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Authorities must deescalate the ongoing crisis and respect the rights of protesters

Bangladesh

Responding to the escalating violence, excessive use of force and widespread arrests during opposition led protests against the ruling party in Bangladesh, Smriti Singh, Interim Regional Director for South Asia at Amnesty International said:
July 31, 2023

“There is an urgent need to de-escalate the situation in Bangladesh as it threatens further violations of rights of the people and is likely to perpetuate more violence and turmoil in the months leading to the upcoming General Elections. The authorities should be aiming to defuse the situation, ensuring that only law-enforcement agencies that are properly trained in policing of assemblies in a human rights compliant manner are involved in regulating protests and any use of force by such agencies must go no further than is necessary and proportionate.

“Amnesty International strongly urges Bangladeshi authorities to exercise restraint and only use the minimum level of force where strictly necessary. Firearms and rubber bullets must never be used to disperse an assembly. The violence of a few individuals must not lead to a response which treats the entire protests as violent.

“The attacks on opposition leaders Rahim Newaz and Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, must be immediately and impartially investigated, those responsible brought to justice. The authorities must also ensure that protestors and opposition leaders are not arbitrarily arrested. Arrests should only be made if and when there is reasonable evidence indicating criminal conduct on part of the arrestee, and an arrest is a necessary and proportionate response.

“The violence over the weekend is deeply worrying and may have implications for the human rights situation before, during and after the elections. Instead of cracking down on protesters, the authorities should fulfil their duty to facilitate the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.”

Background

On July 28 and 29, Bangladesh’s main opposition party and other groups protested calling for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s resignation and demanded a caretaker government to be appointed leading up to the elections in January 2024. The protests ended with violent clashes with the Police, with several [media](#) videos alleging the protesters and opposition party leaders being attacked and arrested. These attacks are the latest in a series of reported incidents of violence between the police and protestors from opposition parties in the past few days.

Bangladesh Home Minister stated that around [700 people were detained](#) over the violence during the weekend. Bangladeshi opposition party and activists have been protesting since December last year, demanding the Prime Minister’s resignation, and two people have died and hundreds of protesters and policemen have been hospitalised since then.

Link: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/07/bangladesh-authorities-must-de-escalate-the-ongoing-crisis-and-respect-the-rights-of-protesters/>