

# HOW DID WE GET HERE?



**From the Bloody  
July to the  
August Uprising**



# HOW DID WE GET HERE?

**From the Bloody July to the  
August Uprising**

Occasional Paper on

## **HOW DID WE GET HERE?**

From the Bloody July to the August Uprising

September 4, 2024

**Apon Zahir**

Senior Research Associate, CGS

**Marzana Mahnaz**

Research Assistant, CGS

**Kazi Rhid**

Content Strategy Coordinator, CGS



The Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) was established in 2004 as a non-profit autonomous think tank to work on improving the quality of governance in Bangladesh through facilitation of collaborative efforts among the academic community, government, private sector, civil society, and development partners. CGS contributes to research, media advocacy, and dialogue in democratic governance and sustainable economic development. Based in Dhaka, CGS' clients include multinational firms, multilateral agencies, diplomatic missions, government departments, private sector organizations, and civil society actors. CGS has current partnerships with the National Endowment for Democracy, National Democratic Institute, United Nation's Development Program, Centre for International Private Enterprise, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, and Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office and has built relationships with the private sector and the media as a trusted source of independent research and analysis.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	.....	4
BACKGROUND	.....	5
THE PEACEFUL PROTEST: BANGLA BLOCKADE	.....	6
THE DARK TURN OF EVENTS	.....	7
THE CURFEW DAYS	.....	11
THE PRELUDE TO UPRISING	.....	15
THE UPRISING	.....	18
THE FALL OF A DICTATOR	.....	21
CONCLUSION	.....	24

## INTRODUCTION



History has observed that in times of great political turmoil, a single incident of defiance serves as the spark that ignites the powder keg. Such events are historic, changing the political landscape of entire nations. Examples of such events can be the burning man from Tunisia who ignited the Arab Spring or the Tank Man from Tianmen who became an enduring symbol of defiance against authoritarianism across the world. The image above is one such example, at least for the collective social psyche of Bangladesh. Pictured above is Abu Sayed, a student of the English department of Begum Rokeya University, Bangladesh. He was participating in a protest over government job reservations in front of his university in the city

of Rangpur on 16 July 2024. The image is a screenshot from a full video that shows the moment Abu Sayed is shot by the police four times with shotgun pellets. He is shown running back, eventually collapsing, and being carried away by fellow student activists. He died before he reached the hospital. The silhouette of Abu Sayed, in his defiant stance against authority, has been widely adopted by the ongoing protest movement in Bangladesh as they demand justice for the deaths of hundreds of student protestors due to excessive police force. The resulting escalation of civil unrest was met with a brutal crackdown by law enforcement, paramilitary groups, and eventually the army, who have all been caught on video using lethal force against unarmed protestors and violating several basic principles of human rights to subjugate the masses. This occasional paper will attempt to chronicle and analyze the series of events that led to so much death and destruction in Bangladesh, the likes of which had not been seen since the liberation war of 1971.

## BACKGROUND

On December 30th 2010 the government included grandchildren in the 30% quota reserved for freedom fighters and their children (FFQ). This resulted in a protest two and a half years later in July of 2013, the campus of the University of Dhaka saw clashes between two groups. The police had to intervene, activists get beat up by the ruling party student wing Bangladesh Chhatro League (BCL), and the activists get labeled as “Shibir” (Banned Jamaat-E-Islami student wing Islami Chhatro Shibir) These activists get beaten out of campus.

In early 2018 a writ petition was filed with the High Court (HC) seeking re-evaluation of the quota system in government jobs, in March the HC rejected the writ. A student uproar is noticeable at the University of Dhaka campus. These students campaign around campus, rallying support for their cause. By April, it turned into a huge movement on campus, the students were demanding the government make reforms to the quota system, focusing on the 30% of FFQ. Then agriculture minister Matia Chowdhury calls the protesters “Razakar er baccha”, meaning children of the collaborators of the Pakistani military in the 1971 War of Independence. This triggers enormous uproar among the students as the word “Razakar” is considered a slur, even more students take to the streets because of this. The BCL attacked the students again, this time at night with the help of the police, and tear shells. This causes enormous amounts of students all across the country to protest on their campuses, condemning the violence inflicted on DU students. This resulted in the Prime Minister abolishing the whole quota system altogether for government jobs by an executive order. After a few months, a group of children of Freedom Fighters took this matter to court by another writ petition, arguing the abolishment of FFQ is illegal.



## THE PEACEFUL PROTEST: BANGLA BLOCKADE

On June 5, 2024 HC ruled the executive order to be illegal, four days later the government challenged the rule by an appeal to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court gives a stay order on the HC ruling. Things start off slowly, after a month on July 4th the students start off with demonstrations at the University of Dhaka campus, and soon the movement takes over across major public universities of the country. They call for the “Bangla Blockade” where the protesters block major intersections and roads across the country. This goes on from July 7th to 11th. The coordinators don’t block on the weekends, the protest is totally peaceful up until then.

### 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2024

After the weekend on the first working day, the Prime Minister holds a press conference about her recent visit to China. In that press conference, two journalists asked her about the Quota Protests that have been going on in the streets. One of those questions was, “If you have two candidates, one is a grandchildren of the freedom fighter, and another a grandchildren of a Razakar, who should the PSC (Public Service Commission) give the job to?” in answer to that question, the PM gets emotional, and says “Who do you think should get the job? Obviously it’s not going to be the grandchild of the Razakar”. Her tone did stroke the wrong chords with the students, the students had flashbacks of Matia Chowdhury calling them “Children of Razakar” Back in 2018. The entirety of the University of Dhaka halls roar with the chants “Tumi ke ami ke? Rajakar. Rajakar. Ke boleche Ke boleche? Shoirachar! Shoirachar!” meaning “Who am I? Who am I? Razakar Razakar. Who said it? Who said it? Dictator! Dictator!” This is the first time during her regime that Sheikh Hasina has been openly called a dictator by the regular people.



## THE DARK TURN OF EVENTS

### 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2024

The General Secretary of Awami League and the Roads and Highway Minister Obayedul Quader in a meeting says “The BCL will take care of campus matters”. The next day the BCL attacked the protesters with wooden sticks and construction rods. They hit female students in broad daylight. Students bleeding from their heads are seen going off campus in a horrific video. Videos of students getting brutally beaten up across the campus surface all across social media. Every university and college across the country revolts, especially the residential universities. BCL members brutally beat up residential students from Jahangirnagar University at night, the students went to the VC’s residence for protection the VC didn’t open his door for the students BCL came into the VC’s house and they started beating the students seeking shelter. The same instances happen across different residential campuses.

### 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2024

Students from all across the country, from universities to schools, take to the streets to protest the brutal beatings. Police and RAB are deployed to control the situation, protesters clash with the police and Awami League party members, 7 people die across different parts of the country, and hundreds are injured. Video of a police shooting and killing Abu Sayeed is seen across social media. This fuels the situation to a greater extent. The halls of the University of Dhaka roar in protest, throwing the BCL members out of their hall rooms. Pictures of luxurious hall rooms are spread across social media of political leaders in these halls. Videos of female student leaders of BCL are seen dragged out of halls by the hair. The UGC (University Grants Commission) asks all residential students to vacate the halls the next day within 6 in the evening.

### 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2024

In the morning, things are very tense at the University of Dhaka. Police and the paramilitary force BGB (Border Guard of Bangladesh) are deployed inside the campus. Students refuse to leave their halls and demand justice for the murders that took place on the 16th. Police shoot tear shells into the halls to empty them. Students are beaten out of their halls and sent to their homes in an attempt to destabilize the movement. BNP and Ganatantra Mancha hold an Absentee funeral prayer at the Baitul Mukarram for the 7 deaths where police attacked them and a clash broke out. Several opposition leaders and activists were injured and detained during the incident. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina comes on television to address the nation and says she’s sorry for the families that lost their members. Tells the student to go back to class and parents to keep their kids out of the protest. This does not bode well with the students. Later that night a toll plaza of Mayor Hanif Flyover was burned down by protesters at Jatrabari, observing the escalation the Ministry of Education shut down all schools and colleges until further notice.

## 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2024

Any decision regarding closing public universities, especially the University of Dhaka comes from the syndicate, and not from the UGC nor have they ever intervened in the regular activities. This was a first and the protesters decided not to oblige. After UGC decided to close the public universities across the country and forcefully vacate the residential halls to destabilize the movement, the students declared a “Complete Shutdown” across the country on 18th July which took a dark and tragic turn. The government shut down the 3G and 4G mobile networks around 8 AM, so students who were protesting on the street could not use the internet to post or gather people by using social media platforms; only the broadband lines worked throughout the day. Students from private universities and colleges took the lead in the movement that day. They decided to take the procession to Shahbag at the University of Dhaka from their respective campus areas. One particular video took over social media where the police started attacking protestors from BRAC University in front of the university campus around 11 AM. Students rushed into the university premises, and the authorities closed the gates. The police did not stop there and started throwing tear shells and firing rubber bullets inside the building from the closed gates. Clashes broke out in many places as the law enforcement agencies, including the Police and Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), BCL, and AL’s youth front Jubo League started a brutal crackdown on the movement by shooting live rounds and raining tear shells on the protestors. This infuriated the students to retaliate against police with brickbats, turning areas into war zones, especially in the capital. Dhaka became a battleground by noon. Protesters in the Mirpur area set the police box in Mirpur-10 as the local ruling party men, Juba League, and BCL attacked them continuously with the support of the police. This forced the operation of the metro rail train suspended. An 11th grader of Dhaka Residential Model College was killed in a clash in Dhanmondi-27 sustaining a bullet injury on his chest. Many government establishments, including Bangladesh Television Bhaban in the capital’s Rampura, police stations, were vandalized and some were set on fire. Fire Service and Civil Defence received reports of 25 incidents of fires across the country from July 17 to 18 until 7 PM. Besides Dhaka, students also blocked roads in other cities like Chittagong, Khulna, Barisal, and more. Around 2 PM, the police surrendered to the students at the University of Barishal and allowed them to continue their protest. According to Prothom Alo, 27 people were killed in the clashes across the nation including at least 11 students, 1 journalist, 2 rickshaw pullers, and 1 pedestrian. Thousands of people were left injured. Obayedul Quader stated at noon that the movement had been hijacked from the students by BNP-Jamat and they are taking advantage of this situation. In his words, this situation has to be tackled in the street. As the nationwide blockade “Complete Shutdown” escalated into a state of political instability and war among the protesters, law enforcement agencies government supporting fronts, Law Minister Anisul Huq announced with a tone of desperation that the government was ready to meet with the protesters at any time, even immediately. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina instructed the law minister to expedite the hearing on an appeal against the quota system, originally scheduled for August

7, to address students' demands promptly. Anisul Huq, along with Education Minister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury, has been appointed as the chief negotiator for discussions with the protesters. The government has welcomed the protesters' willingness to negotiate while they continue their demonstrations. The law ministry also proposed Justice Khandaker Diliruzzaman as the head of a judicial probe committee to investigate the deaths during the quota reform protests over the past few days. However, Nahid Islam and Asif Mahmud denied the government's offer for dialogue as they resorted to violence and killed innocent students. They now want justice for the death of the students and demand that the government take responsibility for the killings. Asif Mahmud, one of the core coordinators of the movement stated to the media that the blockade would be continued until the next day and requested every mosque to hold absentee funeral prayers for the students who were killed by the police and other men of the supporting regime. The government deployed 229 platoons of BGB to tackle the situation but it turned out to get worse leaving the city burning. Around 8 PM the whole nation faced an "Internet blackout" for the first time, due to an arson attack on Mohakhali's data center located in Dhaka crippled the country's entire Internet infrastructure according to the state minister of Post, Communication, and Information Technology Zunaid Ahmed Palak, leaving the citizens in fear and terror about the whole situation.

### **19<sup>th</sup> July, 2024**

Nationwide Internet blackout continued another day as the blockade from the Anti-discrimination Students' Movement. On 19th July, BNP and Ganatantra Mancha came forward to hold a procession protesting the law enforcement agencies' brutality against the protesters. The Dhaka Metropolitan Police(DMP) banned rallies on Friday the 19th until further notice. However, DMP's decision changed around noon following the request from both the ruling party and BNP's request. The decision later said the processions and rallies could be held for the venues in front of the central offices of AL and BNP, but for the rest of the city would remain banned. Before the decision was made, DMP charged BNP's procession and took Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, the senior joint secretary of BNP, into custody. Clashes between police and protestors occurred again in some of the battlegrounds from yesterday including Mohammadpur, Badda, Mirpur, Rampura, and Jatrabari. Mirpur-10 and Kazipara metro rail station were vandalized amid the clashes. RAB and Bangladesh Army's helicopters hovered over the capital throwing tear shells and sound grenades into the clashing areas as the smoke were rising from the battlegrounds. Police attacked the procession from the Gantantra Mancha lobbing sound grenades, teargas, and charged batons to disburse the movement, causing more than 25 leaders and activists wounded. At least 103 people died in violent clashes over three days, with 44 deaths in Dhaka alone on Friday. The clashes on Friday not only took the lives of the protestors, law enforcement agencies, or the men of the government supporting parties, it also took the lives of people who were not involved in this at all. The violent

firing from the police took the lives of 3 innocent children. An 11-year-old boy went to close the window after the tear gas entered his home and was shot dead. The stray bullet also took the life of a 6-year-old girl who went to her rooftop to play. Another 4-year-old boy died on his balcony. Hospitals in Dhaka and other cities reported numerous deaths and injuries, struggling to manage the influx. During this chaos, the Narsingdi central jail was broken into by a mob, the security guards failed to control the situation as their weapons were taken from them by the outnumbered crowd. 826 convicts escaped from the prison, including 9 convicted terrorists. The raiders looted 85 weapons from the armory and 8150 rounds of live ammunition. Sarjis Islam, one of the core coordinators accompanied by two coordinators and a co-coordinator of the anti-discrimination student movement, met with Law Minister Anisul Huq, Education Minister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury, and State Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mohammad Ali Arafat at the state guest house Padma. During this meeting, the Anti-Quota protestors put forward 9 point demands and said to continue the shutdown until the government meets all of them.

#### **The Demands were:**

1. The prime minister must accept responsibility for the mass killings of students and publicly apologize.
2. The home minister and the road, transport, and bridges minister must resign from their [cabinet] positions and the party.
3. Police officers present at the sites where students were killed must be sacked.
4. Vice Chancellors of Dhaka, Jahangirnagar, and Rajshahi universities must resign.
5. The police and goons who attacked the students and those who instigated the attacks must be brought to justice.
6. Families of the killed and injured must be compensated.
7. Bangladesh Chhatra League [BCL, the pro-government student wing, which is, effectively, the government's vigilante force] must be banned from student politics and a student union established.
8. All educational institutions and halls of residence must be reopened.
9. Guarantees must be provided that no academic or administrative harassment of protesters will take place.

The state minister for Information and Broadcasting Mohammad Ali Arafat on his Ministry held a press conference in his ministry and stated that the government has enough rubber bullets in their stock to last 5 years even if they shot one every second.

The whole country fell into a state emergency and extreme political instability. The Government issued a curfew across the country from Friday midnight to Saturday noon to get a grip on the situation.

## THE CURFEW DAYS

### 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2024

Nationwide curfews and internet blackouts leave the citizens in the dark with a major economic hit. The television media propagated normalcy regarding the whole situation. Despite the curfew, many people defied orders, leading to clashes with law enforcement and military personnel. At least 24 more people were killed on Saturday, bringing the death toll from the protests over job quota reforms to 136 in five days, including 3 journalists. Clashes occurred in Dhaka, Savar, Narsingdi, and Gazipur, and many were injured. The government announced a two-day general holiday on Sunday and Monday and relaxed the curfew for two hours to tighten the grip. DMP reported 267 injured officers between Tuesday and Friday. Arrests were made in Chattogram, and demonstrations occurred in multiple districts, including Khulna, Barishal, Pabna, and Kishoreganj. On the 20th of July, government-enforced disappearances started to happen allegedly by the detective branch (DB) of police along with arresting renowned politicians of BNP-Jamaat. According to New Age, two of the movement's coordinators Nahid Hasan and Asif Mahmud went missing. Plain clothed DB police picked up Nahid around 3 AM from the capital's Sabujbagh area. However, no whereabouts were found regarding Asif Mahmud's disappearance. DB Police arrested BNP standing committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury. He was picked up from his home around 10 pm. Earlier in the day, a Dhaka court placed BNP standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan and the party's Senior-Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi on one-day remands each in a violence case filed with Paltan Police Station. Alongside the BNP leaders, Nurul Haque Nur, convener of the Gono Odhikar Parishad and one of the joint convenors of the 2018 quota reform movement was reportedly taken from his Uttara home by law enforcers. His wife, Maria Nur, stated that the front door was broken down and that the men wore uniforms of Rab, DB, and police. Despite her inquiries at the DB office, officials denied arresting him. The helicopters kept hovering over the capital's sky to patrol the city throughout the day and the citizens lived another day without the internet in Digital Bangladesh filled with fear.

### 21<sup>th</sup> July, 2024

Amid the nationwide curfew on 21st July, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court operated with heavy security to scrap HC's verdict on government job quotas and established a new quota system: 5% for children of freedom fighters, 1% for national minorities, and 1% for people with disabilities and third genders. The clashes continued country-wide despite the curfew across the country. Citizens defied the restrictions and went on the street along with the protestors. Ongoing protests in Dhaka and other areas led to significant violence and casualties, with at least 13 people killed on Sunday. The Students' Movement Against Discrimination platform curfew and urged the people to continue the 'Complete Shutdown' programme and

hold Funeral Prayers. The platform also claimed that at least three of their coordinators had disappeared along with Nahid and Asif. After 24 hours after Nahid's disappearance, he found himself battered under a bridge in Purbachal and later went to Gonoshastho Kendre Hospital for treatment. He stated that around 25 DB police picked him up blindfolded and handcuffed. They physically tortured him until he collapsed and threw him under the bridge after he lost consciousness. According to Prothom Alo, 34 cases were filed for arson, vandalism, and attack on police alone in Dhaka. Most of the plaintiffs in these cases were anonymous and the number crossed 61,000. 27 cases among the pile were filed by police in the capital's 8 police stations including Mirpur, Pallabi, Kafrul, Rampura, Badda, Banani, Jatrabari, and West Uttara. The filed cases foreshadowed an upcoming systematic police crackdown on students or whomever they can get their hands on. The crackdown and arrests of BNP leaders advanced with the number of deaths of the protesters. Over the weekend, several leaders, including Amanullah Aman, Sultan Salauddin Tuku, Aminul Haque, and Nipun Roy, were arrested in the capital. Additionally, law enforcement agencies conducted searches at the residences of BNP leader Moazzem Hossain Alal and the missing BNP leader Ilias Ali. On Sunday, a Dhaka metropolitan magistrate court placed BNP leaders Amir Khasru, Sultan Salauddin Tuku, and Nipun Roy Chowdhury on a three-day remand in a case filed with the Rampura police station. Later that day the magistrate court also placed one-day remand on BNP's standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan with one-day remand. The last time BNP leaders faced a police crackdown was before the 2024 election.

On the other hand, the internet blackout slams the citizens of Bangladesh into suffering as most utility services are acclaimed via using online platforms. Apart from digital public services, the freelancer community faced a great economic loss due to



no broadband access for 3 days. The DMP Inspector General Abdullah Al Mamun stated that the BNP-Jamat is using the student movement as a shield to make the protest violent. Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan declared that the curfew will be continued with relaxed hours until the situation gets back to normal.

## 22<sup>th</sup> July, 2024

The ongoing curfew and internet blackout brought great economic loss to the country along with the lives of the students. The premier held a meeting with businessmen at the PM's office on 21st July. In that meeting, business leaders urged the government to reopen factories and restore internet connections to resume export and import activities. The PM assured that the government would allow the reopening of factories once the situation turned normal. Apart from assurance, the premier also states that BNP and its ally Jamat are using the movement as a shield to spread anarchy. Business leaders expressed solidarity with the Prime Minister. During the meeting, the majority of business leaders lauded the prime minister's leadership, attributing it to the creation of a business-friendly and investment-conducive environment in the country. The business leaders have created a nexus with the government over the past 16 years that has allowed them to benefit from the current administration. They expressed unwavering support for her continued tenure, emphasizing its importance for Bangladesh's progress. Information Minister Mohammad Ali Arafat stated that the government was forced to take a violent approach to the protest since the movement had been hijacked by BNP and Jamat. He also delivered a preposterous statement during the business meeting saying, 'Look at their dress-up, approach and attitude,' adding that some of the attackers were drugged. After five days of intense clashes surrounding the student movement for quota reform, the military and police took control of the Shimrail-Chittagong road area from Dhaka's Jatrabari to the Dhaka-Chittagong highway. Chief of Army Staff General Waqar-uz-Zaman and Inspector General of Police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, visited the area, emphasizing the need for cooperation to restore normalcy. The coordinators of the anti-discrimination student movement gave a 48-hour ultimatum to the government at 10 PM on Sunday with a new 4-point demand, which will end at 10 PM on Tuesday while the 9-point demand was still in force. The four-point demands include:

1. Restoration of internet connectivity,
2. Reopening of dormitories by making arrangements for students to return to the hall
3. Ensuring security for movement coordinators and
4. Lifting of curfew.

A joint statement titled 'Joint Statement of 56 Coordinators of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement on the Prevailing Situation in the Country' was released to the media. The statement asserted that the government cannot evade responsibility for the murders solely through court verdicts. It accused the

government of ongoing repression against students involved in the quota reform movement, alleging over 300 deaths. However, one of the coordinators Sargis Alam denied any such program being informed to the media in favor of the anti-discrimination student movement. Meanwhile, the crackdown on BNP leaders and some anonymous sabotaged cases kept adding up in the capital and Chittagong. Prothom Alo reported that another 37 cases have been filed against anonymous people at 12 police stations in Dhaka. 478 people have been arrested in Chattogram since 16th July in which a major portion of the arrested people are from BNP.

### **23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2024**

After 4 days of rigorous curfew, violent clashes, and internet blackout, the government declared the reopening of government and private offices, banks, and factories for a limited schedule as it appears the situation of the whole movement is heading toward normalcy. Broadband internet services in Bangladesh resumed on a limited scale after a five-day shutdown. Zunaid Ahmed Palak announced the phased restoration and stated that full internet service would resume soon. Priority for emergency services, financial and business institutions, media, and other critical sectors to get internet access. On the contrary to the government's effort to portray the situation as normal, the death toll rose to 197 on Tuesday. BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir alleged that the Awami League government was destroying the evidence of killings and attacks. The families of the disappeared started visiting morgues in the hope of finding their loved ones' dead bodies. The anti-discrimination student movement held a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) auditorium on Tuesday afternoon and reiterated the 4-point demand. Sarjis Alam stated at the press conference that a 9-point demand was made to government representatives, followed by 4 urgent demands two days ago. If these four demands are not met, the remaining 9 demands cannot be discussed. Despite a two-day ultimatum, no response has been received. A renewed two-day ultimatum is given to meet the four urgent demands. The end of the movement depends entirely on the government's actions. Asif Mahmud, Abu Baker Majumder, and Rifat Rashid, one of the coordinators of the anti-discrimination student movement, have been missing since July 18. Among them, Asif's father Billal Hossain was present at the press conference. The arrest spree continued with law enforcement agencies arresting 2,500 people, including political leaders, activists, and ordinary citizens, in response to violent student protests. News of people getting picked up from police and BGB checkpoints in the streets from acquaintances left people in fear of going out even after the government eased up the curfew. Many of the arrested individuals face charges of sabotage, vandalism, and arson, with cases filed under the Special Powers Act 1974.

## THE PRELUDE TO UPRISING

### 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2024

From 24 July, all offices and businesses were instructed to resume their operations from 11 AM-3 PM while curfew was restricted from 10 AM-5 PM for commute of the everyday offices. After the weekend, the offices resumed at 9 AM and 4 PM. Law enforcement agencies continue to crack down on students. Media reports show that the agencies are checking phones on the streets and taking anyone with protest-related content into custody, a 17-year-old student was ordered to be taken into police interrogation, then later put in a juvenile detention center because of mass public scrutiny. The murder of Abu Sayeed in Rangpur has been written off as a murder by the protesters, even though there is footage of him being shot by the police. The student mess areas around Dhaka are facing police raids every night. There have been over 6000 people arrested related to the movement, and hundreds of cases filed by the police and ruling party members across the country accusing over 60,000 anonymous miscreants.

### 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2024

The security forces of Bangladesh have been in hot water for a long time over allegations of human rights violations, extrajudicial killings, and enforced disappearance of dissenting voices. The US Treasury Department has even sanctioned the Bangladeshi elite paramilitary force, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB). However, in attempting to bring back order, the security forces of Bangladesh have openly engaged in acts that violate the human rights of the citizens of Bangladesh. Such acts have continued even after the protests have simmered, as security forces have begun going door to door and illegally detaining all students. There are numerous reports and video evidence of law enforcement officers seizing student's mobile phones by force and going through them to find incriminating material, which is a clear breach of privacy and an act that goes against the constitution of Bangladesh.

### 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2024

Three coordinators of the anti-discrimination student movement, including Nahid Islam were taken into custody in the name of personal safety from the Gonoshastho Nagar Hospital while being treated the very same day when the premier reassured them that the injured would be treated accordingly. Nahid Islam's father, Badrul Alam, and several witnesses told The Daily Dhaka Tribune that some plainclothes individuals from law enforcement agencies picked up Nahid and Asif from Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital around 4 pm on Friday while being treated. The AL regime created a puppet media community like the nexus with the businessmen in the past 15 years. Where the media should be free from politicization and fighting for

the truth, the journalist community showed their support to the prime minister. The death toll rose to 209 on that day. The block raid continued in different areas of the capital to crack down on the protestors along with the arrests of BNP leaders and activists.

### **27<sup>th</sup> July, 2024**

To simmer down the protestors, The DB police took the other 3 coordinators of the movement into custody on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July. The DB claimed that the coordinators had talks with leaders arrested on charges of sabotage. The government increased the flexible hours for curfew from 28<sup>th</sup> July and the capital got back to some state of normalcy. Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said, "The law and order situation is gradually improving. That's why we want to relax the curfew a little more. Very soon we will try to relax the curfew further." However, people kept defying curfew rules and spotted in the street during curfew hours. The premier commented that the opposition and their allies are purposefully creating a hostile environment to damage the economy. Upon the events of oppression on the masses, BNP called for national unity with their ally to combat the oppressive regime and free the people from Sheikh Hasina's autocracy.

### **28<sup>th</sup> July, 2024**

After denying the urgency of the situation for 10 days, on 28<sup>th</sup> July, for the first time, the government reported the death toll. At a press briefing at the Secretariat Asaduzzaman Khan said that 147 people have so far been killed in clashes during the quota reform movement in government jobs. However, according to Prothom alo and New Age, the death toll has risen to 211 people, with more than 2000 injured. The government also launched a 4G or Mobile data network on Sunday. Even after 10 days of restricting broadband internet and relaunching mobile internet the four most used apps including Facebook were being restricted. Six coordinators of the anti-discrimination student movement, who are in the custody of the Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said in a video message that all programs would be withdrawn since their initial demands were met. The video message, recorded at the DB office, was sent to the media around 9:00 pm on Sunday. However, some coordinators later disagreed with this decision, raising concerns about the conditions under which the announcement was made.

### **29<sup>th</sup> July, 2024**

Meanwhile, the government tried to put up a narrative of normalcy, on 29<sup>th</sup> July Ganatantra Mancha for the first time urged for AL's resignation. They accused the government of brutally suppressing the student-led quota reform movement and called for its resignation, citing the killings and repression of students and citizens. They demanded an impartial UN-led investigation and announced a demonstration

on July 31 in Paltan, urging a political solution to the crisis. Nationwide the students were adamant that the video of 6 coordinators at DB was taken forcefully and declared to continue the protest by selecting new coordinators. Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) denounced the illegal detention of quota reform movement coordinators by the DB. A writ was filed on Monday by a group of lawyers, seeking the release of the coordinators and a directive against firing on protesters. Petitioners argued that live ammunition should not be used against students, and questioned the legality of detaining individuals for "safety." The state's lawyers countered, justifying law enforcement actions. The High Court criticized the handling of the situation, stating, "Don't make a mockery of the nation," and questioned why such actions were taken. The court scheduled further hearings for Tuesday.

### **30<sup>th</sup> July, 2024**

The desperation to take a grip on the situation the government issued a gazette notification banning Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing, Islami Chhatrashibir, by executive order. Law Minister Anisul Huq confirmed the decision, citing the parties' alleged involvement in recent violence and historical crimes during the 1971 Liberation War. The move followed a high-level meeting and the Awami League-led 14-party alliance's agreement. Jamaat's registration had been canceled in 2013, and the government planned to amend the International Crimes Tribunal Act to prosecute Jamaat as a party for war crimes. In remembrance of those who died during the quota reform movement, people added red frames to their Facebook profiles. Teachers and students across different educational institutions held processions in support of justice. Protests took place at North South University, Jahangirnagar University, and Rajshahi University, although police interference occurred at one of these sites. Abdul Quader, one of the coordinators of the anti-discrimination student movement, announced a new program in his group on the online messaging app Telegram. The 'March for Justice' was held at 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday. The program was announced to be observed in all courts, campuses, and streets of the country to protest the genocide, mass arrests, attacks, cases, disappearances, and murders of students and people across the country.

## THE UPRISING

### 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2024

On Wednesday the 'March for Justice' by the anti-discrimination student movement sparked widespread protests in at least 23 districts, including Dhaka and Chittagong. The demonstrations, joined by students, teachers, and lawyers, faced significant resistance from law enforcement, with police using tear gas, sound grenades, and batons to disperse crowds. Clashes occurred in various locations, leading to injuries and detentions. 6 people were arrested for the clashes in Khulna District. At least 341 arrests were made on the day of the March for Justice. During a confrontation between Doel Chatter and the High Court area, a police officer twisted University of Dhaka lecturer Shehreen Amin Bhuiyan's arm while she intervened to stop the apprehension of a student. Shehreen said to Dhaka Tribune "When the police tried to apprehend a student, I intervened, asking what his crime was and insisting they check in front of us. However, the police did not listen and used force. A policeman twisted my arm and tried to take the student away. I fell while trying to stop them again." The coordinators of the movement were still in DB custody. Despite these obstacles, the movement announced a new program, "Remembering Our Heroes," to honor those affected by the protests through online and offline activities, including reminiscences and artistic expressions.

### 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2024

The Detective Branch released six coordinators of the anti-discrimination student movement after detaining them for up to six days. Upon their release, some revealed they had been kept in separate rooms and had staged a 32-hour hunger strike. Sarjis Alam expressed on Facebook that the ongoing repression would not deter their movement for justice and reform. On Thursday, the anti-discrimination student movement's 'Remembering Our Heroes' program featured mass songs, street plays, wall writings, and demonstrations across 16 districts, including Dhaka. Students, teachers, and lawyers participated, despite police obstructions and detentions. Protests were held in various cities, including Dhaka, Sylhet, Mymensingh, and Barisal, where police disrupted activities and arrested participants. In Sylhet, students protested for hours, while Mymensingh saw road blockades. Despite police interference, demonstrations continued with road blockages, graffiti, and silent marches in other areas. The movement announced a new program, 'Droh Jatra' to follow Jumma prayers on Friday. The government banned Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing, Islami Chhatrashibir, through a gazette notification under the Anti-Terrorism Act. This decision, made following allegations of terrorism and involvement in violence during the quota reform movement, marks the fourth ban on Jamaat-e-Islami since its inception in 1941. The ban follows the Election Commission's cancellation of Jamaat's registration and a Supreme Court ruling upholding it.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2024

Six coordinators of the anti-discrimination student movement revealed they were forcibly detained by the Detective Branch (DB) and coerced into announcing the withdrawal of their movement. After a hunger strike and subsequent release, they condemned the government's actions and vowed to continue protesting for justice and the release of detained students. On Friday, thousands rallied in Dhaka for the 'Droho Jatra' starting at the National Press Club and concluding at Central Shaheed Minar. Participants, including students, teachers, and activists, demanded government resignation, an end to mass arrests, trials for July's killings, and the reopening of educational institutions. The event, marked by protests, street plays, and speeches, turned into a unified demonstration against ongoing repression. While the people in the press club and Shaheed Minar area were chanting uninterrupted, clashes erupted in Dhaka's Uttara between police, local Awami League activists, and students during a mass procession. Police used sound grenades, tear gas, and rubber bullets, injuring at least six students. The violence began when Awami League and its various wing members, armed with rods and weapons, confronted the students. Witnesses reported that ruling party activists attacked students preparing for a peaceful march, leading to widespread chaos. Some students were beaten as they tried to flee. One AL member tried to strangle a female student when she tried to raise her voice. Apart from Capital's Uttara, clashes also broke out in five districts during the mass procession. In Habiganj, a worker was killed, while a policeman was beaten to death in Khulna. The death toll rose to 215 according to Prothom Alo. Violence erupted in Sylhet, Khulna, Laxmipur, and Narsingdi as well as leaving at least 370 people injured.



### 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 2024

In response to concerns about discrimination, mass killing, and arrest, a large crowd including mass from every walk of life gathered at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka. Protesters demanded justice, calling for one point demand, the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The movement spread to 33 districts, with some incidents of violence. The student-led initiative announced plans for a nationwide uprising and 'Non-cooperation movement'. Demonstrations by the anti-discrimination student movement in 33 districts led to violent clashes, resulting in two deaths, and at least 130 injuries. The violence included shootings in Cumilla, an attack on the Education Minister's house in Chittagong, and multiple highway blockades across the country. In Naogaon, clashes between protesters, AL goons, and police injured at least 13, including police and journalists. On the same day, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader announced a new two-day program.

The party is set to hold rallies in wards, districts, and metropolises in the capital on 4th August. On the next day, AL was to bring out a mourning procession from in front of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) to Bangabandhu Bhaban on 5th August to pay homage to the Father of the Nation and other martyrs of the August 15 carnage and the recent violence. The premier on the other hand urged the agitating students to sit with her at Ganabhaban to prevent violence centering the quota reform movement. The overwhelming support from the public towards the protestors forced her to state, "The doors of Ganabhaban are open. I want to sit with the quota protesters, I want to listen to them. I don't want conflict." The military who were seen to harass the protestors alongside the police, came forward to help them. Army Chief General Waqar-uz-Zaman affirmed the Bangladesh Army's commitment to standing beside the people, ensuring their safety, and safeguarding state interests while urging vigilance against social media rumors.

## THE FALL OF A DICTATOR

**4<sup>th</sup> August, 2024**

In the morning, protesters gathered at the Science Lab intersection of the capital on the first day of the non-cooperation movement announced by the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement. Thousands of protesters gathered at the Shahbagh intersection in the capital that morning and blocked it to press home their one-point demand—resignation of the government. Awami League men took position at the Mirpur-10 intersection of the capital in the early morning, apparently to counter the protesters demanding the resignation of the government. At least two people were killed, and 20 others were injured in a clash between protesters and Awami League men in Munshiganj town around 10:45 am. A number of vehicles at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) were torched in the morning by unidentified people. The AL's main office was set on fire in Khulna city around noon. The protesters and police clashed around noon, half an hour after hundreds of demonstrators gathered at Court Point area in Sylhet city as part of their non-cooperation movement. Unidentified people torched the Khulna Zilla Parishad office around 12:30 pm. At least three people were killed, and at least 28 others were injured during a clash between protesters on one side, and police and ruling party men on the other in Magura. The Faridpur district Awami League office was vandalized while its BCL office was torched. The protesters also set fire to eight to ten motorcycles in front of the district AL office on Hasibul Hasan Lablu Road in the Niltuli area. In the afternoon, the officials of mobile phone operators said they had received a directive to shut down 4G services. State Minister for Water Resource Ministry Zahid Faruk's house was vandalized in Barishal around 12:30 pm. A curfew was imposed indefinitely starting from 6:00 pm that day in Dhaka and other divisional cities, district towns, and all city corporations, and it was to remain in effect until otherwise directed. The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement declared a long march to Dhaka on Monday, 5th August. Initially, they had announced that the program would be held on Tuesday but later changed their decision. At least eight people from both sides were killed in clashes in Feni as Awami League men attacked protesters. The government announced a three-day general holiday on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday to ensure public safety amid the ongoing violent protests across the country. At least three people, including a student, were killed during clashes in Dhaka's Dhanmondi, Gulistan, and Farmgate areas. At least six Awami League leaders were beaten to death, and several others injured in a clash between Awami League members and protesters of the anti-discrimination quota movement in Narsingdi. At least 13 police personnel of the Enayetpur Police Station in Sirajganj were killed as a mob attacked the station. Overall, throughout the day, at least 93 people, including 14 policemen, were killed and dozens injured as fierce clashes took place in different areas in Dhaka and other parts of Bangladesh on the first day of the non-cooperation movement.

## 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2024

Defying the curfew and police barricade, hundreds of people took position at Shahbagh in the capital around noon. Thousands of people joined the Anti-Discrimination Students' Movement's "March to Dhaka" program at the Mirpur 10 roundabout and moved towards Farmgate. Army personnel were present at the location, and thousands more joined from nearby alleys. About 12 to 20 minutes later, the crowd began marching towards Farmgate. They carried bamboo sticks and batons but did not engage in any attacks or assaults. Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina left Dhaka in the face of mass protests demanding her resignation, a source told AFP. Before being evacuated, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned, and Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman announced that an interim government would be formed to run the country. Protesters stormed the gates of the Gono Bhaban (The PM's residential palace) and entered the premises around 3:00 pm. Bangladesh's former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina landed in India's northeastern city of Agartala, a broadcaster CNN-News18 reported. Masses attacked the Bochaganj upazila police station in Dinajpur and set it on fire. The protesters also torched the local Awami League office and the Muktijoddha Complex in Bochaganj upazila. Several roadside shops were looted.

Meanwhile, people also vandalized the Bochaganj Upazila Press Club. A mob looted and vandalized the official residence of Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan in Dhaka's Kakrail area. Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman announced that he would hold discussions with all representatives of students and teachers very soon. The Anti-Discrimination Students' Movement organizers announced that they planned to place a framework for a national government that night. There would be no political comeback for Sheikh Hasina, her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy told the BBC, hours after the former Bangladesh prime minister resigned and left the country. Joy said Hasina was "so disappointed that after all her hard work, a minority rose up against her." The C-130J transport plane carrying Sheikh Hasina landed at Hindon Air Base in India's Uttar Pradesh. At least 13 people were killed, and several others were injured after unidentified arsonists torched a residential hotel owned by Shahin Chakladar, general secretary of Jashore district Awami League. Agitators vandalized and torched key establishments of the Awami League. Around 4:00 pm, a group of people torched the Awami League headquarters in the capital's Gulistan.

Meanwhile, demonstrators clambered atop a statue of Hasina's father, state founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and began chiseling away at the head with an axe. Around that time, the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum on Dhanmondi 32 was also vandalized and set on fire. The agitators shouted slogans and removed different items, including furniture, from the building. The International Crisis Group (ICG) made a statement saying that the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was an opportunity to avert further bloodshed, and the immediate priority was to prevent any further deaths at the hands of either protesters or groups loyal to Hasina and the Awami League. BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir called upon people to remain calm and exercise restraint to maintain peace and stability in the

country following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government. The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) decided not to reopen factories the next day as their management wanted to observe the situation further to see if there was a change in the political situation. At least three people were burned to death after arsonists set fire to the Kalibari residence of Barishal City Corporation's former mayor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah. Five people were killed, and 40 others were injured as Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and protesters clashed at Mulaid village in Gazipur's Sreepur upazila. Curfew was set to be in force from midnight to 6:00 am the next day, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. Nahid Islam, one of the key organizers of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, urged all to ensure that no one got the opportunity to provoke religious tensions in the country after the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina-led government. India's Border Security Force issued a "high alert" along the 4,096 km-long India-Bangladesh border considering the current law-and-order situation in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi President Mohammed Shahabuddin ordered the release of jailed former prime minister and key opposition leader Khaleda Zia, hours after her arch-rival Sheikh Hasina was ousted and the military took power. The Indian Cabinet Committee on Security met at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's official residence the previous evening amid the turmoil in Bangladesh.



## CONCLUSION

The first credible official report detailing the incident came from the United Nations Human Rights Council on 16 August. This report also provides a preliminary overview of key human rights violations and concerns related to recent events in Bangladesh. It compiled data from various open sources and other reliable remote sources, offering an initial assessment of the human rights issues that emerged during the protests and the state's response from July until 6 August 2024.

According to the report, the student protests in Bangladesh began peacefully but escalated into violence and significant human rights abuses by security forces. An estimated 650 people, including at least 32 children, lost their lives, and thousands were injured. There are strong indications, warranting further independent investigation, that the security forces employed excessive and disproportionate force. Alleged violations include extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, torture, ill-treatment, and severe restrictions on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

The report made several recommendations for the Interim Government to ensure accountability for those responsible for human rights violations, in accordance with Bangladesh's international human rights obligations, and to uphold victims' right to effective remedies. It also offered recommendations to the international community to reduce tensions, prevent recurrence through the security sector and other essential reforms, and ensure a democratic, peaceful, and inclusive transition in line with human rights principles.



The power vacuum left behind caused several days of lawlessness in Bangladesh as there was no government, and the police force was entirely dysfunctional. Many police stations were attacked and burnt down nationwide. Firearms were looted from at least 22 abandoned police stations. Even after the interim government took office on 8 August, the police force took several days to begin operations nationwide, leaving communities to fend themselves against looters and organized criminals.

There have also been reports of targeted attacks against minorities, particularly Hindus, in the immediate aftermath of the government transition. On August 5th and 6th, Hindu homes and properties were reportedly attacked, vandalized, and looted across 27 districts. Several places of worship were also damaged, including an ISKCON temple in Meherpur, Khulna division, which was vandalized and set on fire. In response, various student organizations and ordinary citizens have reportedly formed groups to protect minorities and safeguard religious sites belonging to these communities.

Dr. Yunus, the Chief Advisor to the Interim Government, strongly condemned the attacks on minority communities, labeling them as "heinous." The Religious Affairs Adviser, AFM Khalid Hossain, noted that a comprehensive list of damaged places of worship and properties had been compiled, and a hotline was established to report attacks on minorities.

At the time of writing, Bangladesh remains in a precarious position. As long as a new election is not held and democracy is not restored, most of the state's functions are handicapped. The interim government now has to perform the monumental task of restoring peace, stability, and democracy to a nation that was under autocratic rule for over 15 years.





45/1 New Eskaton (2nd Floor), Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh  
Phone: +880258310217, +880248317902, +880222223109  
Email: [ed@cgs-bd.com](mailto:ed@cgs-bd.com)  
Website: [www.cgs-bd.com](http://www.cgs-bd.com)