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Sheikh Hasina Wajed Foto: Suhaimi Abdullah Getty Images/ © Amnesty International

Justice for victims of 2024 massacre not served by death sentence against Hasina Wajed

Bangladesch

Responding to today's decision by Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal to sentence former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and former Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal to death after convicting them in absentia of crimes against humanity, Amnesty International's Secretary General, Agnès Callamard, said: Those individually responsible for the egregious violations and allegations of crimes against humanity that took place during the student-led protests in July and August 2024 must be investigated and prosecuted in fair trials. However, this trial and sentence is neither fair nor just. Victims need justice and accountability, yet the death penalty simply compounds human rights violations. It's the ultimate cruel, degrading and inhuman punishment and has no place

in any justice process. More than 1,400 people were killed and thousands injured between July and August 2024. Justice for survivors and victims demands that fiercely independent and impartial proceedings, which meet international human rights standards are conducted. Instead, this trial has been conducted before a court that Amnesty International has long criticized for its lack of independence and history of unfair proceedings. Further, the unprecedented speed of this trial in absentia and verdict raises significant fair trial concerns for a case of this scale and complexity. Although Sheikh Hasina was represented by a court-appointed lawyer, the time to prepare a defence was manifestly inadequate. Such unfair trial indicators are compounded by reports that defence cross examination of evidence deemed to be contradictory was not allowed.”

“This was not a fair trial. The victims of July 2024 deserve far better. Bangladesh needs a justice process that is scrupulously fair and fully impartial beyond all suspicion of bias and does not resort to order further human rights violations through the death penalty. Only then can genuine and meaningful truth, justice and reparations be delivered.”

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception, regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime; guilt, innocence or other characteristics of the individual; or the method used by the state to carry out the execution.

Background

Mass protests erupted in July 2024 in response to the reinstatement of a 30% quota in government jobs for the children of freedom fighters, which the protesters felt favoured supporters of the ruling party. The protests intensified after Bangladeshi authorities used unlawful violence against largely peaceful protesters, and calls mounted for the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s government. Hasina fled Bangladesh following the deadly violence and prosecutors filed charges against her, other members of government and security forces before the International Crimes Tribunal in June.

Last year, Amnesty International documented the violence and repression in Bangladesh in response to the students-led quota-reform protests across the country. We published a video verification series documenting evidence of the unlawful use of both lethal and less-lethal force against student protesters. Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, the former police chief who turned into a state witness, was sentenced to five years in prison. He plead guilty, and was tried in-person.

Amnesty International has repeatedly criticized Bangladesh’s International Crimes Tribunal for politically influenced trials and systemic fair trial violations, including pressure for death sentences and contempt proceedings against critics (2013 statement, 2014 statement).

Links

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/11/bangladesh-justice-for-victims-of-2024-massacre-not-served-by-death-sentence-against-sheikh-hasina/>

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/government-of-bangladesh-must-urgently-halt-mounting-death-toll-of-protestors/>

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/bangladesh-witness-testimony-video-and-photographic-analysis-confirm-police-used-unlawful-force-against-protesters/>

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<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2013/02/bangladesh-resist-pressure-to-push-for-death-sentences-at-war-crimes-tribunal/>