

## 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, Shahiqul 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—steadfast 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.

# Bangladesh needs institutional repair, not tougher policing



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People are increasingly weary and frustrated with the pace of improvement in law and order. This is reasonable given the little visible remission in nationwide crime, with gun shootings, knife killings, beatings with sticks and rods, street clashes, and mob attacks continuing to punctuate public life. As a result, the interim government is being branded weak, incompetent, and indifferent, accused of lacking clues about how to reverse the situation. But weak or incompetent compared to whom? And measured against which standard of "order"? To demand a restoration of law and order requires an honest analytical starting point: restore it to what period, exactly? This question is almost never asked, yet it is an important gateway to understanding the present crisis.

It bears recalling that the violence of knives, guns, and organised street terror also existed throughout the 15-and-a-half-year rule of Sheikh Hasina, but for the large part it took quite a different institutional form compared to what Bangladesh is witnessing now. This distinction matters because it explains why today's violence feels chaotic, retaliatory, and socially diffused rather than centrally controlled. During the klepto-fascist phase of Hasina's governance, violence was not an accidental failure of law and order—it was an instrument of rule.

For more than a decade, coercion replaced political competition. Opposition parties were systematically suppressed, journalists intimidated, and dissent criminalised. Enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings were not aberrations but rather signals carefully calibrated to instil fear without provoking decisive international rupture. At the grassroots level, ruling party activists and student wings functioned as informal enforcers, using knives, rods, and machetes not randomly, but rather selectively—to silence opponents and control tenders, campuses, and neighbourhoods.

That era produced suppressed violence, not peace. Crime statistics appeared manageable because fear discouraged reporting, and streets looked calm because dissent had been crushed, not resolved. The state monopolised violence but delegated its execution to party-aligned actors, creating a system in which brutality was rewarded with protection. Justice did

not fail accidentally; it was deliberately suspended for loyal perpetrators. What Bangladesh is experiencing now is the "leakage" of that violence from the state back into society. Today's violence is decentralised and retaliatory—anger released after years of humiliation, suppression, and forced silence. This is a classic post-authoritarian pattern: when fear collapses faster than institutions can be rebuilt, the muscle memory of violence remains. Klepto-fascism reprogrammes social behaviour, teaching citizens that law is irrelevant and that survival requires aggression. When such a system ends,



FILE VISUAL: **SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR**

society does not instantly revert to civic norms; it suffers the withdrawal symptoms of a long coercive regime.

This is why framing current violence simply as the result of a "law and order failure" is analytically shallow. While current law enforcement has undoubtedly left a lot to be desired, we must acknowledge that what Bangladesh is dealing with are the aftershocks of a long coercive regime, compounded by a persistent security vacuum. The interim government did not inherit a neutral administrative machine, but a hollowed-out shell. The police force, civil service, and security apparatus were shaped by years of loyalty-based internal politics, partisan capture, and

exclusion—that policing alone cannot neutralise.

International experience points towards a different architecture for stability. Societies that experience low levels of everyday violence—such as the Nordic countries, Canada or New Zealand—are not peaceful because their citizens are inherently more virtuous or their police more brutal. They are peaceful because their economic and institutional systems prevent despair from becoming the dominant condition of youth. When people believe tomorrow will be better than today, violence loses its appeal long before police intervention becomes necessary. Bangladesh requires a three-fold structural transformation that

be met with swift, transparent legal consequences for all perpetrators, regardless of their current or former political alignment. Only when citizens see the courtroom as more effective than the street will the demand for mob justice subside.

Ultimately, restoring law and order does not mean restoring the past. It means dismantling a legacy of fear and replacing it with institutions that citizens trust and opportunities that young people can see. Idle, politicised young men cannot be policed into peace; they must be reintegrated into productive economic life. Law can suppress symptoms, but only dignity, opportunity, and legitimacy can cure the disease.

## Why values-based education is crucial for our youth



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Human life is not a calm, still lake; rather, it is a vast and often storm-tossed sea. In this sea, favourable winds sometimes blow, while at other times sudden cyclones disrupt everything and throw life off course. At every stage of life, these storms may take different forms—during childhood, they appear as challenges of discipline and behaviour; in adolescence, as emotional turbulence and identity crises; in youth, as temptation and loss of direction; and in adulthood, as moral compromise and neglect of responsibility.

Modern civilisation has placed in our hands fast-moving technology, comfortable lifestyles, and the alluring promise of glamorous careers. Yet amid this glittering surface, confusion, self-centeredness, consumerism, and moral laxity quietly take root. The question is, while sailing on this dazzling vessel, are we truly moving towards the real destination of life, or are we losing ourselves in a directionless journey driven by the illusion of visible success?

In today's reality, success is often

measured by exam scores, certificates, salary figures, etc. What these measures fail to capture, however, are honesty, compassion, a sense of responsibility, and the ability to make ethical decisions in moments of crisis. As a result, despite educational advancement, society is witnessing a visible erosion of humanity—corruption, violence, intolerance, and moral decay. Technology may enhance our capacity, but without moral development, that same power can become a tool of destruction. A technologically skilled but ethically bankrupt young person may engage in cybercrime, just as a highly educated but value-deficient professional can inflict grave harm on society.

Therefore, education without values cannot help individuals navigate life's storms. At every stage of life, different forms of moral guidance are required. If children are taught honesty, responsibility, and respect, they are far less likely to drift towards violence, dishonesty, or harmful subcultures during adolescence. Adolescence, in particular, is a highly

sensitive phase. Without value-based education, they can easily fall prey to substance abuse, violence, extremism, or self-destructive behaviour.

In youth, life's storms take on yet another form, containing career pressure, competition, financial success, and social recognition. When values-based education has already taken root, a young person learns that not all shortcuts lead to success, and not every gain brings genuine well-being.

In this context, education needs to be more than exam-based; it needs to be life-oriented. One effective and practical expression of such education is the establishment of wellbeing clubs in our schools and colleges, where extracurricular activities can represent a conscious and structured effort towards character development. Through these platforms, students can learn to recognise and manage their emotions and mental stress, cultivate empathy and teamwork, develop the courage to make ethical decisions, and form a positive and meaningful outlook on life. These qualities ultimately serve as a reliable navigation system for the turbulent sea of life.

In the present era, rising levels of mental stress, depression, and lack of self-confidence among adolescents and youth are deeply concerning. These challenges are often accompanied by growing intolerance and violent tendencies. Without institutional emphasis on mental well-being and values-based education, future generations will face

even greater risks. Wellbeing clubs can create opportunities for students to understand themselves, recognise their strengths and limitations.

However, such initiatives require the coordinated involvement of teachers, parents, and society. Teachers must become examples of values and ethical conduct. Parents must understand that character formation is far more important than academic grades. Society, in turn, must create an environment where honesty and humility are seen not as weaknesses, but as strengths.

At the state level, clear and structured action is essential. National education policies must prioritise mental well-being, life skills, and values-based education. Alongside the formal curriculum, effective implementation of initiatives such as wellbeing clubs can lay a strong foundation for future good governance, social stability, and humane development.

Ensuring that our children do not lose their way in the stormy sea of life is a shared responsibility. If we place a moral compass in their hands today, they will be able to steer the helm with courage even amid the fiercest storms of tomorrow. Let us therefore make a collective commitment to integrate values with education, humanity with skills, and ethics with success. Let this shared resolve become the lighthouse of the future, guiding coming generations towards a peaceful, dignified, and truly humane destination.