While the Home Minister was assuring the nation on national television that the gathering had been peaceful, the nation saw, on the corner of their TV screen, footage of Sharmin running and trying to escape from those frenzied men, outraged that a woman had ventured into male territory. The leadership of HEI later offered an apology for the behaviour of a few of their men. The government, if at all, seems to deal with such mindless acts of violence on an ad hoc basis avoiding the core issues underneath.

No one has been arrested to date. Despite repeated attempts, latest information in this regard could not be collected from the Ministry of Home Affairs. As of April 17, Motijheel police station remained clueless about it.



Journalists like Latefa Ansery Runa carry on doing their job despite the recent escalation of violence.

Arafat Ara, a reporter for the Financial Expresss, on her way to work, was stopped by HEI men and asked to cover her head. Activists of Jaamat-Shibir threw stones at Mashrekha Mona, a researcher with Shomoy TV. She suffered injuries to her eye. HEI men harangued Zakia Ahmed, a staff reporter for Banglanews24.com for not wearing a head scarf.

It is not only the bigots of society that display intolerance to women journalists. Sometimes they receive unfriendly treatment from student wings of major political parties. Pinky Chowdhury, a reporter for *Dainik Shuprobhat Bangladesh*, Chittagong, says, "Members of *Chatra League* and *Chatra Dal* often talk to us in a disrespectful way when we cover their news."

How could such an act of violence take place in the middle of the day in the business hub of the capital city? Kaberi Gayen, associate professor, Department of Journalism and Communication at Dhaka University explains, "In terms of Communications, we call it de-sensitisation. When we see the same things happening time and again, our senses do not work anymore. We accept it as our fate accompli. It seems that we have lost the conviction to resist such forces or the commonsense to try to rescue someone in danger."

A physical attack is not the only menace women journalists have to face. They suffer discrimination in recruitment, promotion, benefits, allocation of assignments and sexual harassment, the elephant in the room.

"The recruitment process needs to be more transparent and merit based, not gender based", says Nasimun Ara Huq, a senior journalist who worked as senior assistant editor of the daily *Sangbad* and is now president of *Bangkladesh Nari Shangbadik Kendra*," For example, in some media houses, if there are three women and ten men in the news room, management says, "we have enough women already. We do not want any more." Thus participation of women in media is not increasing. Only 6% of journalists in all media are women. We have written to the employers of various media demanding that they employ at least 25 percent women at all levels based on their skills. It may sound like a quota, but we can look at it as an affirmative action which is necessary to advance the causes of women."