

# Why reforming the NHRC as per the Paris Principles matters



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On August 29, 2024, Bangladesh signed the UN convention on enforced disappearance, hence completing signing all nine core international human rights treaties. This step by the interim government symbolises our respect towards international human rights norms and commitment to uphold those. On several occasions, the chief adviser emphasised his government's commitment to upholding human rights and freedom of speech in the country. Among many important initiatives required to fulfil this commitment is reforming the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Bangladesh, which needs immediate attention.

Due to widespread criticism of the NHRC, particularly in terms of civil and political rights, one may question the importance of the commission. However, it cannot be denied that the success or effectiveness of such an institution depends on political will, enabling environment, and the institution's leadership.

Considering discussions about crucial reforms, the NHRC staff now see a light of hope to make the organisation stronger and credible at home and abroad.

First, we need to realise the importance of an independent and credible national human rights institution (NHRI). Over the last five decades, most countries, including Bangladesh, have signed, ratified, or acceded to the major human rights treaties. When it comes to honouring their commitments to implementing the rights embodied in these instruments, many states have conspicuously failed in important respects. Moreover, development assistance has, since the end of the Cold War, increasingly been conditioned by both multilateral and bilateral donors based on respect for human rights and reforms designed to enhance good governance. NHRI have been recognised by them as an important element in this regard.

As a matter of fact, as of April 2025, 118 countries have established NHRI, among which 91 have A status while 27 hold B

status. This accreditation is crucial for such an institution as it enhances the image of a country in the international arena, and also, fully compliant A status NHRI enjoy several rights and powers, such as voting power in the annual meeting of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) and Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and the opportunity to become a bureau member of GANHRI.

However, it is unfortunate to note that only two NHRI in South Asia—Bangladesh and Maldives—were awarded B status while those of India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka were awarded A status from the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) of GANHRI. SCA accredits the status to an NHRI based on compliance with the Paris Principles, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993. The Paris Principles provide a broad normative framework for the status, structure, mandate, composition, power, and methods of operation of the principal domestic human rights mechanism.

The Paris Principles require NHRI to have as wide a role as possible, with two main responsibilities: human rights promotion and human rights protection.

Human rights promotion includes creating a national culture of human rights where tolerance, equality, and mutual respect thrive. Human rights protection, on the other hand, means helping to identify and investigate human rights abuses, bringing those responsible for human rights violations to justice, and providing a remedy and redress for victims. Core protection activities should focus primarily on the prevention of torture, arbitrary detention, disappearances, and the protection of human rights defenders. Linked to this is the role of NHRI as watchdogs, reviewing conditions in detention facilities, visiting facilities unannounced and requesting private interviews with detainees. The inability to directly investigate law enforcement agencies is a critical flaw that is preventing the

NHRC in Bangladesh from getting an A status, regardless of how broad its general mandate might seem on paper.

The Paris Principles require that an NHRI be provided with an appropriate level of funding in order to guarantee its independence and ability to freely determine its priorities and activities. They also require that government funding be allocated to a separate budget line item applicable only to the NHRI. India and Pakistan's NHRI have complied with this requirement, and these NHRI receive a parliament approved grant. Although the NHRC Bangladesh has overcome dependency on donor budget and now fully operates with funds from the government, financial independence is still to be achieved as the commission does not receive its budget directly from parliament.

Another crucial criterion for an NHRI to be fully compliant with the Paris Principles is related to the selection and appointment of NHRI leadership. It requires the selection process to be transparent, through broad advertisement, maximising the number of potential candidates from a wide range of societal groups. The SCA recommends that NHRI advertise vacancies and establish clear and uniform criteria upon which to assess the merit of eligible applicants. Another vital point is the long term vacancy of NHRI leadership. In this matter, incorporating a provision in the NHRC Act on appointing alternate commissioners during the period following the resignation of a commissioner may be considered.

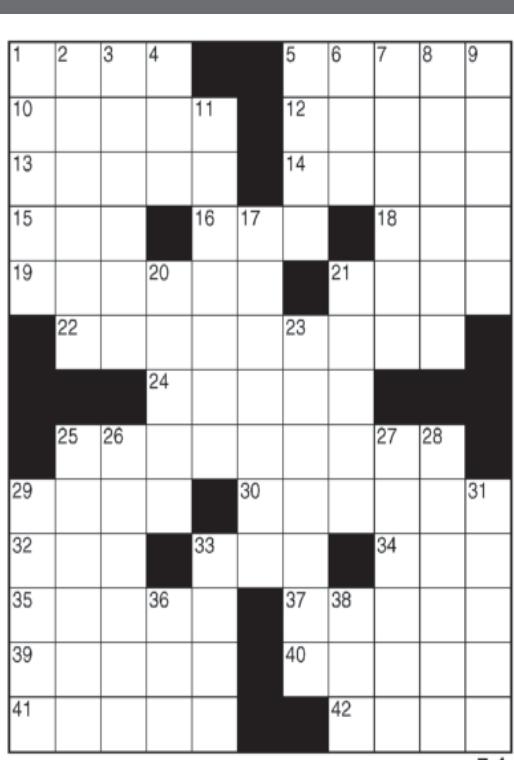
To move forward, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the importance of NHRC in a civilised, democratic country is undeniable. Kofi Annan in 2002 said that building strong human rights institutions at the country level is what, in the long run, will ensure that human rights are protected and advanced in a sustained manner. For long now, the NHRC and human rights defenders have been advocating for amending the NHRC Act as per the Paris Principles, arranging for a permanent space, increasing its budget, and providing lucrative service benefits to the staff. We hope that the interim government will consider reforming the commission as per the Paris Principles to make a stronger and credible NHRC that will pave the way for promoting and protecting human rights in Bangladesh, and will enhance the country's dignity in the international arena as well.

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS**  
1 Card collection  
5 Burglar's crime  
10 Verdi pieces  
12 TV sound  
13 Skater Harding  
14 Nursery resident  
15 Summer in Paris  
16 Tick off  
18 Pot fill  
19 "Cold as ice," e.g.  
21 Thatcher, for one  
22 Kitchen containers  
24 Composer  
Bruckner  
25 Capone's cohorts  
29 Steamed  
30 Capital north of  
Syracuse  
32 Lobbying org.  
33 Low digit  
34 Big shot  
35 Tony or Oscar  
37 Monsoon weather  
39 In shape  
40 Burn a bit  
41 Goes downhill

42 Base meal

**DOWN**  
1 Sees socially  
2 Steamy  
3 Film  
4 Bandleader Kyser  
5 Carpet fastener  
6 "What was that?"  
7 Book worker  
8 1040 users  
9 The present  
11 Regatta activity  
17 Uses for support  
20 Foolish  
21 Precept  
23 Walks unsteadily  
25 Leave base, perhaps  
26 Secret  
27 Deep chasm  
28 Playground fixtures  
29 Minor arguments  
31 Church areas  
33 Casino figure  
36 Sunburned  
38 Target



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# The war that Israel lost



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SHAMSHER M CHOWDHURY

Since its highly contentious and controversial founding in 1948, Israel, backed by its all-weather ironclad ally across the Atlantic and exploiting Europe's collective guilt, has gotten used to flexing its military muscle on the people of Palestine and illegally occupying their lands with impunity. The ongoing genocide in Gaza is only the latest episode of this brutality and its total disregard for international law and human lives.

Emboldened by his "success" in the most gruesome and uninterrupted genocide in Gaza and its unarmed population, Israel's murderous Prime Minister Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu and the extreme hardline Zionist partners in his government believed that they could carry out a repeat act on Iran using mid-to long-range missiles, ostensibly targeting Iran's nuclear facilities. Only this time, Bibi met his match. After Iran retaliated in equal—and at times more effective—terms, within less than two weeks Netanyahu was begging for a ceasefire before Iran wrought greater damage on key Israeli cities and military and intelligence installations in Tel Aviv and other parts of the country. It was only with the direct intervention of US President Donald Trump that Bibi managed to save his skin, at least for now. President Trump has publicly stated of the huge damages that Iran's counter-offensive had caused in Israel.

Obviously, Bibi and his hardline colleagues were suffering from deep amnesia. The supreme irony is that they even chose not to remember that it was Cyrus II, or Cyrus the Great of Persia, who is exalted in Judaism for freeing the Jewish people from the Babylonian captivity following the Persian conquest of Babylon in Sixth Century BCE. This event is described in the Hebrew Bible as the return to Zion whereby displaced Jews were repatriated to what had been the Kingdom of Judah. This enabled the resurgence of Jewish life in the Land of Israel. Cyrus also facilitated Jewish aspirations for a new temple in Jerusalem, where the original Solomon's Temple had once stood before being destroyed during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. His efforts resulted in the completion of the Second Temple, which marked the beginning of the Second Temple period of Judaism. According to the Book of Isaiah, Cyrus the Great was anointed by Yahweh and explicitly designated as the "messiah" for his seminal role in bringing Jews back to Jerusalem. Cyrus is the only non-Jewish figure to be revered in this capacity. For the ungrateful Zionists of today, as symbolised by the likes of Netanyahu, history has no place in their genocidal narrative. They ventured to bite the hand that had saved them and got bitten instead.

At the outset of Israel's missile attacks on Iran, Netanyahu made what can best be described as a comical appeal to the people of Iran to rise against the regime—in other words, a call for regime change. In fact, a change of regime is still a possibility, but that's more likely to happen in Tel Aviv, not Tehran.

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Viva-Voce	: 11 August 2025, 10 AM to 4 PM
Publication of Final Result	: 13 August 2025
Admission from Merit List (From First Merit List)	: 17-19 August 2025 upto 11:59 PM
Physically Document Submission (Online application form & Original Certificate/Transcript)	: 21 August 2025, 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM
Admission from Waiting List (Second Merit List)	: 24-27 August 2025 upto 11:59 PM
Physically Document Submission (Online application form & Original Certificate/Transcript)	: 31 August 2025, 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM
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Class Starts	: 1 September 2025
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