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SUBMISSION FOR BANGLADESH

NGO Submission

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Prepared and submitted by:
The Human Rights Foundation
Center for Law and Democracy

Human Rights Foundation
350 Fifth Avenue, Suite 4202
New York, NY 10118
www.hrf.org

ABOUT HRF

The Human Rights Foundation (HRF) is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that promotes and protects human rights globally, with a focus on closed societies. HRF unites people in the common cause of defending human rights and promoting liberal democracy. Our mission is to ensure that freedom is both preserved and promoted around the world.

HRF's Center for Law and Democracy (HRF-CLD) is a program of HRF. HRF-CLD promotes legal scholarship in the areas of comparative constitutional law and international law, with a focus on international human rights law and international democracy law.

INTRODUCTION

This submission was prepared by HRF for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Bangladesh. In this submission, HRF evaluates Bangladesh's implementation of recommendations made during its previous UPR, as it relates to the current human rights situation in the country, which is characterized by systematic, widespread, and gross violations of human rights, including: violations of the freedom of assembly, association, and expression; extrajudicial killings, torture, and ill-treatment; and enforced disappearances.

FOLLOW-UP ON THE PREVIOUS REVIEW

1. As a UN Member State, Bangladesh has committed to protecting, promoting, and respecting the individual rights and fundamental freedoms laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
2. The most recent UPR of Bangladesh by the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council took place on May 18, 2018. A total of 251 recommendations were made to Bangladesh, with the government accepting 178 recommendations and noting

73.¹ However, Bangladesh has not made significant progress in implementing these recommendations.

3. The 1992 Constitution of Bangladesh (*hereafter* Constitution), formally enshrines the protection of several human rights. However, despite these constitutional guarantees, individuals in Bangladesh are routinely subjected to human rights violations, not least by the very existence of laws that impinge upon their fundamental freedoms.

BANGLADESH'S NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS

4. The Constitution² contains several key provisions relating to the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens.

5. In relation to the equal protection of individuals under the law, the Constitution states in *Article 27*:

All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law.

6. In relation to the rights of individuals against arbitrary arrest and detention, the Constitution states in *Article 33*:

No person who is arrested shall be detained in custody without being informed, as soon as may be of the grounds for such arrest, nor shall he be denied the right to consult and be defended by a legal practitioner of his choice.

7. In relation to the freedom of assembly and expression, the Constitution states, in *Articles 37 and 38*, respectively:

Every citizen shall have the right to assemble and to participate in public meetings and processions peacefully and without arms, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of public order health;

¹ *Bangladesh Infographic: UPR Working Group 30th Session*, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session30/BD/BANGLADESH_Infographic_30th.pdf.

² *Bangladesh's Constitution of 1972, The Constitution Project* (Apr. 22. 2022) https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Bangladesh_2014.pdf?lang=en.

Subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence - the right of every citizen of freedom of speech and expression and freedom of the press - are guaranteed.

8. In relation to the right to the prohibition of torture, the Constitution states in Article 35:

No person shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment or treatment.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

9. Bangladesh was formerly part of the Bengal region of India during the period of British colonization from 1700 to 1947.³ When British India gained independence in 1947, the country was partitioned, creating India and Pakistan, with the latter divided into West and East Pakistan.⁴

10. In 1969, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Sheikh Mujib), founder of the Awami League, led the East Pakistan independence movement and renamed the territory Bangladesh.⁵ In 1971, amidst the Bangladesh Liberation War, Awami League members proclaimed an independent Bangladesh and formed the first government, the Provisional Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.⁶ Sheikh Mujib was arrested soon after in March of 1971 by West Pakistan armed forces for leading the liberation movement and remained in prison until January 1972, despite his landslide victory in the East Pakistan national elections in December 1970.⁷ With the help of foreign assistance, he was released and declared Prime Minister, and consequently, Bangladesh was

³ Bangladesh: The British Period, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bangladesh/The-British-period-c-1700-1947>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Bangladesh: The Pakistani period, 1947–71, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bangladesh/The-Pakistani-period-1947-71>.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Bangladesh since independence, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bangladesh/Bangladesh-since-independence>.

recognized as a sovereign state.⁸ In 1972, a constitution was approved, and parliamentary elections the following year resulted in a landslide victory for Sheikh Mujib and the Awami League.⁹

11. In 1975, Sheikh Mujib was assassinated by right-wing pro-Pakistan army officers, and the Awami League was overthrown in a series of military coups that paved the way for the creation of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), resulting in a military dictatorship created by Ziaur Rahman in 1978.¹⁰ The BNP and Awami League fought for power throughout a decade-long period of military rule, devastating turmoil, and poor economic state that led to a state of emergency by Hussein Mohammad Ershad who usurped power in 1982 after a coup and declared himself Chief Martial Law Administrator.¹¹ Though Bangladesh resumed competitive parliamentary elections in 1991, weak democratic institutions and widespread corruption persisted.¹²

12. In 1991, following violent anti-government protests, Khaleda Zia, the widow of former President Ziaur Rahman, became prime minister, leading the BNP.¹³ Between 1991 and 2008, the political power battle continued between the BNP and the Awami League, against a backdrop of devastating natural disasters, opposition party strikes, and corrupt elections.¹⁴ In 2006, a caretaker administration, headed by Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, was appointed, which implemented aggressive programs to stabilize Bangladesh before the next election.¹⁵ In 2008, Sheikh Mujib's daughter and head of the Awami League, Sheikh Hasina, consolidated political power and has served as prime minister since.¹⁶

13. The prime minister in Bangladesh is the leader of the party that wins the most seats in the National Parliament, which is composed of 300 directly-elected

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *History of Bangladesh*, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bangladesh/The-Pakistani-period-1947-71>.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ Britannica, *supra* note 7.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

members and 50 selected women, based on share of parties' elected seats.¹⁷ The Awami League and its alliance partners hold an overwhelming majority, with 288 seats, and the BNP denouncing that opposition party supporters and candidates have been arrested or subjected to intimidation tactics and violence.¹⁸ While Bangladesh's Constitution stipulates a parliamentary government elected by free and fair elections, there is no prime minister term limit, and Hasina and the Awami League have won three consecutive five-year terms, with election periods marred by political violence.¹⁹ The Election Commission failed to investigate widespread allegations of fraud and complaints or provide sufficient security measures for violent outbreaks after the 2018 elections.²⁰

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY, ASSOCIATION, AND EXPRESSION

14. In 2018, the Bangladeshi government passed the Digital Security Act (DSA), a law to “make provisions for ensuring digital security and identification, prevention, suppression and trial of offences committed through digital device[s].”²¹ The DSA led to an authoritarian crackdown on civil liberties and increased censorship, especially targeting dissenting voices, journalists, and human rights activists.²² The DSA was preceded by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act in 2006, which was also used to arrest at least 1,200 people between 2006 and 2018.²³ Due to widespread criticism of the ICT Act, it was repealed and replaced with the DSA. However, the government continues to use the DSA to commit egregious human rights violations with even

¹⁷ *Bangladesh: Freedom in the World 2021*, Freedom House (2021)

<https://freedomhouse.org/country/bangladesh/freedom-world/2021>.

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Bangladesh: Election Abuses Need Independent Probe*, Human Rights Watch (Jan. 2, 2019),

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/02/bangladesh-election-abuses-need-independent-probe>.

²⁰ *Bangladesh: Freedom in the World 2021*, Freedom House (2021)

<https://freedomhouse.org/country/bangladesh/freedom-world/2021>.

²¹ *Digital Security Act, 2018*, Law and Practice (Oct. 16, 2020) <https://lawandpractice.com/9/bd/digital-security-act-2018/>.

²² *Digital Security Act: A tool for harassment*, Dhaka Tribune (July 19, 2022)

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2022/07/19/digital-security-act-a-tool-for-harassment>.

²³ *Bangladesh: New Digital Security Act is attack on freedom of expression*, Amnesty Int'l (Nov. 12, 2018),

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2018/11/bangladesh-muzzling-dissent-online/>.

harsher penalties, just under a different name.²⁴

15. Since the enactment of the DSA, the government has imprisoned at least 433 people, the majority based on Section 25 of the Act, which criminalizes “spreading information with an intention to affect the image or reputation of the country or to spread confusion.”²⁵ The Act also gives the government absolute power to arrest, without a warrant, any individual on suspicion that a crime may have been committed using digital media.²⁶ For example, in 2020, a 15-year old child was detained and held in a juvenile detention center for a Facebook post that defamed the prime minister.²⁷

16. In 2021, cases filed under the DSA increased ninefold, with an estimated 1,134 cases lodged against journalists and government critics.²⁸ One of those cases was that of award-winning journalist Rozina Islam, who was arrested under the DSA for reporting on corruption in the health sector during the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁹ By 2022, the number of cases had almost doubled, with 2,249 cases brought under the DSA.³⁰ On June 7, 2022, for example, police arrested Fazle Elahi, the editor of a privately-owned newspaper and online news website, for violating the DSA by publishing an article covering the suspicious activity of the daughter of a former parliamentary member of the ruling Awami League.³¹

17. In June 2022, officials in Bangladesh arbitrarily revoked the registration of the human rights organization Odhikar, stating that it had published “misleading

²⁴ Ali Riaz, *How Bangladesh's Digital Security Act Is Creating a Culture of Fear*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Dec. 9, 2021), <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/12/09/how-bangladesh-s-digital-security-act-is-creating-culture-of-fear-pub-85951>.

²⁵ Rokeya Lita, *Bangladesh's Digital Security Act is criminalising journalism*, Al Jazeera Media Institute (Apr. 18, 2022), <https://institute.aljazeera.net/en/ajr/article/1872>.

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Bangladesh Arrests Teenage Child for Criticizing Prime Minister: 15-Year-Old Joins over 1,000 Children at Risk of Covid-19 in Detention Centers*, Human Rights Watch (June 25, 2020), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/26/bangladesh-arrests-teenage-child-criticizing-prime-minister>.

²⁸ Ahammad Foyez, *Bangladeshi NGO: Cases under Digital Security Act Blew Up in 2021*, Benar News (Jan. 3, 2022), <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/bengali/security-report-01032022161133.html>.

²⁹ *Bangladesh's Digital Security Act is criminalising journalism*, Al Jazeera (Apr. 18, 2022), <https://institute.aljazeera.net/en/ajr/article/1872>.

³⁰ *Report: 2,249 cases registered under DSA in 2022*, Dhaka Tribune (Dec. 31, 2022), <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2022/12/31/report-2249-cases-registered-under-dsa-in-2022>.

³¹ *Bangladesh journalist arrested, 2 charged under Digital Security Act*, Committee to Protect Journalists (June 27, 2022), <https://cpj.org/2022/06/bangladesh-journalist-arrested-2-charged-under-digital-security-act/>.

information” about enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, which “tarnished the reputation of the state globally.”³²

EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS, TORTURE, AND ILL-TREATMENT

18. Bangladesh’s Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), an elite paramilitary force formed in 2004, has been repeatedly accused of egregious violations, including 600 extrajudicial killings since 2018.³³ RAB has been condemned globally and described as a “Bangladeshi government death squad.”³⁴ The United States Treasury Department imposed financial sanctions in 2021 on RAB, naming it “among some of the worst rights abusers in the world.”³⁵ Despite a multitude of human rights organizations and other governments demanding accountability for RAB’s actions, the Bangladeshi government has made no significant progress in curtailing its abuses.³⁶

19. RAB forces continue to circumvent accountability by fabricating narratives to conceal their crimes, often claiming victims were suspected drug dealers who died in “crossfire” or a “gunfight.” For example, in 2018, 26-year old Bablu Mia was forcibly disappeared for 43 days and later found with seven bullet wounds in his body, after RAB members arrested Mia on drug-related offenses.³⁷ RAB alleged that Mia was killed in a “gunfight” after he opened fire at RAB

³² *Bangladesh: Deregistration of NGO Odhikar detrimental to human rights work*, Amnesty Int’l (June 7, 2022), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/06/bangladesh-deregistration-of-ngo-odhikar-detrimental-to-human-rights-work/>.

³³ *Freedom in the World: Bangladesh*, Freedom House (2022), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bangladesh/freedom-world/2022>.

³⁴ Ian Cobain, *Bangladesh ‘death squad’ trained by UK police resumes extrajudicial killing*, The Guardian (Jan 26, 2011) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jan/26/bangladesh-death-squad-killings-britain>.

³⁵ *Concluding observations on the initial report of Bangladesh*, United Nations Committee Against Torture (Aug. 26, 2019), <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPRiCAqhKb7yhsgqRP%2BqMxsHC87ICAd8ka3DUpHWZxnSYlrsZb%2BjutT8cwUmdLczTGdyUVFhyA3LMfy86GCE%2BvjgX1E8Z61aCE24rf03z5%2FQYI095H7EP7rO>.

³⁶ *Democracy in the Crossfire*, Human Rights Watch (Apr. 29, 2014), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/04/29/democracy-crossfire/opposition-violence-and-government-abuses-2014-pre-and-post>.

³⁷ *Killed in “crossfire”: Allegations of extrajudicial executions in Bangladesh in the guise of a war on drugs*, Amnesty Int’l (Nov. 4, 2019), page 13, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa13/1265/2019/en/>.

³⁸ *Id.*

members.³⁸ Also in 2018, businessperson Rahim (full name withheld for security reasons) was disappeared for eight days and subsequently killed; RAB officials also claimed his death was due to a “gunfight” with Rahim’s associates.³⁹ In 2018, Kalam, (full name withheld for security reasons) a popular butcher, was abducted and killed by RAB forces who claimed Kalam was caught with drugs and weapons.⁴⁰

20. In 2013, the Bangladeshi government adopted the Torture and Custodial Death Prevention Act, as part of its commitment to the UN Committee Against Torture, and added constitutional provisions for the protection of any persons against torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment or treatment.⁴¹ However, while the government has reported opening 17 cases against members of law enforcement agencies under the Act since 2013, it has provided no further information regarding these cases.⁴² Furthermore, law enforcement agencies consistently request exemptions from the Act, as they consider torture and ill-treatment acceptable and necessary in their course of work.⁴³

21. In 2020, seven years after the implementation of the Torture and Custodial Death Prevention Act, the Metropolitan Sessions Judge’s Court of Dhaka ordered the first-ever conviction of three policemen for the torture and death of driver and father of two Ishtiaque Hossain Jonny.⁴⁴ While the policemen were sentenced to life imprisonment, Jonny’s family reported having experienced “repeated pressure, threats, and offered bribes by law enforcement to drop the case.”⁴⁵ Despite continued torture against individuals by officials, Jonny’s has been the only case of torture resulting in a conviction since the Act was passed a decade ago.⁴⁶

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ *Id.* at 15.

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 16.

⁴¹ United Nations Committee Against Torture, *supra* note 35.

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ *A historic verdict: 3 policemen get life term for custodial death*, The Daily Star (Sep. 9, 2022),

<https://www.thedailystar.net/city/news/custodial-death-jonny-3-policemen-get-life-term-2-get-7-years-jail-1958473>.

⁴⁵ *Bangladesh: Hold Security Forces Accountable for Torture*, Human Rights Watch (June 26, 2021),

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/26/bangladesh-hold-security-forces-accountable-torture>.

⁴⁶ *Id.*

22. In January 2023, lawyer and human rights activist Abu Hossain Rojan and journalist Raghunath Kha were arrested and tortured, but officials denied their claims.⁴⁷ Rajon was interrogated for one week, during which time police “beat him everywhere” and prohibited any family members from visiting.⁴⁸ Kha, who campaigned and advocated for the rights of minority communities in Bangladesh, was blindfolded, beaten, and electrocuted in half-hour phases.⁴⁹
23. Ordinary citizens and children also remain vulnerable to the unlawful use of custodial torture. In 2022, a video of two 13-year old boys tortured by three police patrol officers and tied to an iron pole in Lalkhan Bazar went viral.⁵⁰ In January 2023, trader Rabiul Islam died, due to alleged torture in police custody days after being arrested on charges of gambling.⁵¹ Police demanded money from Islam’s wife, Nupur, for his release, but despite her fulfilling the demand, they requested more and did not release Rabiul. Later that evening, officials informed Nupur that Islam had died in a road accident after his release. Islam’s family alleges that he was tortured to death, and the police fabricated a narrative to avoid responsibility.⁵²
24. Two weeks after Police Week 2023, a week-long celebration commemorating police and law enforcement, Mohammad Mostakim was arrested and beaten in custody after peacefully protesting the increased price of dialysis treatment in front of the Chattogram Medical College and Hospital.⁵³ Mostakim was protesting on behalf of his mother, who required dialysis treatment for kidney disease.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ *Allegations of Bangladesh Police Torture, Illegal Detentions*, Human Rights Watch (Feb. 3, 2023), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/03/allegations-bangladesh-police-torture-illegal-detentions>.

⁴⁸ *Lawyer tortured, sent to jail*, The Daily Star (Jan 30, 2023) <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/lawyer-tortured-sent-jail-3233851>.

⁴⁹ Muktadir Rashid, *Journalist Raghunath alleges torture in custody*, New Age (Jan. 29, 2023) <https://www.newagebd.net/article/193035/journalist-raghunath-alleges-torture-in-custody>.

⁵⁰ *Ordinary citizens’ vulnerability to custodial torture*, The Daily Star (Jan. 23, 2023), <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/views/the-shores-injustice/news/ordinary-citizens-vulnerability-custodial-torture-3227991>.

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² *Id.*

⁵³ *Id.*

⁵⁴ *Id.*

25. Furthermore, the combination of draconian laws, such as the DSA, and abusive security forces, have resulted in record-high reports of torture. In 2021, for example, Mushtaq Ahmed, who was detained in 2020 under the DSA, died after being held in pretrial detention for nine months for criticizing the government's COVID-19 response.⁵⁵ Government investigations concluded that Ahmen died of natural causes.⁵⁶ And cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore, also arrested and detained under the DSA, was subjected to genital electric shock torture by RAB,⁵⁷ though government investigations also concluded that he died of natural causes.⁵⁸

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

26. Bangladesh has not ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, nor does it recognize the crime of enforced disappearance in its domestic criminal law. The regime's denial of cases of enforced disappearances and absence of the rule of law creates a strong climate of impunity within the government and a police force that inhibits individuals from reporting enforced disappearances.

27. Since the ruling Awami League party took office in 2009, the government has allowed security forces to illegally detain opposition leaders and political opponents in secret, for weeks or months, and without formal arrest procedures, as required by law. Enforced disappearances are a hallmark of Sheik Hasina's rule and occur in the context of "widespread and systematic state-sponsored human rights violations."⁵⁹ An estimated 600 people have been forcibly disappeared by security forces since Hasina took office in 2009, and many of the

⁵⁵ *Bangladesh: Grave Rights Concerns Dismissed*, Human Rights Watch (Jan. 13, 2022), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/01/13/bangladesh-grave-rights-concerns-dismissed>.

⁵⁶ *2021 Bangladesh Report*, Amnesty Int'l, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/bangladesh/report-bangladesh/>.

⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch, *supra* note 45.

⁵⁸ Amnesty Int'l, *supra* note 56.

⁵⁹ *Bangladesh: Government must stop enforced disappearances*, International Federation fo Human Rights (May 23, 2022), <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/asia/bangladesh/bangladesh-government-must-stop-enforced-disappearances#:~:text=Bangladesh%20does%20not%20recognise%20the,taken%20any%20step%20towards%20ratification>.

victims are critics of the Awami League.⁶⁰ The RAB is responsible for at least 189 of the enforced disappearances, while the Detective Branch of the police is responsible for the disappearance of another 181 individuals.⁶¹

28. In 2019 alone, 98 cases were reported, though the government denies these allegations.⁶² While some individuals are released or produced in court, many more are killed, tortured, or remain “disappeared.”⁶³ The United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances reported 81 outstanding cases at the end of the 2022 reporting period.⁶⁴

29. In 2020, for example, photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol was forcibly disappeared for 53 days before being “found” blindfolded and tied in a field.⁶⁵ Officials did not investigate his disappearance and instead, arrested him under three separate DSA cases for a Facebook post containing the names of people associated with a sex-trafficking ring run by members of the Awami League.⁶⁶ After Kajol’s confinement, he spent seven months in prison and was denied bail 13 times.⁶⁷ Kajol describes his confinement as “a grave,” recalling that his hands were cuffed, eyes tied, and mouth gagged in a small room with no windows.⁶⁸

RECOMMENDATIONS

30. HRF calls on the government of Bangladesh to:

⁶⁰ *Bangladesh: 86 Victims of Enforced Disappearance Still Missing*, Human Rights Watch (Aug. 26, 2021), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/16/bangladesh-86-victims-enforced-disappearance-still-missing>.

⁶¹ *RAB, DB blamed for most incidents, UN rights session told*, New Age (Sep. 13, 2021), <https://www.newagebd.net/article/149044/rab-db-blamed-for-most-incidents-un-rights-session-told>.

⁶² *Id.*

⁶³ *Id.*

⁶⁴ *Report of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances*, United Nations Human Rights Council (Aug. 12, 2022), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/448/25/PDF/G2244825.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁶⁵ *Bangladesh: Arbitrarily detained Journalist is at risk of infection with COVID-19 after returning from an enforced disappearance*, Asian Human Rights Commission (June 19, 2022), <http://www.humanrights.asia/news/ahrc-news/AHRC-STM-011-2020/?fbclid=IwAR1-j5Nbr0fpNo2WsmAVE2Bk7ayuaZpIO7pAnOOG05pSA1ESkRPst8MjqhQ>.

⁶⁶ *Shafiqul Islam Kajol: Photographing Bangladesh Through Turbulent Time*, Blind Magazine (May 9, 2021), <https://www.blind-magazine.com/news/shafiqul-islam-kajol-photographing-bangladesh-through-turbulent-times/>.

⁶⁷ Zyma Islam, *‘It felt like I was in a grave’*, The Daily Star (Jan 6, 2021), <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/it-felt-i-was-grave-2022969>.

⁶⁸ *Id.*

- a. Strengthen its commitment to ending impunity for crimes committed by security forces and public officials, by bringing these individuals before local courts and cooperating with an independent, transparent investigation into their use of excessive force;
- b. Ensure that, absent compelling evidence of criminal conduct, individuals who have been arbitrarily detained, in violation of their rights to freedom of expression and association, are released, and that those in detention receive humane treatment;
- c. Protect the due process rights of every accused person to a fair, speedy, and public trial;
- d. Commit to ratifying critical international human rights instruments, including, but not limited to: the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- e. Protect, respect, and promote, without reservation, the rights of all individuals to the freedom of expression and association, and ensure that activists, journalists, and opposition groups can operate safely within Bangladesh, without fear of retribution in the form of censorship, harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, ill-treatment, extrajudicial killings, and enforced disappearances; and
- f. Cooperate with regional and international human rights mechanisms by allowing the special procedure mandate holders to carry out an independent assessment of the human rights situation in Bangladesh.