

Stay out of Gaza ISF

Bangladesh must not be drawn into this misadventure

The interest expressed by National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman in participating in the proposed International Stabilisation Force (ISF) for Gaza is both perplexing and troubling. It is difficult to comprehend the rationale behind such an initiative by an interim government that is expected to leave office within a month or so, but still appears willing to saddle the country and its armed forces with a commitment that borders on an outlandish adventure.

The clarification offered by the chief adviser's press secretary, Shafiqul Alam, regarding the adviser's discussions with US officials is neither convincing nor coherent; indeed, it appears internally contradictory. Referring to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2803, he stated, "As one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping forces and an ardent supporter of the Palestinian cause, Bangladesh's interest in participating in the ISF is contingent on the fulfilment of a number of principles." These, he explained, include the force being temporary and operating under a clear UNSC mandate, the establishment of a permanent ceasefire and complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, and the transfer of responsibility for Gaza to the Palestinians.

However, Resolution 2803 tells a different story. It states that "as the Force establishes control and stability, the Israel Defense Forces will withdraw from the Gaza Strip based on standards, milestones, and timeframes linked to demilitarisation that will be agreed between specified parties—save for a security perimeter presence that will remain until Gaza is properly secure from any resurgent terror threat." The language of the resolution makes it abundantly clear that the proposed multinational force is not intended as a peacekeeping mission. Rather, it is designed to secure Gaza while the IDF retains a continuing presence. In effect, the IDF's withdrawal is conditional and open ended.

It is also noteworthy that although the UNSC adopted the resolution, two veto-wielding members—Russia and China—abstained, citing the lack of clarity and warning that the force "could actually transform it into a party to the conflict." Even members who voted in favour expressed reservations about the resolution's vagueness. While attempting to justify the interim government's interest in the ISF, the government's spokesperson pointed out that all Muslim members of the UNSC supported the resolution. Yet, Pakistan and Somalia explicitly voiced concerns over the absence of any meaningful role for the Palestinian Authority and the lack of a clear pathway towards Palestinian statehood.

Against this backdrop, the interim government's reiteration of Bangladesh's long-held policy—staunch support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital—rings hollow due to the willingness to deploy Bangladesh's armed forces in support of an ill-defined mission.

It is well-documented that Israel is among the most persistent violators of UN resolutions adopted by both the Security Council and the General Assembly. Since the ceasefire mediated by President Donald Trump came into effect on October 10, 2025, Israel has reportedly violated it nearly 1,200 times, including through airstrikes, shelling, and the demolition of homes, resulting in the deaths of at least 439 Palestinians. Extending support to a security operation that risks becoming a direct party to the conflict—particularly one that may operate against Palestinian interests—would mark a departure from Bangladesh's long and principled history of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle against illegal and brutal occupation. Moreover, an interim government scheduled to hand over power within weeks has no authority to entangle the country in such a complex conflict situation.

A manifesto that must not be ignored

Political commitment essential to ensuring workers' rights

The 15-point manifesto placed by the National Workers' Rights Advocacy Alliance for the political parties ahead of the upcoming national election is a timely and necessary step. At a time when parties are preparing to seek public mandates, the alliance's call to prioritise labour rights and social justice deserves serious attention. Workers have historically been at the heart of political movements in this country, yet their interests have routinely slipped down the list of priorities by successive governments. Job insecurity, low wages, unsafe workplaces, and weak social protection continue to define the lived reality of millions of workers. That these issues persist despite constitutional guarantees exposes a deep gap between legal measures and practice.

Central to the manifesto is the demand for a national minimum wage that ensures a dignified living standard for workers. This reflects long-standing demands from labour rights groups and aligns with the basic idea that work should provide more than mere survival. However, our past experience shows that announcing rights is much easier than enforcing them, especially in an economy where most workers are in the informal sector. Without strong enforcement, clear monitoring, and real political commitment, a national minimum wage may remain a promise on paper rather than a force for real change.

Equally important are the proposals to amend labour laws to ensure universal legal recognition and protection, guarantee freedom of association and collective bargaining—including in export processing zones—and strengthen workplace safety and accident compensation. Given our history of industrial tragedies and lack of accountability, transparent investigations and fair compensation are essential to ensuring justice and preventing future accidents. The emphasis on gender equality, protection from harassment and violence, and six months of paid maternity leave reflects a broader understanding that labour rights are also human rights.

Workers are often praised for their contribution to the nation, only to be sidelined once ballots are counted. This should not happen this time. As election manifestos take shape, political parties must move beyond verbal support and commit to implementing these demands with clear timelines and accountability. Establishing a permanent national labour commission could be an important step, provided it is empowered, independent, and effective. Ultimately, if political parties are serious about change, they must show it by placing workers' rights at the centre of their agenda.