

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	132
Land:	Bangladesh
Kilde:	British Home Office
Titel:	Country of Origin Information Report
Udgivet:	11. august 2009
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	7. oktober 2009



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION REPORT

BANGLADESH

11 AUGUST 2009

UK Border Agency

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION SERVICE

Contents

Preface

Latest News

EVENTS IN BANGLADESH, 21 JUNE TO 30 JULY 2009

REPORTS ON BANGLADESH PUBLISHED OR FIRST ACCESSED SINCE 21 JUNE 2009

Paragraphs

Background Information

1. <u>GEOGRAPHY</u>	1.01
<u>Maps</u>	1.05
2. <u>ECONOMY</u>	2.01
3. <u>HISTORY</u>	3.01
4. <u>RECENT DEVELOPMENTS</u>	4.01
<u>State of emergency lifted</u>	4.01
<u>General Election of 29 December 2008</u>	4.03
<u>Other developments</u>	4.23
<u>Post-election violence</u>	4.23
<u>Local elections</u>	4.25
<u>Ordinances of the Caretaker Government</u> adopted/ rejected...	4.26
<u>Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) mutiny</u>	4.28
<u>War criminals to be tried</u>	4.32
<u>Continued extrajudicial killing by the security forces</u>	4.34
<u>Other</u>	4.35
5. <u>CONSTITUTION</u>	5.01
6. <u>POLITICAL SYSTEM</u>	6.01
<u>Government</u>	6.01
<u>Caretaker Government</u>	6.04
<u>Local government</u>	6.07
<u>Supervision of elections</u>	6.09

Human Rights

7. <u>INTRODUCTION</u>	7.01
8. <u>SECURITY SITUATION</u>	8.01
9. <u>CRIME</u>	9.01
10. <u>SECURITY FORCES</u>	10.01
<u>Police and paramilitary forces</u>	10.02
<u>Arbitrary arrest and detention</u>	10.04
<u>Torture</u>	10.05
<u>Extrajudicial killings</u>	10.11
<u>Accountability</u> and impunity.....	10.14
<u>Police Reform Programme</u>	10.20
<u>Avenues of complaint</u>	10.23
<u>Armed Forces</u>	10.26
<u>Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI)</u>	10.31
11. <u>MILITARY SERVICE</u>	11.01
12. <u>ABUSES BY PROSCRIBED MILITANT GROUPS</u>	12.01
<u>Militant Islamist organisations</u>	12.01
<u>Leftist groups</u>	12.16
13. <u>JUDICIARY</u>	13.01

Organisation	13.05
Special Tribunals	13.10
Speedy Trial Act (STA)	13.11
Family Law	13.12
Informal systems of justice: Village Courts and Shalish	13.13
Independence	13.15
Fair trial	13.18
Corruption in the Judiciary	13.20
14. ARREST AND DETENTION – LEGAL RIGHTS	14.01
Preventive detention and its legislative framework	14.02
The Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC): Section 54	14.04
The Special Powers Act (SPA)	14.05
Pre-trial Detention	14.08
Bail	14.10
15. PRISON CONDITIONS	15.01
16. DEATH PENALTY	16.01
17. POLITICAL AFFILIATION	17.01
Freedom of political expression	17.03
Freedom of association and assembly	17.04
Opposition groups and political activists	17.07
Politically-motivated detentions	17.07
18. FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND THE MEDIA	18.01
Treatment of journalists	18.05
19. HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS, ORGANISATIONS AND ACTIVISTS	19.01
Treatment of human rights NGOs	19.04
20. CORRUPTION	20.01
Corruption in the lower Judiciary	20.07
Corruption in the law enforcement agencies	20.10
21. FREEDOM OF RELIGION	21.01
Introduction	21.01
Fatwa	21.10
Hindus	21.13
Buddhists	21.18
Ahmadiyya community (Ahmadis/Kadiyanis/Qadianis)	21.21
Christians	21.26
22. ETHNIC GROUPS	22.01
The Jumma Peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts	22.01
Biharis	22.10
23. LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER PERSONS	23.01
Legal rights	23.02
Societal treatment and attitudes	23.08
Ill-treatment by police officers and mastans	23.13
Access to health and welfare services	23.16
24. DISABILITY	24.01
25. WOMEN	25.01
Overview	25.01
Legal rights	25.04
Political rights	25.06
Social and economic rights	25.08
Violence against women	25.10
Domestic violence	25.11
Rape	25.17
Acid attacks	25.21
Vigilantism	25.29

Domestic workers.....	25.30
Health issues.....	25.31
26. CHILDREN.....	26.01
Overview.....	26.01
Legal rights.....	26.09
Violence against children.....	26.11
Child labour.....	26.16
Child care and protection.....	26.25
Education.....	26.31
Madrassas.....	26.35
Health and welfare.....	26.36
Documentation.....	26.41
27. TRAFFICKING.....	27.01
28. MEDICAL ISSUES.....	28.01
Overview of availability of medical treatment and drugs.....	28.01
HIV/AIDS.....	28.06
Kidney dialysis.....	28.08
Mental health.....	28.09
29. HUMANITARIAN ISSUES.....	29.01
30. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT.....	30.01
31. INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE (IDPs).....	31.01
32. FOREIGN REFUGEES.....	32.01
Rohingya refugees.....	32.04
33. CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONALITY.....	33.01
34. EXIT/ ENTRY PROCEDURES.....	34.01
35. FORGED AND FRAUDULENTLY OBTAINED OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS.....	35.01
36. EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS.....	36.01
37. SITUATION ON THE INDIA-BANGLADESH BORDER.....	37.01

Annexes

- [Annex A – Chronology of Major Events](#)
- [Annex B – Political Organisations](#)
- [Annex C – Prominent People](#)
- [Annex D – List of Abbreviations](#)
- [Annex E – References to Source Material](#)

Preface

- i This Country of Origin Information Report (COI Report) has been produced by COI Service, United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA), for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. The Report provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The main body of the report includes information available up to 20 June 2009. The 'Latest News' section contains further brief information on events and reports accessed from 21 June to 30 July 2009. The report was issued on 11 August 2009
- ii The Report is compiled wholly from material produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources and does not contain any UKBA opinion or policy. All information in the Report is attributed, throughout the text, to the original source material, which is made available to those working in the asylum/human rights determination process.
- iii The Report aims to provide a brief summary of the source material identified, focusing on the main issues raised in asylum and human rights applications. It is not intended to be a detailed or comprehensive survey. For a more detailed account, the relevant source documents should be examined directly.
- iv The structure and format of the COI Report reflects the way it is used by UKBA decision makers and appeals presenting officers, who require quick electronic access to information on specific issues and use the contents page to go directly to the subject required. Key issues are usually covered in some depth within a dedicated section, but may also be referred to briefly in several other sections. Some repetition is therefore inherent in the structure of the Report.
- v The information included in this COI Report is limited to that which can be identified from source documents. While every effort is made to cover all relevant aspects of a particular topic, it is not always possible to obtain the information concerned. For this reason, it is important to note that information included in the Report should not be taken to imply anything beyond what is actually stated. For example, if it is stated that a particular law has been passed, this should not be taken to imply that it has been effectively implemented unless stated.
- vi As noted above, the Report is a collation of material produced by a number of reliable information sources. In compiling the Report, no attempt has been made to resolve discrepancies between information provided in different source documents. For example, different source documents often contain different versions of names and spellings of individuals, places and political parties, etc. COI Reports do not aim to bring consistency of spelling, but to reflect faithfully the spellings used in the original source documents. Similarly, figures given in different source documents sometimes vary and these are simply quoted as per the original text. The term 'sic' has been used in this document only to denote incorrect spellings or typographical errors in quoted text; its use is not intended to imply any comment on the content of the material.

- vii The Report is based substantially upon source documents issued during the previous two years. However, some older source documents may have been included because they contain relevant information not available in more recent documents. All sources contain information considered relevant at the time this Report was issued.
- viii This COI Report and the accompanying source material are public documents. All COI Reports are published on the RDS section of the Home Office website and the great majority of the source material for the Report is readily available in the public domain. Where the source documents identified in the Report are available in electronic form, the relevant web link has been included, together with the date that the link was accessed. Copies of less accessible source documents, such as those provided by government offices or subscription services, are available from the COI Service upon request.
- ix COI Reports are published regularly on the top 20 asylum intake countries. COI Key Documents are produced on lower asylum intake countries according to operational need. UKBA officials also have constant access to an information request service for specific enquiries.
- x In producing this COI Report, COI Service has sought to provide an accurate, balanced summary of the available source material. Any comments regarding this Report or suggestions for additional source material are very welcome and should be submitted to UKBA as below.

Country of Origin Information Service

UK Border Agency
Apollo House
36 Wellesley Road
Croydon CR9 3RR
United Kingdom

Email: cois@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Website: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html

INDEPENDENT ADVISORY GROUP ON COUNTRY INFORMATION

- xi The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency to make recommendations to him about the content of the UKBA's country of origin information material. The IAGCI welcomes feedback on UKBA's COI Reports, COI Key Documents and other country of origin information material. Information about the IAGCI's work can be found on the Chief Inspector's website at <http://www.ociukba.homeoffice.gov.uk>
- xii In the course of its work, the IAGCI reviews the content of selected UKBA COI documents and makes recommendations specific to those documents and of a more general nature. A list of the COI Reports and other documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI or the Advisory Panel on Country Information (the independent organisation which monitored UKBA's COI material from September 2003 to October 2008) is available at <http://www.ociukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

- xiii Please note: it is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any UKBA material or procedures. Some of the material examined by the Group relates to countries designated or proposed for designation to the Non-Suspensive Appeals (NSA) list. In such cases, the Group's work should not be taken to imply any endorsement of the decision or proposal to designate a particular country for NSA, nor of the NSA process itself.

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information contact details:

Office of the Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency

4th floor, 8-10 Great George Street,

London, SW1P 3AE

Email: chiefinspectorukba@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.ociukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

[Return to contents](#)

Latest News

EVENTS IN BANGLADESH, FROM 21 JUNE TO 30 JULY 2009

- 29 July In a development towards implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord signed in 1997, the Government announced the withdrawal of a brigade of troops and 35 temporary security camps from the CHT area by September 2009.
The Daily Star: Biggest pullout from CHT: 30 July 2009
<http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=99258>
- 27 July It was reported that the Government would 'seek the opinion' of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court on whether those accused of complicity in the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) mutiny of 25-26 February 2009 should be tried under civil law or under military law.
The Daily Star: Govt to seek Supreme Court opinion on BDR trial mode: 28 July 2009
<http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=98923>
- 9 July Parliament unanimously passed the International War Crimes (Tribunals) (Amendment) Bill 2009, paving the way for those suspected of committing war crimes during the 1971 Liberation War to be brought to trial.
United News of Bangladesh: Parliament passes International War Crimes Tribunals Bill: 9 July 2009 (Accessed via Thomson-Reuters DataStar)
- 9 July Parliament approved a bill ratifying the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).
The Daily Star: HR Commission made strong: 10 July 2009
<http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=96248>

[Return to contents](#)

**REPORTS ON BANGLADESH PUBLISHED OR FIRST ACCESSED SINCE
JUNE 2009****21****Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)**

'Mounting desperation for Rohingya in Bangladesh

http://www.msf.org/msfinternational/invoke.cfm?objectid=1160D820-15C5-F00A-2519A0037DE230AA&component=toolkit.article&method=full_html

Published 24 June 2009

Freedom House

Freedom in the World 2009 (Bangladesh)

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2009&country=7563>

Published 16 July 2009

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Norwegian Refugee Council

Bangladesh: Indigenous people and religious minorities still affected by displacement

[http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpCountries\)/6E57E5E3F7F7952F802570A7004BB1F8?OpenDocument](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpCountries)/6E57E5E3F7F7952F802570A7004BB1F8?OpenDocument)

Published 16 July 2009

[Return to contents](#)

Background information

1. GEOGRAPHY

- 1.01 The People's Republic of Bangladesh is located in south Asia and is bordered almost entirely by India, except for a small frontier in the southeast with Burma and a coastline along the Bay of Bengal in the south. The capital is Dhaka. (CIA World Factbook) [62] The country covers an area of approximately 144,000 sq. km. (56,000 sq. miles). (Europa) [1b]
- 1.02 The country is administratively divided into 6 Divisions, 64 Districts (*Zila*), 507 sub-districts (*Thana* or *Upazila*) and 4,484 *Wards/Unions*. There are over 87,000 villages in Bangladesh. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs website). [77a] A particular name might refer to more than one geographical entity; for example, the City of Chittagong is situated in the District of Chittagong, which is in Chittagong Division. The 'Chittagong Hill Tracts' (CHT) area, referred to later in this report, comprises three of the districts within Chittagong Division. [25]
- 1.03 The Preliminary Report of the 2001 Population Census, published in August 2001 by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), gave the total population of Bangladesh as 129.2 million (statistically adjusted). [43a] (p4) The US Bureau of the Census estimated that the population of Bangladesh would reach 156.1 million by July 2009. (CIA World Fact Book, updated 23 April 2009) [62] The 2001 census showed that 77 per cent of the population resided in rural areas. [43a] (p6) The metropolitan area of Dhaka, in 2001, had a population of 9.7 million; the populations of the other principal cities (as 'statistical metropolitan areas') were as follows in 2001: Chittagong 3.3 million, Khulna 1.2 million, and Rajshahi 0.7 million. [43d] (Census by metropolitan area) Apart from territories comprising less than 1,200 sq. km in area, Bangladesh is the most densely populated country in the world. (Europa) [1b] The 2001 census, as summarised in 'Bangladesh Census Results at a Glance' by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, classified 89.6 per cent of the population as Muslim, 9.3 per cent as Hindu, 0.6 per cent as Buddhist and 0.5 per cent as Christian or 'other'. [43b]
- 1.04 The state language is Bangla (Bengali) and is spoken by about 95 per cent of the population. (Europa) [1b] (p635) *Sylheti*, which is spoken primarily in Sylhet Division in the north-east of the country, is commonly defined as a dialect of Bengali/Bangla, although it is quite different to standard Bengali in its sound system, the way in which its words are formed and in its vocabulary. (Hampshire County Council) [110] There are approximately three million indigenous (*Adivasi*) people in Bangladesh, many of whom have their own language or dialect. 11 out of the 45 ethnic groups are concentrated in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, where they are collectively known as the *Jumma* peoples. There are also about 300,000 Urdu-speakers in the country, collectively known as 'Biharis' (see [Section 22](#)). (FCO, 6 November 2007) [11k]

MAPS

- 1.05 On the following page is a map showing the main cities and towns, and the Divisions of Bangladesh. (United Nations Cartographic Section: Map no. 3711 ref.2, dated January 2004; edited by COI Service to show Sylhet Division.)



Other Maps of Bangladesh

The Bangladesh Government website has links to various national and regional maps of the country: <http://www.bangladesh.gov.bd/> (Click on 'Maps')

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

2. ECONOMY

- 2.01 The Economist Intelligence Unit, in its Bangladesh Country Profile of 2008 (EIU Country Profile 2008), estimated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per head in 2007 to have been US\$427, compared with US\$1,033 for India, US\$871 for Pakistan and US\$1,650 for Sri Lanka. [40n] (p24) A survey conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in 2007 showed the mean monthly wage for a worker in the formal sector to be 3767 Taka (about US\$55 or £34). [43f] The EIU Country Profile 2008 quoted another BBS survey as indicating that, by 2005, approximately 40 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line. (The poverty line was here defined as being able to afford to buy food providing a daily intake of 2,122 calories.) [40n] (p19) [43e] Real GDP growth for the 2008/2009 fiscal year was estimated by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics to have been 5.9 per cent, compared to 6.2 per cent for the previous year. The EIU expects Bangladesh to be adversely affected by the global downturn in 2009/10, with the economy expanding by less than 4 per cent in real terms during that fiscal year. (EIU Country Report, May 2009) [40s] According to the EIU Country Profile 2008: "The authorities acknowledge that a GDP growth rate of around 7% is necessary to achieve a meaningful reduction in poverty." [40n] (p21)
- 2.02 Agriculture (including fishing) employed more than half of the labour force and contributed 19 per cent of GDP in 2006/2007. Bangladesh is now virtually self-sufficient in food. However, unpredictable weather, including flooding and droughts, regularly undermine production plans and targets, disrupting the economy and necessitating food imports. Bangladesh is the world's largest exporter of jute; other agricultural exports include frozen foods, fish, leather and hides, and tea. By 2006/2007, ready-made garments accounted for over 75 per cent of the country's total export earnings. (EIU Country Profile for 2008) [40n] (p18-26) A BBC News article of 6 January 2005 recorded that about 1.8 million people, mainly women, worked in clothing factories and another 15 million jobs depended indirectly on garment manufacturing. [20ar] Following several years of rapid growth in the ready-made garments sector, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) reported a significant decline in export orders for the first three months of 2009, due mainly to the global recession. (EIU Country Report, May 2009) [40s]
- 2.03 In late-2006 and throughout 2007, there were substantial cost of living increases for Bangladeshi consumers. United News of Bangladesh (UNB) observed in a report of 17 May 2007, "Cost of living has really become quite impossible for not only the disadvantaged sections of the community...but also lower and middle class groups...and those surviving on pensions and minor savings after retirement." [39s] The EIU, in their Country Report of February 2008, recorded that the price of rice, the country's staple food, had nearly doubled since January 2007. Production losses, particularly as a result of the floods of July-August 2007 and the cyclone in November 2007, had led to a severe food shortage in the country. [40l] (p7,11,13) The *Daily Star*, however, reported on 24 March 2009 that rice prices had stabilised; course rice varieties, for example, were selling in retail markets at 23-25 Taka (BDT) per kg, compared with 30-33 BDT a year earlier (see currency in paragraph 2.06). [38c] The Food Planning and Monitoring Committee announced in April 2009 that the Government would, between May and September 2009, procure large

quantities of certain types of rice at fixed prices to help maintain wholesale market prices at levels viable to farmers. (UNB, 27 April 2009) [39az] On taking office as Prime Minister, on 7 January 2009, Sheikh Hasina said that one of her government's first priorities would be to bring down the prices of essential consumer commodities. (*The Daily Star*, 7 January 2009) [38dk]

- 2.04 Bangladesh is a world pioneer in micro-credit financing, having first implemented pilot lending projects in the late 1970s. Micro-credit lending has since expanded rapidly and has proved effective in helping to alleviate poverty and empower women. In June 2003, 17 institutions reported that they had disbursed over US\$8 million in micro-credit loans and had a total of 15.1 million outstanding borrowers. (Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005) [77b] Grameen Bank – one of the leading loan providers – reported in February 2006 that it had, to date, advanced micro-credit loans to 5.8 million borrowers, 96 per cent of whom were women. The Bank had 1,861 branches and its staff worked in 62,089 villages. Total loan disbursement since the Bank's founding in 1976 had reached US\$5.34 billion by February 2006, of which US\$4.73 billion had been repaid. Although Grameen Bank did not require any collateral against its micro-credit loans or even require its borrowers to sign a legal instrument, the loan recovery rate was 98.45 per cent. [76a] Other major micro-credit providers included the Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (established by the Government), PDBF, Bangladesh Krishi Bank, Agrani Bank and Sonali Bank, as well as the NGOs BRAC, ASA and Proshika and the Bangladesh Rural Development Board (Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005). [77b]

- 2.05 The EIU Country Report of August 2008 stated:

"Strong inflows of workers' remittances have reduced the pressure on the balance of payments. Remittances, Bangladesh's second-biggest source of foreign income, surged by 51% year on year to US\$778m in June. In 2007/08 [fiscal year] some 5m Bangladeshi expatriate workers sent home US\$7.9bn, up by 33% on the previous year. BB officials have said that they expect inflows of remittances to grow by more than 60% over the next two years. Statistics released by the central bank show an extraordinary rise in recent years in the number of workers taking up employment overseas, mainly in the booming economies of the Middle East (and particularly the Gulf region). In the first half of the present decade about 250,000 people took up employment overseas every year, and in 2006/07 this figure rose to 583,000. In the first ten months of 2007/08 [fiscal year] some 800,000 workers left Bangladesh to start jobs overseas." [40o]

The EIU Country Profile 2008 observed, "The importance of remittance inflows to the economy is likely to be far greater than reflected in official data, as large sums of money are thought to enter the country through unofficial channels." [40n] (p23) According to a BBC News article of 4 June 2009, there were more than six million Bangladeshis working abroad; however, thousands were returning home in 2009 as a result of the global recession and a slowdown in construction work in the Gulf States. [21f]

- 2.06 The unit of currency in Bangladesh is the 'Taka' (BDT), which is divided into 100 poisha/paisa. (Europa) [1b] The rate of exchange on 31 May 2009 was £1 sterling = 111 Bangladesh taka. (xe.com) [22]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

3. HISTORY

PRE-INDEPENDENCE: 1947 – 1971

- 3.01 As recorded by Europa World Online (Europa), accessed on 19 February 2009, present-day Bangladesh was formerly East Pakistan, one of the five provinces of Pakistan created following the partition of the Indian sub-continent in August 1947. East Pakistan comprised the former Indian province of East Bengal and the Sylhet district of Assam. [1a]
- 3.02 A secessionist movement led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League (AL) rapidly gained support in East Pakistan, where there was widespread dissatisfaction with the distant central government based in West Pakistan – in spite of concessions such as the approval of Bengali as a joint official language with Urdu, and the division of the country into two parts (East and West) with equal parliamentary representation. (EIU Country Profile 2007) [40n] (p4)
- 3.03 An election in December 1970 gave the Awami League (AL) an overwhelming victory in East Pakistan; the AL demanded a loose federation of the two parts of Pakistan. (EIU Country Profile 2007) [40j] (p4) On 26 March 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proclaimed the independence of the People's Republic of Bangladesh ('Bengal Nation'). A full-scale civil war immediately ensued. (Europa) [1a]
- 3.04 By April 1971, the Pakistan army dominated the eastern province. Resistance continued, however, and the Liberation Army of East Bengal (the *Mukhti Bahini*) launched a major offensive in November 1971. On 4 December 1971, Indian forces intervened on the side of the Mukti Bahini. Pakistan surrendered to the combined forces on 16 December 1971 and Bangladesh gained its independence, rapidly achieving international recognition. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who had been arrested by the Pakistan authorities at the outset of the civil war, was released in January 1972 and became Bangladesh's first Prime Minister. (Europa) [1a]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

1972 – 1999

- 3.05 Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who had been arrested by the Pakistan authorities at the outset of the civil war, was released in January 1972 and became Bangladesh's first Prime Minister. Under a provisional Constitution, Bangladesh was declared to be a secular state and a parliamentary democracy. A general election for the country's first parliament (*Jatiya Sangsad*) was held in March 1973; the Awami League won 292 of the 300 directly elective seats. Internal stability was, however, threatened by opposition groups resorting to terrorism. (Europa) [1a] The economic and political situation deteriorated rapidly. (EIU Profile 2007) [40j] (p4)
- 3.06 Sheikh Mujibur declared a state of emergency in late 1974 and in early 1975 he became President, assuming dictatorial powers through one-party rule. (EIU Profile 2007) [40j] (p4) In August 1975 Mujibur and members of his family were assassinated in a coup (led by Islamist army officers). Martial law was

- then declared and political parties banned. A subsequent counter-coup on 3 November 1975 brought Khalid Musharaf, a pro-Indian commander of the Dhaka garrison, to power. This proved to be extremely short-lived, as a third coup on 7 November 1975 overthrew Musharaf and power was assumed under a neutral non-party government, with Major General Ziaur Rahman (General Zia) taking precedence. (Europa) [1a]
- 3.07 Political parties were again legalised in July 1976. General Zia assumed the presidency in April 1977. In the parliamentary elections of February 1979, Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) won 207 of the 300 directly elective seats in the *Jatiya Sangsad*. A new Prime Minister was appointed in April 1979 and martial law repealed. The state of emergency was revoked in November 1979. (Europa) [1a]
- 3.08 General Zia was assassinated on 30 May 1981, during an attempted military coup. Political instability ensued and Vice President Abdus Sattar was nominated President. Sattar (finding it difficult to retain civilian control) formed a National Security Council in January 1982, led by Chief of the Army Staff, Lieutenant-General Hossain Mohammad Ershad. On 24 March 1982 Ershad seized power in a bloodless coup. Martial law was again declared, with Ershad as Chief Martial Law Administrator (in October 1982 Ershad changed his title to Prime Minister), aided by a military Council of Advisers. (Europa) [1a]
- 3.09 Europa noted that, although the Government's economic policies achieved some success, there were increasing demands for a return to democracy during 1983. The two principal opposition groups that emerged were an eight-party alliance, headed by a faction of the Awami League under Sheikh Hasina (daughter of the late Sheikh Mujibur) and a seven-party group, led by a faction of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) under former President Sattar and Begum Khaleda Zia (widow of General Zia). In September 1983 the two groups formed an alliance: the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy. In November 1983, the ban on political activity was lifted and a new political party, the Jana Dal (People's Party) was formed to support Ershad as a presidential candidate. Ershad declared himself President on 11 December 1983. [1a]
- 3.10 In January 1985 a new Council of Ministers was formed, composed almost entirely of military officers. Ershad refused to relinquish power to an interim government. In March 1985, the parliamentary elections planned to take place the following month were cancelled and political activity was again banned by Ershad. Local elections were held in May 1985, but without the participation of the opposition. The National Front (NF), a new five-party political alliance, comprising the Jana Dal, the United People's Party, the Gonotantrik Party, the Bangladesh Muslim League and a breakaway section of the BNP, was established in September 1985. (Europa) [1a]
- 3.11 Europa related that the ten-month ban on political activity was lifted in January 1986, and the NF formally became a single pro-government entity, the Jatiya Party (National Party). Although smaller opposition parties participated in the parliamentary elections in May 1986 the elections were boycotted by the BNP. The Jatiya Party won 153 of the 300 directly elective seats in the Jatiya Sangsad. Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, the former General-Secretary of the Jatiya Party, was appointed Prime Minister in July 1986. [1a]

- 3.12 Ershad joined the Jatiya Party in September 1986 and was elected chairman of the party. In the presidential election of October 1986 (which was boycotted by both the BNP and Awami League) Ershad received 22 million votes. In November 1986, the Jatiya Sangsad approved indemnity legislation (legalising the military regime's actions since March 1982). Ershad then repealed martial law and formed a new Council of Ministers, which included four MPs from the AL. (Europa) [1a]
- 3.13 Europa recorded that dissension from the opposition continued throughout 1987 and President Ershad declared a state of emergency on 27 November of that year. In December 1987, after 12 opposition members had resigned and the 73 Awami League members had agreed to do the same, Ershad dissolved the Jatiya Sangsad. The Jatiya Party won a large majority of seats in the parliamentary elections of 3 March 1988. Ershad repealed the state of emergency in April 1988. [1a]
- 3.14 Violence, anti-government demonstrations and strikes occurred throughout the country during 1989 and 1990 in response to Ershad's autocratic rule. Ershad proclaimed a state of emergency on 27 November 1990 and proceeded to arrest opposition activists. In December 1990 Ershad relinquished power to a neutral caretaker government, which arranged for a general election to be held on 27 February 1991, thereby re-establishing democracy in Bangladesh. In the week following his resignation, Ershad was placed under house arrest. (Europa) [1a] (EIU Profile 2007) [40j] (p5)
- 3.15 The parliamentary election of February 1991 was won by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP); Khaleda Zia assumed office as Prime Minister. Abdur Rahman Biswas was elected as the new President on 8 October 1991. (Europa) [1a]
- 3.16 All opposition members of the Jatiya Sangsad resigned en masse in December 1994. Nonetheless, the Prime Minister pledged to maintain constitutional government. Then, on 24 November 1995, the Prime Minister requested that the Jatiya Sangsad be dissolved pending the outcome of the next general election. (Europa) [1a]
- 3.17 Europa recorded that the general election, postponed until 15 February 1996, was boycotted by all of the main opposition parties; independent monitors estimated voter turnout at only about 10–15 per cent of the registered electorate. Consequently, the BNP won 205 of the 207 legislative seats declared. However, the opposition refused to recognise the legitimacy of the polls and announced the launch of a non co-operation movement against the government. Finally, the Prime Minister Khaleda Zia agreed to hold fresh elections. [1a]
- 3.18 Khaleda Zia and her government resigned from their posts on 30 March 1996 after making the 13th amendment to the Constitution, which provides that a non-party caretaker government takes control during a three-month period leading up to each general election. Notwithstanding an unsuccessful military coup on 20 May 1996, a general election was held on 12 June 1996: the Awami League (AL) won 146 of the 300 elective seats in the Jatiya Sangsad. (Europa) [1a] Sheikh Hasina formed a government with support from the Jatiya Party. (EIU Profile 2007) [40j] (p5) The AL government repealed the Indemnity Ordinance, passed in 1975 to protect the assassins of Sheikh

Mujibur, and the trial of 20 people accused of involvement in the assassination began in January 1997. In November 1998, 15 former soldiers were sentenced to death, most of them in absentia. (EIU Profile 2007) [40j] (p5) BBC News reported on 18 June 2007 that Mohiuddin Ahmed, a former Bangladesh army officer who had been convicted in absentia in 1998 for his role in the 1975 military coup and assassination of President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, had been deported from the US and arrested on arrival in Dhaka. Although 12 of the 15 men found guilty in the 1998 trials were sentenced to death, these sentences had not yet been carried out by June 2007 because their appeal procedures had not been completed. [20ci]

- 3.19 In December 1997 the AL government signed an historic peace accord with the PCJSS – the political wing of the Shanti Bahini – to end the 25-year insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). The treaty offered the Shanti Bahini a general amnesty in return for the surrender of their weapons, and promised the indigenous Jumma peoples greater powers of self-governance. The peace agreement was strongly criticized by the BNP-led opposition, who described it as a “sell-out” and a threat to Bangladesh’s sovereignty. Violence during the insurgency had caused over 50,000 people to seek refuge in India. (Europa) [1a]
- 3.20 The ruling coalition split on 15 March 1998 when the minority Jatiya Party announced that it was leaving the ‘national consensus’ Government. (Keesing’s, March 1998) [5b] (p42133) The BNP walked out of the Jatiya Sangsad on 12 April 1998, in protest against four bills concerning the December 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord. (Keesing’s, April 1998) [5c] (p42198) In December 1998 a new anti-government alliance was formed, comprising Begum Khaleda Zia’s BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and the Jatiya Party under Gen. Ershad. (Europa) [1a]
- 3.21 Keesing’s, March 1999, related that two bombs had exploded at a music and culture festival in the town of Jessore on 6 March 1999, killing at least eight people and injuring some 150 others. The festival organisers blamed the bombing on Islamic fundamentalists. [5h] (p42837)
- 3.22 Europa records that political instability and unrest escalated through 1999; in mid-1999 the BNP and other opposition parties began a boycott of parliamentary proceedings. Opposition-led strikes took place in October and December 1999 and January 2000, leading to serious economic disruption. In July 2000 an attempt to assassinate Sheikh Hasina was foiled. [1a]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

2000 – SEPTEMBER 2006

- 3.23 The term of office of Sheikh Hasina’s government came to an end in July 2001 and a caretaker government took office to organise new elections. (Europa) [1a] BBC News reported on 26 September 2001 that a bomb blast in Dhaka had killed at least eight members of the Awami League (AL) as the hostile atmosphere in the run-up to the general election heightened. In response to the escalating tension the caretaker government deployed more than 50,000 troops to quell the violence. [20h]
- 3.24 The general election went ahead on 1 October 2001, although voting was

suspended in several constituencies due to violence. (Europa) [1a] Domestic and international observers deemed the general election to be generally free and fair. (USSD 2008) [2b] (section 3) Following a round of by-elections held on 12 November 2001, mainly necessitated by the fact that certain candidates – including the main party leaders – had stood and won seats in more than one constituency on 1 October [39ab], the Bangladesh Election Commission recorded the number of seats secured by each party as follows:

	Seats
Governing coalition ('Four-party Alliance'):	
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	195
Bangladesh Jatiya Party (N-F/Naziur)	4
Jamaat-e-Islami	17
Islamic Oikya Jote (IOJ)	3
Awami League	58
Jatiya Party (Ershad) / Islami Jatio Oikya Front	14
Jatiya Party (Manju)	1
Krishak Sramik Janata League	1
Independents	7
	300

[16b]

- 3.25 Khaleda Zia was sworn in as Prime Minister on 10 October 2001. Elected members of parliament representing the Awami League took their oath of office, but refused to join the opening session of parliament in protest at what they considered to be a rigged election. (Europa) [1a] Following the resignation of President Bardruddoza Chowdhury, parliament elected Iajuddin Ahmed, a retired professor from Dhaka University, as President on 5 September 2002. (BBC News, 5 September 2002) [20s]
- 3.26 The Government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, facing criticism for a rising crime wave and deteriorating law and order in the country, launched "Operation Clean Heart" on 17 October 2002. (Amnesty International, 23 October 2002) [7e] Operation Clean Heart involved the deployment of nearly 40,000 soldiers, in all the major cities, to help restore law and order, arrest 'listed criminals' and recover illegal firearms. (BBC News, 9 January 2003) [20y] The army withdrew from the operation and returned to barracks on 10 January 2003. More than 10,000 people had been arrested and hundreds of weapons seized during the three-month period. (BBC News, 11 January 2003) [20z] Troops were then redeployed in six divisional headquarters the following month, but BBC News reported on 18 February 2003 that the operation, this time, was on a smaller scale and the army had been instructed not to arrest any suspects, but to hand suspects over to the police. [20ab] At least 40 people reportedly died while in army custody during Operation Clean Heart. (BBC News, 18 February 2003) [20ab] On 9 January 2003 President Iajuddin Ahmed signed an order granting legal immunity, with immediate effect, to soldiers who had taken part in the operation. (BBC News, 9 January 2003) [20x] In February 2003, amid angry protests by the opposition, the Bangladesh Parliament passed a controversial indemnity bill entitled "Joint Drive Force Indemnity Ordinance 2003" to give legal protection to army personnel involved in the operation. (Financial Times Information, 27 February 2003) [21b]

- 3.27 A bomb attack occurred at the Hazrat Shahjalal, a Muslim shrine in Sylhet, on 12 January 2004, killing three people and injuring about 30. No group admitted responsibility for the bombing, but Islamist extremists were believed to have been responsible. (BBC News, 13 January 2004) [20e] On 21 May 2004, three people were killed and 70 were injured in a second bomb attack at the same shrine. The British High Commissioner to Bangladesh was one of those hurt. (The *Daily Star*, 24 May 2004) [38e]) Al Jazeera announced on 9 June 2007 that four men had been charged with murder in connection with the bombing of 21 May 2004; it was speculated that the attack was an attempt to assassinate the British High Commissioner. [91f] [23i]
- 3.28 It was reported in the *Daily Star* on 20, 23 and 27 April 2004 that the Awami League had organised a campaign of public demonstrations during April 2004 in an apparent attempt to force the Government to resign by 30 April. Between 18 and 27 April the police arrested more than 15,000 people, mainly supporters of the Awami League and the NGO *Proshika*, in an attempt to contain the protests. On 27 April the Government called on the police to stop mass arrests and not to harass the innocent. [38g] [38h] [38i]
- 3.29 On 7 May 2004 a senior Awami League MP, Ahsan Ullah Master, was assassinated by unknown gunmen, reported BBC News. [20ap]
- 3.30 BBC News announced on 16 May 2004 that Parliament had approved a Constitutional amendment to increase the number of seats in the *Jatiya Sangsad* from 300 to 345 for a period of ten years, with the additional 45 seats being reserved for women. It was intended that the additional women MPs would initially be selected in proportion to each party's support at the 2001 general election, but the Awami League declined its initial allocation. [20ae] [43c] See Section 25: [Women](#).
- 3.31 In June 2004 Awami League (AL) Members of Parliament returned to their seats after boycotting parliamentary sessions for almost a year. (BBC News, 15 June 2004) [20ag]
- 3.32 In July 2004 Bangladesh was hit by devastating floods. A BBC News report of 3 August 2004 stated that about 60 per cent of the country had been under water at one stage. [20af] The BBC News 'Timeline: Bangladesh', accessed on 8 April 2009, put the final death toll at "nearly 800" and noted that the floods had also left an estimated 20 million people in need of food aid. [20o]
- 3.33 A number of attacks against senior Awami League officials took place between August 2003 and August 2004. On 25 August 2003, the president of the AL in the city of Khulna was shot dead; the Janajuddha faction of the banned Purba Banglar Communist Party apparently claimed responsibility (BBC News). [20n] On 7 May 2004 a senior Awami League MP, Ahsan Ullah Master, was assassinated. (BBC News) [20ap] On 16 April 2005, 22 people were sentenced to death for Ahsan Ullah Master's murder. This was the highest number of individuals ever sentenced to death in a single case in Bangladesh. Six others were given life sentences. (BBC News, 16 April 2005) [20bg]
- 3.34 On Saturday 21 August 2004, 23 people were killed in a grenade attack at an opposition Awami League party rally in Dhaka which was addressed by opposition leader Sheikh Hasina. There were about 20,000 people in the

- crowd and 200, including Sheikh Hasina, were injured in the explosions and the chaos that ensued. BBC News reported subsequent rioting across the country; the Awami League called general strike on 24 and 25 August, and again on 30 August 2004, in protest. (BBC News) [20ai] [20aj] [20ak] [20al]
- 3.35 The *Daily Star* reported on 30 September 2004 that the police had been carrying out “blanket arrests” ahead of an Awami League (AL) mass rally planned for 3 October. The newspaper estimated that over 5,000 people, mostly AL supporters, had been detained, mainly under Section 86 of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Ordinance. The authorities maintained, however, that the arrests were part of a ‘routine anti-crime drive’. On 29 September the High Court issued an injunction forbidding any further arrests under Section 86, until 3 October 2004. [38n] The rally on 3 October 2004 was attended by “tens of thousands” and proceeded largely peaceful. (*Daily Star*, 4 October 2004). [38d]
- 3.36 Associated Press reported on 20 October 2004 that a Dhaka court had sentenced three former army officers to death in absentia for their roles in the murder of four Awami League leaders in Dhaka Central Jail on 3 November 1975. The killings had taken place soon after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the overthrow of his government in a military coup in August 1975. Twelve other people were sentenced to life imprisonment. [61a]
- 3.37 In mid-November 2004, the Awami League (AL) – together with 11 ‘left-leaning’ opposition parties and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), National Awami Party (NAP) and the Jatiya Janata Party – launched an opposition party alliance (which subsequently became known as the ‘14-party alliance’ or the ‘grand alliance’). On 18 November 2004 this opposition alliance released a list of nine demands, including calls for the immediate resignation of the Government and a general election under a reformed caretaker government. (EIU January 2005) [40b] (p12) The alliance organised two successive nationwide ‘human chains’ as an expression of no confidence in the BNP-led Government. On 11 December 2004 a 1000-km human chain was formed, connecting the country’s southern tip (in Cox’s Bazar) and northern tip (in Dinajpur) and running through 18 districts, including the cities of Chittagong and Dhaka. On 30 December another human chain was organised, stretching 800-km across Bangladesh from west to east. These demonstrations were largely peaceful. (EIU January 2005) [40b] (p12-13)
- 3.38 The *Daily Star* reported on 28 January 2005 that former Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria and four other people had been killed in a grenade attack at an Awami League (AL) rally in Habiganj district. About 70 others were injured. [38o] Street protests erupted throughout the country and the AL called a 60-hour *hartal* (general strike), maintaining that the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami were responsible for Kibria’s murder. [38o] [38q] The *Daily Star* reported on 21 March 2005 that ten people had been formally charged for alleged complicity in the grenade attack. [38y] A BBC News article of 21 March 2005 quoted police as saying that eight of the ten accused had links with the BNP. [20be]
- 3.39 Associated Press and Agence France-Presse announced on 23 February 2005 that the Government had officially banned Jama’ul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB or JM) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) – both militant Islamic groups – blaming them for a recent spate of murders, bombings and related terrorist activities across the country. The same day,

police arrested Dr Muhammad Asadullah al-Ghalib, head of the Islamist organisation Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh (AHAB) [61b] [23jj]; he was subsequently charged with sedition. [20ba]

- 3.40 BBC News announced on 17 August 2005 that more than 300 bomb explosions had occurred almost simultaneously in cities and towns across the country that day. Most of the bombs were small, rudimentary devices; they were set to go off between 10.30 and 11.30 local time. Many of the bombs were placed in the vicinity of government offices, judicial buildings and journalist's clubs. The militant Islamist group Jamatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) were believed responsible; leaflets bearing JMB's name were found at some of the bombsites, calling for the implementation of Islamic Law. [20bc] An Agence France-Presse article of 26 August 2005 provided more specific information: 434 small bombs had gone off in 63 of the 64 districts of the country; two people had been killed and over 100 injured. [23i]
- 3.41 In a judgment delivered on 29 August 2005, the High Court found that the country's military takeover in 1975 had been illegal. The Court's judgment struck down the fifth amendment to the Constitution, which had sought to legitimise martial law under former President Ziaur Rahman. (BBC News, 31 August 2005) [20bd]
- 3.42 BBC News reported on 17 October 2005 that the Government had banned the Islamist group Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (better known as 'HuJI'), describing it as a terrorist organisation. [20bk]
- 3.43 On 3 October 2005 a series of bomb attacks occurred inside law court buildings, in three different districts, killing least two people and injuring 30. (*Daily Star*, 4 October 2005) [38ae] On 14 November 2005, two judges were assassinated in a bomb attack in the southern district of Jhalakathi. (BBC News 14 November 2005). [20bi] Police recovered hand-written leaflets of Jama'tul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) at the site of this attack, which read "Ban man-made laws and establish Qur'anic laws". Death threats were made against several other judges during October and November 2005, apparently by members of JMB and other Islamist groups. (ACHR, 23 November 2005) [53c] (p4-6) On 29 November 2005, BBC News reported that at least nine people had been killed and 40 injured in two further attacks – a suicide bombing inside the law court building in Gazipur, a town 30 km north of Dhaka, and an explosion in the city of Chittagong. [20bm] The EIU noted in a report of January 2006 that this was the first time a suicide bombing had taken place in Bangladesh; it marked a new phase in the campaign of terrorist violence. Police believed JMB to be responsible. [40d] (p12)
- 3.44 The Awami League-led 14-party alliance held a mass rally in Dhaka on 23 November 2005 and announced a 23-point national programme which, in effect, would constitute the their manifesto for forthcoming elections. (EIU, January 2006) [40d] The alliance held another mass rally in Dhaka on Sunday 5 February 2006; at least 40,000 opposition supporters converged at the Paltan Maidan after a three-day 'Long March' from different parts of the country. A large number of opposition activists were arrested during the three-day march; Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina was quoted as saying that at least 10,000 activists and leaders had been rounded up by police. (AFP, 5 February 2006) [23o] Sheikh Hasina announced at the rally that her party would return to parliament, following their boycott. [23o] [21g]

- 3.45 According to an EIU report of January 2006, police arrested over 800 people between 30 November 2005 and early January 2006 on suspicion of being involved in terrorist activity. [40d] BBC News announced on 9 February 2006 that three men had been convicted in a Barisal court for the assassination of the two judges on 14 November 2005 (see above); they received prison sentences of up to 40 years. [20bo] On 20 February 2006 the court in Barisal sentenced a further four individuals, in absentia, to prison terms of 40 years each for their roles in the killing of the two judges; they included Sheikh Abdur Rahman and Siddiquil Islam, alias 'Bangla Bhai', the leaders of banned militant Islamist organisations Jama'tul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB). The four were sentenced under the Explosive Substances Act, but remained liable to murder charges for the same incident. (BBC News, 20 February 2006) [20bt] On 28 February 2006, a Jhenidah court sentenced 21 men to death – three of them in absentia – for their part in the co-ordinated detonation of over 400 bombs throughout the country on 17 August 2005. All 21 were reported to be members of JMB. (AFP, 28 February 2006) [23p]
- 3.46 On 2 March 2006 JMB leader Sheikh Abdur Rahman surrendered to police in Sylhet district following a 30-hour siege (BBC News). [20bq] On 6 March 2006, United News of Bangladesh (UNB) reported that Siddiquil Islam, alias 'Bangla Bhai', had also been arrested following an encounter with the Rapid Action Battalion at his hideout in Mymensingh district. [39ac] On 29 May 2006, a court in the southern town of Jhalakathi convicted and sentenced to death both Sheikh Abdur Rahman and Siddiquil Islam, for their role in the murder of the two judges in November 2005. Five other JMB militants were also sentenced to death for the same crime, including three members of the group's ruling council, the Majlish-e-Shura. Keesing's noted that, in furtherance of its aim of establishing an Islamic state with a *Sharia* legal system, JMB had been conducting a bombing campaign targeting judges, court buildings, and government offices. A court in Rajshahi, on 15 May 2006, sentenced ten other JMB militants to life imprisonment for their role in organising the simultaneous country-wide bombings on 17 August 2005. (Keesing's May 2006) [5j] The High Court, on 31 August 2006, rejected the appeals of the JMB leaders sentenced to death on 29 May. (Amnesty International, 28 September 2006) [7p]
- 3.47 Labour unrest on an unprecedented scale took place in the garment sector in May and June 2006. A dispute over dismissals in a single factory in Dhaka led to widespread strikes and riots by garment workers on 20-23 May and again on 4 and 17 June, citing low pay, long hours and poor working conditions. The Government announced on 25 May that it would establish a commission to set a minimum wage in the garment industry. (Keesing's, May-June 2006) [5j] [5k]
- 3.48 The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Country Report of July 2006 observed that the domestic political scene was then dominated by a dispute over the voter list (voter's role) for the next general election, due to be held in January 2007 at the latest. The opposition parties, led by the Awami League (AL), accused the BNP-led government of manipulating the voter list to its own advantage, and threatened to boycott the general election unless the head of the Election Commission resigned. The dispute over the system for appointing members of the Caretaker Government also continued; the AL called for an impartial person, acceptable to all parties, to be appointed to head the interim

government, charging that the current eligible candidate (former Chief Justice KM Hasan) has strong links with the BNP. [40e] (p12) BBC News reported on 18 September 2006 that 'tens of thousands' of opposition supporters were protesting in Dhaka to demand electoral reforms. The '*hartal*' had been called by the alliance of 14 opposition parties, who again threatened to boycott the general election if their demands were not met. [20bz]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

OCTOBER 2006 – OCTOBER 2008

- 3.49 Agence France-Presse reported on 10 October 2006 that garment workers had staged violent demonstrations, following the announcement of a new minimum wage for the industry on 9 October. [23q] The government had formed a Wage Commission in reaction to the worker unrest in May 2006. On 9 October the Commission released its recommendation for a minimum wage of Tk 1,662.50 for entry-level workers, up from the previous level of TK 950; trade unions were demanding at least Tk 3,000 (£25) per month. (Asia Pulse, 25 October 2006) [89a]
- 3.50 The Nobel Foundation announced on 13 October 2006 that Grameen Bank and its founder, Dr Muhammad Yunus, had been jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2006 for their pioneering work in the provision of micro-credit. (See [Economy](#) section for information on micro-credit financing in Bangladesh.) [90]

CARETAKER GOVERNMENT

- 3.51 The five-year term of office of Khaleda Zia's BNP-led coalition government came to an end at midnight on 27 October 2006. An interim Caretaker Government was due to take office on 28 October, for the period leading up to a general election in January 2007. (See paragraphs 6.05 – 6.07 under [Government](#)) Thousands of opposition protesters took to the streets as the Government and the opposition Awami League failed to reach an agreement on who should lead the Caretaker Government; the opposition did not regard the current eligible candidate, the immediate past Chief Justice KM Hasan, as being politically impartial. (BBC News, 27 October 2006) [20cf] On 28 October Justice KM Hasan withdrew his candidature in the face of mounting pressure. (BBC News) [20cg]
- 3.52 On 29 October 2006, following two days of violent demonstrations during which more than two dozen people were killed in clashes between rival supporters of the two main political parties, the President of Bangladesh, Iajuddin Ahmed, announced that he was personally assuming the role of Chief Advisor, having failed to get party leaders to agree on a compromise candidate. (BBC News, 30 October 2006; EIU, January 2007) [20ch] [40h] This development was criticised by the 14-party alliance, which pointed out that the President was a BNP-nominated president, but Dr Ahmed claimed that he took over only after exhausting all other constitutional options. [46c] Previously Iajuddin Ahmed had been only a titular head of state; he now took on direct control of the home, defence and foreign ministries and became commander-in-chief of the armed forces. (EIU, January 2007) [40h]
- 3.53 By November 2006 the 14-party alliance, led by the Awami League, had

stepped up its campaign of strikes and transport blockades. One of its main demands was the appointment of a neutral and independent Election Commission; in particular, it insisted on the removal of M.A. Aziz, the Chief Election Commissioner, whom it regarded as having pro-BNP sympathies. Furthermore, Mr Aziz had consistently ignored a Supreme Court decision of April 2006, which ruled that the voter list, drawn up under his supervision, was invalid. A study published in December 2006 by the US-based lobby group, the National Democratic Institute of International Affairs, apparently indicated that there were 12.2 million more names on the voter's list than would be eligible according to the country's population profile. On 23 November Mr Aziz, and one other election commissioner, took the face-saving option of going away on leave for ninety days and Mahfuzur Rahman, a former judge, declared himself Acting Chief Commissioner. On 9 December President Ahmed ordered troops to be deployed across the country to maintain law and order and aid the civil administration in preparing for the general election. In early December the Election Commission began the process of correcting mistakes on the voters list, but it became clear that this task could not properly be completed in time for a general election to be held the following month. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, the Caretaker administration under Iajuddin Ahmed proved to be "weak" and the law-and-order situation "precarious". (EIU, January 2007) [40h]

- 3.54 The Awami League-led 14-party opposition alliance announced formally on 3 January 2007 that it would boycott the general election planned for 22 January, on the basis that it would not be fair. [40h] By early January, over 40 people had been killed in violent clashes involving rival political groupings and the police; mass political demonstrations had, at times, brought the country to a virtual standstill. (BBC News, 12 January 2007) [20cd] On 10 January 2007, Sheikh Hasina announced to a rally of 100,000 of her supporters a renewed programme of general strikes and countrywide blockades intended to force the interim government to call off the election. (*Daily Star*, 11 January; *Financial Times*, 12 January) [38a] [87a]

STATE OF EMERGENCY PROCLAIMED; GENERAL ELECTION POSTPONED

- 3.55 In a televised address on the evening of 11 January 2007, President Iajuddin Ahmed proclaimed a State of Emergency in Bangladesh under Article 141 of the Constitution. (*The Daily Star*, 12 January) [38ah] The President's office stated that there was a "grave emergency in the country, threatening public security and [the] economy". (*The Guardian*, 12 January 2007) [55b] The issuance of this proclamation effectively suspended the operation of Articles 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 and 42 of the Constitution, which provide for freedom of movement, freedom of association, freedom of thought, conscience and speech, freedom of profession or occupation and property rights. [38ah] A curfew was imposed in Dhaka and more than 60 other cities and towns for the hours 11pm to 5am. (BBC News, 11 January) [20cb]
- 3.56 The President further announced the postponement of the general election for an unspecified period, to allow time for errors in the voter list to be rectified and to ensure that the elections would be "free, fair and credible". The announcement was welcomed by the Awami League and its allied parties, who had been staging mass demonstrations and had promised to boycott the election if it went ahead as planned. (BBC News, 12 January 2007) [20cc] President Ahmed also announced his resignation from the post of Chief

Advisor to the interim Caretaker Government; nine of the ten other advisors resigned as well. (BBC News, 11 January 2007) [20cb] Mr Justice Fazlul Haque was initially named to lead the Caretaker Government. However, following a consensus between the two major political alliances, Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed – a former Governor of the Bangladesh Bank – was appointed the new Chief Advisor and was sworn in on 12 January. (*Daily Star*, 13 January) [38ai]

- 3.57 The Emergency Power Ordinance 2007 was proclaimed on 12 January 2007, to remain in force for the period of the state of emergency. Under the ordinance, power was given to the relevant authorities to restrict any activities deemed to be “subversive to the state”, or “hampering the relations of Bangladesh with foreign countries”, or “disrupting peace in any part of the country or creating enmity, hatred, or confrontations among different sections of society”. The Ordinance empowered the government to arrest or detain any person or restrict the entry, living, stay or movement of any person – if deemed to be “in the public interest”. (*Daily Star*, 14 January 2007) [38aj] Police and other security agencies, including the Rapid Action Battalion, continued to operate under the Interior Ministry, now under the control of the interim Caretaker Government. The Election Commission remained accountable to the Caretaker Government. (Associated Press, 14 January 2007) [61f]
- 3.58 More than 4,000 people were reportedly detained in the first three days of the state of emergency; the Government was quoted as saying that ‘disruptive elements’ would continue to be arrested until a new election was held. Reports indicated that those detained included supporters of all the main political parties. (Associated Press, 14 January 2007) [61f]
- 3.59 Both major political parties declared themselves to be in favour of a general election at the earliest possible date. (Associated Press, 12 January 2007) [61f] On 22 January, Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed expressed his intention to reconstitute the Election Commission. (*Daily Star*) [38ao] [38ap]
- 3.60 The *Daily Star* reported on 27 January 2007 that the Caretaker Government had published a gazette notification under the Emergency Powers Ordinance 2007; this was to take effect, retrospectively, from 12 January 2007. According to the *Daily Star*:

“The government has banned political and trade union activities and restricted provocative news, including talk shows, in print and electronic media under the Emergency Powers Rules 2007...The government has restricted processions, demonstrations, *hartals*, strikes and lockouts across the country... [The] government can ban any meeting, procession, siege, demonstration, speech, statement, any harmful news or information, [if doing so is] in the interest of government, state or public security and peace...The government can also restrict any publication or transmission of any anti-government news, editorial, post editorial, article, feature, cartoon, talk show or discussion in print or electronic media and any mass media, including the internet...The government will be able to proscribe any newspaper, book, document, printing press or equipment of electronic media if any news or information is published or propagated violating the government order or restrictions...”

The Ordinance provided for a maximum penalty of five years’ imprisonment, or a minimum of two years’ ‘rigorous imprisonment’, with fines, for violation of

these restrictions. Anyone found guilty of a violation would, however, have a right to appeal. [38an]

The role of the military

- 3.61 On 10 December 2006, President and then-Chief Advisor Iajuddin Ahmed had ordered a large-scale deployment of troops across the country, evidently anticipating the resumption of a nationwide blockade by the Awami League-led 14 party alliance the following day. He stated that the troops were being deployed for the purpose of maintaining law and order. (Odhikar, March 2007) [46c]
- 3.62 Although Bangladesh had been under military rule for 15 years and had experienced at least 19 failed coup attempts since 1971, it had become widely assumed in recent years that the army's involvement in politics was over. However, immediately after the proclamation of the state of emergency, the *Economist* was to declare in an article: "The army, not the politicians, now runs Bangladesh." The article expressed a widely-held view that the state of emergency had been implemented at the behest of the army. (*Economist*, 20 January 2007) [41a] The Financial Times (FT.com), in an article of 16 January 2007, also commented that the state of emergency had been declared "at the insistence of the army". [87b] In an apparent response to commentators who were saying that the army now wielded ultimate power in the country, Chief Advisor Fakhruddin Ahmed emphasised in an interview on 10 May 2007 that his administration, not the military, was running the country. He said the army was working "in aid" of his interim civil administration. (*Daily Star*, 10 May 2007) [38by]

Electoral reform and the election 'Roadmap'

- 3.63 On 30 January 2007, the High Court called on the Election Commission (EC) to show cause why the present voters list should not be declared inconsistent with the provisions of the Representation of the People Order (RPO) of 1972 and directives passed by the Appellate Division in 2006, and a fresh electoral roll prepared. (*Daily Star*) [38aq] (BBC News) [20cj]
- 3.64 On 4 February 2007, the President appointed a new Chief Election Commissioner, Dr A.T.M. Shamsul Huda. (Keesing's, February 2007) [5n] The Election Commission (EC) announced on 22 March 2007 its decision to simultaneously prepare national identity cards and an entirely new Voter List (electoral role), with photographs. Implementation of this massive project would begin after July 2007 and it was anticipated that it would take at least a year to complete, suggesting that the general election could not be held before late-2008. (*Daily Star*, 22 March 2007) [38bq] On 27 March 2007 the High Court declared the exiting electoral role null and void. (*Daily Star*, 28 March 2007) [38br] On 5 April the EC formally unveiled a set of proposals for electoral reforms, which included mandatory registration of political parties with provisions ensuring financial transparency and internal democracy; the authority to cancel candidature on grounds of gross irregularities; a limit on the number of constituencies an individual could contest; certain restrictions on independent candidates, newly-retired civil servants or military personnel and other specific categories; measures to dispose of election disputes within six months; threshold requirements for new political parties; and a requirement for all candidates to submit certain documents with their nomination forms. The

Chief Election commissioner indicated that these proposals would only be finalised after consultations with the political parties. (*Daily Star*, 6 April 2007) [38bs]

- 3.65 Chief Advisor Fakhruddin Ahmed, in an address to the nation on 12 April 2007, stated the Caretaker Government's intention to hold the ninth general election "before the end of 2008". (*Daily Star*, 13 April 2007) [38bt] On 8 May the Electoral Commission (EC) announced further proposed reforms: political parties would have to cut links with professional and student bodies; financial transparency and democracy within parties would be monitored; the Awami League, BNP and Jatiya Party (Ershad) would have to amend their constitutions to 'de-link' from smaller parties and organisations currently affiliated to them. (*Daily Star*, 8 May 2007) [38bu] On 14 May 2007 the EC advised that 12,000 teams, each comprising four officials, would be moving throughout the country from August onwards, registering individuals for the new Voter List and national identity cards. (*Daily Star*, 15 May 2007) [38bv]
- 3.66 The Chief Election Commissioner, on 15 July 2007, announced a 'Roadmap' leading to the next general election, which he said would definitely be held before the end of 2008. Local elections, to city corporations, municipalities, *union parishads* and *upazila parishads*, would take place prior to the general election; these would begin in January 2008 in those areas where the voter list had been finalised. (UNB, 15 July 2007) [39ag] On 10 September 2007 the Home Ministry gazetted a partial lifting of the ban on 'indoor political activity'. The offices of political parties could now be re-opened and parties could hold meetings, but permission would have to be sought from the Home Ministry if the number of attendees was to exceed 50. The partial lifting of the ban applied only in the Dhaka metropolitan area; it remained in force throughout the rest of the country. (*Daily Star*, 10 September 2007) [38d]
- 3.67 The Bangladesh Election Commission's website showed that, by 22 June 2008, voter registration had been completed in 481 out of 522 areas. A total of 79,717,345 voters had been registered; it had been estimated at the outset of the registration campaign that there would be approximately 80 million names on final Voter's List. [16c]
- 3.68 On 4 August 2008 local elections were held in the four city corporation areas of Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet and in nine other municipalities. [38dn] Although these local elections were conducted on a non-party basis, candidates backed by the Awami League won the mayoral contests in all four cities and eight of the nine other municipal areas. The polls, which were monitored by over 5,500 local and international observers, took place without any apparent violence. [20eg]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

Militant Islamist leaders executed for murder; others convicted

- 3.69 The leaders of the terrorist organisations, Jamatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) – Sheikh Abdur Rahman and Siddiquil Islam (alias 'Bangla Bhai') – and four other leaders of JMB were hanged on 29 March 2007. They had been convicted in a Jhalakathi court in May 2006 and sentenced to death for the November 2005 murder of two judges, but were also said to have been complicit in numerous other serious crimes, including terrorist bombings. (*Daily Star*, 31 March 2007) [38au] Their appeals had been rejected by the High Court on 31 August 2006.

(HRW, 28 September 2006) [7p]

- 3.70 A total of 698 individuals had, by the end of 2006, been arrested in connection with the August 2005 co-ordinated bombings in 63 of the country's 64 districts and for other bombings attributed to Jamatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB). By the end of 2007, the courts had issued 32 death sentences (including the above six), 62 life imprisonment sentences and 59 other sentences of varying durations. (USSD 2007) [2a] (section 1a) It was also announced on 29 October 2007 that 12 suspects had been arrested in connection with the grenade attack at the Awami League rally on 21 August 2004 in which 23 people were killed and over 200 injured. [20dr]

Renewed Islamist militant activity

- 3.71 The US State Department's 'Country Reports on Terrorism', published 30 April 2007, noted that there had been no JMB-linked violence during 2006. [2j] On 1 May 2007, bomb explosions took place simultaneously at railway stations in the cities of Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong. Jadid (new) al-Qaeda Bangladesh, a previously unknown group, claimed responsibility. (BBC News, 1 May 2007) [20cn] On 22 May 2007 police recovered a home made bomb near the main gate of the Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (RUET); two more such bombs were recovered from the same location on 24 May, and a fourth one on 14 June. (*Daily Star*) [38cg] [39af]
See also Section 8: [Security Situation](#)

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) strengthened; right to bail curbed

- 3.72 In February 2007 the Caretaker Government replaced the three members of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC); former army chief, Lieutenant-General Hasan Mashud Chowdhury, was appointed as the new Chairman (Aljazeera, 22 February 2007) [91a] In March the ACC sought a number of additional facilities from the Government: It asked for its staff to be increased from 700 to about 1,200; a panel of high-profile lawyers would be appointed to handle cases in trial courts; the ACC also requested the legal power to attach the properties of graft suspects. (*Daily Star*, 22 March 2007) [38bh] By March 2007 the Government had formed eight central and 64 district-based task forces, under the National Co-ordination Committee, to probe allegations of corruption. (BBC News, 12 March 2007) [20cr]

See also Section 20: [Corruption](#)

- 3.73 On 21 March 2007 the Government promulgated an amendment to the rules under the Emergency Powers Ordinance 2007, suspending the right to petition for bail or to lodge an appeal with a higher court, until a final verdict has been delivered in the trial court. This provision applied only to cases brought under the Emergency Powers Ordinance, and to crimes relating to corruption, illegal weapons or explosives, money laundering and certain other specific categories. The amendment also gave sweeping powers to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to investigate, arrest and seize property without the permission of the Government or an official appointed by it. The amendment was given retrospective effect from 13 February. (*Daily Star*, 22 March 2007) [38cd] It was subsequently reported that a further amendment to the Emergency Powers Ordinance extended the suspension of the right to apply for bail to offences under all sections of the Penal Code. (*Daily Star*, 6

April 2007) [38bj] Following criticism from different quarters, the Caretaker Government announced a further amendment to the Emergency Powers Ordinance on 9 April, to provide for bail in certain cases under the Penal Code. (*Daily Star*, 10 April 2007) [38bz]

3.74 According to the Human Rights Watch (HRW) World report 2007:

“The [Emergency Powers] Ordinance...empowers Anti-Corruption Commission officials, with retroactive effect, to arrest suspects without warrants, confiscate property without court orders, and detain suspects for thirty days without a warrant. Many suspects have been held for 30 days while evidence of their alleged offenses is collected. The special tribunals set up for these cases often fail to meet international fair trial standards because of limits on access to counsel, flawed evidentiary requirements, and lack of judicial independence.” [10i]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

High-profile arrests on corruption and other charges

3.75 The Chief Advisor of the Caretaker Government stated in a speech on 21 January 2007 that “tough action would soon be taken in a methodical way” to curb corruption, which he said had “pushed the economy, society and politics into a disastrous state”. On 4, 5 and 6 February 2007, joint security forces detained several high-profile politicians and businessmen, including nine former government ministers, for questioning in connection with allegations of corruption (graft). Those arrested subsequently had their bail petitions turned down and were remanded in custody. They included members of both main political parties. (BBC News, *Daily Star*) [38bc] [20cp] [20cq] On 18 February the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) published a list of 50 persons, which included another three former government ministers and senior members of all of the main political parties; of the 50, 22 had already been detained earlier in the month. Those named were required to submit statements of their wealth to the ACC within 72 hours, or risk the temporary attachment of their movable and immovable properties. (*Daily Star*) [38bg] Several more prominent figures from both parties were arrested on 25 February 2007. (Keesing’s, February 2007) [5n]

3.76 On 7 March 2007, joint forces arrested Tarique Rahman, joint general secretary of the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) and son of the former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, on suspicion of corruption. Several other senior politicians, including the mayor of Chittagong, a senior Awami League member, were arrested the same day in connection with corruption. (Keesing’s, March 2007) [5o] [During a remand hearing in early-January 2008, Tarique Rahman alleged that he had been tortured while in detention.] (EIU, January 2008) [40i] (p10)]

3.77 On 1 October 2007 the ACC published a further list of 80 high-profile corruption suspects, including senior politicians, businessmen and senior civil servants (UNB News Agency, 1 October 2007) [39aw] An article in the *Gulf Times* of 19 October 2007 noted:

“At least 219 people, mostly politicians, have so far been jailed for varying terms in the ongoing drive against high-profile corruption and serious crimes. The convicts include seven former ministers and 12 former lawmakers [MPs]

... The convicts include six businessmen, two business house employees, three policemen, two engineers and 208 political party leaders and activists. Of the convicted politicians, eight are from the Awami League (AL), one from the Jatiya Party and the remaining 198 are Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) members.” [109a]

- 3.78 Four of the five special courts established to try suspects on charges of corruption began their hearings on 7 May 2007. (*Daily Star*, 7 May 2007) [38bk] The daily newspaper *New Age* reported on 24 February 2008 that 61 ‘high-profile’ cases had so far been heard by the special courts. At least 240 people had been found guilty (some in absentia) in those 61 cases and sentenced to prison terms of various lengths; 21 people had been acquitted. *New Age* noted that, by February 2008, the ACC had so far ordered 256 people to submit wealth statements and had prosecuted 148 of them, mostly politicians, for amassing wealth beyond their known sources of income, or failing to declare assets, or failing to submit a wealth statement. [96e]

- 3.79 The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Leandro Desprouy, issued a statement on 30 August 2007 regarding the trial of UN Special Rapporteur Sigma Huda who, on 27 August 2007, had been sentenced to three years imprisonment by the Special Anti-Corruption Court for aiding and abetting extortion found to have been committed by her husband. The statement read, inter alia:

“The Special Rapporteur received information indicating that the right to legal representation and the independence of the court were severely affected during her trial. According to these reports, defense lawyers felt pressured. They had no opportunity to visit her in prison and could only meet with her at the end of the hearings. They also had difficulties accessing the case files and other relevant information, thus compromising their ability to ensure an adequate defence. The atmosphere during the trial was reportedly intimidating, with military and police presence both outside and inside the courtroom, and access of the public and the media to the courtroom was considerably restricted.” [8h]

Other arrests

- 3.80 The NGO Odhikar said in a press release of 12 March 2007 that, based on information from newspaper articles, a total of 95,825 people had been arrested in the two months since the state of emergency was proclaimed in 11 January 2007. [46f] However, Odhikar subsequently clarified that this figure included arrests for any type of criminal offence and did not refer only to measures enforcing the state of emergency, or suspected corruption or to preventative detention under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code. [46h]
- 3.81 Odhikar stated in their report Human Rights Concerns 2007, published 1 January 2008: “In ten months since the state of emergency was declared and the present government took over, a total of 440,684 people have been arrested on various grounds. This was disclosed at a cabinet committee meeting on law and order. It is further learnt that of those arrested 239,480 had warrants of arrest against them and 778 were criminals wanted by the police.” [46i] (p18) [Again, these figures were based on a scan of newspaper articles and include arrests for any type of criminal offence.]

- 3.82 A Human Rights Watch (HRW) report published in January 2008, stated: “The government has not published accurate statistics on detainees, access to official places of detention has been restricted, and the security forces have used unofficial sites, such as the headquarters of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI, or military intelligence) in Dhaka, making it impossible to know exactly how many people were arrested or how many are still being held.” The HRW report stated that most arrests under the state of emergency had taken place without warrants. [10h] (p3)
- 3.83 An intensive wave of arrests took place between 28 May and 12 June 2008, when between 18,000 and 25,000 people (based on media estimates) were arrested by police and ‘joint forces’ in what the government described as a drive against ‘miscreants, criminals and those wanted by the law’. Those arrested included political leaders and activists (of both major political parties) at district, sub-district and municipal level. It is not known how many were subsequently released. (*New Age*, 9 June 2008) [96f] (*Odhikar*, 12 June 2008) [46q]

Charges against, and restrictions on, the main party leaders

- 3.84 In an article for BBC News, dated 26 April 2007, John Sudworth observed:
- “The Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Chairperson Khaleda Zia are bitter political rivals who have alternated in power for the best part of two decades. Their mutual loathing and mistrust are carried through into their parties’ politics. The cancellation of January’s general election and the declaration of the state of emergency were precipitated by Bangladesh’s unique brand of violent street protest, gerrymandering and winner-takes-all politics that have characterised their years in power ... Elements of the current military-backed emergency government have clearly been intent on removing the two women from the scene. ‘I have no doubt, nor would anyone you ask in the street, that this government was trying to persuade them to leave Bangladesh,’ says Dr Nazrul, Professor of Law at Dhaka University. But nor can there be, he believes, much doubt that this government, although bolstered with strong military backing, is intent on genuine democratic reform ... So with Sheikh Hasina out of the country on a personal visit, the government saw its chance...” [20cv]
- 3.85 On 9 April 2007, while Sheikh Hasina was away on a personal trip to America, the chairman of the Westmont Power Company filed an extortion case against her under a non-bailable section of the Penal Code, alleging that he was forced to pay her Tk.30 million when she was Prime Minister (prior to October 2001). (*Daily Star*, 10 April 2007) [38ca] Ms Hasina was also one of 50 people who had been charged with murder and other serious offences on 11 April, in connection with violence during street demonstrations in October 2006. (*Daily Star*, 12 April 2007) [38bo] A Dhaka court issued an arrest warrant for her on 22 April, on the charge of murder. Nevertheless, she expressed her determination to return to Bangladesh to clear her name. (BBC News, 22 April 2007) [20cw] On 22 April the Caretaker Government sought to prevent her from boarding a flight home from London. (BBC News, 22-23 April 2007) [20cx] [20cy] In a reversal, the Government announced on 25 April that the ban on Sheikh Hasina’s return had been lifted. (*Daily Star*, 26 April 2007) [38cb] She arrived in Dhaka on 7 May 2007. (*Al Jazeera*, 7 May 2007) [91c]

- 3.86 In March-April 2007, the Caretaker Government reportedly also put pressure on Khaleda Zia to leave the country. Her eldest son and heir apparent in the BNP, Tarique Rahman, had been arrested on 7-8 March and charged with extortion. On 16 April police detained a second son, Arafat Rahman Koko, apparently on suspicion of graft. (BBC News, 16 April 2007) [20cz] BBC News reported on 17 April that Arafat had been released, amid mounting speculation in the Bangladeshi media that it was part of a 'deal' with the Caretaker Government under which Ms Zia's family would go into exile in Saudi Arabia. [20da] However, it was reported that the Saudi authorities had delayed issuing Ms Zia a visa, being concerned that she would not be leaving Bangladesh of her own free will. (BBC News, 24 April 2007) [20db]
- 3.87 On 14 June 2007 a magistrate's court issued an order preventing Sheikh Hasina from leaving the country. She had planned to fly to the US the following day. [38cl] On 16 July 2007 Sheikh Hasina was arrested and remanded in custody. (BBC News) [20dh] BBC News reported on 24 July that she had been formally charged with extortion in the case filed by Westmont Power Company. (Two separate cases of extortion had recently been filed against her by representatives of other companies.) [20di] [39ah] On 2 September 2007 the Anti-Corruption Commission filed charges against Sheikh Hasina, accusing her of taking illegal payments totalling US \$435,000.
- 3.88 On 3 September 2007 Khaleda Zia was also detained on charges relating to extortion and corruption, it was alleged she had misused her power in awarding two container terminal handling contracts to a local company while she was in office in 2003. Her youngest son, Arafat Rahman Koko was detained (again) for questioning on suspicion of being involved in the same deal. The former Prime Minister was refused bail by a Dhaka court and was remanded to a makeshift prison in the parliament complex, close to where Sheikh Hasina was being held. (Associated Press, 4 September 2007) [61c] (BBC News, 3 September 2007) [20dw] (Keesing's, September 2007) [5q] The High Court granted bail to Khaleda Zia on 30 September but, following an appeal from the government, the Supreme Court ordered that she be held in detention while the case against her proceeded. (Associated Press, 4 October 2007) [61g]
- 3.89 Sheikh Hasina's trial on charges of extortion opened in Dhaka on 3 December 2007, but was then adjourned after defence lawyers requested time to examine new evidence. (Associated Press, 3 December 2007) [61h] On 24 January the Supreme Court struck down a High Court order that had stalled proceedings in Hasina's trial; on 17 January, the High Court further stayed proceedings. (UNB, 24 January 2008) [39at] (BBC News, 1 February 2008) [20dy] It was announced on 29 January 2008 that the cases against Sheikh Hasina and her co-accused were to be transferred to a special court to ensure 'fast disposal'. (BBC News) [20dx]
- 3.90 On 28 May 2008 both the Awami League and the BNP declared that they would not take part in discussions with the Caretaker Government, ahead of the next general election, until their leaders had been released from detention. (BBC News, 28 May 2008) [20dv] It was reported on 9 June 2008 that the special court had ruled that Sheikh Hasina would not have to remain present in court while her lawyers defended her four cases; she could thus be released from detention while her trial was still in progress. The court would

return her passports. (BBC News) [20ea] (UNB) [39av] She was released on bail and allowed to travel abroad under an 'executive order' on the grounds of urgent medical treatment. [109a] (chapter 6) Sheikh Hasina flew to the US on 12 June 2008. (BBC News, 12 June 2008) [20eb]

- 3.91 BBC News reported on 9 June 2008 that the Government had responded to Sheikh Hasina's release by immediately offering Khaleda Zia, who was still in custody, the opportunity to travel abroad to seek treatment for her arthritis and knee problems. [20ec] Ms Zia rejected the conditional offer and instead pleaded for the release from remand of her two sons, Tarique Rahman and Arafat Rahman Koko, whom she said were both in poor health and in need of treatment. (BBC News, 9 June 2008) [20ec] (UNB, 20 June 2008) [39au] Koko was released on two months' parole on July 17 2008 to facilitate his treatment abroad. [38dg] Khaleda Zia's elder son, Tarique Rahman – who had 13 cases pending against him involving extortion, tax evasion and other alleged offences – was released on bail on 3 September and granted permission to seek medical treatment abroad. (UNB, 12 September 2008) [39ba] On 11 September 2008, Khaleda Zia was released on bail from her makeshift prison in the Parliament complex. She had been detained since 3 September 2007. (UNB) [39bb]

Evictions from slum areas

- 3.92 BBC News reported on 12 March 2007 that, according to aid organisations, more than 50,000 people had been evicted from their homes in slum areas in Dhaka within the previous two months; their homes were demolished as part of the Caretaker Government's drive against unauthorised settlements. Many illegally constructed roadside stalls and shops were also demolished. Similar action had reportedly been taken in other cities across the country. [20cr] Amnesty International stated in their 2008 annual report that over 60,000 people had been evicted, and that they had not been given alternative accommodation or compensation. [7s]

Student protests; prominent academics detained

- 3.93 On 20-21 August 2007, large scale violent unrest broke out on Dhaka University (DU) campus and subsequently spread to several other educational institutions, after a group of students in Dhaka said they had been 'manhandled' by army personnel in a dispute at a football match. The protests escalated and became violent. Slum dwellers, street vendors and others joined students in clashes with the police, who baton charged them and fired tear gas. The demonstrators' demands included an end to the state of emergency and a return to democracy. The Government imposed a curfew in Dhaka and five other cities, closed universities and suspended cell phone services during curfew hours. [20i] [20j] BBC News reported on 24 August that one person had been killed and "several hundred" hurt in the riots since 20 August, but that the violence had subsided. The security forces carried out several raids on the Dhaka University campus and elsewhere; they detained several students and five senior staff members. [20k] [10h] The curfew was lifted on 27 August. [38cy]
- 3.94 The *Daily Star* confirmed on 26 August that the five University of Dhaka professors had been remanded in custody on charges of breaching the Emergency Powers rules; two of them had allegedly been subjected to

physical and mental torture since being arrested on 24 August. [38cy] BBC News announced on 4 December 2007 that four professors from Rajshahi University had been found guilty by a special court of breaching emergency power rules and imprisoned, having been accused of inciting students to engage in demonstrations against emergency rule in August. Two others were released. [20do] On 10 December 2007 the convicted academics from Rajshahi received a Presidential pardon and were released from prison. (BBC News, 11 December 2007) [20 dp] On 12 December 2007, four of the five Dhaka University (DU) professors were formally charged with breaching the emergency power rules; their trial date was set for 17 December. (*Daily Star*, 12 December 2007) [38cz] On the morning of 22 January 2008, it was announced that three of the DU professors had been found guilty and sentenced to two years imprisonment; the fourth staff member and 15 students had been acquitted. Later the same day, however, the three convicted academics reportedly were granted clemency by the government and released from prison. (BBC News, 22 January 2008; *Daily Star*, 23 January 2008) [20dq] [38 da]

Arrangements for the independence of the lower Judiciary

- 3.95 The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Ordinance came into effect on 1 November 2007, separating the lower Judiciary from Executive control and placing it under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.

See Section 13: Judiciary - [Independence](#)

National Human Rights Commission to be established

- 3.96 On 9 December 2007 the Council of Advisors approved an ordinance for the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), 'for the protection, development and institutionalization of human rights in the country'. (UNB, 9 December 2007) [39ak]

See Section 7: [Human Rights - Introduction](#)

Biharis recognised as citizens

- 3.97 The High Court, on 18 May 2008, declared valid a claim on behalf of the *Biharis* (or 'Stranded Pakistanis') that they were eligible to be registered as voters and thus become recognised as citizens of Bangladesh. The ruling applied to those who were minors when Bangladesh became independent in 1971, or were born in the country thereafter – roughly half of the total Bihari community.

See Section 22: [Biharis](#)

The Truth Commission

- 3.98 As noted by the NGO *Ain o Salish Kendra* (ASK) in their Annual Report 2008:

"The 'Truth and Accountability Commission' was set up on 3 August [2008], pursuant to the Right to Voluntary Disclosure Ordinance 2008, which allows citizens to avoid imprisonment by making voluntary disclosures regarding any

unearned income and depositing the same with the Commission. The tenure of the Commission was set to end on 2 January 2009. Up to November, some 389 people, mainly government officials and medium-level businessmen, applied for voluntary disclosure; 259 of them admitted to possessing assets beyond their known source of income amounting to some Taka 27.79 crores (277.9 million Taka) and deposited Taka 14.46 crores (144.6 million Taka) with the public exchequer. However, the High Court, on 13 November, declared the Ordinance, the formation of the Commission, and all its functions illegal and unconstitutional, in a public interest litigation. The Court observed that the Commission was unconstitutional as it had by allowing offenders to be exonerated without trial in the courts, effectively by-passed the judiciary. The writ petitioners argued that the provisions of the Ordinance which allowed the conduct of private hearing by the Commission, the reliance on self-incriminating evidence and the confiscation of private property were in violation of fair trial protections under Article 35 of the Constitution. The Appellate Division, on 16 November [2008], stayed the High Court order for one month, allowing the Commission to function in the mean time. However, the Commission had completed all its hearings before the High Court order, and functioned only administratively following this order.” [109a] (chapter 6)

Natural catastrophies

3.99 At least 130 people were killed, and ‘scores’ were injured, in mudslides following monsoon rain in and around the city of Chittagong in June 2007. (BBC News, 11 June 2007) [20dj] (Al Jazeera, 13 June 2007) [91g]

3.100 Severe monsoon flooding affected South Asia in late-July and early-August 2007. BBC News reported on 4 August 2007 that, after 20 days of heavy rain, about 64 people were known to have been killed in Bangladesh; an estimated seven million people were displaced, stranded, or otherwise impacted by the floods, in 41 of the country’s 64 districts. [20dg] By 13 August 2007, the known death toll in Bangladesh stood at 441. (Keesing’s, August 2007) [5p]

3.101 Cyclone *Sidr* struck southern Bangladesh on 15 November 2007 with devastating results. Keesing’s noted:

“The 240 kph storm winds drove heavy rains and a tidal surge that engulfed the low-lying delta region, sweeping away houses and destroying crops. The official death toll as of Nov. 26 was 3,243, but with many areas still isolated by the floods the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society estimated that the final death toll could be as high as 10,000 ... The UN said that thousands of lives had been saved by an early warning system organised by the government and the UN World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)” [5s] (p48248)

The army, navy, air force and civil authorities, as well as local NGOs, launched a full scale emergency relief operation; by 21 November most parts of the southern coast had been reached. (BBC News, 21 November 2007) [20dk] The US and Pakistani navies assisted in operations; helicopters were deployed from the *USS Tarawa* to drop supplies. [20dl] [5s] Millions of people were reported to be at risk from food shortages and water-related diseases. [20dk] The Government appealed to the international community for food aid, following widespread crop damage caused both by the cyclone and by the earlier floods. (Agence-France Presse, 28 November 2007) [23s]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

4. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

STATE OF EMERGENCY LIFTED

- 4.01 The Election Commission had, since February 2008, been urging the Caretaker Government to lift, or at least partially lift, the state of emergency so as to allow political parties to start campaigning for the forthcoming general election, as well as for certain local elections which were to be held in April 2008. (*The Daily Star*, 6 February and 2 December 2008) [38dv] [38dy] In September 2007 the government relaxed its ban on political party meetings – but this allowed for indoor meetings only to be held, and only within the Dhaka metropolitan area. (*The Daily Star*, 10 September 2007) [38du]
- 4.02 It was announced on 17 December 2008 that the President had signed an order terminating the state of emergency completely. (BBC News) [20eh]

GENERAL ELECTION OF 29 FEBRUARY 2008

- 4.03 The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) noted in a press release of 11 January 2009: “Bangladesh’s 9th parliamentary election is being hailed as the country’s most transparent, credible, and peaceful election ever.” [108c]

New Voters’ List

- 4.04 As detailed in Section 3, the Caretaker Government took steps in early-2007 to reconstitute the Bangladesh Election Commission, replacing commissioners who were not seen by the Awami League and other parties as being politically neutral. (Keesing’s) [5n] On 22 March 2007 the new Election Commission announced that an entirely new voters’ list (electoral roll) would be created to replace the existing one, which could no longer be relied on. This new computerised electoral roll would contain the details and the photographs of the estimated 80 million eligible voters, and would be prepared together with new national identity cards; this massive project would be implemented from August 2007 and would take about a year to complete. (*Daily Star*, 22 March 2007) [38dq]
- 4.05 It was reported on 14 October 2008 that the final voters’ list, comprising 81.1 million names with photographs, had been handed over to the Election Commission; fieldwork and voter registration had been completed in June 2008. (*The Daily Star*, 15 October 2008) [38dq]
- 4.06 The UNDP reported in a press release dated 25 December 2008:
- “As Bangladesh gears up for its first parliamentary elections in seven years, a nationwide independent audit of the country’s new digital voter list has concluded that all names on the roll are legitimate voters and nearly all eligible voters are on the list. This first ever computerized photo voter list in Bangladesh contains pictures of more than 80 million voters and took 11 months to compile ... The independent audit of the computer voter list, conducted by Washington-based International Foundation for Electoral

Systems (IFES), consisted of two nationwide surveys sampling nearly 17,000 individuals of voting age across the country. It concluded that the list was compiled with a 'high degree of accuracy'. It verified that no 'ghost voters' were found on the 2008 photo voters list." [108b]

Electoral rules

- 4.07 In April and May 2007 the Election Commission had proposed a number of electoral reforms. (*Daily Star*, 6 April 2007) [38bs] Following consultations with the political parties later in 2007, most of these proposals were given effect by the Representation of the People (Amendment) Ordinance 2008 (RPO 2008). They included, for example:
- a candidate may be disqualified from standing if, for example, they have been found guilty of a serious criminal offence (imprisonment of two years or more, including under the Emergency Power Rules), or defaulted on a loan;
 - candidates' nomination papers must give details of their assets, sources of income and educational qualifications. Voters would have access to this information;
 - in order to register to take part in elections political parties would be required, inter alia, to make their financial statements transparent, relinquish any affiliated professional organisations and not to discriminate in their Constitution regarding religion, race, caste, language or gender.
- (BEC, accessed 13 January 2009) [16d]
- 4.08 The EC announced in April 2008 that it had re-drafted the boundaries of 133 constituencies to conform more closely with the findings of the 2001 national census. (*The Daily Star*, 30 April 2008) [38dx]

The election 'Roadmap'

- 4.09 As noted in paragraph 3.66, in July 2007 the Election Commission (EC) announced a comprehensive 'Roadmap', or schedule, leading up to the general election which, it said, would definitely take place before the end of 2008. Apart from setting a formal timetable for the new voters' list, registration of parties, delimitation and other key projects, the Roadmap made provision for the EC to conduct a dialogue with each of the political parties, between September and November 2007, on its proposals for electoral reform (see 'New electoral rules' above). (*The Daily Star*, 16 July 2007) [38ea]
- 4.10 On 2 November 2008 the EC declared that the general election would take place on 18 December. (*The Daily Star*, 3 November 2008) [38en] However, following representations from the BNP and other parties, the EC announced on 24 November that the election would now be held on 29 December 2008, with nominations closing on 30 November. Local elections would take place early in 2009. (BBC News, 24 November 2008) [20el]

Political parties which contested the General Election

- 4.11 The Election Commission required political parties to register by 20 October 2008 in order to take part in the general election. Over 100 parties applied for registration, but only 39 of those met the criteria laid down in the

Representation of the People Ordinance 2008 and its amendments; 38 of these 39 parties actually fielded candidates. In addition, 148 individuals stood as independents. (*The Daily Star*, 1 January 2009) [38do] (RP2008 Ordinance) [16d]

- 4.12 Both the Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) maintained alliances with a number of other parties to contest the 2008 election: The AL-led 14-party *Mohajot*, or 'grand alliance', and the BNP-led 'four party alliance' (see Results below). (BBC News, 12 December 2008) [20en]

Results of the General Election

- 4.13 The results (marked 'unofficial'), published on the website of the Bangladesh Election Commission (accessed 13 January 2009), were as follows:

	Number of seats	
Awami League-led 'grand alliance':		
Awami League	230	
Jatiya Party – Ershad	27	
Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD)	3	
Liberal Democratic Party	1	
Workers Party	<u>2</u>	263
BNP-led 'four-party alliance':		
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	30*	
Jamaat-e-Islami	2	
Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP)	<u>1</u>	33
Independent candidates		4
Total		<u>300</u>

*includes the result in Noakhali-1, declared 12 January 2009 [16c]

- 4.14 Some notable comparisons with the results of the 2001 general election:

Seats:	2001	2008
Awami League	62	230
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	193	30
Jamaat-e-Islami **	17	2
Islamic Oikkya Jote (IOJ)**	2	0

** Jamaat-e-Islami and IOJ are the principal Islamist political parties in Bangladesh and both were members of the BNP-led coalition government from 2001 to 2006.

[16c] [Section 3: History]

- 4.15 **Voter turnout:** 70.3 million people cast their votes on 29 December 2008, representing 87.03 per cent of all registered voters. There were 35,158 polling stations in the country. (*The Daily Star*, 6 January 2009) [38dp]

Reaction to the results

- 4.16 The magnitude of the Awami League win came as a surprise to most commentators. One reason for the outcome, it was suggested, was that the AL – formerly seen as a traditionalist party – presented a pragmatic and forward-looking set of policies which appealed to younger and first-time voters, whereas the BNP and its allies reportedly conducted a more negative campaign. (Economist Intelligence Unit, 30 December 2008) [40v]
- 4.17 BBC News reported on 30 December 2008 that BNP leader Khaleda Zia had said she rejected the results, telling reporters: “We have confirmed reports of rigging and other irregularities in many polling stations across the country... We are collecting details of more irregularities and will give them to the media and appropriate authorities over the next few days.” [20em] Nevertheless, BNP officials confirmed on 7 January 2009 that their MPs would be attending the first session of the new parliament “for the sake of democracy, the country’s interest and to continue the democratic process”. (BBC News, 12 January 2009) [20ek]

International observer reports

- 4.18 According to a BBC News article of 30 December 2008, the general election was monitored by some 200,000 observers, including 2,500 from abroad. [20ei]
- 4.19 The UNDP, in a press release of 11 January 2008, stated:
- “The High-Level Panel established by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon for the elections consisting of senior UN officials and election experts said that the Election Commission had conducted the polls with credibility and fairness, pointing to the very high voter turnout and the large participation by minorities. Over 200,000 national and 500 international election observers deployed on Election Day returned similar verdicts: the election was peaceful, transparent, and credible, setting a high democratic standard.” [108c]
- 4.20 The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), which deployed 70 observers around the country, reported that the election was conducted credibly and it did not believe isolated breaches of the electoral laws affected the overall polling process. (United News of Bangladesh, 31 December 2008) [39bf] The Commonwealth Observer Group told a press conference that they did not find any evidence to justify the BNP’s claims of serious irregularities. (UNB, 31 December 2008) [39bg] Similarly, the European Union Election Observation Mission did not find evidence of ‘election manipulation’ as alleged by the BNP; they reported that the general election was free, fair and transparent and was held in a peaceful atmosphere, with high turnout. (*The Daily Star*, 1 January 2009) [38dw]

Security during the election

- 4.21 Serious violence accompanied the 2001 general election; at least 140 people were killed in feuding between AL and BNP supporters during the run-up to the election, voting had to be suspended in several constituencies owing to violence, and unrest continued after the results were announced – including an outburst of serious, systematic attacks on the minority Hindu community.

[Section3] The Caretaker Government stated that it would not permit the same to happen in 2008 and, from 18 December, it tightened security throughout the country. On election day over 600,000 police and army personnel were deployed, half of them at the 35,000 polling stations. (BBC News, 17 December 2008) [20eh]

The new Government

- 4.22 Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina was sworn in as Prime Minister on 6 January 2009. (BBC News, 6 January 2009) [20ej] In selecting members of her cabinet, she overlooked many in the party's 'old guard' in favour of generally younger, 'bolder' appointments – which included four women and three members of ethnic minorities – in an attempt to build what *The Daily Star* described as “a bold, new and gender sensitive face of Bangladesh's government”. No members of the new cabinet had faced corruption charges. (*The Daily Star*, 7 and 12 January 2009) [38dr] [38ds]

Post-election violence

- 4.23 The Dhaka-based human rights NGO, Odhikar, stated that – according to press reports – 62 people were killed and over 4,000 were injured in violence between supporters of various political parties during the first three months of 2009. [46s] Most were killed in clashes between supporters/activists of the Awami League, BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami and their affiliated student organisations, and between members of two opposing factions of Bangladesh Chhatra League, the student association of the AL. In most instances the violence involved students and it took place at several different universities and colleges throughout the country. (Odhikar) [46s] For example, clashes between AL and BNP student wings in early January at Jahangir Nagar University, located 30 km from the centre of Dhaka, spread and led to the temporary closures of a number of other higher-education institutions. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, “The violence [at Jahangir Nagar University] was sparked by an attempt by some students to ‘establish control’ over certain dormitories.” (EIU, February 2009) [40r]
- 4.24 During January and February 2009, there were reports of Awami League supporters attacking the houses of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami supporters and vandalising their property. (Odhikar) [46u] [46v]

Local Elections

- 4.25 Elections for the upazila parishads (sub-district councils) were held on 22 January 2009. The Economist Intelligence Unit reported:
- “Preliminary results released on January 24th showed that Awami League-backed candidates had won 306 of the 475 upazila leadership positions contested; the authorities suspended voting in several upazilas, owing to disturbances or electoral irregularities. BNP-backed candidates won 79 seats, followed by an Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami, with 20, the Jatiya Party, also with 20, and candidates of other parties with 44. Unlike the national election, the local polls were marred by violence and allegations of vote-rigging and voter intimidation; at least three people were killed and 150 injured in post-poll violence ... The Election Commission has said that there were instances in which the AL, which now governs at national level, misused its power to

interfere with the electoral process. The BNP rejected the upazila poll results, saying that the elections had been 'grossly rigged' ... [T]he new national government has already indicated that it will modify the legislation to give parliamentarians greater influence at local level than envisaged by the previous administration." (EIU Country Report, February 2009) [40r]

Ordinances of the Caretaker Government adopted/ rejected

- 4.26 In order to remain in force, any ordinances promulgated by the Caretaker Government during its term of office would have to be ratified by the new parliament. It was reported on 20 February 2009 that, of the 122 ordinances promulgated during and just before the Caretaker Government's tenure, the government had selected 54 ordinances to be placed in parliament as bills for ratification. The remaining 68 ordinances would lapse on 24 February 2009. (UNB) [39bh]
- 4.27 The Human Rights Commission Ordinance 2007 and the Anti-Terrorism Ordinance 2008 were submitted for ratification. (UNB) [39bh] (Daily Star) [38dc]

See Section 7: [Human Rights - Introduction](#)

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) mutiny

- 4.28 On 25 February 2009 a mutiny took place at a Bangladesh Rifles (border guards) barracks in the Pilkhana area of Dhaka, apparently following a dispute over pay and conditions; the mutineers surrendered the following day, after tanks surrounded the barracks. (BBC News, 27 February 2009) [20eo] By 2 March, the bodies of 57 murdered army officers and 17 other people had been found at the barracks. (Army officers are seconded to command posts in the Bangladesh Rifles.) Nearly 700 guardsmen (*jawans*) had, by then, been detained and were liable to charges ranging from sedition to murder. Police were still searching for several hundred other guardsmen and 'accomplices' who had absconded since 25 February. (BBC News, 2 March 2009) [20ep]
- 4.29 Investigators said on 10 March that they had so far found evidence of about 450 guardsmen being involved in the mutiny. (The Daily Star, 10 March 2009) [38ec] BBC News reported on 11 March that a team from Scotland Yard had arrived in Bangladesh to help with the investigation. BBC News commented that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had "won praise" from many Bangladeshis for her handling of the situation and in "averting a coup". She had apparently held a meeting with about 2,000 army officers soon after the event, many of whom expressed anger that the government had not sent in troops immediately news of the mutiny had been received. [20eq] The *Daily Star* reported on 21 April that 1,079 guardsmen and 20 other people had so far been arrested for suspected involvement in the mutiny. Investigators were making use of video footage and 'information from various sources' to identify suspects. The government reportedly would be consulting legal experts to decide under what law the accused would be tried. [38ed]
- 4.30 In a news release dated 25 March 2009, Human Rights Watch (HRW) noted that six of the those in custody, including five border guards and an Islamic imam, had died. While press reports quoted the authorities as saying that the men either committed suicide or had died of heart attacks, relatives of one of the men publicly alleged that he was tortured to death. [10j] An Amnesty

International (AI) release of 27 March, referring to four of the deaths, stated: "There are credible reports suggesting that these detainees may have died as a result of torture." The AI report said it was not clear whether they were in the custody of the police or the army when they died. [7v] HRW claimed to have received "credible information that several other border guard members in custody have been brought to hospital with signs of torture". HRW urged the government to ensure that all suspects had access to lawyers and were tried in a judicial process that met international fair trial standards. HRW contended it would be inappropriate to hold the trials in military courts, as the Bangladesh Rifles are under the authority of the Home Ministry and not the Defence Ministry. [10j]

- 4.31 The *Daily Star* reported on 15 May 2009 that a military committee appointed to investigate the reasons behind the mutiny had returned largely inconclusive findings. The committee recognised that the guardsmen had several grievances and that these had been made known prior to the mutiny, but there were apparently also suggestions that 'external parties' may have exploited the soldiers' grievances to instigate the mutiny, possibly for political reasons. The committee pointed out that its terms of reference did not permit it to record statements from civilians, and it therefore recommended that a more powerful enquiry board be formed to continue the investigation. The committee also suggested that the guardsmen be tried under army rules. The *Daily Star* recorded that a further 750 guardsmen had been arrested on sedition charges since 10 May. [38ek]

War criminals to be tried

- 4.32 As noted by Human Rights Watch (HRW) in a report published in May 2009:

"Grave human rights violations committed with impunity marked the events that accompanied the separation of East and West Pakistan and the establishment of Bangladesh as an independent nation. In the 1971 War, Pakistani forces and their collaborators indiscriminately killed civilians and engaged in large-scale torture, rape, and destruction of villages and towns ... Estimates of the number of people killed in connection with the 1971 war vary greatly from a Pakistani government commission's calculation of approximately 26,000 to figures of about 3,000,000 cited by Bangladeshi historians. Rape occurred on a large but undetermined scale (figures of 200,000 to 400,000 victims are often mentioned in the literature, though some scholars claim that these figures are seriously inflated)." [10l] (section II)

- 4.33 In January 2008 the secretary general of Amnesty International called on the Government to establish a 'truth commission' to probe war crimes. (Agence France-Presse, 10 January 2008) [23t] In April 2008 a research organisation called the War Crimes Fact Finding Committee published a list of 1,597 people alleged to be war criminals from the Liberation War; 369 of those on the list were members of the Pakistan military, 78 were Biharis and 1,150 were local collaborators. (*Daily Star*, 4 April 2008) [38df] In its manifesto for the December 2008 general election, the Awami League had announced a commitment to bring war criminals to justice. Parliament adopted a resolution in January 2009 requesting the government to take immediate action bring war criminals to trial. In March 2009 Law Minister Shafique Ahmed announced that the trials would be held under the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act, 1973. (HRW, 18 May 2009) [10l] (section II)

Continued extrajudicial killing by the security forces

- 4.34 The NGO Odhikar stated in a report of 31 May 2009 that 29 people had been “extra-judicially killed” by the police and security forces since the Awami League government came to office on 6 January 2009. In an address to the Human Rights Council on 3 February, the Foreign Minister said the Government would show “zero tolerance” towards extrajudicial killings, torture and custodial deaths. [46t]

Other

- 4.35 Md. Zillur Rahman, a 79 year old Awami League leader, was sworn in as President of Bangladesh on 12 February 2009 having been elected (unopposed) by parliament. He resigned his seat as an MP. The former President, Iajuddin Ahmed, whose five-year term expired in September 2007, had remained in office until after the election of a new parliament. The presidency of Bangladesh is a largely ceremonial post. (*The Daily Star*, 12 February 2009) [38el]
- 4.36 It was reported on 25 March 2009 that a large arms cache and bomb-making equipment had been found at an Islamic school, or madrassa, in the southern district of Bhola; the school was reportedly run by ‘Green Crescent’, a UK-based charity. (BBC News) [20er]
- 4.37 Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia was, on 20 April 2009, served with a notice to vacate her residence in the Dhaka cantonment (military compound) within 15 days. She had lived there since her husband, former President Ziaur Rahman, was assassinated in 1981. The government claimed that Mrs Zia was allocated a house in the Gulshan district of Dhaka following her husband's death, and that it was illegal for her to hold a lease on that house as well as the residence in the Dhaka cantonment. Mrs Zia's supporters viewed the notice as an act of political vindictiveness and resolved to challenge it in court. (EIU, May 2009) [40s] *The Daily Star* reported on 28 May that the High Court had stayed (for three months) a third notice of eviction and had issued a rule upon the government to explain why the notice should not be declared illegal. [38eh]
- 4.38 Cyclone *Aila* struck on 25 May 2009 and caused devastation in the country's southern coastal districts. UNB reported on 29 May that the official death toll stood at 155; at least 7,000 people had been injured and over 500,000 homes were destroyed or partially damaged. [39bj]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

5. THE CONSTITUTION

- 5.01 Europa recorded that a new Constitution for the People's Republic of Bangladesh came into effect on 16 December 1972. Following the military coup of 24 March 1982, the Constitution was suspended and the country placed under martial law. On 10 November 1986, martial law was repealed and the Constitution reinstated. [1a] The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Country Profile 2007 noted that amendments to the Constitution require a two-thirds majority of parliament. [40j] (p8)
- 5.02 Europa noted that the 1972 Constitution based its fundamental principles on nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism. The Constitution aimed to establish a society free from exploitation in which the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedoms, justice and equality were to be secured by all citizens. All citizens are equal before the law and have a right to its protection. Arbitrary arrest or detention, discrimination based on race, age, sex, birth, caste or religion, and also forced labour are all prohibited under the Constitution. Subject to the law, public order and morality, every citizen has a right to freedom of movement, of assembly and of association. The Constitution also aims to guarantee freedom of conscience, speech, press and religious worship. [1a] Europa recorded that the Constitution was amended in 1977 to increase the influence of Islam in its text; the word 'secularism' was also deleted from the preamble. A further amendment in 1988 established Islam as the state religion. [1a]
- 5.03 A United Nations Development Programme report of September 2002, entitled 'Human Security in Bangladesh', commented: "The Constitution states that all existing laws that are inconsistent with fundamental rights shall be declared void, and the State is forbidden to make any law inconsistent with fundamental rights ... However, the enjoyment of any right is subject to 'reasonable' restrictions imposed by law in the interest of the State, public order, public health, morality or decency." The UNDP report pointed out that "reasonable" is a relative term, and what is reasonable in one given set of circumstances may be unreasonable in another. [8b] (p15)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

6. POLITICAL SYSTEM

GOVERNMENT

- 6.01 As recorded in the US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2008 (USSD 2008), Bangladesh is a multiparty, parliamentary democracy in which elections by secret ballot are held on the basis of universal suffrage. [2b] (section 3) A parliamentary election held on 29 December 2008 was considered by international and domestic observers to have been free and fair, although marked by isolated irregularities and sporadic violence. [2b] (introduction) The Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) is a unicameral legislature; members are directly elected for a five-year term on the basis of universal adult franchise from single territorial constituencies i.e. a member of parliament for each constituency is elected by simple majority, on a 'first-past-the-post' basis. Persons aged eighteen and over are entitled to vote. (Europa) [1a] BBC News reported on 16 May 2004 that a Constitutional amendment, approved by Parliament on that day, increased the number of seats in the Jatiya Sangsad from 300 to 345 for a period of ten years, with the additional 45 seats reserved for women. [20ae]
- 6.02 Europa noted that the President is the constitutional Head of State and is elected by Parliament (Jatiya Sangsad) for a period of five years. Executive power is held by the Prime Minister, who heads the Council of Ministers. [1a]
- 6.03 The author of the Freedom House report of June 2005, 'Countries at the Crossroads 2005: A Survey of Democratic Governance', commented on the state of democracy at that time:

"Although Bangladesh has had a parliamentary system since 1991, in practice, parliament hardly functions as an effective accountability mechanism. Regardless of which party is in power, the main opposition party has boycotted most parliamentary sessions, alleging Government repression and impediments in parliament to voicing its views. The year 2004 saw no exception to this practice; the AL [Awami League] for the most part refrained from participating in parliament. The AL also boycotted parliamentary committees due to controversies over their composition." [65a] (p68-69)

CARETAKER GOVERNMENT

- 6.04 The Economist Intelligence Unit's Bangladesh Country Profile 2007 (EIU Country Profile 2007) noted that, under the 13th amendment to the Constitution passed in March 1996, a non-party Caretaker Government takes office for a period of up to three months preceding a general election. This administration assumes office within 15 days of the dissolution of parliament and must hold the general election within 90 days of the dissolution; it is led by a Chief Advisor – who holds the status of a prime minister – and who runs the Government with not more than ten other Advisors appointed by the President on the advice of the Chief Advisor. [40j] (p9-10) Article 58c(7) of the Constitution provides that the Advisors must not be members of any political party or of any organisation affiliated to a political party. [4] The Caretaker Government is responsible for giving the Election Commission "all possible aid and assistance that may be required for holding the general election of Members of Parliament peacefully, fairly and impartially". (EIU Country Profile 2006)

[40a] (p9)

6.05 Clause 58c(3) of the Constitution states that “The President shall appoint as Chief Advisor the person who among the retired Chief Justices of Bangladesh retired last and who is qualified to be appointed as an Advisor under this article...” The Constitution goes on to detail, in 58c(4) and (5), a sequence by which other senior retired judges would become eligible, should the most recently retired Chief Justice be unavailable for the post. Article 58c(6) also says: “Notwithstanding anything contained in this Chapter, if the provisions of clauses (3), (4) and (5) cannot be given effect to, the President shall assume the functions of the Chief Advisor of the Non-Party Caretaker Government in addition to his own functions under this Constitution.” [4] As described in paragraph 4.02 above, the immediate past Chief Justice, KM Hasan, withdrew his candidature on 28 October after mass protests by the Awami League-led alliance, who disputed his impartiality. President Iajuddin Ahmed announced on 29 October 2006 that he had failed to get the major party leaders to agree on an alternative candidate and was therefore taking on the role of Chief Advisor (CA) himself. [It is not clear, from available sources, whether the President had given serious consideration to the availability of eligible retired judges other than KM Hasan – as provided for in the Constitution – before announcing his own appointment.] [20ch] [40h] The President then resigned his position as Chief Advisor in proclaiming the state of emergency on 11 January 2007. Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, a former Governor of the Bangladesh Bank, was appointed CA on 12 January, following a consensus between the two major political alliances. (*Daily Star*, 13 January 2007) [38ai]

6.06 The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Country Report for April 2007 observed:

“The current administration differs greatly from previous caretaker governments. It has embarked on sweeping reforms and policy initiatives that go far beyond its constitutional mandate of preparing for the next parliamentary election. In addition to launching an anti-corruption drive, which has resulted in the arrest of politicians and prominent businessmen, it has also promised to address a looming electrical power crisis and overhaul the country’s main seaport, Chittagong...While work on voter identity cards continues, the administration is likely to pursue other measures aimed at putting the economy on a more secure footing.” [40i] (p7)

Maneeza Hossain, of the Hudson Institute, wrote in June 2007: “Although similar governments have appeared elsewhere, for Bangladesh it is a new model. I describe it as ‘semi-constitutional’ because it stretches the notion of a caretaker cabinet into a time-frame for which the Constitution is silent.” [95] (p2)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

6.07 The EIU Country Profile 2007 noted:

“Bangladesh is divided into 64 districts, each with its own district council. Beneath the districts are 460 sub-districts and 4,488 union councils [*union parishad*], which are currently the lowest tier of government in Bangladesh. In late 2003 the Government formed 40,392 village governments (*gram sarkar*) as a fourth layer of government. *Gram sarkars* are non-elected bodies at the grassroots level, and were introduced by a former president, General Zia, in late 1970s. When he was president, General Ershad introduced *upazila* (local

councils) in the mid-1980s, as an elected local government body. The village governments are aimed at local development by local people. Although the constitution provides for elected bodies at all tiers of local government, only the third tier – union councils and municipalities (mostly sub-district and district administrative centres) – is elected; all others are administratively controlled. Bangladesh has six administrative divisions – Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Barisal, Rajshahi and Sylhet – and four major municipal corporations – Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna. The mayors of the municipal corporations are directly elected and wield considerable political power.” [40j] (p9]

- 6.08 On 2 August 2005, United News of Bangladesh and BBC News reported that the High Court had declared *Gram Sarkar* – village governments composed of nominated members – illegal and unconstitutional, on the basis that they violated the basic principles of democracy based on elections, as provided for in the Constitution. [20bf] [39x] The *Daily Star* reported on 21 April 2008 that the Government had approved the Gram Sarkar (Rescission) Ordinance 2008, abolishing Gram Sarkar village governments. [38di]

SUPERVISION OF ELECTIONS

- 6.09 Europa noted that the Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC), a constitutional body, supervises parliamentary and presidential elections. The Commission also delimits constituencies and prepares electoral rolls. It consists of a Chief Election Commissioner and other commissioners, as appointed by the President. The Election Commission is independent in the exercise of its functions. [1b]
- 6.10 In early-2007 the Caretaker Government took steps to reconstitute the (Bangladesh) Election Commission (BEC), replacing commissioners who were not seen by the Awami League and other parties as being politically neutral. On 4 February 2007 the President appointed Dr ATM Shamsul Huda, a career manager in the civil service, as Chief Election Commissioner for a five-year term; he would be assisted by two Commissioners. (Keesing's, February 2007) [5n] On 29 January 2008 the Caretaker Government approved the Election Commission Secretariat Ordinance 2008, making the Secretariat of the Election Commission independent of the Prime Minister's Office (then the Office of the Chief Advisor of the Caretaker Government). (*The Independent*, 31 January 2008) [9a]

See also Section 17: [Political affiliation](#)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

Human Rights

7. INTRODUCTION

7.01 Bangladesh is party to most of the principal United Nations international human rights treaties. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights website (accessed in June 2009) noted that these included:

- the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), date of accession 5 January 1999;
- the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), date of accession 6 December 2000;
- the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), date of accession 11 July 1979;
- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), date of accession 6 December 1984;
- the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW-OP), date of ratification 22 December 2000;
- the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), date of accession 4 November 1998;
- the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), date of ratification 2 September 1990; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC-OP-AC), date of ratification 12 February 2002; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (CRC-OP-SC), date of ratification 18 January 2002;
- the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (MWC), signatory only 7 October 1998. [8a]

7.02 The proclamation of a state of emergency, on 11 January 2007, effectively suspended the operation of Articles 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 and 42 of the Constitution, which provide for freedom of movement, freedom of association, freedom of thought, conscience and speech, freedom of profession or occupation and property rights. [38ah] The state of emergency was lifted on 17 December 2008. [20ee]

See Section 4: [Recent Developments](#)

7.03 The US State Department's *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2008* (USSD 2008), published on 25 February 2009, summarised the human rights situation under the State of Emergency, as follows:

“Although levels of violence declined significantly and the caretaker government oversaw successful elections, the government's human rights record remained a matter of serious concern, in part due to the state of emergency that remained in place for most of the year and the failure to fully investigate extrajudicial killings. The state of emergency, which was relaxed temporarily in advance of local elections in August and finally lifted on December 17 [2008], curtailed many fundamental rights, including freedom of

expression, freedom of association, and the right to bail. The government promulgated the Emergency Powers Rules (EPR) 2007 and Emergency Powers Ordinance 2007 to enforce the state of emergency. The anticorruption drive that the government initiated, while greeted with popular support, gave rise to concerns about fairness and equity under the law. For most of the year the government banned political activities, although this policy was enforced unevenly. There was a decrease in the number of extrajudicial killings by security forces, but they committed serious abuses, including extrajudicial killings, custodial deaths, arbitrary arrest and detention, and harassment of journalists. Some members of security forces acted with impunity and committed acts of physical and psychological torture. Violence against women and children remained a serious problem, as did trafficking in persons.” [2b] (introduction)

- 7.04 According to Odhikar, a Dhaka-based human rights NGO, a total of 149 persons died at the hands of law enforcement agencies in 2008; 136 of them were killed in so-called ‘crossfire’/‘encounter’/‘gunfight’/‘shootout’. (Odhikar Human Rights Report 2008, published 15 January 2009) [46r] (p37) For the period 6 January to 31 May 2009, during which time the new Awami League government was in power, 29 people were reportedly killed by officers of the law enforcement agencies (Odhikar Human Rights Monitoring Report, May 2009). [46t] [Note: The above data are based on scans of newspaper articles by Odhikar. There are often very large differences in figures reported by different NGOs. [93]]

See Section 10: [Police – Extra-judicial killings](#)

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

- 7.05 On 9 December 2007 the Council of Advisors approved an ordinance for the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), ‘for the protection, development and institutionalization of human rights in the country’. (UNB, 9 December 2007) [39ak] As noted in the *Daily Star* of 13 December, various previous governments had described the setting up of a national human rights ‘watchdog’ as a priority, but the approval of this ordinance represented the first definite action towards establishing such an institution. [38cq] The Secretary-General of Amnesty International was quoted as welcoming the decision to create an NHRC provided that the body was made to be effective and strong, and the selection of its members and its funding were done in an accountable, transparent way. (EIU, February 2008) [40l] (p11) (UNB, 9 January 2008) [39al]
- 7.06 The ‘National Human Rights Commission Ordinance 2007’ made provision for a three-member body, one of whom would be a serving or retired judge of the Appellate Division. Members would be appointed for three-year tenures by a selection committee which includes an Appellate Division justice (as chair), the cabinet secretary, attorney general, comptroller and auditor general, chairman of the public service commission, and law secretary. [39ak] [38cq] According to the *Daily Star*:

“The functions of the commission will include investigating any allegation of human rights violation received from any individual or quarter, or the commission itself can initiate investigation into any incident of rights violation. The commission would be empowered to investigate particular human rights

violation allegations brought forward by citizens or discovered through their own monitoring. If a human rights violation has been proved, the NHRC can either settle the matter or pass it on to the court or relevant authorities.” [38cq]

- 7.07 At a meeting on 26 February 2008, representatives of various human rights NGOs expressed concern that the Ordinance would not ensure the independence, transparency, accountability and effectiveness of the Human Rights Commission. At a press conference after the meeting they said that human rights organisations were not consulted prior to the publication of the Ordinance and they called for changes to be made to its text. Critics argued that the Ordinance was flawed in the way it defined human rights. It was also asserted, *inter alia*, that the Commission itself should be composed of five – rather than three – members so as not to be dominated by its chair, that the Commission should publish an annual report, and that its terms of reference should be broadened. (*Daily Star*, 27 February 2008) [38cr]
- 7.08 The National Human Rights Ordinance 2007 came into effect on 1 September 2009. On 20 November 2008, the President appointed a former judge of the Supreme Court, Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury, as Chairman of the NHRC and Professor Niru Kumar Chakma and Ms Munira Khan as members, for a three-year period. (*Daily Star*, 20 November 2008) [38em] On 7 June 2009, the Foreign Minister confirmed that a Human Rights Commission bill had been placed before parliament for ratification. (*Daily Star*, 8 June 2009) [38eg]

Monitoring of private communications

- 7.09 In January 2006 the government adopted the Telecommunication Amendment Law, which extended the Government’s power to tap telephones. (Odhikar, March 2007). [46c] The USSD 2008 report noted:

“The law allows intelligence and law enforcement agencies to monitor private communications with the permission of the chief executive of the [Ministry of Home Affairs]. The ordinance also gives the government, in the interest of national security, the authority to prevent telephone operators from delivering messages. According to media reports, the government established a national monitoring center made up of representatives from law enforcement and intelligence agencies to monitor and coordinate phone taps during the year [2008].” [2b] (section 1f)

Anti-Terrorism Bill

- 7.10 On 18 May 2008, the Caretaker Government approved the Anti-Terrorism Ordinance 2008. The ordinance provided for the death sentence as the maximum penalty for acts of terrorism, and life imprisonment for anyone found guilty of ‘sponsoring’ terrorism. Membership of a proscribed party carried a maximum sentence of six months and a fine; the penalty for sheltering terrorists is five years imprisonment. Special Tribunals would be set up to hear cases; these would comprise one session judge, or additional session judge, appointed by the government in consultation with the Supreme Court. It was intended that trials will be completed within six months. Appeal could be made to the High Court against the verdict of the Special Tribunal. (*Daily Star*, 19 May 2006) [38dc] Odhikar, a human rights NGO, commented that the proposed ordinance could be used as a ‘tool for the persecution of political opposition’ and argued that the criminal activities identified in the ordinance could be

prosecuted under existing penal laws. [46o] In a report of 30 June 2008, Human Rights Watch (HRW) stated: “The ordinance sweeps far too broadly, disregards normal standards of proof, and establishes harsh penalties for anyone who publicly expresses support for a banned organization.” [10j] Specifically, HRW expressed the following concerns:

- “The law’s definition of terrorist acts is overly broad. Besides violent acts and kidnapping, acts that cause ‘damage to any property of any person’ may be deemed terrorist under the law if they are carried out for a specified purpose. As the UN Special Rapporteur on Counterterrorism and Human Rights has explained, the concept of terrorism should be limited to acts committed with the intention of causing death or serious bodily injury, or the taking of hostages, and not property crimes.”
- “The law provides that a person may be held criminally liable for financing terrorism if that person is involved in financial transactions for which there is merely a ‘reasonable suspicion’ that the money will be used to fund a terrorist act.”
- “The law allows an organization to be banned as terrorist because it has ‘cooperated’ with another organization deemed terrorist. Moreover, the government may ban an organization as terrorist based simply on ‘reasonable allegations’ of involvement in terrorist activities.”
- “The law criminalizes speech meant to support or ‘bolster the activities of’ a banned organization, without any showing that such statements constitute incitement of criminal conduct. To comply with international protections on freedom of expression, laws should only allow for the criminal prosecution of direct incitement to terrorism – that is, speech that directly encourages the commission of a crime, is intended to result in criminal action, and is likely to result in criminal action.”
- “The law allows the imposition of the death penalty for certain offenses that cannot be considered among the ‘most serious crimes,’ as required by international law. Human Rights Watch opposes the death penalty in all circumstances because it is inherently cruel and irrevocable.” [10j]

7.11 In order for the provisions of the Ordinance to retain the force of law after the Caretaker Government had relinquished power, the Ordinance had to be ratified as an Act of parliament. Odhikar reported on 31 March 2009: “The Cabinet [gave] final approval to the Anti-Terrorism Bill in order to enact it as law, on 19 February 2009, without any public consultation or scrutiny.” Odhikar echoed HRW’s concern that the definition of “terrorism” in the bill was so broad and vague that it might create opportunities for abuse. [46s]

Right to Information Ordinance

7.12 As recorded in the USSD 2008 Report, the Caretaker Government promulgated the Right to Information Ordinance in October 2008. [2b] (section 2a) It established an Information Commission and recognised both the right of the public to obtain information from public bodies and the obligation to make

such information available. The Ordinance provided that information could be denied on several grounds, for example, if it were deemed to threaten public security or relations with foreign countries or organisations. There would also be a fee for requesting material. Odhikar noted that there was a public consultation before the Ordinance was adopted and most parties were, in principle, in favour of it. However, journalist associations and others were critical of the wide range of exclusions provided for in the Ordinance and the intention to charge a fee. (*Odhikar Human Rights Report 2008*) [46r] (p 22)

- 7.13 It was reported in February 2009 that the government intended to place the Right to Information Ordinance before parliament for ratification. (Bangladesh News, 16 February 2009) [6a] Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) noted in their *e-Waves* newsletter of April 2009 that parliament had adopted the Bill, and stated:

“TIB hailed the Government for passing the bill on the Right to Information (RTI) in the Jatiya Sangsad (national parliament) . Terming the passage of the bill a timely decision reflecting the popular demand, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said this law is a must for curbing corruption. Through enacting the law the government has fulfilled one of its election manifestos for ensuring good governance ... Dr. Zaman hoped that the Government would form an independent and strong information commission and play a proactive role in implementing the law. To benefit the citizens from this law everyone including the media will play active role, he further expected.” [42j]

See also Section 19: [Treatment of Human Rights NGOs](#)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

8. SECURITY SITUATION

- 8.01 According to Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, 'National Overview' posted on 28 April 2009:

"Bangladesh has been politically unstable since independence, a situation which undermines state stability. Poor civilian governance interspersed with military rule, a weak economy plagued by rampant corruption, a continuing population explosion and frequent natural disasters have blighted the country's development and left half the population below the poverty line. Strikes, demonstrations and political violence are regular occurrences ... Between 1991 and 2006...there was an alarming growth in Islamist militancy, exemplified in the banned Jamaat ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), which orchestrated a campaign of low-level violence that became increasingly intense during this period ... Although there have been no major attacks on the same scale as the 2005 blasts, and arrests of JMB leaders across the country continue, militancy remains a threat ... clashes between activists from the Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) ...in early 2007 resulted in the army declaring a state of emergency - which ended on 17 December 2008 ... Until the suspension of democratic rule in January 2007, Bangladesh's political sphere was highly volatile and chaotic. Conflict between the BNP and AL emasculated parliament and jeopardised economic regeneration. Following the implementation of emergency rule, street violence and political killings declined... [T]here is a risk that Bangladesh may return to politically motivated violence ... Border and resource disputes [with India] frequently lead to minor border clashes..." [83e]

- 8.02 The *Country Reports on Terrorism*, published by the US Department of State on 30 April 2009, noted:

"Jamaatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB), the banned domestic Islamic extremist group responsible for a wave of bombings and suicide attacks in late 2005, remained a threat. During the national Parliamentary election campaign in December [2008], authorities arrested several suspected JMB members and uncovered weapons caches that included grenades and chemicals that could be used to make explosives." [2j] (Bangladesh

- 8.03 The Institute for Conflict Management's South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) reported in their Bangladesh Assessment 2008 (covering events of 2007):

"[Chief Advisor Fakhruddin Ahmed's] regime has successfully targeted the vast network of the Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and its affiliate, the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), a task that appeared to have been deliberately left unfinished by the previous Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-led regime ... Since the execution of the JMB leaders, over a hundred JMB cadres, mostly lower-rung activists have been arrested from various parts of the country. The group's backbone has been broken as a result of this neutralisation process. Intelligence reports did suggest a possible mutation of the JMB into gangs such as the Allahr Dal (Allah's Group), Jamal-al-Jadid (New Glory) and the Jadid al Qaeda (The New Base) ... Activities of the new Islamist groups [after June 2007] remained limited to issuing press statements threatening to carry out attacks. None of these threats was, however, translated into action." [59e]

- 8.04 The Armed Conflict Database of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (accessed 14 June 2009) provided an assessment of militant Islamist activity during 2008 and the first quarter of 2009; the following are excerpts:

There was a lull in the conflict between the Bangladeshi authorities and Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in 2008, with no fatalities directly related to attacks by Islamist militant groups. The year was characterised more by law-enforcement activities to limit the actions of terrorist organisations than by actual militancy ... The conflict between the authorities, JMB, Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HuJI) and other Islamist groups was dominated by security operations and arrests, with militant groups involved in only a small number of violent incidents. The JMB and aligned militant groups carried out a handful of attacks with small improvised explosive devices (IEDs) ... During 2008 over 100 activists from the JMB, HuJI and Jamaat-e-Islami's youth wing Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) were tried for involvement in militant attacks. Over 50 were sentenced to death or given long prison sentences ... Political developments in the January–March 2009 period were dominated by the ongoing crackdown on militant Islamist groups ... No fatalities in the period were directly connected to attacks by Islamist groups or claimed by them. [116a]

- 8.05 The South Asia Terrorism Portal's *Data Sheets*, updated to 15 June 2009, confirmed that there were no fatalities associated with Islamist terrorism in 2008 or early-2009. During the same period, 64 left-wing militants – mostly members of Purba Bangla Communist Party factions and the New Biplobi Communist Party – and six civilians were killed, primarily in encounters with the security forces. [59f]

See also Section 4: [Recent Developments](#) and Section 12: [Abuses by Proscribed Militant Groups](#)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

9. CRIME

- 9.01 Statistics on the website of the Bangladesh Police (accessed in May 2009) showed that the total number of registered criminal cases in 2008 was 0.5 per cent higher than in 2007 and 32.4 per cent higher than in 2004. The number of murder cases had increased by 5 per cent from 2004 to 2008, while the number of registered cases involving ‘cruelty to women’ had increased by 11 per cent over the same period. [98a] In a public attitude baseline survey conducted on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2006, about one third of all household respondents mentioned that they had personally been victims of crime, an average of two times in their life. [97a] (p101)
- 9.02 In February 2009 the country’s first Victim Support Centre was established in Dhaka by the Bangladesh Police. It is staffed by 17 trained female police officers and is supported by a network of health care professionals, social workers, lawyers and NGO personnel. The UN Development Programme’s Country Director, Stefan Priesner, commented at the Centre’s inauguration that it reflected “the significant shift that has taken place in the police mindset in recent years”. (Ministry of Home Affairs press release, 17 February 2009) [97c] In the 2006 public attitude baseline survey described above, only a minimal percentage of respondents were aware of the availability of victim support services in their locality; such services were then mainly provided by NGOs. [97a] (piii)

See also Section 10: [Security Forces: Avenues of complaint](#) and Section 25: [Women: Violence against women](#)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

10. SECURITY FORCES

- 10.01 The internal security establishment in Bangladesh consists primarily of the Police and four auxiliary forces: the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), the Ansars and the Village Defence Party, all of which are organised nationally under the control of the Ministry of Home Affairs. [33] As noted in the US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008*, released on 25 February 2009:

“Police...have a mandate to maintain internal security and law and order. Under recent governments, police were generally ineffective and reluctant to investigate persons affiliated with the ruling party. After the declaration of a state of emergency, the government formed [a Joint Task Force], composed of police, the RAB, the military, and other security agencies, and gave the special new teams responsibility for enforcing the state of emergency. The DGFI [Directorate General of Forces Intelligence], a military intelligence agency, assumed the lead in enforcing the state of emergency by investigating corruption charges and interrogating suspects.” [2b] (section 1d)

POLICE AND PARAMILITARY FORCES: STRUCTURE

- 10.02 The Bangladesh Police is made up of 123,000 personnel serving under police divisions across the country and responsible to the Ministry of Home Affairs. (Bangladesh Police website, May 2009) [98b] According to the website of the Rapid Action Battalion (accessed June 2009), Bangladesh has one police officer per 1,200 population, compared with ratios of 1:728 for India and 1:625 for Pakistan. [70]
- 10.03 The following information on the various auxiliary paramilitary forces was obtained from the websites of the Rapid Action Battalion [70], the Bangladesh Rifles [72] and the non-governmental website, Bangladesh Military Forces [71] Jane’s Information Group [83] the US State Department’s ‘Background Note: Bangladesh’, as updated in August 2008 [2e] and the British High Commission:

Rapid Action Battalion (RAB): The Rapid Action Battalion was established in March 2004 as a special anti-crime strike force capable of dealing with armed criminal organisations. It functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs and consists of personnel drawn mainly from the police and the armed forces. [70] [71] [83a] There are 12 RAB battalions, stationed in the main urban centres of the country, with a total strength of roughly 9,000 personnel. RAB troops have received training from the special forces and are equipped with modern equipment. (Human Rights Watch (HRW), 18 May 2009) [10i] (section III) [70] The Freedom House report, *Countries at the Crossroads 2007*, commented, “Although the battalion has enjoyed widespread public support, partly because of its apparent success in cracking down on hitherto untouchable gangsters, thugs, and criminals, it has been accused of torturing innocent people and killing alleged criminals in what it calls crossfire.” [65a] The NGO Odhikar reported that, during 2008, 65 people were killed by the RAB in “crossfire/encounter/gunfight/shootout”. [46r] It was noted in the USSD 2008 report: “The RAB received human rights training through the UN Development Program; the UK government; and a local NGO, BSEHR. Although the RAB

continued to commit serious human rights violations [in 2008], the number of incidents involving the RAB dropped from the previous year.” [2b] (section 1d)

(See [Torture](#), [Extrajudicial Killings](#) and [Accountability](#), below.)

Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Parties (VDP): These voluntary forces are combined under the Ministry of Home Affairs Ansar and VDP Directorate. The forces have the stated mission of ensuring safety and security in rural Bangladesh, assisting in disaster management, contributing to socio-economic development, and work under operational control of the army during an emergency or war. They are divided into three basic components: Ansar Bahini, Battalion Ansar, and VDP. Ansar Bahini is said to have a company of 100 men and a female platoon of 32 members in every sub-district, as well as 32 members in each ‘union’ of the country. Battalion Ansar is made up of 35 male battalions and one female battalion. The total strength of VDP is about 5.6 million people, of which 50% are women. There is a VDP presence in most villages of the country; there is also an urban version of VDP called the Town Defence Party. (Bangladesh Military Forces Group, accessed 12 June 2008) [71] (HRW, 19 May 2009) [10I] (section III)

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR): The primary role of this paramilitary force is border control, including anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking activities. [71] The BDR has also been called upon to assist the police in various “internal” operations, such as recovering illegal firearms and guarding election polling stations. [72] The BDR is reported to have 67,000 personnel, is under the authority of the Home Ministry and is mainly commanded by officers seconded from the army. [10I] (section III)

See Section 4: Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) mutiny

Joint Task Force: The Joint Task Force was set up by the Caretaker Government to pursue cases that had been filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission. It comprised personnel from the police, Rapid Action Battalion and the military and has been under the command of the head of the National Coordination Committee on Combating Corruption and Crime. (The British High Commission in Dhaka have, however, advised that the term ‘joint task forces’ is also sometimes mistakenly used interchangeably with ‘joint forces’ - a “catch-all term for a group of law-enforcement personnel, often used for convenience when it is not clear to which unit they belong”.) [11n]

(Note: ‘Cobra’ and ‘Cheetah’, sometimes referred to as ‘Kobra’ and ‘Chita’, are units within the Bangladesh Police. [38aa])

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

Arbitrary Arrest and Detention

See also Section 14: [Arrest and Detention – Legal Rights](#) and Section 17: [Opposition Groups and Political Activists](#)

10.04 According to the USSD 2008 report:

“The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention; however, the law permits authorities to arrest and detain persons suspected of criminal activity without an order from a magistrate or a warrant. Following the declaration of a

state of emergency in 2007, the government promulgated the Emergency Power Rules that gave authorities further authority to detain citizens without filing formal charges or specific complaints. The government relaxed the state of emergency in August and early December before fully lifting it on December 17 [2008].... [section 1d] Arbitrary arrests were common, and the government held persons in detention without specific charges, often to collect information about other suspects.” [2b] (section 2d)

Torture

10.05 The USSD 2008 report stated:

“Although the constitution prohibits torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment, security forces, including the RAB, military, and police, frequently employed severe physical and psychological abuse during arrests and interrogations. According to human rights organizations, the use of such techniques increased in 2007 after the interim government declared the state of emergency, but the number of incidents declined by 60 percent during the year [2008]. Abuse consisted of threats, beatings, and the use of electric shock. According to human rights organizations, security forces tortured 12 people to death. The government rarely charged, convicted, or punished those responsible, and a climate of impunity allowed such abuses by the RAB, police, and military to continue.” [2b] (section 1c)

10.06 The human rights NGO, Odhikar, recorded 44 incidents of torture by the law enforcement agencies in 2008. However, Odhikar points out that the actual number could have been higher as not all incidents are reported. (Odhikar *Human Rights Report 2008*) [46r] The Bangladesh Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma Victims (BRCT) maintains a documentation centre and investigates specific cases. [63]

10.07 According to the Human Rights Watch (HRW) World Report 2009 (covering events of 2008), dated 31 January 2009: “Torture remains widespread in Bangladesh and is frequently used by law enforcement officials to coerce confessions in criminal investigations and to extort money. It is also used for politically motivated purposes against perceived government critics and alleged national security suspects. The bodies of those who are killed by RAB and the police regularly have physical marks and injuries indicating that they have been tortured.” [10k] A Human Rights Watch report, *Ignoring Executions and Torture...*, published on 18 May 2009, added: “Although there are no reliable statistics on the extent to which state agents engage in acts of torture...nongovernmental organizations and journalists in Bangladesh have over the years documented and reported thousands of cases.” [10l] (section II)

10.08 The Redress Trust, a UK-based NGO, produced a report in August 2004 entitled “Torture in Bangladesh 1971-2004”. The report stated, *inter alia*, that:

(a) Bangladesh has ratified the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), but numerous reports suggested that the practice of torture continued unabated and that there was nearly complete impunity for perpetrators. [34] (Introduction)

(b) It appeared that the practice of torture had perpetuated since 1971,

regardless of which government was in power. [34] (section II C)

(c) Ill-treatment, which may amount to torture, was frequently used by the police in the course of criminal investigations, and also as a tool to extract money from detained suspects and their families. Political opponents have reportedly been subjected to ill-treatment and torture under various governments; during times of unrest there has been a marked increase in institutional violence against journalists, demonstrators, opposition members, etc. Members of religious minorities have been subjected to ill-treatment and have been targeted by extremist groups. [34] (section II C)

(d) Reasons for the prevalence of torture included high levels of corruption, a long practice of using violence for political ends, poor training of police, and inadequate legal safeguards. [34] (section II C)

(e) Torture is expressly prohibited in Article 35(5) of the Constitution. Public officials (including police officers) who committed certain acts amounting to torture could be prosecuted – and imprisoned – under various sections of the Penal Code or, where applicable, under the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance or the Police Act. (Offences of rape or sexual harassment are tried by the Suppression of Violence against Woman and Children Tribunals.) [34] (section III B ii)

(f) There were no comprehensive official statistics on the number of torture-related complaints filed with magistrates (or the police) and subsequent action taken. A large number of cases remained unreported. Some complaints were withdrawn due to police pressure, including offers of money to victims to drop their claims. Only a few prosecutions of perpetrators had been successful; inadequate investigations and difficulty in finding witnesses and obtaining medical evidence were cited as problems. There had, apparently, been several instances of out-of-court settlements in torture cases. [34] (section IV B)

(g) The High Court was competent to award compensation or reparation to citizens whose Constitutional rights had been violated – including victims of torture – and to initiate criminal proceedings against the perpetrators. [34] (section III B ii)

(h) Bangladeshi laws provided certain groups of public officials with immunity from prosecution for certain offences committed in discharge of their duties. [34] (section IV B i)

(i) Specialist treatment was available to torture victims through non-governmental rehabilitation centres, including the Bangladesh Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma Victims (BRCT) and the Centre for Rehabilitation of Torture Survivors, Bangladesh (CRTS.B). [34] (section III B ii)

- 10.09 Cholesh Richil – an outspoken leader of the Garo indigenous community, who live in the Modhupur area north of Dhaka – died in custody on 18 March 2007, reportedly following torture carried out by Joint Forces personnel. In May 2007, a one-member judicial commission was formed to investigate Richil's death. Amnesty International has pointed out that, in recent times, neither the terms of reference nor the findings of such commissions have been made public. (AI, 10 May 2007) [7q]

- 10.10 BBC News reported on 11 May 2007 that journalist and human rights activist Tasneem Khalil had been arrested in the early hours of that morning by plainclothes personnel, who took his passport, computer equipment and papers. Khalil wrote for the *Daily Star*, CNN and for his own blog and had done work for Human Rights Watch (HRW). He had detailed human rights abuses committed by the security forces, including the RAB. [20cu] [10f] In a report published by HRW in February 2008, Khalil stated that he had been detained and interrogated on 11 May by officers of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), who accused him of “anti-state” activity in reporting on human rights violations by the security forces, as well as sedition and smuggling sensitive national security information to a foreign state. He was severely beaten while blindfolded, was threatened and forced to write a false confession. Khalil was released on the night of 11 May and subsequently made his way to Sweden, where he was granted asylum. (HRW) [10f]

Extrajudicial Killings

- 10.11 According to the USSD 2008 report:

“Security forces committed numerous extrajudicial killings. The police, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), the military, and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) sometimes used unwarranted lethal force. While there was a nearly 20 percent decrease in the overall number of killings by all security personnel [from 2007 to 2008], the government and military did not take any public measures to investigate these cases ... The deaths, many under unusual circumstances, occurred during law enforcement operations or while the accused were in custody. The government, however, often described these deaths as ‘crossfire killings’, ‘gunfights’, or ‘encounter killings’, all terms to describe exchanges of gunfire between the RAB or police and criminal gangs ... Since 2004 when the Minister for Law, Justice, and Parliamentary Affairs stated that crossfire deaths under RAB or police custody could not be considered custodial death, the government has not disclosed publicly any prosecution of a RAB officer in a killing.” [2b] (section 1a)

- 10.12 Odhikar, a Dhaka-based human rights NGO, noted in their Human Rights Report 2008 (published 15 January 2009) that, according to media reports, 149 persons were killed by law enforcement agencies during the year 2008, 136 of them in “crossfire/encounters/gunfights/shootouts”. In addition, the deaths of 12 people are reported to have occurred following torture in custody. Of the 149 deaths, 68 were attributed to the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), 59 to the Police and the balance to joint forces or other units. Fifty-four of those killed were said to belong to factions of the Purbo Banglar Communist Party or other radical leftist groups. [46r] (p36-39) The NGO, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), in their 2008 Annual Report, stated that, according to their records, 175 people were killed by law enforcement agencies in 2008 – 82 of them by the RAB, 72 by the police and 21 by joint units. Of the 175 deaths, 48 took place while the person concerned was in custody. Nine of the 175 deaths were associated with torture. [109a] (chapter 4) A report published by Odhikar on 1 April 2009 stated that 11 persons were killed by law enforcement agencies during the period January to March 2009, eight of them in so-called “crossfire/encounters/shootouts”; three persons were allegedly tortured to death by police during this period. [46r]

- 10.13 According to the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report *Ignoring Executions and*

Torture..., published on 18 May 2009:

“The longstanding problem of killings in custody assumed endemic proportions after the creation of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), a paramilitary law enforcement agency, in 2004. RAB started the trend of so called ‘crossfire killings’-apparent extrajudicial killings that officials purport were legitimate or accidental killings where the victims (people RAB called ‘wanted criminals’ or ‘top terrors’) died when they resisted arrest or when they were caught in the crossfire during an armed clash between RAB and a criminal group. But the police also adopted these methods soon after. Since June 2004, well over 1,000 people have been killed by the police, RAB, and other security forces. It is widely believed that the vast majority of these killings in reality are thinly-disguised executions, often preceded by torture.” (10I] (section II)

See also ‘Accountability and impunity’ below

Accountability and impunity

10.14 According to the USSD 2008 report:

“Police are organized nationally under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) and have a mandate to maintain internal security and law and order. Under recent governments, police were generally ineffective and reluctant to investigate persons affiliated with the ruling party ... The government took steps to address widespread police corruption and a severe lack of training and discipline. The Inspector General of Police continued to implement a new strategy, partially funded by international donors, for training police, addressing corruption, and creating a more responsive police force ... Plaintiffs rarely accused police in criminal cases due to lengthy trial procedures and the fear of retribution. Such reluctance to confront police created a climate of impunity.” [2b] (section 1d)

10.15 Referring to extrajudicial killings by the security forces, the USSD 2008 report stated, “While there was a nearly 20 percent decrease in the overall number of killings by all security personnel [from 2007 to 2008], the government and military did not take any public measures to investigate these cases ... According to local human rights organizations, no case resulted in criminal punishment, and, in the few instances in which the government levied charges, those found guilty generally received administrative punishment.” [2b] (section 1a]

10.16 The NGO, Odhikar, in their Human Rights Report 2008, released on 15 January 2009, commented that successive governments had failed to meet their obligations to investigate, prosecute and punish human rights violations by the police and security forces, and this had enabled a culture of impunity to take root. [46r] (p40-41) The Human Rights Forum on Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Bangladesh, membership of which comprises 17 locally-based NGOs, referred in a Stakeholders’ Report of 1 September 2008 to extrajudicial killings and incidents of torture that had been reported for the period 2004 to June 2008, and stated:

“In the vast majority of instances, the state failed to publish any information regarding actions taken to investigate, prosecute or punish those responsible for such killings. Exceptionally, the 2007 case of Cholesh Richil, a prominent

Adivasi rights leader and a key activist against the proposed 'Eco-Park' in Modhupur, who died after being taken into custody following arrest by the joint forces resulted in the formation of a one-person judicial inquiry commission. However, its findings and information regarding action against those responsible, if any, (like those of so many judicial inquiry commissions in earlier years) have not been made public as of the writing of this report." [111] (p7-8)

- 10.17 Human Rights Watch (HRW) stated in their report *Ignoring Executions and torture...*, published on 18 May 2009:

"There has been a lack of political will under successive governments to hold accountable those responsible for human rights violations. Of the thousands of killings of individuals in the custody of the security forces since independence in 1971, Human Rights Watch knows of very few cases that have resulted in a criminal conviction. The situation is not significantly different when it comes to other forms of human rights abuses, including torture, which is endemic in Bangladesh ... The internal justice and disciplinary systems of the military, RAB, and police have utterly failed to deliver justice. Although these institutions have claimed that in some cases their personnel have been punished, details are not made publicly available. There is every indication, however, that the sanctions handed out to the perpetrators are wholly inadequate and stand in no relation to the gravity of the crimes committed." [101] (section I)

According to HRW:

"[Former governments], while in power, had been unwilling to hold the security forces accountable. Some failed to act in order to protect their subordinates, others out of fear of antagonizing the security forces, which they perceived as essential for protecting and furthering their political and economic interests. Concerns remain that the new government may fail to act for the same reasons ... Impunity in Bangladesh is also the result of an outdated legal framework under which law enforcement officers and members of the armed forces are shielded from prosecution. In violation of international legal standards, Article 46 of Bangladesh's constitution empowers parliament to pass laws that provide immunity from prosecution to any state officer for any act done to maintain or restore order, and to lift any penalty, sentence, or punishment imposed. Soldiers and RAB officers are also protected from the civilian criminal justice system because the rules ensure that they are prosecuted only in internal courts by their peers through processes that lack any form of independence or impartiality. While the civilian courts have jurisdiction over cases involving police officers suspected of involvement in criminal activities, such officers are protected by section 197 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which requires explicit government approval for the prosecution of an officer purporting to act in his or her official capacity. Several other laws state that no legal action can be taken against a person who in good faith acts to implement any of its provisions..." [101] (section I)

"The authorities are often quick in presenting their own version of events and in resolutely denying that any violations have taken place. This serves to prevent any serious investigations and discourages victims and their family members from trying to seek justice ... RAB and the police regularly issue press statements when a person has been killed during their operations. As a

matter of routine, these statements are published in the press without the media making any efforts to verify the presented facts..." [10I] (section V)

"Human rights violations frequently go unreported. Victims, family members, and potential witnesses are discouraged by the very slim prospect that a formal complaint will eventually lead to those responsible being punished. Often they are also warned that any efforts they make to find justice will come at great personal risk ... Another reason why criminal complaints are not filed is widespread police corruption." [10I] (section V)

"Of the more than 1,100 'crossfire' or 'encounter' killings that RAB and the police have committed over the past four-and-a-half years, not a single person is known to have been held criminally responsible. Since Bangladesh's independence, there are, as far as Human Rights Watch has been able to determine, only two reported cases in which a member of the security forces has been convicted for a death in government custody ... While the cases described in this report have not resulted in criminal convictions, it appears that in several cases those responsible have been subjected to disciplinary actions." [10I] (section V)

- 10.18 On 18 June 2008, Transparency International (TI) published a 'National Household Survey 2007', fieldwork for which was conducted between July 2006 and June 2007. Of the 5,000 households interviewed, 10.7 per cent claimed to have had dealings with the law enforcement agencies in the 'past year'; these included the Police, Rapid Action Battalion, Ansar, Village Defence Party, *Chaudikar*, *Dafadar* and – after the declaration of the state of emergency in January 2007 – also members of joint forces. Of those who dealt with the law enforcement agencies, 64.5 per cent of respondents claimed to have paid a bribe; in most instances, this was to the local police. Most bribes to the police were for police verifications and clearance certificates, charge sheets, general diary entries and 'other'; 10 per cent of bribes paid were said to be to 'avoid arrest'. The survey identified 78 households in which individuals had been arrested by law enforcement agencies in the past year; of these, 22 per cent reported to have been tortured while in custody. A further number claimed to have been threatened with torture, or threatened with arrest without a warrant. [42g] (pp34-36) TI advised under 'Methodology' that data pertaining to sectoral estimates of corruption should be viewed with caution due to limited sample sizes. [42g] (p7)
- 10.19 Human Rights Watch commented in their report of May 2009: "The new government, headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has reiterated its human rights commitments. In February 2009, at the United Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni stated that Bangladesh had a policy of zero tolerance for extrajudicial killings, torture, and deaths in custody. The prime minister stated a few days later that legal action would be taken against those responsible for extrajudicial killings." [10I] (section I) The Home Minister was quoted in May 2009 as saying that the Government was investigating allegations of extrajudicial killings by the security forces. (*Daily Star*, 31 May 2009) [38ee]

See also Avenues of complaint below and [Corruption](#)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

Police Reform

- 10.20 A Police Reform Programme (PRP), designed to assist the Bangladesh Police to improve performance and professionalism, to ensure equitable access to justice and to be more responsive to the needs of vulnerable people, commenced in 2005 and then progressed more rapidly under the Caretaker Government. A comprehensive public attitude baseline survey was carried out in 2006 and submitted in January 2007 (see 'Avenues of complaint', below). [11i] [97c] [97a] By April 2008, 11 model *thanas* (police stations), designed under the Programme, had so far opened in different regions of the country; officers were receiving training on human rights, on gender awareness and on accountability. [11i] [97c] [97a]
- 10.21 Under the Police Reform Programme, a draft ordinance (Bangladesh Police Ordinance 2007) was prepared to replace the Police Act of 1861; it aimed to redefine the roles and responsibilities of police. It also recommended pay increases and improved allowances for police personnel, and provided for specialised training of officers. (*New Age*, 10 June 2007) [96d] (PTI, 10 May 2007) [56b] The draft ordinance proposed the establishment of a Police Complaints Commission, as well as a Summary Court for quick adjudication of cases against police personnel accused of abuse of power or other irregularities. (*Daily Star*, 20 June 2007) [38cw] An article in the *Daily Star* of 26 August 2008 noted that Police Ordinance 2007 had not yet been implemented, but had been referred to stakeholders for comment. [38cx] It was reported on 16 February 2009 that the government had not yet selected the draft Ordinance for ratification by Parliament. (*The Daily Star*) [38dm]
- 10.22 In February 2009 the country's first Victim Support Centre was established in Dhaka by the Bangladesh Police. It is staffed by 17 trained female police officers and is supported by a network of health care professionals, social workers, lawyers and NGO personnel. The UN Development Programme's Country Director, Stefan Priesner, commented at the Centre's inauguration that it reflected "the significant shift that has taken place in the police mindset in recent years". (Minsitry of Home Affairs, Police Reform Programme press release, 17 February 2009) [97c]

See also Avenues of Complaint (Below); Section 9: [Crime](#) and Section 20: [Corruption](#)

Avenues of Complaint

- 10.23 According to a Human Rights Watch (HRW) report of December 2006: "Citizens who wish to file a complaint with the police face many hurdles. First is the fear of reprisal, sometimes based on direct threats not to file a complaint. When families of victims are brave enough to come forward, the police frequently refuse to accept the case. Under Bangladeshi law, the government must provide sanction for courts to consider any offence by a public servant on official duty, including members of the police and other security forces." [10c] (section II) The HRW report of 18 May 2009 noted that, in certain cases where the police had refused to accept a complaint, individuals had turned directly to the judiciary – which had the power to conduct its own investigations into those cases. [10l] (section III)
- 10.24 The public attitude baseline survey conducted on behalf of the UNDP in 2006 found:

“Only a meager percent of the respondents at household (4-7%) mentioned that they reported any incidence of crime to the police during the last 12 months and of them about three fourths (71-74%) were dissatisfied with the response received from the police... About half (49-55%) of the respondents were dissatisfied with the ease of reporting and accuracy of reporting crimes to the police. The following were identified as problems in reporting crimes to the police (placed in order of priorities): police seeks incentives/bribes (money); they remain busy and do not give time or listen; non availability of forms (printed) and papers (carbon paper); concerned police staff not available; police influence or discourage complainant from lodging complaints; forms are complex, not understandable; and police create unnecessary complications and delays ... The overwhelming majority of the respondents (82-83%) mentioned that people [most frequently] report to police when the crime committed is a life-threatening one. [Other] crimes which [frequently] induce people to report to police...are physical torture (63%); property related crimes (57-63%); and [honour-related] issues/defamation (29-53%). Crimes [which victims usually do not report to police] include violence against women. Sex related crimes have also been identified by three fourths of the female respondents (77%)...as crimes inhibiting reporting to police. Other crimes which discourage victims from reporting to police are crimes committed by [influential people] or police themselves and unnecessary harassments.” [‘Common or minor crimes’ were also usually not reported]. [97a] (p111)(p51)

The report added:

“The [female respondents] hardly or never reported crimes to the police unless police was incidentally present at the place of occurrence. Males...most frequently, or frequently, reported crimes by visiting the police station personally or sending somebody to police station or through telephone or sending letters or bringing the police to the place of occurrence. Most frequently, or frequently, cited reasons for not reporting crimes to the police... include: worried or afraid to face police; problems or fear of expenditure; fear of harassment by the police; fear of harassment by the criminals; fear of losing honor; no confidence in police/ police not effective; community people/ward commissioner solved the problem; neutral investigation and equal protection of law not expected; and directly filed case in the court.” [97a] (p111)

Police officers interviewed for this survey estimated that, on average, it required 23 to 26 hours to reach the scene of a crime after receiving information. [97a] (p52) Most household respondents said that the police were over-worked and did not have sufficient time off. However, a majority also perceived that police officers spent time doing errands for higher officials, or on protocol functions or VIP protection or collecting incentives/bribes, or could not perform their duties properly. [97a] (p64-65)

- 10.25 The British High Commission in Dhaka, in a letter dated 1 October 2004, described how citizens could proceed if the police refused/declined to investigate a particular complaint or file a criminal case: “Lawyers working for the respected Human Rights NGO, Odhikar, have advised that in such a case an individual can petition a magistrate. If the magistrate agrees with his [or her] claim, the magistrate can then direct the police to accept the case. [The British High Commission has also] heard the same from another Human Rights NGO, the Human Rights Congress for Bangladeshi Minorities.” [11h]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

ARMED FORCES

- 10.26 The US Department of State's Background Note on Bangladesh as updated in August 2008 noted that the army, with 110,000 troops, and the air force and navy, with about 7,000 members each, were composed of regular (professional) personnel. There are no conscripted forces at present. [2e]
- 10.27 A Chatham House report of January 2007 recorded that Bangladesh was providing the second largest (after Pakistan) contingent to United Nations peacekeeping forces around the world, for which it received around US \$200 million a year. [88a]
- 10.28 The Economist Intelligence Unit's Bangladesh Country Profile 2007 observed:
- “The army has long played a prominent role in Bangladeshi politics, starting with the war of liberation in 1971 but being particularly notable following the military coup in mid-1975. After the fall of General Ershad in 1990, the army temporarily withdrew from politics. In the run-up to the general election in June 1996, the armed forces chief of staff, Abu Saleh Mohammad, led a failed military revolt against the caretaker government. In the decade that followed the army refrained from becoming directly involved in politics, and the government steered it towards playing a role in UN peacekeeping operations. But in January 2007 the army took centre-stage yet again, when it put an end to violent street protests and the political impasse between the two main political parties.” [40j] (p12)
- 10.29 Various commentators have held the view that the state of emergency was proclaimed on 11 January 2007 at the insistence of the military and that the military leadership has since wielded ultimate power in the country. For example, Maneeza Hossain of the Hudson Institute commented in a paper of June 2007: “Events on January 11, 2007 changed the course of the country and saved it from civil war: The Bangladeshi military, an institution professionalized and depoliticized over a decade and a half, stepped out of the cantonment and into the political arena and effectively dictated the agenda to politicians and bureaucrats ... The army leadership held a meeting with President Iajuddin Ahmed [prior to the proclamation of the state of emergency] in the course of which their vision for the way forward was spelled out, and the President was asked to follow course.” [95] (p2)
- 10.30 General Moeen Ahmed, who had served as Army Chief of Staff since June 2005 and was said by commentators to have instigated the declaration of the state of emergency in January 2007, retired in June 2009; he was succeeded by General Md. Abdul Mubeen (*Daily Star*, 14 June 2009. [38dl]

Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI)

- 10.31 The DGFI is Bangladesh's principal military intelligence agency and operates subdivisions serving all branches of the armed forces. Established in 1977, it reports directly to the prime minister and maintains offices in all of the country's districts and sub-districts. (HRW, 18 May 2009) [10l] (section III) According to the Human Rights Watch report of 18 May 2009, the DGFI “is widely regarded as a driving force behind the military-backed regime that took

power on January 11, 2007, and exercised a central role in its anti-corruption campaign. It intimidated, arrested, and arbitrarily detained dozens of businesspersons, senior party officials, journalists, and academics and placed them in illegal detention facilities inside the military cantonment in Dhaka. Many were physically and mentally tortured, often threatened...to make forced confessions or implicate others in crimes ... During much of the state of emergency, DGFI exercised control over media outlets.” [101] (section III)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

11. MILITARY SERVICE

- 11.01 Conscription has never existed in Bangladesh, although the 1952 Bangladesh Army Act does provide for a possible introduction of compulsory military service. (War Resisters International: Bangladesh entry, last updated March 1998, accessed May 2009) [13] A State Party report, dated 14 July 2005, to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) observed: "There is no provision for compulsory recruitment into the armed forces of Bangladesh." [52b] According to the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers *Global Report 2008* (accessed 15 June 2009) the minimum age for voluntary recruitment in the army is 16, and 17 years for the navy and air force. The minimum age for recruitment into the armed paramilitary and auxiliary forces, including the Bangladesh Rifles and the Ansar, is 18 years. [35] **(Bangladesh narrative)** The UN CRC report of July 2005 clarified that, because recruits into the armed forces initially underwent a period of basic training, there was no scope for any person to be employed for actual service or combat duty before attaining the age of 18. [52b]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

12. ABUSES BY PROSCRIBED MILITANT GROUPS

(See [Annex B](#) for further information on each of these organisations.)

MILITANT ISLAMIST ORGANISATIONS

Jamatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB or JM) (alternatively Jama'atul Mujahideen)

- 12.01 JMB is reported to have been founded in 1994, in the northern district of Jamalpur. In 2006 it was said to be led by a troika consisting of Sheikh Abdur Rahman, Siddiqui Islam (alias 'Bangla Bhai') and Muhammad Asadullah al-Ghalib. [83f] Abdur Rahman and Siddiqui Islam were among six JMB leaders executed on 29 March 2007 for their roles in the murder of two judges in 2005. It is not known who may have replaced them in the hierarchy. [5o] JMB and its 'sister' organisation, Jagrata Muslim Janata of Bangladesh (JMJB) were banned by the Government on 23 February 2005. According to an internal JMB document dating from 2004 and made available to Jane's, JMB then had 6,739 active members and a further 4,250 'sympathisers'. [83c] A Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor report of January 2006 stated, "The group calls for the imposition of Islamic Sharia law in Bangladesh and has been targeting organisations and individuals that it accuses of advancing a secular, anti-Islamic agenda. The judiciary and media have been the primary targets, although threatening letters have also been sent to schools, universities and government offices." [83b]
- 12.02 According to the Jane's report, JMB's terrorist activity began in 2002 and was then mainly limited to the northern districts of the country. [83c] However, JMB had, by 2005, developed a national organisational structure. On 17 August 2005, JMB activists detonated 434 small explosive devices virtually simultaneously across 63 of the country's 64 districts. Government offices, courts, press clubs and other public places were targeted in the attacks; two people were killed and 104 were injured. [83c] On 3 October 2005 a number of bomb attacks inside law court buildings in three different districts killed two and injured over 30. Suspects arrested at the three locations apparently identified themselves as activists of JMB. (*Daily Star*) [38ae] BBC News reported on 14 November 2005 that two judges had been assassinated in a bomb attack in the southern district of Jhalakathi. [20b] According to an ACHR report, JMB claimed responsibility. Death threats were made against several other judges during October and November 2005. [53c] (p4-6) On 29 November 2005, at least 14 people were killed and over 40 injured in two attacks – a suicide bombing inside the law court building in Gazipur, a town 30 km north of Dhaka, and a bomb blast in the city of Chittagong. [20bm] [83c] An EIU report of January 2006 noted that suicide bombings marked a new phase in the campaign of terrorist violence and that these attacks were designed to kill as many people as possible; the police believed JMB to be responsible. [40d]
- 12.03 On 28 February 2006, a court in Jhenidah district sentenced 21 men to death – three of them in absentia – for their part in the co-ordinated detonation of over 400 bombs across the country on 17 August 2005. All 21 were reported to be members of JMB. (Agence France-Presse) [23p] Sheikh Abdur Rahman and Siddiqui Islam ('Bangla Bhai') were captured and arrested on 2 March and 6 March 2006, respectively. [39ac] [20bq] On 29 May 2006, a court in the

southern town of Jhalakathi convicted and sentenced to death Abdur Rahman and Siddiqui Islam ('Bangla Bhai') for the murder of the two judges in November 2005. Five other JMB militants were also sentenced to death for the same crime; they included three members of JMB's ruling council, the Majlish-e-Shura. (Keesing's May 2006) [5j] Abdur Rahman, Siddiqui Islam and four other JMB leaders were executed on 29 March 2007. (Keesing's March 2007) [5o]

See below: New groupings: Developments after 1 May 2007

Jagrata Muslim Janata of Bangladesh (JMJB)

- 12.04 In a special report of 28 August 2005, the *Daily Star* described JMJB as a fundamentalist 'vigilante' group whose aim is Islamic revolution through jihad. It is claimed that the group was first founded in 1998; the present name (JMJB) first became apparent in April 2004. Sheikh Abdur Rahman was said to be *amir* ('spiritual leader') of JMJB – as well as being the leader of Jamatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB), with which JMJB has close links – see above. Siddiqui Islam, also known as 'Bangla Bhai', was a senior member who had assumed command of JMJB 'operations'. [38ac] [59b] As noted in paragraph 12.03 above, Abdur Rahman and Siddiqui Islam were executed on 29 March 2007 following their conviction for the murder of two judges. [5o]
- 12.05 JMJB activists are reported to have carried out over 100 operations, including murders and attacks on people they believe to be "un-Islamic" or "criminal". (Daily Star) [38ac] [38w] There have been violent clashes between JMJB and the (Maoist) Purba Bangla Communist Party (PBCP) since April 2004; for example, in May 2004 JMJB operatives killed six members of the PBCP; the PBCP retaliated by killing two JMJB men and injuring six others. On 22 May 2004 several thousand JMJB activists armed with bamboo and hockey sticks staged a rally in Rajshahi city, under police escort, threatening journalists with death for reporting against them. In May 2004 the Government issued a warrant for the arrest of 'Bangla Bhai'. [59b] [38ac] JMJB is believed to have been involved in a number of bombings and vigilante killings, including a bomb attack on a *jatra* folk theatre show in Shahjahanpur on 14 January 2005 in which two people were killed and 70 wounded. [38t] The *Daily Star* of 25 January 2005 reported that at least 50 people, including eight policemen, were injured in clashes between the security forces and JMJB militants in Bagmara the previous day. [38r] A police spokesman, on 4 February 2005, warned that JMJB planned to continue with bomb attacks on cinemas, theatres and *jatra*, which they have deemed to be "un-Islamic". NGOs were also to be targets. [38w]
- 12.06 It was announced on 23 February 2005 that the Government had officially banned Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) – as well as its associated group, Jumatul Mujahedin. [61b] [23j] However, the newspaper *Prothom Alo* reported on 21 July 2005 that JMJB had secretly continued with fund raising and recruitment since being banned. [21f]

Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (alternatively known as HuJI or Harkatul Jihad)

- 12.07 According to a *Daily Star* report of 28 August 2005, Harkatul Jihad was established in the early-1990s apparently with assistance from Osama bin Laden. Many of its founders fought with the Mujahideen in Afghanistan in the

1980s. [38ac] The current leader is Shawkat Osman, alias 'Sheikh Farid'. HuJI apparently has training camps in Chittagong division. (South Asia Terrorism Portal – SATP). [59c] HuJI has been accused of plotting to assassinate Sheikh Hasina when she was Prime Minister. [38ac] On 28 April 2006 a HuJI leader was charged with involvement in this assassination plot. [59c] Police interrogations of arrested HuJI cadres in 2000 reportedly revealed plans to kill 28 prominent intellectuals. [38ac] On 17 October 2005 the Government banned Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami, describing it as a “self-confessed terrorist group”. (SATP) [59c]

New groupings: Developments after 1 May 2007

- 12.08 The existence of a new militant group, **Jadid al-Qaeda Bangladesh**, first became apparent on 1 May 2007, when bomb explosions took place simultaneously at railway stations in the cities of Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong, leaving one person injured. (See Section 4: Recent Developments) Messages etched into metal plates left at two of the sites said the attacks had been carried out by Jadid al-Qaeda Bangladesh. Police said at the time that they were investigating whether this was a new group, or a new name for a terrorist group that already existed. (BBC News, 1 May 2007) [20cn]
- 12.09 The daily newspaper *New Age* reported on 4 May 2007 that, according to Bangladeshi intelligence officials, the explosions on 1 May had been carried out ‘under the direct supervision’ of Jamatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) and that Jadid al-Qaeda Bangladesh, which claimed the responsibility for the bombings, was one of the factions spun off from JMB after the execution of six JMB leaders. [96a] However the *Daily Star*, on 19 March, quoted the Inspector General of Police as saying that the police were yet to find hard evidence of the existence of Jadid al-Qaeda Bangladesh. [39u]
- 12.10 According to *New Age*, the intelligence agencies had learned that JMB and seven other militant organisations discussed a regrouping plan at a meeting at Sariakandi, in Bogra, on 5 March 2007. The seven groups were named as Jamaatul Muslemin, Majlish-e-Tamuddin, Hizbul Zihad, Hizbut Tahrik, Jamaatil Muslemin, 'Dawatul Jihad and Jadid al-Qaeda. *New Age* reported: “Jamaatul Muslemin was given the charge of organising the militants in Bogra and its adjoining areas while Hizbul Zihad was assigned for Dhaka’s Uttara, Ashulia and Tongi, Hazbut Tahrik for Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj and Naogaon, Majlish-e-Tamuddin and Jadid al-Qaeda for the central Dhaka and its adjoining areas. The meeting also decided that Jamaatul Muslemin and Dawatul Jihad would work under the direct supervision of Jamaatul Mujahideen as the organisations lacked required strength and network. The intelligence people spotted a training camp of the militants at Kendua in Tangail, two each in Sariakandi and Dhunat in Bogra, one each at Islampur and Melandah in Jamalpur and three in Gazipur.” [96a]
- 12.11 *New Age*, in an article dated 16 June 2007, named the new leader of JMB as Maulana Abdul Makit Salafi; he had reportedly been appointed at a meeting of the seven-member *Majlish-e-Shura* (the organisation’s highest policy-making body) on 30 March 2007. The other members of the *Majlish-e-shura* were said to be Asadur Rahman Arif, a fugitive convict of Jhalakati judges killing case, Hasibur Rahman, Iqbal Hanif, Saiful Islam, Faisal Alam and Nurul Huda. *New Age* was advised by intelligence officials that:

“The four tiers of the organisational structure of the JMB are called [from the lowest tier] *sathi* or *sudhi*, *ghayer ehsar*, *ehsar* or *amir* and *majlish-e-shura*. *Sathis* or *sudhis* are recruited from comparatively young and dedicated people. Those who are in charge of districts are called *ghayer ehsar* and the divisional level leaders are called *ehsar*. The *majlish-e-shura* is the top tier of the outfit comprising seven leaders ... Led by its district chiefs re-named as ‘*nayak*’, or hero, the JMB is now working across the country through 21 sub-centres by dividing the country into 40 regions. Operatives of the JMB are working under the supervision of some five kingpins and 12 regional and district ‘*nayaks*’, a highly-placed source quoted the recently arrested JMB leader Matin Mehdi as telling the interrogators. Police arrested the outfit’s suicide squad chief Matin Mehdi along with his three accomplices from Kurigram on March 19. Intelligence agencies earlier identified 39 commanders of the suicide squad who are still at large. Some 25 district commanders out of 64 also remain in hiding.” [96b]

Hundreds of activists of the different Islamist militant groups, particularly operatives of JMB who went into hiding following the arrest, trial and execution of its six leaders, were trying to regroup under the new leadership, reported *New Age* on 20 June 2007. [96c]

- 12.12 On 1 May 2007, bomb explosions took place simultaneously at railway stations in the cities of Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong, injuring one man and causing panic among commuters. **Jadid (new) al-Qaeda Bangladesh**, a previously unknown group, claimed responsibility. (BBC News, 1 May 2007) [20cn] The daily newspaper *New Age*, on 4 May 2007, quoted Bangladeshi intelligence officials as saying that the explosions on 1 May had been carried out ‘under the direct supervision’ of Jamatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) and that Jadid al-Qaeda Bangladesh, which claimed the responsibility for the bombings, was one of the factions spun off from JMB after the execution of six JMB leaders. According to the newspaper, the intelligence agencies had learned that JMB and seven other militant organisations discussed a regrouping plan at a meeting at Sariakandi, in Bogra, on 5 March. The seven groups were named as Jamaatul Muslemin, Majlish-e-Tamuddin, Hizbul Zihad, Hizbut Tahrik, Jamaatil Muslemin, ‘Dawatul Jihad and Jadid al-Qaeda. [96a] *New Age* reported on 16 June 2007 that Maulana Abdul Makit Salafi, from the Indian State of West Bengal, had been appointed the new leader of JMB at a meeting of the seven-member *Majlish-e-shura* (the organisation’s highest policy-making body) on 30 March 2007. [96b] Hundreds of activists of the different Islamist militant groups, particularly operatives of JMB who went into hiding following the arrest, trial and execution of its six leaders, were trying to regroup under the new leadership, reported *New Age* on 20 June 2007. [96c] On 22 May 2007 police recovered a home made bomb near the main gate of the Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (RUET); two more such bombs were recovered from the same location on 24 May, and a fourth one on 14 June. One was wrapped in an aluminium sheet which bore the name ‘Jadid al Qaeda’. (*Daily Star*) [38cg] [39af] In late-May the RAB captured two claimed Jadid al-Qaeda Bangladesh members who had threatened to blow up the Jatiya Press Club. [38ch] The *Daily Star* announced on 27 July 2007 that Aminul Haque, a former Minister of Posts and Telecommunications in Khaleda Zia’s government, and others had been found guilty of “patronising” Islamist militants and were sentenced to 31 years’ imprisonment, with a fine. Specifically, it was found that they aided and abetted militants of JMB in extortion and torture in Bagmara in 2004. [38cj]

- 12.13 The *Daily Star* announced on 27 July 2007 that Aminul Haque, a former Minister of Posts and Telecommunications in Khaleda Zia's government, and others had been found guilty of 'patronising' Islamist militants and sentenced to 31 years and 6 months' imprisonment, with a fine. It was found that they aided and abetted militants of JMB in extortion and torture in Bagmara in 2004. [38c]
- 12.14 Freedom House, in a report published on 2 July 2008, noted that
- "Islamist militant groups were severely weakened by the 2006 crackdown that followed a spate of attacks in late 2005, although a group that made statements against Ahmadis and NGOs carried out a series of nonfatal bombings at railway stations in May 2007. The primary aim of most Islamist groups – though their tactics vary – is the imposition of Islamic law (Sharia). Many also support religious schooling, the veiling of women, and an end to 'un-Islamic' practices such as celebrating traditional festivals and watching movies. The government also struggles to contain a Maoist movement in the north that is connected to the banned Purbo Bangla Communist Party. Casualties from clashes involving leftist militants declined in 2007, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, with several dozen militants and fewer than 10 civilians killed." [65b]
- 12.15 The US State Department '*Country Reports on Terrorism*', published 30 April 2009, noted that in December 2008, during the national parliamentary election campaign, authorities arrested several suspected JMB members and uncovered weapons caches that included grenades and chemicals that could be used to make explosives. [2]

See also Section 8: [Security Situation](#)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

LEFTIST GROUPS

- 12.16 The Institute for Conflict Management, in their Bangladesh Assessment 2008, commented: "The... left-wing insurgency in Bangladesh is a highly dispersed, low-scale and criminalised movement consisting of a multiplicity of minor groups. Nevertheless, this...movement continued to be the principal focus of security forces 'counter-terrorist' responses [in 2006 and 2007], especially of operations by the elite Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), a specialised 'anti-crime' para-military force under the Home Ministry." [59e] The South Asia Terrorism Portal's (SATP's) Data Sheets, updated to 15 July 2009, indicated that 54 left wing (Maoist) militants were killed in encounters with the security forces in 2008. [59f] The following are the principle left-wing armed groups:

Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP; Communist Party of East Bengal; Purba Bangla Sarbohara Party)

- 12.17 The PBCP is a proscribed radical Maoist movement, founded in 1968 following a split in the Bangladesh Communist Party. It seeks communist revolution by violent means. PBCP cadres have reportedly been involved in acts of murder, robbery, extortion, land grabbing and abduction for ransom. According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal (accessed on 26 June 2009), the leader is Mofakkar Chowdhury. [59a]

- 12.18 PBCP has reportedly claimed responsibility for a number of attacks on journalists, dating back to 2005. [9f] [59a] The South Asia Terrorism Portal has provided details of several encounters between the PBCP and the security forces during 2008 and 2009:
<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/PBCP.htm>
[59a]

New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP)

- 12.19 Formed in 1999 after the Biplobi Communist Party split, NBCP has mainly been active in the Khulna, Jessore, Bagerhat and Satkhira districts. The group is financed through racketeering. [38x]

See also Section 8: [Security Situation](#)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

13. JUDICIARY

- 13.01 Article 35(3) of the Constitution states “Every person accused of a criminal offence shall have the right to a speedy and public trial by an independent and impartial court or tribunal established by law.” Article 27 provides: “All citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of law.” [4]
- 13.02 According to the US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008* (USSD 2008 report), released 25 February 2009: “Corruption, judicial inefficiency, lack of resources, and a large case backlog remained serious problems.” [2b] (section 1e) The previous USSD *Country Report on Human Rights Practices* noted that the backlog of cases in Dhaka alone had reached more than 50,000 in 2007. [2a] (section 1d)
- 13.03 A September 2002 report on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme, *Human Security in Bangladesh, In Search of Justice and Dignity* (UNDP 2002), gave the following reasons for the delayed processing of criminal cases and the subsequent backlog of cases in the courts: (a) the number of cases in which bail is not granted; (b) non-attendance of witnesses on the date of the hearing; (c) unnecessary adjournments; (d) delays in completing investigations; (e) acute shortage of judges and magistrates; (f) tendency of lawyers and parties to delay trials; and (g) lack of vigilance on the part of judges and magistrates. [8b] (p82)
- 13.04 As detailed in Section 3 (History) there were, during October and November 2005, serious attacks on the Judiciary by Islamist militants. A BBC article of 29 November 2005 commented that the courts may have been targeted because they represented the secular laws of the country. (BBC News, 29 November 2005) [20bm] No attacks of this nature have been reported since 2005.

ORGANISATION

- 13.05 As noted in the USSD 2008 report:
- The court system has two levels: the lower courts and the Supreme Court. Both hear civil and criminal cases. After the separation of the judiciary from the executive, the government appointed judicial magistrates to replace the executive magistrates who used to preside over the lower courts. The Supreme Court is divided into two divisions, the High Court and the Appellate Division. The High Court Division hears original cases mostly dealing with constitutional issues and reviews cases from the lower courts. The Appellate Division hears appeals of judgments, decrees, orders, or sentences of the High Court. Rulings of the Appellate Division are binding on all other courts. The EPR [Emergency Power Regulations] authorized the government to create special, speedy, anticorruption courts to adjudicate cases prosecuted by the Anti-corruption Commission. Sentences from these tribunals could also be appealed to the High Court.” [2b] (section 1e)
- 13.06 Decisions of the Appellate Court are binding on all other courts, including the High Court. The judges of both divisions of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President, according to the terms of the Constitution. [4]

- 13.07 It was pointed out in the UNDP 2002 report that the High Court Division of the Supreme Court is responsible for enforcing the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution, including the right to equality before the law. Thus, it stated, for enforcement of rights pertaining to human security under the Constitution one has to go to the High Court. [8b] (p16)
- 13.08 The Civil Justice system in Bangladesh is based on the British model (USSD Background Note, August 2008) [2e] and continues to operate under the 1908 Civil Procedure Code. Certain amendments have been incorporated to try to speed up the process and avoid long and unnecessary delays. (*Daily Star*, 16 July 2005) [38ag]
- 13.09 The Law Commission was formed in 1976; its functions include recommending the repeal or amendment of existing laws which are obsolete or inconsistent with fundamental rights; recommending the enactment of new laws; and recommending reforms to modernise the judicial system. The Commission is headed by a retired Chief Justice of Supreme Court. [84]

Special Tribunals

- 13.10 The USSD *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006*, released March 2007, recorded that, under the provisions of the Public Safety Act, the Law and Order Disruption Crimes Speedy Trial Act (see below), and the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act (see section 25: [Women](#)), special tribunals hear cases and issue verdicts. Cases under these laws must be investigated and tried within specific time limits, although the law is unclear regarding the disposition of a case if it is not finished within an allotted time period. [21] (section 1e)

The Speedy Trial Act (STA)

- 13.11 It was noted in the USSD 2003 report that:

“In 2002, Parliament rescinded the Public Safety Act (PSA) enacted by the AL Government in 2000. A week after the repeal of PSA, Parliament passed the Law and Order Disruption Crimes Speedy Trial Act (STA) to remain in force for 2 years if not extended. It contains a provision for the trial in special courts of those accused of certain crimes from 30 to 60 days after arrest. Unlike the PSA, the STA has a bail provision with mandatory recording of the grounds for granting bail. As a safeguard against misuse of the law, it provided punishment for bringing false charges with jail terms from 2 to 5 years.” [2o] (section 1d)

On 16 March 2004 Parliament passed the Disruption of Law and Order Offences (Speedy Trial) Act 2004 to extend the term of the 2002 Act for another two years. (Hands Off Cain', January 2006) [73a] The term of the Act was extended in 2004 and 2006 and, for a further two years, by the Caretaker Government in March 2008 through the Law and Order Disrupting Offences (Speedy Trial) (Amendment) Ordinance 2008. (*New Nation*, 9 March 2008) [15a]

Family Law

- 13.12 As noted in the USSD 2008 report, the Muslim Family Ordinance codifies

traditional Islamic law concerning inheritance, marriage and divorce for registered marriages of members of the Muslim community. There are similar sets of laws in place for the Hindu and Christian communities. [2b] (section 1e) The US State Department's International Religious Freedom Report 2008 confirmed that *Sharia* law was not implemented formally and was not imposed on non-Muslims during the period covered by the report. Marriage proceedings are governed by the family law of the religion of the parties concerned and marriages are also registered with the state. There are separate family laws in Bangladesh for Muslims, Hindus and Christians, based on their respective traditions. [2p] (section II)

Informal Systems of Justice: Village Courts and *Shalish*

- 13.13 The UNDP 2002 report noted that about two-thirds of all disputes did not enter the formal court process; instead they were either settled at a local level by local leaders or a village court, or they remained unsettled. *Shalish* (or *Grameen Shalish*) local mediation councils provide a traditional alternative to dispute resolution and comprise local community leaders who either individually or in groups provide a forum for arbitration and dispute resolution. A study of *Shalish* in two districts in 1996 indicated that the majority of disputes dealt with related to family law, maintenance, second marriage, dowry and land ownership. According to the UNDP 2002 report, the option of conciliation through mediation was particularly favoured by women and the poor. [8b] (p91-100) *Shalish* cannot lawfully try criminal cases; all criminal proceedings must be regulated by the Code of Criminal Procedure or by specific acts passed by parliament. (UNB, 20 March 2009) [39b] Village courts deal with both civil and criminal matters; they have the power to summon witnesses and can impose a fine on contempt charges. The officials of village courts are usually chairmen and members of 'union parishads' (the local government authorities, of which there are 4,448 in Bangladesh) and are generally powerful members of the local community. Village courts can, however, be open to outside influences. The main sources of influence were said to be local political leaders, community leaders, wealthy people and other influential individuals in the village. Village courts generally functioned in co-operation with the local police. [8b] (p91-100)
- 13.14 In the 'Base Line' survey conducted for Transparency International in 2005, about 60 per cent of rural respondents felt that *grameen shalish* were 'fair'. The minority who doubted the fairness of *shalish* thought that they favoured the rich, or favoured males, or were influenced by religious fundamentalism or terrorism. [42e] (p52)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

INDEPENDENCE

- 13.15 Article 94(4) of the Constitution states "Subject to the provisions of this Constitution the Chief Justice and the other Judges shall be independent in the exercise of their judicial functions." Article 96 provides that a judge cannot be removed from office for reasons other than those set out in the Constitution. [4]
- 13.16 On 1 November 2007, the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Ordinance came into effect, separating the lower Judiciary from Executive control and placing it under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court (in

accordance with a Supreme Court ruling of December 1999 on the Constitutional separation of powers). Effectively, two magistracies were created: (a) Judicial magistrates would be selected and appointed by the Supreme Court; (b) Executive magistrates, previously selected by the Executive from the administrative cadre, would be stripped of nearly all their judicial powers and would only retain temporary magistracy powers in certain situations, such as dispersing unlawful assemblies and issuing search warrants. (FCO, 4 November 2007) [11i] (BBC News, 1 November 2007) [20dn] (*Daily Star*, 1 November 2007) [38cv]

- 13.17 The NGO Odhikar commented in its Human Rights Report 2008 of 15 January 2009 that the separation of the Judiciary from the Executive could be regarded as one of the major successes of the Caretaker Government. The report, however, stated that the Government still exercised some control over the recruitment of judges, which was done by the Public Service Commission through the Ministry of Law. [46r] (p26)

FAIR TRIAL

- 13.18 The USSD 2008 report stated:

“The law provides accused persons with the right to be represented by counsel, to review accusatory material, to call or question witnesses, and to appeal verdicts. Cases are decided by judges rather than juries, and trials are public. In practice a public defender is rarely provided to defendants. Defendants are presumed innocent, have the right to appeal, the right to be present and to see the government’s evidence.” The report added, “Corruption and a substantial backlog of cases hindered the court system, and trials were typically marked by extended continuances, effectively preventing many from obtaining a fair trial due to witness tampering, victim intimidation, and missing evidence.” [2b] (section 1e)

- 13.19 The UNDP 2002 report provided details of the Government legal aid fund which has been in operation since 1994. [8b] (p42-44) The report also stated that more than 300 NGOs in Bangladesh then listed “human rights and legal aid” as one of their activities – though only a few of these NGOs provided legal aid on a large scale. Two organisations, the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) and the Madaripur Legal Aid Association (MLAA) had, by 2002, each provided legal aid for litigation in more than 2,000 court cases; BLAST has offices in all the Divisions of Bangladesh. Four other NGOs had each provided legal aid in over 500 court cases. [8b] (p44-47) As noted on the website of the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC (accessed on 8 October 2006), “The Government has constituted Legal Aid Committees, headed by District Judges in 61 districts, to provide legal assistance to the poor and destitute litigants. These district level committees have been working under the National Legal Aid Committee.” [85]

CORRUPTION IN THE JUDICIARY

- 13.20 Reports from Transparency International (TI) have suggested a high level of corruption in the lower judiciary, particularly amongst court officials (clerks and administrators). [42c] [42e] [42g] In a National Household Survey on Corruption in Bangladesh, conducted by TI during the period July 2006 – June 2007 and published in 2008, 10.7 per cent of the 5,000 surveyed households claimed to

have had dealings with the judiciary during the 'past year'. Of these, 46.0 per cent were as plaintiffs, 51.9 per cent as defendants/accused and 2.1 per cent as witnesses; over half of all cases related to land disputes. The overwhelming majority of households had dealt with the lower judiciary; only 4.6 per cent of respondents had been to the High Court or Supreme Court during this period. Of households who had interacted with the judiciary in the reference year, 41.7 per cent claimed to have paid a bribe. The amount of bribe money paid averaged Tk. 4,825. Asked whom the bribe was actually paid to, 36.9 of households said it was to court officials, followed by middlemen (31.1 per cent), own lawyers (10.7 per cent), public prosecutors (10.7 per cent), opposition lawyers (2.1 per cent) and magistrates/judges (1.2 per cent). [42g] (p37-39) The TI report advised under 'Methodology' that data pertaining to sectoral estimates of corruption should be viewed with caution due to limited sample sizes. [42g] (p7)

- 13.21 In an interview with Transparency International in May 2007 Dr Kamal Hossain, a Senior Advocate to the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, confirmed that corruption had been a particular problem in the lower courts. With reference to the High Court, he was quoted as saying "The high court is in the capital, and its judges are drawn from senior members of the judiciary, people of good-standing in the practice, as well as senior members of the lower courts who have been promoted. The institutional safeguards also are higher – they function under much greater scrutiny and, because of this, their independence is more secure." [42h]

See also Section 20: [Corruption](#)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

14. ARREST AND DETENTION – LEGAL RIGHTS

See also Section 10: [Arbitrary Arrest and Detention](#) and Section 17: [Opposition Groups and Political Activists](#)

- 14.01 As stated in the US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008* (USSD 2008 report), released on 25 February 2009: “The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention; however, the law permits authorities to arrest and detain persons suspected of criminal activity without an order from a magistrate or a warrant.” USSD also has noted that, following the declaration of a state of emergency in 2007, the government promulgated the Emergency Power Rules that gave authorities further authority to detain citizens without filing formal charges or specific complaints. The government lifted the state of emergency on 17 December 2008. [2b] (section 1d)

PREVENTIVE DETENTION AND ITS LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

- 14.02 The USSD 2008 report noted:

“The law provides for arrest without the use of warrants in certain cases. Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code and Section 86 of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Ordinance authorize detention of persons on suspicion of criminal activity without an order from a magistrate or a warrant, and the government used such provisions regularly ... The number of preventive and arbitrary detentions [in 2008] declined from the previous year, although the overall number of arrests remained much higher than it was prior to the state of emergency.” [2b] (section 1d)

- 14.03 Human Rights Watch (HRW) commented their report of 18 May 2009, “Laws giving the authorities the power to deprive a person of his or her liberty in order to prevent potential future criminal acts have been in place on the subcontinent since British colonial rule. As no crime has been committed, these laws are by their very nature in conflict with the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty, as well as to not be arbitrarily detained.” [10] (section V)

THE CODE OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (CrPC): SECTION 54

- 14.04 Section 54 of CrPC authorises any police officer to arrest “without an order from a magistrate or without a warrant.... any personconcerned in any cognisable offence, or against whom a reasonable complaint has been made or credible information has been received or a reasonable suspicion exists of his having been so concerned”. Section 54 of the CrPC lays down certain procedures to be observed once an arrest has been made. This includes that the accused must be produced before a magistrate within 24 hours, and that a magistrate must give prior permission if police want to hold a prisoner for longer. However, it is reported that despite these safeguards, Section 54 effectively allows the police to arrest anyone at any time for almost any reason, and is one of the most easily abused provisions in the Bangladesh legal system. (Canadian IRB, September 1998) [3f] (p4)

THE SPECIAL POWERS ACT (SPA)

- 14.05 The Special Powers Act (SPA) of 1974 gives the Government powers to

detain any person for an initial period of up to 30 days, without a formal charge or specific complaint, in order to prevent him or her performing a 'prejudicial act'. A prejudicial act is broadly defined as "any act... likely to prejudice... the sovereignty and defence of the country, national security, public order or the economic or financial interests of the state". (Canadian IRB, 1998) [3f] (p5) UNDP 2002 commented that the definition of 'prejudicial act', as provided in the Act, is vague and open to wide interpretation. Detention under SPA precludes the possibility of bail. [8b] (p17)

14.06 The USSD 2003 report provided the following details:

"The magistrate must inform the detainee of the grounds for detention within 15 days, and the Ministry of Home Affairs must agree with the grounds presented for detention within 30 days or release the detainee. The Government does not have to charge the detainee with a statutory crime. In practice, detainees sometimes were held for longer periods. Detainees may appeal their detention, and the Government may grant early release... Detainees are allowed to consult with lawyers, although usually not until a charge is filed; however, they are not entitled to be represented by a lawyer before an advisory board. Detainees may receive visitors." [2o] (section 1d)

14.07 The USSD 2008 report confirmed:

"Under the Special Powers Act, the government or a district magistrate may order a person detained for 30 days to prevent the commission of an act that could threaten national security; however, authorities held detainees for longer periods. The magistrate must inform the detainee of the grounds of detention, and an advisory board is required to examine the detainee's case after four months. Detainees had the right to appeal... however, detainees arrested under the Special Powers Act were not entitled to representation. The government rarely provided detainees with state-funded defense attorneys, and there were few legal aid programs to offer such detainees financial assistance. Many persons arrested on charges of graft under the Special Powers Act typically would not have qualified for legal aid because of their relatively high incomes. The government generally permitted lawyers to meet with their clients only after formal charges were filed in the courts, which in some cases occurred several weeks or months after the initial arrest." [2b] (section 1d)

14.08 The HRW report of 18 May 2009 noted that the advisory board, required to review the detainee's case after 120 days, and thereafter every six months, is made up of two persons qualified to be high court judges, and 'one senior officer in the service of the Republic'. The proceedings before the board are confidential. [10I] (section V)

14.09 The UNDP report of 2002 noted that detentions under the SPA may be challenged on the basis of *habeas corpus* petitions moved before the High Court under Article 102 of the Constitution and under Section 491 of the CrPC. [8b] (pp1 and 18-20) The HRW report of 18 May 2009 commented:

"From 1974 to March 1995, according to court records, of the 10,372 habeas corpus writs that were moved before the High Court Division of the Supreme Court to challenge detentions, only in less than 9 percent did the court find the detention to be valid-an indication of the extent to which the Act has

historically been misused. However, the executive seems to have taken little or no notice of the Supreme Court's repeated criticism of the law and its implementation. It has even ignored release orders, forcing the court to initiate contempt of court proceedings.” [10I] (section V)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

PRE-TRIAL DETENTION

14.08 The USSD 2008 report recorded:

“In cases not affiliated with the state of emergency or anticorruption drive, arbitrary and lengthy pretrial detention remained a problem. The total number of pending civil and criminal cases was more than 1.8 million. Many persons who were arrested served longer in pretrial detention than they would have if given the maximum sentence for their alleged crimes. According to the International Centre for Prison Studies, nearly 70 percent of prison inmates remained in pretrial detention at year's end [2008].” [2b] (section 1d)

14.09 The USSD 2004 report stated, “During the year [2004], the Government submitted to the [High Court] a list that included 16 persons who had been in prison without trial for more than 11 years, 10 [for] over 10 years, 29 more than 9 years, 51 more than 8 years, 111 for more than 7 years, 238 for more than 6 years, 502 more than 5 years, 917 more than 4 years, 1,592 more than 3 years and 3,673 more than 2 years.” On 3 August 2004, a High Court panel ordered the Government to free on bail over 7,400 detainees who had been in prison, awaiting trial, for more than 360 days. [2d] (section 1d)

BAIL

14.10 The USSD 2008 report confirmed that there was, in 2008, a functioning bail system in the regular courts; under certain security and crime law, a non-bailable period of detention existed. [2b] (section 1d)

14.11 On 21 March 2007 the Government promulgated an amendment to the rules of the Emergency Powers Ordinance 2007 (EPR), suspending the right to petition for bail or to lodge an appeal with a higher court, until a final verdict has been delivered in the trial court. This provision applied only to cases brought under the EPR and to crimes relating to corruption, illegal weapons, money laundering or certain other specific categories, during the State of Emergency. (*Daily Star*, 22 March 2007) [38cd] In 2008, however, before the state of emergency was lifted, the Supreme Court restored some of its bail jurisdiction in such cases and exercised the authority to consider bail petitions. (USSD 2008) [2b] (section 2d)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

15. PRISON CONDITIONS

- 15.01 According to the US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008*, (USSD 2008) released on 25 February 2009: "The prison system remained abysmal due to overcrowding, inadequate facilities, and the lack of proper sanitation. Local human rights observers considered these conditions to be contributing factors to custodial deaths." The report continued:

"In most cases, prisoners slept in shifts because of the overcrowding and did not have adequate bathroom facilities ... In 2007 the inspector general of prisons (IGP) took several steps to improve the prison system, including updating the jail code, reducing corruption and drug trafficking in prisons, limiting the use of full shackles on prisoners for reasons other than discipline, improving the quality of food, creating more prisoner vocational training opportunities and literacy classes, and improving the morale of prison staff ... NGOs argued that these reforms were helpful, but that they were not adequately maintained and that the pace of reform during the year was slower than in previous years. These reforms included the construction of three new jails exclusively for women, the launch of several small-scale training programs for prisoners to assemble garments, and physical improvements such as the addition of television sets and fans. During the year the IGP tried to address prisoner morale by allowing low-level offenders to meet family and friends inside jail cells without any physical barriers between them."

[2b] (section 1c)

- 15.02 The International Centre for Prison Studies (ICPS) at King's College, London, recorded in their Prison Brief that, according to the national prison administration, the total prison population stood at approximately 83,000 on 19 September 2008, while the country's 67 prisons had an official capacity of only 27,451. ICPS noted that pre-trial detainees/remand prisoners then comprised 69 per cent of the prison population. [78a] The *Daily Star* had reported on 26 July 2008 that the prison population was then 87,011. In Dhaka Central Jail, which was accommodating around 9,000 to 10,000 inmates in July 2008 but had a capacity to house only 2,600, prisoners were sleeping in shifts and had to wait in long queues to use the bathrooms and toilets. [38cu] The Bangladesh Prisons Directorate reported that the total prison population on 28 February 2009 was 75,521, while the nominal capacity of all prisons was 27,368. [112a]
- 15.03 The NGO Odhikar noted in its *Human Rights Report 2008*, dated 15 January 2009, that 66 people had died in prison during 2008. [46r] (p41-42) Odhikar stated in another report that, during the period January-March 2009, eight people had died in prison due to illness. [46s] (p5)
- 15.04 The Ministry of Home Affairs, through the Directorate of Prisons, is responsible for the management of prisons. (UNDP 2002) According to the UNDP 2002 report, overcrowding had already become a serious issue by 2002, due mainly to the large number of prisoners awaiting trial. Prisoners/detainees were accommodated either in separate cells or in *association wards*, which are dormitories accommodating about 100 to 150 individuals. Under dormitory rules, each prisoner was entitled to 36 sq. ft of floor space; however, overcrowding had reduced the space available per prisoner to 15 sq. ft. In certain wards prisoners had to sleep in shifts owing to lack of space. Ordinary prisoners received 2,800 to 3,000 calories of food per day, considered satisfactory by the Institute of Public Health Nutrition; so-

called “classified prisoners” received more. However, prisoners were often required to eat their meals sitting on the ground under the open sky, in all weathers. The striped, coarse uniform worn by ordinary prisoners was considered demoralising. Bedding, consisting only of two blankets, was inadequate, degrading and detrimental to physical and mental health. Prison authorities still followed statutes framed by the British colonial authorities in the nineteenth century, the main objective of which was the confinement and safe custody of prisoners through suppressive and punitive measures. There was an absence of programmes for the reform and rehabilitation of offenders and vocational training programmes did not cater for all classes of prisoners. The recruitment and training procedures of prison officers was inadequate to facilitate the reform of prisoners. The number of medical doctors was disproportionate to the size of the prison population, and women prisoners were attended to by male doctors. There were no paid nurses in prison hospitals; literate convicts worked as hospital attendants, without training. There were no trained social welfare officers or psychologists. Handcuffs and fetters were used as punishment for breaches of prison rules. [8b] (p79-89)

- 15.05 Women prisoners comprised 3.7 per cent of the prison population in September 2008. (ICPS, 1 September 2008) [78a] In 2007, the government opened a new prison for women in Gazipur. (USSD 2008) [2b] (section 1c) On 3 October 2006, Parliament had passed a law allowing release on parole of women prisoners in certain categories and their eventual freedom from imprisonment on fulfilment of certain conditions. (USSD 2006) [21] (section 5)
- 15.06 It was stated in the USSD 2008 report: “In general the government did not permit prison visits by independent human rights monitors, including the International Committee of the Red Cross. Government-appointed committees of prominent private citizens in each prison locality monitored prisons monthly but did not release their findings. District judges occasionally visited prisons, but rarely disclosed their findings.” [2b] (section 1c)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

16. DEATH PENALTY

16.01 The Amnesty International (AI) Annual Report of 2008 (covering events of 2007) released in May 2008, noted that Bangladesh retains the death penalty. According to this report, at least 90 men and three women were sentenced to death in 2007; at least six executions were actually carried out. [7s] (The six persons executed were the leaders of the militant Islamist organisation Jamatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB), who were hanged on 29 March 2007 having been sentenced to death in May 2006 for the murder of two judges). (*Daily Star*, 1 April 2007) [38au] According to an Amnesty International report, *Death Sentences and Executions in 2008*, of 24 March 2009, five people were executed and at least 185 people were sentenced to death in Bangladesh in 2008, bringing the estimated number of prisoners on death row to at least 1,085. [7t]

16.02 Hands Off Cain, an Italian NGO which campaigns for an end to the death penalty worldwide, stated in their 2008 report (undated but accessed on 24 August 2008):

“The number of death sentences passed in Bangladesh increased significantly with the introduction of [Speedy Trial Tribunals established under the Disruption of Law and Order Offences Act of 2002]. According to official sources in the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, the nine Speedy Trial Tribunals of the country dealt with 650 cases between October 2002, when they were set up, up to June 30, 2005. The tribunals passed death sentences on 311 people. On the other hand, Sessions Judges' courts of the country sentenced 123 people with death punishment from 2001 until June 30, 2005. A total of 221 people were sentenced to death by different courts of the country until 2001 since independence. On the other hand, 80 people were given death sentence in 2002, 162 in 2003, 112 in 2004 and 80 in 2005 (up to June 30), the sources said... The Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, on June 30, 2005, said there were 655 prisoners condemned to death in prisons scattered across the country. The government had only 53 cells for condemned prisoners with each cell originally made to accommodate only one convict. Bangladesh resumed executions in 2001, after a de facto three-year suspension. Two men were hanged between February and March and another in November. One execution was recorded in 2002 and two people were put to death in 2003. At least 13 people were sent to gallows in 2004 and at least five in 2005; four people were executed in 2006 an[d] six in 2007. On December 18, 2007 Bangladesh voted against the Resolution on a Moratorium on the Use of the Death Penalty at the UN General Assembly.” [73a]

16.03 Bangladesh applies the death penalty for such crimes as murder, sedition and drug-trafficking. In March 1998 the Bangladesh Cabinet approved the death penalty for crimes against women and children, including trafficking and rape. Skyjacking and sabotage became capital offences in 1997. (Hands Off Cain) [73a] In 2002 the death penalty was introduced for acid attacks. (State party report to CEDAW, dated 3 January 2003.) [47a] (p20) In March 2008 the Caretaker Government approved an anti-terrorism ordinance containing a provision for the death sentence as the maximum penalty for those convicted of terrorism. (Hands Off Cain) [73a]

- 16.04 Amnesty International noted in a statement of 28 September 2006 “Prisoners sentenced to death in Bangladesh have an automatic appeal hearing before the High Court. They can also lodge additional appeals with the High Court. They can then appeal to the Supreme Court, and after that they have the right to appeal to the President for mercy. Executions are carried out after all these appeals have been exhausted.” [7p]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

17. POLITICAL AFFILIATION

- 17.01 Freedom House, in their 2007 report 'Freedom in the World', observed: "In recent years, political violence during demonstrations and general strikes has killed hundreds of people in major cities and injured thousands, and police often use excessive force against opposition protesters ... Student wings of political parties continue to be embroiled in violent campus conflicts." [65b] The incidence of violence between rival party supporters declined in 2007 and 2008, during the time the Caretaker Government was in power. (USSD 2008) [2a] [2b] However, according to the human rights NGO Odhikar, 62 people were killed and over 4,000 were injured in violence between supporters of various political parties during the first three months of 2009. [46s]
- 17.02 Violence involving members of student organisations affiliated to the main political parties has occurred frequently in Bangladesh. This has not been co-ordinated on a nationwide basis, but has typically involved small groups of students/youths in a specific university or college or area who are vying for control of 'local turf'. In most instances over the past few years, clashes have been between activists of the Awami League-affiliated student organisation 'Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL)' on the one side, and the BNP's 'Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD)' and/or Jamaat-e-Islami's 'Islami Chhatra Shibir' (ICS) on the opposing side. (South Asia Terrorism Portal, accessed June 2009) [59d]

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

See also Section 18: [Freedom of Speech and the Media](#) and Section 6: [Political System](#)

- 17.03 The US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights 2008*, released on 25 February 2009, recorded that, during the period of the state of emergency which ended on 17 December 2008:

"Certain individuals were not able to criticize the government publicly without fear of reprisal. Although public criticism of the government was common, journalists regularly practiced self-censorship. The [Emergency Power Rules] had suspended indoor and outdoor political gatherings, allowed the government to take legal action against critical editors and journalists, and allowed authorities to compel the broadcast or publication of stories supporting the government, although in practice these rules were not always strictly enforced. On November 3, the government rescinded the ban on political rallies and gatherings. The government also revoked the clause of the EPR preventing the media from publishing or broadcasting reports on public meetings or rallies and banning so-called provocative stories, editorials, and shows." [2b] (section 2a)

The USSD 2008 report also noted that the 2008 parliamentary elections were supervised by a politically neutral caretaker government and were deemed to be free and fair by international and domestic observers. [2b] (introduction)

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

- 17.04 As noted in the USSD 2008 report:

“The [Emergency Power Rules] restricted freedom of assembly and freedom of association and prohibited indoor and outdoor political activities. On May 12 [2008], the government relaxed some of the bans on indoor political activities throughout the country but limited the number of people who could attend and required parties to seek permission from the authorities to hold meetings. The government also allowed meetings and processions with permission from authorities for two weeks in 11 cities prior to the August 4 municipal elections in those cities. In September the government eased bans on indoor political gatherings in Dhaka but with limits on the number of people who could attend and a requirement for parties to seek permission from the home ministry to hold meetings. On November 3, the government eased the ban further by permitting political gatherings and rallies ahead of the December parliamentary elections and fully lifted the state of emergency on December 17 [2008].” [2b] (section 2b)

- 17.05 The USSD 2008 report added “The law provides for the right of every citizen to form associations, subject to ‘reasonable restrictions’ in the interest of morality or public order, and the government generally respected this right. Individuals were free to join private groups.” [2b] (section 2b)
- 17.06 According to the Human Rights Watch (HRW) World Report 2009, referring to events of 2008 (under the state of emergency): “Law enforcement agencies continue to use excessive force to break up demonstrations ... In June 2008 security forces detained thousands of grassroots political activists following the refusal of the major political parties to participate in a government-initiated dialogue about the country’s political future until party leaders were released from detention. Most of those arrested were released shortly afterwards.” [10k]

OPPOSITION GROUPS AND POLITICAL ACTIVISTS

Politically-motivated detentions

- 17.07 The USSD 2008 report stated:

“It remained difficult to estimate the total number of persons detained for political reasons. Many high-level officials detained during the state of emergency were also widely suspected of corruption and had credible charges of corruption pending against them at year’s end. Several high profile figures, including some members of the leadership of the BNP and AL, however, were held for months without any charges filed against them. International and domestic human rights organizations accused the government of selective prosecution.” [2b] (section 1e)

- 17.08 The same report recorded:

Between May 28 and June 15 [2008], authorities arrested approximately 32,000 persons reportedly to improve the law and order situation. Political parties and NGOs criticized the arrests as politically motivated and claimed that as many as 350 grassroots political activists and local officials were arrested along with extremists and criminals. According to government officials, many of those detained were arrested based on existing warrants and only 191 individuals were arrested under the EPR. Authorities also claimed that fewer than 100 of the detained individuals had ties to political

parties. In most cases, authorities released the individuals shortly after their arrest. [2a] (section 1d)

See also Section 14: [Arrest and Detention – Legal Rights](#)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

18. FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND THE MEDIA

- 18.01 The US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights 2008*, released on 25 February 2009 (USSD 2008) described the situation under the state of emergency, which was lifted on 17 December 2008, as follows:

“The constitution provides for freedom of speech and press; however, the government used the EPR [Emergency Power Rules] to curtail these rights ... Certain individuals were not able to criticize the government publicly without fear of reprisal. Although public criticism of the government was common, journalists regularly practiced self-censorship ... The EPR...allowed authorities to compel the broadcast or publication of stories supporting the government, although in practice these rules were not always strictly enforced ... On November 3 [2008]...the government revoked the clause of the EPR preventing the media from publishing or broadcasting reports on public meetings or rallies and banning so-called provocative stories, editorials, and shows ... Newspaper ownership and content were sometimes subject to direct restriction by the military's Inter-Service Public Relations office and DGFI [Directorate General of Forces Intelligence]. Journalists reported being cautioned by DGFI against criticizing the government or the military. In May [2008] editors from several media outlets expressed concern over the increased pressure on media freedom. According to Nurul Kabir, editor of the English language newspaper *The New Age*, an intelligence agency of the armed forces began giving instructions to editors of newspapers and television channels mandating that certain news should be published or broadcast and other news should not.” [2b] (section 2a)

- 18.02 The BBC News *Country Profile: Bangladesh*, updated 2 March 2009 noted that:

“The main broadcasters - Radio Bangladesh and Bangladesh Television (BTV) - are state-owned and government-friendly. There is little coverage of the political opposition, except in the run-up to general elections when a caretaker government takes control.

“TV is the most-popular medium, especially in cities. BTV is the sole terrestrial TV channel. Popular satellite and cable channels include ATN, Channel i, NTV, RTV, Channel One, BanglaVision and Boishakhi.

“Foreign, especially Indian, TV stations have large audiences in Dhaka and other cities.

“State-run radio covers almost the entire country. BBC World Service programmes in English and Bengali are broadcast on 100 MHz FM in Dhaka.

“Newspapers are diverse, outspoken and privately-owned. English-language titles appeal mainly to an educated urban readership.” [20am]

- 18.03 The USSD 2008 report noted:

“There were hundreds of daily and weekly independent publications ... In addition to one official government-owned news service, there are two private

news services.

“The government owned one radio and one television station. There were 10 private satellite television stations and three private radio stations in operation. There were two foreign-based and licensed satellite television stations that maintained domestic news operations. Cable operators generally functioned without government interference; however, cable operators were forced to drop several international channels, allegedly for non-payment of taxes ... The 24-hour all news television station, CSB, which the government shut down in September 2007 (purportedly for not having a proper license), remained closed at year's end [2008].

“The government subjected foreign publications and films to review and censorship. A government-run film censor board reviewed local and foreign films and had the authority to censor or ban films on the grounds of state security, law and order, religious sentiment, obscenity, foreign relations, defamation, or plagiarism. Video rental libraries and DVD shops stocked a wide variety of films, and government efforts to enforce censorship on rentals were sporadic and ineffective.

“Although individuals and groups could generally engage in the peaceful expression of views via the Internet, local human rights organizations reported continued government monitoring of Internet communications. Reporters without Borders claimed police monitored journalists' e-mail. In addition, journalists and political figures detained by the Joint Forces reported they were forced to hand over their e-mail logons and passwords.

“The government did not limit academic freedom or cultural events; however, authorities discouraged research on sensitive religious and political topics.” [2a] (section 2a)

18.04 The NGO Odhikar reported on 1 April 2009:

“The government has recently imposed a rigid censorship on the browsing of some websites, including youtube.com, for Bangladeshi nationals. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission prohibited the visiting of some of websites on the pretext of protecting ‘national security’. However, the government did not officially specify what kind of content and information should be forbidden in the name of ‘national security’.” [46s]

TREATMENT OF JOURNALISTS

18.05 Odhikar's report ‘Human Rights Concerns 2007’ stated that during 2007, at least 35 journalists were reportedly injured, 13 journalists were arrested, 35 were assaulted and 83 were threatened; 13 legal cases were filed against journalists. [46l] (p14)

18.06 According to the Reporters Without Borders (Reporters Sans Frontières – RSF) Annual Report, published on 8 February 2008:

“A drop in the number of physical assaults and death threats was eclipsed by dozens of cases of arrests, maltreatment and censorship committed by the army against independent journalists ... There was a sharp decrease in the number of journalists physically attacked or receiving death threats from

political militants and criminals. On the other hand, arrests increased markedly, with almost 40 cases in 2007. And the army, the real power in the country, committed serious press freedom violations aimed at silencing independent journalists ... Several journalists were tortured for investigating the security forces ... No fewer than 15 journalists were arrested on the same evening when a curfew was imposed in August [2007] and around 30 others were beaten by police and soldiers deployed in the capital ... Although weakened, Jihadist groups continued to threaten journalists. An Islamist group threatened an attack on the Jatiya press club in May and in April [2007] extremists sent a letter containing death threats to a journalist on the daily *Bhorer Kagoj*, in Chittagong. [9k]

18.07 As detailed in Section 10, journalist and human rights activist Tanseem Khalil was arrested early on 11 May 2007. In a report published by Human Rights Watch in February 2008, Khalil stated that he had been detained and interrogated by officers of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), who accused him of “anti-state” activity. He said he was severely beaten while blindfolded, was threatened and was forced to write a false confession. Khalil was released on the night of 11 May. [10f] Another journalist, Jahangir Alam Akash of the television news channel CSB and General Secretary of the Rajshahi Union of Journalists, was reportedly arrested in October 2007 by members of the Rapid Action Battalion on charges alleging extortion. (Odhikar) [46l] (p14) (Committee to Protect Journalists, February 2008) [51b] Reporters Without Borders related that Akash had been taken to an army camp and tortured, before being released on bail on 19 November 2007. [9k] According to Odhikar’s Human Rights report for 2007, however: “Cases of assault and arrest of journalists are rare compared to other forms of intimidation by the agents of the intelligence agencies. Journalists report receiving regular telephone calls from people claiming to represent DGFI telling them that if they report on a certain storey, or publish a particular photograph, they will face ‘untoward consequences’.” [46l] (p14)

18.08 The Committee to Protect Journalists recorded in their special report, *‘Getting Away with Murder 2009’*, dated 23 March 2009:

“Authorities have failed to solve at least seven journalist murders that occurred between 2000 and 2005. The victims typically covered crime, corruption, and political unrest. The unsolved cases include the brutal 2004 murder of Kamal Hossain, a crime reporter whose decapitated body was found hours after he was abducted from his home. Local media advocates say Bangladeshi authorities’ practice of dragging out investigations and repeatedly postponing trials erodes the drive for justice.” [5d]

18.09 The USSD 2008 report noted:

“There was an increase in the number of journalists who were harassed, arrested, and assaulted by security personnel [during 2008] ... According to journalists, editors, and other media personnel, intimidation and pressure on the media continued under the state of emergency ... Numerous editors and journalists in Dhaka reported being summoned to DGFI [Directorate General of Forces Intelligence] headquarters for questioning, and encouragement to file positive stories about the government and military.” [2b] (section 2a)

See Section 7: [Right to Information Ordinance](#)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

19. HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS, ORGANISATIONS AND ACTIVISTS

19.01 The United Nations Common Country Assessment for 2004 had observed:

“The growth of civil society and in particular nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) has been one of the great success stories in Bangladesh. Though the country has a long tradition of social activism throughout its history – the language movement being one example – the emergence of the NGO sector has been a relatively new phenomenon that began in the late 1970s. Today, NGOs are a significant provider of social services, in particular health and education, to the rural poor. Specialized microfinance institutions (MFIs) such as the Grameen Bank, pioneered the micro-credit model that has been replicated all around the world and MFIs have had considerable success in helping to provide alternative income-generating opportunities for poor women in Bangladesh. The emergence of NGOs has also played a significant role in the improvement of human development indicators and compensated, in part, for weak market and state institutions. Within the context of a rights-based approach, it should be noted that local NGOs have also played a significant role in terms of helping poor and marginalized groups to make claims for the fulfilment of their rights to education and health and secure and sustainable livelihoods. Today there are well over a thousand NGOs registered with the Government. From village cooperatives and women’s groups on the one hand to large internationally recognized institutions with staff running into the thousands, civil society in Bangladesh has thrived since the restoration of democracy.” [8d] (p69)

19.02 The report added:

“Legitimate questions have been raised on the accountability and representation of (foreign funded) NGOs and there have been several attempts to limit the work of NGOs to basic service provision. In a couple of notable cases, prominent NGOs have come under fire from within and outside the sector for allegedly crossing the line into direct partisan activities. Legislation is under consideration for tightening the regulatory environment for NGOs including issues relating to registration and taxation.” [8d] (p70)

19.03 The 2007 Human Rights Annual Report of the UK Foreign Office noted “Human rights defenders in Bangladesh typically suffer from low capacity and inadequate methodology.” The report stated that the British High Commission in Dhaka has conducted a series of workshops with ten influential local NGOs to raise the standard of their reporting of human rights issues. [11e] (p111)

TREATMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS NGOS

19.04 The US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights 2008*, released on 25 February 2009 (USSD 2008) stated:

“A wide variety of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated independently and without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Although human rights groups were often sharply critical of the government, they also practiced self-

censorship. The government required all NGOs, including religious organizations, to register with the Ministry of Social Welfare. After the government declared the state of emergency, NGOs came under heightened scrutiny by the caretaker government and the military. Transparency International Bangladesh alleged that some local NGOs were guilty of corruption. [2b] (section 4)

- 19.05 According to the USSD 2008 report, the NGO Affairs Bureau – the government office which approves NGO projects – delayed approval in 2008 of various NGO proposals related to the elections and human rights. [2b] (section 4) The USSD 2007 report had noted instances in which the government and security forces targeted some human rights activists for harassment. For example, Naval intelligence officers summoned the acting director of Odhikar to their headquarters and threatened him, following Odhikar's investigation into allegations that navy personnel had killed a man in Bhola. Authorities charged the head of Uttaran, another human rights NGO, with murder. Police later dropped the charges due to lack of evidence. The government also reportedly harassed groups advocating the rights of indigenous people. The Forestry Department, for example, continued to file hundreds of cases against these groups in the Madhupur and Srimongal areas. [2a] (section 4)
- 19.06 HRW's *World Report 2009*, Bangladesh, covering events in 2008, released in January 2009 noted:
- “Bangladesh's NGO Affairs bureau, which approves projects and funding of NGOs, has created obstacles for some human rights organizations seeking permission to receive foreign donor funding. Organizations critical of the regime and outspoken against human rights abuses appear to be particularly affected. There were some reports of staff members of nongovernmental human rights organizations being harassed by members of the security forces.” [10k]
- 19.07 Freedom House, in their ‘*Countries at the Crossroads 2007*’ report, dated 25 September 2007, noted:
- “While most NGOs are able to implement their programs without any serious political interference, the relationship between the state and a few groups, including the development NGO Proshika and Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), remains very tense. The BNP government maintained that Proshika is a partisan, antigovernment group, and the caretaker regime of Fakhruddin Ahmed has not altered that stance. In early February 2007, the NGO Affairs Bureau refused to release 1.98 billion taka (\$29 million) in foreign grants to Proshika on the grounds that it was engaged in antigovernment activities.” [65c]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

20. CORRUPTION

- 20.01 In its 2008 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), Transparency International (TI) ranked Bangladesh 147th in the world corruption ranking, out of 180 countries, giving it a CPI score of 2.1. (CPI score relates to perceptions of the degree of corruption as seen to exist among public officials and politicians by business people and country analysts. It ranges between 10 (highly clean) and 0 (highly corrupt)).[42i] Prior to 2006 Bangladesh had, for five consecutive years, been ranked in the TI Index as the most corrupt country in the world. (BBC News, 18 October 2005) [20bj]
- 20.02 Dr Gareth Price of Chatham House observed in an article of January 2007, “As governments alternate, projects introduced by the previous administration are assumed to have stemmed from corrupt deals. Consequently, they are stopped. Corruption, and accusations thereof, are now beginning to directly affect the country’s infrastructure.” [88a]
- 20.03 The Government formally constituted an Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) on 21 November 2004. The ACC absorbed most of the 950 staff of the dissolved Bureau of Anti-Corruption and was headed by a retired High Court judge. (EIU, January 2005) [40b] (p15) In March 2007 the ACC sought a number of additional facilities from the Government, such as for its staff to be increased to about 1,200, a panel of high-profile lawyers to handle cases in trial courts and the legal power to attach the properties of graft suspects. (*Daily Star*, 22 March 2007) [38bh] The ACC was, by then, being assisted in its investigations by the National Co-ordination Committee on Combating Corruption and Crime. (*Daily Star*, 19 April 2007) [38bi]
- 20.04 By March 2007 the Caretaker Government had formed eight central and 64 district-based task forces, under the National Co-ordination Committee, to probe allegations of corruption. (BBC News, 12 March 2007) [20cr] On 22 March 2007 the Government promulgated an amendment to the rules under the Emergency Powers Ordinance 2007, giving sweeping powers to the Anti-Corruption Commission to investigate, arrest and seize property without the permission of the Government. The amendment was given retrospective effect from 13 February 2007. (*Daily Star*, 22 March 2007) [38cd]
- 20.05 The NGO Transparency International (TI) noted in their ‘National Household Survey 2007 on Corruption in Bangladesh’, published June 2008:

[During 2007] the government spearheaded an unprecedented campaign against corruption. To prevent serious crimes and offences, the government formed a taskforce involving different law enforcing agencies to investigate and prosecute the offenders. As part of this massive campaign, more than one hundred high profile politicians, bureaucrats and business people were arrested on charges of corruption and legal process was brought against them. The taskforce also started investigations in different institutions like Chittagong Port, Rajdhani Unnayan Kortipakha (RAJUK), Titas Gas and Transmission Company, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), Roads and Highways Department (RHD), Public Works Department (PWD) etc. to identify corrupt elements and prosecute them. These are milestone measures taken by the government to fight against corruption and improve the governance mechanism in Bangladesh. [42g] (p3)

- 20.06 The US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights 2008*, released on 25 February 2009 (USSD 2008) noted:

“The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption; however, the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. Following the declaration of a state of emergency, the caretaker government and military took several significant steps to address government corruption. It appointed a retired chief of army staff (the country's senior defense official) as the new chairman of the ACC, formed a National Coordination Committee to help coordinate government and security forces' efforts regarding graft investigations, and set up several task forces to help the committee with its work.

“During the year the courts released 158 of the approximately 200 high-profile graft suspects security forces detained in 2007. Among those detained were former prime ministers Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, both of whom were charged in bribery cases related to their government tenures. On June 11, the government released Hasina by executive order to facilitate her medical treatment abroad. On September 11, the Supreme Court granted Zia bail.

“Using the Special Powers Act that allows preventive detention, the government detained prominent business leaders. Most of those persons were then tried under existing anticorruption legislation. Most high-profile cases were handled under the Emergency Power Rules and therefore initially denied suspects both the right to bail and the right to appeal their cases during the course of the trial. The Supreme Court, however, restored some of its bail jurisdiction through a ruling and exercised the authority to consider bail petitions.

“The release of many of the corruption suspects drew criticism from some members of civil society who stated the government was not serious about fighting corruption. Government leaders argued that the government and the ACC would continue to pursue corruption cases despite release of some suspects on bail.” [2b] (Section 3d)]

See [Section 3: History](#): ‘Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) strengthened’ and ‘High profile arrests on corruption and other charges’

Corruption in the lower Judiciary

- 20.07 As detailed in Section 13 of this report, Transparency International, in their National Household Survey 2007, found that 41.7 per cent of households who had interacted with the Judiciary during the reference year claimed to have paid a bribe. In about 95 per cent of cases, their dealings had been with the lower Judiciary. Asked whom the bribe was actually paid to, 36.9 of respondents said it was to court officials, followed by middlemen (31.1 per cent), own lawyers (10.7 per cent), public prosecutors (10.7 per cent), opposition lawyers (2.1 per cent) and judges/magistrates (1.2 per cent). [42g] (p37-39)
- 20.08 Of all household respondents in the ‘Base Line’ survey conducted for Transparency International in 2005 and published in 2006, 9.6 per cent had been involved in court cases. The majority of these cases were land or property-related. Asked if they had to pay a bribe to court officials, 63 per cent

said 'yes'. A majority felt that their pending cases were being deliberately delayed. Almost 9 out of 10 respondents had a low opinion of the integrity of the courts, answering affirmatively to the question "It is impossible to get quick and just settlement without money or influence." [42e] (p47-50)

- 20.09 As noted in Section 13, the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Ordinance came into effect on 1 November 2007, separating the lower Judiciary from Executive control and placing it under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court. The Ordinance provides that magistrates and lower court judges would, in future, be appointed by the Supreme Court and not by government officials, as had previously been the case. [11i] [20dn] [38cv]

See Section 13: [Corruption in the Judiciary](#)

Corruption in the law enforcement agencies

- 20.10 As detailed in [Section 10](#), a study carried out by Transparency International (TI) in 2006-2007 found that 64.5 per cent of those respondents who had dealings with the law enforcement agencies claimed to have used bribery. [42g] (pp34-36) In the 'Base Line' survey published in 2006 on behalf of TI, over 90 per cent of all respondents expressed agreement with the statement "It is impossible to get any help from the police without money or influence." [42e] (p58)

See Section 10: [Police and Auxiliary Paramilitary Forces: Accountability](#) and [Forged and fraudulently obtained documents](#)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

21. FREEDOM OF RELIGION

INTRODUCTION

- 21.01 The US State Department's *International Religious Freedom Report 2008* (2008 Religious Freedom Report) published 19 September 2008, covering the period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008, observed:

"According to the 2001 census, Sunni Muslims constitute 89.7 percent of the population and Hindus account for 9.2 percent. The rest of the population is mainly Christian (mostly Roman Catholic) and Theravada-Hinayana Buddhist. Ethnic and religious minority communities often overlapped and were concentrated in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and northern regions. Buddhists are found predominantly among the indigenous (non-Bengali) populations of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Bengali and ethnic- minority Christians lived in many communities across the country ... There also are small populations of Shi'a Muslims, Sikhs, Baha'is, Animists, and Ahmadis. Estimates of their numbers varied from a few thousand to 100 thousand adherents per group ... Religion was an important part of community identity for citizens, including those who did not participate actively in prayers or services." [2m] (section 1)

- 21.02 The 2008 Religious Freedom Report stated, "The Constitution establishes Islam as the state religion but provides for the right to profess, practice, or propagate, subject to law, public order, and morality, the religion of one's choice. It also stated that every religious community or denomination has the right to establish, maintain, and manage its religious institutions." [2p] (introduction) The report noted also:

"While the Government publicly supported freedom of religion, attacks on religious and ethnic minorities continued to be a problem. Protests demanding that Ahmadis be declared non-Muslims and instances of harassment continued sporadically, but the Government generally acted in an effective manner to protect Ahmadis and their property ... Citizens were generally free to practice the religion of their choice. Government officials, including the police, were nonetheless often ineffective in upholding law and order and were sometimes slow to assist religious minority victims of harassment and violence. The Government and many civil society leaders stated that violence against religious minorities normally had political or economic motivations and could not be attributed only to religious belief or affiliation ... There were reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious belief or practice during the period covered by this report. Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist minorities experienced discrimination and sometimes violence by the Muslim majority. Harassment of Ahmadis continued along with demands that Ahmadis be declared non-Muslims." [2p] (introduction)

- 21.03 The US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008* (USSD 2008 report), released on 25 February 2009 noted:

"The constitution establishes Islam as the state religion and also stipulates the right, subject to law, public order, and morality, to practice the religion of one's choice. The government generally respected this right in practice. Although the government was secular, religion shaped the platforms of certain political parties. Discrimination against members of religious minorities existed at both

the governmental and societal levels, and religious minorities were disadvantaged in practice in such areas as access to government jobs, political office, and justice.” [2b] (section 2c)

- 21.04 The same report further noted “The government allowed various religions to establish places of worship, train clergy, travel for religious purposes, and maintain links with co-religionists abroad.” The government allows foreign missionaries to work in the country and the law permits citizens to proselytise. [2b] (section 2c)
- 21.05 The 2008 Religious Freedom Report stated “Shari'a (Islamic law) was not implemented formally and was not imposed on non-Muslims, but played an influential role in civil matters pertaining to the Muslim community... Family laws concerning marriage, divorce, and adoption differed slightly depending on the religion of the persons involved. Each religion had its own set of family laws ... There were no legal restrictions on marriage between members of different faiths.” The report further noted that “Religion was taught in government schools, and parents had the right to have their children taught in their own religion; however, some claimed that many government-employed religious teachers of minority religious groups were neither members of the religion they taught nor qualified to teach it.” [2p] (section II) A BBC News article of 25 February 2005 stated that there were then nearly 8,000 *madrassas* – or Islamic schools – registered with the government. “Tens of thousands” more had been set up unofficially and were outside official control. [20aw] The 2008 Religious Freedom Report quoted a “recent” US Government study as stating that there were “at least 25,000” *madrassas* in Bangladesh, some government funded and some privately funded and run. The report added: “There were no known government-run Hindu, Buddhist or Christian schools.” [2p] (section II) (See Section 26 on [Children: Education](#))
- 21.06 As recorded in the 2008 Religious Freedom Report:
- ”The Government took steps to promote interfaith understanding. For example, government leaders issued statements on the eve of religious holidays calling for peace and warned that action would be taken against those attempting to disrupt the celebrations. Through additional security deployments and public statements, the Government promoted the peaceful celebration of Christian and Hindu festivals, including Durga Puja, Christmas, and Easter.” [2p] (section II)
- 21.07 The 2008 Religious Freedom Report commented: “Since 2001, the Government has routinely posted law enforcement personnel at religious festivals and events that are easy targets for extremists.” [2p] (section III)
- 21.08 The Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad (BHBCOP), an independent human rights organisation in Dhaka, has provided reports listing a total of 369 incidents of violent and other crime or acts of intimidation which occurred in Bangladesh during the year 2008 – in which the victims were members of minority religious communities, or in which sacred images or property belonging to religious minorities was destroyed or damaged. It is not clear from the reports how many of these criminal incidents were religiously motivated. In most cases the perpetrators were said to be “miscreants”, “terrorists” or “fundamentalists”. Most of these incidents had been reported in the press in Bangladesh. [57a] (These data were supplied in cooperation with

the UK Bangladesh Hindu Baudha Christian Unity Council -BHBCUC)

21.09 The 2008 Religious Freedom Report related:

“The Ministry of Religious Affairs administered three funds for religious and cultural activities: the Islamic Foundation, the Hindu Welfare Trust, and the Buddhist Welfare Trust. The Christian community consistently rejected government involvement in its religious affairs. The Hindu Religious Welfare Trust received a total of \$1.45 million (98 million taka) from the Government for the year ending June 2008, much of which was dedicated to temple-based literacy and religious programs. Trust money also was used to repair temples, improve cremation pyres, and help destitute Hindu families afford medical treatment. Approximately \$36,000 (2.5 million taka) in government funds was spent on annual Puja worship celebrations. The Buddhist Welfare Trust, founded in the 1980s, received \$42,500 (3 million taka) from the Government in the year ending June 2008. The trust used funds to repair monasteries, organize training programs for Buddhist monks, and celebrate the Buddhist festival Purnima. There was no public criticism of how the money was proportioned or distributed.” [2p] (section II)

Fatwa

21.10 As was stated in the 2008 Religious Freedom Report, “In 2001 the High Court ruled all legal rulings based on Shari'a known as fatwas to be illegal. However, the ban had not been implemented because of a pending appeal filed by a group of Islamic clerics, which remained unresolved at the end of [2008].” [2p] (section ii) According to the USSD 2007 Religious Freedom Report, issued in September 2008

“In deeming all fatwas illegal, the high court intended to end the extrajudicial punishments and restrictions forced on local populations by religious leaders. However, the high court's prohibition also included pronouncements on purely religious matters such as the dates of festivals or the religious validity of marriage or divorce. Several weeks later, after an appeal was filed by a group of Islamic clerics, the appellate court stayed the high court's ruling, stating that while the appeal was pending, the ban on fatwas could not be implemented. It was unclear when the appeal was expected to be considered.” [2m] (section ii)

21.11 The 2008 Religious Freedom Report noted that only *Muftis* (religious scholars) who have expertise in Islamic law can legitimately issue a fatwa. In practice, however, village religious leaders sometimes made rulings in individual cases and called the ruling a fatwa. Sometimes this resulted in extrajudicial punishments, often against women, for their perceived moral transgressions, particularly in rural areas. [2p] (section ii) According to a BBC News article of 13 February 2001, punishments could vary from public naming and shaming to physical mutilation. [20g] The USSD 2008 report stated that incidents of vigilantism against women, sometimes led by religious leaders (by means of fatwas), had occurred during 2008. [2b] (section 4)

21.12 Barrister M.A. Muid Khan, in an article dated 20 March 2009, noted that if a punishment meted out as a result of a fatwa causes hurt or grievous bodily harm, it contravenes the Penal Code and possibly also the Suppression on Women and Children (Special Provision) Act, both of which carry lengthy terms of imprisonment. However, no persons who had issued fatwas

(*fatwabazs*) had so far been convicted under these provisions. (UNB) [39b]

See Section 25: [Women - Vigilantism](#)

HINDUS

- 21.13 The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), in their 'Profile of the internal displacement: situation' dated 28 March 2006, quoted various primary sources as follows:

"In the weeks following the 1 October [2001] general elections, Bangladesh witnessed an outburst of systematic attacks on the minority Hindu community across the country, in addition to attacks on activists of the freshly ousted Awami League... By 8 October 2001, at least 30 people had been killed and more than 1,000 others injured. Their houses were torched, ransacked and in many cases seized, women were raped, and temples were desecrated... Many Hindu families reportedly fled their homes and sought refuge in areas considered 'safe'. The *Bangladesh Observer* reported that at least 10,000 people of the minority community from Barisal district ran away from their homes following attacks by activists of the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami party and took shelter in neighbouring Gopalganj district... Many others fled to the Indian State of Tripura and West Bengal. (HRF March 2002) ...Islamic fundamentalists have initiated a rain [sic] of terror forcing minorities to endure living in a nightmare condition in those areas. (HRCBM)" [45c] (p19-20)

The report added:

"Women were particularly targeted – in many cases rape of female family members made it impossible for families to stay in their villages ...By a letter dated 10 December 2002, the Special Rapporteur informed the Government that she had received information that more than 2,000 women in Bangladesh between the ages of 7 and 80 had been raped, gang-raped, beaten and subjected to degrading treatment by fundamentalist groups following the 1 October 2001 elections. Much of the violence allegedly took place in small villages, and the perpetrators in many cases were identified as activists of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) or the group Jamaat-e-Islami... (CHR, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women 14 January 2003)" [45c] (p20-21)

- 21.14 As was outlined in the 2003 Religious Freedom Report:

"Inter-communal violence caused many Hindus to emigrate to India between 1947 and 1971 and continued on a smaller scale throughout the 1980s. Since the 1991 return to democracy, emigration of Hindus has decreased significantly, which generally can be attributed to the significant reduction in the Hindu population over the last 30 years. In recent years, emigration has been primarily motivated by economic and family reasons." [2g] (p4)

IDMC's 2006 report entitled 'Bangladesh: Minorities increasingly at risk of displacement' noted that the Hindu population comprised approximately 10.5 per cent of the total population of Bangladesh in 1991, compared with about 25 per cent in 1947. It is estimated that 5.3 million Hindus left Bangladesh between 1964 and 1991. [45b] (p21) The Census showed that Hindus, in 2001, comprised only 9.34 per cent of the population. [43b]

21.15 The 2008 Religious Freedom Report noted:

“Many Hindus have been unable to recover landholdings lost because of discrimination under the now-defunct Vested Property Act. The act was an East Pakistan-era law that allowed the Government to expropriate ‘enemy’ (in practice Hindu) lands. The Government seized approximately 2.5 million acres of land, affecting almost all of the Hindus in the country. In April 2001 Parliament passed the Vested Property Return Act, stipulating that land remaining under government control that was seized under the Vested Property Act be returned to its original owners, provided that the original owners or their heirs remained resident citizens ... In 2002 Parliament passed an amendment to the Vested Property Return Act, which allowed the Government unlimited time to return the vested properties and gave control of the properties, including the right to lease them, to local government employees. By the end of the period covered by this report, the Government had not prepared a list of such properties.” [2p] (section II)

The NGO *Ain o Salish Kendra* (ASK) reported that the Caretaker Government had formed a Vested Property Return Tribunal and an Appeal Tribunal in October 2008, but commented that it was not clear under what mandate or guiding principles the Tribunal would be operating. (ASK Annual Report 2008) [109a] (chapter 15)

21.16 The 2008 Religious Freedom Report observed:

“In contrast to the previous reporting period, there were no reports of the military conducting widespread evictions of Hindus from their land. During the previous reporting period, the military attempted to evict 120 families, 85 percent of them Hindu, from land in the Mirpur area of Dhaka abutting the military cantonment. A temple is also located on the property. The eviction was being carried out on the basis of a 1961 land purchase agreement by the military. The land owners challenged the land acquisition and eviction in court. At the end of the reporting period the case was still pending.” [2p] (section III)

21.17 According to the 2008 Annual Report of the NGO *Ain o Salish Kendra* (ASK):

“As noted in previous years’ reports, incidents of harassment against the Hindu minority community continued at a low level, almost as a persistent ‘background noise’ in the country’s overall human rights situation. There were arguments, often by those who wished to deny specific religious discrimination, that such incidents of harassment, looting, rape, etc., occur against all impoverished communities in Bangladesh. Religious minorities continue to be most vulnerable ... Temples appeared to be a vulnerable target, with several major cases reported by the press this year [2008] ... An attack on Kotiadi monastery, Kishoreganj, which resulted in the rape of one monastery occupant and death of the elderly priest Abinash Chandra Goshai; destruction of idols of two hundred year old temple at Gouranadi arson at Badarganj temple, Rangpur; and destruction of idols at Aghoiljhara, Barisal district ... Thus whether the motivation was looting or communal attack, or a combination of both, the lack of punishment for one incident appears to create an enabling environment for more attacks in same location. Even more worrying are incidents that happen with support of local authorities, as in Bagerhat, where attempts to build a structure on temple land resulted in

hundreds of Hindu community members surrounding the offices of municipal authorities demanding the temple area be left intact for Kirtan, Kobi Gaan and other religious events. In many cases of attacks against minority community, the local police appeared reluctant to take the cases seriously. In cases where there is sustained reporting, it is often revealed that land grabbing is a primary motive behind the violence... The footprint of the Vested Property Act can be seen both in the targeting of Hindu land as more vulnerable to legal maneuvers, as well as the frequent exhortations to 'move to India'." [109a] (chapter 15)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

BUDDHISTS

- 21.18 As stated in a report of the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) dated 16 August 2005, the majority of the Jumma people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts practise Buddhism. [3v] For further information on the treatment of Buddhists, therefore, refer to Section 22: [The Indigenous Jumma Peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts](#).
- 21.19 The 1991 Census showed that there were then 623,000 Buddhists in Bangladesh, of whom 575,000 were living in the Division of Chittagong. [43b] According to an estimate quoted by BuddhaNet, the Australian-based website of the Buddha Dharma Education Association, there were about one million Buddhists in Bangladesh by 2004, living mainly in the area of the city of Chittagong, the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Comilla, Noakhali, Cox's Bazar and in Barisal. The Buddhists of Bangladesh belong to four groups of nations who have been gradually mixed together; the groups are the Austic, the Tibeto-Burman, the Dravilians and the Aryans. According to historians the Tibeto-Burman consists of three tribes – the Pyu, the Kanyan and the Thet (Chakma). The Chakma tribes primarily reside in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The Kanyan tribe is known as the Rakhine (Arakanese) group who still live in the South-Eastern part of Chittagong district. The plain Buddhists of Bangladesh, known as the Burua-Buddhist, are the ancient peoples of Bangladesh who have lived there for five thousand years, according to Arakanese chronology. [92a]
- 21.20 Reports from the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC) indicate that there have, on occasion, been religiously motivated attacks against the Buddhist community. For example, a gang reportedly set fire to the Paschim Nanupur Anandodham Bouddha Bihar in Chittagong district on 29 December 2008. [57a]

THE AHMADIYYA COMMUNITY (ALTERNATIVELY AHMADIS OR KADIYANIS OR QADIANIS)

- 21.21 The Ahmadiyya community was founded in the 1880s by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who was born in the Punjab town of Qadiyan, according to a report of the Canadian IRB dated June 1991. It later split into two groups, of which Qadiani is the larger; the other is the Lahore branch. While they identify as a Muslim community, Ahmadiyyas are considered heretics by mainstream Islam. [20ay] The Human Rights Watch report of June 2005, *Breach of Faith: Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in Bangladesh* (HRW 2005 Ahmadiyya report), related that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad declared himself to be the expected *mahdi*, or messiah of the latter days. According to this HRW report, "Virtually all mainstream Muslim sects believe that Ahmad proclaimed

himself as a prophet, thereby rejecting a fundamental tenet of Islam: *Khatme Nabuwat* (literally, the belief in the ‘finality of prophethood’ – that the Prophet Mohammed was the last of the line of prophets leading back through Jesus, Moses, and Abraham).” [10a] (p7) In an Amnesty International (AI) report of 23 April 2004, entitled ‘The Ahmadiyya Community – their rights must be protected’, it was estimated that there are about 100,000 Ahmadiyyas in Bangladesh. [7k] The HRW 2005 Ahmadiyya report noted that the Ahmadiyya community is also derogatorily referred to by some as the “Qadiani” (or “Kadiyani”) community, a term derived from Ahmad’s birthplace. [10a] (p7)

- 21.22 The US Committee on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report 2009, covering events from May 2008 to April 2009 observed that

“Bangladesh’s small Ahmadi community of about 100,000 is the target of a campaign to designate the Ahmadis as non-Muslim heretics. In January 2004, the BNP government bent to extremist Islamist pressure and banned the publication and distribution of Ahmadi religious literature. Police seized Ahmadi publications on a few occasions before the ban was stayed by the courts in December 2004. The ban is not currently enforced ... In some instances, local anti-Ahmadi agitation has been accompanied by mob violence in which Ahmadi homes have been destroyed and Ahmadis are held against their will and pressured to recant. However, violence against Ahmadis has diminished due to improved and more vigorous police protection.” [115a] (p220)

- 21.23 The USSD 2008 report also noted that “Government protection of Ahmadiyyas continued to improve, although social discrimination continued” and the ban on publishing Ahmadiyya literature remained stayed by the High Court, effectively allowing the continued publication of such material. [2b] (section 2c)

- 21.24 The 2008 Religious Freedom report stated: “As opposed to previous reporting periods, there were no reported demonstrations or attempt to lay siege to Ahmadiyya institutions, but there were instances of harassment. Demands that Ahmadis be declared non-Muslims continued sporadically, but the Government generally acted in an effective manner to protect Ahmadis and their property.” [2p] (introduction) The report continued, “While mainstream Muslims rejected some of the Ahmadiyya teachings, the majority supported Ahmadis’ right to practice without fear or persecution. However, Ahmadis continued to be subject to harassment from those who denounced their teachings. [2p] (section II) The 2008 Religious Freedom report noted: “On March 15, 2008, the Special Branch of police in Brahmanbaria prevented the Ahmadiyya from holding a religious convention. The convention ultimately was held peacefully after the Special Branch lifted its objections following intervention by higher authorities. A similar incident occurred at Shalshiri in Panchagarh district on March 21, 2008.” [2p] (section II)

- 21.25 Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) commented in their Annual Report 2008:

“Continuing tensions prevail regarding the security of the country’s *Ahmadiya* community ... while there have been occasional forays by bigotted groups, as in Khulna against the Moazzem Hossain family, there have been no attacks on *Ahmadiya* mosques. The *Ahmadiya* faith’s centennial celebrations were carried out without hindrance, with a cross-section of political and civil society leadership in attendance. However, while there were no major incidents, we should note the organizing of a seminar by Amra Dhakabashi at Deen Hall,

where discussants demanded that *Ahmadiyas* ('Qadiyanis' to their opponents) be declared non-Muslim. This group, essentially involved in street violence earlier, is now pushing hate speech demands through law-based arguments. When looking at recent court case demanding ban of construction of a statue in Narayanganj, one can see possible futures where hate groups push their agenda through the courts rather than street demonstrations, allowing them to take on an apparent mantle of respectability." [109a] (chapter 15)

CHRISTIANS

- 21.26 A report from the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, dated 9 August 2006, has quoted from various other sources as follows:

"There are an estimated 350,000 to 500,000 Christians living in Bangladesh, the majority of whom are Catholic. The [2005 Religious Freedom Report] indicates that Bengali Christians are spread across Bangladesh, and that some indigenous (non-Bengali) groups are also Christian...Reported incidents against religious minorities, including Christians, have included killings, sexual assaults, extortion, intimidation, forced eviction, and attacks on places of worship... According to Open Doors (OD), an evangelical Christian organization that provides religious materials, training and support to Christians around the world, Christians, and particularly Muslims who convert to Christianity, are not safe in Bangladesh. According to the International Coalition for Religious Freedom, a US-based NGO, Muslim converts to Christianity generally do not openly practice their religion. Sources consulted indicate that Muslims who convert to Christianity could face rejection by their families and society and physical 'danger'. A May 2005 U.S. Newswire article reports that Christian Freedom International (CFI), a US based human rights organization, found evidence of 'persecution' of Muslims who had converted to Christianity during a fact-finding mission to Bangladesh. Cited in the same article, the president of CFI indicated that Muslim women who convert to Christianity may be subject to beatings, abduction, rape, forced marriage and forced reconversion to Islam. Specific reports of Muslim women who converted to Christianity being subject to such treatment could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate [IRB]...The government has, however, taken measures to provide security at places of worship of religious minorities around the country. During Christmas celebrations in 2005, the government reportedly tightened security at churches across the country following a series of Islamic militant bombings earlier that year." [3t]

- 21.27 The 2008 Religious Freedom Report recorded certain incidents of harassment and violence in which the victims were Christian:

"Reports of harassment and violence against the Christian community were recorded during the reporting period. According to Christian Life Bangladesh (CLB), members of a Muslim fundamentalist group attacked two Christian men at Rangunia in Chittagong on April 12, 2008, as they were showing a film to build social awareness about arsenic pollution, child marriage, and other social ills ... Members of a banned insurgent group called Shanti Bahini in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) attacked Chengko Marma, a member of CLB's community awareness team in Khagrachhari Hill District on September 6, 2007. According to CLB, the Buddhist-dominated Shanti Bahini targeted the Christian man because of his religious beliefs. In another incident, the CLB

reported the daughter of a Christian evangelist who converted some local Hindus was raped by Muslim men in Mymensingh in April 2008 ... In the northern district of Nilphamari, police on July 26, 2007, arrested Sanjoy Roy, a church pastor, after a mob pressured the police to take action against him for converting 25 Muslims to Christianity, CLB stated. Roy was released after 2 days in custody and most of the converts returned to Islam" [2p] (section III)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

22. ETHNIC GROUPS

THE INDIGENOUS JUMMA PEOPLES OF THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

- 22.01 The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) covers about 10 per cent of the total land area of Bangladesh; it includes the districts of Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban within the Division of Chittagong. (The Mappa Ltd: Bangladesh Guide Map 2003) [25] With regard the CHT, Amnesty International (AI), in a report of 1 March 2004, stated:

“The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is a hilly, forested area in south-eastern Bangladesh which for many hundreds of years has been home to people from 13 indigenous tribes [collectively known as the *Jumma* people]. These tribal people differ significantly from the rest of the population of Bangladesh in terms of their appearance, language, religion and social organisation.

“Pressure for land to cultivate and encouragement from successive governments have led to the migration of large numbers of non-tribal Bengali people to the CHT. Tribal people have viewed the movement of Bengali settlers to the CHT as a threat to their way of life and their customs and traditions.

“Armed rebellion in the Chittagong Hill Tracts began in mid-1970s. A peace accord signed in 1997 ended the armed conflict, but human rights violations against the tribal people which began during the armed conflict have continued on a smaller scale.” [7m]

- 22.02 The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre ‘Profile of the internal displacement situation’ updated 28 March 2006 (IDMC 2006 Profile) quoted from various primary sources as follows:

“Prior to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, the population of the [CHT] area consisted almost entirely of people from 13 different indigenous tribes. The tribal people who differ significantly from the majority population of Bangladesh are of Sino-Tibetan descent, have a distinctive appearance with Mongoloid features and are predominantly Buddhists, with small numbers of Hindus. They differ linguistically and in their social organization, marriage customs, birth and death rites, food, agriculture techniques and other social and cultural customs from the people of the rest of the country. (AI February 2000, section 2) ...The three largest groups are the Chakma, the Marma and the Tripura. The total population of the CHT, in the 1991 census, was 974,445 of which 51.43 per cent were indigenous Jumma people and 48.57 per cent were non-indigenous Bengalis. At the time of the independence of India in 1947, only 9 per cent of the population of the CHT was non-indigenous. (UNPO 1997)” [45c] (p26)

- 22.03 The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, in a special report of 28 March 2006 entitled ‘Minorities increasingly at risk of displacement’, noted that:

“Tensions intensified after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, when tribal demands for constitutional safeguards and recognition as a separate community were rejected (Amena Mohsin, 2003, p. 22). The tribal population reacted by creating the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti or

Chittagong Hill Tracts People's Solidarity Association (PCJSS) in 1972. Its armed wing, the Shanti Bahini, was formed in January 1973...In 1976, Shanti Bahini started an armed insurgency with the support of India, which in turn led to a sharp increase of government forces in the Hill Tracts. Thus began a 25-year-long armed conflict...As the conflict escalated, the government began relocating Bengalis in the Chittagong Hill Tracts as a counter-insurgency strategy. Between 1979 and 1983, over 400,000 poor and landless Bengalis from the plains were settled in the region and provided with land, cash, rations and other incentives (AITPN, April 1998, p. 20-21). At the height of the conflict, almost one third of the Bangladesh army was deployed in the region and Bengali settlers were also mobilised against the tribal population. Official figures indicate that more than 8,500 people were killed during two decades of insurgency, including some 2,500 civilians (AI, February 2000).

"Forced evictions, atrocities in the conflict between the Shanti Bahini and government forces, confiscation of land to establish military camps, the population transfer programme and clashes between tribals and new settlers compelled tens of thousands of [Jumma] to leave their homes. After 1980, ten major massacres by Bengali settlers and the security forces led to a refugee exodus of about 65,000 tribals to the neighbouring Indian state of Tripura (AI 2000, UN GA, August 2000, para. 69). An even larger number were internally displaced." [45b] (p9)

22.04 Europa noted:

"In December 1997 the Bangladesh Government signed a peace agreement with the political wing of the Shanti Bahini [the Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity – PCJSS], ending the insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The treaty offered the [Shanti Bahini] a general amnesty in return for the surrender of their weapons and gave the [Jumma] people greater powers of self-governance through the establishment of three new elected district councils (to control the area's land management and policing) and a Regional Council (the chairman of which was to have the rank of a state minister). The peace agreement, which was strongly criticized by the opposition [BNP] for representing a 'sell-out' of the area to India and a threat to Bangladesh's sovereignty, was expected to accelerate the process of repatriating the remaining refugees from Tripura (who totalled about 31,000 at the end of December 1997). According to official Indian sources, only about 5,500 refugees remained in Tripura [in India] by early February 1998. By the end of 2000 most of the Chakma refugees had been repatriated, the district and regional councils were in operation, and a land commission had been established." [1a]

22.05 A general amnesty was granted to PCJSS members who surrendered their arms within the time frame set out in the Peace Accord. According to the IDMC report of 28 March 2006, most returning refugees did not recover their lands which were now occupied by Bengali settlers. [45b](p11)

22.06 The IDMC 2006 Profile observed that the issue of tribal land ownership has remained at the core of the conflict in the CHT. [45c] (p49-50) The report noted, "A major problem is to determine the ownership of tribal land. Among the tribal population many did not possess any documentation of land ownership [tribal communities owned land on a communal basis and little documentation was deemed necessary], while Bengali settlers taking over their land obtained

official certificates.” [45c] (p63)

The IDMC special report of 28 March 2006 observed:

“The Land Commission was to function as a special tribunal for property restitution for the tribal people. By May 2003, some 35,000 cases had been filed involving land disputes between indigenous people and state-sponsored settlers (*Daily Star*, 5 May 2003). However, it had not even started its work as of March 2006.” After years of delay, the [Land Commission] met for the first time on 8 June 2005, but no date was set for a subsequent meeting. [45b] (p12)

22.07 As recorded in an Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) report of 23 April 2008, hundreds of illegal plain settlers attacked seven indigenous Jumma villages in the Chittagong Hill Tracts on 20 April 2008. Journalists who visited the area on 21 April 2008 with local government officials reported that at least 500 houses in a four kilometre stretch from Baghaihat to Gangaram were burnt down. Several indigenous Jummas were wounded and an unknown number of women were raped by the perpetrators. Hundreds of people had been displaced as indigenous Jummas took shelter into the deep forest fearing further attack. The Rangamati Hill District Council provided some compensation to the victims. [53d]

22.08 The US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008* (USSD 2008 report), released on 25 February 2009, stated as follows:

“There was little progress in the implementation of the 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord. The government refused to cede responsibility for key functions such as land use and natural resources to local authorities, as the accord called for. Law and order problems and alleged human rights violations continued, as did dissatisfaction with the implementation of the Peace Accord.

“The Land Commission dealing with land disputes between tribal individuals and Bengali settlers did not function effectively in addressing critical land disputes. Tribal leaders remained disappointed with the lack of assistance to those who left the area during the insurgency. Local human rights organizations alleged that security forces took advantage of the state of emergency to increase human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrests, against indigenous people.

“The conflict continued between the Parbattya Chattagram Jono Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), which signed the 1997 Peace Agreement with the government, and the United Peoples' Democratic Front (UPDF), which is opposed to the Peace Agreement.

“The government continued work on national park projects on land traditionally owned by indigenous communities in the Moulvibazar and Modhupur forest areas ... In addition, indigenous communities, local human rights organizations, and churches in the area continued to claim that the government had yet to withdraw thousands of false charges the Forestry Department filed against indigenous residents. [2b] (section 5)

22.09 The Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission, which was first formed in 1990 and then disbanded after the signing of the CHT Peace Accord, was re-constituted

in Copenhagen in May 2008; the new 12-member commission is co-chaired by Lord Eric Avebury, vice-chairman of the UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group, and Sultana Kamal, a former Advisor in the Caretaker Government. Members of the Commission undertook a five-day visit to the Chittagong Hill Tracts from 7 August 2008 and then held discussions with members of the Caretaker Government. (*Daily Star*, 7 August 2008) [38d] The following are excerpts from the report of the Commission's second mission to Bangladesh, on 16-22 February 2009:

"...during the past 11 years, most of the provisions in the Peace Accord have either been left unimplemented or only partially implemented.

"In its election manifesto and Vision 2021 presented before the December 2008 election, the Awami League pledged that (i) Terrorism, discriminatory treatment and human rights violations against religious and ethnic minorities and indigenous people must come to an end permanently. Security of their life, wealth and honor will be guaranteed. Their entitlement to equal opportunity in all spheres of state and social life will be ensured. Special measures will be taken to secure their original ownership on land, water bodies, and their age-old rights on forest areas. In addition, a [new] land commission will be formed. All laws and other arrangements discriminatory to minorities, indigenous people and ethnic groups will be repealed. Special privileges will be made available in educational institutions for religious minorities and indigenous people. Such special privileges will also apply for their employment. (ii) The 1997 Chittagong Hill Tract Peace Accord will be fully implemented. More efforts will be directed toward the development of underdeveloped tribal areas, and special programmes on priority basis will be taken to secure their rights and to preserve their language, literature, culture, and unique lifestyles.

"There is increasingly widespread recognition that one of the main problems in the CHT is the indigenous peoples' loss of land due to evictions, land grabbing, and development projects. There is a backlog of land related problems in the CHT, such as the failure to record titles to land allotted to indigenous peoples, to implement the provisions for resettlement and rehabilitation of repatriated indigenous refugees and to cancel illegally occupied lands and unnecessary land acquisitions involving forcible eviction of the indigenous peoples ... The Land Commission was proposed by the CHT Accord as a mechanism to resolve these disputes and its functioning is a critical precondition for the implementation of other aspects of the Accord...

"The three Hill District Councils were intended to function as the premier local government institutions in the CHT, with the CHT Regional Council playing a supervisory and policy-making role. The CHT Regional Council was supposed to oversee the 'general administration' of the region, among other things. However, the Hill District Councils and the CHT Regional Council [have been] unable to play their expected role in administration.

"...the indigenous peoples in the CHT continue to face human rights violations including arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions, torture, rape, killings, attacks, harassment, religious persecution, political harassment, and lack of access to socio-economic rights or to freedom of expression including with respect to cultural activities. They are often also prevented from accessing justice.

“During the field visit of the CHT Commission, many...Bengali settlers expressed their willingness to return to the plain districts, if given assistance by the government.

“To fully implement the CHT Peace Accord, there is a need to amend laws which are inconsistent with the Peace Accord.” [117a]

During its visit, the CHT Commission held meetings with the Prime Minister and with various other ministers, senior officials, representatives of civil society, diplomatic missions and the press, and presented detailed recommendations to the government on the above issues. [117a]

See also Section 31: [Internally Displaced People](#)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

BIHARIS

(SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS ‘STRANDED PAKISTANIS’, OR AS THE URDU-SPEAKING COMMUNITY OF BANGLADESH)

Background

- 22.10 At the time of the partition of India in 1947, many Urdu-speaking Muslims from the the east Indian states – predominantly Bihar but also from Assam and Orissa – chose to migrate to East Pakistan. An additional number of Indian and Pakistani Urdu-speakers subsequently relocated to Bangladesh; these separate groups of Urdu-speakers became known, collectively, as ‘Biharis’. (FCO, 6 November 2007) [11k] As stated in a 1998 article ‘Fifty Years in Exile: The Biharis Remain in India’, on the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) website:

“The Biharis are Muslims who originated in what is now India’s state of Bihar. In 1947, at the time of partition, they, along with millions of other Muslims, moved to East Pakistan (today’s Bangladesh). Unlike the majority of those other Muslims, however, the Biharis were not Bengali-speakers, but Urdu-speakers with closer links to Muslims who moved to West Pakistan (today’s Pakistan). Between 1947 and 1971, as citizens of greater Pakistan, the Biharis enjoyed the same rights as other residents of East Pakistan and lived amicably alongside the Bengali speaking majority.” [37d]

- 22.11 The US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants ‘World Refugee Survey 2005’ (USCRI 2005) noted that, by 1973, Pakistan had accepted some 170,000 Biharis for resettlement. [37e] An agreement was signed between the two governments to take back [a further] 3,000 stranded Pakistani families from Bangladesh. The repatriation process began in early 1993, but after the repatriation of only 325 families, Pakistan suspended the process. (*Dhaka Courier*, of 5 May 2000) [69a]
- 22.12 In 2008-2009 there were estimated to be about 250,000 to 300,000 Biharis living in Bangladesh.(UNB, 18 May 2008) [39ar] (*Daily Star*, 19 May 2008) [38de] (*Daily Star*, 26 January 2009) [38ej] Of those, approximately 160,000 were living in 116 camps situated throughout the country; the remainder were

living outside of the camps. (Oxford University: Refugee Studies Centre, April 2009) [114a] (*Daily Star*, 30 December 2008) [38ej] These camps had been established after the country's independence by the International Committee of the Red Cross to accommodate Biharis, pending their return to Pakistan. (USCRI 2005) [37e]

- 22.13 The US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants 'World Refugee Survey 2005' (USCRI 2005) noted that, by 1973, Pakistan had accepted some 170,000 Biharis for resettlement. [37e] An agreement was signed between the two governments to take back [a further] 3,000 stranded Pakistani families from Bangladesh. The repatriation process began in early 1993, but after the repatriation of only 325 families, Pakistan suspended the process. (*Dhaka Courier*, of 5 May 2000) [69a]
- 22.14 The legal status of the Biharis had long been the subject of controversy. Article 2 of the Bangladesh Citizenship (Temporary Provisions) Order, 1972 provides that individuals who were born in Bangladesh after March 1971, or who had been permanently resident in the country at that time, were entitled to citizenship. (Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, Dhaka, undated) [31] (p12-14) In 2003, the High Court accepted an application for the right of vote of 10 members of the Bihari community who had been born in Bangladesh after 1971, in effect reaffirming the right of those 10 individuals to citizenship. The Government, however, refused to acknowledge the Biharis – as a community – as Bangladeshi citizens, on the basis that they had expressed 'allegiance to a foreign state' when they sought resettlement in Pakistan in the 1970s and were therefore disqualified under Article 2B of the Bangladesh Citizenship (Temporary Provisions) Amendment Ordinance 1978. (USCR World Refugee Survey 2007) [37g] (p31-32)

Biharis recognised as citizens

- 22.15 On 18 May 2008, the High Court declared valid a claim that Biharis should be included in the Voter List as citizens of Bangladesh. The Court passed the order upon a writ filed by 11 members of the Stranded Pakistani's Youth Rehabilitation Movement on 26 November 2007, following which the High Court ordered the Government and the Election Commission to show cause within two weeks why the Urdu-speakers residing in camps shall not be enrolled as voters. The High Court's judgement on 18 May made its 26 November ruling absolute. (UNB, 18 May 2008) [39ar] (*Daily Star*, 19 May 2008) [20de] BBC News has noted that the ruling applies to those who were minors when Bangladesh became independent in 1971, or were born thereafter - some 150,000 people. (BBC News, 19 May 2008) [20du] The *Daily Star* noted on 27 May 2008 that not all Biharis residing in camps were in favour of accepting Bangladeshi citizenship. Some of those interviewed still wanted to return to Pakistan, having been deprived of citizenship rights in Bangladesh for 37 years. They appealed to the Bangladesh Government and the international community to negotiate repatriation arrangements with Pakistan. [38dd]
- 22.16 The NGO Refugees International (RI) commented in a report dated 23 May 2008, "This measure will allow about half of the 200-500,000 stateless Biharis, hosted by Bangladesh for 36 years, to find a remedy to their lack of an effective nationality. The decision does not cover individuals who were adults at the time of independence." [74b]

- 22.17 An article published in April 2009 by the Oxford University Refugee Studies Centre noted:

“In August 2008, the Election Commission began a drive to register the Urdu-speaking communities in the settlements around Bangladesh. This was an important first step towards integrating these minority communities into Bangladeshi society ... Now all camp residents [born after 1971 or who were under 18 years old at the time of independence] are Bangladeshi citizens and all of them have National ID cards.” [104a]

- 22.18 The *Daily Star* confirmed that Biharis had voted in significant numbers in the general election of 29 December 2008. (DS, 29 December 2008) [38ei] However, the *Daily Star* reported on 26 January 2009:

“Despite obtaining country's citizenship, the Urdu-speaking Bihari are still being deprived of getting Bangladeshi passports as copy of the High Court (HC) verdict is yet to reach the Home Ministry even after eight months of the ruling ... After obtaining the citizenship, many Biharis have applied for getting passport. Though they have submitted the applications after following proper system, the passport offices have rejected the applications depriving their citizen rights, many Bihari alleged ... Secretary for Home Affairs Md Abdul Karim told *The Daily Star* that the ministry is bound to follow the HC ruling but its copy yet to be received. ‘Without knowing the verdict clearly, we can't do anything for issuing passport to Biharis,’ he said. The passport officials are still unaware of new government policy regarding issuing passport to Biharis. Abdur Rab Hawlader, director general of Department of Immigration and Passport said, ‘We didn't receive any instruction from the authorities on issuing passports to the Biharis’.” [sic] [38ej]

The report added:

“Kafil Uddin Bhuiyan, deputy director of Regional Passport Office, Dhaka said, ‘We provide passport on the basis of police verification...’ But the residents at different Bihari camps said, they are still being addressed as ‘Stranded Pakistani’ in police verification, which is the main barrier to get the passport. In some cases, passport officers say, without holding a permanent address, one will not [be] eligible for getting a passport ... Meanwhile, concealing original identity, many Biharis had got passports before obtaining Bangladeshi citizenship. But they are also facing the same problem while trying to renew the passport.” [sic] [38ej]

Living conditions in the camps

- 22.19 The Refugees International report of 23 May 2008 noted that conditions in the camps were poor: “Living conditions are miserable primarily due to high population density, aging accommodations, poor sanitation and hygiene, lack of education and health care facilities, and limited access to livelihoods...” [74b]
- 22.20 The USCR World Refugee Survey 2007, published in June 2007, observed that ‘half of the Biharis’ lived outside of the camps and were integrated into the local community. [37g] (p32) While the USSD 2008 report stated that many of the Biharis born after 1971 have “assimilated into the mainstream Bengali-

speaking environment.” [2b] (Section 2d)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

23. LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER PERSONS

- 23.01 The US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008* (USSD 2008), released on 25 February 2009 recorded: "Attacks on homosexuals were known to occur but difficult to track because victims desired confidentiality; there was a social stigma surrounding homosexuality; and local human rights groups did not monitor the problem. There were few studies on homosexuality in the country." [2b] (section 5)

LEGAL RIGHTS

- 23.02 According to the 'State-sponsored Homophobia' survey, published by the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) in May 2009, same-sex male relationships are illegal in Bangladesh, whereas same-sex female relationships are not illegal. [24b]

- 23.03 A Human Rights Watch (HRW) report of August 2003 noted that Section 377 of the Bangladesh Penal Code of 1898, inherited from the British colonial administration and titled "Of Unnatural Offences" provides, in part: "Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine." The report said that Human Rights Watch had not documented any instances in which Section 377 had been enforced in Bangladesh, but continued:

"Most of the arrests recounted to Human Rights Watch were brought under section 54 [of the Criminal Procedure Code - see [Section 14](#) above]. Whether or not the law is enforced, however, it may effectively criminalize the status of being a *kothi* or any man who has sex with men. The perception by the police and by society that men who have sex with men are inherently criminal fuels attacks on their dignity and the denial of their equality before the law. A report published by the Bangladesh Ministry of Law, 'Mapping Exercise on HIV/AIDS- Law, Ethics and Human Rights', stated that male sex workers and *hijras* consulted for the report argued that the section 'exists only to be used by the police to victimize gay and bisexual men whom they catch in public areas with a motive to extort money and blackmail.' The report concluded that 'Section 377 of the Penal Code violates [the] constitutionally protected right to privacy under the expanded definition of right to life and personal liberty (article 32).' To the extent that section 377 discriminates on the basis of sexual orientation, it is in violation of international human rights law." [10g] (p43)

- 23.04 Referring to Section 377, the USSD 2008 report stated that though "[h]omosexual acts remained illegal...in practice the law is rarely invoked". [2b] (section 5)
- 23.05 The Constitution, under Article 28, protects citizens against discrimination by the State on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth - but is silent on sexual orientation. Article 31, however, states that the protection of the law is the inalienable right of every citizen. [4] No information could be found, within the sources consulted, on civil law or criminal law remedies for discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

- 23.06 There is no military conscription in Bangladesh. COI Service does not have information on whether LGBT persons are generally barred from voluntary service or careers in the military or in the various security services. See [Section 11: Military Service](#)
- 23.07 It should also be noted that over 80 percent of Bangladesh's population is Muslim and that same-sex sexual relations are prohibited in Islamic Sharia Law. [36d] (p29)

SOCIETAL TREATMENT AND ATTITUDES

- 23.08 In a BBC News report of 21 June 2005, Roland Buerk wrote: "Non-traditional sexuality of any kind is deeply frowned upon in Bangladesh which, although a relatively tolerant Muslim country, remains conservative in sexual matters... The condemnation from society of anyone found to be gay is deterrent enough for most to remain very firmly shut in the closet." [20q] In an article published in Himal Magazine in 2004, Afsan Chowdhury observed that families tend to respond with dismay and "a kind of corporate shame" when one of their members first declares a preference for gay sex, or 'comes out'. The article continued:
- "...Bangladeshis are very active on the global gay scene. But those still in the closet oscillate between confusion, guilt and fear ... Being gay in Bangladesh isn't easy because society responds differently to sexuality in public and in private ... People involved with gay issues say that between 5 to 10 percent of the population is homosexual. That would mean at least 6 to 12 million Bangladeshis, more than the total population of many countries, prefer the same sex. Even if that estimate is considered to be on the higher side and is reduced by half, the number left would still be significant. But almost no discussion can take place on the subject, even with the threat of HIV/AIDS looming over Bangladesh and gays being identified as one of the most vulnerable groups ... Demonstration of homosexual tendencies for short periods is quite common in Bangladeshi society. Those practising it are not ostracised, although if caught, are ridiculed. Like in other societies, gay relationships flourish in dormitories, barracks, labour colonies and hostels, and authorities are hard pressed to keep them a secret ... Male homosexuality is tolerated despite religious sanction. Yet divorce citing gay behaviour by any partner is not known." [12a]
- 23.09 Writing in the March 2008 issue of *Himal Magazine*, Tanveer Reza Rouf noted that a Yahoo group called BOB (Boys Only Bangladesh) was started on the internet in 2002 and has since become the "biggest congregation of gay-identified men in Bangladesh". This website caters to the entertainment and friendship needs of its members, but carries very little information on gay rights or political issues. It was only in May 2005 that the Dhaka gay community made its first attempt to assert itself politically, when a letter from the moderators of BOB was published in *The Daily Star*. The letter read, in part:
- "[The World Health Organisation] has removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. Bangladesh, despite being a part of the international community, seems blissfully unaware of it. Because of the ignorance, people like me who are gays are being discriminated against. The end product of

such discrimination is immense mental suffering and physical suffering. The situation gets worse when I can't express myself to my family or friends. Homosexuals in Bangladesh are shackled to a life of secrecy, lies and even internalized homophobia." [12b]

Many subscribers to BOB voiced their disagreement with the website's decision to write this letter to *The Daily Star*, though they may have agreed with its contents, and there has been very little debate on gay issues in the Bangladeshi media since then. In general, only those in the higher income groups and in the main urban areas have access to the internet; the majority of gay men in the country have no such means of networking. Rouf noted in his article that the gay community began to "shrink even further into itself" after the declaration of the state of emergency in January 2007. Whereas 2006 had been a year of regularly scheduled shows and informal gatherings, few such events were held in 2007. Rouf has attributed this, in part, to hotels refusing to rent venues to gay groups, theatres closing and rumours of planned police raids (which proved to be false). [12b] The USSD 2007 report noted also that there are some informal support networks for homosexual men in Bangladesh, but that organisations to assist lesbians were rare. [2a] (section 5)

- 23.10 The Human Rights Watch (HRW) report of August 2003 cited cases in which gay men claimed to have faced discrimination in the jobs market. Several of the men interviewed for the HRW report said that they had experienced harassment by fellow pupils at school. [10g] (p42-43)
- 23.11 Commenting on the situation of lesbians in Bangladesh, journalist Richard Ammon noted in June 2006: "The fate of virtually all Islamic women here is marriage and motherhood. Anyone stepping outside that frame by expressing independence or, far worse, as a lesbian, renders herself un-marriageable and sets her on a likely course of rejection and social derision." (GlobalGayz.com) [44a] Afsan Chowdhury of Himal Magazine had observed in 2004 that lesbianism "is kept a secret fearing loss of marriage prospects. And marriage, after all, is society's idea of a woman's ultimate nirvana ... Society frowns upon single women, and the social pressure to marry – doesn't matter who to – is intense. Most succumb to it, despite their sexual preferences, and end up miserably knotted ...The tolerance level for lesbians is very low in Bengali society." [12a]
- 23.12 In the culture of the Indian sub-continent, *hijras* are regarded as a "third gender"; most *hijras* see themselves as "neither man nor woman". They cannot accurately be described as "eunuchs" or "hermaphrodites" or "transsexual women", which are Western terms. Most *hijras* were born male or 'intersex' (with ambiguous genitalia); many will have undergone a ritual emasculation operation, which includes castration. Some other individuals who identify as *hijras* were born female. Although most *hijras* wear women's clothing and have adopted female mannerisms, they generally do not attempt to pass as women. Becoming a *hijra* involves a process of initiation into a *hijra* 'family', or small group, under a guru "teacher". For further background information, refer to sources [101a] [105a] [20b] In a BBC News article of 30 November 2000, George Arney wrote that *Hijras* have been part of the South Asian landscape for thousands of years. He continued: "Even though they generally provoke horror or ridicule, they have traditionally had a role to play on the margins of society as entertainers and as bestowers of curses and blessings." [20b] A *Daily Star* article of 26 September 2005 commented: "The

hijra or hermaphrodite community has been a despised and neglected minority in society [in Bangladesh]. They face discriminations and deprivations throughout their life. As the hermaphrodites are hounded out of school, they are deprived of basic education and job opportunities. It is impossible for them to cast [a] vote in elections, get a passport, open a bank account or even get a descent house on rent.” [38cs] At a conference on HIV/AIDS and human rights issues, held in June 2007, hermaphrodites (i.e. *hijras*) were described as the most neglected and marginalised community in society. They were also said to be the “worst victims of mental and sexual abuse as they have no social and legal protection due to identity crisis” (sic). Speakers participating in the discussion called for the recognition of a separate gender identity for *hijras* to ensure their proper recognition in society. (Daily Star, 11 June 2007) [38ct] In 2008, for the first time, *hijras* were able to enroll as voters. (ASK Annual Report 2008) [109a] (chapter 1) *Badhan Hijra Sangha* is a social welfare NGO which provides support to transgender people in Bangladesh, focusing on health care, human rights awareness and vocational training. [104]

ILL-TREATMENT BY POLICE OFFICERS AND BY MASTANS

- 23.13 In their August 2003 report entitled ‘Ravishing the Vulnerable’, Human Rights Watch (HRW) stated that many *men who have sex with men* (msm) interviewed by them reported being raped, gang raped and beaten frequently by police and by *mastans* (defined broadly as criminal thugs, sometimes with local political connections). [10g] (p39) According to the report:

“Like women sex workers, men who have sex with men are abducted, raped, physically assaulted, and subject to extortion by police and *mastans*. Men who have sex with men are sometimes arrested and abused without being charged with any crime. They have no effective means of lodging official complaints about the abuses they experience. The police also sometimes harass, beat, and arrest men engaging in HIV/AIDS outreach work. Moreover, men who have sex with men are discriminated against by the wider society: turned away from jobs and harassed at school. An old colonial law against ‘carnal intercourse’ is interpreted to criminalize men who have sex with men. These violations stem from and result in a subjugated, subhuman status for this group of people while simultaneously undermining Bangladesh’s capacity to fight an emerging AIDS epidemic.” [10g] (p37-38)

HRW stated that gay men interviewed by them also reported that they were regularly subjected to extortion by both police and *mastans*; those men who engaged in prostitution said that their clients were also subject to extortion. Some of those interviewed reported that they had been arrested under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code; this had not led to criminal charges or prosecution, but rather to abuses such as extortion and physical assault. They did not see any merit in bringing an official complaint about police or *mastan* abuse, as they believed the police would not act on such a complaint. [10g] (p39-41) Human Rights Watch has recorded that only 17 individuals were interviewed in depth for this report; the respondents were identified through organisations of sex workers, organisations for gay men, needle exchange programs and/or drug rehabilitation programs. [10g] (p10 ‘Methods’) Most of those interviewed described themselves as *kothis* (men or boys who take on a feminine demeanour and identify themselves as female in sexual relationships with men). The HRW report noted that, according to some experts, a significant proportion of *kothis* engage in sex work. [10g] (p10,37,38)

- 23.14 A 2006 UNAIDS report cited a study conducted in 2002 ('AIDS and STD Control Programme: Second Generation Surveillance for HIV in Bangladesh'), in which 40.9 per cent of male sex workers and 50.1 per cent of *hijras* reported violence or rape by policemen or *mastans*. [36d] (p29)
- 23.15 As is referred to in Section VIII of the 2003 Human Rights Watch report [10g] (p48), the Government has been implementing a Police Reform Programme since this report, and the 2002 report cited by UNAIDS, were produced. (See Section 10: Security Forces)

ACCESS TO HEALTH AND WELFARE SERVICES

- 23.16 UNAIDS estimated in 2008 that the overall prevalence of HIV in Bangladesh was less than 0.2 per cent. [36c] The UNAIDS 'Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic', published in May 2006, showed that the prevalence of HIV was then only 0.8 per cent amongst *hijras* and 0 per cent for male sex workers, although syphilis rates were relatively high for both groups. The overall HIV prevalence among gay men was less than one per cent in most areas of the country. Nevertheless, UNAIDS expressed concern about low levels of HIV knowledge and high levels of risk behaviour in Bangladesh. [36d] (p29) The USSD 2008 report stated that there were no reported cases of violence or discrimination against HIV/AIDS patients during 2008. [2b] (section 5)

See [Section 28: Medical services](#) (HIV/AIDS)

- 23.17 The *Bandhu Social Welfare Society* was established in 1997 with international funding, to provide sexual health services to the gay community and to campaign for greater openness and legitimacy for this community. The society, which is run according to a model developed by the international Naz Foundation, has more than 220 staff members based in six cities. Field services include an outreach programme, education on safe sex, condom distribution and referrals to clinics for sexually transmitted diseases. The society set up a clinic in Dhaka in April 1998. By June 2003, 21,593 people had accessed the clinic's services, either to obtain treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, or for psychological services, or for general health services. [36d] (p30-35)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

24. DISABILITY

24.01 The NGO *Ain o Salish Kendra* (ASK) advised in their Annual Report for 2008:

“Bangladesh has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Pursuant to constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination, specific laws have been passed to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs) such as the Disability Welfare Act 2001. In addition, the National Policy on Disability 1995 and the National Action Plan on Disability 2006 have also been adopted. However PWDs continue to face legal and practical barriers to equality including unjust treatment, discrimination in access to voting rights, lack of free access to educational opportunities, health services and job opportunities without discrimination. Their right to free movement is still restricted and many PWDs are still victims of violence and abuse without remedy.” [109a] (chapter 21)

24.02 The ASK Annual Report noted:

- Political participation of PWDs as voters, candidates and campaigners has remained limited. According to ASK: “It is estimated that...eligible people with disabilities have had limited access to voter registration, due to high levels of illiteracy, lack of access to information, vulnerability and poverty. Exclusion from the voter list has in turn excluded them in claiming and receiving services from the public service department and local government.” The Election Commission, in 2007, inserted a provision for identifying voters with disabilities in the registration form. In 2008 the major political parties addressed disability issues in their election manifestos for the first time.
- “Reportedly only four per cent of children with disabilities have access to education in any form. About 1.6 million eligible school-aged children with disabilities are unable to access formal and non-formal education.”
- “In practice, public health centres, such as Upazila Health Complexes and District general hospitals, were also inaccessible to PWDs and provided no disability related services such as early identification, fitting of artificial limbs, aids and appliances, educational or therapeutic services or vocational rehabilitation. NGOs are providing some limited services.”
- “According to a recent study, the mean employment rate of persons with disabilities is less than a quarter of those without a disability.”
- In 2008, some new initiatives were taken by public institutions to facilitate mobility. [109a] (chapter 21)

24.03 The US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008, released on 25 February 2009, noted

“The law provides for equal treatment and freedom from discrimination for persons with disabilities; in practice, persons with disabilities faced social and economic discrimination. The law focuses on prevention of disability, treatment, education, rehabilitation and employment, transport accessibility, and advocacy.

“The Ministry of Social Welfare, the Department of Social Services, and the

National Foundation for the Development of the Disabled were the government agencies responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

“Government facilities for treating persons with mental handicaps were inadequate. Several private initiatives existed for medical and vocational rehabilitation, as well as for employment of persons with disabilities.” [2b] (Section 5)

24.03 The UN Common Country Assessment for 2004 had stated:

“According to the National Forum of Organisations Working With the Disabled [an umbrella organization consisting of more than 80 NGOs working in various fields of disability] approximately 14 percent of the country's population has some form of disability. The economic condition of most families limits their ability to assist with the special needs of the disabled, and superstition and fear of persons with disabilities sometimes results in their isolation.” [8d] (p68-69)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

25. WOMEN

OVERVIEW

- 25.01 Bangladesh acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 6 December 1984 and ratified the Optional Protocol on the Convention on 22 December 2000. [8a]

In the most recent State party report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), dated 3 January 2003, observed that “Bangladesh is a gradually changing society where the position, status and roles of men and women have primarily been shaped by the stereotype of male predominance and authority over women.” [47a] (p16) The report noted, “Traditional socio-cultural values and practices work against raising the status of women. Women still have limited opportunities for education, technical and vocational training, employment and activities.” (p5-6) “According to the Constitution, women enjoy the same status and rights as men in terms of education, health, political process, employment, development processes and social welfare. However, in practice, they do not enjoy the fundamental rights and freedom to the extent as men do. The unequal status of women in society and in public life is largely due to the fact of having unequal status in the family life. Women’s lower socio-economic status, lower literacy, lesser mobility are some of the practical obstacles to the establishment of their fundamental rights.” (p10) The same report detailed recent initiatives both by the Government and by NGOs to reduce discrimination and gender-based oppression. [47a] (p7,10-18)

- 25.02 CEDAW, in its Concluding Comments dated 26 July 2004, urged the Bangladesh Government to implement comprehensive awareness-raising programmes to change stereotypical attitudes and norms about the roles of women; CEDAW also expressed concern over the unequal status of Bangladeshi women within the family and the fact that personal laws, derived from religious precepts which are discriminatory to women, continued to exist in the country. [47b] (p5)

- 25.03 The Freedom House report, *Countries at the Crossroads 2007*, Bangladesh, released in September 2007, noted:

“Although the constitution declares equal rights for men and women in all spheres of public life, civil and criminal laws often discriminate against women. However, evidence suggests that NGO programs, government initiatives, and tougher laws have contributed to the improvement of women’s status in recent years. According to a 2005 report by the International Labor Organization, women’s participation in the Bangladeshi labor market has increased in recent decades, and women are now represented in a variety of economic sectors. They now hold important public offices, serve as private-sector professionals, and lead social movements that seek to place women at the forefront of political change. This progress has been bolstered by the 14th constitutional amendment, which reserves 45 of parliament’s 345 seats for women. Nonetheless, women still face discrimination, receive lower wages than male workers, and are less well represented in the formal sector.

“These positive changes have apparently failed to reduce violence against

women. While the absence of reliable data makes it difficult to determine whether gender-based violence has increased or decreased in the last few years, recent news reports confirm that it is still widespread. According to Amnesty International, in the first quarter of 2005 'more than 1,900 women were allegedly subjected to violence, over 200 were killed allegedly following rape, over 300 women were allegedly abused for not meeting their husband's dowry demands, and over 100 were trafficked.' The same report states that 138 women were the victims of acid attacks in the first nine months of 2005. A large number of crimes against women go unreported, particularly in rural areas, where social stigma coupled with the indifference or hostility of the police often forces female victims to keep their traditional silence. Furthermore, most of these victims lack the social and financial support necessary to seek justice." [65c] (Civil liberties)

See also Section 26: [Children](#), which includes some material which is gender-specific.

LEGAL RIGHTS

- 25.04 The US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008* (USSD 2008 report), released on 25 February 2009, report noted:

"Laws specifically prohibit certain forms of discrimination against women, provide for special procedures for persons accused of violence against women and children, call for harsher penalties, provide compensation to victims, and require action against investigating officers for negligence or wilful failure of duty; however, enforcement of these laws was weak. In 2003 parliament passed an amendment to the current law, weakening provisions for dowry crimes and addressing the issue of suicide committed by female victims of acts of dishonor." [2b] (section5)

- 25.05 Dr Nusrat Ameen, in her book *Wife Abuse in Bangladesh* published in 2005, noted that a "patriarchal interpretation of the law" by society is common. "Despite Constitutional guarantees that women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life...Jahan points out that many aspects of the legal system reflect the continuing dominance of patriarchal attitudes in society." Dr Ameen argued that both substantive and procedural law is not gender-neutral and she noted that the laws governing women's private lives were discriminatory; for example, there was differential treatment of women in divorce proceedings. There was also discrimination between women from different religious groups, since there are different sets of family laws in place for the Muslim, Hindu and Christian communities. Dr Ameen stated that the legal solutions made available to women were often constrained by practical factors, such as the weak economic situation of women, the reluctance of the police to become involved in marital disputes, the difficulty of enforcing and sometimes obtaining injunctions, the emphasis on mediation, arbitration and *shalish* by legal aid workers and professionals, as well as illiteracy and family pressures. [80] (p7-14)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

POLITICAL RIGHTS

- 25.06 The Constitution provides for equal opportunities for women in politics and public life. [4] Both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition are women. In 2008, three of the 67 judges of the Supreme Court were women. (USSD 2008 report) [2b] (section 3)
- 25.07 Of the 345 Members of Parliament, 300 are directly elected. The remaining 45 seats are reserved for women nominated by the political parties, based on their proportional representation within the 300-member group of directly elected members. (USSD 2007 report) [2a] (section 3) This provision was introduced by an amendment to the Constitution in May 2004, and remains effective until May 2014. [20ae] At the local government level, three seats on each of the 4,479 Union Parishad councils and three seats on each Zila (district) council are reserved for women. (CEDAW, January 2003) [47a] (pp5, 22, 23) IRIN News in an article dated 27 January 2009 noted that, following elections in December 2008, "Seventeen directly elected female parliamentarians took up their seats on 25 January [2009], and 45 more are set to join them soon, meaning 62 women out of 345 will sit in the unicameral legislature." [103d]

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

- 25.08 The USSD 2008 report noted that "Employment opportunities increased at a greater rate for women than for men in the last decade, largely due to the growth of the export garment industry. Women constituted approximately 80 percent of garment factory workers. Pay was generally comparable for men and women." [2b] (section 5)
- 25.09 The USSD 2003 report had stated:
- "In recent years, female school enrolment has improved. Approximately 50 percent of primary and secondary school students were female. Women often were ignorant of their rights because of continued high illiteracy rates and unequal educational opportunities... Many NGOs operated programs to raise women's awareness of their rights, and to encourage and assist them in exercising those rights. The Government also expanded incentives for female education by making education free for girls up to grade 12 (approximately age 18) and using a stipend system from grades 6 to 12. By comparison, boys received free education up to grade five." [2o] (section 5)

The Economist Intelligence Unit's Country Profile of 2007 noted that girls are entitled to ten years of free schooling. Primary education was made universal, compulsory and free in 2003. [40j] (p17)

See also Section 2: [Economy](#) (Micro-credit financing) and Section 35: [Employment rights](#)

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

See also Section 10: [Security Forces: Avenues of complaint](#), Section 9: [Crime, Children, Violence against children and Trafficking](#)

- 25.10 According to a report by the human rights NGO 'Odhikar', published on 15 January 2009:

“Violence against women is widespread in Bangladesh and in most of the cases the victims are underprivileged, poor women. Despite specialized criminal laws for protecting women – the Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act, the Dowry Prohibition Act, the Child Marriage Restraint Act, the Acid Crime Control Act, to name a few – instances of violence against women- especially dowry, domestic violence and rape – have not decreased in any significant manner. The major reasons why women do not get justice are: barriers to accessing the justice system, police corruption, mismanagement of vital evidence, and ignorance of the law and a lack of proper medical reports. However, due to social ‘values’ and stigma many women do not disclose the violence. The number of women who experience violence – including rape, dowry related violence, beatings, torture and murder – is high in impoverished sections of society and particularly among women who live in rural areas of Bangladesh, both in domestic situations and outside the home.” [46r] (p32)

Domestic Violence

- 25.11 The USSD 2008 report noted also that domestic violence in Bangladesh is widespread, but difficult to quantify. Some of the reported violence against women continued to be related to disputes over dowries. The law prohibits rape and physical spousal abuse, but makes no specific provision for spousal rape as a crime. [2b] (section 5) The same report noted

“Research showed that as many as 50 percent of women experienced domestic violence at least once in their lives. The Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) reported 622 incidents of domestic violence. Some of the reported violence against women was related to disputes over dowries. There was an increase in the number of dowry-related killings during the year. Odhikar reported 188 dowry-related killings [and 269 dowry-related incidents, including torture and suicides. (*Human Rights Report 2008*) [46r] (p35)] although other NGOs place the figure much higher, at 300 to 500. Domestic violence is not criminalized.” [2b] (Section 5)

Odhikar reported on 1 July 2008 that 140 women were known to have been victims of dowry related violence in the first six months of 2008. Of those, 96 were killed, 38 were tortured and six reportedly committed suicide following dowry demands. [46m]

- 25.12 In her book published for the BNWLA in 2005, entitled *Wife Abuse in Bangladesh*, Dr Nusrat Ameen commented that “Wife abuse is endemic and is overtly or covertly sanctioned [80] (p20) ... Research shows that violence in the family occurs at all levels of society (p22) ... However, the practice of wife abuse is one about which there is least social awareness or outcry in Bangladesh (p27).” Dr Ameen observed that the patriarchal nature of society and of the household, especially in rural areas, permitted socially acceptable violence against women in the form of physical chastisement by a husband. A misinterpretation of religious teaching reinforced this social sanction. (p27-36) Women often faced domestic violence not only from their husbands, but also from their in-laws. (p49) Dowry abuse also continued to lead to cases of serious physical abuse or murder and to the suicides of young married women, though the Dowry Prohibition Act came into force in 1980. (p39-45) A UNFPA report in 1997 quoted a study by the NGO Ain-O-Shalish Kendra

(ASK) in saying that up to 50 per cent of all murders in Bangladesh had been attributed to marital violence. Evidence suggested that only a minor proportion of such cases reached the courts and resulted in convictions. [80] (p49-51)

25.13 Dr Ameen observed that the law in Bangladesh was far more involved with 'stranger' violence against women, for example murder, rape or trafficking; there was no specific law on wife abuse, although there were several special laws to deal with violence against women. [80] (pp7&62) Dr Ameen's book examined in detail the various legal remedies available to victims of domestic violence. For example:

- The Penal Code provides sanction: All forms of physical violence, some forms of psychological violence and threats of physical injury constitute criminal offences. In practice, however, when such an offence was committed by a husband against his wife, it was not considered as an offence punishable in the same way. (p47-48)
- The Women and Children Repression Prevention Act (2000), as Amended in 2003, lays down severe penalties for violent offences against women; it also provides for the speedy trial of offenders in special tribunals situated throughout the country. The Act specifies deterrent punishment for dowry-related crimes and also covered such 'stranger' offences as rape, trafficking and abduction; however, Dr Ameen stated that it "is silent regarding punishment for husbands for abusing wives, except in dowry offences". (p60-61)
- The Dowry Prohibition Act, passed in 1980, also makes giving, taking or demanding dowry punishable offences. (p58)
- There were no specific civil law remedies to which victims of wife abuse could resort, other than divorce and claims for dower, maintenance and custody. A wife could seek an injunction under the Civil Procedure Code, the Specific Relief Act or the Family Court Ordinance of 1985, but these were ancillary to other proceedings. [80] (p53-54)

25.14 The various special laws to protect women from abuse had not proved as effective as they were designed to be; their deterrent value had been diminished by low conviction rates. (p48 & 58) Dr Ameen added, "Owing to the prevalent patriarchal attitude towards women, in most cases complaints are not recorded properly by the police, evidence is hard to produce or establish, there is a very slim chance of the perpetrator being punished. A study by the Family Court in Dhaka shows that husbands rarely appear and thus suits are dismissed *ex parte* and wives are denied justice." [80] (p8)

Government and NGO assistance to victims of domestic violence

25.15 There were several agencies working to assist women in abused situations, noted Dr Ameen. Typically, an agency would serve a notice to the husband to appear at the agency for mediation, following a written complaint made by the wife. If the husband did not attend, the agency had a right to issue a warrant and to seek help from the police. If mediation failed to work, the case could be taken up in court by family lawyers provided by the agency, who would normally handle the case free of charge. [80] (p83-84) Research suggested that most abuse victims are reluctant to report their cases directly to the police and, of those who did, most were not given adequate assistance. There was a widely-held belief that police officers did not like to become involved in 'family matters' and were likely to ask the parties to reconcile matters between

themselves. (p84 & 100) There was often also a reluctance by victims to inform doctors of the injuries they had sustained. (p84-85) Most women in Bangladesh could not afford to approach lawyers directly. And most women, even some educated ones, were unaware of the legal machinery and were also discouraged from contacting lawyers by family, friends and sometimes even the lawyers themselves. (p84) Women in villages commonly sought arbitration through *Shalish* (local mediation councils) – even though the arbiters are usually the ‘local male elite’ and a *Shalish* decision was not binding. (p85-86) However, there was, in general, a reluctance among abused women to seek relief against their husbands, often due to social stigma, or economic insecurity, or fear of retribution, or acceptance of violence as a social norm. [80] (p86-88)

- 25.16 The USSD 2006 report recorded that the Women Affairs Department runs six shelters, one each in the six divisional headquarters, for abused women and children. [21] (section 5) The USSD 2008 report added: “NGOs such as [Bangladesh National Women Lawyers’] BNWLA ran facilities to provide shelter to destitute persons and distressed women and children. According to [Bangladesh National Women Lawyers’ Association] BSEHR, persons in safe custody were no longer housed in prisons. Courts sent most of them to shelter homes. In a few cases they were sent to prison as a transit for short periods.” [2b] (section 5)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

Rape

- 25.17 The NGO Odhikar reported in January 2009 that it was aware of 202 women (over the age of 16) who had been victims of rape during the year 2008; of them, 68 women were killed and five committed suicide after being raped. Of the 202 women, 110 were reportedly the victims of gang rape. A further 252 females under the age of 16 were raped in 2008; 30 of them were murdered after being raped. [46r The USSD 2008 report stated: “According to human rights monitors, the actual number of rape cases was higher [than the 454 recorded by Odhikar] because many rape victims did not report the incidents due to social stigma. Prosecution of rapists was not consistent.” [2b] (section 5)
- 25.18 As noted in the State Party report dated 14 March 2003 to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act 2000 carries the death penalty or life imprisonment for rape if death or injury results or is intended. Attempted rape is subject to a penalty of five to ten years’ imprisonment. [52a] (p31) In January 2005 at a workshop organized by BSEHR, then-attorney general A.F. Hassan Ariff said that “Judges consider the seriousness of rape to be the same as theft, robbery, and other crimes.” (USSD 2007 report) [2a] (section 5)
- 25.19 Dr Nusrat Ameen noted that the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act (2000) provided for trials to be *in camera*, for non-publication of the victim’s identity and for pecuniary compensation to the victim. [80] (p60-61) An article dated 26 January 2004 from United News of Bangladesh revealed that there were then 2,200 cases pending in the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal. [39h]
- 25.20 According to the USSD 2008 report, there were at least five reported incidents of rape or sexual abuse by law enforcement personnel during 2008. [2b] (section 1c)

Acid Attacks

- 25.21 The USSD 2005 report had stated that “Rejected suitors, angry husbands, or those seeking revenge sometimes threw acid on a woman's face [or body] as an act of retribution.” [2f] (section 1c) Noted USSD 2008: “Acid attacks remained a serious problem. Assailants threw acid in the faces of women and sometimes men, leaving victims disfigured and often blind.” [2b] (section 5)
- 25.22 The State party report to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), dated 3 January 2003, recorded that two laws were introduced in 2002 – the Acid Crime Prevention Act 2002 and the Acid Control Act 2002 – to restrict the import and sale of acid in open markets, allow for trials in acid-throwing cases by a special tribunal (with a right of appeal to a higher court) to make the maximum punishment for acid-throwing offences the death penalty and to provide for the treatment and rehabilitation of victims. [47a] (p20)
- 25.23 Statistics provided by the Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF) on its website, accessed 15 June 2009 [64a], show that the number of recorded attacks peaked in 2002, and have since been declining:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Incidents</u>	<u>Total victims</u>
2000	172	232
2001	250	347
2002	366	489
2003	335	411
2004	266	325
2005	214	270
2006	180	221
2007	155	192
2008	137	179

- 25.24 Of the 179 recorded victims in 2008, there were 94 women, 55 men and 30 children under 18 years, of whom the majority were girls. The proportion of male victims was higher than in 2007. (ASF, accessed 15 June 2009) [64a] (Statistics) In its *Human Rights Report 2008*, Odhikar recorded 133 acid attacks: 73 women; 34 men; 15 girls; and 11 boys. [46r] (p34)

Further statistical information, including incidents in 2009, can be found on the [ASF website](#).

- 25.25 The Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association and the Bangladesh Acid Survivor's Foundation estimated in 2003 that only ten per cent of attackers were convicted. It was also stated that the total number of acid attacks against women was difficult to document because many cases went unreported for fear of reprisals. (Asian Legal Resource Centre statement to the UN Economic and Social Council, 10 March 2003) [8c] Among the factors inhibiting case conviction rates are (a) lack of sufficient evidence (b) intimidation of victims or witnesses (c) out of court ‘settlements’. [64c] At a workshop held by the Bangladesh Acid Survivor's Foundation on 30 November 2007 it was stated that, in the 18 districts of the country most affected by acid violence, only 42 out of a total of 622 cases (recorded since 2000) had so far resulted in convictions, 195 of the accused had been

released, 177 cases had been dismissed due to a lack of proper evidence and another 208 cases remained unresolved. (ASF *Voice* newsletter, Issue 12-13) [64d] The USSD 2008 report noted:

“The law provides for speedier prosecutions of acid-throwing cases in special tribunals and generally does not allow bail. The Women and Child Repression Control Act (2000) also seeks to control the availability of acid and reduce acid violence directed toward women, but lack of awareness of the law and poor enforcement limited its effect. Although the special tribunals were not entirely effective, according to the Acid Survivors Foundation, tribunals convicted 444 persons for acid attacks since 2002, including 216 during the year [2008].” [2b] (Section 5)

- 25.26 The motives for acid attacks were not always directly gender-related. For example, 49 per cent of recorded acid attacks in 2008 were, according to the ASF, in connection with land/property/money disputes; 20 per cent of attacks related to marital or family or dowry disputes and 12 per cent of attacks were categorised as “refusal/rejection of love/marriage/ sex”. [64a] However, even in the category of land/property/money disputes, the majority of the victims were female; the Director of the ASF has explained that male perpetrators sometimes seek vengeance against other men by throwing acid at their wives or daughters. (ASF) [64c]
- 25.27 In a report published in February 2008, the NGO Odhikar suggested a number of reasons why annual figures on reported incidents of rape and acid violence remain high and conviction rates are lower than they should be:
- The victims are largely from the poor and underprivileged sections of society, who struggle for access to justice;
 - There is not yet a separated modernised investigation department in the police for such offences;
 - The police are overburdened and not able to carry out investigations properly;
 - There are hardly any checks as to whether businesses are procuring licences for the sale and trade of acid
 - Many doctors are reluctant to come to court to give evidence. [46p]
- 25.28 The Acid Survivors Foundation in Bangladesh runs a 40-bed hospital, at which a total of 416 people were treated in 2006. In addition, the ASF provides professional psychotherapy and counselling to victims, as well as legal services and a full social re-integration programme. (ASF, 14 June 2007) [64b]

Vigilantism

- 25.29 According to the USSD 2008 report, “Incidents of vigilantism against women – sometimes led by religious leaders by means of fatwas – occurred. According to ASK [the NGO *Ain-o-Salish Kendra*], 20 incidents of vigilante justice against women occurred during the year [2008]. The punishments included whipping, ... exclusion from the community, and other forms of physical and mental repression.” [2b] (section 5) As detailed in Section 21, such fatwas and punishments are illegal. Barrister M.A. Muid Khan, in an article dated 20 March 2009, commented:

“In my opinion, lack of knowledge about their very basic legal rights, among

[both] the educated and uneducated Muslim women of our country, gives opportunity to rural illiterate and half-literate religious leaders to issue Fatwa with a view to oppress the women. Over the last couple of years, [these] religious leaders have tortured women for various 'alleged offences' through illegal and extra-judicial procedures (so-called fatwas)." (UNB) [39b]

See Section 21: [Fatwa](#)

Domestic workers

- 25.30 The Amnesty International Annual Report for 2007 has quoted the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies as reporting that at least 169 female domestic workers were killed between 2000 and 2005 in Dhaka alone. Another 122 were critically injured and 52 were raped. A significant proportion of the victims were reportedly children. [7r] The USSD 2007 report observed: "There continued to be numerous reports of violence against domestic workers. The government continued to bring criminal charges against employers who abused domestic servants. Many impoverished families choose to settle for financial compensation." [2a] (section 6c)

See also section 26: [Children \(Child labour\)](#)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

HEALTH ISSUES

- 25.31 The United Nations/Bangladesh Government report of February 2005 on Bangladesh's progress toward meeting the Millenium Development Goals (MDG Progress Report of 2005) observed:

"In the health sector, women's status compares unfavourably with that of men. Although the life expectancy gap between men and women has narrowed over the last decade, Bangladesh continues to be amongst the very few countries in the world where women's life expectancy is lower than that of men: in 1990, life expectancy at birth was 56.4 years for males; 55.4 years for females. The maternal mortality rate, estimated to be in the range 320 to 400 per 100,000 live births in 2001, is among the highest in Asia. Pregnancy-related problems, including early and frequent pregnancies, are among the major causes of these phenomena." [8f] (p21)

- 25.32 According to data provided by UNICEF, most rural women give birth at home, without medical assistance. [58a] During the period 2000-2007, 51 per cent of women attended an antenatal care facility at least once during pregnancy; 18 per cent of all births were attended by a doctor, nurse or midwife and 15 per cent of deliveries took place in a hospital or local health centre. The maternal mortality ratio for this period (i.e. the reported annual number of deaths of women from pregnancy-related causes) was 320 per 100,000 live births. During 2000-2006, approximately 56 per cent of women aged 15-49 were using contraception. [58c]
- 25.33 As noted by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (website accessed in August 2008), abortion law in Bangladesh is based on the Penal Code of 1860, which permits abortion only to save the life of the woman. 'Menstral regulation' services have, however, been available in the

Government's family planning programme. Menstrual regulation is available on request until eight weeks after the last menstrual period. [8g]

25.34 The MDG Progress Report of 2005 stated:

"While the country's overall HIV prevalence rate is believed to be less than one percent, sexual behaviour of partners put women at high risk of HIV/AIDS infection. Sex workers in Bangladesh brothels have an average of 19 clients a week, which is among the highest turnover rates in Asia. This is even higher (44 clients per week) for hotel-based sex workers. Condom use among the clients of sex workers is very low, and condom use among female sex workers is the lowest in Asia (two to four percent). The majority of married men who frequent brothels or have sex with street girls, engage in unprotected sex while continuing to maintain sexual relationship with their wives." [8f] (p21)

See also Section 28: [Medical issues](#)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

26. CHILDREN

OVERVIEW

This section should be read in conjunction with [Section 25: Women](#), which includes further information on issues affecting children.

- 26.01 The US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008* (USSD 2008 report), released on 25 February 2009 stated:

“The government, with the assistance of local and foreign NGOS, worked to improve children's rights and welfare, enabling the country to make significant progress in improving children's health, nutrition, and education. Despite the progress, according to UNICEF slightly fewer than half of all children remained chronically malnourished... Despite advances, including the creation of a monitoring cell in the home ministry, trafficking of children continued to be a problem. Child labor remained a problem in certain industries; it frequently resulted in the abuse of children, mainly through mistreatment by employers during domestic service, and occasionally included servitude and trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation abroad. According to a 2006 study by the Bangladesh Institute of Labor Studies, attacks on children constituted more than 50 percent of the deaths, injuries, and sexual assaults reported among domestic workers during the year.” [2b] (section 5)

- 26.02 UNICEF on its website, Bangladesh profile, accessed on 15 June 2009, identified the following as major issues facing children in Bangladesh:

- Maternal mortality remains high. Most rural women give birth at home, without medical assistance;
- Millions of children are malnourished. Roughly half of all children under age five are underweight (see Health and Welfare, below);
- Primary school enrolment is relatively high, but many children – especially those in urban slums – are still denied their right to a basic education (see Education, below);
- Seven percent of Bangladeshi children under age fourteen are in the labour force (see Child Labour, below);
- Birth registration has been very low, hindering enforcement of child protection measures (see Documentation, below);
- The rise in sea levels predicted due to global warming has the potential to displace millions. [58a] (Background)

- 26.03 About four million babies are born in Bangladesh each year. There has been a steady decline in the infant (under 1-year) mortality rate from 105 per thousand live births in 1990 to 47 per thousand in 2007. The under-five mortality rate was 61 per thousand in 2007, compared with 151 per thousand in 1990. (UNICEF, accessed 15 June 2009) [58a] UNICEF gave the main causes of death in children aged 1-4 as diarrhoea, acute respiratory infection, injury and drowning. [58d]

See Health and Welfare below

- 26.04 Bangladesh ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 3 August 1990 (with a reservation to article 14, paragraph 1); it entered into

force on 2 September 1990. Bangladesh ratified both the CRC Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography on 6 September 2000; both entered into force in 2002. (Bayefsky.com, accessed 14 May 2009) [100]

- 26.05 In 2005, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs launched the third National Plan of Action (NPA) for Children, for the period 2005-2010, in order to focus resources and efforts to improve children's lives, establish child rights, promote gender equality and implement the terms of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). [52g] (paragraph 34) A National Plan of Action against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children, including Trafficking (NPA-SEACT), has also been formulated. [52e] (pp6, 7, 17, 19, 60)

Basic legal information

- 26.06 The State Party report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, dated 14 March 2003, noted "The age of majority in Bangladesh is set at 18 years under the Majority Act 1875, although the Act has no effect on the capacity of any person in relation to marriage, dowry, divorce and adoption or on the religion and religious customs of any citizen [52a] (paragraph 45) The State Party report to the UN Committee on the CRC of October 2008 added, "There are a number of laws related to children in Bangladesh. These do not provide a consistent definition of a child. These laws are yet to be revised to bring in a unified definition. Each law has specific objective and it is difficult to synchronize ages in different laws. A high powered Committee has been formed to review and harmonize the national laws in line with CRC." [52g] (paragraph 73)

The State Party reports of March 2003 and October 2008 have provided examples of minimum legal age requirements set by various pieces of national legislation. Some examples are:

- End of compulsory education – 10 years;
- Admission to employment – various ages between 14 and 18 years;
- Marriage – 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys under the Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929, although religious personal laws permit marriage at an earlier age;
- Sexual consent – 14 years;
- Criminal responsibility – full criminal responsibility from the age of 12 years; rebuttable presumption of capacity to infringe the criminal law between the ages of 9 and 11 years;
- Deprivation of liberty including by arrest, detention and imprisonment: Juvenile justice cases – linked to age of criminal responsibility (see above); care and protection cases – no minimum age;
- Capital punishment – 17 years. Life imprisonment in certain exceptional circumstances – 9 years if presumption of capacity not rebutted, otherwise 12 years;
- Giving testimony in court – no minimum age but a witness must be capable of understanding questions put to him or her and of giving intelligible and sensible answers.

[52a] (paragraph 47) [52g] (paragraph 71)

- 26.07 Persons aged eighteen and over are entitled to vote. (Europa World Online,

accessed 19 February 2009) [1a] There is no military conscription in Bangladesh. The minimum age for voluntary recruitment in the army and the navy is 17 years, and 16 years for the air force. Because recruits initially undergo a period of basic training, there is no scope for any person to be employed for actual service or combat duty before attaining the age of 18. (Third & Fourth Periodic Report of the Government of Bangladesh under the CRC: August 2007) [52e] (p78)

- 26.08 Bangladeshi nationality can be acquired by birth, descent, migration or naturalization. A child's nationality is based on the nationality of his or her father. [52e] (p23) [52g] (paragraph 120)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

LEGAL RIGHTS

- 26.09 Agence France-Presse confirmed on 8 March 2005 that the Muslim Marriages and Divorces (Registration)(Amendment) Bill 2005 received presidential consent. [23n]. The Act provides for the registration of all marriages to be made compulsory and has introduced stiffer penalties for under-age marriages; the legal minimum age for marriage remains 18 years for a woman and 21 for a man. (United News of Bangladesh: 16 February 2005) [39q] The 2006 MICS survey – conducted jointly by UNICEF and the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics – showed that about 33 per cent of female respondents aged below 15 years, and 74 per cent of those under 18 years, were already married. The marriage rate for women under 18 years was higher in rural than in urban areas. [52e] (page 17) The USSD 2008 report noted that, in an effort to prevent child marriage, the government has offered stipends for girls' school expenses if parents promised to delay their daughters' marriage until at least age 18. [2b] (section 4)
- 26.10 The High Court confirmed on 9 July 2006 that all children must be tried in juvenile courts. The Court ruled that “When the accused is a child under the Children Act 1974, irrespective of the offence alleged, that child must be tried by a juvenile court and not by any other court.” (Save the Children UK – Bangladesh Office, via CRIN.) [30b]

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

- 26.11 The USSD 2008 report recorded, “According to the Bangladesh Child Rights Forum, 47 children were abducted, 154 were murdered, 388 were injured in various forms of violence, 115 were raped, 15 were victims of acid attacks, and 394 others were missing [in 2008]. According to human rights monitors, child abandonment, kidnapping, and trafficking continued to be serious and widespread problems.” [2b] (section 5) An Odhikar report of January 2009 recorded that 252 females under the age of 16 were raped during the year 2008; 30 of them were killed after being raped. Of the 252, 70 were victims of gang rape. During the same year, 26 children were the victims of acid attacks [46r] [Note: These figures were based on press reports – the actual incidence of serious human rights violations involving children may be far higher.]
- 26.12 The State Party report of October 2008, to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, noted that the Government had enacted a number of laws to address violence against children, such as the Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act 2000, The Acid Control Act 2002 and the

Acid Crimes Prevention Act, 2002. The report stated that “offenders are now being arrested and tried in more numbers than before”, but did not provide information on the number of cases prosecuted. [46r] (paragraph 360) The State Party report of 23 December 2005 noted that the Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act 2000 lays down severe penalties (including life imprisonment and the death penalty) for various kinds of offences against children (up to 14 years), such as rape, sexual harassment, kidnapping and detention for ransom. [52c] (p14-15)

26.13 A report published in 2003 by Save the Children noted the absence of adequate data on child sexual abuse, but that available information suggested the problem was widespread. Denial of the problem was said to be extensive, with victims often protecting their family by refusing to acknowledge abuse occurring within the home. Traditions of privacy and loyalty with the family, and the stigma associated with sexual abuse, prevented many children from seeking outside protection. Further, reports of ‘lesser forms’ of sexual abuse were often not taken seriously by the police, the courts, and others. Sexual abuse of boys is said to be much less prevalent than amongst girls. Bangladesh was the first country in South Asia to sign the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. Provision has been made in the National Plan of Action for Children for measures to tackle child prostitution, trafficking, sex tourism and child pornography. There are several NGOs and other organisations which provide care, counselling and/or shelter to child victims of abuse, such as the Bangladesh National Woman Lawyers Association (BNWLA), Breaking the Silence (BTS), Dhaka Shishu Hospital, Bandhu Social Welfare Society and INCIDIN. [102a] (pp19-32)

26.14 The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), a major welfare NGO, stated in their 2008 Annual Report:

“According to the reported incidents of extreme form of violence across the country, rape or attempted rape shows the highest prevalence. Disaggregated by age during 2007-8, the data on rape/attempted rape indicates that victims of these incidents are mostly children. The general lack of child protection against sexual abuse as well as the lack of rehabilitation and social re-integration for the majority of child victims has resulted in a large number of children suffering in silence. Social stigmas, negative attitudes towards victims of sexual abuse, lack of mental health counselling services and child-unfriendly legal systems lead to continuous re-victimization of the child victims.” [28a]

26.15 The USSD 2008 report noted that:

“The authorities generally ignored the minimum age of 18, often circumvented by false statements of age, for legal female prostitution. The government rarely prosecuted procurers of minors, and large numbers of underage girls in prostitution worked in brothels. Local NGOs estimated the total number of female prostitutes was as many as 100,000. The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) estimated in 2004 that there were 10,000 underage girls used in commercial sexual exploitation in the country, but other estimates placed the figure as high as 29,000. Trafficking of women internally and internationally remained a problem.” [2b] (Section 5)

See also Section 25: [Violence against Women](#) and Section 27: [Trafficking](#)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

CHILD LABOUR

26.16 The USSD 2008 report observed:

“The BLA [Bangladesh Labor Act of 2006] regulates child employment depending on the type of work and the child's age. Because of widespread poverty many children began to work at a young age. In 2006 the International Labor Organization (ILO) released a 2005 Baseline Survey for Determining Hazardous Child Labor Sectors, which estimated that of the 2.2 million workers in 45 targeted hazardous sectors, 532,000 child workers age five to 17 did hazardous labor ... During the year [2008] the government, with ILO support, established a child labor unit at the Ministry of Labor and Employment to coordinate planning and execution of all child-related labor interventions. Children routinely performed domestic work. The government occasionally brought criminal charges against employers who abused domestic servants. Under the law every child must attend school through grade five or the age of 10 years, but there is no effective legal mechanism to enforce this provision. There was little enforcement of child labor legislation outside the export garment sector. The BLA specifies penalties for child labor violations, typically nominal fines of less than 5,000 taka (\$80). Agriculture and other informal sectors that had no government oversight employed large numbers of children.” [2b] (section 6d)

26.17 The State Party report of August 2007 to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) stated:

“According to the Second National Child Labour Survey (NCLS) 2002-03, of 42.3 million children aged 5-17 years, estimated 7.4 million children (17.5 percent) are engaged in some form of economic activity. Based on definition used in ILO Convention, it is estimated that 3.2 million (43 percent) children would be considered as child labour, representing 7.5 percent of the of the entire child population in this range. Over half of the working children (53 percent) were employed in agriculture sector, followed by production (15 percent), trading/sales (14 percent) and transport (10 percent). Children often work alongside family members in small scale and subsistence agriculture. Of the total child labour (3.2 million), 26 percent were attending schools and working simultaneously. As revealed in the survey, approximately 41 percent of child labour or 1.3 million children were engaged in hazardous labour ... There is no official record of actual number of child [domestic workers] because of the ‘hidden’ nature of work. According to one survey (ILO–IPEC, 2005/06), the total number of [child domestic workers] is estimated at 405,508, of them 31 percent are in Dhaka city and remainder in other parts of the country. Of the total domestic help in Dhaka, 92 per cent are full time [child domestic workers] and the remaining are part time ... Given the often-informal nature, regulation is difficult. However, recently the Government has been bringing criminal charges against employers who abuse domestic [workers] ... However, there is no effective mechanism for enforcing the law in favour of child domestics in particular. [52e] (p66-67)

26.18 The State Party report of October 2008 to the UN Committee on the CRC

recorded that a new law, the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 (BLA), had been enacted in October 2006. This prohibits hazardous work by any person below the age of 18. The Government publishes a list of jobs deemed hazardous. For any other (non-hazardous) economic activity, the lower limit of admission into employment is 14 years; however, a child under 18 can only be employed if a registered medical doctor certifies the fitness and age of the child. The employer must also adjust working hours to allow the child to continue with his/her education. [52g] (paragraph 28)

26.19 A report of the US Department of Labor, published on 27 August 2008, noted that the law forbids parents or guardians from pledging their children's labour in exchange for a payment or benefit. [88a]

26.20 According to the State Party report of October 2008:

"The Government is very much concerned about child labour and is increasingly undertaking different poverty focused programmes for reduction of child labour through facilitating access to education, with collaboration of NGOs and development partners. A comprehensive Time Bound Programme (2004-15) for eradicating child labour has been undertaken with the support of development partners. There are several other projects also addressing the issues of hazardous child labour, street children etc." [52g] (paragraph 357)

26.21 As commented on the International Labour Organization (ILO) website, accessed in June 2009:

"Extreme forms of poverty play a crucial role. Child labour is part of a vicious cycle, with poverty as a main cause as well as a main consequence. This implies that child labour cannot be addressed in isolation. Among factors contributing to child labour are rapid population growth, adult unemployment, bad working conditions, lack of minimum wages, exploitation of workers, low standard of living, low quality of education, lack of legal provisions and enforcement, low capacity of institutions, gender discrimination, conceptual thinking about childhood, etc. One or more of the above contribute to the large numbers of children working under exploitative or hazardous conditions." [32a]

26.22 The ILO 'Child Labour Data Country Brief', updated in 2006, illustrated the correlation between household income and the likelihood of children working. In the poorest quintile, 5.6 per cent of children aged 5-14 both worked and studied, while 9.3 per cent worked only; in the richest quintile, 5.9 per cent worked and studied, while 4.1 per cent worked only. [32b]

26.23 The US Department of Labor report dated 27 August 2008 noted: "According to a survey by the ILO, there are over 421,000 children, mostly girls, working as domestic servants in private households, some in exploitive conditions. These child domestics are vulnerable to abuse, including sexual abuse." [88a] In the abstract to a report of March 2006, Nasrin Akter cited a higher estimate of the number of children engaged in domestic work:

"Some NGOs estimate that there are approximately two million children engaged in domestic work in Bangladesh. Child domestic workers in Bangladesh stay alone in individual households, hidden from public scrutiny, and their lives controlled by their employers. The destiny of these child domestic workers rests largely on the mercy of their employers. As their

parents primarily live in rural areas and usually are unable to afford to visit Dhaka regularly to oversee the condition of their children, they are exposed to abuses and health risks. Although some aspects of child domestic workers, for example, sexual exploitation and education, have recently received attention from scholars, we are not sufficiently aware of the health consequences of child domestic workers in Bangladesh.” [107]

- 26.24 In 2001 Bangladesh ratified ILO Convention 182, concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action on Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour. The Government has also declared itself committed to the Rawalpindi Declaration of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) calling for the eradication of child labour by 2010. [52e] (Forward)

CHILD CARE AND PROTECTION

- 26.25 The USSD 2005 report quoted a 2002 news release from the government news agency Bangladesh Shongbad Shongsta in saying that there were then approximately 400,000 homeless children in the country, of whom as many as 150,000 had no knowledge of their parents. [2f] (section 5) In June 2007, the executive director of the NGO ‘Incidin Bangladesh’ was quoted as saying “It is impossible to figure out an accurate number but it is assumed that about two million children are living in the streets.” He urged the Government to ensure an adequate provision in the national budget to establish safe night shelter for street children. (*Daily Star*, 10 June 2007) [38ak]
- 26.26 The State Party report of October 2008 to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) stated:
- “There is no reliable statistics on orphans and orphanages. The registered orphanages provide services to about 50,000 orphans and abandoned children. This is indeed a very small proportion compared to the estimated number of orphans. Devoid of parental support and care orphans are vulnerable to hazardous child labour, HIV, trafficking, physical and sexual exploitation. In case of orphaned girls, the risks of early marriage, abortion, sexual exploitation and other forms of violence are high.” [52g] (paragraph 189)
- 26.27 The State Party report of August 2007 noted that the Ministry of Social Welfare ran 85 orphanages (capacity 10,300 children); six ‘Baby Homes’, one each in Division (capacity 550 children) for abandoned children aged 1 to 5 years; six Destitute and Vagrant Centres, six Safe Homes with capacity for 400 children, and a number of other facilities. [52e](p33) According to the State Party report of 14 March 2003, there were another 950 orphanages run by NGOs, some with Government funding. These included institutions linked to various religions: over 300 Muslim orphanages attached to madrasa schools, nine Hindu, five Buddhist and four Christian orphanages. [52a] (p29)
- 26.28 The State Party report to the UN Committee on the CRC, dated 23 December 2005, noted that it is an offence under the Children Act for a person who has custody, care or charge of a child to assault, ill-treat, neglect, abandon or expose the child or to cause such things to happen to him or her in a way likely to cause the child unnecessary suffering or injury to their health. [52c] (p14-15)

- 26.29 With regard to children with disabilities, the State Party report of October 2008 noted as follows:

“No comprehensive survey on disability has so far been conducted in Bangladesh. Findings of different partial surveys or supplementary information of other surveys indicate a range of 10-18 percent Persons with Disability (PWDs) in Bangladesh. Children with disabilities are subjected to various discriminatory practices from the moment of their birth. Considered a social and economic encumbrance, children with disabilities experience prejudicial treatment in terms of family entitlements, learning opportunities, health services and equal opportunities to develop individual capacities. Girls are generally the worst suffers. Government has undertaken various measures to address the problems of persons/children with disabilities, in some cases in collaboration with NGOs/CBOs and development partners.” [52g] (paragraphs 193-194)

- 26.30 Boys, some as young as four or five, have in the past been sold to become camel jockeys in Middle Eastern countries. (Save the Children, 2003) [102a] (p19) The Government, with support from UNICEF and various NGOs, has repatriated hundreds of children who were formerly involved in camel racing in the United Arab Emirates. (State Report to CRC 2007) [52e] (p31) In May 2009, the United Arab Emirates government agreed to pay compensation to 879 Bangladeshi individuals who were employed as child camel jockeys in the UAE and have since returned to Bangladesh. The employment of children as camel jockeys – an occupation that risks injury, disability and death – was banned in the UAE in 2005. (*The Telegraph*, 5 May 2009) [113a]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

EDUCATION

- 26.31 Primary education was made universal, compulsory and free in 2003. (EIU Contry Profile 2007) [40j] (p17) According to Government statistics, the national net primary school enrolment rate in 2005 was 87 per cent; 90 per cent for girls and 84 per cent for boys. (State Report on CRC 2008) [52g](paragraph 91) The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) noted in their Country Profile for 2007 that Bangladesh was on track to meet the Millennium Development Goal target of 100 per cent enrolment in primary education, as well as gender parity at all levels of education, by the year 2015. [40j] (p17) According to UNICEF, undated accessed 15 June 2009, the adult literacy rate (persons who can read and write) in 2007 was 54 per cent. [58c] For persons aged 15 to 24, the literacy rates in 2007 were 71 per cent for males and 73 per cent for females. [58c]
- 26.32 Education is divided into four levels: Primary (from grades 1 to 5), Secondary (from grades 6 to 10), Higher Secondary (grades 11 to 12) and Tertiary. The language of tuition in state schools is Bangla. A number of private schools provide an English medium education and offer ‘O’ and ‘A’ level courses. There are also 11 government universities and approximately 20 private universities in Bangladesh. Specialised universities include Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), Bangladesh Agricultural University and Bangabandhu Shaikh Mujib Medical University. (‘Bangla2000’ website, accessed June 2009) [26a]
- 26.33 Boys are entitled to five years of free schooling and girls to ten years. (EIU

Country Profile 2008) [40n] (p13) The Government has expanded incentives for female education by making education free for girls up to grade 12 (approximately age 18) and using a stipend system from grades 6 to 12. Boys receive free education up to grade five. (USSD 2003 report) [2o] (section 5) A Government report of August 2007 noted that, although primary education is officially free and universal, there were various direct costs to families – including admission fees, examination fees, utility fees, etc – and incidental costs such as transport and dress. Low-income families were, however, given financial incentives to send their children to school, in the form of rations or stipends, free books, etc. [52e] (p52-53)

- 26.34 The EIU Country Profile 2008, dated 18 July 2008, noted that the level of enrolment in primary schools increased substantially in the 1990s; the number of primary school children increased from 12.0 million in 1990 to 16.2 million in 2005. [40n] (p13) Large numbers of students did not complete their primary education; however, the drop-out rate decreased from 59 per cent in 1991 to 33 per cent in 2005. [52f](p3) Approximately 345,000 teachers were employed in 80,397 primary education institutions in 2005, yielding a teacher:student ratio of 1:47. Classroom overcrowding was said to be quite common in most schools. (State Report on the CRC 2007) [52e](p52) The EIU, in 2008, described the general quality of elementary education as ‘poor’ and attributed this to badly trained or absentee teachers, large classes and a shortage of books. [40n] (p13) IRIN reported in February 2009 that a study, conducted for the Department of Primary Education, had shown that 69 per cent of students who had completed five years of primary school were unable to read news headlines in Bangla, while 87 per cent failed to do simple mathematical calculations. Students in the fifth grade completed only about 56 per cent of the Bangla syllabus, 46 per cent of the mathematical syllabus and 47 per cent of the English syllabus. The quality of education in remote rural areas was far worse than in urban areas. [103b] The EIU has noted that the Government is the main provider of primary education, while most secondary schools are private. In 2006 there were 19,766 secondary schools with about eight million students, over half of whom were female. [40j] (p17) Over 98 per cent of secondary schools were private, but the Government paid 90 per cent of the teacher and staff salaries for these schools. (State Report on the CRC 2007) [52e](p54)

Madrasahs

- 26.35 There is also a Madrasah system which emphasises an Islamic religious education. A report published by the Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies (APCSS) in 2004 estimated that there were, in 2000/1, some 13,400 madrasahs in Bangladesh, of which about 6,900 were state-funded. Approximately 3,340,000 pupils attended madrasahs. [27a] (p105 and 107) A BBC News article of 25 February 2005 noted that there were then nearly 8,000 madrasahs registered with the Government and perhaps “tens of thousands” of others set up unofficially and outside government control. [20aw] United News of Bangladesh, in a report of 4 March 2005, recorded: “There are 2.5 lakh (250,000) teachers in around 27,000 Ebtedayi, Dakhil, Alim and Kamil madrasahs, with 40 lakh (4,000,000) students across the country.” [39z] An Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) report of November 2005, entitled *Judges under the attacks of the Jihadis*, stated as follows:

“There are presently an estimated 64,000 madrasahs in Bangladesh. [The

ACHR report quoted the estimate of 64,000 from the Mukhtadhara website: <http://muktadhara.net>] The state support to madrasas, which are increasingly being held responsible for fomenting extremism across the world, has increased exponentially during the current BNP-Jamaat rule. It is not only Saudi funds. The Government of Bangladesh has been using assistance for education from UN agencies, western donors and other multilateral financial institutions to fund the madrasas. According to Bangladesh Economic Review, from 2001 to 2005, the number of madrasas increased by 22.22 per cent in comparison to the 9.74 per cent growth of the general educational institutions. Teachers in the general schools and colleges increased by 12.27 per cent against 16.52 per cent in the madrasas during the same period. The number of students in general educational institutions rose by 8.64 per cent while the madrasas saw 10.12 per cent rise. These figures relate to about 9,000 government-registered madrasas. There are about 15,000 Qawmi madrasas under the Bangladesh Qawmi Madrassa Education Board which are totally out of government control and have their own curriculum ... There are thousands of other madrasas which are not registered under any organisation.” [53c] (p8)

HEALTH AND WELFARE

- 26.36 IRIN reported in April 2009 that a survey – conducted by the World Food Programme, UNICEF and the government’s Institute of Public Health Nutrition – had indicated that two million children in Bangladesh, between the ages of six months and five years, suffered from acute malnutrition. Of these, half a million suffered from severe acute malnutrition. The survey also found that one household in four was experiencing food insecurity, as defined by the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO). [103c] The Government has been implementing a National Nutrition Programme (NNP) for the period 2003-2010, covering micronutrient supplementation, universal salt iodization, breast feeding promotion and other measures. [52e] (p38)
- 26.37 UNICEF has noted that various diseases which could be prevented by vaccination have, in the past, killed tens of thousands of children under the age of five; these include diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, tuberculosis and measles. [58d] In 2006, 96 per cent of 1-year old children were immunised against tuberculosis, 88 per cent against polio and 81 per cent against measles. There have also been measures to protect infants against tetanus. (UNICEF) [58c] More than 12 million children have received deworming treatment. (UNICEF) [58a] It was estimated in 2004 that 74 per cent of the population had access to ‘improved drinking-water sources’. (UNICEF) [58c] Sanitation coverage has almost doubled since 2003; by the end of 2006, the country had achieved 81 per cent coverage. (UNICEF) [58a]
- 26.38 The USSD 2008 noted that there were “a few” state hospitals designated exclusively for children. Boys and girls had equal access to medical care in state-run hospitals. [2b] (section 5)
- 26.39 As stated above, most women in rural areas give birth at home, without medical assistance. [58a] UNICEF has advised that nearly 200 medical facilities in Bangladesh have so far been upgraded to provide improved prenatal care and safe deliveries. (UNICEF, accessed 15 June 2009) [58a] The neonatal mortality rate was 41 per thousand live births in 2004. This was attributed mainly to infections (pneumonia, neonatal sepsis), birth asphyxia, low birth weight and preterm delivery. (State Report on the CRC 2007) [52e]

(p41)

- 26.40 The overall incidence of HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh has remained relatively low; the estimated prevalence of HIV amongst adults aged 15-29 was less than 0.1 per cent in 2005. (UNICEF) [58c] COI Service has been unable to establish the mother-to-child transmission rate for HIV; however, it was estimated that only 1,400 women aged 15+ in the country were living with HIV in 2005. (UNICEF) [58c]

Further statistical data regarding children can be found on the [UNICEF website](#).

See also [Women](#) and [Medical issues](#)

DOCUMENTATION

- 26.41 A Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) document of 8 August 2005 stated:

“Birth certificates are not usually issued in the period immediately following the event. These certificates are often issued several years later to meet a need for identification and as a proof of age. It is relatively easy to verify civil registries for these purposes. However, birth certificates are issued upon verbal or written request, and no proof of the person's date of birth, identity or age is required; these certificates have the same value as the information provided by the applicant. Little weight is given to the integrity of the information found on a recently issued birth certificate.” [3b]

- 26.42 A new Births and Deaths Registration Act was passed in December 2004 and entered into force on 3 July 2006; it made the registration of births of Bangladeshi citizens compulsory. The Act provides that birth certificates have to be shown when applying for a passport, registering a marriage, obtaining a driving licence, within 45 days of admission to a school or other state educational institution, and to obtain a number of other services. Birth certificates would continue to be issued by local authorities. (State report on the CRC 2007) [52e] (p22) (UNB, 30 November 2004 and 27 October 2005) [39am] [39an]

- 26.43 In July 2007 the Government announced a universal birth registration programme, with the objective of issuing every citizen of the country with a birth certificate by 2009; registration would be free of charge until mid-2008. (UNB, 3 July 2007) [39ao] [103a] According to IRIN, approximately 40 per cent of the population had received a birth certificate by March 2008. (IRIN, 15 July 2008) [103a]

- 26.44 The new National Identity Card, issued to over 80 million registered voters (adults) in 2008, also shows the individual's date of birth. [16f] A sample appears on the website of the Bangladesh Election Commission: <http://www.ecs.gov.bd/QLExternalFilesEng/21.jpg>

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

27. TRAFFICKING

- 27.01 The US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008* (USSD 2008 report) released on 25 February 2009 recorded:

“The law prohibits trafficking in persons; however, trafficking remained a serious problem affecting men, women, and children. Trafficking in children for ‘immoral or illegal purposes’ carries the death penalty or life imprisonment, and the government took measures for the expeditious prosecution of traffickers ... Trafficked women and children went to India, Pakistan, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, and destinations within the country. Men seeking work abroad as expatriate labor in countries such as Malaysia and the Middle East found themselves in exploitative situations of forced labor, with conditions including restrictions on movement, threats, and physical assault. Some women and children were trafficked internally for commercial sexual exploitation ... According to government sources, law enforcement personnel rescued 164 victims of trafficking [compared to 87 victims of trafficking rescued by the law enforcement agencies in 2007. (USSD 2007 report) [2a] (section 5)].” [2b] (section 5)

- 27.02 The USSD 2008 report noted that, although a lack of resources has hindered investigations, the government has expanded anti-trafficking police units to all 64 districts of the country, encouraging victims to testify against their traffickers and compiling data on trafficking. In response to inadequately trained police and prosecutors, the government has worked with legal experts to provide specialised training to prosecutors and, with the International Organization on Migration (IOM), to develop a trafficking course for the National Police Academy. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Expatriate Welfare and Home Affairs have worked with the IOM and foreign donors to develop an action plan to combat labour trafficking and migration issues. In 2007 the Foreign Ministry issued new instructions to all consular staff worldwide on how to deal with trafficking cases abroad. [2b] (section 5) In June 2008 the Bangladesh Police established a new investigation wing to combat human trafficking. [97d]

- 27.03 The Ministry of Home Affairs reported that 178 persons were arrested on trafficking charges in 2007, compared with 130 in 2007. In 37 trafficking cases heard during 2008, 43 persons were convicted and 32 of those were sentenced to life imprisonment. No death sentences for trafficking were handed down in 2008. (USSD 2008, 2007) [2b] (section 5) [2a] (section 5) The USSD 2007 Report cautioned, however: “The actual number of persons arrested for trafficking was difficult to obtain, as charges against traffickers were sometimes for lesser crimes, such as crossing borders without proper documents.” The report also noted that “Large numbers of children were used in brothels for commercial sexual exploitation, and procurers of minors were rarely prosecuted.” [2a] (section 5) The US State Department’s ‘Trafficking in Persons Report’ of June 2008 (USSD Trafficking report 2008) pointed out that, due to the length of court cases, many are resolved through illegal out-of-court settlements between victims and traffickers. [2n] (Country Narratives)

- 27.04 According to the USSD 2008 report, police and local government officials often ignored trafficking in women and children for commercial sexual

exploitation and were easily bribed. [2b] (section 5) The USSD Trafficking report 2008 quoted UNICEF and other sources as estimating that between 10,000 and 29,000 children are engaged in prostitution in Bangladesh. [2n] (Country Narratives)

27.05 The USSD 'Trafficking in Persons Report' of June 2009 stated:

"Bangladesh does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. Despite these significant efforts, including some progress in addressing sex trafficking, the government did not demonstrate sufficient progress in criminally prosecuting and convicting labor trafficking offenders, particularly those responsible for the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers for the purpose of labor trafficking ... The practice of allowing labor recruiters to charge outbound migrants up to [US] \$1,235, the equivalent of ten months' salary in some Gulf state destinations, may contribute to forced labor and debt bondage, as the ILO has concluded that such high recruitment costs increase workers' vulnerability to forced labor ... Bangladesh prohibits the trafficking of women and children for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation or involuntary servitude under the Repression of Women and Children Act of 2000 (amended in 2003), and prohibits the selling and buying of a child under the age of 18 for prostitution in Articles 372 and 373 of its penal code. Prescribed penalties under these sex trafficking statutes range from 10 years' imprisonment to the death sentence; the most common sentence imposed on convicted sex traffickers is life imprisonment. These penalties are very stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes, such as rape. Article 374 of Bangladesh's penal code prohibits forced labor, but the prescribed penalties of imprisonment for up to one year or a fine are not sufficiently stringent to deter the offense ... The country's National Police Academy provided anti-trafficking training to 2,827 police officers during the year ... Throughout the year, the government disseminated anti-trafficking messages in various forms...on the government-run television channel and radio network. The government failed, however, to take measures to prevent fraudulent recruitment that could lead to debt bondage." [2q] (Country Narratives)

27.06 The USSD Trafficking in Persons report of June 2008 reported that Bangladesh had developed a witness protection protocol permitting [women and child] victims to submit testimony in writing, or to testify in front of a judge only. [2n] (Country Narratives) The 2009 report noted, "Law enforcement personnel encouraged victims of trafficking, when identified, to participate in investigations and prosecutions of their traffickers and generally did not penalize victims for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of their being trafficked." [2q] (Country Narratives)

27.07 The USSD 2007 and 2008 reports have recorded that, besides law enforcement agencies, a number of NGOs recover and assist victims of trafficking and are also engaged in research, advocacy and legislative reform. [2a] (section 5) [2b] (section 5) The Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) rescued 59 trafficking victims from within the country, and repatriated 65 others during 2007. [2b] (section 5)

See [Women: Violence against women](#) and [Children: Violence against children](#)

[Return to contents](#)

[Go to list of sources](#)

28. MEDICAL ISSUES

OVERVIEW OF AVAILABILITY OF MEDICAL TREATMENT AND DRUGS

- 28.01 The EIU Country Profile 2007 stated that medical facilities in the country were “extremely scarce”; in the fiscal year 2005/06 there were 49,669 hospital beds, 42,101 registered doctors and 14,689 registered nurses in the public sector. (This translates to approximately 27 doctors and 10 registered nurses per 100,000 population.) [40j] (p16) A World Bank report of May 2004 estimated the worldwide average to be about 146 physicians and 334 nurses per 100,000 population. [6] As was noted in the United Nations Common Country Assessment for 2004, the private sector provides the major proportion of outpatient curative care, especially among the poor, while the public sector serves the larger proportion of inpatient care. [8d] (p30) The EIU Country Profile noted that only about 12 per cent of all “serious cases” were referred to public health services. The report added, “Whereas health services for the general population remain poor, there are private hospitals that provide first-rate medical services for the wealthy in Dhaka.” [40j] (p17)
- 28.02 The World Health Organisation (WHO) informed in its Bangladesh Country Profile (accessed August 2008):
- “Significant changes in human resources for health have taken place in recent years leading to overall improvement in the coverage of health services. These include production and deployment of more health and health-related personnel, refresher training for health personnel in service, and greater use of health volunteers ... Actions are being taken, which include the establishment of a permanent health institute, formulation of a human resource development plan, and enhancing the quality of medical education ... As early as the 1980s, Bangladesh had a national essential drugs policy and a list of essential drugs to be procured and used in health services. These have been maintained to date. Most of the essential drugs were known by their generic name and were less costly than brand name drugs. Production and distribution facilities, both in the private sector and public limited companies, are adequate. Despite these advantages, government run health facilities did not have sufficient essential drugs to meet their actual needs, since the budgetary allocation for the procurement of drugs was not enough.” [14a] (Country Health System Profile; p 5)
- 28.03 The World Health Organisation estimated that life expectancy at birth increased from 55 years in 1990 to 63 years in 2006, for both males and females. The Infant Mortality rate declined from 100 per thousand live births in 1990, to 52 per thousand in 2006. [14c]
- 28.04 There has been a high incidence of malaria in the Chittagong Hill Tracts; Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and others started providing the effective artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT) in Bangladesh in 2004, according to MSF articles of 19 July 2004 and 5 December 2005. [29b] [29c]
- 28.05 The database of the Directorate General of Health Services provides a comprehensive listing of medical institutions in Dhaka. [82]

See also Section 26: [Children](#) and Section 25: [Women](#)

HIV/AIDS

- 28.06 As stated on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) website 'You and AIDS', accessed on 6 August 2008, Bangladesh is a country with low HIV prevalence but high 'vulnerability'. In 2005 the country's overall HIV prevalence rate was less than one percent. There are reported to be over 105,000 sex workers in the country, with a higher average client turnover rate than elsewhere in the region. Use of condoms during paid sex is said to be "rare". There is a relatively high incidence of syphilis and other STDs among sex workers. There is extensive needle/syringe sharing by drug users; a national survey had indicated that the HIV incidence among intravenous drug users jumped from 1.8 per cent in 2001 to more than 4 per cent in 2004. [108a] The NGO, 'CARE International' (undated accessed 1 May 2009) has estimated that some 90 per cent of intravenous drug users in Bangladesh share needles. CARE runs 52 'drop in' centres in Dhaka, some of them through local NGOs, which provide a needle exchange programme, free condoms and other services to groups at high risk of HIV infection. [86]
- 28.07 UNAIDS estimated that, in 2007, between 4 and 12 per cent of HIV-infected men and women were receiving anti-retroviral therapy. [36c] According to the 2008 UNGASS Country Progress Report prepared by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 13.3 per cent of adults and children "with advanced HIV infection" were receiving anti-retroviral therapy in 2007. [19a] (p17) Anti-retroviral therapy was mainly provided by NGOs. [19a] (p18)

KIDNEY DIALYSIS

- 28.08 The website of the National Kidney Foundation of Bangladesh gives details of hospital- and clinic-based dialysis centres in the principal cities, and of renal transplant facilities in Dhaka: <http://www.kidneybangla.org/> [81]

MENTAL HEALTH

- 28.09 Mental healthcare is provided at the primary level by primary care physicians and health workers, at the secondary level by district hospitals (though only one hospital has been equipped to provide the services), and at tertiary level by teaching hospitals. Of the 14 drugs for psychiatric treatment listed in the WHO Project Atlas survey for 2005, only three were not available in Bangladesh. (WHO Mental Health Atlas 2005) [14b] The British High Commission in Dhaka commented in November 2003: "As requested we have made enquiries into the provision of psychiatric care in Bangladesh. We have been advised by doctors working here that there are practising psychiatrists here who trained in the UK. While that standard of care provided in government hospitals is not necessarily fully up to UK standards, most doctors also run high quality private practices where fees are minimal compared with the UK." [11f]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

29. HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

- 29.01 The Economist Intelligence Unit's Country Profile 2007 stated, "Bangladeshis suffer from some of the highest malnutrition levels in the world. Major problems include childhood protein-energy deficiency, maternal under-nutrition (as evidenced by low weight, short stature and anaemia in expectant and nursing mothers) and deficiencies of micronutrients (particularly vitamin A, iron and iodine), which affect all ages." [40j] (p18)
- 29.02 IRIN reported in April 2009 that a survey – conducted by the World Food Programme, UNICEF and the government's Institute of Public Health Nutrition – had found that one in four households was experiencing food insecurity, as defined by the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) The survey also indicated that two million children in Bangladesh, between the ages of six months and five years, suffered from acute malnutrition. Of these, half a million suffered from severe acute malnutrition. [103c]

See also Section 26: [Children – Health and welfare](#)

- 29.03 The EIU, in their Country Report of February 2008, recorded that the price of rice, the country's staple food, had nearly doubled since January 2007. [40i] (p7,11,13) Rice prices had stabilised by March 2009; coarse rice varieties, for example, were selling in retail markets at Tk 23-25 per kg, compared with Tk 30-33 a year earlier. (*The Daily Star*, 24 March 2009) [38c] The Food Planning and Monitoring Committee announced in April 2009 that the Government would, between May and September 2009, procure large quantities of certain types of rice at fixed prices to help maintain wholesale market prices at levels viable to farmers. (UNB, 27 April 2009) [39az] The EIU Country Profile, published in July 2008, observed: "Bangladesh is now virtually self-sufficient in food. However, unpredictable weather, including flooding and droughts, regularly undermine production plans and targets, disrupting the economy and necessitating food imports." [40n]
- 29.04 Much of the country lies within the deltaic plains of the Ganges (Padma), the Jamuna (Brahmaputra) and the Meghna river systems and flooding can have devastating consequences. Serious monsoon floods hit south Asia in July-August 2007, displacing or otherwise affecting an estimated seven million people in 41 of the country's 64 districts. (BBC News, 4 August 2007) [20dg] By 13 August 2007, the known death toll in Bangladesh stood at 441. (Keesing's, August 2007) [5p] Cyclone *Sidr* struck southern Bangladesh on 15 November 2007, again with devastating results. The official death toll, as of 26 November, was 3,243 – but the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society estimated that the final death toll could have been as high as 10,000. [5s] (p48248) On 25 May 2009 Cyclone *Aila* struck the country's southern coastal districts. UNB reported on 29 May that the official death toll stood at 155; at least 7,000 people had been injured and over 500,000 homes were destroyed or partially damaged. [39bj] See also [Section 3: History](#)
- 29.05 It was estimated in 2004 that 74 per cent of the population had access to 'improved drinking-water sources'. (UNICEF) [58c] Sanitation coverage reached 81 percent by the end of 2006. (UNICEF) [58a] Drinking wells in Bangladesh have often been dangerously contaminated with arsenic.

(Keesing's Scientific Research, November 2006) [5e]

29.06 The United Nations Common Country Assessment for 2004 noted:

“...NGOs are a significant provider of social services, in particular health and education, to the rural poor. Specialized microfinance institutions...have had considerable success in helping to provide alternative income-generating opportunities for poor women in Bangladesh. The emergence of NGOs has also played a significant role in the improvement of human development indicators and compensated, in part, for weak market and state institutions. Within the context of a rights-based approach, it should be noted that local NGOs have also played a significant role in terms of helping poor and marginalized groups to make claims for the fulfilment of their rights to education and health and secure and sustainable livelihoods. Today there are well over a thousand NGOs registered with the Government. From village cooperatives and women's groups on the one hand to large internationally recognized institutions with staff running into the thousands, civil society in Bangladesh has thrived since the restoration of democracy.” [8d] (p 69)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

30. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

- 30.01 The US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008* (USSD 2008 report), released on 25 February 2009 stated:

“The law provides for these rights, and the government respected these rights in practice with specific exceptions. The [Emergency Power Rules] gave the government authority to curb freedom of movement. The government prevented persons suspected of corruption from leaving the country. Law enforcement personnel prevented numerous persons from departing the country via Dhaka's international airport because they had been placed on lists of corruption suspects.” [2b] (section 2d)

- 30.02 The US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) *World Refugee Survey 2008*, published June 2008, recorded:

“The 1972 Constitution reserved its protection of freedom of movement to citizens, while the 1946 Foreigners Act, without exceptions for refugees, permitted the Government to require foreigners to reside in particular places and to impose any restrictions on their movements. Bangladesh had no law, regulation, or formal policy regulating the confinement of refugees and asylum seekers; authorities simply restricted it arbitrarily.” [37h]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

31. INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE (IDPs)

- 31.01 The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), in a special report of 28 March 2006 entitled 'Minorities increasingly at risk of displacement', has recorded that civil war and persecution of minorities have displaced hundreds of thousands of people in Bangladesh since 1971. [45b] (p3)
- 31.02 The largest occurrence of conflict-induced displacement is found in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in south-east Bangladesh, noted the above IDMC report. No recent information exists about the current number of people displaced; estimates of the number of IDPs in the CHT have varied between 60,000 (Amnesty International, 2000) and 500,000 (Government task force, 2000), although there is apparently a consensus between tribal representatives, NGO workers and academics that the task force list is inaccurate. There was also a debate about the definition of an IDP. [45b] (p13-14) According to the IDMC, "The government of Bangladesh has done little to assess and respond to the rights and needs of people who have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict. A national strategy and political will are lacking to address the needs of the internally displaced in Bangladesh." [45b] (p23)
- 31.03 The IDMC report of March 2006 cautioned: "The tribal population of the Chittagong Hill Tracts remains under serious threat of displacement as a result of evictions from existing reserve forests, acquisition of land by government agencies for the creation of additional reserve forests, expansion of military facilities and lease of land by the government for commercial plantations." [45b] (p18)

See also Section 22: [The indigenous Jumma peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts](#)

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

32. FOREIGN REFUGEES

- 32.01 The US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008* (USSD 2008 report), released on 25 February 2009 recorded:

“The law does not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, and the government has not established a system for providing protection to refugees. In practice the government provided some protection against the expulsion or return of refugees to countries where their lives or freedom would be threatened.” [2b] (section 2d)

- 32.02 The US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) *World Refugee Survey 2008*, published June 2008, stated that there had been no reports of *refoulement* of UNHCR-registered refugees or asylum seekers in 2007. However, the report continued: “In late December [2007]...authorities forced some 14 Muslim Rohingyas from Myanmar back over the border. At least several hundred left for other countries, such as Malaysia, because of the Government’s severe restrictions against them in Bangladesh ... UNHCR began training [personnel of the Bangladesh Rifles], which patrolled the border, on the difference between asylum seekers and migrants but they still treated asylum seekers as illegal entrants and often detained them, generally releasing them for bribes.” [37h]

- 32.03 The US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) *World Refugee Survey 2009*, published June 2009, observed:

“[The] Authorities generally do not forcibly return registered refugees. As the Government of Myanmar refuses to accept the deportation of Rohingyas from detention in Bangladesh, the BDR increasingly pushes non-registered would-be Rohingya entrants back over the border to Myanmar rather than arresting, processing, or formally deporting them.

“Bangladesh is not party to either the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol and has no refugee law. The 1972 Constitution obliges the Government to ‘support oppressed peoples throughout the world waging a just struggle against...racism.’ It also provides that ‘no action detrimental to the life, liberty, body, reputation or property of any person shall be taken except in accordance with law.’ There are no reports, however, of courts applying these provisions to refugees. The Birth Registration Act of 2004 specifically provides for the registration of refugee children. The 1920 Passport Act, the 1946 Foreigner’s Act, and the 1952 Control of Entry Act apply to all foreigners without exception for refugees.” [37i]

ROHINGYA REFUGEES

- 32.04 The US Committee for Refugees (USCR) Country Report for 2002 had noted:

“Some 250,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh from Burma in late 1991 and early 1992. The Rohingya, who are Muslim, claim religious and other forms of persecution in Burma. Although the refugees were initially welcomed by Bangladeshis who share ethnic and cultural links with the Rohingya, relations between the refugees and the local residents quickly turned sour. Between

mid-1992 and 1999, more than 230,000 Rohingya repatriated to Burma. Although some returned voluntarily, Bangladesh coerced most into returning.” [37c]

32.05 According to the USCRI *World Refugee Survey 2009*, published in June 2009:

“Bangladesh hosted some 193,000 refugees, almost all of them Muslim residents of North Rakhine State of Myanmar - commonly known as the Rohingya ... The Government confines some 28,100 of them in Nayapara and Kutupalong camps in the southern Cox's Bazar District. UNHCR has registered these and the Government at least recognizes their right to temporary asylum. The Government estimates that, in addition, there are between 100,000 to 200,000 Rohingya living outside the camps without legal status in the Cox's Bazar district and the Bandarban sub-district of Chittagong. The Government relocated about 9,000 of these from the Teknaf squatter camp on the edge of the Naf River to Leda and another 15,000 set up makeshift housing around Kutupalong camp.” [37i]

32.06 The USSD 2008 report recorded:

“The government continued to deny asylum to Rohingyas newly arriving from Burma. The government categorized these refugees as illegal economic migrants and turned back as many persons as possible at the border, although to a great extent the border was porous, and attempts to stem the tide of migration proved unsuccessful. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), some individuals the government returned were likely entitled to refugee status. Some unregistered persons in UNHCR camps returned illegally after their official repatriation to Burma, sharing food and lodging with relatives who received rations as registered members of the camps. On a number of occasions, local police picked up unregistered persons outside the camps and imprisoned them under the Foreigners Act ... Working with UNHCR, the government provided temporary protection to approximately 28,000 registered Rohingya refugees at two official refugee camps and to individual asylum seekers whom UNHCR interviewed and recognized as refugees on a case-by-case basis ... There were no repatriations of Rohingyas.” [2b] (section 2d)

32.07 UNHCR has confirmed that the Government stopped registering Rohingya refugees in 1992. Thereafter it has not permitted its officials or UNHCR to conduct registration of new arrivals, with the result that Rohingya who arrived after 1992 have not been able to register as refugees. [67g]

32.08 In September 2005, UNHCR published a paper which described living conditions in the government-run Nayapara and Kutupalong camps as sub-standard. Housing was overcrowded and badly in need of repair or renewal. Children, who made up 65 per cent of the camp population, received only a partial education. The inhabitants of the camps claimed to have been beaten, family books which entitled them to rations confiscated and money extorted, often by refugee leaders, known as Mahjees, and their followers. [67c] According to the USCRI 2006 report, “Sixty-five percent of children in the refugee camps suffered from chronic malnutrition and thirteen percent from acute malnutrition.” [37f]

32.09 The USSD 2008 report stated: “Working with UNHCR, the government

continued to improve conditions in the refugee camps following findings in recent years that sanitation, nutrition, and shelter conditions had fallen below minimum international standards. The government permitted the UNHCR to build replacements for shelters and latrines and permitted more NGOs to work in the camps on skills training, education, and health.” [2a] (section 2d)

- 32.10 Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported in June 2009 on the situation of those refugees living in and around the Kutupalong camp who were unregistered:

“Thousands of unregistered Rohingya refugees living in the Kutupalong makeshift camp, Bangladesh, are being forcibly displaced from their homes, in an act of intimidation and abuse by the local authorities. The international medical organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has treated numerous people for injuries where the majority were women and children. Furthermore, MSF has witnessed countless destroyed homes and heard many reports of people being warned to remove their own shelters or face the consequences ... To date, an estimated 25,000 people have flocked to the Kutupalong makeshift camp hoping for recognition and assistance. Instead of finding help, they have been told that they cannot live next to the official camp, supported by the Bangladeshi Government and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. Nor can they legally live on adjacent Forestry Department land. They have nowhere to go and no way to meet their basic needs ... In March 2009, MSF was alerted to fast rising numbers in the makeshift camp and conducted an assessment. There were 20,000 people living in dire humanitarian conditions, with global acute malnutrition rates above the emergency threshold, 90 percent food insecurity, poor water and sanitation and no assistance ... MSF responded immediately by treating the severely malnourished children, offering basic healthcare and improving water sources and waste facilities. [29d]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

33. CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONALITY

- 33.01 The Bangladesh Citizenship (Temporary Provisions) Order 1972 introduced the citizenship laws after the country's independence. Article 2 of the Order stipulates that anyone who was born in the territories now comprised in Bangladesh (or whose father or grandfather was born in these territories) and who was a permanent resident in these territories on 25 March 1971 and continues to be so resident, will be deemed to be a Bangladeshi citizen. Article 2A provides that a person to whom the above article would have applied, but who is resident in the United Kingdom, shall be deemed to have continued to have been permanently resident in Bangladesh. The Government may notify, in the official Gazette, any person or categories of persons to whom this Article shall not apply. In case of doubt as to whether a person is qualified to be deemed a citizen of Bangladesh under Article 2 of the Order, a decision of the Government will be final. [18a]
- 33.02 The Bangladesh Citizenship Order of 1972 further provides that any person who "owes, affirms or acknowledges, expressly or by conduct, allegiance to a foreign state", or is notified under the provisions of Article 2A, does not qualify for Bangladeshi citizenship. [18a]
- 33.03 The 1978 Bangladesh Citizenship (Temporary Provisions) Rules allow for the Government to consider an application for citizenship from an applicant who is a foreign woman and married to a Bangladeshi citizen and has resided in Bangladesh for two years, or from any other applicant who has resided in Bangladesh for a period of five years. [18b]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

34. EXIT/ENTRY PROCEDURES

- 34.01 The US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008* (USSD 2008 report), released on 25 February 2009 confirmed that the law provides for freedom of movement in respect of foreign travel, emigration and repatriation; the government generally respected these rights in practice during 2008, although there were instances in which the government restricted these rights. [2b] (section 2d)
- 34.02 The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), in a document dated 21 February 2005, quoted the Bangladesh High Commission as saying that the validity of passports or travel documents might vary from 'months' to several years (usually up to five years); documents with shorter validity were normally issued to Bangladesh nationals who had lost their passport or were unable to produce details of their previous passport. Passports were issued after standard identity checks, as required by law. [3s]
- 34.03 The Canadian IRB was advised by the Bangladesh High Commission in November 2003 that a woman did not need her husband's consent in order to obtain a passport. A child under the age of 12 would usually be included on their mother's passport but, should there be cause for concern regarding the application, the authorities might request the other parent's consent. There was no official requirement for parental consent for children over the age of 12 who apply for a passport, although children were "typically accompanied by a parent when filing their application". Passport applicants were required to provide their birth certificates and, since 2002, the names of both parents had appeared in passports. [3p]
- 34.04 A Canadian IRB paper of 20 November 2003 quoted the Bangladesh High Commission as stating that in instances where minor children were travelling from Bangladesh with one parent, the presence and/or consent of the other parent was not normally required. Children could travel alone provided that a form had been filled out and signed by one parent; the name of the guardian who was to pick the child up at the destination was stipulated on the form. According to the High Commission, there were no provisions in policy or legislation that restricted the travel of children although, in practice, the view was that children should travel in the presence of their mother. Furthermore, immigration authorities had the right to prevent anyone from leaving the country if they reasonably suspected wrong-doing. Where the parents were separated or divorced and a custody order had been issued stipulating that a parent was not permitted to leave the country with their child(ren), immigration authorities were notified of this by the courts. [3q] However, a separated or divorced parent could leave the country with their child(ren) after obtaining permission from the courts. [3r]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

35. FORGED AND FRAUDULENTLY OBTAINED OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

- 35.01 The Canadian High Commission in Dhaka, in July 2005, advised the Canadian IRB as follows, inter alia:

“Many false documents exist; it is relatively easy to verify these documents, but verification takes a long time when it is done outside the capital ... The content of genuine documents is often questionable. The rampant corruption in various levels of the government weakens the integrity and the credibility of officially issued documents ... It is common for [political party] membership confirmation letters to be issued to facilitate verification procedures, even if the information is incorrect ... We often hear people saying that it is normal to provide incorrect information for a third party, because it is considered a duty to help ‘co-nationals/brothers’ to immigrate to a so-called ‘rich’ country ... Genuine medical certificates containing incorrect information can also be issued ... Birth certificates are issued [often years after the person’s birth] upon verbal or written request, and no proof of the person’s date of birth, identity or age is required; these certificates have the same value as the information provided by the applicant ... Similarly, it is relatively easy to obtain a passport under a false identity.” [3b]

- 35.02 British High Commission in Dhaka stated as follows in a letter of 1 December 2003:

“Forged and fraudulently obtained documents are readily available in Bangladesh and are frequently submitted in support of entry clearance applications. Such documents include forged passports, birth, death and marriage certificates, bank statements (local and British), business plus employment related documents and educational certificates. Maintenance of official records in Bangladesh tends to be haphazard. Most records are kept in hand written logs, with very little in the way of computerised records. There is no local equivalent of the UK Police National Computer system. Instead, records are kept at local police stations with no national link. With regard to birth and death certificates, and marriage and divorce certificates, local municipal corporations or union councils, and local registrars issue these respectively. As with police records, there is no national link up between any of these records. Most banks have similar poor maintenance of accounts, and most rural branches lack computers or even telephones.” [11g]

- 35.03 The Country Information Service of the Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs noted in a 1998 document entitled *“Bangladesh: Profile of Asylum Claims and Country Conditions”*:

“Asylum applicants from all [Bangladeshi political] parties submit voluminous documentation to support their claims, including in particular outstanding warrants for their arrest if they return to Bangladesh and other alleged court and police documents. Arrest warrants are not generally available to the public, and all such documents should be scrutinized carefully. Many ‘documented’ claims of outstanding arrest warrants have proved to be fraudulent. As of December 1997, the Embassy had examined several hundred documents submitted by asylum applicants; none proved to be genuine.” [50a]

- 35.04 A sample of the new National Identity Card, issued to all registered voters in 2008 [16f], appears on the website of the Bangladesh Election Commission: <http://www.ecs.gov.bd/QLExternalFilesEng/21.jpg>

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

36. EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

- 36.01 The US State Department *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008*, (USSD 2008 report), released on 25 February 2009, stated:

“The law provides for the right to join unions and, with government approval, the right to form a union; Export Processing Zones (EPZs) have a separate set of labor laws. In practice the government did not consistently respect the right of association. After the government enforced the EPR, the right of labor unions to meet lawfully, conduct activities, or hold public demonstrations was suspended. Additionally, during the year several labor leaders and organizations reported intimidation and scrutiny by security forces. In September the government relaxed portions of the EPR to allow for some union and labor activities, and when the state of emergency was fully lifted all activities resumed. The total labor force was approximately 50 million, of whom approximately 1.9 million belonged to unions, many of which were affiliated with political parties. There were no reliable labor statistics for the large informal sector in which the majority (nearly 80 percent) of citizens worked ... The BLA [Bangladesh Labor Act of 2006] consolidated laws from 25 separate acts into one comprehensive law ... Unions were highly politicized and were strongest in state-owned enterprises, including jute mills, textile mills, chemical industries, and the government-run port of Chittagong. Civil service and security force employees were legally prohibited to form unions ... In 2006, new categories of workers, including teachers and NGO workers, were permitted to form unions. Due to the broad limitations on union organizing during the state of emergency, these new regulations were not formally instituted.” [2b] (section 6a)

- 36.02 The USSD 2008 report added:

“The BLA includes provisions protecting unions from employer interference in organizing activities. Implementation of these provisions was uneven, however, and many private sector employers discouraged union activity. Some employers fired workers suspected of organizing or sympathizing with unions, placed informants in work areas, and in some cases, intimidated workers with threats of violence ... Throughout the year [2008] the labor court ordered reinstatement of workers who had been fired for union activities, but a large backlog of unresolved cases remained.” [2b] (section 6b)

- 36.03 The USSD 2008 report further noted, “The National Minimum Wage Board (NMWB) announced a new national minimum wage in 2007 for all economic sectors not covered by industry-specific wages at 1,800 taka a month (\$26.50). Given the low standard for minimum wages and high inflation, worker advocacy groups stated that none of the set minimum wages were sufficient for a decent standard of living.” [2b] (section 6e)

- 36.04 In a special report published on 16 July 2007, *The Guardian* (UK) described working conditions in certain factories in Bangladesh which were producing garments for export to supermarket groups the UK. Interviews of both factory workers and the President of the United Garment Workers Federation indicated that the majority of garment factories (not necessarily those exporting to the UK) were still not paying the minimum wage of Tk1,662.50 (then about £12) per month, announced in October 2006. Furthermore:

- Many workers were required to work a minimum of 60 hours a week, some up to 84 hours; they were sometimes forced to work through the night to fill orders.
- Workers were refused access to trade unions;
- Some of those interviewed said that workers in their factory were subjected to physical and verbal abuse and threats from managers; some had been dismissed for trivial reasons;
- Long hours, bad working conditions, poverty and overcrowded and unsanitary conditions made garment workers susceptible to various illnesses and diseases, such as tuberculosis, kidney problems, diarrhoea, hearing difficulties, skin diseases and mental health problems. [55c]

36.05 The USSD 2008 report commented:

“The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) reported implementation of the minimum wage at nearly 99 percent compliance in the factories surveyed ... Workers groups contested BGMEA's sampling methods ... The BLA established occupational health and safety standards. Workers groups stated that legally established standards were sufficient, but they were rarely implemented ... A standard work week is 48 hours but can be extended up to 60 hours, subject to the payment of overtime allowances.” [2b] (section 6e)

36.06 BBC News reported on 5 May 2008 that many garment factories had begun to provide food to their lowest paid workers at subsidised prices. The President of the BGMEA said it was hoped to provide four kgs of rice a week to 200, 000 people out of a total workforce of 800,000, at two-thirds of the market price. [20ds]

36.07 The NGO Odhikar has reported that, during the period January-March 2009, “...worker’s unrest was observed in many ready-made garments factories. Most of the incidents occurred due to demands of proper wages and dues ... A total of 418 ready-made garments (RMG) workers were injured during this reporting period. Most of the violence took place due to the non-payment of workers by factory owners.” [46s]

36.08 Labourers in the tea gardens situated in the north east of the country have constituted a marginalised and exploited community. According to the Reliant Women Development Organisation (RWDO) in Sylhet, the main community of tea garden workers migrated to Bangladesh from India nearly 150 years ago. There were about 297,000 people in this community in 2007; most were Hindu, Christian, or of other religious minorities and they tended to live in isolation from the surrounding Bangladeshi society. A worker in a tea garden, in 2007, was paid Tk.30 (about £0.23) for plucking 23 kgs of tea leaves, often a full day’s work. Some additional payment was made for quantities over 23 kgs. ‘Registered’ workers were entitled to accommodation and medical treatment which, according to RWDO, was of a very poor standard. Other problems facing this community included a high rate of illiteracy, unhygienic sanitation, contaminated drinking water and alcoholism. [94]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

37. SITUATION ON THE INDIA-BANGLADESH BORDER

- 37.01 Odhikar, an independent NGO, reported in March 2007 that, on average, one Bangladeshi national was killed every four days by armed and “apparently trigger-happy” personnel of the Indian Border Security Force (BSF). [46c] Odhikar’s Human Rights Report 2008 noted that, according to press reports, a total of 213 incidents involving Indian BSF occurred in Bangladeshi territory during 2008, in which 62 people were killed, 47 were injured and 81 were reported to have been ‘abducted’. [46r] In 2007, 120 Bangladeshi nationals were reportedly killed by the BSF; 82 were injured 98 were abducted and three women were raped. Most of the victims were said to be local farmers or farm workers. [46l]
- 37.02 Odhikar has stated also that there were several attempts in 2007 and 2008 by Indian border guards to ‘push-in’, or force Bangla-speaking Indian citizens across the border into Bangladesh. During 2008, 20 such occurrences were reported. (Human Rights Concerns, 1 January 2008) [46l] (Human Rights Report 2008) [46r] The Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka was reported to have said in May 2008 that people who had died in border shootings were mostly “smugglers”. (Odhikar HR Report 2008) [46r]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

Annex A: Chronology of Major Events

Source: BBC News '*Timeline: Bangladesh*', last updated 2 March 2009 [2009], unless otherwise specified.

- 1947** British colonial rule over India ended. A largely Muslim state comprising East and West Pakistan was established, either side of India. The two provinces were separated from each other by more than 1,500 km of Indian territory.
- 1949** The Awami League was established to campaign for East Pakistan's autonomy from West Pakistan.
- 1970** The Awami League, under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, won an overwhelming election victory in East Pakistan. The Government in West Pakistan refused to recognise the results, leading to rioting.

Independence

- 1971** Independence of the province of East Pakistan – as the People's Republic of Bangladesh – was proclaimed on 26 March. The Awami League formed the government-in-exile on 17 April with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, imprisoned in Pakistan, as the President.
- 1972** Sheikh Mujibur became Prime Minister. He began a programme of nationalising key industries in an attempt to improve living standards, but with little success.
- 1974** Severe floods devastated much of the grain crop, leading to an estimated 28,000 deaths. A national state of emergency was declared as political unrest grew.
- 1975** Sheikh Mujibur became President of Bangladesh. The political situation worsened. Sheikh Mujibur was assassinated in a military coup in August. Martial law was imposed.
- 1976** The military banned trade unions.
- 1977** General Ziaur Rahman assumed the presidency. Islam was adopted in the Constitution.
- 1979** Martial law was lifted following elections, which Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) won.
- 1981** Zia was assassinated during an abortive military coup. He was succeeded by Abdus Sattar.

The Ershad era

- 1982** General Ershad assumed power in an army coup. He suspended the Constitution and political parties.
- 1983** Ershad's proposal that all schools should teach Arabic and the Koran led to demonstrations. Limited political activity was permitted. Ershad became

President.

- 1986** Parliamentary and presidential elections were held. Ershad was elected to a five-year term. He lifted martial law and reinstated the Constitution.
- 1987** A state of emergency was declared after opposition demonstrations and strikes.
- 1988** Islam became the state religion. Floods covered up to three-quarters of the country. Tens of millions were displaced.
- 1990** Ershad stepped down following mass protests.
- 1991** Ershad was convicted and jailed for corruption and illegal possession of weapons. Begum Khaleda Zia, widow of President Ziaur Rahman, became Prime Minister. The Constitution was changed to render the position of president ceremonial. The prime minister now had primary executive power. A cyclonic tidal wave killed up to 138,000.

Awami League returns to power

- 1996** Two sets of elections saw the Awami League win power, with Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, becoming Prime Minister.
- 1997** Ershad was released from prison. The opposition BNP began a campaign of strikes against the Government.
- 1998** Two-thirds of the country was affected by floods. Fifteen former army officers were sentenced to death for involvement in the assassination of President Mujibur in 1975.
- 2000** **September:** Sheikh Hasina criticised military regimes in a UN speech, prompting Pakistani leader General Musharraf to cancel talks with her. Relations were strained further by a row over the leaked Pakistani report on the 1971 War of Independence.
December: Bangladesh expelled a Pakistani diplomat for comments on the 1971 war. The diplomat had put the number of dead at 26,000, whereas Bangladesh insisted nearly three million were killed. Bangladesh wanted Pakistan to apologise for alleged genocide that it said Pakistani forces were guilty of during the War of Independence.
- 2001** **July:** Sheikh Hasina stepped down and handed power to a caretaker government. She was the first Prime Minister in the country's history to complete a five-year term.

BNP-led coalition Government

- 2001** **October:** A BNP-led coalition won an overwhelming victory in the general election. Khaleda Zia once again became Prime Minister. [20i] Three hundred international monitors declared the poll to have been free and fair. [1a]
- 2002** **March:** The Government introduced a law making acid attacks punishable by death.
April: The Government approved a temporary law to speed up the legal

process for dealing with violent crime.

June: President Chowdhury resigned after the Bangladesh Nationalist Party accused him of taking an anti-party line.

The opposition Awami League ended its boycott of parliament and attended for the first time since losing the general election of October 2001.

September: Iajuddin Ahmed, a retired professor from Dhaka University, was announced as the new President. [20s]

October: "Operation Clean Heart" was launched by the Government in response to criticism over rising crime and deteriorating law and order. This involved the deployment of nearly 40,000 soldiers in all major cities to help restore law and order, arrest "listed criminals" and recover illegal firearms. More than 11,000 people were arrested during the Operation, and between 31 and 40 people died after soldiers detained them.

- 2003** **January to March:** Local elections to 4,267 local councils were held. By February 2003, 25 people had reportedly been killed in election-related violence.
- February:** The Joint Force Indemnity Ordinance 2003 was passed by Parliament to give legal protection to members of the army and security forces who took part in Operation Clean Heart.

- 2004** **January:** A bomb attack took place on a shrine in Sylhet.
- May:** A Constitutional amendment increased the number of seats in Parliament from 300 to 345, the additional 45 being reserved for nominated women members.
- May:** A bomb attack at a Muslim shrine in Sylhet killed two and injured 25, including the British High Commissioner.
- July-August:** Devastating floods hit Bangladesh: more than 600 people were killed and an estimated 30 million people were displaced or stranded; 60 per cent of the country, including half of Dhaka, was under water at one stage.
- August:** On 21 August a grenade attack at an Awami League rally in Dhaka, addressed by Sheikh Hasina, killed 23 people and injured about 200. Rioting by Awami League supporters subsequently erupted across the country; the Awami League called general strikes. [40b](p16)
- September-October:** Police carried out "blanket" arrests ahead of an Awami League mass rally on 3 October.
- November:** The Anti-Corruption Commission was established.
- December:** An Awami League-led opposition alliance staged two "human chain" demonstrations stretching right across the country.

- 2005** **January:** Former Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria and four other Awami League activists were killed in a grenade attack in Habiganj.
- February:** The Government banned two militant Islamic groups, Jumatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB).
- August:** Some 400 small home-made bombs exploded almost simultaneously in 63 cities and towns across Bangladesh, killing two people and injuring over 100. Jumatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) reportedly claimed responsibility.
- October:** Bomb attacks inside law court buildings in three districts killed two people and injured dozens; Jumatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) were believed responsible. The Islamist group Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI) was banned.
- November:** Two judges were assassinated on 14 November. Several other judges received death threats from Islamist groups. On 29 November at least 14 people were killed and over 40 injured in a suicide bombing inside the law

courts in Gazipur and a bomb blast in Chittagong. JMB were believed to be responsible.

- 2006 February:** At least 40,000 members of the Awami League-led opposition alliance held a mass rally in Dhaka. [23o]
- March:** Sheikh Abdur Rahman and Siddiqui Islam, alias 'Bangla Bhai', the leaders of Jama'atul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), were captured by police and RAB units. [20bq] [39ac]
- May:** Sheikh Abdur Rahman, Siddiqui Islam and other senior JMB members were sentenced to death for involvement in the assassination of two judges in November 2005. [5j]
- May-June:** Unprecedented labour unrest in the garment sector results in the closure of several factories. [5j]
- June-September:** The AL-led opposition alliance stepped up its campaign of street protests and *hartals*, demanding reforms to the election commission and the caretaker government due to take power in October 2006. [20bz]
- October:** Renewed labour unrest in the garment industry followed the announcement of a new minimum wage. Micro-credit pioneer Dr Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. [90]

Caretaker Government

October cont. On 27 October the term of office of Khaleda Zia's BNP-led coalition government came to an end. [20cf] President Iajuddin Ahmed assumed the role of Chief Advisor of the interim Caretaker Government after former Chief Justice KM Hasan withdrew his candidature in response to mass protests by the Awami League-led 14-party alliance. [40h]

- 2007 January:** The Awami League-led 14-party alliance announced on 3 January that it would boycott the forthcoming general election on the grounds that it would not be fair; its demands included the reconstitution of the Election Commission and the correction of irregularities in the voters' list. The alliance announced a renewed programme of general strikes and blockades. On 11 January President Iajuddin Ahmed proclaimed a State of Emergency and postponed the general election, scheduled to take place on 22 January, until such time as conditions existed for free and fair and credible elections. [38ah] The proclamation of the Emergency Power Ordinance 2007 effectively suspended articles 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 and 42 of the Constitution. [20cb] [38aj] Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, a former Governor of the Bangladesh Bank, was appointed the new Chief Advisor and was sworn in on 12 January. [38ai] On 17 January the Caretaker Government gazetted four rules as a prerequisite for the separation of the lower Judiciary from the executive branch of government. [38as]
- February:** On 4-6 February, joint security forces arrested several high-profile politicians and businessmen, including nine former government ministers, on suspicion of corruption. (By 13 April, more than 160 prominent politicians, businessmen and senior bureaucrats had been detained.) [38bc] [20cs]
- March:** The re-constituted Election Commission announced on 22 March 2007 its decision to simultaneously prepare national identity cards and a new Voter List, with photographs, for the ninth parliamentary election. [38bq] On 29 March Sheikh Abdur Rahman, Siddiqui Islam (alias 'Bangla Bhai') and four other leaders of the militant Islamist organisation Jamatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) were hanged for murder. [38au]
- April:** On 12 April the Chief Advisor stated the Caretaker Government's

intention to hold the ninth general election before the end of 2008. [38bt]

May: Simultaneous bomb explosions took place at railway stations in the cities of Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong on 1 May. An unknown group, Jadid al-Qaeda Bangladesh, claimed responsibility. [20cn]

July: On 16 July Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina was arrested and charged with extortion [20dh]

August: The Government imposed a curfew on Dhaka and five other cities amid violent clashes between police and students demanding an end to emergency rule. [20i] [20k]

September: Former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia was detained on September 3rd on charges of extortion and corruption. [61c] On 10 September the ban on indoor political activity was partially lifted. [38d]

November: Cyclone Sidr hit Bangladesh killing thousands. Hundreds of thousands of survivors were left struggling for basic necessities. [5s] The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Ordinance came into effect, separating the lower Judiciary from Executive control and placing it under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court. [11i] [20dn]

December: The Council of Advisors approved an ordinance for the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission. [39ak]

2008 May: On 18 May 2008, the Council of Advisers approved the Anti-Terrorism Ordinance 2008. [38dc] The High Court declared valid the claim of the Urdu-speakers known as Biharis (or 'Stranded Pakistanis') to become voters, as citizens of Bangladesh.

June: Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina was released from custody to obtain medical treatment in the US. [20ea] Khaleda Zia, leader of the BNP, was also released on bail. [20o] Voter registration was nearly completed. [16c]

August: Local elections were held in five city 'corporations' and in over 4,000 *union parishads*. Candidates backed by the Awami League performed strongly. [20o]

November: Sheikh Hasina returned to Bangladesh. [20o]

December: The state of emergency, declared in January 2007, was lifted on 17 December 2008. Following the general election on 29 December, which international observers described as free and fair, a democratically-elected government – that of the Awami League under Sheikh Hasina – took over from the interim Caretaker government that had been in power since October 2006. [20o]

2009 February: Md. Zillur Rahman became President of Bangladesh on 12 February. [38es] About 74 people, mostly army officers, were killed in a mutiny by border guards at a Bangladesh Rifles barracks on 25-26 February; police charged over 1000 guardsmen with offences ranging from sedition to murder. [20o]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

Annex B: Political Organisations

MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES

Awami League (AL)

Founded 1949. The Awami League spearheaded the war of independence under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and is currently headed by his daughter, Sheikh Hasina. Advocates socialist economy, but with a private sector, and a secular state. Has about 1,025,000 members, according to Europa. After 21 years in opposition, the AL governed Bangladesh between June 1996 and July 2001 – and returned to government in January 2009. [1c] [40j] [16c] In the general election of December 2008, the AL won 230 of the 300 ordinary seats in parliament and Sheikh Hasina again became Prime Minister. [16c]

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) (*Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Dal*)

Founded in 1978 by a former President, General Zia, and is now led by his widow, current Prime Minister, Khaleda Zia. [40a] The BNP won 193 of the 300 parliamentary seats in the 2001 general election and formed a government in coalition with Jamaat-e-Islami, the Jatiya Party and the Islamic Oikya Jote. [16] According to the Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profile 2006: “The BNP espouses Bangladesh nationalism with anti-Indian and pro-Islamic nuances; however, these nuances have not been evident in its policymaking since coming to power in October 2001... The BNP, with close links to business, is committed to fostering a market economy and liberal democracy, and encourages private sector-led economic growth.” [40a] The term of office of the BNP-led coalition government ended on 27 October 2006. [20cf] The BNP won only 30 seats in the 2008 general election and formed the official opposition. [16c]

Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) (alternatively Islami Oikya Jote)

An Islamist party which won two seats in 2001 election and was a member of the BNP-led coalition Government. Seeks to implement Islamic doctrine and draws support from traditional religious groups. Mufti Fazlul Haque Amini is secretary-general of IOJ. [40a] (p11) IOJ won no seats in the 2008 general election. [16c]

Jamaat-e-Islami

Founded 1941. A fundamentalist party that espouses an Islamic state. Opposed to Bangladesh's independence in the 1971 civil war with Pakistan. [1b] [40j] Leader is Matiur Rahman Nizami. [40j] The party was banned after independence but got its rights back after General Zia allowed it and other fundamentalist parties to enter politics after the first AL-led Government had banned them from politics. [4b] Won 17 seats in the October 2001 election to form part of the ruling BNP-led coalition [16b]; won only two seats in the December 2008 election. [16c].

Jatiya Party (Ershad)

The Jatiya (Jatio) Party was founded 1983 as Jana Dal; it reorganised in 1986 when the National Front (founded 1985) formally converted itself into a single pro-Ershad grouping. [1a] (p649) The JP's main faction is led by the deposed former President, General HM Ershad. Contested the 2001 general election as ‘**Islami Jatio Oikya Front**’ and won 14 seats. [40a] [16] HM Ershad resigned as party chairman on 30 June 2007 and appointed Anisul Islam Mahmud to deputise for him until the party council elected a new leader. (*Daily Star*, 1 July 2007) [38ck] On 30 June 2007 HM Ershad resigned as Jatiya Party chairman, a post he had held since 1986, and appointed Anisul Islam Mahmud to deputise for him until the party council elected a new leader. (*Daily Star*, 1 July 2007) [38ck]

Bangladesh Jatiya Party (N-F), or Jatiya Party (Naziur): This faction, led by Naziur Rahman Manzur, secured four seats in the 2001 election and formed part of the BNP-led governing coalition'; secured only one seat in December 2008. The party is secular.

Jatiya Party (Manju) is a separate party/faction which broke away from the Jatiya party in 1999 and won one seat in 2001. [11b]

A full list of the 95 political parties allocated symbols for the 2001 general election is on the website of the Bangladesh Election Commission:

http://www.bangla2000.com/Election_2001/150_symbols.shtm

Another extended list of political parties can be found at:

<http://elive.matamat.com/ppb.php>

STUDENT/YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL)

Affiliated to Awami League. [11b]

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD)

Affiliated to Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). [11b]

Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS)

Affiliated to Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamaat). [11b]

Jatiya Chhatra Samaj

Affiliated to Jatiya Party. [11b]

Gonotantrik Chhatra League

Affiliated to the Democratic League. [11b]

PROSCRIBED AND/OR EXTREMIST ORGANISATIONS

[See also Section 12: [Abuses By Proscribed Militant Groups](#)]

ISLAMIST GROUPS

Jamatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB or JM) (alternatively Jama'atul Mujahideen)

A militant Islamist group founded in the 1990s, JMB is said to be an offshoot of Hizb ul-Mujahedin. JMB has strong links with Jagrata Muslim Janata of Bangladesh (JMJB) – see *below*. Agence France-Presse, Associated Press and BBC News reported on 23 February 2005 that the Home Ministry had banned both JMB and JMJB. [23j] [61b] [20az] A *Daily Star* report of 28 August 2005 commented: "Activists of [JMB] believe in capturing power through armed revolution and running the country by establishing Islamic rule by a Majlish-e-Shura." [38ac] JMB is believed to have been responsible for the 400+ simultaneous bomb blasts across the country on 17 August 2005. Sheikh Abdur Rahman, referred to as the leader of JMB by both of these news sources, was charged in absentia on 26 August 2005 for his alleged role in the 17 August bombings. (Agence France-Presse and United News of Bangladesh) [23i] [23m] [39r] On 28 February 2006, a court in Jhenidah district sentenced 21 men to death for their part in

the 17 August bombings. All 21 were reported to be members of JMB. (Agence France-Presse) [23p]

BBC News announced on 2 March 2006 that Abdur Rahman had surrendered to police in the district of Sylhet. [20bq] On 29 May 2006, a court in the southern town of Jhalakathi convicted both Abdur Rahman and apparent deputy JMB leader Siddiqui Islam (alias 'Bangla Bhai') and sentenced them to death for the murder of two judges in November 2005. Five other JMB members were also sentenced to death for the crime, including three members of the ruling council, the *Majlish-e-Shura*. (Keesing's May 2006) [5j] Amnesty International (AI) noted in a statement of 28 September 2006 that the High Court, on 31 August 2006, had rejected the appeals of these JMB leaders. [7p] Abdur Rahman and Siddiqui Islam were among the six JMB leaders executed on 29 March 2007. [5o]

The newspaper *New Age*, in an article dated 16 June 2007, named the new leader of JMB as Maulana Abdul Makit Salafi; he had reportedly been appointed at a meeting of the seven-member *Majlish-e-Shura* (the organisation's highest policy-making body) on 30 March 2007. *New Age* was advised by intelligence officials that:

"The four tiers of the organisational structure of the JMB are called [from the lowest tier] *sathi* or *sudhi*, *ghayer ehsar*, *ehsar* or *amir* and *majlish-e-shura*. *Sathis* or *sudhis* are recruited from comparatively young and dedicated people. Those who are in charge of districts are called *ghayer ehsar* and the divisional level leaders are called *ehsar*. The *majlish-e-shura* is the top tier of the outfit comprising seven leaders ... Led by its district chiefs re-named as '*nayak*', or hero, the JMB is now working across the country through 21 sub-centres by dividing the country into 40 regions. Operatives of the JMB are working under the supervision of some five kingpins and 12 regional and district '*nayaks*', a highly-placed source quoted the recently arrested JMB leader Matin Mehdi as telling the interrogators. Police arrested the outfit's suicide squad chief Matin Mehdi along with his three accomplices from Kurigram on March 19. Intelligence agencies earlier identified 39 commanders of the suicide squad who are still at large. Some 25 district commanders out of 64 also remain in hiding." [96b]

Jagrata Muslim Janata of Bangladesh (JMJB)

JMJB is a fundamentalist 'vigilante' group whose aim is Islamic revolution through jihad. It is claimed that the group was first founded in 1998; the present name (JMJB) first became apparent in April 2004. According to the *South Asia Intelligence Review* of 31 May 2004, its highest decision-making body is the seven-member *Majlis-e-Shura* (also referred to as the *Sura Board*); the first tier of the organisation has activists called 'Ehsar' who are recruited on a full-time basis and act at the directive of top echelons. The second tier, 'Gayeri Ehsar', has over 100,000 part-time activists. The third tier involves those who indirectly co-operate with JMJB. The organisation operates mainly in the northern districts of the country, but also has bases in some southern districts. Sheikh Abdur Rahman was said to be *amir* ('spiritual leader') of JMJB – as well as being the leader of Jamatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB), with which JMJB has close links – see *below*. Siddiqui Islam, also known as 'Bangla Bhai', was a senior member who assumed command of JMJB operations. There had been violent clashes between JMJB and the maoist Purba Bangla Communist Party (PBCP) since April 2004; for example, in May 2004 JMJB operatives killed six members of the PBCP; the PBCP retaliated by killing two JMJB men and injuring six others. [38i] [59b] [38ac] JMJB is believed to have been involved several bombings and vigilante killings, including a bomb attack on a *jatra* folk theatre show in Shahjahanpur on 14 January 2005 in which two people were killed and 70 wounded. [38t] It was announced on 23 February 2005 that the Government had officially banned JMJB. [61b] [23j] [38ac] United News of

Bangladesh announced on 6 March 2006 that Siddiqui Islam had been arrested after an encounter with the Rapid Action Battalion. [39ac] He and Sheikh Abdur Rahman were sentenced to death in May 2006 and were executed on 29 March 2007. [5j] [50]

Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (alternatively known as HuJI or Harkatul Jihad)

According to a *Daily Star* report of 28 August 2005, Harkatul Jihad was established in the early-1990s apparently with assistance from Osama bin Laden; its ideals were also inspired by the Taliban in Afghanistan. Many of its founders fought with the Mujahideen in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Current leader is said to be Shawkat Osman, alias 'Sheikh Farid'; Imtiaz Quddus is apparently general secretary. HuJI mainly operates in the southern coastal belt and apparently has training camps in Chittagong division. It is said to have around 15,000 members in Bangladesh. HuJI has been accused of plotting to assassinate Sheikh Hasina when she was Prime Minister. [38ac] BBC News reported on 17 October 2005 that the Government had banned Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI), describing it as a terrorist organisation. [20bk] According to Keesing's, members of HuJI held a rally in Dhaka on 18 August 2006 under the banner of Sachetan Islami Janata (SIJ). According to an organiser of the rally, HuJI leaders had been holding discussions with the government in an attempt to persuade it that the group was not a terrorist organisation. Keesing's reported that an article in the newspaper *Jai Jai Din*, on 22 August 2006, had stated that HuJI was planning to adopt the name Islami Gondolo Andolon (IGA – Islamic People's Movement). [5l]

Jadid (new) al-Qaeda Bangladesh

The existence of this group first became apparent on 1 May 2007, when bomb explosions took place simultaneously at railway stations in the cities of Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong. Messages etched into metal plates left at two of the sites said the attacks had been carried out by Jadid al-Qaeda Bangladesh. Police said at the time that they were investigating whether this was a new group, or a new name for a terrorist group that already existed. (BBC News, 1 May 2007) [20cn] In May and June 2007 the police, on three occasions, recovered bombs planted near the main gate of the Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (RUET). One of the powerful home-made bombs was wrapped in an aluminium sheet which bore the name 'Jadid al Qaeda'. (*Daily Star*) [38cg] [39af]

Other Islamist extremist/militant organisations in Bangladesh reportedly include **Shahadat Al Hiqma, Hizbut Towhid (HT), Hizb-ut Tahrir, Jamaatul Muslemin, Majlish-e-Tamuddin, Hizbul Zihad, Hizbut Tahrik, Dawatul Jihad and Islami Biplobi Parishad (IBP).**

LEFTIST GROUPS

The South Asia Terrorism Portal's (SATP's) Data Sheets, updated to 15 June 2009, showed that 54 Maoist activists were killed in encounters with the security forces in 2008 and 10 were killed in the first half of 2009. [59f]

Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP; Communist Party of East Bengal; Purba Bangla Sarbohara Party)

A proscribed radical Maoist movement. Seeks communist revolution by violent means. Responsible for the murder of police, officials, merchants and others; also engaged in robbery and extortion. According to the South Asia Terrorism portal of the Institute for Conflict Management (accessed 30 March 2005), its current leader is Mofakkar Chowdhury. The PBCP was founded in 1968 following a split in the Bangladesh Communist Party. [11a] [59a]

As stated above, there were violent clashes between the PBCP and Jagrata Muslim Janata of Bangladesh (JMJB) during 2004. Various articles from United News of Bangladesh have also recorded that several gun battles took place between the security forces and PBCP in the latter half of 2004 and early 2005; some of these involved the PBCP faction **Janajuddha**. Also during this period a number of PBCP members were apparently lynched by civilian mobs. [39i]; A regional leader of Janajuddha was killed in a shootout with police in Akamdanga upazila on 8 October – he had been wanted for seven murders [39j]; five Janajuddha operatives were killed in gunfights with police in Alamdabga upazila in late November [39k]; on 2 December 2004 a PBCP (Janajuddha) cadre was beaten to death by a mob in Rupsa when he went to collect his takings [39l]; Mohidul Islam Shamim, said to be second-in-command of PBCP (Janajuddha), was killed in a gunfight between police and PBCP cadres in Daulatour upazila on 12 February 2005. [39n] Abdul Malek, a regional leader of PBCP, had been killed in a gunfight between PBCP and New Biplobi Communist Party members on 2 February 2005. [39m]

The Janajuddha faction claimed responsibility for the assassination of the Khulna president of the Awami League in August 2003. [20n] PBCP has also reportedly claimed responsibility for a number of attacks on journalists, including the bombing outside the Khulna Press Club on 5 February 2005 in which a journalist was killed and others injured. PBCP has threatened that it has “many more journalists in its sights”. [9f] Several PBCP cadres were killed in encounters with the police and the Rapid Action Battalion during 2005 and 2006. (SATP) [59a]

Further details at

<http://www.satp.org/satporgrp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/PBCP.htm>

Biplobi Communist Party (before 1971 was known as the Communist Party of East Pakistan)

Maoist movement. Fought against both the Pakistan army and the Awami League during independence struggle. By mid-1970s largely suppressed by State; revived 1980s. [11a]

New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP)

Formed in 1999 after the Biplobi Communist Party split. Police estimate about 5,000 ‘cadres’. Leader was Monoranjon Goshal, alias ‘Mrinal’. Has mainly been active in Khulna, Jessore, Bagerhat and Satkhira districts. Financed through racketeering. [38x]

The *Daily Star* reported on 22 September 2004 that ‘Mrinal’ had been shot dead the previous day by unidentified assailants. He had been wanted by the police in connection with 103 cases of murder, 43 abductions for ransom and various other crimes. [38x]

According to a United News of Bangladesh article of 20 December 2004, Habibur Rahman, alias Ekdil, had styled himself as “commander-in-chief” of NBCP. Three of his bodyguards were killed in an encounter with police on this date. [39o]

OTHER GROUPS

Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO)

The RSO, a militant Sunni Muslim group, was founded in 1982 as a faction of the Rohingya Patriotic Force, with the apparent aims of preventing the oppression of ethnic Rohingyas in Burma and of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, and the establishment

of an autonomous Rakhine (Arakan) state for the Rohingya people. According to a Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment of January 2007, the organisation had by then become dormant – despite claims to the contrary by the Burmese and Bangladeshi governments. The RSO's primary activity was confined to the Burma-Bangladesh border region; Jane's stated that most terrorist activities attributed to the RSO are more likely to have been carried out by HuJI and other organisations. Last known leader was Mohammad Yunus. [83f]

Swadhin Bangabhumii Movement ('Free Land of Bengal')

Hindu separatist movement. Founded in Calcutta by former Awami League MP, who fled to India in August 1975. Seeks separate state in southwest Bangladesh (where there is a large Hindu minority). Responsible for attempted take-over of Bangladesh High Commission in Calcutta in 1984. Bangladesh security forces launched a crackdown against the movement in 1988, arresting many top leaders. [11a]

Shanti Bahini ('Peace Force')

Armed wing of the Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), a tribal insurgency which operated in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Founded in 1972. Stood for political independence for the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and drew support from Chakma tribes. However, following the Peace Accord of 2 December 1997, Shantu Larma reportedly declared an end to the Shanti Bahini. On 10 February 1998 the Shanti Bahini formally surrendered their arms to the Government, marking an end to the 25-year insurgency. The group is now considered to have disbanded, having surrendered their arms and had criminal cases against them dropped as part of the Peace Accord.

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

Annex C: Prominent People

AHMED Prof. Iajuddin

President of Bangladesh from September 2002 to February 2009. [20s] [20ef]

AHMED Dr Fakhruddin

Formerly a Governor of the Bank of Bangladesh; served as Chief Advisor of the Caretaker Government (in effect, acting prime minister) from January 2007 to December 2008. [38ai]

AHMED General Moeen

Army Chief of Staff from June 2005 to June 2009.

ERSHAD General Hossain Mohammed

Leader of the main faction of the Jatiya Party from 1986 until June 2007. Assumed power following a military coup in March 1982 and ruled the country as an autocrat until December 1990. [1a] [40a] [38ck]

HASINA Sheikh

Leader of the Awami League (AL); Prime Minister since 6 January 2009. [20ej] Was previously Prime Minister from 1996 to 2001. A daughter of Bangladesh's founder, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Sheikh Hasina Wajed became leader of the AL in 1981. [40a] [1a]

MUBEEN General Md Abdul

Army Chief of Staff since June 2009

NIZAMI Motiur Rahman

Leader of Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh's largest Islamist party. [40a]

RAHMAN Sheikh Mujibur (Mujib)

Bangladesh's first Prime Minister; assassinated in August 1975. [1a]

RAHMAN Ziaur (General Zia)

Assumed the Presidency in April 1977; assassinated in May 1981. [1a]

RAHMAN Zillur

President of Bangladesh since 12 February 2009. [20ef]

YUNUS Dr Muhammad

Micro-credit pioneer and founder of Grameen Bank. Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006. [20cm]

ZIA Begum Khaleda

Leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Prime Minister from 2001 to October 2006. Was previously Prime Minister from 1991 to 1996. The wife of former President Ziaur Rahman, she became leader of the BNP in 1981. [20i] [40a]

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

Annex D: List of Abbreviations

AI	Amnesty International
AL	Awami League
BCL	Bangladesh Chhatra League
BJP	Bangladesh Jatiya Party
BLAST	Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BNWLA	Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
EU	European Union
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK)
FH	Freedom House
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HUJI/HuJI	Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICRC	International Committee for Red Cross
ICS	Islami Chhatra Shibir
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOJ	Islami Oikya Jote
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JCD	Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal
JMB or JM	Jamatul Mujahedin Bangladesh
JMJB	Jagrata Muslim Janata of Bangladesh
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
NBCP	New Biplobi Communist Party
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
ODPR	Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PBC	Purba Bangla(r) Communist Party
RSF	Reporters sans Frontières
STC	Save The Children
TI	Transparency International
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSD	United States Department of State
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

[Return to contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

Annex E: References to Source Material

The Home Office is not responsible for the content of external websites.

Numbering of source documents is not always consecutive because some older sources have been removed in the course of updating this document.

[1] Europa World Online

(Online version of the Europa World Year Book, published by the Taylor and Francis Group – Routledge. <http://www.europaworld.com/pub/> By subscription)

- a Bangladesh: Recent History (Accessed 19 February 2009)
- b Bangladesh: Country Profile, Country Statistics (Accessed 17 March 2009)
- c Bangladesh: Government and Politics (Accessed 17 March 2009)

[2] US State Department

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/> (Human Rights reports)

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/irf/rpt/> (Religious Freedom reports)

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3452.htm> (Background Note)

- a Bangladesh Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2007, published 11 March 2008
- b Bangladesh Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2008, published 25 February 2009
- c Bangladesh: International Religious Freedom Report 2006, published 15 September 2006
- d Bangladesh Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2004, published 28 February 2005
- e Background Note: Bangladesh; updated August 2008
- f Bangladesh Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2005, published 8 March 2006
- g Bangladesh: International Religious Freedom Report 2003
- h Bangladesh: International Religious Freedom Report 2004
- j Country Reports on Terrorism (Bangladesh): 30 April 2009
- l Bangladesh Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006
- m Bangladesh: International Religious Freedom Report 2007
- n Trafficking in Persons Report 2008, released 4 June 2008
- o Bangladesh Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2003, published 25 February 2004
- p Bangladesh: International Religious Freedom Report 2008 (released 19 September 2008)
- q Trafficking in Persons Report 2009: released 16 June 2009

[3] Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board

<http://www.irb.gc.ca/default.htm>

- b BGD100388.E, 8 August 2005. Bangladesh: Prevalence of fraudulent, forged or fake documents...
- f Bangladesh: State Protection: September 1998
- i BGD42249.E, 12 January 2004. Violence against women, especially domestic violence; state protection and resources available to survivors of abuse.
- j BGD42086.E, 12 January 2004. Whether civilians bribe newspapers to publish fraudulent articles; frequency of this practice; which newspapers are most vulnerable to corruption; names of newspapers known to be corrupt (2001-2003).

- p BGD42162.E, 11 November 2003. 'Bangladesh: Whether a man is required to give his consent...'
- q BGD42137.E, 20 November 2003. 'Bangladesh: Whether minor children travelling...'
- r BGD42288.E, 9 December 2003. Follow-up to BGD42137.E
- s BGD43359.E, 21 February 2005. 'Bangladesh: Meaning of the phrase "No further extension"...'
- t BGD101510.E, 9 August 2006. 'Bangladesh: The situation of Christians...'
- u BGD101509.E, 4 August 2006. 'Bangladesh: The situation of Hindus...'
- v BGD100462.E, 16 August 2005. 'Bangladesh: The situation of Buddhists...'
- x BGD42664.E, 1 June 2004. 'Bangladesh: Societal attitudes towards handicapped people...'

[4] Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

(website of the Prime Minister's Office)

<http://www.pmo.gov.bd/constitution/contents.htm> (Last accessed 12 August 2008)

[5] Keesing's Record of World Events

(by subscription)

- b March 1998
- c April 1998
- e November 2006 (Scientific Research)
- h March 1999
- j May 2006
- k June 2006
- l August 2006
- n February 2007
- o March 2007
- p August 2007
- q September 2007
- s November 2007
- t February 2009

[6] Bangladesh News

<http://www.bangladeshnews.com> (Accessed 20 June 2009)

- a The 54 ordinances: 16 February 2009

[7] Amnesty International

<http://web.amnesty.org> (Last accessed 26 June 2009)

- e Bangladesh: Accountability needed in 'Operation Clean Heart', AI Index: ASA 13/015/2002, 23 October 2002
- k Bangladesh: The Ahmadiyya Community – their rights must be protected, AI Index: ASA 13/005/2004: 23 April 2004
- m Chittagong Hill Tracts: A Call for Justice at Mahalchari. AI Index: ASA 13/003/2004: 1 March 2004
- p Bangladesh: Fear of imminent execution. AI Index: ASA 13/009/2006: 28 September 2006
- q Bangladesh: Death in custody and reports of torture: AI Index: ASA 13/005/2007: 10 May 2007
- r Bangladesh Annual Report 2007 (events of 2006)
- s Bangladesh Annual Report 2008 (events of 2007)
- t Death Sentences and Executions in 2008: AI Index ACT 50/003/2009: 24 March 2009
- u Bangladesh Annual Report 2009 (events of 2008)

- v Border guards die in custody in Bangladesh: 27 March 2009

[8] United Nations

- a Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (website): Ratifications and Reservations. (Accessed 22 June 2009)
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/ratification/index.htm>
- b 'Human Security in Bangladesh, In Search of Justice and Dignity', a report on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme: September 2002
<http://www.un-bd.org/undp/info/hsr/index.html> (Accessed 24 March 2006)
- c Economic and Social Council. Statement submitted by the Asian Legal Resource Centre: 'Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective: Violence against Women'. E/CN.4/2003/NGO/96 dated 10 March 2003.
- d Bangladesh Common Country Assessment 2004 (published January 2005)
http://www.un-bd.org/docs/CCA_Jan_2005.pdf
- e United Nations Development Programme: 'Largest ever development project in the CHT approved' (Media release): 15 December 2005
- f Millennium Development Goals: Bangladesh Progress Report: February 2005 <http://www.un-bd.org/docs/Bangladesh%20MDG%20Progress%20Report.pdf> (Accessed 19 August 2008)
- g UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division: 'World Abortion Policies 2007'
<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/abortion/doc/bangladesh1.doc> (Accessed 23 August 2008)
- h United Nations Office at Geneva: UN Human Rights Special Rapporteur expresses concern about Sigma Huda's trial: 31 August 2007
[http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/\(httpNewsByYear_en\)/8427B9AB3CE48B35C1257348002A7D71?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/(httpNewsByYear_en)/8427B9AB3CE48B35C1257348002A7D71?OpenDocument) (Accessed 20 September 2008)

[9] Reporters sans frontières (Reporters without Borders)

- http://www.rsf.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=50
- f Maoist group admits responsibility for fatal Khulna bombing: 15 February 2005
- k Bangladesh - 2008 Annual Report, dated 8 February 2008
http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=25616&Valider=OK (Accessed 4 September 2008)

[10] Human Rights Watch (HRW)

- <http://www.hrw.org/>
- a Breach of Faith: Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in Bangladesh: June 2005. (Vol. 17, No. 6c.)
- b HRW World Report 2006 (covering 2005): published 18 January 2006
- c Judge, Jury and Executioner: Torture and Extrajudicial Killings by Bangladesh's Elite Security Force: December 2006. (Vol. 18, No. 16c.)
- f The Torture of Tasneem Khalil: How the Bangladesh Military Abuses its Power under the State of Emergency: February 2008 (Vol. 20, No. 1c.)
- g Ravishing the Vulnerable: Abuses against Persons at High Risk of HIV Infection in Bangladesh: August 2003 (Vol. 15, No. 6c.)
- h Bangladesh: Abuses Grow in Crackdown on Protests: 25 August 2007
- i HRW World Report 2008 (covering 2007): dated 31 January 2008

- j Bangladesh: Repeal New Terror Law: 30 June 2008
- k HRW World Report 2009 (covering 2008): dated 31 January 2008
- l 'Ignoring Executions and Torture – Impunity for Bangladesh's Security Forces': 18 May 2009
- j Bangladesh: Investigate torture allegations: 25 March 2009

- [11] **UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office or British High Commission, Dhaka**
 - e Human Rights Annual Report 2007
<http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/human-rights-report-2007>
 - f Letter dated 4 November 2003 (Medical facilities in Bangladesh)
 - g Letter dated 1 December 2003 (Authentication of documents in Bangladesh)
 - h Letter dated 1 October 2004 (Petitioning a magistrate)
 - i 23 July 2007
 - k Suggestions/additions to Bangladesh COI Report: 6 November 2007
 - l 4 November 2007 (Separation of Judiciary)
 - n 8 June 2008

- [12] **Himal South Asian magazine**
<http://himalmag.com/>
 - a The Shadow Citizens, by Afsan Chowdhury: May 2004
<http://www.south-asia.com/himal/July/shadow.htm>
 - b Comfortable in the virtual closet, by Tanveer Reza Rouf: March 2008
http://himalmag.com/2008/march/cover_bangladeshi_gay_community.htm

- [13] **War Resisters' International**
Bangladesh entry; last updated 27 March 1998
http://www.wri-irg.org/programmes/world_survey/reports/Bangladesh (Accessed 6 May 2009)

- [14] **World Health Organization (WHO)**
<http://www.who.int/en/>
 - a Country Health System Profile, Bangladesh (Accessed 28 August 2008)
http://www.searo.who.int/EN/Section313/Section1515_6038.htm
 - b Department of Mental Health and Substance Dependence, WHO, Geneva. Mental Health Atlas 2005. (Accessed 3 September 2008)
http://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/atlas/profiles_countries_a_b.pdf
 - c WHO Statistical Information System
<http://www.who.int/whosis/en/index.html> (Accessed 3 September 2008)
 - e 'Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women': November 2005
http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/en/ (Accessed 19 August 2008)

- [15] **The New Nation, Dhaka**
<http://nation.ittefaq.com/issues/>
 - a Speedy Trial Act extended for two years: 9 March 2009
<http://nation.ittefaq.com/issues/2008/03/09/news0687.htm> (Accessed 15 June 2009)

- [16] **Bangladesh Election Commission (website)**
<http://www.ecs.gov.bd/English/> (Last accessed 22 June 2009)
 - a 2001 General Election: Share of Votes by Party
 - b 2001 General Election: Parliamentary General Seats after By-Election

- c Total seats won by political parties (unofficial)
<http://123.49.39.5/result/report4.php?lang=en>
- d Representation of the People (Amendment) Ordinance 2008
<http://www.ecs.gov.bd/MenuExternalFilesEng/236.pdf>
- e Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners
http://www.ecs.gov.bd/English/MenuTemplate1.php?Parameter_MenuID=8&ByDate=0&Year=
- f Electoral roll with photograph
http://www.ecs.gov.bd/English/MenuTemplate1.php?Parameter_MenuID=48&ByDate=0&Year=
- g Constitution of Bangladesh: Part VII (Elections)
http://www.ecs.gov.bd/English/QLTemplate1.php?Parameter_QLSCat_ID=33&ByDate=0&Year=

[17] USAID

www.usaid.gov/bd and <http://www.usaid.gov/bd/files/niphp.doc>
(Accessed 14 July 2008) "Partnerships within the National Integrated Health and Population Program (NIPHP)"

[18] Government of Bangladesh: Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs

- a 'The Bangladesh Citizenship (Temporary Provisions) Order, 1972', Notification published by the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs (Law Division)
<http://www.bangladoot.org/CitizeshipOrder1972.pdf>
(Accessed 6 September 2008)
- b "Bangladesh Citizenship (Temporary Provisions) Rules, 1978", Notification published in the Bangladesh Gazette Extraordinary dated (27/7/1978)
<http://www.bangladoot.org/Citizenshiplaw%20amendment.pdf>
(Accessed 6 September 2008)

[19] Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh

- a National AIDS/STD Programme: 2008 UNGASS Country Progress Report (Reporting period: January 2006-December 2007)
http://data.unaids.org/pub/Report/2008/bangladesh_2008_country_progress_report_en.pdf (Accessed via UNAIDS website, 24 September 2008)

[20] BBC News OnLine

- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>
- b Blurring the gender lines in Bangladesh: 30 November 2000
- e Police probe Bangladesh bombing: 13 January 2004
- f Migrants return to Bangladesh: 4 June 2009
- g Four killed in Dhaka riot: 13 February 2001
- h Bangladesh's feuding politicians: 26 September 2001
- n Thousands at Bangladesh funeral: 26 August 2003
- o Timeline: Bangladesh. Updated 2 March 2009 (Accessed 3 June 2009)
- q Fighting for sexual tolerance: 21 June 2005
- s Bangladesh names new president: 5 September 2002
- y Bangladesh army deaths amnesty: 9 January 2003
- z Bangladesh crime troops go home: 11 January 2003
- ab Troops resume Dhaka crime fight: 18 February 2003
- ae Bangladesh law boosts women MPs: 16 May 2004
- af Bangladesh appeals for food aid: 3 August 2004
- ag Bangladesh opposition comeback: 15 June 2004

- ai Bangladesh's unsolved bombings: 21 August 2004
- aj Blasts hit Bangladesh party rally: 22 August 2004
- ak Clashes erupt across Bangladesh: 22 August 2004
- al New strike over Bangladesh attack: 30 August 2004
- am Country Profile: Bangladesh. Updated 2 March 2009 (Accessed 1 May 2009)
- ap Top Bangladeshi politician killed: 7 May 2004
- ar Bangladesh garments aim to compete: 6 January 2005
- aw Bangladesh and Islamic Militants: 25 February 2005
- ay Court suspends Ahmadiyya book ban: 21 December 2004
- az Police hold Bangladesh professor: 23 February 2005
- ba Bangladesh 15 on sedition charges: 28 February 2005
- bc Bombs explode across Bangladesh: 17 August 2005
- bd Bangladesh to appeal court ruling: 31 August 2005
- be Ten charged with Bangladesh murder: 21 March 2005
- bf Village governments ruled illegal: 2 August 2005
- bg Death for 22 in Bangladesh murder: 16 April 2005
- bj Bangladesh tops the most corrupt list: 18 October 2005
- bk Dhaka outlaws third Islamic group: 17 October 2005
- bl Judges killed in Bangladesh blast: 14 November 2005
- bm Nine die in Bangladesh bombings: 29 November 2005
- bo Sentencing over Bangladesh bombs: 9 February 2006
- bq Top Bangladesh militant captured: 2 March 2006
- bt Bangladesh 'militants' sentenced: 20 February 2006
- bv Violent Dhaka rally against sect: 23 December 2005
- bz Huge Bangladesh opposition rally: 18 September 2006
- cb Bangladesh poll delay emergency: 11 January 2007
- cc Q & A: Bangladesh in political crisis: 12 January 2007
- cd Troops enforce Bangladesh order: 12 January 2007
- cf Bangladesh pledge on power shift: 27 October 2006
- cg Bangladesh power shift postponed: 28 October 2006
- ch No end to Bangladesh poll crisis: 30 October 2006
- ci US deported Bangladesi coup man: 18 June 2007
- cm Nobel laureate to enter politics: 19 February 2007
- cn Blasts rock Bangladesh stations: 1 May 2007
- co Bangladesh concern over possible rise of new militant group: 3 May 2007
- cp Bangladesh politicians questioned: 5 February 2007
- cq Bangladesh ex-minister arrested: 6 February 2007
- cr Many targets of anti-corruption drive: 12 March 2007
- cs Top Bangladesh politician is held: 13 April 2007
- cu Bangladesh reporter held in raid: 11 May 2007
- cv What next for Bangladesh dynasties? 26 April 2007
- cw Bangladesh issues ex-PM warrant: 22 April 2007
- cx Bangladesh's ex-PM's return blocked: 22 April 2007
- cy Sheikh Hasina warrant suspended: 23 April 2007
- cz Son of Bangladesh ex-PM arrested: 16 April 2007
- da Bangladesh ex-PM 'in exile deal': 17 April 2007
- db Bangladesh exile plan 'delayed': 24 April 2007
- de Bangladesh ex-PM in murder probe: 5 June 2007
- dg S Asia floods trigger aid effort: 4 August 2007
- dh Police arrest Bangladeshi ex-PM: 16 July 2007
- di Bangladesh ex-PM formally charged: 24 July 2007
- dj Mudslides kill many in Bangladesh: 11 June 2007
- dk Race to reach cyclone survivors: 21 November 2007
- dl US military cyclone aid finishes: 7 December 2007

- dn Court to choose Bangladesh judges: 1 November 2007
- do Professors jailed in Bangladesh: 4 December 2007
- dq Bangladesh teachers are released: 22 January 2008
- dr Bangladesh grenade suspects held: 29 October 2007
- ds Bangladesh companies in food move: 5 May 2007
- dt Bangladesh bans most rice exports: 7 May 2008
- du Citizenship for Bihari refugees: 19 May 2008
- dv Bangladesh parties decline talks: 28 May 2008
- dw Bangladesh former PM is arrested: 3 September 2007
- dx Bangladesh ex-PM Hasina case sent to special court: 29 January 2008
- dy Bangladesh: Hasina writ verdict to decide other cases: 1 February 2008
- dz Bugs eat Bangladesh court papers: 30 May 2008
- ea Ex-Bangladesh PM 'to be released': 9 June 2008
- eb Bangladesh former PM flies to US: 12 June 2008
- ec Ex-Bangladersh PM not to go abroad: 9 June 2008
- ed Bangladesh to hold local election: 20 June 2008
- ee Bangladesh lifts emergency rule: 17 December 2008
- ef Bangladesh elects new president: 11 February 2009
- eg Awami League wins B'desh election: 5 August 2008
- eh Bangladesh lifts emergency rule: 17 December 2008
- ei Hasina wins Bangladesh landslide: 30 December 2008
- ej Democracy returns in Bangladesh: 6 January 2009
- ek BNP to join parliament on first day: 12 January 2009
- el Bangladesh election is deferred: 24 November 2008
- em Khaleda Zia rejects 'rigged' poll: 30 December 2008
- en Bangladesh poll campaign begins: 12 December 2008
- eo Bangladesh troops find mass grave: 27 February 2009
- ep Bangladesh cuts mutiny death toll: 2 March 2009
- eq UK team probes Bangladesh mutiny: 11 March 2009
- er UK to probe arms haul: 25 March 2009
- es Bangladesh elects new president: 11 February 2009

[21] LexisNexis Database

- b Financial Times Information: Immunity for actions during anti-terror drive: 27 February 2003
- c
- d 28 August 2004 – Financial Times Information: Bangladesh police, civil groups thwart attempt to seize Ahmadiyya complex
- f Bangladesh militants continue to get new recruits. 21 July 2005. Prothom Alo, Dhaka, via BBC Monitoring
- g Bangladesh opposition holds 'grand rally' in Dhaka: 5 February 2006. ATN Bangladeshi Television, via BBC Monitoring
- h Financial Times Information: Bangladesh interim government to sign UN anti-graft convention: 6 February 2007
- i Bangladesh hit by student riots: 21 August 2007
- j Bangladesh moves to quell unrest: 24 August 2007
- k Curfew in Bangladesh cities ends : 27 August 2007

[22] xe.com Universal Currency Converter

website <http://www.xe.com/ucc/full.shtml> (Accessed 21 April 2009)

[23] Agence France-Presse

(via LexisNexis)

- f Bangladesh bans publications of minority Islamic sect: 9 January 2004

- i Bangladesh militants charged in connection with envoy attack: 9 June 2007
- j Bangladesh government bans two Islamic groups over recent bombings: 23 February 2005
- l Bangladesh bombing 'mastermind' charged in absentia: 26 August 2005
- m Bangladesh arrests a leader of banned Islamic group in blast probe: 29 August 2005
- n Bangladesh passes law to tackle early marriages: 8 March 2005
- o Tens of thousands rally against Bangladesh government: 5 February 2006
- p Bangladesh sentences 21 Islamic militants to death for bombings: 28 February 2006
- q Thousands protest 25 dollar minimum wage in Bangladesh : 10 October 2006
- r 17,000 arrested in Bangladesh corruption clampdown, official says: 11 July 2007
- s Bangladesh seeks tonnes of food aid after cyclone – official: 28 November 2007
- t Amnesty calls for Bangladesh 'truth comission': 10 January 2008

[24] International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA)

<http://www.ilga.org/>

- a World Legal Survey - Bangladesh

http://www.ilga.info/Information/Legal_survey/Asia_Pacific/bangladesh.htm (Accessed 29 May 2007)

- b 'State-sponsored Homophobia: A world survey of laws prohibiting same sex activity between consenting adults', edited by Daniel Ottosson: May 2009

http://www.ilga.org/statehomophobia/State_sponsored_homophobia_ILGA_07.pdf (Accessed 14 July 2009)

[25] The Mappa Ltd: Bangladesh Guide Map 2003

[26] Bangla2000 website

www.bangla2000.com

- a Education in Bangladesh (Accessed 25 June 2009)

[27] Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies

<http://www.apcss.org>

Religious Radicalism & Security in South Asia (2004) Chapter 5. 'Madrassa Education in Pakistan and Bangladesh', by Mumtaz Ahmad

[28] Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)

<http://www.brac.net/>

- a Annual Report 2008

<http://www.brac.net/useruploads/files/SDP-Annual%20Report%202008.pdf> (Accessed 23 June 2009)

[29] Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)

www.msf.org

- b Bangladesh: Assisting people in neglected areas: 5 December 2005
- c Bangladesh: Five hour hikes common when assisting remote populations in Chittagong Hills: 19 July 2004

<http://www.msf.org/msfinternational/countries/asia/bangladesh/index.cfm>

- d Rohingya refugees face unacceptable abuse in Bangladesh: 18 June 2009
http://www.msf.org.uk/Rohingya_20090618.news
- [30] **The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN)**
www.crin.org
- a Situation of Children in Bangladesh 1996 (Accessed 3 October 2006)
- b Bangladesh High Court Verdict on Children in Conflict with the Law. 11 July 2006. (Source: Save the Children UK – Bangladesh Office)
- [31] **Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (University of Dhaka)**
 “A Forsaken Minority: The Camp Based Bihari Community in Bangladesh”, by Chowdhury R Abrar (undated document)
- [32] **International Labour Organisation (ILO)**
www.ilo.org
- a **Bangladesh: Child labour situation**
- <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/newdelhi/ipe/responses/bangladesh/index.htm> (Accessed 22 June 2009)
- b Bangladesh: Child Labour Data Country Brief
<http://www.ilo.org/ipeinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=7790>
 (Accessed 19 August 2008)
- [33] **Bangladesh Ministry of Home Affairs (website)**
<http://www.mha.gov.bd/sitemap.php> (Accessed 19 August 2008)
- [34] **The Redress Trust**
<http://www.redress.org> (Accessed 10 June 2009)
 ‘Torture in Bangladesh, 1971 – 2004’. Report dated August 2004
- [35] **The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers**
 Global Report 2008 (covers the period April 2004-October 2007)
http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/files/country_pdfs/FINAL_2008_Global_Report.pdf (Accessed 15 June 2009)
- [36] **Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)**
<http://www.unaids.org> (Bangladesh and epidemiology sections)
- a Accessed 13 September 2004
- b Accessed 2 October 2006
- c 2008 Update (Accessed 22 June 2009)
- d ‘HIV and Men who have Sex with Men in Asia and the Pacific’: September 2006 (pages 29-35) http://data.unaids.org/Publications/IRC-pub07/jc901-msm-asiapacific_en.pdf
- [37] **US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)**
<http://www.refugees.org>
- c Worldwide Refugee Information: Bangladesh Country Report 2002
- d Worldwide Refugee Information: ‘Fifty Years in Exile: The Biharis Remain in India.’ Source: World Refugee Survey 1998
- e World Refugee Survey 2005: Published June 2005
- f World Refugee Survey 2006: Published June 2006
- g World Refugee Survey 2007: Published June 2007
- h World Refugee Survey 2008: Published June 2008
- i World Refugee Survey 2009: Published June 2009

[38] **The Daily Star (of Bangladesh)**

<http://www.thedailystar.net/>

<http://www.thedailystar.net/archive.htm>

- c Rice turns cheap: 24 March 2009
- d Hasina vows to sacrifice her life for people: 4 October 2004
- e Scotland Yard in city to probe shrine blast: 24 May 2004
- g Massive arrests ahead of Hawa Bhaban siege plan: 20 April 2004
- h Arrest frenzy continues in city: 23 April 2004
- i Mass arrests stopped: 27 April 2004
- l The hidden face of the Bangla Bhai gang: 17 May 2004
- m CHT land body to be activated: 1 June 2007
- n Mass arrest put on hold until Oct 3: 30 September 2004
- o Kibria, 4 AL men killed in grenade attacks: 28 January 2005
- q Storm of protests, non-stop hartal: 29 January 2005
- r 50 injured as Bangla Bhai's men clash with police: 25 January 2005
- t JMJB behind Jatra attack, nabbed terrorist says: 30 January 2005
- w Bangla Bhai's men to keep bombing cinemas: 4 February 2005
- x Top outlaw Mrinal slain in West Bengal: 22 September 2004
- y 10 BNP men charged with killing Kibria: 21 March 2005
- aa Killing spree in 'crossfire': 18 July 2005
- ac Inside Militant Groups: Profiles show them interlinked: 28 August 2005
- ae Militants strike again on courts: 4 October 2005
- ag The Judiciary and its importance: 16 July 2005
- ah Emergency declared; Iajuddin quits as chief advisor: 12 January 2007
- ai Fakhruddin new CA: 13 January 2007
- aj Emergency ordinance promulgated: 14 January 2007
- ak Call for adequate budget allocation for street children: 10 June 2007
- al Hasina declares tougher actions: 11 January 2007
- an Rules promulgated to curb political activity: 27 January 2007
- ao EC reconstitution likely in a couple of days: 21 January 2007
- ap CA vows to transfer power through polls at earliest: 22 January 2007
- aq HC suspends all polls for 3 months: 30 January 2007
- as Separation of judiciary in sight, at last: 17 January 2007
- au Six JMB militants hanged: 31 March 2007
- bc Caught political bigwigs detained, sent to jail: 6 February 2007
- bd AAC bigwigs decide to step down: 7 February 2007
- bg 50 given 72 hours to submit wealth report: 19 February 2007
- bh Anti-graft body seeks to bolster its muscles: 22 March 2007
- bi Anti-graft drive lacks experience, co-ordination: 19 April 2007
- bj No hearings on bail prayers in 10 days: 6 April 2007
- bk Special graft courts start rolling: 7 May 2007
- bo Hasina, Nizami, their top leaders charged: 12 April 2007
- bq National ID cards, voter list with photos on way: 22 March 2007
- br HC declares void electoral role: 28 March 2007
- bs Poll reform proposals: 6 April 2007
- bt Election by end of 2008: 13 April 2007
- bu EC to push political parties into reforms: 8 May 2007
- bv 12,000 teams to do voter listing at camps: 15 May 2007
- by CA says his admin, not army, controls country: 10 May 2007
- bz Govt further changes emergency rules: 10 April 2007
- ca Hasina sued for extortion: 10 April 2007
- cb Ban on Hasina's return lifted: no bar on Khaleda: 26 April 2007
- cd Right to bail curbed until trial ends: 22 March 2007

- cg Two bombs with Jadid al Qaeda message found: 25 May 2007
- ch Rab captures 2 militants who threatened to blow up Jatiya Press Club: 25 May 2007
- cj JMB patron Aminul jailed: 27 July 2007
- ck Ershad quits party post: 1 July 2007
- cl Govt restricts Hasina's going abroad: 15 June 2007
- cq National Human Rights Commission sees the light of day: 15 December 2007 (Law and Our Rights)
- cr Rights bodies decry flaws in ordinance: 27 February 2008
- cs Fighting for survival...: 26 September 2005
- ct Separate gender identification for hermaphrodites demanded: 11 June 2007
- cu Sardined into prisons: 26 July 2008
- cv Judiciary freed from executive fetters today: 1 November 2007
- cw Worn out, they see no light at the end of tunnel: 20 June 2007
- cx Editorial: Whither police reform? 26 August 2008
- cy Five university teachers remanded: 26 August 2007
- cz Court orders trial of 4 DU teachers: 12 December 2007
- dc Anti-terror ordinance okayed: 19 May 2008
- dd Stranded Urdu-speaking people divided over accepting Bangladeshi citizenship: 27 May 2008
- de Court declares 300,000 'stranded Pakistanis' Bangladesh citizens: 19 May 2008
- df Fact-finding body releases list of 1,597 'war criminals' of 1971
- dg Koko freed for 2 months: 18 July 2008
- dh Ban on indoor politics relaxed: 10 September 2007
- di Govt to reconstitute CHT Lang Commission soon: 1 April 2008
- dj Reconstituted CHT body goes to hills today: 7 August 2008
- dk Hasina sworn in as PM: 7 January 2009
- dl Moeen retires, new chief to take over army tomorrow: 14 June 2009
- dm Ordinances chosen: 16 February 2009
- dn Polls in 4 city corporations today under emergency: 4 August 2008
- do Double blow: 1 January 2009
- dp No confusion over high turnout: 6 January 2009
- dq List of 8.11cr voters handed over to EC: 14 October 2008
- dr Hasina sworn in as PM: 7 January 2009
- ds Sheikh Hasina's cabinet: Gutsy but risky: 12 January 2009
- dt A Pakistani viewpoint: 18 December 2006
- du Ban on indoor politics relaxed: 10 September 2007
- dv EC wants politics ban to go by March: 6 February 2008
- dw Observers find no irregularities: 1 January 2009
- dx 133 constituency boundries changed, Dhaka gets 20 seats: 30 April 2008_
- dy Emergency to be lifted before polls: 2 December 2008
- dz Parties unite to stop post-poll violence: 13 January 2009
- ea Voter list by Oct '08, poll by Dec: 16 July 2007
- eb EC declares polls fixture: 3 November 2008
- ec 450 BDR men found involved so far: 10 March 2009
- ed Govt to consult legal experts to decide mode of trial: 21 April 2009
- ee Govt investigating 'crossfire' killings: 31 May 2009
- ef 96 ordinances come to a full stop: 25 February 2009
- eg HR Commission bill likely to be passed in this JS session: 8 June 2009
- eh Third Khaleda notice stayed for 3 months: 28 May 2009
- ei Biharis embark on new era: 30 December 2008
- ej Biharis kept waiting for passport: 26 January 2009

- ek Army investigation restricted, many finds inconclusive: 15 May 2009
- el Zillur in, Iajuddin out: 12 February 2009
- em Justice Amirul made chairman of National HR Commission: 20 November 2008

[39] United News of Bangladesh/UNB News Agency

Accessed via LexisNexis:

- d Death penalty: 29 August 2004
- h Cases – Pending: 26 January 2004
- i Outlaw – killed: 4 October 2004
- j Gunfight – killed: 8 October 2004
- k Lead, Crossfire – 5 killed: 26 November 2004
- l Outlaws – Lynched: 2 December 2004
- m Outlaw – Killed: 2 February 2005
- n Crossfire – Killed: 12 February 2005
- o Gunfight – Three killed: 20 December 2004
- q Bill – Early Marriage: 16 February 2005
- r Shaikh Abdur Rahman accused in five cases: 24 August 2005
- s Report: Price factors and living conditions: 17 May 2007
- u Police yet to find existence of ‘Jadid al Qaeda Bangladesh’: 19 May 2007
- x HC declares illegal Gram Sarkar: 2 August 2005
- z Report: Government gets tough with militants: 4 March 2005
- ab By-election: 11 October 2001
- ac Two injured by bullet, splinter as the militants retaliate: 6 March 2006
- af Powerful bomb recovered from RUET in Rajshahi: 14 June 2007
- ag General election anytime between October and December next year, CEC says announcing electoral roadmap: 15 July 2007
- ah Report – The case against Hasina: 20 July 2007
- ak Caretaker government approves Ordinance to form National Human Rights Commission: 9 December 2007

Accessed via Thomson-Reuters DataStar:

- am Birth-Death Registration Bill Passed: 30 November 2004
- an Hundred per cent registration within two years: Bhuiyan: 27 October 2005
- ao Countrywide birth registration begins: 3 July 2007
- ar Biharis eligible to become voters as citizens of Bangladesh: High Court: 18 May 2008
- at SC grants govt plea for clearing way for resuming stalled trial of Hasina in extortion case: 24 January 2008
- au An intransigent Khaleda: 20 June 2008
- av All legal bars to detained ex-PM Hasina’s trip abroad lifted...: 9 June 2008
- aw ACC to follow same process in dealing with new list of 80 corrupt suspects: 1 October 2007
- ay Export growth in apparel sector may slide by March/ April, BGMEA president seeks govt support: 18 February 2009
- az Bangladesh Govt to Buy Boro Paddy, Rice from May 1: 27 April 2009
- ba Tarique Rahman arrives in London for treatment: 12 September 2008
- bb Detained ex-PM released: 11 September 2008
- bc Private Homes Raided for ‘Immorality’, 28 March 2008
- bd Two More Executions for Homosexual Conduct, 22 November 2005
- be The issue is torture, 31 March 2008
- bf Dec 29 election conducted with credibility: ANFREL: 31 December 2008
- bg Commonwealth Observer Group finds no evidence to justify BNP’s claim of election under a blueprint: 31 December 2009

- bh 54 ordinances to be made law: 20 February 2009
- bi Outlawing the malpractice of 'so-called fatwa': 20 March 2009
- bj Govt puts official death toll from Aila devastation at 155: 29 May 2009

[40] Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)

(by subscription)

- a Bangladesh Country Profile 2006
- b Bangladesh Country Report, January 2005
- d Bangladesh Country Report, January 2006
- e Bangladesh Country Report, July 2006
- g Bangladesh Country Report, May 1998
- h Bangladesh Country Report, January 2007
- i Bangladesh Country Report, April 2007
- j Bangladesh Country Profile 2007
- l Bangladesh Country Report, January 2008
- n Bangladesh Country Profile 2008 (Editorial closing date 18 July 2008)
- o Bangladesh Country Report, August 2008
- p 'Bangladesh politics – Numerous local elections loom in 2008': 2 January 2008
- q Bangladesh Country Report, January 2009
- r Bangladesh Country Report, February 2009
- s Bangladesh Country Report, May 2009
- t Bangladesh Country Report, December 2008
- u 'Bangladesh politics – Emergency rule lifted': 17 December 2008
- v 'Bangladesh politics – Awami win': 30 December 2008

[41] The Economist

(on-line subscription)

- a Bangladesh: The coup that dare not speak its name: 20 January 2007

[42] Transparency International

http://www.transparency.org/policy_and_research/surveys_indices/cpi/#cpi2004

- c Corruption in Bangladesh: A Household Survey, 2005 – Summary Findings www.ti-bangladesh.org/documents/HouseholdSurvey200405-sum1.pdf
- e Survey on Corruption in Bangladesh: Report of Phase 2 activities: Baseline survey. Conducted for Transparency International Bangladesh by The Survey and Research System, Dhaka: Fieldwork conducted in August 2005, results published 2006
- f Press release: TI welcomes Bangladesh's decision to sign UN convention: 15 February 2007
- g National Household Survey 2007 on Corruption in Bangladesh (covers the period July 2006 – June 2007) <http://www.ti-bangladesh.org/research/HHSurvey07full180608.pdf> Published 18 June 2008
- h *Transparency Watch*: Interview of the month, May 2007: Dr Kamal Hossain
- i Corruption Perceptions Index 2008 http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2008 (Accessed 13 July 2009)
- j e-Waves newsletter, April 2009: 'TIB hails govt for passing RTI bill' http://www.ti-bangladesh.org/news/e-news/0904/e-news_april2009.htm

- [43] **Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Bangladesh**
<http://www.bbs.gov.bd/>
- a Preliminary Report: Population Census 2001. Published August 2001 (Accessed 19 January 2006)
 - b 'Bangladesh Census Results at a Glance'
http://www.bbs.gov.bd/dataindex/census/bang_atg.pdf
 (Accessed 25 August 2008)
 - c Statistical Pocketbook 2005. Published November 2006
 - d 'Census results by metropolitan area.'
 (Accessed 6 February 2008)
 - e 'Key Findings of HIES 2005.'
http://www.bbs.gov.bd/dataindex/hies_2005.pdf (Accessed 27 May 2009)
 - f Key findings from Wage survey 2007
http://www.bbs.gov.bd/dataindex/key_wage07.pdf (Accessed 28 July 2009)
- [44] **GlobalGayz.com**
<http://www.globalgayz.com/g-bangladesh.html>
- a Gay Bangladesh by R. Ammon. June 2006 (Accessed 1 October 2006)
- [45] **Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (iDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council (formerly Global IDP Project)**
<http://www.internal-displacement.org/>
- a Profile of Internal Displacement: Bangladesh (as of 25 February 2005)
<http://www.idpproject.org/>
 - b 'Minorities increasingly at risk of displacement.' Special report dated 28 March 2006
[http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpCountries\)/6E57E5E3F7F7952F802570A7004BB1F8?OpenDocument](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpCountries)/6E57E5E3F7F7952F802570A7004BB1F8?OpenDocument)
 (Accessed 29 June 2009)
 - c Profile of the internal displacement situation: 28 March 2006
[http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/DEE60477D0B99F33C125713F002EFFD8/\\$file/Bangladesh+-March+2006.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/DEE60477D0B99F33C125713F002EFFD8/$file/Bangladesh+-March+2006.pdf) (Accessed 29 June 2009)
- [46] **Odhikar, Bangladesh**
<http://www.odhikar.org/> (Last accessed 22 June 2009)
- b 'Women and Children in Disadvantaged Situations': April 2001
 - c 'The State of Human Rights in Bangladesh: 2006': Published March 2007
 - d Press release: "79 killed by law enforcers, 37 killed by BSF from 1 January to 31 March 2007: 2 April 2007
 - e Press release: 409 reportedly killed by Rapid Action Battalion from 24 June 2004 to 24 March 2007
 - f Press release: 50 die, 95825 arrests in the first 60 days of emergency: 12 March 2007
 - g Fact sheet: Arrests in Dhaka Metropolitan Area: April 2007
 - h Home Office visit to Odhikar, Dhaka March 2007
 - i Report: '121 killed by law enforcement, 55 killed by Indian Border Security Force between 01 January and 30 June 2007': 1 July 2007
 - j Press release: '12 people killed by Law Enforcement Agencies, 8 people killed by BSF in July 2007: 1 August 2007
 - k Press release: '180 days of the State of Emergency in Bangladesh: 11 July 2007
 - l Human Rights Concerns 2007: 1 January 2008
 - m Half-yearly human rights Report on Bangladesh: 1 July 2008
 - n Press release: Annual Human Rights Situation in Bangladesh, 2007

- o Press release: Odhikar's statement on the approval of the Anti-Terrorism Ordinance 2008: 19 May 2008
- p Ending impunity to acid violence and rape: February 2008
- q Report on 17 months of emergency in Bangladesh: 12 June 2008
- r Human Rights Report 2008: published 15 January 2009
http://www.odhikar.org/report/pdf/hr_report_2008.pdf
- s Three-month Human Rights Monitoring Report: 1 January – 31 March 2009: published 1 April 2009
- t Human Rights Monitoring Report, May 2009
- u Human Rights Monitoring Report, January 2009
- v Human Rights Monitoring Report, February 2009

[47] United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

- a [CEDAW/C/BGD/5] Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. Dated 3 January 2003.
- b [CEDAW/C/2004/II/CRP.3/Add.2/Rev.1] Concluding comments: Bangladesh. Dated 26 July 2004.

[48] Global Information Society Watch

Global Information Society Watch: 2007 report

<http://www.globaliswatch.org/files/> (Accessed 14 August 2007)
http://www.globaliswatch.org/files/pdf/GISW_Bangladesh.pdf

[49] Encyclopedia of the Nations

Bangladesh: Media (undated) (Accessed 4 September 2008)

<http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Asia-and-Oceania/Bangladesh-MEDIA.html>

[50] Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs: Country Information Service

- a CX31417, dated February 1998: Bangladesh: Profile of Asylum Claims and Country Conditions.

[51] Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

<http://www.cpj.org/>

- a Attacks on the Press 2006 Bangladesh
- b Attacks on the Press 2008 Bangladesh
- c Attacks on the Press in 2008: Asia developments: 10 February 2009
- d Special report: Getting Away with Murder 2009: 23 March 2009
- f CPJ disturbed by journalist's sedition trial: 3 March 2006
- g Office of controversial magazine Weekly Blitz bombed: 7 July 2006

[52] United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

- a [CRC/C/65/Add.22] Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under Article 44 of the Convention: Bangladesh. Dated 14 March 2003
- b [CRC/C/OPAC/BGD/1] Consideration of Reports submitted by States Parties under Article 8 (1) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict: 14 July 2005

- c [CRC/C/OPSC/BGD/1] Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 12 (1) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. Dated 23 December 2005.
http://www.bayefsky.com/reports/bangladesh_crc_c_opsc_bgd_1_2005.pdf
- d [CRC/C/OPSC/BGD/CO1] Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 12 (1) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography: Dated 5 July 2007
http://www.bayefsky.com/.pdf/bangladesh_t4_crc_opsc_45.pdf
- e [CRC/C/BGD/4 (2007)] Third & Fourth Periodic Report of the Government of Bangladesh under the CRC: August 2007
http://www.bayefsky.com/reports/bangladesh_crc_c_bgd_4_2007_adv.pdf
- f [CRC/C/OPSC/BGD/Q/1/Add.1] Written Replies By The Government Of Bangladesh to the List Of Issues... (Crc/C/OpSC/Bgd/Q/1): Dated 16 May 2007
[http://www.unhchr.ch/TBS/doc.nsf/e121f32fbc58faafc1256a2a0027ba24/a240ce82e9e9ead2c12573010050386d/\\$FILE/G0742020.doc](http://www.unhchr.ch/TBS/doc.nsf/e121f32fbc58faafc1256a2a0027ba24/a240ce82e9e9ead2c12573010050386d/$FILE/G0742020.doc)
- g [CRC/C/BGD/4] Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under Article 44 of the Convention: Bangladesh. Dated 23 October 2008
http://www.bayefsky.com/reports/bangladesh_crc_c_bgd_4_2007.doc

[53] Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR)

- <http://www.achrweb.org>
- a The Ravaged Hills of Bangladesh. ACHRF/35/2004: 25 August 2004
- b Destruction of a people: Jummas of the CHTs. Review 74/05: 25 May 2005
- c Judges under the attacks of the Jihadis: 23 November 2005
- d 'Life is not ours': Attacks on indigenous Jumma peoples.: 23 April 2008

[54] Time Magazine (Asia edition)

- <http://www.time.com/time/asia>
- a "State of Disgrace": Article dated 5 April 2004. Issue date 12 April 2004
- b "Reining in the Radicals". Webpage article dated 28 February 2005 (Subsequently published in Time Asia: 7 March 2005 Vol.165 No 9.)

[55] The Guardian (UK)

- www.guardian.co.uk
- a Rape and torture empties the villages: 21 July 2003
- b Bangladeshi poll postponed after interim leader resigns: 12 January 2007
- c Special report: High price paid for cheap UK clothes: 16 July 2007

[56] The Press Trust of India

- (accessed via Lexis/Nexis)
- a Bangla-Attack: 2 January 2004
- b Bangladesh to replace century-old Police Law: 10 May 2007

[57] Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad)

- a 'Communal Attack and Repression on Minority' Reports: January – December 2008
<http://www.bhbcop.org/bulletin/atrocity.html> (Accessed 22 June 2009)

- [58] **UNICEF**
<http://www.unicef.org/index.php>
 a Bangladesh: Background
http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/bangladesh_bangladesh_background.html (Accessed 22 June 2009)
 b UNICEF Bangladesh: Overview - Economics
 (Accessed 5 August 2008)
 c Bangladesh: Statistics
http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/bangladesh_bangladesh_statistics.html
 (Accessed 22 June 2009)
 d UNICEF Bangladesh: 'The Children': Early Years, Primary School Years; Adolescence
<http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/children.html> (Accessed 5 August 2008)
- [59] **Institute for Conflict Management, New Delhi: South Asia Terrorism Portal**
<http://www.satp.org/> (Accessed 14 June 2009)
 a Purba Bangla Communist Party
 b Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB)
 c Harkut-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI)
 d Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS)
 e Bangladesh Assessment 2008
<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/index.htm>
 f Data Sheets: updated to 15 June 2009 (Accessed 26 June 2009)
<http://satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/database/index.html>
- [60] **The Independent (Bangladesh)**
<http://independent-bangladesh.com/news>
 a Crime and Punishment: 376 hanged in 32 years: 16 October 2004
 b Govt frees EC secretariat: 31 January 2008
- [61] **Associated Press**
 (via LexisNexis)
 a Bangladesh court hands death sentences to three fugitives in killing of four Cabinet ministers: 20 October 2004
 b Bangladesh bans two radical Islamic groups, arrests 19 suspected militants: 23 February 2005
 c Bangladesh police arrest ex-PM Khaleda Zia on corruption charges: 4 September 2007
 f New Bangladesh leader takes control of security agencies as mass arrests continue: 14 January 2007
 g Bangladesh Supreme Court rejects bail for ex-Premier Khaleda Zia in corruption case: 4 October 2007
 h New evidence forces adjournment at opening of extortion trial against former Bangladesh PM: 3 December 2007
 i Bangladesh court rejects defence pleas to scrap charges of extortion against ex-leader: 13 January 2008
- [62] **CIA World Factbook**
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bg.html>
 Updated 23 April 2009 (Accessed 6 May 2009)
- [63] **Bangladesh Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma Victims (BRCT)**
<http://www.brct.org/> (Accessed 15 June 2009)

- [64] **Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF)**
<http://www.acidsurvivors.org/>
 a Statistical Facts page (Accessed 15 June 2009)
 b Information received by email from the Executive Director of the ASF on 14 June 2007
 c Discussion with the ASF Executive Director in March 2007
 d *Voice* newsletter: Extract from issue 12-13, October 2007 to January 2008
 -
- [65] **Freedom House**
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=1>
 b 'Freedom in the World' – Bangladesh (2008) Published 2 July 2008
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2008&country=7349> (Accessed 3 September 2008)
 c 'Countries at the Crossroads 2007: A Survey of Democratic Governance': Bangladesh: Published 25 September 2007
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=140&edition=8&ccrpage=37&ccrcountry=149> (Accessed 25 August 2008)
- [66] **Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)**
<http://www.ahrchk.net>
<http://www.alrc.net/>
 a Special report: 'Lawless Law Enforcement & the Parody of Judiciary in Bangladesh': Published in *article 2*, Vol.5 No.4: August 2006
<http://www.article2.org/pdf/v05n04.pdf>
- [67] **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**
<http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>
 a Briefing notes: Bangladesh: Joint emergency mission to Teknaf sees plight of Rohingya Myanmarese: 19 July 2005
 b UNHCR comments to the Advisory Panel on Country Information on the April 2005 Home Office Country Report for Bangladesh: 8 September 2005. Full comments appear on the APCI website - www.apci.org.uk
 c Rohingya refugees living in tough conditions in Bangladesh camps: 21 September 2005
 d Bangladesh: Registration starts in camps: 25 November 2005
 e UNHCR urges Bangladesh to find new homes for riverbank refugees: 7 March 2007
 f After 15 years of stagnation, improvements come to Bangladesh camps: 22 March 2007
 g UNHCR, Dhaka: 'Comments on the Bangladesh Country Report of June 2007, UK Home Office.' Received by email from UNHCR, London on 28 September 2007.
- [68] **International Federation for Human Rights/Fédération Internationale des ligues des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH)**
http://www.fidh.org/_news.php3
 a Report on fact-finding mission of December 2004: "Speaking out Makes of You a Target – Human Rights Defenders and Journalists at Risk." No 421/2: June 2005
- [69] **Dhaka Courier**
 a Neglecting the Bihari time bomb: 5 May 2000

- [70] **Rapid Action Battalion (RAB)**
<http://www.rab.gov.bd/> (Accessed 27 June 2009)
- [71] **Bangladesh Military Forces Group**
<http://www.bdmilitary.com/> (Accessed 14 June 2009)
- [72] **Bangladesh Rifles (BDR)**
<http://www.mha.gov.bd/bdr/index.html> (Accessed 7 October 2006)
- [73] **Hands Off Cain**
<http://www.handsoffcain.info/>
 a Bangladesh country report 2008
<http://www.handsoffcain.info/bancadati/schedastato.php?idcontinente=23&nome=bangladesh> (Accessed 24 August 2008)
- [74] **Refugees International (RI)**
<http://www.refugeesinternational.org/>
 a Citizens of Nowhere: The Stateless Biharis of Bangladesh: January 2006
<http://www.refugeesinternational.org/content/publication/detail/7828/>
 b Bihari: from statelessness to citizenship: 23 May 2008
<http://www.refugeesinternational.org/blog/bihari-statelessness-citizenship>
- [75] **European Commission: Delegation to Bangladesh**
<http://www.eudelbangladesh.org/> (Accessed 22 July 2009)
 a Press Release: The European Commission supports UNDP Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility Programme with 7.5 million euros: 21 August 2005
- [76] **Grameen Bank (website)**
<http://www.grameen-info.org/>
 a 'Grameen Bank at a Glance': February 2006
- [77] **Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh**
<http://www.mofa.gov.bd/index.htm>
 a 'About Bangladesh': Country Profile
http://www.mofa.gov.bd/glimpse_of_bangladesh.htm (Accessed 10 March 2006)
 b Booklet entitled 'Bangladesh: The Pioneer of Microcredit'. Published December 2005
- [78] **King's College, London: International Centre for Prison Studies**
<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/schools/law/research/icps>
 a Prison Brief for Bangladesh (Accessed 7 May 2009)
- [79] **High Commission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, London**
 a "Implementation status of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord 1997." Paper presented at a House of Lords seminar on the CHT: 28 March 2006
- [80] **Dr Nusrat Ameen: *Wife Abuse in Bangladesh: An Unrecognised Offence***
 Book published in 2005 for the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association. ISBN 984 05 1742 2

- [81] **National Kidney Foundation, Bangladesh**
<http://www.kidneybangla.org/> (Accessed 1 October 2006)

- [82] **Directorate General of Health Services**
<http://www.angelfire.com/ak/medinet/database.html> (Accessed 28 August 2008)

- [83] **Jane's Information Group** (by subscription)
<http://www.janes.com/>
 - a Jane's Terrorism & Security Monitor: Bangladesh's Rapid Action Battalion: 15 May 2006
 - b Jane's Terrorism & Security Monitor: Bangladesh's first suicide bombers: 18 January 2006
 - c Jane's Intelligence Review: Jihadist ideology struggles to take root in Bangladesh: 16 June 2006
 - d Jane's Terrorism & Security Monitor: Captures fail to halt Bangladesh militants: 7 April 2006
 - e Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment: 25 June 2009
 - f Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Non-state Armed Groups: 22 January 2007

- [84] **Law Commission of Bangladesh (website)**
<http://www.lawcommissionbangladesh.org/about.htm> (Accessed 1 October 2006)

- [85] **Bangladesh Embassy, Washington DC (website)**
<http://www.bangladoot.org/aboutbangladesh.asp> (Accessed 8 October 2006)

- [86] **CARE International UK: Bangladesh**
<http://www.careinternational.org.uk/10937/bangladesh/care-in-bangladesh.htm> (Accessed 1 May 2009)

- [87] **Financial Times (FT.com)**
www.ft.com
 - a Bangladesh postpones elections: 12 January 2007 (Accessed 15 January 2007)
 - b Bangladesh generals plan anti-corruption drive: 16 January 2007 (Accessed 31 May 2007)

- [88] **United States Department of Labor**
 - a 2007 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor – Bangladesh
<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=printdoc&docid=48caa45d38> (Accessed 17 June 2009)

- [89] **Asia Pulse**
Accessed via LexisNexis:
 - a Profile – Bangladesh's Textile Industry: 25 October 2006 (Accessed 26 October 2007)**Accessed via Thomson-Reuters DataStar:**
 - b 'National Security Council', by Barrister Harun ur Rashid: 9 May 2008

- [90] **The Nobel Foundation**
<http://nobelprize.org/> (Accessed 13 October 2007)
 The Nobel Peace Prize for 2006: 13 October 2006

- [91] **Al Jazeera**
<http://english.aljazeera.net/English>
 a Bangladesh anti-graft chief chosen: 22 February 2007
 c Hasina returns to Bangladesh: 7 May 2007
 f Dhaka charges four for 2004 attack: 9 June 2007
 g Bangladesh disaster toll rises: 13 June 2007
- [92] **BuddhaNet (Buddha Dharma Education Association)**
<http://www.buddhanet.net/> (Accessed 7 August 2007)
 a Buddhism in Bangladesh
- [93] **Prof. Mushtaq H. Khan, Department of Economics, SOAS, University of London**
 Bangladesh Human Security Assessment (2005)
 (Study on behalf of the UK Department for International Development (DfID))
- [94] **Reliant Women Development Organisation (RWDO)**
 Printed information pack (received April 2007)
- [95] **Hudson Institute**
<http://www.hudson.org/>
 Maneeza Hossain: 'Bangladesh 2007: The New Order and Islamism': June 2007 (White Paper)
- [96] **New Age** (daily newspaper)
<http://www.newagebd.com/arch.html>
 a Seven outfits join hands with JMB to carry out terror attacks: 4 May 2007
 b Intelligence fears fresh JMB attacks: 16 June 2007
 c Police asked to crush revitalised JMB: 20 June 2007
 d New police law drafted...: 10 June 2007
 e 240 so far convicted in 61 cases of high-profile corruption, crimes: 24 February 2008
 f 20,600 arrested so far in crackdown: 9 June 2008
- [97] **Bangladesh Ministry of Home Affairs: Police Reform Programme**
 (Partners: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP);
 UK Department for International Development (DfID))
<http://www.prp.org.bd/AboutUs.htm>
 a Final Report on Public Attitude Baseline Survey for the Police Reform Programme (BGD/04/001), commissioned by UNDP: Submitted 10 January 2007
<http://www.prp.org.bd/Reports/PublicAttitudeBaselineSurveyPRP.pdf>
 b Press release: Bangladesh police to provide victim support services to enhance police-community relations: 9 August 2007
 c Website pages: 'About Us'; 'Programme'; 'Major Achievements'; 'News/Press Release'. (Last accessed 23 June 2009)
 d Press release: Bangladesh Police launches new investigation to combat human trafficking: 17 June 2008
- [98] **Bangladesh Police** (Accessed 28 May 2009)
<http://www.police.gov.bd/>
 a Crime statistics (by year) 2004 to 2008
 b 'About police'

- [99] **Loving-Bengal.net / SOS-Arsenic.net**
<http://sos-arsenic.net/lovingbengal/>
 a The Bengalees and Indigenous Groups (Accessed 6 February 2008)
- [100] **Bayefsky.com**
 The United Nations Human Rights Treaties: Bangladesh
<http://www.bayefsky.com/bycategory.php/state/14> (Accessed 14 May 2009)
- [101] **The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader** (book)
 Edited by Abelove, Barale and Halperin. Published by Routledge, 1993.
 ISBN 978-0-415-90519-0
 a Chapter 35: Hijras as Neither Man Nor Women, by Dr Serena Nanda
- [102] **Save the Children**
 a **Mapping of Psychosocial Support for Boys and Girls affected by Child Sexual Abuse in Four Countries in South & Central Asia: Published in 2003**
http://www.crin.org/docs/scs_psycho_social_mapping.pdf (Accessed 19 August 2008)
- [103] **IRIN News (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)**
<http://www.irinnews.org/irin-asia.aspx>
 a Moving towards universal birth registration: 15 July 2008
<http://www.irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportId=79258>
 b Bangladesh: Report blasts primary school education: 11 February 2009
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,...BGD,,4993ea3b14,0.html> (via Refworld)
 c Bangladesh: Two million children suffer from malnutrition: 9 April 2009
 d. Bangladesh: Women move forward but challenges remain, 27 January 2009, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82575> Date accessed 1 June 2009
- [104] **DHL: YES Awards 2007**
 Bangladesh: *Badhan Hijra Sangha*, by Pinky Sikder (Dated 2007)
http://www.dhl.com/publish/etc/medialib/g0/downloads/integration.Par.0053.File.tmp/case_study_brochure.pdf
- [105] **Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh**
<http://banglapedia.org/english/index.htm>
 a *Hijra*, by Mohammad Solaiman (undated)
http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/HT/H_0117.htm
- [106] **Hossain S. and Turner S.**
 'Abduction for Forced Marriage - Rights and Remedies in Bangladesh and Pakistan' (undated) Accessed on the website of the School for Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London University
<http://www.soas.ac.uk/honourcrimes/FMarticleHossain.pdf> (Accessed 18 August 2008)
- [107] **Akter N.**
 'Child Domestic Workers in Bangladesh: An Exploratory Study of Health Consequences of Child Domestic Workers in Dhaka': March 2006 (Abstract)
http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/0/9/9/7/5/p99757_index.html (Accessed 24 August 2008)

- [108] **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**
 a YOUandAIDS: Portal for Asia Pacific
<http://www.youandaids.org/About%20Us/index.asp> (Accessed 6 August 2008)
 b Bangladesh electronic photo voter list gets excellent rating from international audit team: 25 December 2008
 c Professionalism, transparency and credibility: UNDP supports Bangladesh's return to democracy: 11 January 2009
- [109] **Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK)**
<http://www.askbd.org/web/>
 a 2008 Annual Report: Chapter 4, Right to life
http://www.askbd.org/web/?page_id=430 (Accessed 14 June 2009)
- [110] **Hampshire County Council: Minority Achievement Service**
 'Sylheti Bengali – Bangladeshi children in Hampshire schools'
<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/ema/ema-advice/ema-advice-lcr/ema-advice-lcr-bengali.htm> (Accessed 21 April 2009)
- [111] **Human Rights Forum on Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Bangladesh**
 a Bangladesh: Stakeholders' Report 01 September 2008
<http://www.drishtipat.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/uprfinalfinalfinal.doc>
- [112] **Bangladesh Prisons Directorate**
<http://www.prison.gov.bd/index5.php?category=1>
 a Population in prisons: 31 December 2008
<http://www.prison.gov.bd/index5.php?category=15> (Accessed 7 May 2009)
- [113] **The Telegraph (London)**
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/>
 a Former camel jockeys compensated by UAE:
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/bangladesh/5278605/Former-camel-jockeys-compensated-by-UAE.html>
- [114] **Oxford University: Refugee Studies Centre**
 a *Forced Migration Review*: Issue 32, April 2009
 'The end of Bihari statelessness', by Khalid Hussain
<http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR32/FMR32.pdf> (page 30)
- [115] **US Committee on International Religious Freedom**
<http://www.uscifr.gov/>
 a Annual Report 2009
http://www.uscifr.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2260&Itemid=35 (Accessed 13 June 2009)
- [116] **International Institute for Strategic Studies: Armed Conflict Database (by subscription)**
 a Bangladesh (JMB) : 'Political trends' (Accessed 14 June 2009)
- [117] **Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission**
 a Report of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission's Mission in Bangladesh: 16-22 February 2009 (Accessed via the IWGIA website)

<http://www.iwgia.org/graphics/offentlig/pdf/CHTC%20Mission%20Report%20February%202009.pdf>

[Return to contents](#)