

## MARCH FOR GAZA IN BANGLADESH

# A vital chapter in the fight for justice



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The March for Gaza, held on April 12, 2025, saw 100,000 protesters painting the streets of Dhaka with the colours of the Palestinian flag and the spirit of freedom. The word "freedom," is synonymous with the fight and struggle for Palestine. I think of Palestine as a land where freedom is not merely spoken of, but lived, longed for, and bled for. My father, the Palestinian ambassador to Bangladesh, always told me, "You cannot value freedom unless you fight for it." As I write this, human beings in Gaza continue to face the wrath of Israel's indiscriminate bombings, and human beings in the West Bank continue to see their lives uprooted by the Israeli settlers. Fighting for justice while struggling with injustice is embedded in the ancestry of every Palestinian family: we've seen oppression at our doorsteps; our fathers and mothers have seen it, just like our grandfathers and grandmothers had, too.

In every olive tree that still grows through the rubble, in every child who dares to dream beneath drones and debris, and under occupation, and in every soul that chooses dignity over despair—there is resistance. The Palestinian people do not simply value freedom; they carry it in their bones, they breathe it, ache for it, and pass it on like a sacred inheritance, even when the world tries to strip it from their hands, no thief can steal that from them.

On March 23, 2025, the world witnessed yet another tragedy as Israeli forces targeted Palestinian aid workers in Gaza. Among the victims were paramedics, ambulance drivers, medics, firefighters, and first responders who were all actively engaged in providing life-saving assistance amidst the ongoing

genocide. Their sacrifices, made in the service of saving lives, were met with an unjust and devastating attack. Meanwhile, the brutality continued as Israeli forces opened fire on a group of children in the occupied West Bank, killing a 14-year-old Palestinian-American boy and wounding at least two others.

**As a Palestinian woman living through the heavy heartache of the ongoing struggle, it's hard to put into words what it feels like to see the world around us—so far, yet so close—rallying for our freedom and dignity. The love and solidarity from the people of Bangladesh mean more than they will ever know.**

In Palestine and in the heart of Gaza, where the echoes of violence and struggle are an everyday reality, it is often hard to imagine the world outside of our borders sharing in our pain. Yet, today, as I reflect on the recent protests in Dhaka and other major cities in Bangladesh, I find myself overwhelmed with a deep sense of gratitude. The solidarity shown by the people of Bangladesh for Palestine is not just heartwarming; it is a testament to the power of human empathy and the unbreakable bonds that unite us all in the pursuit of justice.

It is no secret that power dynamics in the world—driven by the US—back the Israeli apartheid state and enable the system of oppression that the Netanyahu-led Israeli government is unleashing onto Palestinians.

And in an intertwined, globalised world where the lives of domestic people and the sustenance of a government depend on global power dynamics, it's often easier for nations and their citizens to stay silent.

but have also demonstrated that the struggle for Palestinian freedom is not one we fight alone. In a world where geopolitical divides often overshadow the voices of the oppressed, the people of Bangladesh have answered our cries for justice with unwavering support.

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end to the bloodshed that has torn apart our land and our lives. They showed up not out of obligation, but because their hearts understand our pain. They are not our family by blood, but they are our family by the most beautiful bond of human compassion.

For us, Palestinians, it's more than just a protest—it's a symbol of the collective power of humanity. Their involvement is a reminder that our fight is not confined to the streets of Gaza or the frontlines of conflict; it lives in every voice that rises for justice, no matter where in the world it echoes. The protest serves as a powerful reminder that love and solidarity are not bound by geography. The people of Bangladesh have not only acknowledged our suffering; they have chosen to stand with us, amplifying our voices in a world that often seems to turn a deaf ear.

The people of Bangladesh fought for their freedom in 1971 and then again in 2024 to free themselves from a despot. The bond between Bangladesh and Palestine is one tied with a shared struggle to resist oppression of any form and to live with dignity. The most remarkable aspect of the current Palestinian solidarity in Bangladesh is that the nation and its citizens are choosing to march for the Palestinian cause while dealing with their fair share of instability that comes from rebuilding a nation after a revolution. The people of Bangladesh have lifted us in their prayers, their protests, and their undying hope for peace. They are not just spectators of our pain; they are part of our story, a vital chapter in the ongoing fight for justice.

To the people of Bangladesh: your support gives us Palestinians strength in our darkest hours. It reminds us that no matter how distant our struggles may seem, there are compassionate souls who will rise to support what is right. Your actions give us hope that the world can be a better place—a place where justice prevails and where the oppressed are never forgotten. Bangladesh, you've shown us that the spirit of solidarity can bridge oceans and that even in the darkest of times, there are people willing to rise and speak for what is right.



On April 12, 2025, at least 100,000 protesters painted the streets of Dhaka with the colours of the Palestinian flag and the spirit of freedom, chanting for an end to the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

But Bangladesh and Bangladeshis have consistently remained on the right side of history at a time when doing what is right brings forth more pain than gains.

The streets of Dhaka, bustling with thousands of passionate voices, have become a beacon of hope for the Palestinian people. These protests, organised by students, workers, and activists, have not only raised awareness about the dire situation in Gaza

rallying for our freedom and dignity. The love and solidarity from the people of Bangladesh mean more than they will ever know.

In a world where news cycles often turn cold and distant, it's hard to believe that anyone could feel the pain of our plight as deeply as we do. But then, I read about the streets of Dhaka, where thousands of people, young and old, gathered to shout our name, to hold our flag high, and to chant for an

# Trade, trust and transit between Bangladesh and India



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### ASHISH BANIK

India's withdrawal of the transhipment facility for Bangladesh—which allowed Bangladeshi exports to reach third countries through India—could potentially cause a significant setback in bilateral relations between the neighbouring nations. Launched in 2020, the facility had allowed Bangladeshi goods, particularly RMG, to move through Indian land to reach their global destinations, thereby enhancing trade efficiency and saving costs.

Undoubtedly, the abrupt withdrawal of this facility, without a phase-down period, undermines the progress made in bilateral trade facilitation over the past few decades. The experience also highlights the exposed nature of South Asian regional cooperation and the need for resilient, mutually reinforcing and beneficial trade arrangements that can withstand political and economic shocks. In fact, South Asia has already been ranked as the least economically integrated region in the world, with intra-regional trade constituting only 5 percent of the region's total trade volume, compared to ASEAN's 25 percent, North America's 40-50 percent, and the European Union's 60-65 percent. The low degree of integration has been caused by a legacy of perceived political tensions, divergent perceptions on bilateral and mutual security affairs, absence of infrastructure, and non-tariff barriers, which have been stifling regional trade potential for the past couple of decades.

The recent withdrawal by India also does

not help alleviate diplomatic tensions that have been brewing between Bangladesh and India for some time. In the aftermath of the unexpected political shift in Bangladesh on August 5, 2024—which saw the fall of the Awami League-led government through a student-led democratic uprising—the bilateral relationship entered a new phase of uncertainty. A notable manifestation of this transition was the visible rise in acrimonious rhetoric, a proliferation of misinformation from the Indian media, and an uptick in nationalistic posturing from various quarters in both countries. However, the strategic imperatives and the socio-economic interdependences that underpin the relationship between the neighbours continue to provide a strong justification for recalibrating bilateral engagement through dialogue, diplomacy, and pragmatic cooperation.

Bangladesh-India's deep historical linkages—particularly the role India played during the 1971 Liberation War—serve as a strong basis for sustained cooperation, especially in areas such as cultural exchange, people-to-people connectivity, and trade. The geographical contiguity and ethnic ties across the borders further cement the relationship, facilitating an exceptional level of social interaction uncommon elsewhere in South Asia. Additionally, the two countries share a wide range of mutual interests in domains including disaster management, basin-wide river management, forest conservation,

water-sharing issues, and the call for the extradition of Sheikh Hasina. Meanwhile, India expressed concerns over regional security, particularly the rise of extremist forces and the persecution and protection of minorities in Bangladesh. Despite these divergent priorities, both sides acknowledged the necessity of continued dialogue—a crucial step towards building a conflict-resilient diplomatic framework.

Another important factor in increasing dialogue and cooperation between the two nations is the security dynamics of Eastern South Asia, which highlight the necessity for close cooperation between Dhaka and New Delhi. The rise of the Arakan Army along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, the protracted Rohingya refugee crisis, and the latent threat posed by non-state insurgent actors represent shared security challenges. These threats are transnational in nature and cannot be effectively addressed in isolation. Political and security cooperation, underpinned by mutual recognition of each other's sovereignty and core interests, becomes not just desirable but essential. The current instability in Myanmar, combined with the potential for radicalisation among displaced communities, has the capacity to destabilise the broader Bay of Bengal region. A robust, trust-based Bangladesh-India partnership is therefore a critical pillar in ensuring regional peace and stability.

A defining feature of Bangladesh-India relations over the past two decades has been the development of multi-tiered institutional frameworks for dialogue and cooperation. These include joint working groups, border management coordination mechanisms, and shared intelligence platforms. Reinvigorating these structures in the current political climate is vital for managing misunderstandings, preventing escalation, and fostering predictability. However, rebuilding the structures to better bilateral relations must follow a new

template—not that of the past regime, whose cooperation between the two nations served India's national and economic interests in a lopsided manner. Bangladesh's chief adviser has reiterated that rebuilding the relations must be done to benefit both nations equally.

Moreover, a key challenge in the digital age is the weaponisation of information. The spread of disinformation and fabricated narratives through social media has emerged as a potent destabilising force, fuelling mistrust and animosity at the grassroots level. Even after the meeting between the two leaders, hostile rhetoric in sections of the Indian media has continued towards the current government of Bangladesh. Both governments must prioritise cyber diplomacy and information hygiene by establishing fact-checking protocols, digital literacy campaigns, and cross-border communication frameworks to combat this emerging threat.

The present uncertainty in Bangladesh-India relations, while concerning, also offers a rare opportunity to redefine the terms of engagement, and it is imperative that both nations seize it. The political transition in Bangladesh has altered the dynamics of bilateral diplomacy, but it has not diminished the strategic logic that binds the two nations. In fact, the challenges of the current moment underscore the need for more—not less—engagement. The Yunus-Modi meeting serves as a beacon of cautious optimism, a reminder that even in moments of political flux, diplomacy can prevail. To ensure a stable and prosperous South Asia, it is imperative for both nations to transcend short-term disagreements and invest in a long-term, cooperative framework grounded in mutual respect, historical solidarity, and shared aspirations. Only through sustained dialogue, robust institutional cooperation, and an unwavering commitment to truth and transparency can Bangladesh and India chart a course through this testing time and emerge with a stronger, more resilient partnership.

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS**  
1 Supermarket aids  
6 Select group  
11 Concerning  
12 Alpine trill  
13 Entertainer Midler  
14 Business bigwigs  
15 Feedbag fill  
17 That woman  
18 Valuable item passed down  
22 Old Atlanta arena  
23 Radio button  
27 Pocket breads

29 Ham it up  
30 Furry wraps  
32 Possesses  
33 Looks down on  
35 Scrooge cry  
38 Convoy truck  
39 San Antonio mission  
41 Canary homes  
45 More certain  
46 Fill with joy  
47 Vacant  
48 Newark's county  
**DOWN**  
1 Hailed vehicle

2 Lincoln nickname  
3 Go bad  
4 Helpful software features  
5 Real bargain  
6 Ugly building  
7 Smoked salmon  
8 Midmonth day  
9 Computer fixer  
10 Different  
16 Spinning toy  
18 Brewing ingredient  
19 Give off  
20 A fan of

21 Some D.C. landmarks  
24 Boars' mates  
25 Sicilian peak  
26 Exam  
28 Kind of overload  
31 Take in  
34 Game show host  
35 Diamond corner  
36 Homecoming attendee  
37 Angel's instrument  
40 Convened  
42 Neon or helium  
43 Summer in France  
44 Kinsey topic



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