

Dhaka condemns killings of civilians in Gaza: Momen

27 eminent citizens concerned by attacks on Palestinians

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has strongly condemned the disproportionate use of force in Gaza resulting in the growing civilian casualties, including women and children.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday urged the international community to allow assistance to Gaza to avoid mounting humanitarian disaster.

It also called for working towards a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the UN Security Council resolutions for a just and lasting solution and enduring peace in the region.

The statement came following Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen's call on by Palestinian Ambassador in Dhaka Yousef SY Ramadan.

Talking to the reporters later, Momen said an entire community cannot be punished for the wrongs of a group, adding that it is unacceptable that food, water, and medicine supplies have been suspended to the Gazans by Israel following the Hamas attack in Israel.

"The Israel-Palestine conflict must have a permanent solution."

Meanwhile, twenty-seven eminent citizens of the country, in a statement, yesterday expressed deep concern over the attacks on Palestinians in Gaza by Israel.

The inhuman activities engaged in by the Israeli government are unacceptable under any circumstances, the statement said, demanding an immediate end to this crisis and a permanent solution to the problem through the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Signatories of the statement include former caretaker government advisors Sultana Kamal and Rasheda K Choudhury; Sammilita Samajik Andolon president Prof Syed Anwar Husain and presidium member Ramendu Majumdar; Liberation War museum trustee Dr Sarwar Ali; Bangladesh Mahila Parishad president Dr Fauzia Moslem; Prof Dr Rashid-E-Mahbub, former president of the Bangladesh Medical Association; Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad general secretary Rana Dasgupta; Dhaka University professor MM Akash and Dipayan Khisha, central member of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, among others.

Thousands march in Amsterdam in support of Palestinians

AFP, Amsterdam

Thousands marched through the streets of Amsterdam yesterday in a pro-Palestinian demonstration, as Israeli forces prepared to invade the Gaza Strip in response to last week's unprecedented attack by Hamas Islamists.

The protesters turned the central Amsterdam square into a sea of Palestinian flags and placards reading: "Free Palestine", "Stop The War" and "Stop The Attack on Gaza", according to AFP reporters at the scene.

Three planes flew overhead trailing messages "Love Hummus, not Hamas", "Make falafel, not war" and "Shalom, Salam", the word "peace" in Hebrew and Arabic respectively.

Similar marches took place over the weekend in major Western capitals, including Washington, London and Geneva.

James Casey, a 63-year-old retired tourist from Canada, told AFP: "It's horrible. You know I have no solutions for it... but what I'm feeling is sadness."

"I do feel support for the Palestinian people... but what has just happened recently is horrific," he said, referring to the Hamas attacks on Israel that claimed the lives of more than 1,300 people.

"So it's really mixed you know. I have mixed feelings. Peace is what we would love, a path to peace," Casey said.

In the eight days since Hamas gunmen unleashed the bloodiest attack in Israel's history, Israel has responded with a devastating bombing campaign of Gaza that has killed more than 2,300.

Israel has warned 1.1 million Palestinians to leave northern Gaza as it prepares for a ground invasion that aims to destroy the Islamist militant group.



PHOTO: JOYEETA TRISHA, JULIA YEASMIN

The plight of stray animals in Dhaka

AYMAN ANIKA

Animal abuse, like all forms of abuse, cannot be tolerated. So, why do we routinely hear horror stories or watch videos of stray animals getting abused on the streets of Dhaka?

Strays – dogs, cats, and birds – are a common sight on the streets of the city, and they lead lives marred by abuse.

Are we so incapable of understanding another being's suffering?

Joyeeta Trisha, a freelance photographer and an animal rights activist, remarks, "I feel heartbroken every time I see the miserable condition of these strays. From pouring hot water to kicking them – why people treat these innocent beings so horribly and with utter disrespect is beyond my comprehension."

Joyeeta along with her friend Julia Yeasmin have been trying to raise awareness against animal violence through monthly campaigns in different parts of the city, including Mirpur and Hazaribagh, where stray dogs and cats are frequently abused.

Joyeeta explains, "We are organising these campaigns with our resources but how long or to what extent we can keep doing this? We have repeatedly asked for help from numerous animal welfare organisations – yet, no one is willing to support us. This unsupportive behaviour is discouraging for us, who want to do something for these animals."

Every day for these strays is a battle for survival. They spent their days roaming around the roads and alleys, scavenging nutrition from the discarded food in the dumpster. With the city's overpopulation and limited



resources, finding food and shelter becomes a constant struggle – leading to malnutrition and exposure to the harsh elements.

Julia Yeasmin, a school teacher by profession and an animal lover, strongly opposes any form of animal abuse and regularly feeds stray dogs in Chandrima Udyan, along with creating awareness against animal violence for the last four years.

"Stereotypes and cultural beliefs also play a role in the neglect and abuse of stray animals," opines Julia, adding, "Some people hold misguided notions about certain animals being bad omens or carriers of diseases, such as dogs, and this can lead to mistreatment of these creatures. So, if we want to change people's negative perceptions, we need to educate them first – only then, violence against animals might stop."

Many people in the city simply

do not care or are unaware of the suffering these animals endure. The mere presence of strays is a nuisance – a complaint often echoed by the residents. But what sort of troubles do we see them causing apart from asking for some food and care?

Ferdous Utsho, an amateur photographer and animal lover, observes, "One of the unfortunate reasons stray animals are abused is because of their appearance, as unlike pet animals, they are not so well-groomed. So, abusers use this reason as an excuse to abuse them."

Despite the grim situation, there are rays of hope in Dhaka. Now and then, we see young activists caring for the stray animals.

Of course, it is an act of compassion, but this act should be done in the right way, if possible, after consulting with a professional.

We can leave food and fresh water in designated areas and support spaying and neutering programmes to control the stray population. This humane approach prevents further suffering and reduces the number of strays on the streets.

The plight of stray animals in Dhaka is a complex issue with deep-rooted causes; nevertheless, our goal is not just to rescue these animals, but also to create a more compassionate society that values the lives of all creatures, no matter their form.



One arrested over killing of Rohingya leader Mohib Ullah

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Rapid Action Battalion has arrested Noor Kamal, alias Somiuddin, one of the suspected killers of Rohingya leader Mohib Ullah.

Noor Kamal was nabbed from the Kutupalang area, said ASP Md Abu Salam Chowdhury, senior assistant Rab-15 director (law and media) in Cox's Bazar without disclosing when he was arrested.

Foreign and locally made arms were recovered from his possession, he added.

Further details about his arrest will be disclosed at a press briefing today.

On September 29, 2021, last year, armed assailants shot Rohingya leader Mohib Ullah dead at his office in Kutupalong refugee camp in Ukhiya.

Shortly after the murder, Mohib's brother Habib Ullah claimed that Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (Arsa), locally known as Al-Yakin, was behind the assassination.

BCL leader accused of rape, intimidation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A former Chhatra League leader has allegedly raped a woman and then intimidated her and her husband into not filing a police complaint. Out of fear, the couple left their home in the Kulaghat union of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, local said.

The accused, Solaiman Ali Sabuj, 30, is the former general secretary of BCL's Kulaghat union unit.

According to locals, Sabuj broke into the victim's house around 8:00pm on Friday night and raped her. Hearing her screams, locals detained Sabuj, but his men later came and snatched him away.

Speaking to this newspaper, the victim said Sabuj threatened to abduct her husband and make him disappear.

Her husband said he wanted to file a case but was afraid of the consequences. "If someone gives me courage, I will file a case against Sabuj."

This correspondent phoned Sabuj, but he identified himself as someone else and cut the call.

Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Omar Faruk said he didn't receive a formal complaint in this connection. "However, we will look into the matter on our own initiative."

RMG workers besiege factory inspection office

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

More than 500 readymade garment workers yesterday besieged the office of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments in Tongi, Gazipur, demanding arrear wages and their jobs back after their factory suddenly shut down.

Contacted, Motaleb Mia, deputy inspector general of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, said, he spoke to the workers. "I've contacted the factory authorities and they have agreed to sit with us regarding this matter on October 23."

DIRD Composite Textiles Ltd in Rajendrapur of Sreepur upazila abruptly closed its factory without paying their 10,000 workers two months' outstanding wages on September 23, said protesters.

US team calls for dialogue on polls

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conditional dialogue," said Quader at a press briefing.

BNP standing committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury told The Daily Star: "We have been calling for a meaningful dialogue, and the mission urged exactly that."

On Quader's remarks on dialogue, Khasru said, "Who is he to set the term? The terms will be set by the people of Bangladesh. An unelected government cannot set terms for holding talks."

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said he welcomes the suggestions made by the US mission, but there is nothing to make a fuss over it. "Many give different opinions. It is up to us to accept them or not. I don't think the suggestions they made are very important," he told reporters at the foreign ministry.

Momen said the government has been holding dialogues with various parties and it has no objections to dialogue. "We have an independent Election Commission. We want the election to be participatory."

US MISSION'S ASSESSMENT

The mission said Bangladesh's robust economic growth and tradition of democratic values have set a strong foundation for the country to achieve its 2041 vision of becoming a developed country.

However, the current political environment presents several challenges to electoral integrity, including uncompromising and zero-sum politics, highly charged rhetoric, political violence, a widespread climate of uncertainty and fear, contracting space for civil society and freedom of expression, and a trust deficit among citizens, political leaders, and other stakeholders.

Women, youth, and other marginalised groups also face significant barriers to participation. Bangladesh is at a crossroads and the upcoming elections provide a litmus test for the country's commitment to a democratic, participatory, and competitive political process, the

statement said.

"Political paralysis and declining trust in democratic processes cast a shadow on this progress and threatens to undermine the economic and development trajectory," the mission's report said.

During the 2014 and 2018 parliamentary elections, boycotts, violence, strikes, and electoral irregularities undermined the legitimacy of the outcomes among many Bangladeshis. As a result, turnout for national and local elections is now routinely low, it said.

"In an environment of widespread mistrust, lack of political dialogue could lead to increased tensions and significantly escalate violence."

It said while legally the EC can direct election and security officials, "the delegation heard that, in practice, the EC does not have the capacity to independently identify problems on election day or enforce its directives to polls workers and security personnel."

"This creates an opening for undue political influence on voting and counting, decreases public trust in the overall process and blurs the lines of responsibility between the EC and the government regarding the effective and impartial conduct of the election."

The Awami League government has consistently said it intends to hold a free and fair election and has called for international election observers. Still, civil society groups and opposition leaders expressed concern about the EC's neutrality.

The EC's decision to provide registration to relatively unknown new political parties while denying registration to more established parties raises concerns about its impartiality, the mission said.

"Interlocutors also noted the concern that the political affiliation of some EC commissioners undermined its willingness to fairly apply election laws."

It said effective campaign finance oversight requires a strong legal mandate, sufficient resources, and an enforcing mechanism.

However, people the mission spoke to noted that the EC dedicates little resources to the verification of campaign finance reports and has no enforcement power to address irregularities, the report said.

The report recognises that it is the people of Bangladesh who will ultimately determine the credibility and legitimacy of their elections and their country's democratic development.

The mission did not say if it would recommend sending an election observation mission to Bangladesh.

Earlier, a European Union exploratory mission, after visiting Bangladesh, said it would not send a fully-fledged polls observation mission.

West's stance on democracy

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disregarding what the US, the EU and the opposition parties are saying.

Hasina usurped power using the state machinery and she decided to hold the next election in the same fashion.

"You will not be able to hold a national election in 2024 that resembles the ones held in 2014 and 2018. It will not be possible this time around because people have stood up to resist you."

It is not easy for a democratic force to fight against a fascist regime, he said.

"Many of our leaders and activists, including 22 over the last one year, have lost their lives in this struggle. Over 1,000 people became victims of extrajudicial killings."

In a bid to suppress the opposition, the government implicated around 45 lakh leaders and activists in false cases, he said.

BNP standing committee members Mirza Abbas, Abdul Moyeen Khan and Selima Rahman, and vice-chairman Abdullah Al Noman, Shahjahan Omar and Barkatullah Bulu also spoke at the programme.

Why such hush-hush over Shakib's injury?

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his commitment on the field, but did not mention what exactly came up in the MRI scan and the physio's interpretation of the diagnosis.

"Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan felt discomfort near his left quadriceps while batting during the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup India 2023 match against New Zealand in Chennai yesterday. An MRI was performed of the affected area following the match," read the statement.

Quoting the team physio Bayjedul Islam Khan, the statement also said, "The player felt uncomfortable in the left quadriceps region when he was batting. He later fielded and completed his full quota of ten overs. He had an MRI scan done after the game and we will continue to observe his fitness for the coming matches. We will clinically assess his day-to-day progress and take measures accordingly."

In the same game, New Zealand captain Kane Williamson picked up an injury on his left thumb. The next morning New Zealand Cricket issued a statement saying that an X-ray revealed an undisplaced fracture to his left thumb. The New Zealand team management also said that Williamson would remain with the squad with the hope that he might be available for the team's final World Cup pool matches in November before the semifinals and the final.

While the Kiwis followed the standard practice regarding the injury status of a player, the Bangladesh Cricket Board appeared to have left its fans guessing about the injury situation of the premier all-rounder.

It is not understandable what prompted the Bangladesh team management not to disclose the injury status of Shakib depending on the MRI diagnosis.

The physio said that they would 'continuously observe' Shakib's fitness and 'clinically assess his day-to-day progress' without saying a word about the gravity of Shakib's injury.

According to Azmol Ahmed Mithu, a former BCB sports physiotherapist now based in Canada, an MRI scan identifies any abnormalities in the muscle.

He said that expert medical professionals like physiotherapists assess the injury status. A Grade 1 muscle injury means a minimum of three weeks' rest while a Grade 3 injury leaves a player out of action for at least six months.

Mithu, however, said that Shakib's injury might not be that serious, adding that it might be a case of stress fracture or cramp.

If that is the case, then it's a very good news for the Tigers who are desperately looking forward to getting their World Cup campaign back on track after two heavy defeats against England and New Zealand.

Unfortunately, this simple disclosure is yet to come from the horse's mouth.

The Tigers have been maintaining a low-key profile since they left Dhaka following the controversial last-minute exclusion of experienced opener Tamim Iqbal from the squad on fitness ground. They have imposed embargo on players talking to the media. Bangladesh are the only team in this World Cup who are lukewarm about sending players to an official briefing and in the mixed zone after a game.

This strategy might have stemmed from the fear of players being distracted and team harmony being upset.

But if keeping the injury status of a player in the dark has anything to do with the ironclad team strategy, then it is not only inexplicable but also weird and unprofessional.