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EXPERT COMMENT

A year after Hasina: A defiant Awami League and rising mob violence threaten Bangladesh's political transition – Expert Comment

ACLED's expert comments on the state of political violence in Bangladesh after a year with an interim government and elections on the horizon.

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ACLED's South Asia Research Manager, Pearl Pandya, says:

One year after anti-government protests ousted Bangladesh's long-serving premier, Sheikh Hasina, the country remains mired in political uncertainty and violence. With the timeline for fresh elections proving to be a sticking point and deadly violence involving Hasina supporters re-emerging in July, Bangladesh's political transition continues to falter.

While the main opposition party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, is pushing for elections to be held as soon as possible, the interim government, led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, is seeking more time to implement a host of reforms aimed at facilitating free and fair elections.¹

Holding such elections, however, will be challenging. Elections in Bangladesh [historically have been marred by high levels of political violence](#), and the stakes this time are higher than ever. The interim

government has banned all political activities by Hasina's party, the Awami League (AL), until cases against its senior leaders for their role in the 2024 demonstrations are resolved.²

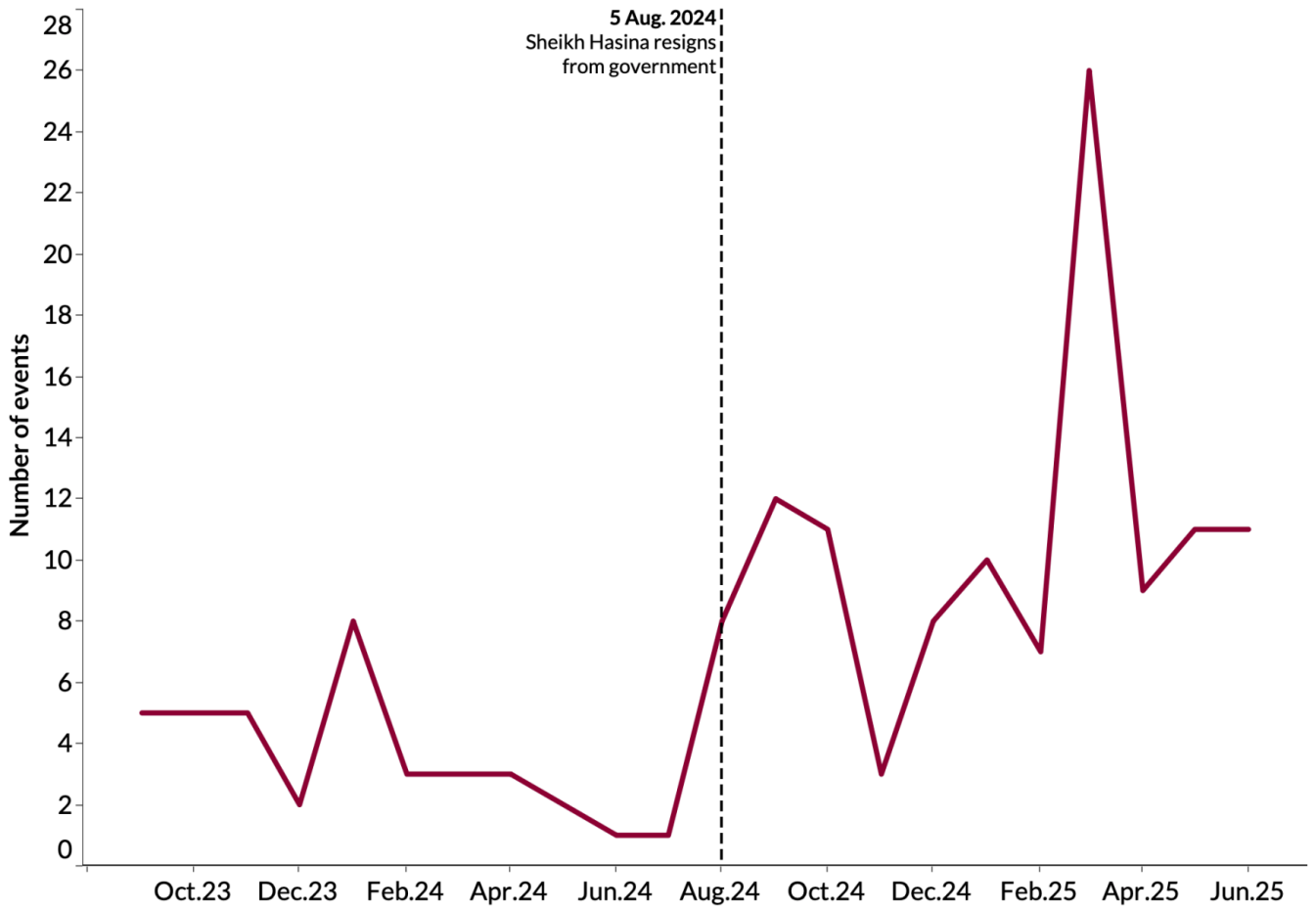
ACLED data show, however, that despite the crackdown on the party over the last year, the AL is down, but not out: It has led nearly 50 demonstrations since 5 August 2024, indicating its continued ability to mobilize supporters. On 16 July, the National Citizen Party – which led the 2024 demonstrations – organized a rally in Hasina's stronghold of Gopalganj district that spilled over into violence with AL supporters, leaving four people dead. The AL's reaction to the National Citizen Party's mobilization signals that the AL is unlikely to take a backseat in the country's politics.

Excluding the AL from the elections may undermine their legitimacy and risk a continuation of the same cycles of retributive violence against political opponents that characterized the AL's rule.

Further complicating the interim government's pursuit of a sustainable political transition, the country has been afflicted by worsening levels of mob violence, which could hinder the conduct of free and fair elections. Anti-Hindu violence has remained at elevated levels after [a significant outbreak immediately after Hasina's ouster](#), with fears that such violence could worsen should Islamist parties gain ground in the space left vacant by the more secular AL. Bangladesh's Hindu minority has often borne the brunt of violence by Islamist parties, such as the Jamaat-e-Islami, as backlash against their perceived support for the AL.³ At the same time, acts of vigilantism have proliferated across the country since the interim government took over (*see graph below*), demonstrating a lack of faith in the state apparatus and security forces after their heavy-handed response to last year's unrest.

Mob violence involving vigilantes in Bangladesh

September 2023 - June 2025



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