truthfully about the mass protests and their violent suppression.[478] The DGFI joined the Police in intimidating victims, their families and lawyers to make sure they keep quiet about violations.[479]

Political leadership

282. The integrated and systematic effort using the entire range of police, paramilitary, military and intelligence state actors and wings of the Awami League to commit and sustain serious violations and abuses occurred with the knowledge, coordination and direction of the political leadership of the former Government and Awami League. There are accordingly reasonable grounds to believe that the political leadership of the country was directly implicated in the violations committed.

283. The then Home Affairs Minister chaired regular meetings of the "Core Committee," which brought together the heads of Police, paramilitary forces and intelligence agencies and, from 20 July, a senior representative of the Bangladesh Army. These "Core Committee" meetings discussed strategic directives on the overall approach, deployments of forces, and specific operations of strategic importance.[480]

284. In parallel to the coordination efforts of the Home Affairs Minister, the Prime Minister's Office was also directly engaged. Throughout the period of mid-July to 5 August, the then Prime Minister received daily reports from the heads of three intelligence agencies who had a direct reporting line to her (DGFI, NSI and Police Special Branch). On 21 July, one of those reports warned her about security forces using excessive force.[481] Senior officials also relayed such concerns to her in early August.[482] The Prime Minister also discussed protest-related issues with her government ministers in at least one Cabinet meeting, held on 29 July.[483] The Prime Minister and senior advisors in her office also conferred directly and over the telephone with senior security officials to supervise operations and to issue orders.[484]

285. Political leaders and security commanders personally had opportunity to get a direct impression of the violations being inflicted and their impacts. The then Home Minister, accompanied by the Inspector General of Police and the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner, personally went to Jatrabari on 20 or 21 July, when police and RAB were shooting and killing numerous protesters on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway and around Jatrabari Police Station. An authenticated video filmed on the occasion shows a local police commander telling the Minister and the two senior police chiefs that the police were shooting people dead.[485] During the protest period, the DMP Commissioner personally visited Detective Branch headquarters on Minto Road, a key detention facility that, at the time, was overflowing with arbitrarily detained persons and torture victims.[486] The then Prime Minister also interacted with a number of victims during her visits to several hospitals and also spoke to families of victims of extrajudicial killings committed by security forces in late July.[487]

286. Some former senior officials interviewed by OHCHR claimed that the then Prime Minister and the Home Affairs Minister instructed the security forces to limit the use of force and keep it within the law, but that security forces in the field overstepped these limits.[488] These claims lack credibility. Security forces around Dhaka and across the country engaged in very similar patterns of serious violations, acting in coordinated operations bringing together different security forces, and armed Awami League supporters, over a continuing period of time. OHCHR considers highly unlikely that all of these security forces, in each of these places, would have systematically disregarded the orders and instructions of their senior leadership. Violations instead followed the patterns established during the Government's suppression of earlier sets of protests in previous years, although the number of extrajudicial killings that occurred in July and August 2024 was unprecedented. Many of the most serious violations were committed by elite, well-trained and highly disciplined agencies reporting either directly to the then Home Affairs Minister such as BGB and RAB, or to the then Prime Minister herself as was the case for DGFI and NSI.

287. None of the serious violations that occurred were subject to any genuine investigations or accountability efforts. Senior leaders received numerous reports about the situation on the ground and violations that were occurring. Instead, the then Prime Minister and other senior officials actively reinforced the efforts of other officials to conceal violations by falsely alleging responsibility of protesters and opposition parties for the killings in fact committed by state security forces.[489]

288. OHCHR also received testimony from senior officials showing that the political leadership gave direct orders and directives linked to operations that entailed serious violations. During the "Core Committee" meeting of 18 July, the then Home Minister

directed the BGB to use more lethal force to suppress the protests. In other "Core Committee" meetings, he elaborated with senior security officials the plan to unblock the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway with unlawful lethal force. The mass arbitrary arrest campaign, including the block raids it involved, were also elaborated in "Core Committee" meetings chaired by the Home Affairs Minister and attended by senior security officials from Police, BGB, RAB, Army, DGFI and other security and intelligence actors. The blanket Internet shutdowns were based on ministerial orders and served to conceal serious violations, facilitate arbitrary arrests and obstruct the organisation of peaceful protests.

289. According to a senior official's testimony, the then Prime Minister personally ordered killings when she told senior officials present at a meeting on 19 July to "*arrest the ringleaders of the protests, the troublemakers, kill them and hide their bodies*." In other meetings, she personally discussed the violent clearing of the Dhaka-Chattogram highway with senior security officials. Testimony from senior officials establishes that the Prime Minister approved the plan to cover up the arbitrary arrest and detention of student leaders by Detective Branch and DGFI. In a Cabinet meeting held on 29 July, she also ordered the removal of the head of Detective Branch for creating a public relations disaster when he released a coerced videotaped statement of these student leaders, while failing to order that the students' arbitrary detention and coercion be investigated. On 4 August, the Prime Minister chaired a National Security Council meeting in the morning and a second meeting in the evening at her residence where the Prime Minister, the Home Affairs Minister and the most senior security sector officials formulated and agreed the plan to use force to stop the "March on Dhaka." In pursuance of that plan, police and, in at least one instance, also Army personnel, fired at protesters in violation of international human rights law and committed extrajudicial killings.[490]

Further criminal investigations into crimes against humanity warranted

290. OHCHR has reasonable grounds to believe that the crimes against humanity of murder, torture, imprisonment and infliction of other inhumane acts have taken place, as part of a widespread and systematic attack against protesters and other civilians seen as potentially joining or supporting the protests, in furtherance of the former Government's policy to violently suppress the protests to ensure its continuation in power. OHCHR established the underlying facts on a reasonable grounds basis, which is a lower standard of proof than what would be required to ensure a criminal conviction in a court of law. However, the established facts warrant further criminal investigations by competent authorities into alleged crimes against humanity, torture as a stand-alone international crime, and serious crimes under domestic law. According to Article 7 (1) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, to which Bangladesh is a party, crimes against humanity require a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population, with the perpetrator knowing that the conduct was part of, or intended for it to be part of, the attack. "Attack directed against any civilian population" means a course of conduct involving multiple acts of murder, torture or other acts prohibited under Article 7 of the Rome Statute when committed pursuant to or in furtherance of a State or organizational policy to commit such attack.[491] Widespread refers to the large-scale nature of the attack and systematic to the organised nature of the acts of violence and the improbability of their random occurrence.[492]

291. During the period of 15 July to 5 August, relevant prohibited acts of murder, torture, imprisonment and other inhumane acts were consistently directed against a defined group of civilians, namely participants in the protests and anyone the Government suspected of being likely to join or otherwise supporting the protests, including students, opposition party members, journalists and others, including when such suspicion was simply based on general characteristics such as being young and unemployed, and living in certain urban areas.

292. In this context, it would appear that a significant number of the killings by State security forces and Awami League supporters would amount to the crime against humanity of murder, as set forth in Article 7 of the Rome Statute.[493] In some cases, security forces shot and killed defenceless protesters from point blank range, with the clear intent of killing their victims. In many other cases, the security forces aimed and fired lethal ammunition from military rifles and automatic pistols at crowds, targeting the head and torso level, or they fired shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets from close range aimed at these vital areas, usually

multiple rounds by multiple shooters. Persons discharging such weapons and their commanders would have been aware that this conduct would result in the death of some members of targeted crowds in the ordinary course of events. In most cases, such killings could find no justification as self-defence or defence of others[494] since the victims were either peaceful protesters, vandals of property or and rioting persons who posed no imminent threat of death or serious injury.

293. Security forces and Awami League supporters who unlawfully discharged firearms with intent to harm, or who assaulted protesters with machetes and other dangerous weapons, also committed inhumane acts intentionally causing great suffering and serious injuries[495] to thousands of people, including those who were blinded, maimed for life, suffered skull fractures and other critical injuries to vital organs.

294. The security forces also tortured persons in their custody or control.[496] People endured severe pain and suffering resulting from severe beatings, electroshocks, threats of execution and other forms of extreme physical and mental harm in Police, Detective Branch and DGFI places of detention to extract confessions, obtain information and to intimidate them. In some cases, security forces tortured and ill-treated apprehended protesters at the scene of protests themselves, such as by shooting into their limbs from point blank range in order to punish them for protesting, for participating in riots or for helping injured protesters.

295. Thousands whom the authorities arbitrarily detained for exercising their rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression were subject to imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty, in violation of fundamental rules of international law.[497] The victims were often arbitrarily arrested in warrantless home invasions, mass roundups and street arrests, without legitimate grounds and without being provided reasons for their arrest. Many victims were subsequently detained incommunicado in inhumane conditions, not brought before a judge or only after considerably delay. Children were detained together with adults and some children and adults were tortured and otherwise ill-treated in detention.

296. All these acts formed part of a systematic and widespread attack. They occurred on a large scale and followed regular patterns across the country involving a range of different security and intelligence actors. These actions were taken in complex operations using extensive government resources, including helicopters, armoured vehicles, and with tens of thousands of security sector and intelligence personnel. The level of crimes escalated and geographically expanded in a clearly discernible pattern that aligned with the expansion of protests. Patterns of suppression also resembled prior instances of protest suppression by the Government.

297. OHCHR has reasonable grounds to believe that the widespread and systematic attack against civilians was carried out pursuant to and in furtherance of a government policy. The political leadership and senior security leadership organized and directed the attack to fulfil their objective of violently and unlawfully suppressing the protests and remain in power. The intelligence and security services and the political leadership also made coordinated efforts to conceal the crimes committed in furtherance of that policy, by arbitrarily shutting down the Internet, falsely accusing others and intimidating the media, victims, victim families and lawyers.

298. Commanders and also many rank-and-file personnel in the police, other security forces and Awami League supporters, would have known that their conduct formed part of a widespread and systematic attack that aimed to suppress the protests and keep the Government in power, not least since many would have already participated in similar violent campaigns to suppress protests on past occasions, including during previous quota protests in 2018 and during various protests in the period of 2021-2023.[498] Moreover, the fact that many Army junior officers and ordinary soldiers resisted shooting, because they understood that unlawful killing of fellow Bangladeshis would serve only to suppress peaceful protests, suggests that many other police officers and others possessed that same knowledge, yet decided nevertheless to participate in clearly criminal acts; as one police commander put it, they were "*defending the Government.*"[499]

2. Protest movement, other political parties and members of the general public

299. Students against Discrimination was an umbrella movement that brought together a range of students, including from the student wings of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami.[500] When Students against Discrimination called for an expansion of protests and strategic and sustained disruptions of key roads and transport infrastructure by way of a complete shutdown from 18 July, BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami echoed that call and many of their supporters responded, along with large parts of the general population.

300. Going beyond the call to create disruption, however, many in the crowds also initiated acts of violence. Violent mobs not only vandalized buildings and other property, but some also attacked media outlets seen as supportive of Awami League, set fire to buildings with people inside and launched violent attacks on Awami League supporters and police personnel, including by lynching some. Particularly severe cases of revenge violence occurred from 4 August as the former Government was losing its grip on power. In many places, enraged local populations released their anger about the violations and abuses they had suffered at the hands of police and Awami League officials. In some cases, BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami supporters, members and local leaders were among those involved in acts of violence during the protests and in their aftermath.

BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami leadership

301. Former senior officials have claimed that they had received intelligence information that the violence around the protests was planned and orchestrated by BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami.[501] They pointed as evidence to the large number of police facilities, government buildings and transport installations that were attacked in different places.[502] OHCHR did not receive any information to corroborate that claim. Instead, it is very conceivable that crowds in different places focused their violence on the police and installations linked to the Government without needing, much less following, specific directives, given the serious, and well-known, violations the police and the former Government had systematically inflicted on protesters across the country. Some of the most serious revenge violence attacks targeted police in areas where the police's prior violations against local inhabitants had been particularly severe, as was the case in Jatrabari, Uttara and Ashulia.

302. As far as OHCHR could ascertain, neither the central leadership of BNP nor Jamaat-e-Islami publicly called for the use of violence during the protests. OHCHR could not, however, find statements of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami leadership urging their supporters to refrain from violence and not engage in attacks against Awami League officials, the police, or government installations. After the protests, BNP made a public call to stop violence and publicly announced that it had expelled 44 leaders and activists for involvement in violence.

303. During the protests and in their aftermath, human rights abuses were inflicted on some members of Bangladesh's Hindu, Ahmadiyya Muslim and indigenous communities. The majority of cases concern vandalising, looting and burning of homes and business, but there were also attacks on religious places, aggravated physical assaults and at least one killing. The perpetrators acted with different and often overlapping motives, including political revenge against Awami League supporters among minorities, religious and ethnic discrimination, settlement of personal disputes, and localized communal conflict. While some members, supporters and local leaders of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami took part in some of the abuses that occurred, the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami leadership condemned this violence. OHCHR found no information showing that such human rights abuses were orchestrated at a national leadership level.

Student leaders

304. While OHCHR found isolated cases in which some students initiated violence against Chhatra League supporters and vandalized property, victims and eyewitnesses of the most serious acts of revenge violence against the police and Awami consistently described the participants as looking very different, notably in terms of their attire, age or apparent

economic background, from the Students Against Discrimination protesters they observed in other places.[503] Former senior officials made the same point.[504]

305. Leaders of Students Against Discrimination generally emphasized a peaceful approach, including in their public calls for the "March on Dhaka" that led to the Government's fall and in the aftermath of the protests.[505] On 6 August, for instance, one prominent leader of Students Against Discrimination called for an end to any arson or attacks, in particular on media institutions and minority communities.[506]

3. Interim Government

306. As soon the Interim Government assumed power on 8 August, it prioritized making law enforcement functional again. Army soldiers and some BGB and Ansar/VDP personnel were temporarily deployed to police stations. After several days, the Interim Government managed to get police officers back to work, although the police's functioning remained impaired, and the authorities were unable to fully protect against revenge attacks and abuses by private actors. In statements made during the first days of his tenure, the Chief Advisor of the Interim Government urged people to refrain from all kinds of violence and appealed on members of political parties to stay calm. He specifically condemned attacks on minorities and urged youth to protect Hindus and other minorities from harm.

307. The Interim Government has commenced efforts to ensure criminal accountability for serious human rights violations by the previous Government and also reported 100 arrests relating to attacks on minorities. These efforts have been hampered by preexisting structural dysfunctionalities within the law enforcement and justice sectors, including the malpractice of filing unsubstantiated charges and arrests based on mass cases, instead of targeted investigations of cases where there is sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of achieving a conviction. OHCHR underscores the importance of pursuing criminal justice for serious violence with the time and care necessary to ensure due process and fair trial. Criminal justice needs to be, and be perceived by the wider population as, impartial and even-handed, non-selective and based on the strength of evidence available, rather than any actual or perceived political affiliation of the perpetrator or influenced by other extraneous factors. Nor can justice be excluded for serious acts of revenge violence, in particular against people seen as affiliated with the Awami League, and crimes against members of religious minorities and indigenous groups.

308. In addition to ensuring respect for due process and fair trial, OHCHR considers it fundamental to embed the pursuit of criminal justice into a larger transitional justice approach that also focuses on truth-seeking, reparation, memorialization, and tackling root causes and drivers of violations and abuses, in order to prevent their future recurrence. Only a comprehensive approach to accountability will break the recurring cycles of impunity and revenge which the country has suffered over decades, lay the ground for national healing and rebuild broad-based trust in justice and law enforcement institutions that have long been perceived as serving only the interests of those in power. Such a comprehensive approach must be based on genuine, inclusive consultations across society at large. An inclusive and participatory process that facilitates dialogue between victims, affected communities and society-at-large on the one hand, and government, institutions and political parties on the other, would allow for people's grievances related to legacies of serious human rights violations to be heard and channelled into a national project of transformative healing and social cohesion.

IX. Preventing Recurrence of Repression by Addressing Root Causes

309. The 2024 protests are exceptional in that the protesters' movement prevailed despite an unprecedented number of extrajudicial killings and other serious violations and abuses deployed against them by the full security apparatus of the state, and the ruling party's violent supporters. However, they form part of a pattern of repression and exclusion established over many preceding years. On several previous occasions, police and other security forces, joined

by armed and violent Awami League supporters, suppressed large protests using a combination of firearms, less-lethal weapons, mass arbitrary arrests, torture and ill-treatment, generalised surveillance, harassment and intimidation. A telling emblematic example are the killings that took place during protests by Hefatez-I Islam in 2013.[507] In 2018, again, student protests against the quota system and dismal road safety were met with violent attacks by Chhatra League supporters, extrajudicial killings and other unlawful police force, and a mass arrest and intimidation campaign.[508] Further series of protests in 2021, 2022 and 2023 by the political opposition, civil society groups and garment workers were also suppressed with unlawful force, including extrajudicial killings and mass arbitrary arrests.[509]

310. These patterns of violations have been enabled and exacerbated by the politicization of the security sector, the militarization of law enforcement,[510] outdated laws enabling disproportionate force against protesters, institutionalized impunity and lack of redress for victims, undergirded by draconian laws designed to repress civic and political dissent. Unless these enabling structures are dismantled and fundamentally reformed, there is a risk that any future authoritarian-minded government, regardless of political make-up, may seek to reactivate them to repress civic or political dissent and protest afresh.

311. As part of broader reform ambitions, the Interim Government has established several reform commissions, including on the police, judiciary, anti-corruption, mass media, women's affairs and other key areas. These commissions could be important catalysts towards ensuring non-recurrence of the type of violations that occurred in July and August 2024, if they champion human rights-oriented reforms, and these are duly implemented both during the transition period and by future elected governments.

1. Outdated laws enabling the use of disproportionate force against protesters

312. Bangladesh has a long history of public discontent being expressed through extensive, and at times unruly, public protests. Such protests, including where peaceful, have often been met with unnecessary or disproportionate force, including under previous governments. This is to some extent rooted in a law enforcement approach that regards the police as an instrument of control rather than an institution to ensure public safety and protect the population's human rights. Efforts to replace the Police Act of 1861, a colonial-era statute enshrining such control approach, long ago stalled. A progressive Police Ordinance drafted under the 2007 caretaker government[511] was abandoned when the Awami League came to power the following year.

313. Operational procedures for the police are to a large extent laid down in the Police Regulations of Bengal of 1943, another outdated, colonial-era piece of legislation. Contrary to international law, these Regulations allow police to use firearms with lethal ammunition to disperse unlawful assemblies where necessary to protect property, and they even state circumstances requiring the police to shoot directly into crowds.[512]

314. Former senior officials informed OHCHR that security forces in Bangladesh are authorized to use lethal force to protect property against attack, although this is prohibited under international human rights law.[513] To justify their position, they sought to rely on the Penal Code of 1860 and its provisions on private defence, although these provisions, for the most part, also restrict lethal force to situations involving a threat of death or serious injury.[514] In any case, legal provisions designed to regulate self-defence between private persons fail to address the specificities and particular legal requirements concerning law enforcement agents' use of force and firearms, including those laid down in the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms and associated international standards. This further underscores the urgent need for Bangladesh to update its police legislation in line with international human rights norms and standards.

2. Politicization of the security sector

315. Fifteen years of rule by a single political party coincided with a steadily increasing politicization of state institutions that has permeated the entire security sector. Many police

officers were recruited and promoted not on the grounds of professionalism, integrity and merit, but based on their perceived loyalty to, or affiliation with, the Awami League and the ruling Government it backed. According to senior officials, DGFI, National Security Intelligence (NSI) and Special Branch were vetting each candidate for mid-level and higher positions also based on the political party affiliation of the candidate and their relatives. The then Prime Minister personally signed off on any appointments to a position of Deputy Inspector-General or higher. Awami League loyalists were strategically placed to control important units such as the Detective Branch in the metropolitan police forces.[515] Interlocutors highlighted that the relevance of political party affiliation in police appointments predated the former Government and stems from the long-time absence of an independent body to manage police appointments and promotions.

316. The Bangladesh Army has a history of involving itself in politics, including through military coups and attempted coups. Although the Army is widely regarded as less politicized than other security forces, serving Army officers and others with inside knowledge told OHCHR that the Army has long been permeated by party politics, especially at the senior level. Based on their perceived political loyalties, senior officers have been promoted or placed in key positions in Dhaka and Army headquarters, while officers seen as disloyal were denied promotion, placed in remote positions or, in some cases, illicitly pressured to leave the Army.[516] This facilitated abuse by the political party in power of not only the Army, but even more so the paramilitary forces and intelligence agencies, which were commanded by Army officers and which reported directly to the Prime Minister or Home Minister.

3. Institutionalized impunity and a politically pliant justice sector

317. Politicization has driven a negative symbiotic relationship between the ruling party and the security sector. In exchange for suppressing challenges to the ruling party and not intervening in crimes by ruling party members, police and other security sector personnel could expect impunity for their own serious violations and acts of corruption.

318. Criminal accountability for serious violations remains a rare exception to the generalised rule of impunity. Since 2009, Bangladeshi civil society groups have documented 2597 alleged extrajudicial killings and 708 enforced disappearances. RAB alone was implicated in over 800 alleged killings and some 220 disappearances.[517] Yet, RAB Officers have only been convicted of murder in a single case, in which one of the victims was an influential local Awami League official.[518] According to the same civil society sources, DGFI officials were allegedly involved in more than 170 of the alleged enforced disappearances, but not a single DGFI officer has been prosecuted.[519]

319. Among others, the United Nations Committee against Torture has expressed concern about the widespread and routine commission of torture by law enforcement officials to obtain confessions or extort bribes.[520] In 2013, Bangladesh passed a Torture and Custodial Death (Prohibition) Act. But since then, at least 103 detainees have reportedly been tortured to death.[521] The Government has only reported 24 cases filed under the Act and in only one case were police officers convicted for torturing a person in their custody to death.[522]

320. These patterns of impunity have become institutionalized and anchored in law. According to Art. 132 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, prosecution of public officials can only be instituted when sanctioned by the Government, and officials are also shielded from accountability if they acted "in good faith." Such provisions facilitate ready political interference in favour of perpetrators.

321. In Bangladesh, the Police is entrusted to investigate itself, and cases of reported police violations often end up being investigated by officers from the same jurisdiction as alleged perpetrators. A Police Internal Oversight Unit was established in 2009 for purposes of ensuring internal accountability. Even where a case is actually referred to it, however, it lacks the necessary capacity and independence from the chain of command to take on more than cases of minor misconduct involving low-ranking officers.[523]

322. Bangladesh's regular justice system does not have an independent professional prosecution service that could oversee and guide police investigations. Instead, lawyers are

appointed without clear and objective criteria on an *ad hoc* basis to present cases prepared by the police in court.[524] The current prosecution system provides the Government with opportunities to provide lawyers with lucrative assignments based on their political loyalty and to control the prosecution of cases through hand-picked prosecutors.

323. The entire judiciary is underfunded[525] and subject to a backlog of 4.2 million cases, including 2.4 million criminal cases.[526] It has seen its independence eroded over time and is widely considered to be politicized and prone to corruption, political pressure and intimidation.[527] The Law Ministry leads on the transfer and promotion of judges, giving it considerable leverage over judges since the process has lacked clear criteria and transparency.[528] In 2016, Parliament passed a constitutional amendment giving itself powers to directly remove judges, which the Supreme Court struck down recently on 20 October 2024, redirecting that power back to the Supreme Judicial Council.[529]

324. Other oversight mechanisms face a similar lack of independence, disempowerment and politicization. Notably, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Bangladesh has been considered in non-compliance with United Nations standards established in the Paris Principles relating to the Status of National Human Rights Institutions (Paris Principles). The former Government appointed members to the Commission who were not independent, and the Commission itself lacks the power to investigate violations by law enforcement agencies.[530]

325. Impunity for perpetrators also means no justice or redress for victims of serious human rights violations. A key consequence of consecutive legacies of unaddressed serious human rights violations and abuses is that the legitimate grievances of victims and affected communities become a risk factor for recurrence as well, further perpetuating institutional and societal distrust, fuelling destructive political dynamics, and undermining social cohesion.

4. Stifling of civic space and repressive legal framework

326. The justice system along with the security apparatus were used by the former Government to spearhead efforts to stifle Bangladesh's vibrant civil society. Based on an increasingly repressive legal and institutional framework, civil society organisations, political opposition activists, journalists, trade unionists, lawyers and victims fighting for justice were subjected to intimidation, harassment, false legal charges and, in some cases, arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance and murder.

327. The Foreign Donation (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act 2016 gave government officials extensive powers to inspect, monitor, and evaluate the activities of NGOs and their members. The NGO Affairs Bureau, operating under the direct authority of the Prime Minister, was used to stifle dissent by revoking NGO registrations, blocking foreign funding and delaying project approvals. Many human rights organizations critical of the Government had to close or stop their activities as a result.[531]

328. The Foreign Donation Act as well as the Anti-Terrorism Act 2009, the colonial-era Official Secrets Act 1923, the defamation provisions of the Penal Code, the Information and Communication Technology Act 2006, the Digital Security Act 2018, and the Cybersecurity Act 2023 that replaced it, all contain broad and vague criminal offenses. These have been used to bring charges aimed at intimidating and silencing journalists, human rights defenders and political opposition activists, among others.[532] Overly broad powers of arrest, search, seizure and surveillance, without sufficient judicial oversight, attach to many of these criminal provisions.

329. The former Government built a pervasive Internet, telecommunications and video camera (CCTV) surveillance architecture creating a general fear of "being watched" within society. Surveillance was used to guide targeted arrests and enforced disappearances of civil and political dissenters and to gather compromising information on them. The National Telecommunications Monitoring Centre (NTMC) sits at the heart of this surveillance architecture. The NTMC operates sophisticated surveillance equipment and software, reportedly obtained from Israeli and other foreign companies.[533] The Police, DGFI, NSI,

RAB and other security forces are integrated into the NTMC structure allowing them extensive and unchecked access to surveillance information.[534] The NTMC bases its claims to vast surveillance powers on vague provisions in the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulation Act that fail to regulate digital surveillance in line with international standards.[535]

330. The same BTRA legal provisions are also invoked by the NTMC and the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulation Commission (BTRC) to block websites and social media at the Government's behest or shut down the Internet altogether. While the Internet shutdowns of July and August 2024 were particularly drastic, such shutdowns were not a new phenomenon. Between 2012 and 2023, the Government reportedly shut down the Internet at least 17 times in relation to periods of elections, protests or unrest.[536]

5. Structural discrimination in law and in practice

331. Structural forms of discrimination have emerged in Bangladesh from its constitutional history and the majoritarian policies pursued by successive governments. Despite provisions prohibiting discrimination, the 1972 Constitution emphasized nationalism but marginalized non-Bengali cultural groups by designating "Bengali" as the national identity. Subsequent Constitutional amendments in the 1970s and 1980s established Islam as the state religion, prioritizing Islamic identity.

332. Moreover, education and social services for rural and indigenous communities remained limited, contributing to low literacy rates and fewer economic opportunities. These systemic barriers were compounded by discriminatory practices in local governance, which often favoured the majority population in resource allocation, law enforcement and the justice system, leaving minority communities vulnerable, including to targeted violence, and without recourse to justice.[537]

333. While women's formal participation in political decision-making processes has improved slowly, women participating in public life and political matters continue to be subjected to gender stereotyping and discrimination by some parts of society. This came to the fore during the suppression of the protests, when female students and other women participating were subjected to sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual harassment. Some perpetrators may have been emboldened by the fact that such violence and harassment remain socially entrenched and have not yet been fully criminalized under national law.[538]

X. Recommendations

334. Many protesters interviewed by OHCHR, including victims of serious injuries, emphasized that they had laid their lives and futures on the line to achieve real change in their country and regain lives of freedom, equality and fair opportunity for all persons in Bangladesh. The magnitude and seriousness of the violations and their deep-seated root causes require urgent measures as well as profound reforms so that similar patterns of serious violations do not occur again. In this process, victims and communities that have been deeply affected by serious human rights violations and abuses, not only in the context of the 2024 protests but also in prior cycles of political violence, should be given a platform to voice their grievances, receive some measure of justice and redress, and help shape the future of the country.

335. Beyond the need to ensure justice and accountability, there is an urgent need for broader reform of the security and justice sectors, the abolition of a host of repressive laws and institutions designed to stifle civic and political dissent, and institution of profound changes to Bangladesh's the political and economic governance systems.

336. In particular, OHCHR makes the following recommendations to the Interim Government and to the future elected government. OHCHR stands ready to continue to provide support and technical assistance to Bangladesh, including also to facilitate follow up to these recommendations and to assist in their implementation.

1. Accountability and justice sector

337. Ensure effective, fair, impartial and comprehensive processes to investigate and prosecute extrajudicial killings, torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearance and sexual and gender-based violence, including cases that predate the 2024 quota protests, and cases of revenge violence. Ensure that perpetrators are held accountable according to law, and consistent with international standards, including where individuals in positions of command and leadership are suspected of criminal responsibility, and that victims have access to effective remedies and reparation.

338. As an immediate priority, compile and preserve relevant evidence, including official orders and other internal documents and forensic evidence, and take disciplinary and criminal justice measures against officials and others who seek to destroy or hide evidence. Pending enactment of a comprehensive law on witness protection, take urgent measures to establish a victim and witness protection programme independent of existing security forces and initiate strict disciplinary measures and criminal investigations in case of witness intimidation.

339. Issue binding general directives – pending repeal of Art. 132 Code of Criminal Procedure Act and similar immunity-like provisions in other laws – authorizing investigations and prosecutions of public officials.

340. Reform the legal framework to clarify and ensure that crimes involving serious human rights violations committed against civilians are prosecuted before the regular courts, even if alleged against members of the military or any other personnel subject to military jurisdiction.

341. Suspend officials facing credible allegations of serious human rights violations, including at the command and leadership level, pending completion of full, independent, and impartial investigation and, as appropriate, prosecution.

342. Initiate an inclusive nationwide dialogue and consultation to develop a holistic and context-specific transitional justice model that embeds the fair and effective pursuit of criminal justice, especially for the most responsible perpetrators, in a wider victim-centred process that also redresses deeper legacies of serious human rights violations with the goals of prevention of recurrence, enhancing social cohesion, and fostering of national healing, including through truth-seeking, reparation, memorialization, vetting of the security sector and instituting other guarantees of non-recurrence.

343. Advance and further mobilize resources for a victim-centred reparation process to independently and impartially assess claims and provide compensation, medical treatment and other forms of support on an equitable and transparent basis.

344. Establish an independent public prosecution service staffed with professional full-time personnel with integrity, appropriate training and qualifications, and ensure safeguards against appointments based on partiality, including political party affiliation or prejudice. Ensure that public prosecutors are able to perform their functions without intimidation, harassment or improper interference.

345. Ensure the independence and impartiality of the judiciary at the institutional and individual level, in law and in practice, by ensuring that a genuinely independent mechanism is responsible for the recruitment, suspension, removal and discipline of judges; protecting judges against intimidation and harassment; preventing inappropriate or unwarranted interference including politically motivated interference and corruption; and ensuring adequate remuneration and guaranteed tenure until retirement or expiration of judges' term of office. Undertake appropriate training, including in human rights, so that magistrates can diligently and independently carry out their oversight functions, in particular in relation to arrest and detention and use of force by the security forces.

346. Provide the justice sector with the funding and staff necessary to reassume a genuine oversight over law enforcement operations, including arrests, searches, seizures and surveillance measures, while institutionally protecting it from political interference by government or political party officials.

347. Introduce a moratorium on the application of the death penalty, including in the International Crimes Tribunal, while considering the complete abolition of the death penalty and accession to the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR.

348. Continue to provide support and resources to the National Commission on Enforced Disappearances and publish and diligently follow-up on its findings and recommendations. Reveal and close all clandestine places of detention operated by intelligence, paramilitary, police or military forces, and investigate and prosecute identified perpetrators of enforced disappearance, torture and other crimes committed in such places.

349. Take further steps to address the continuing due process and fair trial concerns related to Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal, and its retention of the death penalty. In the meantime, and taking full account of the principle of complementarity, consider referring the situation described in this report to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court for investigation, in line with Article 14 of the Rome Statute.

2. Police and security sector

350. Pending amendments to bring the entire Police Regulations of Bengal in line with international human rights norms and standards, including on the use of force, issue binding directives prohibiting the use of firearms loaded with metal shot or other lethal ammunition to disperse crowds and permit their use only where necessary to protect against an imminent threat of death or serious injury. Immediately cease equipping police and other security forces with metal shot ammunition for shotguns as a tool of public order management. Limit the issuance of armour-piercing ammunition to military and paramilitary forces. Reform doctrines and training on public order management emphasizing less-lethal tactics and equipment and a de-escalatory, communicative approach that facilitates peaceful assembly and, where necessary, the use of less-lethal tactics, weapons and ammunition.

351. Issue and enforce binding orders to the police to cease practices of mass charges and mass arrests, in particular where based on unsubstantiated and overly broad suspect lists. Where warranted, institute disciplinary and criminal justice proceedings for making false accusations or carrying out arbitrary arrests.

352. Issue and enforce binding orders to ensure full implementation of the Torture and Custodial Death (Prohibition) Act, establish an independent torture prevention and detention monitoring programme and consider acceding to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture. Reform police investigation techniques, orders, doctrines and training to emphasize forensics, non-coercive interviewing techniques and other methods that reduce reliance on coerced confessions.

353. Building on the draft 2007 Police Ordinance, replace the 1861 Police Act as well as metropolitan police ordinances with laws that emphasize the role of the police in ensuring public safety and protection of the population, in line with international human rights norms and standards. This should be combined with reinforced efforts to root out corruption in the police, ensure accountability for serious misconduct and gradually win back public trust in the police.

354. Adopt a fair transparent and merit-based police recruitment, promotions, transfer and removal process, led by a national police commission composed of government, opposition, and independent members, including from civil society.

355. Replace the Police Oversight Unit with an independent police commission that is outside the Home Affairs/Bangladesh Police chain of command. It should be composed of independent members, including from civil society, and have the specialized staff, capacity and legal powers to act as a public complaints body. It should conduct its own effective investigations into human rights violations and other serious misconduct by any police personnel and refer cases for prosecution. Reform the accountability and justice mechanisms for abuses by Armed Forces and BGB personnel in a similar manner.

356. Disband the Rapid Action Battalion and return personnel not involved in serious violations to their home units. Confine the functions of the Border Guards Bangladesh to

border control issues and the DGFI to military intelligence and limit and delineate their resources and legal powers accordingly. Demilitarize control over the Ansar/VDP to the extent that they assume law enforcement support tasks.

357. Pass an ordinance and then, as soon as possible, full law ensuring that members of the Armed Forces can only be assigned to internal security tasks in the most exceptional circumstances for a limited duration, subject to parliamentary approval, under the command of civilian law enforcement authorities and with full transparency to the public regarding their tasks and rules of engagement.

358. Engage in a comprehensive, independent and fair vetting process, with international and civil society input, of all commissioned officer in police, intelligence, BGB, Ansar VDP and Armed Forces, and remove from their functions those involved in serious human rights violations or corrupt practices.

359. Establish an effective and sufficiently independent human rights screening mechanism to ensure that no Bangladeshi personnel deployed to United Nations peace operations or other international missions is subject of credible allegations of international human rights, humanitarian or refugee law violations, or of any instance of sexual exploitation or abuse. Until such a screening mechanism has been established, the Government should agree with the United Nations Department of Peace Operations not to nominate for peacekeeping any military or police personnel who served with RAB, DGFI or Dhaka Metropolitan Police Detective Branch at any previous point, or in any of the BGB Battalions deployed to the 2024 protests or previous instances of protests suppressed with use of force human rights violations.

3. Civic space

360. Pending their repeal or amendment in line with international human rights standards, impose an immediate moratorium on arrests, investigations or prosecutions under overly broad criminal provisions that have historically been used to stifle critical media reporting or civic and political dissent, including provisions in the Cyber Security Act 2023, the Official Secrecy Act, the Anti-Terrorism Act and the criminal defamation provisions of the Penal Code. Curb overly broad powers of arrest, search, seizure and surveillance under these Acts as well as the Special Powers Act 1974 and ensure appropriate judicial oversight over these powers.

361. Withdraw any pending criminal cases lodged against journalists, lawyers, trade unionists, civil society activists and other human rights defenders in respect of conduct protected by international human rights law, including freedoms of expression and of peaceful assembly.

362. Ensure that journalists, Awami League supporters, minority leaders, human rights defenders and others expressing civic or political dissent are not subject to arbitrary arrest, unsubstantiated criminal cases or other types of intimidation. Take steps to effectively protect them against revenge violence and investigate and prosecute perpetrators of such attacks, while also facilitating claims for civil damages, including for attacks on private property.

363. Immediately order the security forces to end any unlawful surveillance of journalists, political party supporters, trade unionists, civil society activists or other human rights defenders. Initiate an independent public inquiry into surveillance of citizens by state security forces and publish its findings. Abolish the National Telecommunications Monitoring Centre and ensure that security agencies conducting surveillance operations act strictly in compliance with Bangladesh's international human rights law obligations. Amend the vague provisions of the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulation Act that were invoked as a basis for unchecked surveillance.

364. Impose an immediate moratorium on Internet shutdowns, pending amendments to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulation Act, ensuring that Internet shutdowns or blocking of specific websites or applications are subject to clear criteria, transparency and appropriate judicial and other independent oversight, and only implemented for a legitimate purpose and to the extent necessary and proportional in a democratic society.

365. Amend the Foreign Donation (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act 2016 to ensure it is consistent with the right to freedom of association and international human rights more broadly, in particular with respect to its overbroad restrictions on funding and operations of civil society organisations.

366. Amend the National Human Rights Commission Act of 2009 to bring the Commission into full compliance with the Paris Principles, strengthen its independence public confidence in it. Ensure that its members are independent and appointed through a transparent and participatory process that includes genuine and credible engagement with all relevant stakeholders in Bangladesh, including civil society. Clarify that the Commission's mandate also entails the investigation of allegations against military, police, paramilitary and intelligence actors. Provide the Commission with the necessary financial and human resources to allow it to fulfil its mandate effectively, impartially and independently.

4. Political System

367. Ensure a safe and enabling environment for free and genuine elections, including by respecting fundamental freedoms. Entrench the reintroduction of appropriate special measures, especially for the period prior to elections, to ensure a level playing field for all participating political parties and candidates. Strengthen oversight institutions that balance the influence of political parties on governance.

368. Strengthen the right to participation in the democratic process through ensuring that citizens and rights-holders are more actively and directly involved in the conduct of public affairs and decision-making processes, including through citizen-led participatory mechanisms.

369. Initiate a broad consultation with political parties towards ensuring that the internal management of parties respects human rights principles.

370. Refrain from political party bans that would undermine a return to a genuine multi-party democracy and effectively disenfranchise a large part of the Bangladeshi electorate.

371. Effectively implement laws and regulations providing for substantive equality between men and women in political and public life, including through temporary special measures where necessary and appropriate.

5. Economic Governance

372. Take urgent measures, using existing legislation, to freeze and seize assets linked to ill-gotten gains from loan embezzlement and other large-scale corruption schemes. Where ill-gotten gains have been transferred out of the country, recipient jurisdictions should closely work together with the Bangladeshi authorities to ensure that such assets are immediately frozen and then seized and repatriated in accordance with due process and allocated in an accountable, transparent and participatory manner that works towards the realization of human rights and, where possible, meets the needs of victims in particular. Recipient jurisdictions should enhance their efforts to scrutinize assets transferred to their jurisdiction for the benefit of politically exposed persons.

373. Ensure that anti-corruption legislation is strictly and evenly enforced, and that all those involved in corruption, particularly high-level officials, politicians, and influential business owners, are prosecuted. Enhance the independence and efficacy of the Anti-Corruption Commission, including by ensuring the independence of its members and providing it with adequate legal staff capacity. Strengthen institutions responsible for managing public finances, ensuring that they are equipped to ensure fiscal transparency and accountability.

374. Take urgent legislative and executive measures against cartels and oligopolies undermining fair competition in Bangladesh's economy and abusing their dominant market positions vis-à-vis consumers. Repeal legislative and economic measures unduly favouring specific large business and promote small and mid-size enterprises. Emphasise economic

diversification to reduce vulnerability to sector-specific shocks, ensure that growth benefits the broader population and provides opportunities to new graduates and unemployed people. Implement a more equitable tax system, including by focusing more on direct taxes, especially income and wealth taxes for high-income individuals and corporations, and abolishing tax breaks provided out of political favouritism.

375. Enhance the protection of workers, including through amendments to the Labour Act, to protect workers' freedom of association, intensify labour inspections, improve work conditions, particularly for women, ensure a fair minimum wage, and address acts of anti-union discrimination, unfair labour practices and violence against workers.

376. OHCHR encourages the Government of Bangladesh to extend standing invitations to United Nations Human Rights Council special procedures to support the authorities' efforts to address human rights concerns and institute relevant reforms.

377. In addition, OHCHR recommends further independent and impartial investigations of violations and abuses that have occurred, including in relation to the protests, with a view to supporting accountability and preventing the recurrence of violations.

Annex 1:

Terms of Reference for the OHCHR Fact-Finding on Bangladesh

In his letter dated 28 August 2024 to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of 28 August 2024, His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Yunus, Chief Advisor of the interim Government of Bangladesh, extended an invitation for an independent and impartial fact-finding to investigate human rights violations arising from the recent protests in Bangladesh. The Chief Advisor requested that the fact-finding should focus on human rights violations occurring between 1 July and 15 August 2024. He expressed hope that it will establish facts, identify actors based on credible evidence, analyse the root causes and offer concrete recommendations for addressing past violations and to ensuring non-recurrence in Bangladesh. He further requested the High Commissioner to keep the Human Rights Council informed of OHCHR's progress and findings.

In accordance with this invitation, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) will deploy a Fact-Finding Team on Bangladesh, consistent with these Terms of Reference and annexed Guarantees for deployment, for information collection, assessment, analysis, documentation and preservation of information, with a view to supporting accountability and reconciliation initiatives, as well as longer-term reforms in Bangladesh.

Scope of the Fact-Finding

Temporal Scope: The fact-finding will cover human rights violations and abuses and related crimes that occurred between 1 July and 15 August 2024, with previous events considered to the extent that they provide important context. It will furthermore include analysis of the root causes.

Geographic Scope: The fact-finding will focus on cities and geographic areas where the majority of protests, unrest and violence occurred during the time period in question, including Dhaka, Chattogram, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Khulna, Bogura, Sylhet and Gazipur city.

Substantive scope: The fact-finding will focus on the primary human rights concerns related to the protests (whether allegedly linked to State or non-State actors). These concerns include:

- Extrajudicial killings by security forces;
- Killings and other abuses committed by political and private actors;
- Excessive and disproportionate use of force, especially in public order management;
- Arbitrary arrests and detention;
- Torture and ill-treatment;
- Enforced disappearances;
- Denial of medical treatment;
- Violation of freedom of expression, media and assembly;
- Protracted Internet shutdowns and freedom of information;
- Incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence;
- Destruction of public and private properties;
- Impact on economic and social rights (such as education, health, property, and a decent standard of living);
- Structural concerns underlying violations, especially concerning the structure, policies and oversight of the operations of the security services, and the organisation and arming of violent individuals by political parties or other actors;
- Gender based-violence, as well as any gender-specific impacts of human rights violations or abuses on women, men, girls, and boys.

The Fact-Finding Team will also seek information and assess proposals and steps taken by the Interim Government and justice system to pursue criminal investigation and provide effective remedy for violations and abuses, especially in relation to accountability of perpetrators and also reparation for victims. These areas of focus may evolve based on information received and subsequent findings.

Functions

The Team will undertake the following tasks, prioritized to best support its mission:

- Engage with relevant government officials, security forces and law enforcement authorities;
- Establish contacts with the student movement, non-governmental organisations, human rights defenders, and other members of civil society, to facilitate the collection of relevant information, outreach to victims, eyewitnesses and insiders, and to facilitate analysis and context;
- Conduct interviews, where possible in person, with possible sources of relevant information, including inter alia victims, witnesses, government and security services where possible, to collect documentation and other information that may be available and serve to verify allegations of human rights violations and abuses;
- Gather and analyse other information and materials related to allegations of violations and abuses, from primary and secondary sources, including, but not limited to, medical records, autopsy reports, unpublished video and photo material, and other forms of digital and non-digital information;
- Review open-source material and corroborate with the information collected through interviews;
- Collect and analyse statements issued by government authorities, law enforcement agencies, and individuals, including potential perpetrators of violations and abuses;
- Examine options for accountability and redress that may be available;
- Provide updates on the progress of the investigation, as considered necessary by the team, to the authorities, media and other relevant stakeholders.

Safely document, preserve and secure all information collected together with the information and evidence collected by OHCHR's enhanced human rights monitoring team in line with international standards, with a view to enhancing its use in future accountability processes.

Expected Outputs

The Fact-Finding Team will produce a complete, public human rights report setting out the OHCHR's findings, conclusions and recommendations. It will endeavour to share this with the Interim Government by the end of October 2024, before being made public.

The underlying information collected from victims, witnesses and other sources will be preserved in a confidential database of information and evidence for analysis and possible use in future accountability processes.

In line with the Interim Government's request, the High Commissioner will also keep the Human Rights Council updated on progress and findings.

Standard of Proof

The Fact-Finding Team will employ OHCHR's standard human rights monitoring methodology. In reaching factual conclusions it will apply the standard of proof of "reasonable grounds to believe".

Applicable law

International human rights law, and any other relevant legal frameworks that may become applicable as the fact-finding process evolves.

Source and victim protection

The Fact-Finding Team will employ procedures and methods of work aimed at protecting victims and sources at all stages, including after the mission. Information received will be treated with full confidentiality, and with full respect for the scope of consent given by the information provider. Gender considerations will be mainstreamed throughout the mission.

Following explanation of options, interviewees will be asked to provide informed consent for future use of interview notes, including sharing with national accountability mechanisms.

United Nations policy on the death penalty and fair trial

Building on established United Nations policy, OHCHR cannot assist any criminal justice processes that permit capital punishment or that raise, in OHCHR's view, serious concerns about fair trial, due process or other relevant international human rights standards.

Composition of the Team

- One team leader
- Three human rights investigators
- One gender adviser
- One media adviser
- One forensic pathologist
- Security sector/arms expert
- Three locally recruited consultants: interpreters and assistant
- Other expertise may be added to the team as required.

Additional specialised support will be provided by OHCHR headquarters. The Team will conduct its work independently from the Senior Human Rights Advisor and other UN staff in country.

Annex 2:

Access and guarantees for deployment of the OHCHR fact-finding team

The OHCHR Fact-Finding Team on Bangladesh, including its investigators, interpreters and other personnel, shall be given the following guarantees and facilities by the Interim Government:

(a). Freedom of movement in any part of the country, including facilitation of transport, particularly to restricted areas;

(b). Freedom of inquiry, in particular as regards:

(i). Contacts with central and local authorities of all branches of government;

(ii). Private contacts with representatives of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, other private institutions and the media;

(iii). Confidential and unsupervised contact with witnesses and other private persons, including persons deprived of their liberty, considered necessary to conduct its investigation;

(iv). Access to all prisons, detention centres and places of interrogation as considered necessary by the Team to conduct its investigation; and

(v). Full access to all documentary materials considered by the Team to be relevant to the investigation.

(c). Assurance by the Interim Government that no person or group of persons, whether acting in their official or individual capacities, who cooperate, seek to cooperate, or have cooperated with the Team will for this reason suffer intimidation, threats, harassment or punishment, be subjected to judicial proceedings or to any other kind of reprisals by any means whatsoever; assurance by the Interim Government that any measures that could deter such cooperation or be perceived as such, will be avoided. These assurances apply before, during and after conclusion of the investigation.

(d). Conduct of its investigation without surveillance by the authorities, including inviolability of its communications, documents, assets and office space, wherever located and by whomsoever held, immunity from search, requisition, confiscation, expropriation and any other form of interference whatsoever by executive, administrative, judicial or legislative action, as well as due protection from surveillance, intrusion, or other forms of interference by non-state actors.

(e). Appropriate security arrangements without, however, restricting the freedom of movement and inquiry referred to above.

(f). Respect for all other privileges and immunities applicable to the United Nations and its staff beyond already set out above, including under the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, of 13 February 1946.

Annex 3:

Information request to the authorities of Bangladesh *(sent on 12 September 2024)*

The terms of reference kindly agreed by the Government of Bangladesh guarantee the OHCHR Fact-Finding Team full access to all documentary materials considered by the Team to be relevant to the investigation. In this regard, and with deep appreciation for the pledges of full cooperation that OHCHR already received from senior officials in relevant ministries and security and law enforcement branches, the Fact-Finding Team would appreciate to receive written information, no later 30 September 2024 and preferably, in English, from the relevant authorities on the following issues:

1. Please provide any available information and materials on the **number of deaths and estimated number of injuries** related to the protests and unrest that occurred during the period of 1 July-15 August 2024. Please disaggregate the data by place (city/upazil), sex (men/women), age (adult/children below 18 years of age) and available information on the ethnicity and religion of the victims. To the extent available, please provide the names of persons killed, the location they were killed in and available information on their cause of death. This data should also include the number of security forces personnel (disaggregated as far as possible by place, sex and the branch of security forces to which the victim belongs) who were killed or injured during this period.

2. Please provide a list of the entities of security forces (including law enforcement, military, paramilitary and intelligence services), specific units and senior-level commanders that were **assigned to or responsible for public order management and law enforcement tasks**, including crowd control and riot control, in context of and related to the protests and unrest that occurred during the period of 1 July-15 August. Please provide in this regard disaggregated information, indicating which specific units were deployed in which cities or other locations were major protests and unrest occurred. Kindly also provide available information, including relevant documentation and other information, such as records of meetings and decisions, on the d structures making and implementing relevant decisions, notably as to supervision and coordination of the different security and law enforcement forces involved, and the senior officials or commanders in charge of them.

3. Please provide a list of the **weapons and related ammunitions** (both lethal and less-lethal, and by type and calibre) as well as major equipment (including helicopters and specialized vehicles) with which different branches of the security and law enforcement forces deployed in public order management were equipped, disaggregated by security force branch and place of deployment.

4. Please provide available **rules of engagement, directives on the use of force, orders and operational plans**, whether conveyed in writing, by text message, orally or otherwise, that were provided to different branches of the security and law enforcement forces deployed in context or in relation to protests and unrest in the period of 1 July to 15 August, disaggregated by the place of their deployment. In particular, please indicate under what circumstances and in what instances different security forces were authorized to use different types of firearms (including automatic/semi-automatic weapons, other rifles, side arms or shot guns). Please also indicate in which known instances firearms were used without or beyond the scope of their lawful authorization and to what extent the orders given followed relevant national laws and ordinances.

5. Please provide the (estimated) number of **persons who were arrested** between 1 July to 4 August 2024 and between 5-15 August 2024. To the extent possible, these figures should be disaggregated by sex (men/women) and age (adults/children) and the branch of security forces that carried out the arrest. Please list the names and locations of places of detention where those arrested were detained and indicate which branch of the security forces and which senior-level commander(s) was/were in charge of the place in detention in question. Kindly indicate the name and location of any places of detention where any people arrested in relation to the protests are still under detention.

6. Please indicate the **factual and legal grounds for the arrests and detention undertaken**, including any charges brought against protesters and the courts that exercised or are exercising jurisdiction on their cases.

7. Please provide available information on any **orders, directives or instructions, whether given in writing, by text message or orally, issued to relevant law enforcement and security forces on carrying out arrests** of protesters, political party members or others in context or in relation to the protests and on their treatment in detention and during interrogations, including to the extent that mass arrest campaign and/or unlawful arrests and detentions were carried out further to such orders, directives or instructions.

8. Please provide any available information on directions and orders given by government officials or political party officials to hospitals and other medical care providers on providing **medical care to persons injured, or death certificates and autopsies in relation to persons killed**.

9. Please provide any available information on elements in the security forces, other authorities or in any political parties who **provided weapons to citizens or ordered or incited them to commit violent attacks** on other citizens or public or private property in context of or in relation to the protests and unrest of the period of 1 July to 15 August.

10. Please provide information on **ongoing criminal investigations and prosecutions** against any officials, political party leaders or private citizens in context of or in relation to the protests and unrest that occurred during the period of 1 July to 15 August, including any senior-level officials in the security forces, other authorities or any political parties.

11. Please provide information on any **disciplinary or administrative proceedings or punishments, temporary suspensions from duty, removal from position** or other adverse measures against of senior-level officials undertaken in relation to human rights violations or abuses that occurred in context of or in relation to protests and unrest during the period of 1 July to 15 August.

12. Please provide information on when, where and to what extent **access to the Internet** was curtailed during the period of 1 July and 15 August and provide copies of any associated orders, decisions or other directions of the responsible authorities. Please provide a **copy of the report of the investigation into the Internet shutdown,** conducted by the committee established under the Interim Government's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Adviser.

13. Please provide information on when, where and to what extent **curfews or other restrictions on physical movement** were imposed at any point during the period of 1 July and 15 August, and provide copies of any associated orders, decisions or other directions.

14. Please provide any information available on the number and type of **attacks on members of minority groups**, or on religious, cultural or other sites associated with minority groups, including their property and places of worship, that occurred during the period of 1 July to 15 August 2024 and any available information on the perpetrators and organizers of such violence. Please provide **information on any ongoing investigations or prosecutions, with respect to** official or private persons, for alleged involvement in or other responsibility for such conduct against minorities.

15. Please provide any information available on instances or patterns of **violence against women or girls, including sexual and gender-based violence and harassment**, that may have occurred related to the protests, unrest and related arrests during the period of 1 July to 15 August 2024.

16. Please provide any available information on **surveillance, reprisals and intimidation** ordered, directed or otherwise advanced by government officials or political party leaders against any protesters, political activists, human rights defenders,

journalists or others that related to the protest and unrest of the period of 1 July-15 August 2024, as well as measures taken to ensure their safety.

Annex 4:

List of BGB Battalions from which troops were deployed during the protests[539]

1. Rajshahi Battalion
2. Teknaf Battalion
3. Panchari Battalion
4. Feni Battalion
5. Dhaka Battalion
6. Chuadanga Battalion
7. Babuchara Battalion
8. Cattogram Battalion
9. Ruma Battalion
10. Cumilla Battalion
11. Patnitala Battalion
12. Lalmonirhat Battalion
13. Naogaon Battalion
14. Nildumur Battalion
15. Panchaghor Battalion
16. Zakiganj Battalion
17. Joypurhat Battalion
18. Kurigram Battalion
19. Khulna Battalion
20. Jaminpara Battalion
21. Sarail Battalion
22. Marisha Battalion
23. Sunamgoj Battalion
24. Fulbari Battalion
25. Ramu Battalion
26. Netrokona Battalion
27. Khagrachari Battalion
28. Satkhira Battalion
29. Cox's Bazar Battalion
30. Jamalpur Battalion
31. Bolipara Battalion
32. Mymensingh Battalion
33. Khedachara Battalion
34. Kaptai Battalion
35. Dinajpur Battalion
36. Ramghar Battalion
37. Srimongal Battalion
38. Kushtia Battalion
39. Sylhet Battalion
40. Jashore Battalion
41. Thakurgaon Battalion
42. Rangpur Battalion
43. Bianibazar Battalion
44. Chainawabganj Battalion
45. Baghaihat Battalion
46. Habiganj Battalion
47. Nilphamari Battalion
48. Alikadam Battalion
49. Rohanpur Battalion
50. Maheshpur Battalion
51. Sultanpur Battalion
52. Tista Battalion
53. Naraanganj Battalion
54. Gazipur Battalion
55. Rangamati Sector
56. Bandarban Sector Guimara Sector.

Annex 5:

RAB battalions deployed and their areas of responsibility during the protests[540]

RAB 1: Dakshin Khan, Uttar Kha, Turag, Uttara East, Uttara West, HSIA, Gulshan, Banani, Vatara, Badda, Khilkhet, Cantonment, Rupganj and Gazipur District.

RAB 2: Tejgoan, Tejgoan Industrial Area, Mohammadpur, Adabar, Kolabagan, Sher E Bangla Nagar, New Market, Dhanmondi and Hazaribag Police Station.

RAB 3: Motijheel, Mugda, Shahjahanpur, Polton, Khilgoan, Sabujbag, Rampura, Hatirjheel, Shahbag and Ramna Police Station.

RAB 4: Magor Robiul Haque: Mirpur, Shahali, Pallabi, Rupnagar, Darus Salam, Kafrul, Vasantek, Cantonment, Savar, Ashulia, Dhamrai Police Station and Manikganj.

RAB 5: Total District 05: Joypurhat, Rajshahi Chapainawabganj, Natore and Naogan.

RAB 6: Total District 08: Khulna, Bagerhat, Narail, Satkhira, Jashore, Magura, Jhenaidah and Gopalganj.

RAB 7: Total District 04: Chattogram, Feni, Khagrachari and Rangamati.

RAB 8: Total District 08: Barishal, Barguna, Patukhali, Pirojpur, Jhalokhati, Bhola, Shariatpur and Madaripur.

RAB 9: Total District 05: Sylhet, Sunamganj, B Baria, Moulovibazar and Hobiganj.

RAB 10: Demra, Jatrabri, Shampur, Kadamtali, Sutrapur, Wari, Kamrangichar, Kotwali, LAlbag, Chakbazar, Bongshai, Gendaria Dohar, Nawanganj, Keraniganj Model Dokkhin Police Station, Keraniganj, Munshiganj District Sirajdikhan, Louhajang, Srinagar Police Station, Fardipur and Jajbari District.

RAB 11: Total District 06: Cumilla, Noakhali, Lakshmipur, Narayanganj, Narsingdi and Chandpur.

RAB 12: Total District 06: Sirajganj, District 06: Pabna, Chuadanga, Kushtia, Meherpur and Bogra.

RAB 13: Total District 08: Rangpur, Dinajpur, Panchagarh, Nilphamari, Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon and Kurigram.

RAB 14: Total District 07: Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Netrokona, Sherpur, Tangail, Kishoreganj and Kurigram.

RAB: Tootal District 02: Cox’s Bazar and Bandarban.

Annex 6:

Armed Police Battalions deployed during the protests

1. Armed Police Battalion 1
2. Armed Police Battalion 4
3. Armed Police Battalion 5
4. Armed Police Battalion 10
5. Armed Police Battalion 12
6. Armed Police Battalion 13 (Airport)

Endnotes:

[1] In its comments to a draft version of this report, the Government took the position that the Chittagong Hill Tract communities are not indigenous but are recognized as ethnic minorities under the Constitution.
[2] See Annex 1. The Interim Government guaranteed freedom of inquiry to OHCHR, including regarding contacts with authorities of all branches of government, private contacts with civil society and witnesses, access to prisons and detainees and full access to all relevant documents and assurances of no reprisals against witnesses. For details see Annex 2.
[3] Letter of His Excellency Dr Muhammad Yunus, Chief Advisor, to Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 28 August 2024.
[4] Some of the officials interviewed are in detention, spoke without authorization of their chain of command or are otherwise in a vulnerable situation. As is the case for other interviewees, testimony provided by officials is only identified with an interview or meeting code (FFTB-INT / FFTB-ME) that does not indicate their name or specific function. Only officials who were interviewed in official meetings arranged by the Interim Government are identified by their function.
[5] See Annex 3.
[6] OHCHR, UN Fact-Finding Team Issues Call for Submissions, 16 September 2024.
[7] As indicated in the call for submissions, limited time and resources prevented the OHCHR fact-finding team from responding individually to all submissions.
[8] See OHCHR, Human Rights Treaty Ratification Status for Bangladesh (as last updated August 2024).
[9] FFTB-INT-0015.
[10] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PB_cJxNSfTQ.
[11] Between 2017 and June 2024, the percentage of Bangladeshis who thought that the country was headed in the wrong direction in terms of politics, society and economy increased from 17 percent to 58 percent according to Asia Foundation/BRAC Institute of Governance and Development, Citizen Perception Survey (June 2024).
[12] OHCHR, Political brinkmanship driving Bangladesh to the edge: UN Human Rights Chief. (1 December 2013);Bangladesh: UN human rights experts alarmed by violence ahead of election (20 December 2018); International Crisis Group, Beyond the Election: Overcoming Bangladesh's Political Deadlock (4 January 2024); Al Jazeera, Bans and boycotts: The troubled history of Bangladesh's elections,5 January 2024.5 January 2024.
[13] OHCHR, Bangladesh Protests, 4 August 2023; United Nations Special Procedures, Public Statement of 24 January 2024.
[14] World Bank, GDP per capita (current US$)-Bangladesh.
[15] Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Household income and expenditure survey 2022, p. xxiii, 27 & 128. See also Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights on his visit to Bangladesh (2024), para. 6.
[16] A recent white paper on the state of the economy prepared for the Interim Government outlined skill gaps as one of the reasons complicating young people's access to private sector employment. The Daily Star, Labour market: A ticking time bomb, 3 December 2024.
[17] Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics 2023, p. xxxvi.
[18] In July 2024, general inflation hit a 12-year high of 11.66%. See World Food Programme, One Pager Bangladesh Market Monitor (July 2024).
[19] For data see International Monetary Fund, Bangladesh: Second Reviews (June 2024). See also Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights on his visit to Bangladesh (2024), para. 25.
[20] Expert witnesses FFTB-INT-0047; FFTB-INT-0048; senior official FFTB-INT-0237. See also Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding Observations on Bangladesh (2018), para. 21; New Age, Economy under strain as informal activities, indiscipline surge, 7 January 2024.
[21] Centre for Policy Dialogue, BDT 922 billion embezzled from Bangladesh's banking sector, 23 December 2023; The Daily Star, 'Loan Fraud': ACC seeks info on 14 firms from BB, Islami Bank, 9 July 2024; senior officials FFTB-INT-0239; FFTB-INT-0220.
[22] FFTB-INT-0163; FFTB-INT-0047; FFTB-INT-0048; New Age, ACC begins probe into S Alam money laundering allegation, 21 August 2024; Prothom Alo, Bangladeshis own 11,000 companies in Dubai, 27 September 2023; Al Jazeera, How A Bangladesh minister spent more than $500m on luxury property, 20 September 2024; Financial Express, Nearly US$ 3.15b drains from BD annually, 16 April 2024.
[23] Transparency International Bangladesh, Corruption in Service Sectors: National Household Survey 2021. Overall, Bangladesh ranks 147 out of 180 countries on the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2023.

[24] FFTB-INT-0052; FFTB-INT-0140; FFTB-INT-0051; FFTB-INT-0095; FFTB-INT-0202. See also Odhikar, Bangladesh: Annual Human Rights Report 2023 (January 2024), paras. 20ff.
[25] FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0220; FFTB-INT-0239.
[26] Senior officials FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0239.
[27] The Daily Star, PM Hasina rejects anti-quota demands, calls movement unjustified, 7 July 2024.
[28] See, e.g., Dhaka Tribune, Hasan Mahmud: BNP has infiltrated student, teacher movements, 4 July 2024; Dhaka Tribune, Anti-quota movement: Awami League cautious about opposition manipulation, 9 July 2024.
[29] FFTB-INT-0214; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0220; FFTB-INT-0237.
[30] Dhaka Tribune, Chhatra League: Prepared to face those trying to politicise quota protests, 11 July 2024.
[31] FFTB-INT-0188; Daily Star, Quota protest: Comilla University students stage demo on campus, 12 July 2024.
[32] FFTB-AU-0003; FFTB-AU-0005; FFTB-0100; FFTB-INT-0024; The Business Standard, 'Attacks on students': Countrywide demonstrations at 4:00pm Friday, says protest coordinator, 11 July 2024.
[33] Prothom Alo, Checking if there is infiltration in the quota movement: DB, 13 July 2024.
[34] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0Xkso-HuZE
[35] FFTB-INT-0130; FFTB-INT-0075; FFTB-INT-0030; FFTB-INT-0120; FFTB-INT-0129.
[36] FFTB-AU-0015.
[37] FFTB-INT-0214; FFTB-INT-0220; The Daily Star, Who said what?, 16 July 2024.
[38] See Section V.1s.
[39] FFTB-INT-0239.
[40] Police Presentation to OHCHR, FFTB-AU-0003.
[41] See Section V.2.
[42] FFTB-INT-0220.
[43] Bangladesh Police and RAB report to OHCHR FFTB-DOC-0029; BGB Director General FFTB-ME-0017; BGB Report FFTB-DOC-0022; DGFI Report FFTB-DOC-0021; FFTB-INT-0001; officials FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0220; FFTB-INT-0222; FFTB-INT-0224; FFTB-INT-0225; Dhaka Tribune, 229 BGB platoons deployed across Bangladesh, 18 July 2024; Dhaka Tribune, 14 platoon Ansars deployed in Dhaka, 17 July 2024; FFTB-AU-0008. Ansar/VDP (FFTB-DOC-0024) claimed that Ansar Battalions were only deployed from 1 August, but this is contradicted by testimony and the Ansar/VDP's own public statements. For a full list of BGB, RAB and Armed Police Battalions deployed, see Annexes 4 to 6.
[44] Officials FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0220; FFTB-INT-0222; FFTB-INT-0225; FFTB-INT-0237. The Commissioner for Dhaka Metropolitan Police chaired a similar, subordinate coordination body that also involved RAB, BGB, intelligence agency representatives and, from 20 July, Bangladesh Army representatives according to FFTB-INT-0225.
[45] Officials FFTB-INT-0121; FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0222; FFTB-INT-0225. FFTB-INT-0162.
[46] Officials FFTB-INT-0200; FTBB-INT-0214; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0220; FFTB-INT-0222; FFTB-INT-0210.
[47] FFTB-INT-0203.
[48] OHCHR, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet concludes her official visit to Bangladesh, 17 August 2022; United Nations Committee against Torture, Concluding Observations on Bangladesh (2019), para. 17; United Nations Human Rights Committee, Concluding Observations on Bangladesh (2017), para. 19; United Nations Special Procedure, Joint Urgent Appeal BGD 8/2013; United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances, General Allegation: Bangladesh, 118th session (13-22 May 2019); Human Rights Watch, Ignoring Executions and Torture: Impunity for Bangladesh's Security Forces (2009); official FFTB-INT-0161; FFTB-INT-0213; Interim Report of the Commission on Enforced Disappearances to the Interim Government of Bangladesh, 14 December 2024.
[49] FFTB-ME-0017. See also Daily Star, BGB gets riot control vehicles, APCs, 11 November 2020; FIDH, Out of Control: Human rights and rule of law crises in Bangladesh (2021). Personally addressing the BGB in March 2024, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina emphasized the BGB's taking on public order management tasks outside border areas, such as "*arson violence in the country*." Dhaka Tribune, PM tells BGB to continue following chain of command, 4 March 2024.
[50] Odhikar, Bangladesh: Annual Human Rights Report 2023 (January 2024), paras. 6, 38 & 36; Human Rights Watch, Blood on the Streets: The Use of Excessive Force During Bangladesh Protests (2013); Human Rights Watch, "Creating Panic": Bangladesh Election Crackdown on Political Opponents and Critics (2018). See also United Nations Special Procedures, Joint Urgent Appeal BGD 5/2013.
[51] BGB Director FFTB-ME-0017.
[52] FFTB-AU-0016.

[53] Confidential DGFI profile FFTB-DOC-0005; senior official FFTB-INT-0220. DGFI, Organigram (as of 9 February 2015); FIDH, Out of Control: Human Rights and rule of law crises in Bangladesh (2021), p. 9. See also below.

[54] United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances, General allegation: Bangladesh, 11th session (6-10 February 2018); Confidential submission on DGFI FFTB-DOC-0005; FFTB-INT-0213; FIDH, Out of Control: Human rights and rule of law crises in Bangladesh (2021); FIDH, Vanished without a Trace: The enforced disappearance of opposition and dissent in Bangladesh (2019); Interim Report of the Commission on Enforced Disappearances to the Interim Government of Bangladesh, 14 December 2024.
Following the departure of Sheikh Hasina, several disappeared persons were released from the DGFI's Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC), a notorious clandestine detention facility commonly known as *Aynaghar* (house of mirrors). FFTB-INT-0213; BBC, 'The howls were terrifying': Imprisoned in the notorious 'House of Mirrors', 1 September 2024.

[55] See also M. Jashim Ali Chowdhury, Democratic Control of Intelligence: Exploring the Legal Vacuum in Bangladesh (2016).

[56] Dhaka Tribune, Full text of PM's address to the nation, 18 July 2024; The Daily Star, Have faith in SC, you won't be disappointed, PM tells students, 17 July 2024, with a link to the video of the Prime Minister's public address.

[57] The Star, Bangladesh students reject PM's olive branch after deadly protests, 18 July 2024.

[58] Prothom Alo, Quota protestors announce nationwide 'complete shutdown' for tomorrow, 17 July 2024.

[59] The Daily Star, BNP pledges full support to 'complete shutdown', 17 July 2024; Jamaat-e-Islami, বৈষম্য বিরোধী ছাত্র আন্দোলনের কর্মসূচির প্রতি সমর্থন এবং ছাত্রসমাজের পাশে দাঁড়ানোর জন্য সমগ্র দেশবাসীর প্রতি আহ্বান, 18 July 2024.Officials FFTB-INT-161; FFTB-INT-0230.

[60] FFTB-INT-0214; FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0215.

[61] FFTB-INT-0063; senior official FFTB-INT-0200.

[62] Dhaka Tribune, Army Chief: Soldiers will be on streets until normalcy returns, 24 July 2024.

[63] The Daily Star, Will consider talks if nine demands met, 20 July 2024.

[64] See Section V.5.

[65] BDNews24, Hasina teary-eyed during visit to BTV building damaged in attack, 26 July 2024; TBNews, 'Punishment needed to stop playing with people's lives': PM after visiting injured at DMCH, 26 July 2024; Dhaka Tribune, PM Hasina meets families of those killed in violence, offers comfort and aid, 28 July 2024; senior official FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0057.

[66] https://x.com/bdbnp78/status/1816858388925714614 BNP Post on X, 26 July 2024.

[67] New Age, Govt set to ban Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami: minister, 30 July 2024.

[68] Senior officials FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0236.

[69] See Section V.3.

[70] Senior officials FFTB-INT-0214; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0220; FFTB-INT-0222; FFTB-INT-0236; FFTB-INT-0237; FFTB-INT-0238.

[71] Senior officials FFTB-INT-0214; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0220; FFTB-INT-0222; FFTB-INT-0236; FFTB-INT-0237; FFTB-INT-0238.

[72] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06N1mi9QEf8; Reuters, Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina flees, army says interim government to be formed, 6 August 2024.

[73] Ministry of Health, List of persons killed and injured in the mass uprising of students (as accessed on 24 January 2024).

[74] FFBT-INT-0027; FFBT-INT-0076; FFBT-INT-0005.

[75] FFBT-INT-0097; FFBT-MTG-0014; FFBT-INT-0076; FFBT-ME-0035; FFBT-INT-0144; FFBT-INT-0165; FFBT-INT-0053; FFBT-INT-0017; FFTB-INT-0195; FFTB-INT-0164; FFTB-INT-0145.

[76] FFTB-ME-0026; FFTB-ME-0034; FFTB-ME-0035; FFTB-INT-0038; FFTB-INT-0042; FFTB-INT-0043; FFTB-INT-0050; FFTB-INT-0081; FFTB-INT-0100; FFTB-INT-0195.

[77] NSI Report FFTB-DOC-0023.
Furthermore, Bangladesh Police reported to OHCHR that 602 deaths, including of 7 women and 92 children, were recorded by Police stations in Bangladesh in relation to the protests. FFTB-DOC-0029. The Police did not indicate to what extent these deaths are also encompassed in the Ministry of Health data.
In November 2024, Chief Advisor of the Interim Government Muhammad Yunus provided an estimate of 1500 protest-related deaths. Reuters, Around 1,500 killed in Bangladesh protests that ousted PM Hasina, 17 November 2024.

[78] FFTB-ME-0031. The death figures provided by the Police (92 children among 602 deaths reported by Police) would suggest a slightly higher rate of 15 percent children among those killed.

[79] Dhaka Medical College Forensic Medicine Department FFTB-ME-0015. An additional 2 percent of forensically examined cases were attributed to pistols. See also OHCHR Forensic Physician Report FFTB-DOC-0018.
The Report of Bangladesh Police and RAB to OHCHR confirmed that rifles with 7.62x39mm ammunition were used during the protests by different units of the Police, including Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Chattogram Metropolitan Police, Sylhet Metropolitan Police, Gazipur Metropolitan Police, Narayanganj District Police, Narsigndi District Police, Kishoreganj District Police, Cox's Bazar District Police, Cumilla District Police, Chandpur District Police, Rajshahi District Police, Chapainawabganj District Police, Bogura District Police, Magura District Police, Bholaa District Police, Mymeningh District Police, Industrial Police, Armed Police Battalions and RAB. The Police, including Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Sylhet Metropolitan Police, Manikganj District Police and Armed Police Battalions also used what the Police described as submachine guns (SMGs) with a 7.62x39mm calibre. The Police also used 7.62x25mm and 9x19mm pistols. FFTB-DOC-0029.

[80] Bangladesh Police confirmed to have used 12 bore shotguns with lead balls (metal pellets) in numerous locations. According to RAB, RAB battalions 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12 and 13 used shotguns with lead balls in various locations. FFTB-DOC-0029.

[81] FFTB-ME-0031.
A second, larger data set provided confidentially to OHCHR by another source (FFTB-ME-0031) indicates that 18 percent of deaths were not by firearms, which tallies with the Dhaka Medical College Forensic Department figures.

[82] OHCHR's fact-finding team requested to visit the Bangladesh Ordinance Factory to confirm the match between guns and projectiles observed and local production, but this request was not granted.

[83] OHCHR Weapons Expert Report FFTB-DOC-0019; Forensic Physician Report FFTB-DOC-0018.

[84] According to the Bangladesh Police and RAB report to OHCHR, the Police's use of less-lethal weapons included rubber balls fired from 12 bore shotguns, 38mm gas guns and tear gas launchers, tear gas grenades, sound grenades, flash bang grenades, smoke grenades, 38mm soft kinetic projectiles and water cannon vehicles. RAB reported the use of 3205 rubber ball cartridges, 1348 tear gas shells, 641 sound grenades, 892 stun grenades and 10 teargas grenades. FFTB-DOC-0029.

[85] Any reference to conduct being unlawful in this report refers to conduct contravening international human rights law, even where it is in line with national law.

[86] FFTB-INT-0100: FFTB-INT-0130; FFTB-INT-0159; FFTB-INT-0030. See also Prothom Alo, Quota protesters call demo at 12pm, BCL calls sit-in at 3pm, 15 July 2024.

[87] The Business Standard, Quota reform protest begins at Raju memorial, BCL plans 3pm counter event, 15 July 2024; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9bMrRln6js; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSE7hNSYm1U.

[88] The Business Standard, BCL ready to strike back on quota protesters' audacity: Quader, 15 July 2024.

[89] Prothom Alo, Chhatra League ready to respond to audacity on campus: Obaidul Quader, 15 July 2024.

[90] See Section III.2.

[91] FFTB-INT-0210; FFTB-INT-0214; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0218; FFTB-INT-0220; FFTB-INT-0221; FFTB-INT-0236.

[92] Senior officials FFTB-INT-0210; FFTB-INT-0218; FFTB-INT-0220.

[93] On 18 July, Chhatra Shibir publicly demanded that "Chhatra league has to pay for every drop of blood of our brothers and sisters " Bangladesh Islami Chhatrashibir, Chhatrashibir strongly condemns and protests incidents of attack and murder on the campus by the Chhatraleague and police administration, 18 July 2024. In subsequent public statements, however, the organisation publicly expressed its support for a peaceful movement and non-violence. Bangladesh Islamic Chhatra Shibir, statements of 25 July, 26 July and 30 July.

[94] FFTB-INT-0206; FFTB-INT-0202; FFTB-INT-0112; FFTB-INT-0026; FFTB-OS-0081, corroborated by open sources and videos.

[95] FFTB-INT-0051; FFTB-INT-0052; FFTB-INT-0071; FFTB-INT-0072, corroborated by photos, videos and medical information. The same night, Chhatra League also attacked students at Shajalal University of Science and Technology in Sylhet according to witness FFTB-INT-0117, corroborated by open sources.

[96] FFTB-ME-0012; FFTB-INT-0030; FFTB-INT-0075; FFTB-INT-0130; FFTB-INT-0013; FFTB-INT-0111; FFTB-INT-0100; FFTB-INT-0015; FFTB-INT-0159; FFTB-INT-0050; FFTB-ME-0009, corroborated by photos, videos and open sources.

[97] FFTB-AU-0016.

[98] FFTB-ME-0026; FFTB-ME-0035; FFTB-INT-0015; FFTB-INT-0017; FFTB-INT-0075; FFTB-INT-0159; FFTB-INT-0167, corroborated by medical information, photos and open sources.

[99] Officials FFTB-ME-0012; FFTB-INT-0221. FFTB-INT-0015; FFTB-INT-0135.

[100] FFTB-INT-0170; FFTB-INT-0167; FFTB-INT-0169; FFTB-INT-0171; FFTB-INT-0013.
[101] FFTB-INT-0100; FFTB-INT-0162; FFTB-INT-0175; FFTB-INT-0196, corroborated by photos.
[102] FFTB-INT-0013; FFTB-INT-0196.
[103] FFTB-INT-0199, corroborated by medical information.
[104] For more cases, see also Section V.2. Jubo League is nominally the Awami League's youth wing but also includes many middle-aged men who engage in violence.
[105] FFTB-INT-0101; FFTB-INT-0140; FFTB-INT-0187; FFTB-INT-0188; FFTB-INT-0209; FFTB-INT-0097; FFTB-INT-0199; corroborated by photos and videos.
[106] See Section IX.2.
[107] FFTB-ME-0018.
[108] Bangladesh Police and RAB report to OHCHR FFTB-DOC-0029. Names and functions on file with OHCHR.
[109] FFTB-INT-0050; FFTB-INT-0053; FFTB-INT-0089; FFTB-INT-0199; FFTB-INT-0223.
[110] FFTB-INT-0004; FFTB-INT-0016; FFTB-INT-0073; FFTB-INT-0077; corroborated by medical information and open sources.
[111] FFTB-INT-0053.
[112] FFTB-INT-0105.
[113] FFTB-INT-0004; FFTB-INT-0014; corroborated by open sources.
[114] FFTB-INT-0187; FFTB-INT-0188; FFTB-INT-0209; FFTB-ME-0014; corroborated by open sources. The Police recorded 7 deaths in the Cumilla area during the protest period, 5 of which it attributed to gunshot injuries, but did not provide specific dates for these deaths. FFTB-DOC-0029.
[115] FFTB-INT-0089 corroborated by photos and videos.
[116] FFTB-ME-0014; FFTB-INT-0199, corroborated by medical information and videos.
[117] FFTB-INT-0223, corroborated by medical information and open sources.
[118] United Nations Human Rights Committee, General comment No. 37 (2020) on the right of peaceful assembly (article 21), General Comment No. 36 (2019) on the right to life.See also United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law enforcement Officials (1990).
[119] Section 99 of the Bangladesh Penal Code provides for a right to self-defence against unlawful force by state agents in case there is a reasonable apprehension of death or grievous harm, or if the state agent used force not in good faith. It is also widely accepted that international human rights law entitles individuals to defend themselves against extrajudicial killings, torture and inhumane treatment at the hands of state authorities without incurring criminal accountability. See Jan Arno Hessbruegge, Human Rights and Personal Self-Defense in International Law (2016), p. 304, with further references to relevant jurisprudence and literature.
[120] Police & RAB report to OHCHR, FFTB-DOC-0029.
[121] FFTB-INT-0051.
[122] FFTB-INT-0051; FFTB-INT-0052; FFTB-INT-0057; FFTB-INT-0070; FFTB-INT-0071; FFTB-INT-0072; FFTB-DOC-0018, corroborated by videos, photos and medical information.
[123] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FdwWlU4SSjs;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYvZiYtdQOg;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22N4kjOa00A&rco=1;
https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=2561077477408439&external_log_id=4437da03-9422-44b4-b25c-4c3fdff743b4&q=abu%20sayed;
https://x.com/basar_asif/status/1813515539274400241/video/1 (as accessed on 30 January 2025).
[124] FFTB-INT-0071.
[125] FFTB-DOC-0026.
[126] OHCHR, Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement (2024), para. 7.5.6.
[127] FFTB-ME-0015.
[128] OHCHR Medical Forensic Summary FFTB-DOC-0016.
[129] FFTB-INT-0005.
[130] OHCHR Weapons Expert Report FFTB-DOC-0019.
[131] Bangladesh Public Procurement Authority, Bangladesh Police tenders of 23 March 2023, 22 December 2022, 11 October 2022. See also New Age, Bangladesh Police buy huge arms, ammo ahead of polls 9 September 2023. On the procurement process official FFTB-INT-0183.
[132] FFTB-INT-0123; FFTB-INT-0203; FFTB-INT-0215.
[133] OHCHR Weapons Expert Report, FFTB-DOC-0019.
[134] FFTB-DOC-0018.
[135] FFTB-INT-0005; FFTB-INT-0095; FFTB-INT-0075; FFTB-INT-0030; FFTB-INT-0063; FFTB-INT-0100; FFTB-INT-0111; FFTB-INT-0020; FFTB-INT-0162, FFTB-INT-0029; FFTB-INT-0240; FFTB-INT-0129; FFTB-INT-0015; officials FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0226, corroborated by photos, videos and open sources.
[136] FFTB-INT-0029.

[137] FFTB-INT-0095.
[138] Senior officials FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0226.
[139] FFTB-AU-0016.
[140] The Report, Police-student clashes ongoing in Dhaka University, 17 July 2024, See also Senior Official FFTB-INT-0203.
[141] Senior officials FFTB-INT-0214, FFTB-INT-0226.
[142] FFTB-ME-0014; FFTB-ME-0034; FFTB-0004; FFTB-INT-0005; FFTB-0006; FFTB-INT-0010; FFTB-INT-0073; FFTB-INT-0076; FFTB-INT-0077; FFTB-INT-0092, corroborated by videos, photos, medical information, weapons analysis, and open sources.
[143] FFTB-0004; FFTB-INT-0005; FFTB-0006; FFTB-INT-0010; FFTB-INT-0073; FFTB-INT-0092; FFTB-ME-0014.
[144] FFTB-INT-0010.
[145] FFTB-INT-0005; FFTB-INT-0006; FFTB-INT-0073.
[146] FFTB-INT-0092; FFTB-INT-0005; FFTB-INT-0006; FFTB-ME-0014.
[147] FFTB-INT-0006; FFTB-INT-0005; FFTB-INT-0073; FFTB-ME-0014.
[148] ME-0014; corroborated by medical information.
[149] FFTB-0004; FFTB-INT-0005; FFTB-0006; FFTB-INT-0010; FFTB-INT-0073; FFTB-INT-0092; Prothom Alo, 2 killed, several hundred injured in clashes in Uttara, 18 July 2024. The Police reported to have recorded the deaths of 28 persons who were not law enforcement officers at Uttara East and Uttara West Police Stations during the protest period but did not provide dates or information on the circumstances for any of these deaths. FFTB-DOC-0029.
[150] FFTB-INT-0006.
[151] FFTB-INT-0005.
[152] FFTB-INT-0010.
[153] FFTB-AU-0017.
[154] FFTB-INT-0014; FFTB-INT-0089; FFBT-INT-0112; FFTB-INT-0041; official FFTB-INT-0157; FFTB-DOC-0010, corroborated by photos, videos and medical information. Bangladesh Police reported that shotguns were used in Savar during the protest period. FFTB-DOC-0029.
[155] FFTB-AU-0018.
[156] FFTB-INT-0023; FFTB-INT-0175, corroborated by photos and medical documentation.
[157] United Nations Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement, pp. 29, 32.
[158] FFTB-INT-0013; FFTB-INT-0033; FFTB-INT-0100; FFTB-INT-0134; FFTB-INT-0147; FFTB-INT-0194; FFTB-INT-0196; FFTB-0199; senior officials FFTB-INT-0224, FFTB-INT-0226, corroborated by medical information and photos.
[159] FFTB-INT-0086; FFTB-INT-0094; FFTB-INT-0100, corroborated by photos and videos. The Police recorded 6 deaths of persons who were not law enforcement officers caused by gunshots in the Paltan area for the protest period, without providing dates or circumstances for specific incidents. FFTB-DOC-0029.
[160] FFTB-INT-0187; FFTB-INT-0188; FFTB-INT-0209, corroborated by videos and open sources. Bangladesh Police reported to OHCHR that rifles and shotguns were used by Police in several locations in Cumilla during the protest period. FFTB-DOC-0029.
[161] FFTB-INT-0037; FFTB-INT-0078; FFTB-INT-0087; FFTB-INT-0098; FFTB-INT-0161; FFTB-INT-0164, corroborated by medical information, forensic analysis, photos and videos. Bangladesh Police reported to OHCHR that rifles and shotguns were used by Police in several locations in Narsingdi during the protest period. The Police also recorded 17 deaths of persons who were not law enforcement officers in Narsigndi during the protest period, without providing dates for specific incidents. FFTB-DOC-0029.
[162] See Annex 3.
[163] Bangladesh Police and RAB report to OHCHR FFTB-DOC-0029.
[164] Senior officials FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0203; FFTB-INT-0215. Official FFTB-INT-0161. A High Court decision from 4 August upheld a similarly over extensive understanding of when police may use lethal force. See Daily Star, High Court HC rejects writ filed challenging legality of firing on protesters, 4 August 2024.
[165] United Nations Human Rights Committee, General comment No. 37 (2020) on the right of peaceful assembly (article 21); para. 89; United Nations Human Rights Committee, General Comment No 36 - Article 6: right to life (2019), para. 12; United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms, Principle 9; OHCHR/UNODC, Resource book on the use of force and firearms in law enforcement (2017), p. 21.
[166] See Section V.10.
[167] Senior officials FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0203; FFTB-INT-0214; FFTB-INT-0222.
[168] Officials FFTB-INT-0161; FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0220; FFTB-INT-0222.

[169] The Daily Star, Govt imposes nationwide curfew, 20 July 2024. Two weeks later, he claimed to have been misinterpreted and that no shoot on sight order was given: The Daily Star, Yunus's calls amount to 'anti-state' act: Quader, 1 August 2024.

[170] Based on various credible sources of reported deaths, OHCHR received dates for killings for about 1100 out of a total 1450 reported cases. From the daily death count for these 1100 cases, OHCHR extrapolated to an estimated total daily number of killings.

[171] FFTB-DOC-0022.

[172] BGB Report to OHCHR FFTB-DOC-0022; BGB Director-General FFTB-ME-0017.

[173] FFTB-DOC-0023.

[174] FFTB-DOC-0022.

[175] FFTB-AU-0031.

[176] FFTB-INT-0012; FFTB-INT-0018; FFTB-INT-0100; FFTB-INT-0102; FFTB-INT-0110; FFTB-INT-0128; FFTB-INT-0138; FFTB-INT-0140; FFTB-INT-0158; FFTB-INT-0180; FFTB-ME-0014; Daily Star, Horror engulfs Badda Rampura as bullets fly, 20 July 2024; corroborated by photos, including from confidential source FFTB-AU-0015, medical information and forensic analysis.

[177] FFTB-INT-0100.

[178] FFTB-INT-0140, corroborated by photos and medical information.

[179] FFTB-INT-0100.

[180] FFTB-INT-0180, corroborated by videos and photo.

[181] FFTB-INT-0110. Hospital name withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.

[182] FFTB-INT-0153; FFTB-INT-0012; FFTB-INT-0158, corroborated by videos and medical information. Hospital name withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.

[183] FFTB-INT-0138.

[184] FFTB-INT-0018; corroborated by photos and medical information.

[185] FFTB-INT-0147; FFTB-INT-0158. Names of hospitals withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.
The NSI Report provided to OHCHR (FFTB-DOC-0023) notes several killings in the Rampura area on 19 July, including one that it specifically attributes to BGB or Police shooting. The Police report notes that deaths caused by gunshots of 31 persons who were not law enforcement officers were recorded in the Rampura and southern Badda areas during the protest period, but without providing dates or further information on the circumstances. FFTB-DOC-0029.

[186] Underlying video available at https://x.com/ZulkarnainSaer/status/1817289770625872183.

[187] FFTB-INT-0060; corroborated by videos, weapons analysis and medical documents.

[188] Underlying video available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfAFJCWUrTw&rco=1; https://mobile.x.com/bdbnp78/status/1817407347159085155 (as accessed on 30 January 2025).

[189] FFTB-INT-0021; FFTB-INT-0053; FFTB-INT-0099; FFTB-INT-0109; FFTB-INT-0160, corroborated by videos and open sources. The Police also reported to OHCHR that Armed Police Battalion 5 shot 7.62 rifles, SMGs and shotguns at Jatrabari intersection under the Jatrabari Police Station, without providing information on the dates and the surrounding circumstances of their shooting.

[190] FFTB-INT-0053.

[191] FFTB-INT-0093, corroborated by medical information.

[192] FFTB-INT-0009; FFTB-INT-0069; senior officials FFTB-INT-0203, FFTB-INT-0215; corroborated by photos, videos, medical information and open sources.

[193] Senior officials FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-0215. On the Core Committee, see Section III.3.

[194] FFTB-INT-0009; FFTB-INT-0011; FFTB-INT-0013; FFTB-INT-0069; FFTB-INT-0175; senior and other officials FFTB-INT-0101; FFTB-INT-0155; FFTB-INT-0203; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0225; FFTB-INT-0226., corroborated by photos and open sources.
OHCHR also received testimony from a victim who was shot in the leg on 20 July, who said that BGB shot him with a military rifle on the Chittagong highway in the Narayanganj area. FFTB-ME-0035, corroborated by medical information. The NSI Report provided to OHCHR (FFTB-DOC-0023) attributes one killing in Narayanganj on 19 July, close to the highway, to BGB shooting and also notes three other non-attributed killings in the area that occurred on 19, 20 and 21 July. Bangladesh Police reported to OHCHR that rifles and shotguns were used by Police in several locations in Narayanganj during the protest period. The Police also recorded 38 deaths of persons who were not police in the Narayanganj area during the protest period, without providing dates and circumstances for specific incidents. FFTB-DOC-0029.

[195] Available also at https://www.shokalshondha.com/dhaka-medical-post-mortem-anti-quota-movement-deadbody/ (as accessed on 30 January 2025).

[196] FFTB-INT-0009; FFTB-INT-0011; FFTB-INT-0021; FFTB-INT-0160; senior official FFTB-INT-0203; corroborated by photos, videos, medical information and open sources.

[197] Video also available at https://x.com/ZulkarnainSaer/status/1815815527698153811 (as accessed on 30 January 2025).
[198] FFTB-INT-0160. Name of hospital withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR. The Police recorded 31 deaths of persons who were not police caused by gunshots on the Dhaka Chattogram Highway in the Jatrabari area during the protest period but did not provide dates and circumstances for these cases. FFTB-DOC-0029.
[199] Officials FTTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0203, FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0220; FFTB-INT-0225; FFTB-INT-0226; FFTB-AU-0015; Daily Star, 'We shoot one dead … but the rest don't budge', 13 August 2024; Business Standard, Situation brought under control within 48 hours: Army chief, 22 July 2024, FFTB-AU-0015 photos.
[200] Daily Star, 'We shoot one dead but the rest don't budge', 13 August 2024.
[201] FFTB-INT-0052.
[202] FFTB-INT-0050; FFTB-INT-0100; FFTB-INT-0196; corroborated by medical information, photos and videos.
[203] For the underlying methodology see Section IV.
[204] FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0220; FFTB-INT-0236; FFTB-INT-0238.
[205] The Business Standard, 3-day general holiday declared as curfew without break extended indefinitely, 4 August 2024; Reuters, Bangladesh protesters call for PM Hasina's resignation as death toll rises to 91, 5 August 2024.
[206] FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0214; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0220; FFTB-INT-0222; FFTB-INT-0237; FFTB-INT-0238; FFTB-INT-0239.
[207] WhatsApp messages contained as hard copies in BGB Report to OHCHR, FFTB-DOC-0022.
[208] FFTB-INT-0214; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0220; FFTB-INT-0222.
[209] FFTB-INT-0157.
[210] FFTB-INT-0099; corroborated by photos.
[211] FFTB-INT-0111; FFTB-INT-0148.
[212] FFTB-INT-0107; corroborated by medical information.
[213] FFTB-INT-0089; FFTB-INT-0157; FFTB-INT-0177. Bangladesh Police reported to OHCHR that shotguns were used by Police in Ashulia during the protest period. FFTB-DOC-0029.
[214] FFTB-INT-0041; FFTB-INT-0202; FFTB-ME-0026, corroborated by photos.
[215] FFTB-INT-0009; FFTB-INT-0020; FFTB-INT-0058; FFTB-INT-0069; FFTB-INT-0096; FFTB-INT-0109; FFTB-INT-0151; FFTB-INT-0175; FFTB-INT-0176; FFTB-INT-0233; officials FFTB-INT-0203; FFTB-INT-0101; FFTB-INT-0155; corroborated by videos, photos, medical information, weapons and ammunitions analysis and open sources. See also ITJP, Jatrabri: Evidence of a Massacre, 15 January 2025.
[216] Videos also available at https://www.reddit.com/r/bangladesh/comments/1hzj0xy/jatrabari_massacre_5_august_2024/ ;https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1211074003567217 (as accessed on 30 January 2025). Enhancement by OHCHR digital forensics.
[217] FFTB-INT-0074, corroborated by photos and medical information.
The Police reported to OHCHR that Armed Police Battalion 1 used shotguns in the Uttara area during the protest period, without providing dates. FFTB-DOC-0029.
[218] FFTB-INT-0234, corroborated by photos and medical information.
[219] FFTB-INT-0108, corroborated by medical information. Bangladesh Police reported to OHCHR that rifles were used in Gazipur by Industrial Police 2 and shotguns by Industrial Police 2 and regular police during the protest period, without providing dates. FFTB-DOC-0029.
[220] FFTB-INT-0088; FFTB-INT-0172 further corroborated by videos and open sources.
[221] FFTB-ME-0034; FFTB-INT-0035; FFTB-INT-0089; FFTB-INT-0157; FFTB-INT-0177; corroborated by videos, photos and medical information.
[222] Videos also available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNQpH5efLx8; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-5TrKcfDQ8 (as accessed on 30 January 2025). Enhancement by OHCHR digital forensics.
[223] BGB Director General FFTB-ME-0017; FFTB-INT-0149; FFTB-INT-0152; BGB Report FFTB-DOC-0022, corroborated by photos, medical information, and weapons expert analysis.
[224] 61; FFTB-INT-0181; medical information FFTB-INT-0175; Meeting with BGB Commander FFTB-ME-0017; BGB Report FFTB-DOC-0022; FFTB-DOC-0023, Dhaka Tribune, 6 killed in clash with BGB in Sreepur, 5 August 2024; Prothom Alo, 109 killed in clashes in a single day, 12 August 2024.
The Police reported to have recorded six deaths caused by gunshot in the Sreepur area during the protest period but did not provide dates or further information on the circumstances of these deaths. FFTB-DOC-0029.
[225] Executive magistrates, who are not judicial officers, are to accompany military and paramilitary forces when those are deployed to aid the civilian administration in public order management to

control their use of force to suppress a riot or disperse an unlawful assembly. See Code of Criminal Procedure, sections 129-131; Police Regulations Bengal, section 151.

226 FFTB-INT-0050; FFTB-INT-0162; FFTB-INT-0196; FFTB-0204; FFTB-INT-0241, corroborated by videos, photos and open sources.

227 FFTB-INT-0100; FFTB-INT-0147; photos from confidential source FFTB-AU-0015, corroborated by Alamy, Quota reformers clash with army and police in Rampura, 20 July 2024, New Age, Protests, violence, killings mark first day of curfew, 21 July 2024.

228 FFTB-INT-0004; FFTB-INT-0009; FFTB-INT-0111; FFTB-INT-0114; FFTB-INT-0148; FFTB-INT-0167; FFTB-INT-0177; FFTB-INT-0185; FFTB-INT-0196; senior official FFTB-INT-0220.

229 FFTB-INT-0012; FFTB-INT-0166, FFTB-INT-0173, corroborated by videos, one of which is also publicly available at https://x.com/PinakiTweetsBD/status/1831758711523594617/video/1 (as accessed on 30 January 2025).

230 FFTB-AU-0019.

231 FFTB-INT-0214.

232 OHCHR Weapons Expert Report FFTB-DOC-0019 with analysis of videos indicating that this was not shooting of blank ammunition; FFTB-INT-0240; FFTB-INT-0050; FFTB-INT-0086; FFTB-INT-0190, FFTB-INT-0201; FFTB-INT-0162; FFTB-INT-0241; FFTB-INT-0143. FFTB-INT-0147.

233 Officials FFTB-INT-0241; FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0222; FFTB-INT-0225; FFTB-INT-0240. FFTB-INT-0001; FFTB-INT-0002; FFTB-INT-0005; FFTB-INT-0043; FFTB-INT-0090; FFTB-INT-0100. See also Wall Street Journal, Young Officers in Bangladesh's Army Persuaded Chiefs to Back Protesters, 29 August 2024.

234 United Nations, Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, 29 July 2024; letter from High Commissioner Volker Türk to Prime Minister Hasina of 23 July 2024.

235 FFTB-INT-0002; FFTB-INT-0048; FFTB-INT-0090; FFTB-DOC-0020. Bangladesh is one of the biggest contributors of military and police to United Nations peacekeeping. See United Nations Peacekeeping, Troop and Police Contributions (accessed October 2024).

236 United Nations Policy on Human Rights Screening of United Nations Personnel (2012). Nevertheless, and despite criticism from human rights bodies and organisations, Bangladesh has deployed officers with a prior history in units with a problematic human rights record such as RAB and DGFI to United Nations missions in recent years. See United Nations Committee against Torture, Concluding Observations on Bangladesh (2019), para. 17; Deutsche Welle, Torturers deployed as UN peacekeepers, (5 May 2024); confidential submission on DGFI FFTB-DOC-0005; Bangladesh Armed Forces, International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers Journal (May 2024), p. 50.

237 FFTB-INT-0001; FFTB-0002; FFTB-INT-0050; officials FFTB-INT-0240; FFTB-INT-0155; FFTB-INT-0212; FFTB-INT-0222; FFTB-INT-0225.

238 Senior officials FFTB-INT-0222; FFTB-INT-0239.

239 FFTB-INT-0006; FFTB-INT-0056; FFTB-INT-FFTB-INT-0114; FFTB-INT-0128; FFTB-INT-0135; FFTB-INT-0140; FFTB-INT-0147; FFTB-INT-0148; FFTB-INT-0159; FFTB-INT-0173; FFTB-INT-0179; FFTB-INT-0226.

240 FFTB-AU-0031.

241 FFTB-INT-0018; FFTB-INT-0030; FFTB-INT-0033; FFTB-INT-0073; FFTB-INT-0111; FFTB-INT-0140; FFTB-INT-0154; FFTB-INT-0166; FFTB-INT-0205; FFTB-INT-0226; FFTB-ME-0014.

242 FFTB-INT-0122; corroborated by medical information and ammunitions analysis in OHCHR Weapons Expert Report FFTB-DOC-0019.

243 FFTB-INT-0215.

244 FFTB-ME-0016; FFTB-ME-0018.

245 Bangladesh Police and RAB report to OHCHR FFTB-DOC-0029.

246 OHCHR Weapons Expert Report FFTB-DOC-0019.

247 United Nations Human Rights Committee, General Comment 37 on Art. 21: The Right to Peaceful Assembly (2020), para. 88; United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms (1990), para. 5 (c).

248 FFTB-INT-0164.

249 BGB Report to OHCHR FFTB-DOC-0022.

250 FFTB-0041; FFTB-0014; FFTB-0038; FFTB-0068; FFTB-ME-0027; FFTB-ME-0026, corroborated by videos, weapons analysis and forensic analysis of medical information.

251 FFTB-INT-0041.

252 FFTB-INT-0014; FFTB-0038.

253 FFTB-AU-0020.

254 FFTB-AU-0020.

255 FFTB-DOC-0027.

256 FFTB-INT-0147.

257 FFTB-INT-0179, corroborated by photos.

[258] FFTB-INT-0094; FFTB-INT-0100; FFTB-INT-0113; FFTB-INT-0136; corroborated by photos, medical information and open sources.
[259] FFTB-INT-0175; FFTB-INT-0176, corroborated by photos and forensic medical analysis.
[260] FFTB-INT-0111; FFTB-INT-0076; FFBT-INT-0077; FFBT-INT-0112; FFTB-ME-0014; FFTB-ME-0027; FFTB-INT-0021; FFBT-INT-0042; FFBT-INT-0062; FFTB-ME-0026; FFBT-INT-0022; FFBT-INT-0050; FFBT-INT-0017; FFTB-INT-0160; FFTB-INT-0147.
[261] FFTB-ME-0026; FFTB-ME-0034; FFTB-INT-0017; FFTB-INT-0022; FFTB-INT-0050; FFTB-INT-0081; FFTB-INT-0112; FFTB-INT-0119; FFTB-INT-0143; FFTB-INT-0147; FFTB-INT-0158; FFTB-INT-0160, FFTB-INT-0184; FFTB-INT-0187. Names of hospitals withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR. Police and RAB reported to OHCHR that they had no information on directives being given in relation to medical care. FFTB-DOC-0029.
[262] FFTB-ME-0011; FFTB-ME-0014; FFTB-INT-0005; FFTB-INT-0043; FFTB-INT-0078; FFTB-INT-0209; FFTB-INT-0119.
[263] FFTB-ME-0034; FFTB-INT-0076; FFTB-INT-0174; FFTB-INT-0195.
[264] FFTB-INT-0015; FFTB-INT-0018; FFTB-INT-0023; FFTB-INT-0062; FFTB-INT-0074; FFTB-INT-0111; FFBT-INT-0097; FFBT-INT-0081; FFBT-INT-0062; FFBT-INT-0038: FFBT-INT-0023; FFBT-INT0018; FFBT-INT-0015; FFTB-INT-0194.
[265] Code of Criminal Procedure, section 174; Police Regulations Bengal, sections 303-308; OHCHR, The Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death (2016), para. 25 and paras. 148 ff.
[266] FFTB-0026; FFTB-INT-0022; FFBT-INT-0023; FFTB-INT-0035; FFBT-INT-0042; FFTB-ME-0034.
[267] See Section V.10.
[268] Business Standard, 2,630 arrested in DMP raids: Over 85% students, ordinary citizens, 29 July 2024.
[269] FFTB-INT-0009; FFTB-INT-0016; FFTB-INT-0094; FFTB-INT-0162; FFTB-INT-0114; FFTB-INT-0140; FFTB-INT-006; FFTB-INT-0180; FFTB-INT-0154; FFTB-INT-0230.
[270] FFTB-INT-0114.
[271] FFTB-INT-0001; FFTB-INT-0049; FFTB-INT-0053; FFTB-INT-0070; FFTB-INT-0039; FFTB-INT-0200; The Daily Star, Cases after violence: Over 2 lakh accused in Dhaka city, 29 July 2024.
[272] FFTB-INT-0006; FFTB-INT-0039.
[273] FFTB-INT-0009; FFTB-INT-0016; FFTB-INT-0094; FFTB-INT-0129; FFTB-INT-0162; FFTB-INT-0114; FFTB-INT-0140; FFTB-INT-0006; FFTB-INT-0180; FFTB-INT-0154; FFTB-INT-0230.
[274] FFTB-INT-0200.
[275] Bangladesh Police and RAB report to OHCHR FFTB-DOC-0029. The Police figure for Dhaka tallies with data OHCHR obtained at Dhaka's Central Jail in Keraniganj, which showed that the number of detainees in that facility alone increased by 2,300 during the month of July. FFTB-ME-0032.
[276] Bangladesh Police and RAB report to OHCHR FFTB-DOC-0029.
[277] FFTB-DOC-0022; FFTB-DOC-0024; FFTB-DOC-0021; FFTB-DOC-0023.
[278] FFTB-DOC-0029.
[279] FFTB-AU-0032.
[280] FFTB-INT-0162; senior officials FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0203; FFTB-INT-0215.
[281] FFTB-INT-0009; FFTB-INT-0038; FFTB-INT-0053; FFTB-INT-0099; FFTB-INT-0112; FFTB-INT-0162; FFTB-INT-0206; Senior officials FFTB-INT-0161; FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0203; FFTB-INT-0215.
[282] FFTB-INT-0053.
[283] FFTB-INT-0154. Name of area withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.
[284] FFTB-INT-0162.
[285] FFTB-INT-0051; FFTB-INT-0105; FFTB-INT-0114; FFTB-INT-0140; FFTB-INT-0187.
[286] FFTB-INT-0053. Name of area withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.
[287] FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0203; FFTB-INT-0215.
[288] Bangladesh Police and RAB report to OHCHR FFTB-DOC-0029. Names and ranks on file with OHCHR.
[289] Officials FFTB-INT-0237; FFTB-0161; FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0203; FFTB-INT-0212. FFTB-INT-0001; FFTB-INT-0019; FFTB-INT-0053.
[290] FFTB-INT-0180. Exact date and place withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.
[291] FFTB-INT-0138; FFTB-INT-0198. Date and place withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.
[292] FFTB-INT-0138, corroborated by medical information.
[293] FFTB-INT-0114; corroborated by social media information. Exact date and place withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.
[294] FFTB-INT-0052; FFTB-INT-0070; FFTB-INT-0231. For the Abu Sayed extrajudicial killing, see case 1.

[295] FFTB-INT-0140; FFT-INT-0203;0186; FFTB-INT-0006; FFTB-INT-0230; FFTB-INT-0184; FFBT-INT-0111; FFBT-INT-0077; FFTB-INT-0076; FFBT-INT-0022.
[296] FFTB-INT-0140. Details on exact date and place of arrest withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.
[297] FFTB-INT-0022. Date of incident and name of hospital withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.
[298] FFTB-INT-0184. Date of incident and name of hospital withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.
[299] FFTB-INT-0111. Date of incident and name of hospital withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.
[300] FFTB-INT-0063; senior officials FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0214.
[301] FFTB-INT-0063; FFTB-INT-0100; FFTB-INT-0105; FFTB-INT-0150; FFTB-INT-0116; FFTB-INT-0200, FFTB-AU-0015.
[302] Senior officials FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0237.
[303] Bangladesh Police and RAB report to OHCHR FFTB-DOC-0029.
[304] FFTB-INT-0215.
[305] Senior officials FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0203; FFTB-INT-0214; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0220; FFTB-INT-0240. FFTB-INT-0001.
[306] FFTB-ME-0033.
[307] FFTB-INT-0230; FFTB-INT-0086; FFTB-INT-0138; FFTB-INT-0140; FFTB-INT-0007; FFTB-INT-0014; FFTB-INT-0159; FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0206; FFTB-INT-0231; corroborated by open sources.
[308] See Section V.10.
[309] FFTB-INT-0005; FFTB-INT-0051, FFTB-INT-0006; FFTB-INT-0230; FFTB-INT-0154; FFTB-INT-0138; FFTB-INT-0140; FFTB-INT-0185, FFTB-INT-0186.
[310] FFTB-INT-0007; FFTB-INT-0159.
[311] FFTB-INT-0026; FFTB-INT-0005; FFTB-INT-0099; FFTB-INT-0129; FFTB-INT-0185; FFTB-INT-0186.
[312] See also Section V.10.
[313] FFTB-INT-0185; FFTB-INT-0186, corroborated by photos, medical records and open-source information. Date and exact location withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.
[314] FFTB-INT-0006; FFTB-INT-0051; FFTB-INT-0114; FFTB-INT-0185; FFTB-INT-0006; FFTB-INT-0159.
[315] FFT-B-INT 0154; FFTB-INT-0051; FFTB-INT-0159; FFTB-INT-0185, FFTB-INT-0186, FFTB-INT-0187.
[316] FFTB-INT-0203.
[317] Ministry of Home Affairs, Memorandum of 20 July 2024, FFTB-ME-0003; Ministry of Home Affairs, Memorandum of 21 July, FFTB-OS-0024; FFTB-ME-0033; FFTB-INT-0039.
[318] Daily Star, HC stays govt order banning prison visits by relatives, lawyers, 14 August 2024.
[319] FFTB-DOC-0028; FFTB-ME-0034.
[320] FFTB-INT-0082; corroborated also by Dhaka Tribune, 4 journos killed, over 200 injured during quota reform protests, 30 July 2024.
[321] FFTB-INT-0196; FFTB-DOC-0008, corroborated by open sources.
[322] FFTB-INT-0118; FFTB-INT-0119; FFTB-INT-0216, FFTB-DOC-0008, corroborated by videos, medical information and ballistics forensics. Bangladesh Police reported to OHCHR that shotguns were used by Police in several locations in Sylhet during the protest period. FFTB-DOC-0029.
[323] New Age, IGP apologises for police acts in party interest, 22 December 2024.
[324] FFTB-INT-0056.
[325] FFTB-INT-0086; corroborated by photos and medical information.
[326] FFTB-INT-0199.
[327] FFTB-INT-0196.
[328] FFTB-INT-0112; FFTB-INT-0026.
[329] FFTB-INT-0126 corroborated by multiple videos, medical information and weapons analysis.
[330] FFTB-INT-0166.
[331] FFTB-INT-0100.
[332] FFTB-ME-0007.
[333] FFTB-INT-0041; FFTB-INT-0050; FFTB-INT-0241; FFTB-INT-0100; FFTB-INT-0162; FFTB-INT-0166; FFTB-INT-0198; FFTB-DOC-0008.
[334] FFTB-INT-0166. Date and other details withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.
[335] OHCHR, Internet shutdowns: trends, causes, legal implications and impacts on a range of human rights (2022), para. 13, 14 & 67. See also Human Rights Council Resolution 47/16. The promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet (2021), para. 13.

[336] Senior officials FFTB-INT-0238; FFTB-INT-0237, FFTB-INT-0215.
[337] Report of Ministry of Posts and Tele Communications to OHCHR, FFTB-DOC-0025.
[338] BTRC WhatsApp messages and NTMC emails to providers FFTB-DOC-0012 and FFTB-DOC-0013. Interviews with senior officials and others with inside knowledge FFTB-INT-0024; FFTB-INT-0031; FFTB-INT-0238, FFTB-INT-0237 & FFTB-INT-0215; Internet usage data obtained by OHCHR FFTB-DOC-0014; Telenor announcement to its Grameenphone customs: Situation in Bangladesh, 5 August 2024; The Daily Star, What you need to know about Internet crackdown in Bangladesh, 13 August 2024.
[339] The Daily Star, Shutdown cost the economy $10 billion: FICCI, 28 July 2024.
[340] Senior official INT-0238. See also Aljazeera, Bangladesh curfews, Internet blackout batter economy amid quota protests, 23 July 2024.
[341] FFTB-DOC-0012; FFTB-DOC-0013; FFTB-DOC-0014; FFTB-INT-0031; FFTB-INT-0024.
[342] The Business Standard, Bizarre claims and apologies: The statements of Palak during Internet blackouts, 6 August 2024. Similar claims were made in a submission from the former Government provided to OHCHR on 24 July (FFTB-DOC-0016) and in interviews with officials FFTB-INT-0238; FFTB-INT-0237; FFTB-INT-0161.
[343] Senior officials FFTB-INT-0237; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0220. FFTB-INT-0024; FFTB-INT-0031.
[344] FFTB-DOC-0014; FFTB-DOC-0017.
[345] FFTB-INT-0220.
[346] FFTB-INT-0019; FFTB-INT-0063.
[347] FFTB-INT-167; FFTB-ME-0022; Daily Observer, The role, rewards and challenges of women in the anti-discrimination movement, 8 November 2024.
[348] See Section V.1.
[349] FFTB-INT-0004; FFTB-INT-0051; FFTB-INT-0075; FFTB-INT-0093; FFTB-INT-0095; FFTB-INT-0111; FFTB-INT-0116: FFTB-INT-0117; FFTB-INT-0135; FFTB-INT-0187; FFTB-INT-0188; FFTB-INT-0206; FFTB-INT-0209.
[350] Section V.6.
[351] FFTB-INT-0075; FFTB-INT-0111; FFTB-INT-0116; FFTB-INT-0116; FFTB-INT-0130; FFTB-INT-0185; FFTB-INT-0186; FFTB-INT-0188; FFTB-INT-0191; FFTB-INT-0216.
[352] FFTB-INT-0095; FFTB-INT-0111; FFTB-INT-0187, FFTB-INT-0209. Precise dates and places withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.
[353] FFTB-INT-013; FFTB-INT-0135; FFTB-INT-0137; FFTB-INT-0141; FFTB-INT-0187; FFTB-INT-0191.
[354] FFTB-INT-0030; FFTB-INT-0050; FFTB-INT-0075; FFTB-INT-0130; FFTB-INT-0139; FFTB-INT-0210.
[355] Section V.2.
[356] FFTB-INT-0094; FFTB-INT-0142; FFTB-INT-0143; FFTB-INT-0146; FFTB-INT-0203; corroborated by videos and medical information. For 19 July, the NSI reported (see FFTB-DOC-0023) another killing of a young man in the area that it specifically attributed to RAB.
[357] FFTB-INT-0111; FFTB-INT-0159; FFTB-INT-0179; FFTB-INT-0050; FFTB-INT-0057.
[358] FFTB-INT-0106; supported by medical information and forensic analysis.
[359] FFTB-INT-0078, corroborated by medical information.
[360] FFTB-INT-0190; FFTB-INT-0201; FFTB-DOC-0029. corroborated by photos and open sources.
[361] FFTB-INT-0006, FFTB-INT-0051; FFTB-INT-00154; FFTB-INT-0114; FFTB-INT-0129.
[362] FFTB-INT-0114.
[363] FFTB-INT-0051; FFTB-INT-0070.
[364] FFTB-INT-0026; FFTB-INT-0099 corroborated by photos and open sources.
[365] According to Police figures provided to OHCHR, the Police only recorded 56 arrests across the entire country during the period of 5 to 15 August. FFTB-DOC-0029.
[366] FFTB-AU-0032.
[367] FFTB-INT-0004; FFTB-INT-0016; FFTB-INT-0073; FFTB-INT-0077; corroborated by open sources.
[368] FFTB-INT-0235, FFTB-INT-0210, corroborated by photos, videos and open sources.
[369] Police Presentation FFTB-AU-0003; FFTB-INT-0083; FFTB-INT-0161; FFTB-INT-0210; corroborated by photos of the bodies.
[370] FFTB-DOC-0029, corroborated by open sources.
[371] FFTB-INT-0052, FFTB-DOC-0029, corroborated by open sources.
[372] FFTB-DOC-0011; FFTB-INT-0037; FFTB-INT-0064; Dhaka Tribune, 6 Narsingdi Awami League leaders, activists beaten to death, 4 August 2024.
[373] FFTB-AU-0003.
[374] FFTB-INT-0217.

[375] FFTB-INT-0118.
[376] FFTB-INT-0180.
[377] FFTB-INT-0009; FFTB-INT-0053; FFTB-ITN-0058; FFTB-INT-0069; FFTB-INT-0109; FFTB-INT-0176; FFTB-INT-0189; official FFTB-INT-0101; Ansar/VDP Report FFTB-DOC-0024; Police Presentation FFTB-AU-0008; corroborated by videos, photos and open sources.
[378] FFTB-AU-0003; FFTB-INT-0215 corroborated by photos and open sources.
[379] FFTB-INT-0157; FFTB-INT-0089; FFTB-INT-0217; FFTB-AU-0003, corroborated by photos. On the Police's burning of bodies see Case 6: March on Dhaka in Section V.2.
[380] Daily Star, BNP expels 44, cites role in violence, other reasons, 11 August 2024.
[381] Officials FFTB-INT-0210; FFTB-INT-0218.
[382] FFTB-INT-0189.
[383] FFTB-INT-0029; FFTB-INT-0053; FFTB-INT-0083; FFTB-INT-0084; FFTB-INT-0095; FFTB-INT-0126; FFTB-INT-0191; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0218; FFTB-INT-0220; corroborated by photos, videos and open sources.
[384] FFTB-INT-0084. Details withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.
[385] FFTB-ME-0031; FFTB-INT-0239 corroborated by open sources, videos and photos.
[386] FFTB-INT-0029; FFTB-INT-0053; FFTB-INT-0083; FFTB-INT-0126; FFTB-INT-0191; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0218; FFTB-INT-0220; corroborated by photos, videos and open sources.
[387] FFTB-INT-0191.
[388] FFTB-INT-0095; FFTB-INT-0191; FFTB-INT-0221.
[389] See Section V.9.
[390] FFTB-INT-0105, FFTB-INT-0128, FFTB-INT-0130, FFTB-INT-0134, FFTB-INT-0135; FFTB-ME-0023; FFTB-ME-0029.
[391] FFTB-INT-0191; FFTB-INT-0199; corroborated by videos, photos and open sources.
[392] FFTB-INT-0098; FFTB-INT-0227; FFTB-INT-0228; FFTB-INT-0229, corroborated by medical information.
[393] FFTB-DOC-0011.
[394] Police & RAB report provided to OHCHR FFTB-DOC-0029.
[395] BGB Report to OHCHR, FFTB-DOC-0022.
[396] Ansar/VDP Report to OHCHR, FFTB-DOC-0024.
[397] Police & RAB Report FFTB-DOC-0029; RAB Director General FFTB-ME-0016.
[398] FFTB-INT-0029; FFTB-INT-0016; FFTB-INT-0028; FFTB-INT-0056; FFTB-INT-0061 FFTB-INT-0068, FFTB-DOC-0008, corroborated by videos and open sources.
[399] FFTB-INT-0091, FFTB-INT-0045, FFTB-INT-0016; FFTB-INT-0082.
[400] FFTB-INT-0196.
[401] Daily Star, Political party consensus will determine speed of reforms, election, 20 November 2024.
[402] FFTB-INT-0028; FFTB-INT-0041; FFTB-INT-0082; FFTB-INT-0091; FFTB-0100; FFTB-DOC-0008.
[403] A study by Dismis Lab, a non-governmental fact-checking organisation, found that misinformation related to attacks on minority communities was the second-most widespread type of misinformation in circulation between July and September 2024 and was only surpassed by political misinformation, According to Dismiss lab's research on misinformation in Bangladesh, social media has amplified false narratives around religious and ethnic tensions, escalating fears and stirring violent responses. The platform notes that specific disinformation campaigns have inflated the scale of violence against religious minorities Dismis Lab, Political shift triggers surge in political and religious misinformation in Bangladesh (October 2024).
[404] FFTB-INT-0125; FFTB-INT-0199.
[405] FFTB-INT-0125; FFTB-INT-0066, FFTB-INT-0065, FFTB-INT-0064.
[406] FFTB-INT-0067; FFTB-INT-0125; FFTB-INT-0066, FFTB-INT-0065, FFTB-INT-0064.
[407] FFTB-INT-0127.
[408] Business Today, Bangladesh's Jamaat-e-Islami condemns attacks on Hindu minorities amid rising violence, 7 August 2024; Prothom Alo, Mirza Fakhrul sees conspiracy behind attacks on minorities, 13 August 2024; Voice7News, Anti-Discrimination Movement Leader Calls for Peace and Protection of Media and Minorities, 6 August 2024; Dhaka Tribune, Chief Adviser urges youth to lead Bangladesh's future, condemns attacks on minorities, 10 August 2024.
[409] FFTB-INT-0085. See also The Daily Star, Vacuum looms as teachers being coerced to quit, 1 September 2024.
[410] FFTB-DOC-0023.
[411] The Business Standard, 76.74% of minority attacks political in nature, 1.24% communal: Police report. 11 January 2025.
[412] FFTB-ME-0013; FFTB-INT-0127; FFB-INT-0132; FFTB-INT-0196.
[413] FFTB-INT-0132, corroborated by photos, medical information and open sources.

[414] United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Bangladesh: UN expert concerned about non-implementation of Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord, 2 December 2022; Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on the initial report of Bangladesh (2018), paras. 15-16; Human Rights Committee, Concluding observations on the initial report of Bangladesh (2017), para. 12.
[415] See TWENTY YEARS OF PEACEBUILDING IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS: An Ethno-National Analysis; Bangladesh's Persecuted Indigenous People | Human Rights Watch.
[416] FFTB-INT-0137; FFTB-INT-0139.
[417] FFB-INT-0137.
[418] FFTB-INT-0137; FFTB-ME-0010; FFTB-INT-0085.
[419] Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief on his visit to Bangladesh (2016), para. 50.
[420] FFTB-ME-0020; FFTB-INT-0085; FFTB-INT-0100; FFTB-INT-0105; FFTB-INT-0125, FFTB-INT-0127; FFTB-INT-0128; FFTB-INT-0199; corroborated by videos and photos.
[421] FFTB-INT-0085; FFTB-INT-0134; FFTB-INT-0135; FFTB-INT-0137; FFTB-INT-0139; FFTB-INT-0141; FFTB-ME-0021.
[422] The Business Standard, 76.74% of minority attacks political in nature, 1.24% communal: Police report. 11 January 2025.
[423] Annex 1.
[424] United Nations Human Rights Committee, General Comment 31: General Obligations (2004) and General Comment 36: Right to Life (2019) and General Comment 37: Right to Peaceful Assembly (2020); United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms (1990); OHCHR, Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death (2016) and Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement (2020).
[425] Police Regulations Bengal, Reg. 157.
[426] FFTB-INT-0203; FFTB-INT-0215.
[427] FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0236. Dates of personal meetings with Prime Minister withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.
[428] Officials FTB-INT-0224; FFTB-INT-0236; text of the Gazette establishing the commission as reflected in Daily Star, Govt forms judicial inquiry commission over recent violence, deaths, 1 August 2024.
[429] See section V.4.
[430] See section V.2. and section V.4.
[431] FFTB-INT-0195; FFTB-INT-0022.
[432] Officials FFTB-INT-0240; FFTB-INT-0101.
[433] According to the Police and RAB report to OHCHR, only 1 out of 15 deployed RAB Battalions shot with rifles (111 bullets by RAB Battalion 2) and only 6 out of 15 RAB battalions shot metal pellets from shotguns (1540 rounds in total). FFTB-DOC-1540.
[434] FFTB-INT-0023; FFTB-INT-0038; FFTB-INT-0042; FFTB-INT-0057; FFTB-INT-0062; FFTB-INT-0097; FFTB-INT-0099; FFTB-INT-0143; FFTB-0162.
[435] FFTB-INT-0051; FFTB-INT-0052; FFTB-INT-0070; FFTB-INT-0231.
[436] See Section V.5.
[437] The Daily Star, 'Don't harass innocents', 30 July 2024.
[438] Bangladesh: Justice for the past requires fair trials, warn UN experts, 7 February 2013; Press Briefing Notes: Bangladesh/Imminent Execution, 8 April 2015.
[439] On 6 January, the ICT reportedly issued a second arrest warrant against Sheilkh Hasina and ten other security sector officials in relation to extrajudicial killings.
[440] FFTB-INT-0001; FFTB-INT-0049; FFTB-INT-0125; FFTB-INT-0197; FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0224; FFTB-ME-0033.
[441] International Criminal Tribunal Act, as revised in 2024, art. 11 (2).
[442] International Criminal Tribunal Act 1973, as amended in 2024, sec. 20 (2).
[443] See also the Fact-Finding's Terms of Reference in Annex 1.
[444] FFTB-DOC-0029.
[445] FFTB-DOC-0022.
[446] FFTB-DOC-0029.
[447] FFTB-DOC-0021; FFTB-DOC-0023; FFTB-DOC-0024.
[448] FFTB-DOC-0029.
[449] FFTB-INT-0049; FFTB-0098; FFTB-INT-0219.
[450] FFTB-INT-0146; FFTB-INT-0094; FFTB-INT-ME022.
[451] FFTB-INT-0161; FFTB-INT-0024; FFTB-INT-0133; FFTB-INT-0062; FFTB-INT-0094; FFTB-INT-0213.

[452] FFTB-INT-0213. The Interim Government's Commission on Enforced Disappearance also reported that evidence of violations in the DGFI's clandestine detention centre Aynaghar was destroyed. The Daily Star, Joint Interrogation Cell evidence destroyed after August 5, 21 January 2025.
[453] FFTB-INT-0038; FFTB-INT-0025; FFTB-Int-0062.
[454] FFTB-INT-0133. Details withheld for protection reasons but known to OHCHR.
[455] See also United Nations Committee against Torture, Concluding Observations on Bangladesh (2019), para. 9; Bangladesh Law Commission, Final Report on a proposed law relating to protection of victims and witnesses of crimes involving grave offences (2006); Hussain Mohamed Fazlul Bari, An Appraisal of Victim Protection in Bangladesh, 61 Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh 183 (2016).
[456] FFTB-INT-0104; FFTB-INT-0174; FFTB-INT-0219; FFTB-INT-0221; FFTB-INT-0236.
[457] The Business Standard, 76.74% of minority attacks political in nature, 1.24% communal: Police report. 11 January 2025. See also Section VI.2.
[458] Daily Star, Bangladesh immunity order sparks fears of justice denied, 29 October 2024; Dhaka Tribune, Home Ministry: July uprising participants safe from legal action, 15 October 2024.
[459] Government comments provided on 7 February 2024, FFTB-DOC-0030.
[460] See United Nations Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 36: Art. 6 (Right to life) (2019), para. 27; General Comment No. 35: Art. 9 (Right to security and liberty of person) (2018), para. 9; United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, General recommendation XXXI on the prevention of racial discrimination in the administration and functioning of the criminal justice system (2005), para. 15; United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Violence against Women, General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations (2013), paras. 15 and 81.
Drawing an analogy to international norms covering post-armed conflict scenarios does not suggest a different interpretation but reaffirms the position taken here by OHCHR. Article 6 of Geneva Protocol II on Non-International Armed Conflicts, indicates that "*At the end of hostilities, the authorities in power shall endeavour to grant the broadest possible amnesty to persons who have participated in the armed conflict*." However, it is established under international law that persons who committed crimes such as the murder of civilians or persons hors combat, sexual violence or the pillaging of civilian homes have to be excluded from such amnesties given that these acts would be considered war crimes in the context of an armed conflict. See International Committee of the Red Cross, Amnesties and International Humanitarian Law: Purpose and Scope (2017).
[461] FFTB-INT-0177.
[462] Prothom Alo, Treatment of the injured: Why the ongoing neglect?, 15 November 2024; New Age, Help for uprising victims should have already been shored up, 8 January 2025.
[463] Prothom Alo, July uprising directorate will be set up by next month: Nahid, 7 January 2025.
[464] Views Bangladesh, Sacrifices of martyrs' can never be fully repaid: Adviser Asif, 16 November 2024; Dhaka Tribune, Govt to establish July Uprising Directorate, 18 December 2024.
[465] See Section IX.3 on institutionalized immunity as a root cause for the violations of the 2024 protests.
[466] Daily Star, Commission links Hasina to disappearances, recommends RAB dissolution, 14 December 2024; Daily Star, Interim report of inquiry on enforced disappearance reveals alarming patterns, 15 December 2024.
[467] See Section V.1 for referenced statements.
[468] See Section V.2.
[469] See Section V.2.
[470] Section III.3.
[471] Section V.2.
[472] Section V.3.
[473] Section V.2.
[474] Section V.3.
[475] Section V.5.
[476] Section V.6.
[477] Section V.8.
[478] Section V.7.
[479] Section VI.1.
[480] Section III.3.
[481] Section III.2.
[482] Section III.6.
[483] Section III.6.
[484] Section III.3.
[485] Section IV.2.
[486] Section IV.6.

[487] Section III.5.
[488] FFTB-INT-0214; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0220.
[489] Section VI.1.
[490] See Section V.2 and Section V.3.
[491] See article 7(2)(a), ICC Statute.
[492] See, e.g. See e.g., ICTY, Prosecutor v. Jadranko Prlić, Judgement (TC), IT-04-74-T, 29 May 2013, paras. 41-42; ICTY; Prosecutor v. Radovan Karadžić, Judgment (TC), IT-95-5/18-T, 24 March 2016 paras. 471-472, 477; ICC, Prosecutor v. Bosco Ntaganda (AC), ICC-01/04-02/06, 30 March 2021, paras. 416 and 430.
[493] See Art. 7 (1) (a) and Art. 30 ICC Statute, as further elaborated in the ICC Elements of Crimes.
[494] See Art. 31 (1) (c) ICC Statute.
[495] See Art. 7 (1) (k) ICC Statute.
[496] See Art. 7 (1) (f) and (2) (e) ICC Statute.
[497] See Art. 7 (1) (e) ICC Statute.
[498] See below Section IX.
[499] See Section V.2.
[500] FFTB-INT-0018; FFTB-INT-0135; FFTB-INT-0073; FFTB-INT-0102; FFTB-INT-0171.
[501] FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0214; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0220.
[502] FFTB-INT-0161; FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0214; FFTB-INT-0215; FFTB-INT-0220.
[503] FFTB-INT-0018; FFTB-INT-0058; FFTB-INT-0105; FFTB-INT-0161; FFTB-INT-0182; FFTB-INT-0189; FFTB-INT-0191; FFTB-INT-0199; FFTB-INT-0212; FFTB-INT-0235.
[504] FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0210; FFTB-INT-0214; FFTB-INT-0215.
[505] New Age, Students announce ‘March to Dhaka’ today, 4 August 2024; BDNews24, Non-cooperation programme: Protests called on Monday, ‘Long March to Dhaka’ on Tuesday, 4 August 2024; Daily Star, Mob Justice goes against the spirit of the student movement, 16 August 2024.
[506] Voice7News, Anti-Discrimination Movement Leader Calls for Peace and Protection of Media and Minorities, 6 August 2024.
[507] See also Amnesty International, Bangladesh: Investigate deaths in protest clashes to prevent more bloodshed, 13 August 2013; OHCHR, Press Briefing Notes on Bangladesh, 13 August 2013.
[508] According to information provided by Bangladesh Police (FFTB-AU-0003), at least 75 people were injured during clashes between police and quota protesters in the second week of April 2018 alone. The Police also acknowledged that law enforcement had downplayed a violent attack of the Chhatra League on protesters in June 2018 and arrested a number of quota reform leaders instead. See also FFTB-INT-0148; Human Rights Watch, “Creating Panic”: Bangladesh Election Crackdown on Political Opponents and Critics (2018), pp. 20-23.
[509] OHCHR, Bangladesh political protests, 31 October 2023; OHCHR, Bangladesh Protests, 4 August 2023; United Nations Special Procedures, Allegation letters to Bangladesh BGAL BGD 3/2021, Al BGD 5/2022, AL BDG 9/2023, AL BGB 1/2024, Public Statement of 24 January 2024; Odhikar, Bangladesh: Annual Human Rights Report 2023 (January 2024), paras. 4ff.; Amnesty International, Bangladesh: Garment workers must receive rights-based compensation and justice immediately (2024).
[510] See Section III.3.
[511] See also United Nations Development Programme, Analysis of Draft Police Ordinance, 2007 and 1861 Police Act against International Good Practice (2012).
[512] Police Regulations Bengal 1943, Reg. 153 and 155. See also Code of Criminal Procedure, section 128.
[513] See Section V.2.
[514] See Penal Code 1860, Article 100 and 103. The Police and RAB report to OHCHR also indicates that police officers can rely on the private defence provisions of the Penal Code to justify their use of force. FFTB-DOC-0029.
[515] Inspector General of Police, FFTB-ME-0018; police official FFTB-INT-0157; senior officials FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0215. FFTB-INT-0162.
[516] FFTB-INT-0001; FFTB-INT-0002; FFTB-INT-0090; FFTB-INT-0240; FFTB-INT-0241.
[517] Extrajudicial killing data according to NetraNews (2009-November 2023) and enforced disappearances according to Odhikar (2009-June 2024).
[518] BBC, Bangladesh elite police to hang for murders (16 January 2017).
[519] As noted above, the Interim Government’s Commission on Enforced Disappearances also found DGFI responsible for enforced disappearances in its interim report of 14 December 2024.
[520] United Nations Committee against Torture, Concluding Observations on Bangladesh (2019), para. 7. See also United Nations Human Rights Committee, Concluding Observations on Bangladesh (2017), para. 21; OMCT/Odhikar, Cycle of Fear: Combating Impunity for Torture and Strengthening the Rule of Law in Bangladesh (2019).

[521] Figures according to Odhikar (2013-April 2024).
[522] National Report of Bangladesh to the Universal Periodic Review, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/WG.6/44/BGD/1 (September 2023), para. 87.
[523] See also United Nations Committee against Torture, Concluding Observations on Bangladesh (2019), para. 11; The Daily Star, Police Investigating the Police, 28 March 2013.
[524] A 2018 study by the Prime Minister's Office concluded that this system is "not suitable for disposal of large number of cases and to ensure good governance" and has "shortcomings to establish accountability, transparency and professionalism." Bangladesh Cabinet Division, Reviews on Prosecution Service Framework in Bangladesh (2018), p. 54. The Anti-Corruption Commission also lacks independence and does not have enough qualified lawyers on staff to pursue legal cases, relying on manipulable ad hoc appointments instead. Mahdeen Hashem Reza, Performance and Effectiveness of the Anti-Corruption Commission in Bangladesh, Journal of Public Administration (2020).
[525] For budget figures see Shahdeen Malik, Judiciary in woes due to insufficient allocation in budget, Prothom Alo, 22 May 2024.
[526] Supreme Court data, as reported in Daily Star, Cases pile up in courts, 27 April 2023; FFTB-INT-0045; FFTB-INT-0049.
[527] United Nations Committee against Torture, Concluding Observations on Bangladesh (2019), para. 27.
[528] FFTB-INT-0049 and FFTB-INT-0197. See also The Pinnacle Gazette, Bangladesh Supreme Court Proposes New Judge Transfer Policy, 4 November 2024.
[529] Prothom Alo, Supreme Judicial Council reinstated to remove judges, 20 October 2024. In May 2016, the Supreme Court decision had already held this amendment to be unlawful once, prompting parliament to pass a resolution seeking to nullify the Supreme Court verdict. Subsequently, the Chief Justice fled the country; according to him, due to threats from the DGFI. Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha, A Broken Dream: Rule of Law, Human Rights and Democracy (2018); The Daily Star, Star Interview: 'Hasina used DGFI to force me to leave the country', 24 August 2024. See also United Nations Committee against Torture, (2019), para. 27.
[530] Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions; Prothom Alo, Accreditation status as of 19 July 2024; National Human Rights Commission remains in category B since 2011, 10 December 2023; United Nations Human Rights Committee, Concluding Observations on Bangladesh (2017), para. 5.
[531] Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights on his visit to Bangladesh (2024), para. 14. For a critical analysis of the law see also United Nations Special Procedures, Allegation letter BGD 3/2014.
[532] United Nations Human Rights Committee, Concluding Observations on Bangladesh (2017), paras. 9 & 27; Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding Observations on Bangladesh (2018), para. 11; OHCHR, Bangladesh: Türk urges immediate suspension of Digital Security Act as media crackdown continues, 31 March 2023; Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights on his visit to Bangladesh (2024), paras. 11-13; United Nations Special Procedures, UN experts urge Bangladesh to seize Human Rights Council review as opportunity to address deteriorating human rights situation, 14 November 2023.
[533] Haaretz, Israeli Spy Tech Sold to Bangladesh Despite Dismal Human Rights Record, 10 January 2023; Al Jazeera, Bangladesh bought mass spying equipment from Israeli company, 2 February 2021; European Parliament, Report of the investigation of alleged contraventions and maladministration in the application of Union law in relation to the use of Pegasus and equivalent surveillance spyware (2023), paras. 153-156, 252-255, 358; Surveillance Watch, Bangladesh (data as of October 2024).
[534] Senior officials FFTB-INT-0200; FFTB-INT-0237.
[535] Sabhanaz Rashid Diya, Beyond the Shadows: Reforming surveillance practices in Bangladesh (2024). Former senior official FFTB-INT-0215 described that NTMC can "intercept anyone, if they have doubts on anyone."
[536] Optima, Internet Shutdown Advocacy in Bangladesh: How to Prepare, Prevent, Resist (2023). See also Shahzeb Mahmood, How to fix the legacy of Internet shutdowns in Bangladesh, 17 September 2024.
[537] FFTB-INT-0141; FFTB-INT-0139; FFTB-INT-0135.
[538] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding Observations on the eight periodic report of Bangladesh (2016), paras. 16-19.
[539] BGB report to OHCHR FFTB-DOC-0022.
[540] Police and RAB report to OHCHR FFTB-DOC-0029.

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