

## INTERNATIONAL

## Haniyeh was seen as more moderate face of Hamas

REUTERS, Dubai

Ismail Haniyeh, the Hamas leader who was killed in Iran, was the tough-talking face of the Palestinian group's international diplomacy as the offensive raged back in Gaza, where three of his sons were killed in an Israeli airstrike.

But despite the rhetoric, he was seen by many diplomats as a moderate compared to the more hardline members of the Iran-backed group inside Gaza.

Appointed to the Hamas top job in 2017, Haniyeh moved between Turkey and Qatar's capital Doha, escaping the travel curbs of the blockaded Gaza Strip and enabling him to act as a negotiator in ceasefire talks or to talk to Hamas' ally Iran.

"All the agreements of normalisation that you (Arab states) signed with (Israel) will not end this conflict," Haniyeh declared on Qatar-based Al Jazeera television shortly after Israel launched the offensive.

Israel's offensive killed more than 35,000 people inside Gaza so far,



according to health authorities in the territory.

Three of Haniyeh's sons - Hazem, Amir and Mohammad - were killed on April 10 when an Israeli air strike struck the car they were driving, Hamas said.

Haniyeh also lost four of his grandchildren, three girls and a boy, in the attack, Hamas said.

Haniyeh had denied Israeli assertions that his sons were fighters for the group, and said "the interests of the Palestinian people are placed ahead of everything" when asked if their killing would impact truce talks.

For all the tough language in public, Arab diplomats and officials had viewed him as relatively pragmatic compared with more hardline voices inside Gaza.

Israel regards the entire Hamas leadership as terrorists.



Smoke billows from burning tyres as Israeli soldiers deploy in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron yesterday, following a demonstration by Palestinians denouncing the killing of the leader of the Hamas group.

PHOTO: AFP

## PALESTINIAN DETAINEES FROM GAZA

## Israel used waterboarding to torture them: UN report

## AGENCIES

Israel has detained thousands of Palestinians during the offensive in Gaza and stands accused of numerous cases of torture, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said in a new report.

The 23-page report, released yesterday, noted allegations of widespread abuse of prisoners being held incommunicado in arbitrary, prolonged detention. It was published during a tense standoff in Israel as far-right politicians and demonstrators opposed an investigation into alleged sexual abuse of detainees by soldiers.

Based primarily on interviews with released detainees and other victims from October 7 to June 30, the UN report found that since the offensive began, "thousands of Palestinians" including medical staff, have been "taken from Gaza to Israel, usually shackled and blindfolded".

As of the end of June, Israel's prison service held more than 9,400 "security detainees", the report said, adding that those detained have been "held in secret, without being given a reason for their detention" and without a lawyer.

**"At least 53 Palestinian detainees" are known to have died in Israeli detention facilities: report**

"At least 53 Palestinian detainees" are known to have died in Israeli detention facilities, it said. It also detailed "allegations of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, including sexual abuse of women and men".

The report was released during an investigation by the Israeli army, which is

questioning nine soldiers over allegations of "substantial abuse" of a Palestinian detainee at the Sde Teiman detention camp in the Negev desert in southern Israel, reports Al Jazeera online.

Last week, eight Palestinian prisoners who were released by the Israeli army said they experienced torture during their time in Ofer Prison in the occupied West Bank.

Former Palestinian detainees told the UN that they were held in "cage-like facilities, stripped naked for prolonged periods, wearing only diapers".

The documented abuse included food, sleep and water deprivation and being burned with cigarettes.

"Some detainees said dogs were released on them, and others said they were subjected to waterboarding, or that their hands were tied and they were suspended from the ceiling. Some women and men also spoke of sexual and gender-based violence," the report said.

## Death toll in Kerala landslides rises to 167

REUTERS, Chooramala

Soldiers and rescuers worked through slush and rocks under steady rain, looking for survivors and searching for bodies in the hills of India's Kerala state yesterday, a day after more than 165 people were killed in monsoon landslides.

Nearly 1,000 people had been rescued from the hillside villages and tea and cardamom estates in Wayanad district and 225 were still missing, authorities said yesterday. They said at least 167 people died and 195 were injured, while the local Asianet news TV channel put the death toll at 179.

Heavy rain in Kerala, one of India's most attractive tourist destinations, led to the landslides early on Tuesday, sending torrents of mud, water and tumbling boulders downhill and burying or sweeping people away to their deaths as they slept.

It was the worst disaster in the state since deadly floods in 2018.

Experts said the area had been receiving heavy rain in the last two weeks which had softened the soil and that extremely heavy rainfall on Monday triggered the landslides.

## 16-yr-old in Rangpur jail

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but he was shown arrested in that case.

Shahjalal filed a prayer seeking bail for Mahim, and the hearing will be on August 4, he said, adding that the matter has been transferred to the children's court.

Shahjalal told The Daily Star that Mahim on July 18 was hanging out with his friends at Parkermor near his home, which is also close to the Begum Rokeya University. He was in his college uniform.

When violence erupted around Parkermor, panicked Mahim ran towards the opposite direction to his home and suffered shotgun pellet injuries to his leg, said his father, quoting Mahim's friends.

Mahim's father Shahjalal said they looked for Mahim all day but at night he received a call from someone claiming to be a law enforcer. The person said Mahim was in their custody and that he would be released the next day, July 19.

Shahjalal called the person the next day but this time he said Mahim would not be released.

That afternoon, the father learnt that Mahim was sent to Rangpur jail after he was produced before a court.

In a Facebook post at 8:24pm yesterday, a sister of Mahim claimed that the commissioner of Rangpur Metropolitan Police called the family to his office yesterday. He assured them that Mahim was in good health and urged the family to be at the court during proceedings today. He also told them that Mahim would be released after the court proceedings today.

The Daily Star could not reach any Rangpur police officials for comments last night.

## Academic calendars in total disarray

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pension scheme issue] is a question of our [university teachers'] dignity. We'll continue our movement until our demands are met."

Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury said ensuring the safety of the students is the government's prime concern now.

"We're in close contact with the government authorities concerned and we'll take decisions in line with their recommendations regarding the reopening of schools and colleges," he told The Daily Star.

He said the situation in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Narsingdi and Gazipur differs from that of the rest of the country, and they will take it into consideration when making the decisions.

"However, we want to reopen schools and colleges as soon as possible."

About the teachers' protests, Mohibul said they were in talks with the teachers. "We'll request the teachers to reach a positive decision."

There are 1.98 crore students in primary level schools, 2.03 crore in secondary level and 44 lakh in all universities and affiliated colleges under public universities.

On July 1, the students took to the streets demanding reforms to the quota system in government jobs and had enforced strikes and boycott of classes and exams on all campuses

indefinitely since July 6.

Their peaceful protests, however, turned violent as Bangladesh Chhatra League men attacked them on the Dhaka University campus on July 15.

Unprecedented violence and police attacks since July 16 had left at least 163 people, including students, dead (the actual number could be much higher) and thousands injured.

That very night, the education ministry declared the closure of all secondary and higher secondary level educational institutions (schools, colleges, madrasas and technical institutions), as well as polytechnic institutes until further notice. Following that, the UGC declared the closure of all public and private universities along with their affiliated colleges. It also instructed them to vacate all dormitories.

On July 17, the primary and mass education ministry issued a press release announcing the closure of all government primary schools, Child Welfare Trust-run primary schools, and Bureau of Non-Formal Education learning centres in the city corporation areas of the eight divisional cities indefinitely.

**LOSSES AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES** Undergraduate admission seekers have been affected by the postponement of the admission processes and orientations at the Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology, Khulna University

of Engineering and Technology and Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology.

Admission tests for the cluster of nine agricultural universities for this academic year, scheduled to be held on July 20, were also postponed.

Besides, Rajshahi University authorities pushed back their undergraduate admission process on July 1 and deferred the start of the first year honours classes.

A student of Comilla University's English department, requesting anonymity, said no classes were held at the university since early May, following a conflict between teachers and the vice-chancellor over an untoward incident at the latter's office. "Then came the teachers' movement, which further hampered the educational environment on the campus.

"We understand that we're all fighting for our rights, but at the same time we need to continue our studies ... It's the government's responsibility to stabilise the situation for the students as well as for the teachers."

**HSC EXAMINEES PERPLEXED** Earlier, the government postponed the HSC and all equivalent exams, scheduled between July 18 and August 1, for eight days.

Professor Tapan Kumar Sarkar, chairman of the Inter-Education Board Coordination Committee and also of the Dhaka Education Board, said, "We'll hold the postponed exams

after August 11."

Meanwhile, teachers of secondary schools said the half-yearly exams, slated for July 15-24, were postponed due to the school closure and the next exams are scheduled for July 30 till August 3.

Classroom activities were disrupted during the first half of this year due to cold waves, the national election and then heat waves. So, more closures will cause more learning loss, teachers said.

Prarthona Sarker, a seventh-grader of Monipur High School and College in Mirpur, said, "It's difficult to study at home without classroom explanations. While self-study provides some understanding, it's not as effective."

Her mother, Labonno Sarker, expressed concerns about the overall situation. "School closures are harmful for the children. On the other hand, if they reopen, there's a fear of violence during the commute [to and from school], which is also a big concern."

The government was scheduled to complete the class XI admission process by July 25 and start classes on July 30.

However, the internet shutdown since the night of July 18 hindered the timely completion of admissions. The authorities concerned are now planning to start classes for newly enrolled class XI students on August 6.

## Matiur goes on early retirement

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his son Mushfiqur Rahman Ifat posted on social media a photo of a sacrificial goat before Eid and wrote that the animal cost Tk 12 lakh.

The post went viral with many pointing out that Matiur, as a grade-1 NBR official, had a basic monthly salary of Tk 78,000.

The Anti-Corruption Commission launched an investigation into the sources of Matiur and his family members' wealth.

In early July, a Dhaka court ordered confiscation of all moveable and immovable properties owned by him and his family members on charges of corruption, involvement in insider trading, and making money through the purchase

of shares through private placement.

His involvement in the stock market raised questions since he was a tax collector.

An analysis of his and his family's shareholding in at least 15 publicly listed companies early last month showed that the top official and his family held 9.8 crore shares and the market value as of last month was Tk 174 crore.

On June 24, a Dhaka court issued a travel ban on Matiur and his family members.

Contacted yesterday, Matiur said he sought voluntary retirement because of the trial.

"I have never indulged in corruption in my workplace. Rather, I faced harassment and opposition from vested quarters when I tried to carry out automation of customs processes," he added.

## Social media curbs lifted

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To further his point, Palak said that pro-Palestine and anti-Israel posts are blocked by social media platforms.

From July 16 to 18, Facebook honoured only 13 percent of the government's requests to remove content on its platform, Palak said.

Social media platforms restrict posts related to the Awami League, Bangabandhu, liberation and Sheikh Hasina, he said.

He asked Meta if its community standards allow running a Facebook page in the name of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who is currently incarcerated.

YouTube honoured 21 percent of

the government's request for taking down posts from July 17 to 26, while TikTok acted on 68 percent of the requests, Palak added.

Although all cache servers were opened from 2pm to allow all social media platforms, it would take another 24 to 48 hours for full-fledged service to resume, said Md Emdadul Hoque, president of Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh.

The mobile operators also received instructions to remove the restrictions on social media.

After the lifting of the restrictions on social media, users said the internet speed has improved but hasn't returned to previous levels.

## Investigate allegations

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The Daily Star's count of the victims is based solely on hospital and police sources.

Over the last several days, police arrested more than 10,000 people in connection with the violence.

"In recent weeks, thousands of students have taken to the streets in Bangladesh to protest a lack of economic opportunity and to end the government's inequitable quota system for public sector employment that reserves government jobs for relatives of veterans of Bangladesh's 1971 war of independence," the statement said.

Rather than engaging in the legitimate grievances of the protesters, the Bangladesh security forces, including the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), responded with brute force, killing hundreds of protesters, and arresting and injuring thousands more, it said.

The statement said the right to peacefully assemble and protest is one of the foundations of a democratic society.

"The United States stands with these courageous individuals who are advocating for their dignity and for a prosperous future, and we will continue to speak up for human rights in Bangladesh and seek to hold accountable those involved in such abuses."

Meanwhile, Catherine West, UK's parliamentary under-secretary of state at the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office, said what has happened in the last couple of weeks in Bangladesh is not acceptable.

"And we have raised that on a number of occasions including the nature of judicial review which is being currently undertaken by the government of Bangladesh," she said in response to a query by Bangladesh-origin MP Rupa Huq in parliament on Tuesday.

She also said the UK and its international partners will continue to push for progress towards accountability and justice including through an independent, impartial and transparent investigation into alleged human rights violations in Bangladesh.

## Olympic spirit

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the Tokyo Olympics because of the Covid pandemic.

"I congratulated them when they were introduced as Silver medalists," Lim told Korean media after the award ceremony.

When asked if they saw the South

Rupa made a reference to the Tiananmen Square and said the use of lethal force on student protesters in Bangladesh has rightly been condemned by their government.

She urged that the UK to put pressure on the Bangladeshi investigation, so that it has an international element, because "a country that can just turn off all communications with the outside world and controls all institutions right down to their stormtrooper-like police should not just be allowed to mark its own homework."

Another Bangladesh-origin UK MP Apsana Begum said following the high death tolls among the student protesters, international human rights bodies are reporting further crackdowns on dissent from mass arrests and enforced disappearances to torture and unlawful killings.

Expressing solidarity with Bangladeshi people facing repression, she said they must have their right to exercise their fundamental human rights, including the right to protest.

Meanwhile, Australian High Commission in Dhaka on Tuesday said they remain deeply concerned about the violence and reiterate Australia's support for universal human rights.

"It is critical perpetrators of alleged violations be held to account," it said in an X post, adding that they honour the memories of all those killed in recent violence in Bangladesh.

However, China said it is heartened as the situation in Bangladesh has come "under control and social order has resumed".

At a press briefing in Beijing yesterday, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian said China is heartened by this as Bangladesh's friend and close neighbour.

He said the two countries are comprehensive strategic cooperative partners and China stands ready to work with Bangladesh to deliver on the important common understandings reached by the leaders of the two countries during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent visit to China.

Korean pair as their rivals, Kim and Ri both shook their heads.

South Korean broadcasters have repeatedly run videos of the selfie, with many commentators reflecting on the significance of a rare moment of unity.

"This is the true spirit of the Olympics," one commentator said.