

HRW slams ban on AL activities

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abused legal powers to silence political opponents, but using similar methods against the supporters of her Awami League party would also violate those same fundamental freedoms," said Meenakshi Ganguly, deputy Asia director at HRW.

The ban on the Awami League will apply until party leaders have faced trial for abuses committed during their 15 year rule, a process that could last years, thus effectively proscribing the party, said the New York-based international rights body.

These moves came in the wake of the interim government's ordinance amending the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, which gives the Tribunal powers to prosecute and dismantle political organisations.

The new provision defines "organisation" expansively to include any political party or affiliated group, or individuals who are deemed to propagate or support their activities.

Because these powers are drafted so broadly, they could contravene international standards of due process and freedom of association.

Additionally, the Tribunal is empowered to punish "any group of individuals which, in the opinion of the Tribunal, propagates, supports, endorses, facilitates, or engages in the activities of such a [banned] party or entity".

Those accused of committing crimes under Hasina's government should be appropriately prosecuted but imposing a ban on any speech or activity deemed supportive of a political party is an excessive restriction on fundamental freedoms that mirrors the previous government's abusive clampdown on political opponents, HRW said.

India pushed 109 more into Bangladesh

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Nayek Subedar Abdul Matin of BGB-61 Battalion's Dhabsuti BOP (border outpost) said they were handed over to Patgram police after initial interrogation, adding their statements suggest they were pushed in by BSF late at night.

In Moulvibazar, seven individuals were detained near the Muroichhara border in Kulaura upazila yesterday.

Lt Col ASM Zakaria, commander of BGB-46, said they are all Bangladeshi citizens and will be handed over to Kulaura police.

In Feni, 39 Bangladeshis were detained near the borders in Chhagalnaiya and Fulgazi on Wednesday night, said Lt Col Md Mosharraf Hossain of BGB-4.

After verifying their documents, 12 were handed over to Fulgazi police and another 12 to Chhagalnaiya police. The BGB could not immediately decide what to do with the remaining 15.

In Cumilla, 13 Bangladeshis were detained near the Golabari border yesterday.

They are currently in the BGB custody, Lt Col Mir Alf Ejaz, commander of the BGB-10, said.

In Thakurgaon, two women were detained near Boirchuna border in Pirganj upazila and two others near Ramchandrapur border in Birol upazila early yesterday.

The Indian police detained them about a month ago and handed them

Already a wide range of people including actors, lawyers, singers and political activists have been arrested on politically motivated murder charges, with prosecutors justifying the arrests by accusing them of backing the "rule of fascist Hasina".

Meanwhile, there is growing concern over delays in addressing serious abuses that occurred under the Awami League government.

On August 27, 2024, the interim government established a commission to investigate enforced disappearances under Hasina's rule.

The commission recorded 1,676 complaints, with some 200 victims still missing, revealing a systematic pattern targeting political opponents and uncovering evidence of torture at secret detention sites run by security agencies.

However, the proposed legislation on enforced disappearances does not mention any role for the commission's findings, and excludes enforced disappearances committed in a "widespread" or "systematic" manner, leaving them to the jurisdiction of Bangladesh's under-resourced and controversial International Crimes Tribunal.

While the proposed disappearance law would establish a new National Commission on the Prevention and Remedy of Enforced Disappearances, there are no provisions to ensure its independence.

Criminal cases of those suspected of enforced disappearances would be prosecuted by a new Tribunal for Prevention and Remedies of Enforced Disappearance.

However, neither body would have jurisdiction over "widespread or systematic" enforced disappearances that constitute crimes against

humanity, which constitute most cases committed under the previous government.

While the legislation would criminalise anyone who aids, abets, instructs, orders or conspires in a disappearance, it sets a stricter threshold for the application of command or superior responsibility compared to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The interim government should reverse its actions to protect the rights of freedom of expression of the AL members and supporters and focus instead on prosecuting members of the former government accused of crimes based on credible evidence.

I should refrain from politically motivated pretrial detentions and ensure that they remain the exception only when necessary in an individual case and not the rule.

The priority should be to deliver justice for human rights violations, particularly unlawful killings and enforced disappearances.

The government should use evidence gathered by the commission of inquiry to investigate enforced disappearances to prosecute alleged perpetrators, remove suspects in the security forces from active duty and reveal the fate of the missing.

"There is widespread anger against the Awami League for the many abuses committed during Hasina's rule, but stripping supporters of opposition parties of their rights isn't a way forward."

Instead, the interim government should ensure progress on revealing what happened to the disappeared and holding perpetrators accountable through fair trials, Ganguly added.

Over to the 63 BSF Battalion, who later pushed them into Bangladesh, said Lt Col Abdullah Al Moin Hasan, commanding officer of BGB-42.

BSF officials denied their involvement when BGB protested the push-ins in two separate company commander-level flag meetings, he added.

In Khagrachhari, five people, including a child, were detained near the Ramgarh border, reports Prothom Alo.

During questioning, the detainees said they had been working as labourers at a brick kiln in Haryana, Ramgarh Upazila. Nirbahi Officer Ismat Jahan told Prothom Alo.

LETTERS TO NEW DELHI

Bangladesh has recently sent at least four letters to India requesting to stop any push-ins, saying it violates existing bilateral frameworks, including the 1975 India-Bangladesh joint guidelines for border authorities, the 2011 Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP), and decisions made during director general-level talks between the BGB and BSF.

The letter reiterated that Bangladesh would accept individuals confirmed as Bangladeshi citizens and repatriated through proper channels. Any deviation from this, it said, would harm mutual understanding between the two countries.

"Any perceived delay of verification cannot be used as a factor for push-ins," he added.

Recently, New Delhi sent a letter

to Dhaka seeking to expedite the verification process of illegal Bangladeshis in India so that they can be sent back home at the earliest.

Responding to a question, Indian External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told the weekly media briefing yesterday that any foreigner living illegally in India -- whether Bangladeshi or others -- is dealt with as per law.

"We have a large number of Bangladeshi nationals here who are required to be deported. We have asked Bangladesh to verify their nationality. There is a pending list of 2,369 [Bangladeshi] nationals. In many cases, the people have completed their jail sentence and are waiting to be deported," he said.

In many cases, the nationality verification required to be done by the Bangladeshi side has been delayed since 2020, he added.

Speaking on the matter, a foreign ministry official told this newspaper yesterday that the letter sent by New Delhi does not explain why the push-ins would take place.

"If we are to receive illegal Bangladeshis from India, it has to be done under a process. We do it on a regular basis. This is applicable for both countries," said the official, wishing to remain unnamed.

"Any perceived delay of verification cannot be used as a factor for push-ins," he added.

Under the existing Public Service Act, 2018, the government retains the authority to retire any government employee without justification, as long as the individual has completed 25 years of service. In such cases, the employee is entitled to full retirement benefits along with other applicable entitlements. Additionally, any government employee may voluntarily resign after 25 years of service and still receive full retirement

benefits without needing to provide a reason.

The draft of the "Public Service (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025" proposes that government employees may be dismissed without an inquiry for allegations such as unauthorised absence, spreading discontent among colleagues, or breach of discipline.

The process would involve issuing two separate notices -- one with a five-day deadline and another with a three-day deadline.

The Advisory Council has recommended extending the notice period to two phases of seven working days each, totalling 14 working days, according to sources.

However, it will be determined after a meeting of the four responsible advisers whether the amended draft will be presented again before the Advisory Council or sent to the President for promulgation as an ordinance after informing the Council.

According to a source, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul, who is now abroad, will further scrutinise the proposed draft along with Food Adviser Ali Imam Majumder, Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan, and Public Works

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