

## **Bangladesh: Stop excessive use of force against student protesters demanding road safety**

(Bangkok/Kathmandu, 4 August 2018) - The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) condemns the excessive use of force and violence against the student protesters in Dhaka, who have been demanding safer roads. FORUM-ASIA urges the authorities to take urgent measures to protect their rights to free expression and peaceful assembly, and restore law and order.

Thousands of students took to the streets of Dhaka demanding justice for two college students, who were killed by a speeding bus in Dhaka on 29 July.<sup>1</sup> The deceased, Abdul Karim Rajib and Dia Khanam Meem, were students of Shaheed Ramiz Uddin Cantonment School and College.<sup>2</sup> Nine other students were injured when the bus rammed into a group of students waiting for public transportation to return home. This incident is one among increasing road accidents and resultant casualties in Bangladesh, as revealed by road accident statistics.<sup>3</sup>

Soon after, the students took to the streets demanding: the immediate arrest of the bus driver responsible for the deaths; justice to the victims; and road safety. They also highlighted several loopholes in the system posing a threat to life of the people due to inadequate road safety. The protests soon drew public attention and started to grow as more students from different schools, colleges, and universities joined in.

Instead of responding to the peaceful protests genuinely, the Shipping Minister of Bangladesh made insensitive remarks on road accidents, which further agitated the students.<sup>4</sup> Then, police started using excessive force, including guns, batons and water cannons injuring many students, including female students. Ahad Alsan, a 19-year old student from Shaheed Police Smriti College, had to be taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital after sustaining injuries from a police baton charge.<sup>5</sup>

FORUM-ASIA condemns the crackdown on the peaceful protests, and urges the Government to immediately undertake adequate measures to ensure justice for the students killed. The Government should also heed call for road safety. Furthermore, FORUM-ASIA reiterates its demand to adhere to international standards of human rights, related to the freedom of expression, association and assembly, and refrain from using force against peaceful protesters and unarmed civilians.

### **About FORUM-ASIA:**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/city/students-demo-cripple-dhaka-5th-day-road-accident-safety-demand-1614880>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/dhaka/2018/07/29/2-students-killed-in-dhaka-road-accident>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2018/01/01/ncpsrr-road-accidents-2017>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/road-safety-demand-gets-louder-1614787>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/dhaka/2018/08/01/injured-student-protester-in-intensive-care>

*FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 58 member organisations in 19 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas*

*of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratisation.*

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