

[Statement] Bangladesh: End Violence Against Peaceful Protests

(Kathmandu, 4 August 2023) - The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) expresses deep concern over the systematic repression against protesting opposition political parties in Bangladesh.

We call upon the authorities to immediately cease such violence and uphold the people's right to peaceful assembly and the principles of democracy, ensuring that the country's upcoming election will be free and fair.

On 29 July 2023, hundreds of workers from the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) staged sit-in [protests](#) at all entry points to the capital Dhaka. The situation escalated when the police used tear gas, rubber bullets, and batons disproportionately to disperse protesters. In response, BNP workers reportedly threw bricks and attacked police vehicles with sticks. The [clashes](#) caused injury to more than 100 opposition party workers and around 20 police officers. Furthermore, the BNP claimed that at least 124 of its members were arrested by the police.

Previous [demonstrations](#) led by opposition parties were met with similar violence, tear gas, assault, and arrests by the police.

To pave the way for an interim government and ensure that the January 2024 elections would be free and fair, the opposition has persistently demanded the resignation of the current government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The opposition—including the BNP—accuses the present administration of rigging the 2018 elections, harbouring apprehensions about potential manipulation in the upcoming elections.

Call to Action

FORUM-ASIA is deeply concerned over these violent incidents and the crackdown on critics. Such actions not only undermine the democratic fabric of Bangladesh but also violate people's fundamental freedoms, including the rights to peaceful assembly, protest, and freedom of expression.

We urge the authorities to exercise restraint and adhere to the United Nations [Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials](#).

The suppression of dissent and violence against protesters should stop. Instead, the Bangladesh Government must help create an enabling environment for free and fair elections.

About FORUM-ASIA:

The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) is a network of 85 member organisations across 23 countries, mainly in Asia. Founded in 1991, FORUM-ASIA works to strengthen movements for human rights and sustainable development through research, advocacy, capacity development and solidarity actions in Asia and beyond. It has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and consultative relationship with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. The FORUM-ASIA Secretariat is based in Bangkok, with offices in Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. www.forum-asia.org

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