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# World Report 2026; Bangladesh

The interim government led by Muhammad Yunus, established in 2024 following the overthrow of Sheikh Hasina's autocratic Awami League government, struggled to maintain law and order, or deliver on promised human rights reforms. General elections are scheduled for February 2026.

Some of the fear and repression that marked Hasina's 15-year rule, including widespread enforced disappearances, appeared to have ended. However, the interim government arbitrarily detained thousands of perceived political opponents and in May [banned](#) the Awami League. On November 17, Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) [sentenced](#) Hasina to death for crimes against humanity committed during the attempted suppression of 2024 protests.

Among the challenges faced by the interim government was an alarming surge in [mob violence](#) by political parties and other non-state groups, such as religious hardliners [hostile to women's rights](#) and to [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people](#). According to the Bangladeshi human rights group Ain O Salish Kendra, at least 124 people were [killed](#) in mob attacks between June and August 2025.

## Accountability for Past Violations

In February, a [United Nations report](#) found that police, border guards, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), and intelligence agencies had [engaged in serious human rights violations](#) during the protests that toppled Hasina, leading to the killing of around 1,400 people. However, the government made limited progress in holding alleged perpetrators accountable. In July, a spokesperson for the Bangladesh Police [told the BBC](#) that only 60 police officers had been arrested for their role in suppressing the 2024 protests.

The interim government decided to prosecute the most serious crimes allegedly committed during the Awami League's rule at the ICT, a domestic court previously used to prosecute crimes under international law committed during Bangladesh's war of independence. In November, the ICT sentenced Hasina, as well as former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, to death following trials in absentia for crimes against humanity. A former police chief, who is in custody, testified for the prosecution and was jailed for five years. The tribunal had been fraught with violations of fair trial standards, and while the interim government [amended](#) the law that establishes the court, introducing some improvements, it still lacks important due process protections and includes the death penalty, in violation of international human rights law. The interim government also gave the tribunal [broad powers](#) to prosecute and dismantle political organizations.

The interim government [established a commission](#) to investigate allegations of enforced disappearance and extra-judicial killings committed under the Awami League, which had received over 1,850 complaints by August 2025. The commissioners told Human Rights Watch that they had collected significant evidence, but security force officers destroyed evidence, limited their cooperation, and are resisting efforts to hold alleged perpetrators accountable. In October, authorities [filed charges](#) against 28 people for alleged involvement in enforced disappearances.

## Stalled Reforms

As Hasina consolidated power during her 15-year rule, she weakened state institutions. After coming to office in 2024, the interim government [established several commissions](#) to recommend reforms including in the judiciary, electoral system, police, women's rights, labor rights, and the constitution. A Consensus Commission chaired by Yunus was then established to complete a package of recommended reforms.

However, for reasons including lack of consensus among political stakeholders, few reforms were agreed on or implemented. On August 5, Yunus announced the [July Declaration](#), named for the month that the uprising against Hasina’s rule began, followed by a more detailed [July Charter](#) in October. In November, Yunus announced a referendum on constitutional reforms to be held during the election, which would commit the incoming government to implement parts of the July Charter.

## Arbitrary Detentions, Mass Arrests, Deaths in Custody

Politically motivated and arbitrary detentions, which had become entrenched under the Awami League government, continued under the interim government, including the practice of adding hundreds of unnamed individuals as suspects in criminal complaints. Hundreds of Awami League leaders, members, and supporters are in custody as murder suspects, [held without trial and routinely denied bail](#). This includes [actors](#), [lawyers](#), [singers](#), and political [activists](#).

A further set of cases was [launched](#) following a clash between Awami League members and student protesters on February 8, in a campaign called “Operation Devil Hunt,” leading to [at least 8,600 arrests](#). Scores more may have been arrested under the draconian [Special Powers Act](#) and [Anti-Terrorism Act](#), laws previously used to [suppress dissent](#).

On July 16, violence involving security forces and supporters of Hasina’s [now banned](#) Awami League killed five people in the town of Gopalganj, after a rally by the National Citizen Party, formed by students who had participated in the 2024 protests. Police later arbitrarily detained [hundreds](#) of alleged Awami League supporters, and filed 10 murder cases against over 8,400 mostly unnamed people. The government [denied](#) carrying out “mass arrests.”

According to a [report](#) by the human rights group Odhikar in October, at least 40 people had been killed by law enforcement since the interim government took charge, including 14 who allegedly died due to torture. Almost 8,000 people had been injured in political violence, and 81 killed.

## Women’s and Girls’ Rights

Sexual and gender-based violence remained widespread, and women and girls had little recourse to seek protection or access justice. Women played a [pivotal role](#) in the 2024 uprising, but were not adequately represented in the interim government.

In April, the commission formed by the interim government to propose measures to protect women’s and girls’ rights [recommended](#) steps [including](#) criminalizing marital rape; providing equal parental rights for women; reforming inheritance laws; and increasing women’s parliamentary representation. Soon after, [nearly 20,000 supporters](#) of the Islamist organization [Hefazat-e-Islam](#) rallied in the capital, Dhaka, to protest the proposed reforms, among other issues.

## Rohingya Refugees

More than 100,000 Rohingya have arrived in Bangladesh since early 2024, [fleeing fighting and abuses](#) by the Myanmar military and Arakan Army, an ethnic armed group. Bangladesh authorities [continued to advocate](#) in 2025 for repatriation of over 1 million Rohingya refugees, although conditions for safe, voluntary, and dignified returns to Myanmar [did not exist](#). Bangladesh held a stakeholders’ dialogue in Cox’s Bazar in August ahead of the UN General Assembly High-Level Conference on the Rohingya in September.

The Rohingya [faced pressure and violence](#) by armed groups and criminal gangs in the camps, including sexual violence, abductions, forced recruitment, and extortion. Many victims reported a near total lack of access to protection, legal assistance, and medical care.

Cuts to foreign aid and the influx of new arrivals led to the closure of health care centers and early education programs, and reductions in food and cooking gas. Humanitarian workers warned of an expected increase in disease outbreaks and child malnutrition, as well as human trafficking, irregular migration, and gang violence.

## Attacks on Ethnic and Religious Minorities

On July 26 and 27, a mob damaged at least 14 homes belonging to members of the Hindu minority in Rangpur district. The year also saw reports of continuing violations against minority communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Rape was among the crimes committed in the targeting of minority communities.

## Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

The 2024 protests that led to the ouster of Sheikh Hasina reflected frustration over uneven distribution of wealth. The unemployment rate for young people aged 15-24 (excluding those in schools or training programs) was over 30 percent in 2024, high by regional standards and with an especially high gender gap. Inflation declined but remained at elevated levels, contributing to intense cost of living pressure for those with low incomes. According to the World Bank, economic growth was expected to slow in 2025, “leading to a rise in extreme poverty to 9.3 percent and pushing an additional 3 million people into poverty.”

The major source of economic growth in recent years was the garment sector, in which the majority of workers are women. In September, an agreement was reached between employers and the interim government that could improve pay and benefits for some workers, although an estimated 90 percent of the workforce in the informal sector would remain unprotected if the new law is adopted. In January, a worker in a garment factory was beaten to death, allegedly by senior staff, over allegations of theft.

## Freedom of Expression and Association

In May, the government ordered a “temporary” ban on the Awami League, using newly introduced powers under an amendment to the Anti-Terrorism Act. The ban includes, among other prohibitions, meetings, publications, and online speech supporting the party.

There were numerous attacks on journalists in 2025, often by non-state actors such as political party members and violent mobs. The police and courts also pursued cases under the Code of Criminal Procedure against writers accused by members of the public of “hurting religious sentiment.”

Bangladesh’s Cyber Security Act (CSA) enables impermissible restrictions on freedom of expression, including for “hurting religious sentiment,” and grants wide authority to officials to criminalize and jail political critics. In March, the interim government amended the CSA to remove nine sections that had been abused under the Awami League government. However, the amendment left in place provisions that failed to fully comply with international human rights standards.

## Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Same-sex conduct is criminalized in Bangladesh with penalties from 10 years to life in prison. There are no legal protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and advocates have reported increased threats of violence and hate speech, including by politicians.

