



#PERSPECTIVE

# How social media became the frontline of the July Uprising

The July Movement did not start with a hashtag. It started with rage, grief, and a country cracking under pressure. However, it found its momentum online, mutating into a hybrid of protest and pixels, strategy and storytelling, bloodshed and bandwidth. When bullets hit the streets, stories hit the feeds.

Before headlines could make sense of it, Instagram stories, Facebook lives, digital illustrations, and satirical memes did the job. And it was not the newsrooms that led this. It was a decentralised army of students, actors, presenters, illustrators, and people you would never have heard of, until they became the voice you could not ignore.

## A movement that could not be silenced

"Social media acted as a replacement for mainstream media," said Manzur-al-Matin, a lawyer, television host, and one of the familiar faces during the July mass uprising.

"Excluding a few newspapers, television in particular, was not showing anything. News of people dying was not coming out. There was a kind of media silencing... So, people became dependent on social

media. It played a role both in mobilising and informing."

Matin recalled receiving tactical instructions via social media — how to treat tear gas wounds, how to regroup when scattered — "a tool for mass mobilisation," he called it. What made this different was that it did not rely on polished journalism. It relied on urgency, on participation, on people stepping up, logging in, and refusing to scroll past

injustice.

Dipti Chowdhury, a TV presenter, also found herself at the centre of this shift. Her televised words, spoken during an internet shutdown, managed to go viral. She became, unwillingly, a symbol.

"That interview wasn't about me," she said. "It was everyone's experience of being silenced. People saw their own frustrations in my words."

"It's very difficult to control social media

in a place where every person is like a TV channel. Even when the internet was shut down, VPNs kept the movement alive. People trusted social media more than conventional news."

Matin echoed the same. "We didn't speak up to go viral. We spoke up because staying silent felt like complicity. I tried to speak on TV. But after the 20th or 21st, that door closed. So, we took to the streets."