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Repeated cycle of deaths, arrests and repression during protests must end

Bangladesh

Responding to widespread arrests of opposition party members, and reports of violent clashes between protesters and police officers that left at least two dead during opposition led anti-government protests over the weekend in Dhaka in Bangladesh, Yasasmin Kaviratne, Amnesty International's regional campaigner for South Asia, said:

“The intensified crackdown on opposition party leaders and protesters over the weekend signal an attempt at a complete clampdown of dissent in Bangladesh ahead of the general elections in January. The Bangladeshi authorities need to remember that it is not a crime to dissent, and they must respect everyone's right to protest peacefully.

“The repeated cycle of killings, arrests and repression in Bangladesh has deeply chilling implications on human rights in the country before, during and after the elections. Once again, Amnesty International urges the Bangladeshi authorities to stop the crack down on protesters and instead fulfil their duty to facilitate peaceful assemblies.

“It is paramount that the police investigate the deaths that occurred in an impartial, independent and transparent manner with a view to bringing all those responsible to justice in fair trials without resorting to the death penalty. As per media reports, some individuals in the protests used violence, the police must ensure that those who are protesting peacefully are able to continue to do so and refrain from using the violent acts of a few as a pretext to restrict the rights of the others.

“The lead up to elections can be charged with tensions and the government of Bangladesh must take all appropriate measures to deescalate the situation. The authorities must ensure that all law enforcement

agencies strictly adhere to international standards on the use of force when strictly necessary, in order to avoid further harm to people's physical integrity and possible escalation of this crisis.”

Background

In the days leading up to the 28 October protests, the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) claimed that over 1,200¹ of its leaders and activists were arrested ahead of the planned protests.

According to media reports², the protests on Saturday in Dhaka were one of the largest demonstrations this year and yet again ended with clashes with police exercising excessive force. There have also been reports that, in some instances, protesters retaliated with violence. The leader of the youth wing of the BNP, Shamim Molla, died after he was injured during the clashes, as well as a police officer.

A day later, the authorities conducted raids³ at residences of various BNP officials. Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, secretary-general of the BNP, was arrested by law enforcement on Sunday.

Previously, Amnesty International has verified evidence⁴ of excessive use of force and violent attacks against protesters and opposition party leaders.

Anmerkungen

1 <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/politics/news/over-1200-bnp-activists-arrested-last-3-days-3453711>

2 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/29/bangladesh-opposition-leader-alamgir-detained-after-antigovernment-rally>

3 <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/city/ew9dm0lq3>

4 <https://amnesty-bangladesch.de/wp-content/uploads/110/pressrelease-082023MeinungsfreiheitCSA.pdf>