

# BANGLADESH'S JULY REVOLUTION:

A Youth-Driven Paradigm  
Shift in Nation-Building

Abdullah al-Mamun

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# BANGLADESH'S JULY REVOLUTION: A Youth-Driven Paradigm Shift in Nation-Building

## ABSTRACT

The July Revolution of 2024 in the Bengal Delta, often referred to as Bangladesh's "second independence," stands as a defining moment in the nation's political history. Unlike previous power struggles dominated by traditional political parties, this revolution was led by the youth, particularly student activists, who galvanized the population into a collective movement. Emerging from the 2024 Anti-Discrimination Students' Movement (বৈষম্যবিরোধী ছাত্র আন্দোলন), the revolution dismantled Sheikh Hasina's 15-year authoritarian regime and reignited Bangladesh's legacy of resistance and independence. In the aftermath, a student-influenced interim government took charge, seeking to restore democratic legitimacy, implement institutional reforms, and rebuild public trust by organizing free, fair, and credible elections. As Bangladesh enters its post-revolutionary phase, the challenges of addressing entrenched inequalities, rebuilding democratic institutions, and navigating international dynamics remain substantial. The revolution's legacy depends on sustained efforts to institutionalize reforms, engage youth in governance, and foster equitable international partnerships, and offers Bangladesh an opportunity to redefine its future as a regional beacon of justice and democratic progress.

**Keywords:** July Revolution 2024, Bangladesh's second independence, Anti-Discrimination Students' Movement, democratic renewal, India-Bangladesh geopolitics.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Abdullah al-Mamun completed his BA in Islamic History and Culture at Dhaka University in 2012. He continued his studies at the same institution, earning a master's degree in Modern Muslim States in 2014. In 2017, he received a second master's degree in Modern History from Istanbul University. Dr. Mamun completed his PhD in History at Istanbul Medeniyet University in 2023. Currently, he serves as the director of the Nation Building Initiative. His research interests include the history of the modern education system, Mughal polity, Indian and Ottoman intellectual history, Bengal history, modernism, and contemporary socio-political theories.

# Introduction: Background of the Revolution

The Bengal Delta—today popularly known as Bangladesh—possesses a unique socio-political, cultural, and religious history that distinguishes it from other parts of the Indian subcontinent. Since the medieval era, the region has enjoyed a degree of autonomy, whether under the direct rule or influence of the Delhi Sultanate, the Baburids, or in contemporary times. Governed independently or autonomously, the region has consistently struggled to preserve its spirit of independence (H. U. Ahmed, 2012).

Since gaining independence in 1971, Bangladesh's journey has been marked by efforts to establish a functioning democracy and safeguard basic human rights. Despite the nation's heroic victory in the Liberation War, its trajectory toward democracy has been turbulent, with numerous challenges undermining political stability. Although a parliamentary system was initially established, internal conflicts and power struggles quickly destabilized fragile democracy.

In 1975, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding leader, introduced a one-party system under

the *Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League* (BAKSAL) to stabilize the nation amidst growing unrest. However, this eliminated political pluralism and dissent, embedding authoritarian tendencies in the country's political culture. Mujib's assassination later that year plunged Bangladesh into political turmoil, marked by military coups and periods of authoritarian rule. The dictatorship of General Ershad during the 1980s further suppressed democratic expression until a popular uprising in 1990 restored the parliamentary system (Uddin, 2024).

Under Sheikh Hasina's leadership since 2009, the Awami League (BAL) has wielded substantial power, though not without stirring significant controversy. The 2011 abolition of the caretaker government system, a key mechanism for ensuring fair elections, severely eroded public trust in the electoral process. The 2014 elections, widely discredited as 153 seats went uncontested due to opposition boycotts, marked a shift toward more consolidated and undemocratic control. This trend continued in

**Table 1.** Number of Extrajudicial Killings, Abductions and Deaths in Custody since 2009

Year	Extrajudicial Killings	Abductions	Deaths in Custody
2023	24	52	128
2022	31	21	68
2021	107	23	72
2020	225	31	76
2019	391	34	60
2018	466	98	81
2017	155	88	58
2016	178	90	63
2015	186	67	51
2014	172	39	54
2013	329	54	59
2012	70	26	63
2011	84	32	105
2010	127	19	60
2009	154	3	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>2699</b>	<b>677</b>	<b>1048</b>

**Note:** The table is based on Odhikar’s annual reports (Shariat, 2024).

the 2018 elections, marred by allegations of massive vote rigging and the notorious “day-time vote at night”<sup>1</sup> scandal. By the 2024 elections, democratic integrity had deteriorated even further, with widespread claims of rigging and voter suppression exacerbating the legitimacy crisis. In this context, it’s no surprise that the term “dummy” became a recurring theme. After identifying dummy candidates, critics expanded the narrative, painting a dystopian landscape filled with dummy voters, a dummy election, dummy observers, and even a dummy parliament—all contributing to what many saw as a “dummy-cratic” process and called “dummy elections” (Bay, 2024; Uddin, 2024).

The Awami League’s prolonged rule from 2009 to 2024 was characterized by severe human rights abuses and systemic corruption, fostering widespread inequality and discontent. According to the human rights organization Odhikar, the period witnessed 2699 extrajudicial killings, 677 enforced disappearances, and 1048 custodial deaths. If fatalities from movements like the anti-discrimination student protests and incidents in 2024 are included, the death toll exceeds 4000 (“Bangladesh using enforced,” 2023; Shariat, 2024).

The *Aynaghor*, or the “House of Mirrors,” has come to symbolize a dark chapter in Bangladesh’s history, embodying the brutal repression

<sup>1</sup> The phrase refers to the allegations that ballots were cast or manipulated the night before the official voting day.

***The Awami League's prolonged rule from 2009 to 2024 was characterized by severe human rights abuses and systemic corruption, fostering widespread inequality and discontent.***

of the state. Operating under the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) in Dhaka, this secretive facility served as a site for the forced disappearance of numerous individuals, including activists, journalists, diplomats, and government critics. Inside these prison cells, detainees were subjected to horrific conditions, such as windowless rooms, continuous noise, and severe torture, both physical and psychological. Families of the disappeared were left in agonizing uncertainty and were denied any information about their loved ones, while the government persistently denied involvement in such human rights violations. The truth about *Aynaghor* began to surface through investigative journalism and testimonies from survivors, shedding light on the systemic abuses and highlighting the erosion of democratic principles under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's regime (Anbarasan, 2024).

Recently, some of these secret prisons, or *Aynaghors*, have been uncovered, and high-ranking officials, including Chief Advisor Dr. Muhammad Yunus, visited them, acknowledging the atrocity. One such site is located in the Rapid Action Battalion-1 compound in Uttara, where Barrister Mir Ahmad bin Quasem Arman, a former detainee, stood before the infamous prison, recalling the eight years he spent there. Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiyan and Muhammad Nahid Islam, student

leaders and advisors to the interim government, also identified these chilling cells, which were used to imprison other victims. While some *Aynaghors* have been discovered, many more are believed to remain hidden. According to Sanjida Islam Tulee, convenor of *Mayer Daak*, a platform representing the families of the disappeared, there is still resistance from authorities to fully open these facilities to the families and victims, with the perpetrators remaining shielded from justice ("Yunus visits," 2025; "In Pictures," 2025).

While visiting these sites, Dr. Yunus emphasized the importance of documenting these atrocities. He expressed his disbelief and horror upon witnessing one of the torture cells firsthand, describing the scenes inside as reminiscent of the darkest periods in history. The torture and disappearances, he remarked, were emblematic of a government that had sunk to an "era of ignorance." Dr. Yunus further emphasized the gravity of the situation, stating that over 1750 people had been victims of enforced disappearances, and many more are still unaccounted for. He warned that such horrors could continue to haunt the nation without accountability. This dark chapter in Bangladesh's history calls for decisive actions to ensure that such violations never occur again, and the evidence gathered should remain sealed for future judicial proceedings, ensuring that the victims' stories and the nation's history are never forgotten ("Asif, Nahid identify," 2025; "Horried with," 2025).

Corruption permeated all sectors during this period, including high-profile bank scams, stock market manipulation, and resource plundering in the power and energy sectors. These practices deepened economic inequality, led to jobless

growth, and exacerbated unemployment. Falsified economic statistics further obscured the extent of the crisis, eroding public trust in governance. Together, these factors painted a grim picture of Bangladesh under the prolonged rule of the Awami League (Mustafa, 2024).

Despite these grievances, the opposition, particularly the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Bangladesh Jamaat-i Islami (BJI), failed to mount an effective challenge. Internal divisions and weak leadership rendered the opposition incapable of organizing credible resistance, allowing the Awami League to dominate unchallenged. Consequently, democracy in Bangladesh remained in a precarious state, with authoritarian tendencies deepening and opposition forces marginalized (Mustafa, 2024). Within these circumstances, a new history has been shaped under the leadership of the students of the country.

## Quota System in Bangladesh and the 2018 Movement

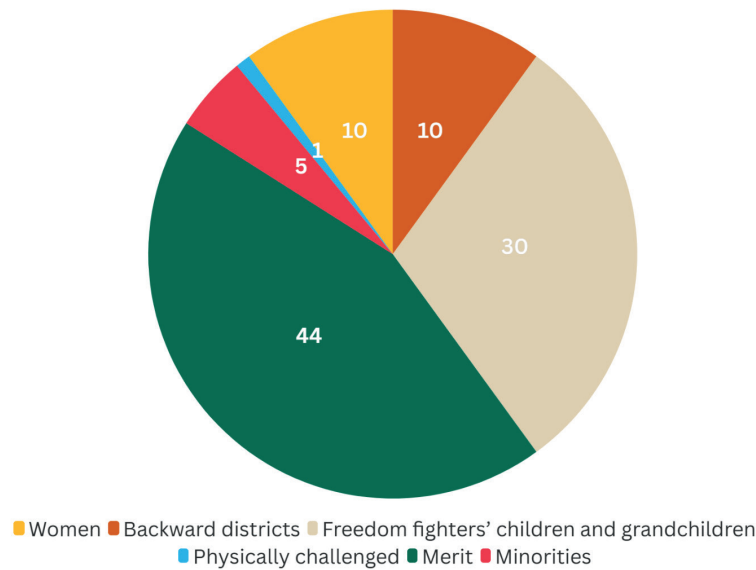
The Quota Reform Movement of 2018 was a pivotal moment in Bangladesh's recent history, especially in relation to youth-led protests. The roots of the quota system stretch back to 1972 when the newly independent Bangladesh introduced a policy that allocated over 56% of government jobs to specific groups, including freedom fighters' descendants, women, ethnic minorities, and residents of underprivileged districts. The system was initially seen as a necessary measure to uplift disadvantaged groups, but over time, many students began to perceive

it as a barrier to merit-based recruitment ("History of the quota," 2024).

Although there had been discontent with the quota system in the past, such as in 2008, the protests did not gain significant traction at that time. However, the situation changed dramatically in 2018 when university students, led by Nurul Islam Nur and his Chhatra Odhikar Parishad, initiated a movement demanding reforms. The students did not call for the abolition of the quota system, but rather for its reformation—specifically, a reduction in the 30% quota reserved for the descendants of freedom fighters and an increase in merit-based recruitment ("Protests in Bangladesh," 2018; "7 quota reformists," 2018).

Another significant issue is the widespread belief that the quota system, particularly the allocation reserved for freedom fighters and their descendants, is often manipulated by the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL). As the leading political party during the war of independence, there is a perception that BAL considers it their prerogative to determine who qualifies as a freedom fighter. Numerous reports have emerged revealing fraudulent freedom fighter certificates. Some might argue that the BAL government has exploited this system for political gain, fostering a highly discriminatory structure where securing a government job has become an increasingly rare opportunity. This has contributed to a strong perception of injustice, fueling calls for a major movement against Prime Minister Hasina and her government. The interim government led by Professor Dr. Muhammad Yunus has found huge irregularities and vowed to take action against those who fraudulently obtained





**Figure 1.** The Quota System in Bangladesh Before the Government's Decision (Bahree, 2024).

freedom fighter certificates over the years. At a press conference, Liberation War Affairs Adviser Farooq-e-Azam clarified that legal action would be initiated against those falsely claiming allowances and benefits as freedom fighters. He stated that at least 2111 individuals, who were under 12 years and 6 months on November 30, 1971, would be removed from the list. Allegations have surfaced that ministers, MPs, and high-ranking officials of the previous Awami League regime were involved in collecting these certificates during the last 15 years of their rule (Regan, 2024; "10,000 fake freedom," 2021; Shawon, 2024).

The quota movement (2018) gained momentum after clashes between students and the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL)—student wing of Bangladesh Awami League (BAL). In one of the most notable incidents, Toriql Islam Tarek, a student from Rajshahi University, was

brutally attacked by BCL activists during a peaceful demonstration. This attack, captured in widely shared images and videos, galvanized public support for the student protestors. The violence drew attention to the heavy-handed approach of both the BCL and the police, which further fueled the protests ("Govt playing," 2018; Rahaman, 2024).

Despite the intense public pressure, the response of the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) government under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina surprised many. On April 11, 2018, she announced the abolition of the entire quota system for first and second-class government jobs. This decision was unexpected because, as previously mentioned, the students had only demanded reform, not the total elimination of quotas. The government's abrupt decision left many students and activists bewildered, as it failed to address their core demand for a more balanced



system that incorporated both meritocracy and affirmative action (What's behind Bangladesh's," 2024).

The 2018 Quota Reform Movement became a symbol of the power of youth activism in Bangladesh. While the protests achieved their immediate aim—the abolition of the quota system, the movement revealed deep frustrations with the lack of transparency and fairness in the country's recruitment process. This wave of activism set the stage for future movements, particularly the 2024 uprisings, where students once again rose to demand reform in governance. The legacy of the 2018 movement—in terms of its organizational strategies, leadership by figures like Nurul Haque Nur, and the collective memory of state violence—played a crucial role in shaping the political activism that followed. By abolishing the quota system outright rather than reforming it as requested, the BAL government may have temporarily quelled the immediate protests but left unresolved tensions within the student community, who would again take to the streets in 2024 to voice their frustrations with the broader political and economic inequalities facing the country.

## **Anti-Discrimination Students' Movement in 2024**

### **First Phase (June 5 – July 13):**

The Anti-Discrimination Students' Movement began on June 5, 2024, following protests by students against the reinstatement of the government job quota system. Public university

students, particularly those from the University of Dhaka (DU), formed the core of the protests. Their frustration stemmed from the quota system, which reserved a significant percentage of government jobs for specific groups, such as descendants of freedom fighters, women, and ethnic minorities. The movement was reignited after a court verdict restored the quota system, reversing the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) government's 2018 decision to abolish it.

Following the verdict, students from DU organized peaceful processions to voice their opposition. However, their initial efforts failed to attract significant attention from the government or mainstream media, which many believed were either aligned with the government or restrained by the ICT law. Despite these challenges, the movement gradually gained momentum, drawing students from across the country. As the protests intensified, the students escalated their actions by blocking roads and key areas, such as Shahbagh and other important locations in Dhaka. Eventually, they called for a strike under the banner "Dhaka Blocked," which garnered widespread support from students at various institutions in the city.

Although the movement was primarily initiated on the DU campus, it quickly developed a leadership structure with coordinators across the country. Key figures such as Nahid Islam, Asif Mahmud, Hasnat Abdullah, Abu Baker Majumder, Sarjis Alam, Abdul Hannan Masud, Abdul Kader, Nusrat Tabassum, and others played pivotal roles in leading the movement at the national level.

**Table 2.** Timeline of the Anti-Quota Movement from 2018 to 2024 (“Completely on merit”, 2018; “Quota reform”, 2024)

Date	Event
March 2018	Students protest against the quota system in government jobs.
April 2018	Students boycott classes, and clashes occur. Hasina announces that the quota system is to be scrapped.
June-July 2018	BCL attacks quota reform leaders at Dhaka University. Law enforcers downplay the violence.
3 October 2018	Cabinet approves decision to abolish the quota system for class-I and class-II jobs.
5 June 2024	High Court reinstates the freedom fighter quota, leading to student protests.
2-6 July 2024	Students demand reinstatement of the 2018 circular that abolishes the quota system. Protests spread nationwide.
7 July 2024	Students blockade Dhaka. Hasina terms the protests “irrational.”
8 July 2024	Protests intensify, demanding the elimination of discriminatory quotas.
10 July 2024	Appellate Division halts the reinstatement of the quota system.
11 July 2024	The High Court states the government’s authority to modify the quota system. Students press for legislative reforms.
12 July 2024	Protesters block Shahbagh, demanding reforms. The law minister warns of potential government action.
13 July 2024	State Minister says judicial consideration prevents forming a commission on quota reform.
14 July 2024	Hasina compares protestors to “Razakars,” leading to uproar and further protests, which marks the beginning of the fall of the government.
15 July 2024	AL General Secretary hints at violent suppression of protestors. Chhatra League attacks demonstrators.
16 July 2024	Violent clashes between students, law enforcement, and ruling party activists. Six deaths were reported. Abu Sayed, a student of Begum Rokeya University, was shot and killed in front of his campus by police. This news became viral on social media and pushed the people to stand and raise their voices against the government.
17 July 2024	Students declare a nationwide shutdown. Hasina announces a judicial probe into the violence.
18 July 2024	Violence escalates. Police and BCL men attack students. Internet blackout imposed across Bangladesh.
19 July 2024	66 deaths were reported. Student coordinators announce a nine-point demand, including Hasina’s apology.

20 July 2024	21 people were killed during curfew. Nahid Islam is abducted and tortured by plainclothes individuals.
21 July 2024	Nahid Islam alleges torture. The Supreme Court curtails quotas to 7 percent.
22 July 2024	Police raids continue. Over 1400 people were arrested.
23 Jul 2024	The government issues a circular reforming the quota system, allowing 93% merit-based recruitment.
24 July 2024	Three quota protest leaders recount being abducted and pressured to call off the protests.
25 July 2024	Hasina makes her first public appearance since the curfew. Protesters remain enraged.
26 July 2024	DB police re-arrest protest organizers from hospitals. BNP calls for government ouster.
27 July 24	Police continue block raids, and the international community expresses concerns.
28 July 2024	Nationwide crackdown continues. Six protest leaders seen dining with police announce the end of protests.
29 July 2024	Students take to the streets again, demanding the release of detained leaders.
30 July 2024	Day of national mourning declared. Protesters flood social media with symbolic red profile pictures.
31 July 2024	Protesters stage a "March for Justice" as lawyers and university teachers support them.
1 August 2024	Government bans Jamaat-Shibir. UN offers to send a fact-finding team.
2 August 2024	Mass protests continue. Cultural organizations express solidarity through songs and dramas.
3 August 2024	Numbers of protestors swell as they demand Hasina's resignation.
4 August 2024	Violent clashes erupt nationwide as thousands march to Dhaka. Curfew defied.
5 August 2024	Hasina resigns and flees the country. Thousands celebrate on the streets.

Additionally, many others worked behind the scenes, including student movement leaders, journalists, humanitarian activists, academics, and cultural activists, who played crucial roles during critical moments.

The University of Dhaka became the epicenter of the movement, with students leading massive demonstrations that often brought the capital to a standstill. Students marched through the streets, staging sit-ins and rallies, making Dhaka

a focal point for the protests. As the movement spread, other universities, including Rajshahi University, Jahangirnagar University, and Chittagong University, also saw significant protests. Demonstrations were not limited to large cities but reached smaller towns, reflecting the widespread dissatisfaction with the government's policies. In addition to student participation, the movement saw support from rickshaw pullers and working-class citizens, many of whom joined the protests in solidarity with the students.

The sight of rickshaw pullers chanting slogans alongside students was a powerful image of the growing unity between different social classes in opposition to the government.

The first phase of the movement, while intense, remained largely peaceful. However, it set the stage for more violent confrontations in the subsequent phases, as government forces began to take a more rigid stance against the growing tide of protests.

## **Second Phase (July 14 – August 5): A Full War Situation**

This phase of the student-led revolution escalated into a full-blown conflict between the students and the government, ultimately leading to the resignation and flight of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The period was marked by widespread violence, the imposition of curfews, and the deployment of military forces. A key turning point occurred on July 14, 2024, when Prime Minister Hasina made a controversial remark, referring to the student protesters as “Razakars’ grandchildren,” a term historically associated with collaborators during the 1971 Liberation War. Here, it is important to mention that the BAL-led government followed a policy like either you are with us or you are Razakar.

***Despite the growing number of casualties and the heightened threat of state violence, students took up the mantle, organizing rallies and protests, and injecting new energy into the movement.***

It has been a common political term to use for the opposition. However, this comparison ignited widespread outrage this time, as it was perceived as an unjust and inflammatory accusation. The comment galvanized students and their supporters, intensifying the protests at midnight not only at the University of Dhaka but also at universities across the country. The reaction was swift and widespread, with demonstrations growing in scale and severity in the following days, further destabilizing the political situation. The widespread slogan was “Who are you? Who am I? Razakar. Razakar.” This event has been marked as the beginning of the fall of the BAL-led government (“They don’t feel,” 2024; “The ‘Razakar’ back,” 2024).

As tensions escalated, Abu Saeid, a student from Begum Rokeya University, was shot and killed by law enforcement officers during a confrontation on July 16, 2024. Saeid’s death became a rallying point for the movement, with slogans such as “Tor kota tui ne, amar vai firiy-e de” (Take your quota, give back my brother) resonating deeply among the protesters. His killing came to symbolize the state’s readiness to use lethal force against unarmed students, intensifying public outrage and solidifying unity among the protesters in their stand against government repression. This tragic event further escalated the conflict, leading to more violent clashes between members of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and the protesters (Imam, 2024; “Quota reform”, 2024).

In an attempt to suppress the escalating protests, the government imposed a nationwide curfew on July 20, 2024. Instead of quelling the unrest, however, this drastic measure only

fueled the movement further. The deployment of military and paramilitary forces led to violent clashes, particularly in Dhaka and Chittagong, where students and civilians defied the curfew and continued to take to the streets. The government responded by forcibly clearing public universities and their dormitories, declaring them vacant, and using police and ruling party supporters to drive students off campus (“Universities closed,” 2024).

Amid the lockdown of public universities, private university students emerged as a critical force in keeping the protests alive. Despite the growing number of casualties and the heightened threat of state violence, these students took up the mantle, organizing rallies and protests, and injecting new energy into the movement. Their defiance, alongside the solidarity shown by the families of slain protesters, ensured that the movement maintained its momentum despite the state’s attempts to crush it. The active involvement of private university students was unprecedented in Bangladesh’s history, as they had traditionally been less politically active. Yet, institutions like North South University, East West University, and others became central hubs of resistance. These students not only mobilized protests but also organized resources to sustain the movement, even as the government intensified its repressive measures. Their resilience and determination played a pivotal role in keeping the movement alive during one of the most challenging periods of the revolution (“Private university students,” 2024).

As the government grew more desperate to regain control, it imposed an internet blackout on July 18, 2024, to prevent the spread of protest

images and messages. However, the movement had already gained significant traction online, with images of police brutality—especially the death of Abu Saeid—going viral. The internet blackout only further incensed the protesters, who began using alternative methods of communication, including graffiti, pamphlets, and word-of-mouth organizations. Social media had already played a crucial role in mobilizing the protests, and even after the blackout, the movement continued to thrive, with students using physical spaces like Shahbagh as a central location for organizing and coordinating activities (“Mobile internet,” 2024).

## From Nine Points to a One-Point Demand

Initially, Abdul Kader, one of the protest leaders, presented a list of nine demands, primarily focused on holding those responsible for state violence, including the Prime Minister, accountable. Later, Kader suggested on social media that the Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir (BICS), particularly naming S.M. Farhad (then DU secretary of BICS), had played a direct role in formulating and disseminating these demands to journalists (“Coordinator Abdul Kader,” 2024). This occurred during strict curfews and widespread arrests, which made movement and communication extremely difficult. As the violence escalated and the number of casualties grew, the demands quickly shifted, coalescing into a singular, uncompromising goal: the resignation of Sheikh Hasina. What began as a protest over government job quotas had transformed into a full-scale revolution, aimed

*Her resignation marked the end of her 15-and-a-half-year rule, and her escape signaled the collapse of an autocratic government in the face of overwhelming public pressure.*

at ending Hasina's authoritarian rule ("Will consider talks," 2024).

By the end of July 2024, Bangladesh was in a state of near-total upheaval. Thousands of students, civilians, and activists took to the streets, defying curfews and facing off against armed military and police forces. The protests reached a fever pitch on August 4, 2024, when tens of thousands of people from cities across Bangladesh marched to Dhaka, demanding Hasina's resignation. Unable to control the situation, and with the international community expressing concern over the violence, Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled to India on August 5, 2024. Hasina's resignation marked the end of her 15-and-a-half-year rule, and her escape signaled the collapse of an autocratic government in the face of overwhelming public pressure (Ripon, 2024; Vock & Ethirajan, 2024).

The Bangladesh military also played a significant role in the July revolution. The Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) government has long sought to control the military, and many argue that the 2009 BDR carnage—during which 57 high-ranking officers were killed—was part of a national and international conspiracy involving the Hasina government. This weakened the military, and in subsequent years, Hasina's allies,

including General Waker-Uz-Zaman, were appointed to top positions. During the revolution, the military initially helped control protests alongside the police, but as tensions escalated, many lower and mid-ranking officers resisted using force. General Waker-Uz-Zaman notably refrained from ordering gunfire on protesters, aligning with public sentiment and strengthening the army's bond with the people. This shift was further highlighted on August 3, when discussions among officers revealed their unwillingness to support the government's violent crackdown. A significant moment came on August 4, when retired senior officers publicly expressed solidarity with the student-led movement. Had the military sided with the Hasina government, the outcome might have been different. Ultimately, the military's stance was pivotal in the success of the July revolution ("Hasina among 58," 2024; "Bangladesh to investigate," 2024; "BDR carnage," 2025; Sarwar, 2025).

Hasina's resignation is unprecedented in Bengal's history since 1205 when Lakshmana (Lokkhon) Sena fled the Bengali palace upon the arrival of Ikhtiyar al-Din Muhammad b. Bakhtiyar Khalji (A. S. Ahmed, 2021; al-Mamun, 2016, pp. 164–165). It marks a deeply shameful moment for a party that once played a pivotal role in the country's independence and national struggle to uphold democracy, human rights, and justice. However, this time, the party stands accused of numerous misdeeds, including extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, and other violations of civil rights. After the successful revolution, it has been clear that all the institutions have been weakened through the politicization of the Awami League

or the Awamization of administration. Awami League became so completely fascist that one may think of it as a religion. No citizen was free to criticize without tension.

Following the uprising, various groups and political parties, particularly student movements, which had united under the banner of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, returned to their own agendas and began asserting their claims to the revolution. It is important to note that all the major student movements, along with opposition political parties, provided both direct and indirect support to the movement. One might also argue that many students and citizens joined the movement out of self-responsibility to raise their voices against the irregularities and the autocratic system established by the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) government. This was a mass movement, perhaps the largest of its kind since the war of independence in 1971. The scale of this movement created an unpredictable situation for the BAL and its affiliated government and non-government institutions.

An important point to mention is that student movements such as the Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir (BICS), and other religious and left-leaning student organizations, all of which opposed the BAL regime, played significant roles. While no single group or political party can claim sole credit for the movement, many of these groups have openly acknowledged their contributions to the uprising in the post-Hasina era. However, it seems that BICS played an active role in policymaking, engaging directly with movement leaders. Specifically, the Dhaka

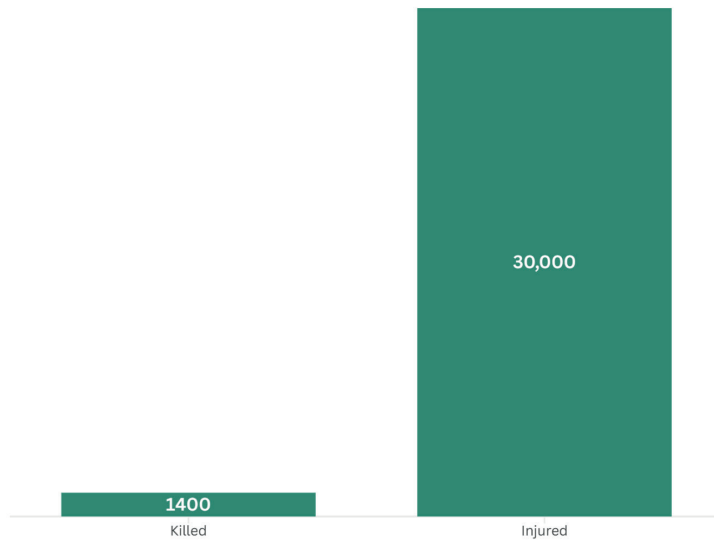
University branch of BICS and its leaders, such as Abu Shadik Kayem and S. M. Farhad, were instrumental in proposing policies and providing shelter for movement leaders, facilitating the communication of the movement's message to both national and international media at critical times (“জুলাই বপ্লিব,” 2025; Saer, 2025; Sami, 2025; Shadik Kayem, 2024).

This involvement is evident from various comments and statements made by journalists, activists, and leaders from BICS and other student groups who participated in the uprising and closely followed its developments. It is still too early to provide a comprehensive evaluation of each group's role. For example, investigative reporter Zulkarnain Saer (Sami) from Al Jazeera recently credited several key figures, including Shadik Kayem, as key players in the July uprising. Later, he published a four-part series detailing the events and key individuals during the most crucial moments of the movement. In this regard, the uprising was vast, with many people—both from within and outside the country—playing a part in its development (Saer, 2025; Sami, 2024, 2025).

## Causalities of the July Revolution

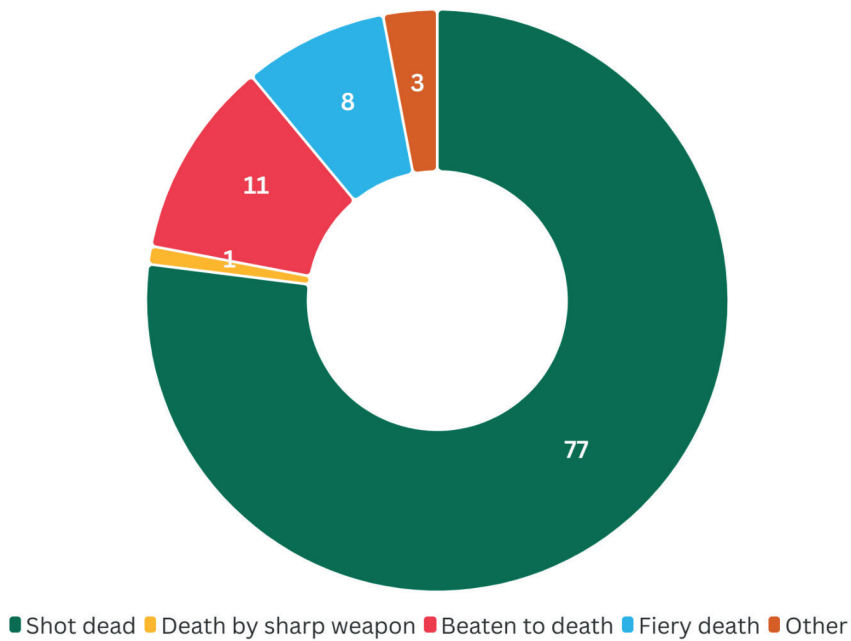
The Ministry of Health data shows that killings and injuries occurred across the country. The figures indicate that a large portion of deaths were due to shootings, accounting for 77%. Among those affected, the youth aged 19-30, primarily university students or candidates for government jobs, represented 53% of the victims. Shockingly, children, whether at home or



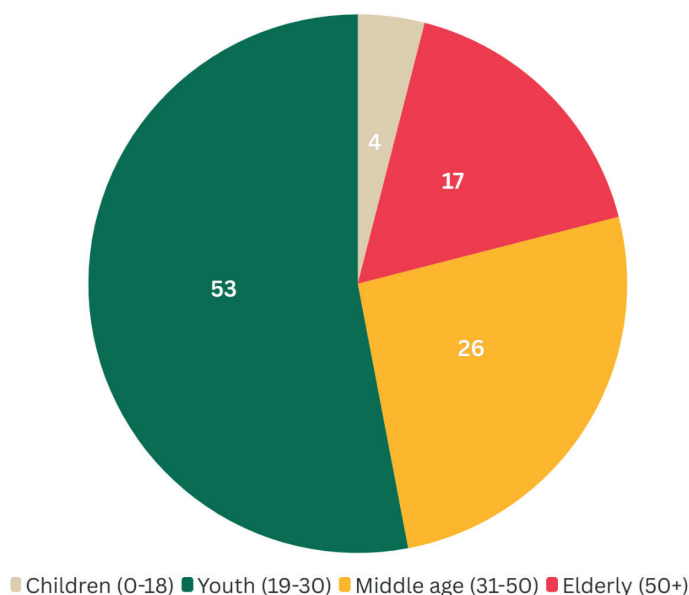


**Figure 2.** Number of Killed and Injured During the July Revolution

**Note:** The reported death toll is based on information provided by OHCHR, while the Dhaka Tribune and HRSS cite the number as 1500 (“HRSS: 875 killed,” 2024; OHCHR, 2025).



**Figure 3.** Description of the Types of Death (%)



**Figure 4.** Age-wise Statistics

**Source:** Human Rights Support Society, 2024; "ছাত্র-জনতার অভ্যুত্থানে," 2024.

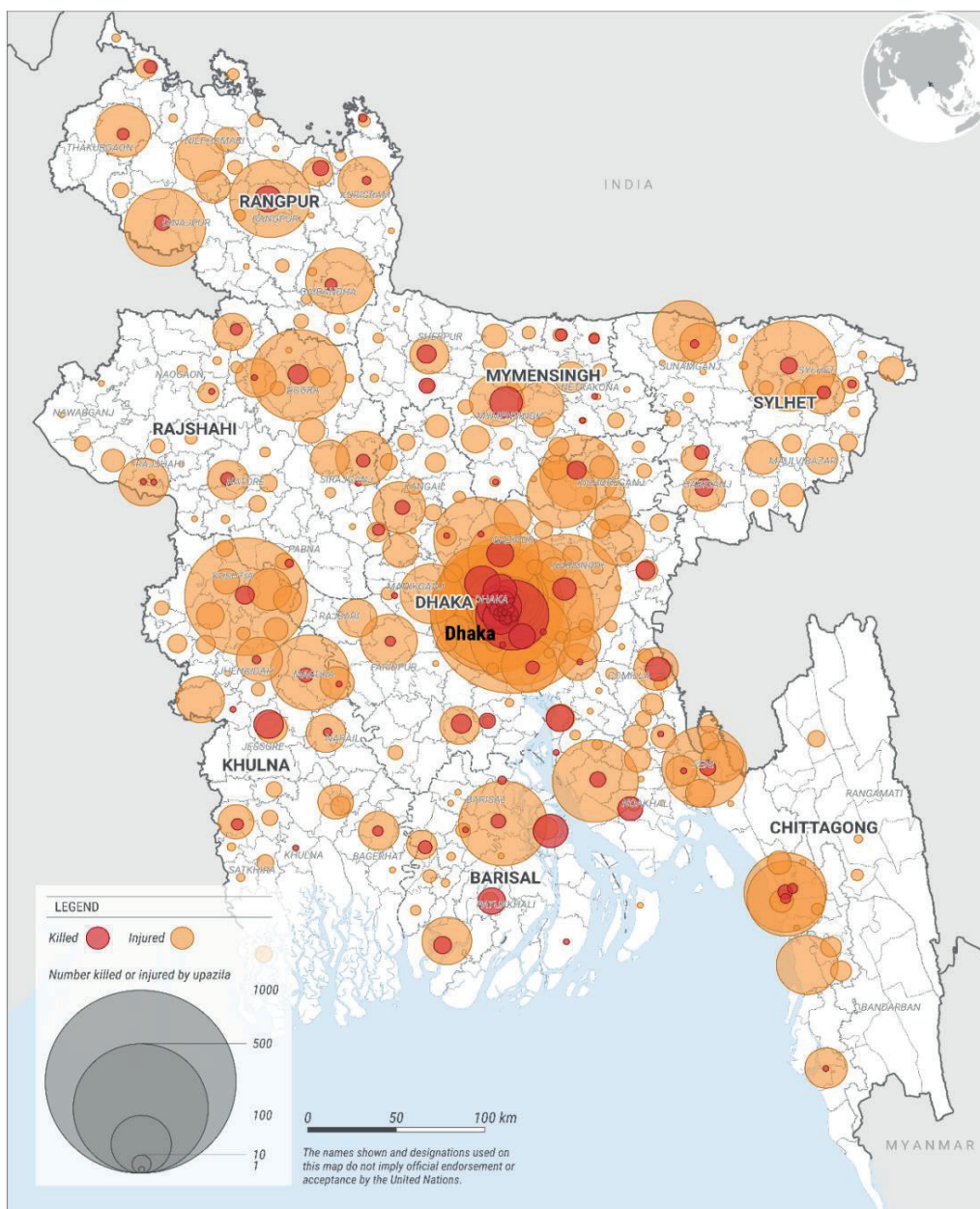
**Note:** OHCHR reports that the children were 12-13% of the total killed.

outside, accounted for 12-13% of the total deaths, as analyzed by the OHCHR (2025).

The movement gained momentum through mass mobilization, driven by powerful slogans that resonated with people from all segments of society. Unlike typical political slogans, which often reflect narrow beliefs, ideologies, or identities, these slogans were inclusive, addressing fundamental human rights and the need for equality across all levels of society. This inclusivity played a crucial role in uniting people from diverse backgrounds under a common cause (Imam, 2024).

The events of July and August 2024 are now widely regarded as the second revolution in the history of political and democratic movements since the country's independence, following the

anti-Ershad movement of 1990. It can also be seen as the second freedom movement after 1971, when Bangladesh gained independence from Pakistan. Some even argue that it represents the third freedom movement, with the 1947 independence of Pakistan from British colonial rule considered the first "azadi" in the country's history. Like previous uprisings, the 2024 movement was driven by the youth and underscored by the collective will of the people to overthrow a repressive regime. Often referred to as the Second Freedom Revolution, this event will be remembered as a pivotal moment in Bangladesh's ongoing struggle for democracy, justice, and freedom. So, now, many expect a paradigm shift, as generally happens after a revolution (Rahman, 2024).



**Figure 5.** Distribution of Deaths and Injuries Recorded by the Ministry of Health in the Context of Protests

**Source:** United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR)

## Third Phase: Formation of the Interim Government

After Sheikh Hasina fled to India, the country entered a period of uncertainty, with immediate steps needed to restore governance and prevent a power vacuum. Amidst the celebrations of the regime's downfall, Dr. Muhammad Yunus, the Nobel laureate known for his role in establishing Grameen Bank and promoting social entrepreneurship, was invited to lead an interim government. His appointment was widely regarded as a neutral and unifying choice, with the potential to guide the nation toward credible and inclusive governance.

While Yunus' credentials and international reputation gave the interim government legitimacy, the task ahead was far from easy. Yunus and his team faced several challenges as they attempted to navigate the complexities of the transitional phase. The first significant challenge was managing the polarized political landscape. Despite Yunus' neutral stance, there were factions within the political sphere and civil society that viewed his role with suspicion, especially those with ties to the Awami League or those who feared the reformation might marginalize their political ambitions. Secondly, the interim government struggled with institutional inertia. The existing bureaucracy, which had been deeply embedded in political patronage networks, resisted change. Many civil servants, accustomed to operating under a corrupt regime, were hesitant to embrace reforms that would undermine their influence and privileges. Moreover, maintaining order during the transition proved difficult. With the security forces previously

used to suppress dissent, there were fears of retaliation and counter-revolution. Yunus had to balance the demands for justice—holding accountable those responsible for violence and corruption—against the need to avoid further destabilization of the country. His team faced the daunting task of reforming these institutions while keeping the peace, avoiding further conflict, and ensuring public safety during a volatile period (Islam, S., 2024).

Finally, the economic challenges posed by the revolution were immense. The economy had been badly damaged by the regime's mismanagement, corruption, and the disruption caused by the revolution itself. Yunus' government had to address the economic crisis while also pushing through the necessary reforms. It was a race against time to stabilize the country while laying the foundation for long-term reform.

## Establishment of Six Commissions

To effectively manage the transition and lay the foundation for credible governance, the interim government established six key commissions, each tasked with proposing reforms aimed at restoring public trust, facilitating the democratic process, promoting socio-economic development and security, and fostering healthy political competition (Ahmed, 2024b, 2024a; Babar, 2024; Siddiqui, 2024; "Quota reform," 2024):

- **Election Commission:** A top priority was reforming the Election Commission to ensure the legitimacy of future elections. The commission was restructured to guarantee autonomy, transparency, and accountability, with specific measures implemented to

prevent voter manipulation and ensure that elections truly reflected the will of the people.

- **Judicial Oversight Commission:** Charged with restoring the independence of the judiciary, this commission focused on eliminating political bias and ensuring merit-based judicial appointments. Its mandate included reviewing judicial processes to prevent executive interference and reinforce the judiciary's integrity.
- **Civil Service Reform Commission:** This body aimed to depoliticize the civil service by introducing a merit-based recruitment system and restructuring civil service regulations. The goal was to align public service with democratic principles, promoting greater efficiency and accountability in governance.
- **Security and Law Enforcement Reform Commission:** Focused on reforming the police and other law enforcement agencies, this commission sought to investigate and hold accountable those involved in abuses under the previous regime. It also worked on enhancing training and oversight to ensure that security forces operated in the public interest rather than serving political elites.
- **Anti-Corruption Commission:** In response to the systemic corruption of the previous regime, this commission was tasked with investigating and prosecuting corruption cases across the public and private sectors. It focused particularly on high-profile individuals who had benefitted from the regime's patronage network.

- **Media and Press Freedom Commission:** To protect and restore freedom of expression, this commission was tasked with overseeing reforms in media regulation, ensuring that journalists could work without fear of reprisal. The commission also worked to remove censorship laws and ensure that the media operated independently of government influence.

## Nation-Building Initiatives

### The Legacy of Colonial Institutions and Their Continuity in Bangladesh's Governance

The colonial legacy in Bangladesh has long influenced its political, legal, and educational structures, creating significant barriers to national unity and progress. Under British rule, the divide-and-rule strategy was a fundamental mechanism used to maintain control, exacerbating ethnic, religious, and class divides. This legacy was inherited by the post-colonial state and further entrenched by subsequent governments. Although Bangladesh gained independence in 1971, many of its governance structures remained deeply influenced by these colonial tactics. This was particularly evident in the political system's ability to foster factionalism, which pitted different groups against each other for political and economic advantage.

One of the key remnants of this colonial strategy was seen in the education system, which still reflects its origins in the colonial emphasis on rote learning, limited access for marginalized

communities, and a focus on producing a narrow class of elites trained to serve in bureaucratic and administrative roles. The education system has been criticized for perpetuating social inequality and failing to equip the population with the skills and critical thinking necessary for modern economic and democratic development (al-Mamun, 2017; Murshed, 2024, pp. 1–7).

The legal structures in Bangladesh, many of which date back to the colonial period, have also continued to present significant challenges. The judiciary has been plagued by inefficiency, political interference, and corruption, which has undermined its ability to deliver justice impartially. The colonial-era laws, including the Special Powers Act of 1974, originally designed to suppress dissent, were frequently used by the previous government to stifle opposition and curtail civil liberties (“The Constitution,” 2024). These legal frameworks allowed the state to maintain authoritarian control, creating an atmosphere of fear and repression that further deepened social divides.

## Initiatives for Justice, Economic Solvency, and Anti-Corruption Efforts

In the aftermath of the revolution, under Dr. Muhammad Yunus, the interim government recognized that nation-building required addressing these deep-rooted colonial legacies. A comprehensive set of nation-building initiatives was launched, focusing on justice, economic solvency, and national identity.

- **Ensuring Justice at All Levels:** One of the key objectives of the interim government

was to reform the judiciary and ensure justice for all citizens. This involved dismantling the legacy of colonial laws that had been used to perpetuate injustice and oppression. Initiatives were launched to create independent judicial oversight, ensuring that the courts would be free from political influence. Judicial reforms aimed at reducing the backlog of cases and increasing access to justice for marginalized communities were introduced, and special commissions were established to investigate and prosecute human rights violations committed by the previous regime (Islam, 2024).

- **Economic Solvency and National Spirit:** Economic solvency was another critical pillar of the nation-building efforts. Years of corruption, cronyism, and economic mismanagement under the previous regime had left the economy in a precarious state. The interim government aimed to restore economic stability through anti-corruption initiatives and financial reforms. A key focus was on ensuring transparency in government contracts, particularly those related to infrastructure and foreign investments. Efforts were made to recover embezzled public funds, targeting individuals and entities that had benefited from corruption. The government also launched programs to revitalize key sectors, such as agriculture and small businesses, which had suffered under the previous regime’s neglect (Ahmed, 2024b).
- **Anti-Corruption Efforts:** Corruption, deeply entrenched in Bangladesh’s political and economic systems, has become one of the largest obstacles to national development.



Under the interim government, anti-corruption measures were intensified, and a zero-tolerance policy was adopted. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) was revitalized, and legal actions were taken against individuals responsible for looting public resources. This included prosecuting high-profile figures from the previous regime and implementing stringent financial reporting requirements for both government officials and private entities. Efforts were also made to reform public procurement processes to reduce the opportunities for corruption (Paul, 2024).

## Push to Amend the Constitution: Focus on Human Rights

One of the most significant aspects of the nation-building process was the push to amend the Constitution. The interim government and civil society advocates recognized that many of the country's most pressing governance issues stemmed from outdated and undemocratic constitutional provisions. Central to this initiative was the drive to ensure that the constitution would reflect human rights, democratic values, and the aspirations of the people.

- **Human Rights Focus:** The interim government sought to reform constitutional provisions that allowed for abuses of power, particularly those inherited from colonial-era laws. For instance, the indefinite detention clause under Article 33, which allowed for arbitrary detention without trial, was targeted for repeal. Moreover, the government worked to enshrine human rights protections in the constitution, ensuring that the

rights to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and protection from arbitrary arrest were upheld. These reforms were seen as crucial to preventing the return of authoritarian rule and ensuring that the people's voices were heard in governance (Babar, 2024; "The Constitution," 2024).

- **Constitutional Reforms and Decolonization:** Advocates within the interim government and civil society called for a new constitution, one that would reflect the core values of equity, justice, and dignity for all citizens. The existing constitution, they argued, was a product of a colonial mentality that prioritized control and centralization of power. They sought to replace this with a constitution that would emphasize decentralization, transparency, and accountability in governance. Furthermore, the call for reforms included overhauling the electoral process and ensuring that the Election Commission was truly independent and empowered to conduct free and fair elections.
- **Protecting Democratic Institutions:** The proposed constitutional amendments also focused on protecting democratic institutions from political interference. This included ensuring that civil service appointments were based on merit rather than political loyalty and that law enforcement agencies could not be used as instruments of repression. The push for reform was rooted in the belief that only through strengthening institutions could the nation move beyond its colonial past and the abuses of the previous regime and build a democratic future based on the rule of law and respect for human rights.



## **Fate of the BAL: The Awami League Post-Hasina**

### **The Immediate Fallout for the Awami League**

The fall of Sheikh Hasina's regime marked a seismic shift in Bangladesh's political landscape, casting the future of the Awami League (AL), one of the country's oldest and most influential political parties, into uncertainty. Once a formidable force with deep historical roots, the Bangladesh Awami League now faces an existential crisis, struggling to reconcile with its sudden loss of leadership and the massive disillusionment of its supporters. Hasina's hasty departure left the party in disarray. Many of the top leaders and key figures of the regime either fled the country or went into hiding, fearing retribution from the public and the interim government. Party stalwarts such as former ministers, bureaucrats, and university vice-chancellors, who had been complicit in the corruption and repression of the regime, found themselves in precarious positions, with some being arrested and others disappearing from public view entirely. The AL's internal structure collapsed, as there was no clear line of succession or plan to manage the crisis following Hasina's flight to India, which further demoralized the party (Dalmia, 2024; Huda, 2024).

Hasina's "undignified exit," described by many within the party as an act of abandonment, severely damaged the Awami League's reputation. The party's rank-and-file members felt betrayed, especially after they were left to fend for themselves during the escalating violence and

unrest. This sense of disillusionment was compounded by the regime's violent crackdown on protestors, which resulted in hundreds of deaths and widespread human rights abuses. The party, once seen as the torchbearer of Bengali nationalism and secularism, is now associated with authoritarianism, corruption, and repression (Bhattacharjee & Apu, 2024).

### **The Awami League's Ideological Crisis: Bengali Nationalism and Secularism Under Siege**

At the core of the Awami League's crisis lies the question of its ideological relevance in post-Hasina Bangladesh. The party has long championed the ideals of Bengali nationalism and secularism, but these principles became increasingly hollow as the regime clung to power through undemocratic means and pragmatic alliances, including with Islamist forces that undercut its secular image. The 2024 uprising, which brought Hasina's downfall, was fueled by the widespread public disillusionment with the party's failure to live up to its founding ideals.

The Bangladesh Awami League positioned itself as the sole guardian of the country's national identity, creating binaries of "pro-Liberation" and "anti-Liberation" to suppress dissent and justify its authoritarian tendencies. However, the 2024 student-led uprising, rooted in a collective call for democracy and pluralism, directly challenged the exclusivity of these narratives. The movement's emphasis on inclusivity and shared political engagement contrasts sharply with the Awami League's divisive tactics. If the uprising is seen as a collective language of democracy

and pluralism, then reconciling the party's exclusionary philosophy with the people's demands for a more open, just, and pluralistic society seems unlikely. To survive in the new political landscape, the Awami League would need to undergo a radical ideological transformation, abandoning its monopolization of national identity and adopting a more inclusive, democratic stance. This ideological shift would not only be difficult but also highly improbable, given how deeply the party's identity is rooted in the post-liberation history of Bangladesh.

## **The Risk of Political Death**

As the Awami League stares down the possibility of political irrelevance, it faces the risk of fragmentation. Hasina's flee has left a power vacuum, and without a unifying figure or clear direction, the party could splinter into factions, further weakening its chances of recovery. Moreover, with many of its leaders hiding or fleeing the country, the organizational structure of the party has been severely compromised. The possibility of the party's demise is not just a question of leadership or ideology but also a reflection of the broader crisis in Bangladesh's political institutions. Years of politicization and professional bankruptcy have eroded the credibility of state institutions, many of which were co-opted by the Awami League to serve its interests. In this context, the party's downfall is seen not just as the collapse of a political regime but as a reaffirmation of the power of the people, particularly the youth, who led the movement to overthrow authoritarianism and demand accountability (Bhattacharjee & Apu, 2024; Iftekharuzzaman, 2024).

## **Post-Revolution Challenges and Raising Political Consciousness**

The post-revolution environment in Bangladesh presents several challenges that need to be tackled strategically to ensure a smooth transition to democratic governance. One of the most pressing concerns is the possibility of a counter-revolution, where forces loyal to the ousted regime may attempt to destabilize the current government. These efforts could be both domestic, driven by political elites who benefited from the old system, or externally supported by international actors who had stakes in the previous political landscape. To tackle this, the interim government led by Dr. Yunus will need to employ vigilance, security measures, and diplomatic engagement to prevent any resurgence of authoritarian power.

## **The Stability of the Interim Government and the Challenge of Retaining the Spirit of the Revolution**

As the initial wave of revolutionary euphoria subsides, the interim government faces the challenge of retaining the spirit of the revolution. The movement was primarily driven by youth and student leaders, who mobilized the nation around ideals of justice, transparency, and an end to systemic corruption and autocracy. However, sustaining this momentum over time can be difficult, especially as governance responsibilities and institutional reforms take center stage. At its core, the interim government

plays a crucial role in retaining the spirit of the revolution. If it succeeds in its reform agenda, it will significantly impact the country's political and administrative culture. However, if it fails, there is a risk that an authoritarian and corrupt government may reemerge. Political leaders and analysts are already discussing the achievements of the government and its focused agenda. Some see uncertainty surrounding the reforms pledged by the Yunus government, particularly regarding its ability to address systemic challenges. It is crucial for the interim government to continue engaging with the youth, who were instrumental in the revolution, by creating platforms for ongoing dialogue and encouraging their active participation in political and social reforms. Such engagement is necessary to avoid disillusionment and maintain popular support.

A revolution brings immense hope and high expectations, which can be difficult for leaders to fulfill. This challenge is reflected in the interim government, led by Dr. Muhammad Yunus, which consists of a small cabinet with limited experience in governing a populous nation where institutions have been weakened, and the bureaucracy remains influenced by the previous regime. Criticism has emerged regarding the government's performance, particularly its failure to restore law and order. Moreover, major political parties, especially the BNP, are pressing for a swift parliamentary election, making it the government's top priority. This has caused divisions between the student leaders of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement and political leaders.

Additionally, students have initiated a new political party, the National Citizen Party (NCP), claiming that their goal is to protect the spirit of the revolution—such as ensuring inclusivity, establishing a second republic, and rewriting the constitution. However, it remains unclear how long the revolution's spirit will remain intact or how it will be sustained in practice. A more comprehensive evaluation will be needed over time to assess the long-term impact of these developments ("What does National," 2025; Hussain, 2025).

## Avoiding Reversion to Authoritarianism

A key concern among political observers is whether the interim or post-revolution government(s), despite its promises of reform, might revert to authoritarian tendencies in the face of political pressures. History shows that post-revolutionary governments often fall into the same authoritarian traps as their predecessors, particularly when faced with challenges of maintaining law and order or economic instability. The interim government's limited power, especially without parliamentary approval—adds another layer of complexity, as it may lead to

***To survive in the new political landscape, the Awami League would need to undergo a radical ideological transformation, abandoning its monopolization of national identity and adopting a more inclusive, democratic stance.***

decision-making that bypasses democratic institutions, raising concerns about transparency and accountability.

## **Raising Consciousness Among Students and Academics**

To combat these potential pitfalls, a significant raising of political consciousness is needed, especially among students and academics, who played a critical role in overthrowing the previous regime. In the wake of the revolution, there has been a wave of seminars, discussions, and political talk shows aimed at increasing political awareness and keeping revolutionary ideals alive. These discussions help ensure that the youth and intellectual community remain vigilant watchdogs of the new government, ensuring it stays on a path toward democratic governance and does not deviate into authoritarianism. Slogans from the revolution, such as “Boishamma Birodhee Jonogan” (People Against Inequality) and “Jonogoner Shokti, Adhikare Mukti” (People’s Power, Freedom in Rights), continue to inspire the masses and remind the government of the values for which the revolution stood. These slogans and public consciousness-raising initiatives act as a buffer against any authoritarian backslide by the interim government.

## **Protests Against the Interim Government: Discriminated Groups, BAL’s Conspiracy, and Minority Issue**

Soon after the formation of the interim government, various groups organized protests against the Yunus government. Initially, members of the

Ansar, stationed at the Secretariat, demanded greater opportunities. Many believed this to be a counter-coup orchestrated by the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL). A conflict ensued between students and Ansar members, resulting in several student injuries. A few days later, high school students gathered at the Secretariat, demanding exemption from exams and the introduction of a recovery option. Ultimately, the Ministry of Education agreed to their demands. These events were widely perceived as activities influenced by the BAL, raising suspicions of a conspiracy (“40 hurt,” 2024). On the other hand, madrasa teachers, who had long faced discrimination, held a protest at Shahbagh, which was met with police force. Ultimately, their appeal was accepted on a broad scale. Many believe that these individuals saw an opportunity to assert their demands, as the government generally seeks to avoid any form of anarchy (“Several hurt as,” 2025).

Perhaps the most significant development was the gathering of Hindu-oriented groups in multiple cities, who raised issues that had not been prominent before. Many believed their actions were part of a BAL conspiracy. A particularly violent incident occurred on November 26, 2024, when a Hindutva mob in Chittagong killed a Muslim lawyer, Saiful Islam Alif. This happened upon an arrest warrant for Chinmoy Krishna, the leader of the pro-Indian Hindutva group ISKCON. The situation rapidly escalated, attracting widespread attention (Dey, 2024).

International media, particularly from India, began attacking Bangladesh and the interim government. In response, political and religious groups across Bangladesh united in protest against what they perceived as an Indian and

BAL conspiracy—an effort rarely seen in the country’s history (Faridi, 2024). Additionally, when the news of Sheikh Hasina’s escape spread, public anger in Bangladesh intensified. The memories of the violence and injuries caused by her previous autocratic government fueled this unrest. Bangladesh’s government urged India to intervene, demanding the extradition of Hasina. Such challenges continue to arise, with the interim government working to address them. It is likely that more developments will emerge in the future (“Bangladesh asks India,” 2024).

## Foreign Reactions

The revolution that resulted in the ousting of Sheikh Hasina has prompted a wide range of responses from neighboring countries and global powers, reflecting Bangladesh’s strategic significance in the geopolitical landscape.

### Submissive Foreign Policy Toward India

Historically, Bangladesh’s foreign policy under Sheikh Hasina was marked by a submissive stance towards India, a key ally that provided substantial support during her 16-year tenure. India’s involvement in Bangladesh was largely driven by shared security concerns and ideological ties, particularly as the Awami League was seen as a trusted partner in maintaining regional stability. However, this close alignment with India came at a cost to Bangladesh’s sovereignty in decision-making on certain domestic and foreign matters. Post-revolution, this submissiveness

has been re-evaluated by the interim government under Dr. Yunus, signaling a shift toward a more balanced foreign policy. India’s reaction to the changes in Bangladesh has been cautious but non-cooperative in several aspects, such as unresolved issues regarding water-sharing agreements and cross-border flood management, which remain points of tension. Furthermore, Sheikh Hasina’s continued stay in India following her ousting has raised suspicions about India’s involvement and its future relationship with the interim government (“Bangladesh-India relations,” 2024; “Bangladesh’s interim govt,” 2024).

### India’s Non-Cooperative Policies in the Post-Revolution Period

Since the revolution, India’s policies toward Bangladesh have demonstrated a calculated distance as New Delhi recalibrates its strategy following Sheikh Hasina’s fall from power. India had heavily invested in Hasina, politically and economically, viewing her regime as a bulwark against Islamist movements that could destabilize the region. With her exit, India now faces the challenge of engaging with a new, less predictable government while maintaining its own security and economic interests. India’s non-cooperative stance has been evident in its reluctance to swiftly acknowledge or support the new interim government. Bangladeshi officials under Dr. Yunus are working to foster a more independent foreign policy, but India remains wary. Indian media outlets have been critical of the upheaval, and internal discussions in New Delhi reflect concerns about losing influence in the region (Islam, M.N., 2024).

***As great power competition intensifies, especially between the USA, India, and China, Bangladesh's foreign relations will remain a pivotal point of strategic interest.***

Some of the comments and social media posts made by responsible politicians, including India's Prime Minister and opposition party leaders, were deemed entirely unexpected by the Bangladeshi people, particularly those made on December 16—Bangladesh's Victory Day. For instance, Prime Minister Modi's post was widely viewed as problematic, as it implied that Bangladesh's independence war was solely possible due to India's support, disregarding the sacrifices of millions of martyrs in 1971. Furthermore, Indian media have collectively spread misinformation against Bangladesh and its people, falsely portraying Hindu minorities as victims of religious discrimination—a claim that is entirely baseless. Historically, India's attitudes toward Bangladesh and its people have raised concerns. Some critics have even drawn parallels between India's role in South Asia and Israel's role in the Middle East, arguing that Hindutva's radical theo-political ideology poses a problem akin to Zionism. Such ideologies, it is argued, lack genuine connections to their respective religions—Hinduism and Judaism. These baseless claims and comments by India have been widely condemned by the Bangladeshi people (Faridi, 2024).

In the months following August 5, India has struggled to reconcile its policy failures and the consequences of its unwavering support for Sheikh Hasina's government rather than

engaging with all sides of Bangladeshi society. The loss of influence and setbacks in the region have been evident, with some Indian intellectuals criticizing the "Neighborhood First" policy as ineffective. Meanwhile, Bangladeshi politicians appear increasingly open to fostering collaborations with nations that uphold mutual respect, dignity, and equitable partnerships, signaling a shift toward a more balanced approach to international relations ("Asif Nazrul," 2024; Faridi, 2024; Rahman, 2024; Sakib, 2024).

## **Reactions from Other South Asian Nations and Western Countries**

Other South Asian nations, such as Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan, have diplomatically acknowledged the situation, emphasizing the need for stability and peaceful transitions of power. Sharing trade and cultural ties with Bangladesh, these nations have remained neutral, avoiding taking a firm stance in the ongoing geopolitical shifts.

Western nations, including the USA, EU, and Canada, have expressed cautious optimism following the revolution. These countries view the changes as an opportunity for Bangladesh to realign itself with democratic values. The United States, which imposed sanctions on certain members of Hasina's regime in 2021, has welcomed the interim government as a potential ally in its broader Indo-Pacific strategy. The European Union has also expressed support for democratic reforms and human rights initiatives, offering aid packages to help stabilize Bangladesh's post-revolution economy (Islam, M.N. 2024; Rabbee, 2024). Nevertheless, Western



capitals remain concerned about Bangladesh's long-term political stability and its ability to resist growing Chinese influence in the region. As great power competition intensifies, especially between the USA, India, and China, Bangladesh's foreign relations will remain a pivotal point of strategic interest.

Finally, foreign reactions to Bangladesh's revolution reflect a complex geopolitical landscape in which India's non-cooperation and Western cautious optimism will shape the country's trajectory. The interim government must carefully balance India's regional concerns and Western expectations for democratic reforms while maintaining Bangladesh's sovereignty. China's economic interests and the broader Indo-Pacific geopolitical dynamics will also influence Bangladesh's strategic direction.

## Conclusion

The July Revolution of 2024 stands as a monumental event in Bangladesh's history, representing a defining moment in the nation's struggle for democracy, justice, and national identity. Led by the youth and student movements, this revolution dismantled an authoritarian regime and reestablished hopes for a democratic and inclusive future. Under Dr. Muhammad Yunus's leadership, the interim government now faces

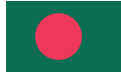
the monumental task of navigating a complex political landscape while upholding the ideals that sparked the revolution.

In the post-revolution phase, several challenges must be addressed to ensure the consolidation of democracy and the preservation of the revolutionary spirit, including institutional reforms, addressing the root causes of inequality, safeguarding human rights, and rebuilding a moral society. The success of the revolution depends on the government's ability to manage these challenges, prevent the resurgence of authoritarianism, and ensure that the transformative energy of the revolution is sustained for the long term.

In conclusion, Bangladesh's post-revolutionary future offers immense potential but also significant challenges. The interim government must capitalize on this moment to forge a path toward inclusive, transparent, and democratic governance. By addressing institutional weaknesses, promoting economic equity, ensuring security, and maintaining a firm commitment to human rights, Bangladesh can emerge as a leading example of democratic renewal in the region and the world. The unity of the people, especially the youth, and the unwavering support for democracy must remain at the core of this transformation, ensuring that the revolution's spirit endures for generations to come.



# Recommendations



## National-Level

### Strengthening Democratic Institutions

The interim government must prioritize judicial and institutional reforms to build trust and restore the legitimacy of state institutions. Efforts should focus on eliminating corruption, ensuring transparency, and creating a robust legal framework to protect civil liberties and human rights.

### Addressing Socio-Economic Inequality

The revolution was driven by widespread discontent over inequality. The interim government must implement policies that address the economic disparities and ensure equitable access to education, health care, and employment. Special focus should be given to marginalized groups and regions to ensure no one is left behind in the nation's development.

### Promoting Inclusive Governance

National dialogues should be held to ensure that all political, religious, and ethnic groups have a voice in the rebuilding process. Inclusivity is essential for preventing further polarization and ensuring that all sectors of society share the gains of the revolution. The unity of all political and socio-religious groups in opposition to racism and autocracy under the previous BAL regime is a positive sign for the future, and it is clear that the general public does not want to return to the same regime.

### Ending Violence in Politics—Blood is Sacred

The spirit of the revolution must reject violence and bloodshed in politics. The phrase “blood is holy” should resonate throughout the nation—no more should there be politics that involve physical harm. It is essential to maintain peace, respect, and dignity in all political and social actions.

### **Promoting a Strong Civil Society**

A strong civil society is essential to ensuring a moral and value-based society, politics, and democracy. Efforts must be made to empower citizens, particularly the youth, and to create platforms where they can actively engage in the political process and contribute to the nation's development.

### **Holding Institutions Accountable**

The police force, one of the most corrupt institutions, must be held accountable for any illegal activities. Establishing strict oversight and transparency in law enforcement is crucial to restoring public trust and ensuring that the rule of law is respected.

### **Empowering Youth**

The interim government must guarantee security in all aspects of life—social, economic, and human dignity. The state and the justice system must act as protectors of the people, ensuring that every citizen's rights are upheld and their dignity preserved.

### **Promoting Inclusive Governance**

The young generation played a central role in the revolution and must be promoted and supported in all sectors of society. Young people should be encouraged to participate in governance, social change, and the development of the nation. Providing them with opportunities for leadership, education, and employment will ensure the continuation of democratic and progressive reforms.



## Global-Level

### Balanced Foreign Policy

Bangladesh's post-revolution foreign policy should aim for greater balance and sovereignty, ensuring that the country's international relationships are based on mutual respect and equity. This includes recalibrating relationships with neighboring countries like India while strengthening ties with Western democracies that have supported the revolution.

### Economic Partnerships

Bangladesh must foster strong economic partnerships, particularly with countries that prioritize human rights, environmental sustainability, and fair trade. By aligning with nations that uphold these values, Bangladesh can attract investments that contribute to long-term growth while maintaining its sovereignty and ethical standards.

### Focus on Human Rights and Global Advocacy

Bangladesh has an opportunity to become a global advocate for human rights, drawing on the lessons learned from its revolution. The interim government should align itself with international human rights frameworks and actively participate in global discussions on democracy, governance, and human rights. This would not only strengthen Bangladesh's international standing but also foster global support for its democratic transition.

### Regional Stability and Cooperation

Bangladesh must carefully navigate its relationships with regional powers in the changing geopolitical landscape, balancing its domestic interests with regional cooperation. Maintaining stability in the South Asian region while prioritizing democratic principles will position Bangladesh as a stable and forward-looking nation.

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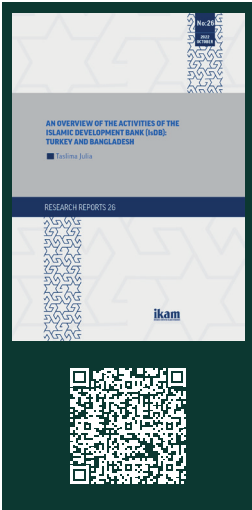
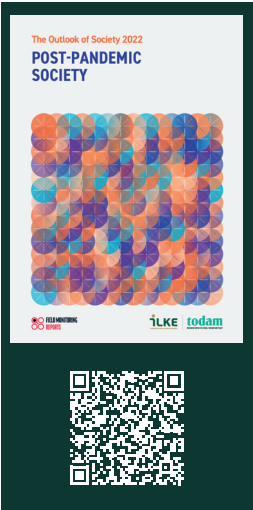
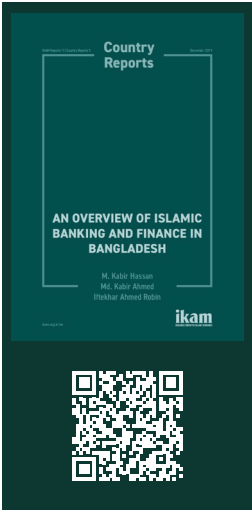
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জুলাই বপ্লব সাদকি কায়েম ও শিবিরি [Shadik Kayem and Shibir in the July Revolution]. (2025, February 23). *Daily Amardesh*. <https://www.dailyamardesh.com/video/amdylybjbdhm8>

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# Publications



# THE PLATFORM

## CURRENT MUSLIM AFFAIRS

From the Middle East to the Balkans and from America to East Asia, the contemporary agenda of Muslim societies is experiencing a profound transformation. As this transformation entails a wide range of issues from the economy to energy, culture to migration, it becomes increasingly important to have a common platform to understand and discuss these dynamic changes. In response to this growing necessity, the İLKE Foundation launched the Thought and Movements in Muslim Societies project in 2021. Initially known as the Bulletin of Intellectual Streams in the Muslim World, the project provided a monthly bulletin on Muslim communities across the globe between 2021 and 2023. In 2023, the project transformed into a magazine and

a website called The Platform: Current Muslim Affairs.

Today, The Platform: Current Muslim Affairs continues as a fully digital publication, featuring current analyses written by experts in different fields focusing on a different theme every two months, and is available in both English and Turkish. It presents up-to-date analyses on topics that have a significant impact on contemporary Muslim societies, such as education, civil society, women, climate, and migration. Additionally, its website and social media accounts feature interviews with leading figures in the Muslim world and present visually engaging infographics based on comprehensive data.

Explore More on Our Website: [platform.ilke.org.tr](https://platform.ilke.org.tr)



The July Revolution of 2024 represents a critical point in the political history of Bangladesh, being referred to by many as the nation’s “second independence.” Unlike previous movements primarily initiated by traditional political factions, this revolution was driven by the youth, particularly student activists who mobilized a nationwide movement opposing the government. The uprising, which originated from the Anti-Discrimination Students’ Movement, ultimately resulted in the fall of Sheikh Hasina’s 15-year authoritarian rule, thereby facilitating the establishment of an interim government focused on democratic renewal and institutional reforms.

This analysis report examines the fundamental causes of the revolution, highlighting the deterioration of democratic principles, pervasive corruption, and widespread human rights violations that reinforce public dissatisfaction. Furthermore, it investigates the evolution of the movement—from its inception as a protest against discriminatory policies to its development into a comprehensive demand for regime change. The involvement of international actors, the reactions of regional powers, and the broader implications of Bangladesh’s changing political landscape are also critically discussed.



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