



SNAPS FROM COURT TO STREET

Clockwise from top left: Addressing the press, relatives of July uprising victims give their reaction to Hasina's sentencing at the ICT. Survivors maimed in last year's uprising exit the tribunal after attending proceedings. Former police chief Chowdhury Abdulla Al-Mamun being escorted out after receiving a five-year sentence. Army personnel maintain security at the ICT premises. Protesters torch an effigy of Hasina near her Dhanmondi 32 residence hours before the ruling. A rickshaw-puller stands atop his vehicle outside the court and raises his hands in prayer after the verdict is announced.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, PRABIR DAS, RASHED SHUMON



TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS OF SHEIKH HASINA USED AS EVIDENCE



WITH THEN DHAKA UNIVERSITY VICE-CHANCELLOR ASM MAKSLAM KAMAL ON JULY 14, 2024

"I have hanged the Razakars, and now I will do the same to them. I won't spare a single one. I'm telling you [...] What kind of country do we live in? Haven't you seen what happened to the Razakars – I had them all executed; now I won't spare them either [...] All of these people must be kicked out... I'm giving the order. Let today pass and then I will arrest them, detain them and take whatever action is necessary."

WITH SHEIKH FAZLE NOOR TAPOSH ON JULY 18, 2024

"I have spoken with the army chief, they'll be on alert. Now we are taking other steps. We are taking photos with drones and using helicopters over a few locations [...] I've given the order to arrest all of them [...] RAB, DGFI, everyone has been told detain as many as they can [...] I've already given the instruction. They will use lethal weapons now. Wherever they are seen, shoot at sight."

WITH HASANUL HUQ INU ON JULY 20, 2024

"Forces will descend from the air and arrest them from all sides [...] they will bomb the area from helicopters. RAB's helicopters will attack from above."

WITH HASANUL HUQ INU ON AUGUST 4, 2024

"I have told them to update the news scrolls [...] We are telling the guardians that there has been a terrorist attack [...] An international organisation gave me a message that these are terrorist attacks. [...] I will put it in the newspapers."

Hasina sentenced to death

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collaboration with each other and committed atrocities in order to kill protesters across the country," said the tribunal chair.

The court premises and surrounding area were under tight security from early morning. With arson and crude bomb attacks in recent days, safety had already been heightened nationwide.

Injured protesters and families of July martyrs gathered outside, demanding that the government ask India to send Hasina back.

In his reaction to the verdict, state-appointed defence lawyer Amir Hossain said he accepted it but was "angry and deeply hurt" by the outcome. "The verdict could have been different. But it

human rights bodies, and newspaper reports.

It also documents the "extent of cruelty" endured by the victims killed, seriously injured, or permanently disabled during the July 2024 uprising.

On the contested casualty figures,

"The videos displayed in the courtroom showing the dead and injured, their cries of agony, and the appearances of victim witnesses who lost skulls, eyes, noses, hands, and legs were so harrowing that any human being would struggle to remain in a

normal state of mind," the judge said. "Such atrocities must be brought to an end at any cost. Justice must not fail."

In view of the tribunal's findings, Hasina was found guilty on three counts under Charge 1 – incitement, ordering the killings, and failure to prevent the atrocities or take punitive action.

For these, she received imprisonment until natural death.

Under Charge 2, the first count concerned her orders to deploy drones, helicopters and lethal weapons to kill protesters, which the tribunal deemed crimes against humanity.

The second concerned the killing of six persons at Chankharpul and another six at Ashulia in Savar in execution of her earlier orders.

The chair added that the chief prosecutor, in summing up, sought an order restraining Awami League from political activities. "The tribunal does not include [this in] the instant case."

The judgment also analyses police communications and top-down directives during the protests, and records the arguments of the chief prosecutor and the state-appointed defence counsel.

The tribunal said the defence "made allegations without showing any substantive contradiction," and after reviewing both sides, found "sufficient grounds" for framing charges.

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He said freedom of speech was systematically undermined under Sheikh Hasina's rule, with critics, writers, journalists, civil society members, lawyers, and even judges facing intimidation, pressure and forced exile.

Thanking defence lawyer Amir, who represented Hasina and Kamal, the tribunal chair said, "In our view, in our estimation, he performed to the best of his ability and played exactly the role he was supposed to, and that we expected."

Responding to the defence claim that the telephonic conversations involving Hasina had not been properly tested, he said the defence failed to present any grounds to support the allegation.

He added that experts at the CID forensic laboratory examined the recordings, and their report confirmed the conversations were genuine and not AI generated.

CHARGES, PUNISHMENT

Originally, five charges were framed against Hasina, Kamal and Mamun, but after reviewing documents and depositions, the tribunal reshaped and modified them.

The ICT chair said the actions of the authorities in question were unprecedented in Bangladesh's history. He said the nature and extent of the cruelty inflicted on protesters, including infants, women and the elderly, remain etched in the nation's collective memory.

The judgment details the prosecution's case, the defence submissions, the evidence presented, and the tribunal's findings, including witness testimonies, video footage, reports of national and international

the chair noted the wide disparities – government gazettes, UN assessments, and other reports place deaths at 800; 1,000; or 1,400. He said such variations were "natural" in mass atrocity situations, adding that even post-1971 lists remain incomplete.

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BNP, Jamaat, NCP hail

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international standards.

"Those who have provided shelter to a fugitive death row convict, in our view, have taken a stand in favour of the heinous criminal. We demand that she be returned to Bangladesh."

Speaking to reporters at NCP central office, Convenor Nahid Islam said the party welcomed the verdict but would not be satisfied until the sentence was executed.

Terming the judgement "historic", he called for her immediate return from India.

Meanwhile, Islami Andolan Bangladesh, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, Hefazat-e-Islam, and a faction of the Jatiya Ganatantrik Party also said the verdict sends a warning to future fascists.

In a statement, Islami Andolan Bangladesh called on the interim government to complete all remaining legal procedures and take steps to carry out the verdict without delay.

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis said the ICT verdict would serve as an example against the use of state power to murder and abduct citizens.

Hefazat-e-Islam said justice had been served and peace had reached the families of the martyrs.

"Those who want to become fascists

and autocrats again in the future will also have to face the consequences of Hasina and the Awami League," Hefazat-e-Islam Babunagari said in a statement.

A faction of the Jatiya Ganatantrik Party went as far as to demand that Hasina's death sentence be executed in public.

Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Bangladesh welcomed the verdict, while the Biplobi Workers Party, in a statement, said the judgement proves that even dictators are not above the law.

Earlier in the day, Hasina was given the death penalty after being found guilty of crimes against humanity for the violent suppression of student protests last year that led to the collapse of her government.

A panel of three judges from the ICT delivered their verdict, ruling that she was responsible for inciting hundreds of extrajudicial killings carried out by law enforcement.

Hasina was tried in absentia, having been exiled in India since she was forced from power in August 2024.

Former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, who was on trial alongside Hasina, was also sentenced to death, while former police chief Chowdhury Abdulla Al-Mamun was sentenced to five years in prison.

Several families said it was under Al-Mamun's orders that police across the country opened fire on protesters, killing their loved ones.

Zartaj Parvin, mother of martyr Afnan, said, "Such a massacre took place under the direction of Chowdhury Abdulla Al-Mamun, yet he has been given only five years' imprisonment. We don't accept this sentence."

Meanwhile, back in Rangpur's Piroganj, parents, siblings, relatives and neighbours of martyr Abu Sayed, the first reported victim of the July killings, were waiting in front of the television with bated breath since early morning, our Salmonirah correspondent reported.

As soon as the verdict came, they all raised their hands in the air, expressing their gratitude to the Almighty. Some rushed to Abu Sayed's grave and prayed for his departed soul's peace.

Abu Sayed's father Mokbul Hossain said, "I am satisfied with the ICT court's verdict. I'll be even happier if it's executed soon. This is one execution I want to witness in my lifetime. My son was very talented. Had he been alive today, our home would still be filled with joy. My child was shot dead on killer Hasina's orders."

Breaking down at the news, Monowara Begum, mother of Abu Sayed, prayed that the verdict be executed without delay. "The government must ensure this happens swiftly."

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday sentenced Hasina to death on several counts of crimes against humanity committed during last year's July uprising that toppled her, forcing her to flee to India.

At the start of the trial on June 1 this year, the tribunal first issued an arrest warrant for her. The tribunal then issued circulars in newspapers for her to appear before the court and face the trial, but she did not. Separately, the interim government has requested India to return Hasina, but New Delhi is yet to honour the request.

Hasina can't appeal before surrender

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The next legal recourse for ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina is to file an appeal against the tribunal's verdict, but she must surrender before she can do that, legal experts have said.

Talking to The Daily Star after the tribunal sentenced her to death on charges of crimes against humanity, state-appointed defence lawyer Amir Hossain said he cannot file an appeal as his client is absconding. "If she is arrested or if she surrenders before the tribunal, only then can an appeal be filed," he said.

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