

August 24, 2024

Joint Letter: Request for a thorough investigation of the killings and atrocities during the recent political crisis in Bangladesh

Excellencies,

We are organizations dedicated to defending freedom of religion or belief, secularism, and justice in the name of democracy. We call for a comprehensive and transparent inquiry into the widespread violence and atrocities that occurred in Bangladesh before and after the resignation of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

Between 15th July and 7th August, Bangladesh witnessed widespread violence resulting in the loss of 819 lives (as of August 21st, reported by the Human Rights Support Society, a non-government human rights organisation) and leaving thousands injured. What initially began as a protest for 'quota reformation' escalated into an anti-government movement, ultimately leading to the downfall of the government. Since 15th July, there were violent clashes between protesters and security forces, resulting in loss of life and significant damage to public property. Even after the former government's resignation on 5th August, the violence continued. From the 5th to the 7th of August, Bangladesh witnessed some of the most severe atrocities since its independence in 1971. These included indiscriminate attacks on security officials and politically motivated revenge attacks on Awami League leaders and activists, resulting in over 100 deaths and numerous injuries. Additionally, there were at least 250 reported attacks on religious minority individuals, their properties, and places of worship. Disturbingly, there were reports of sexual assaults on minority women. Notably, key heritage sites and museums, including the revered residence of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, were targeted and damaged. Over 1,500 sculptures and murals were desecrated or destroyed. Furthermore, inhuman attacks on police stations and personnel severely disrupted the functioning of the security forces, leading to a week-long breakdown in civilian administration and causing widespread looting and chaos.

We respectfully request that the United Nations consider the broader context and carefully examine the development of the situation. During a televised interview, a member of the current interim government highlighted that certain injured security personnel sustained bullet wounds from advanced firearms. His statement indicates that the use of arms was not limited to the

security forces alone. In cases of significant casualties on both sides of a conflict, it is imperative to conduct thorough and impartial investigations into the deaths and injuries of all individuals.

It is crucial to refrain from conducting a hasty investigation and meticulously examine all forensic evidence and autopsy reports. A thorough fact-finding mission must be initiated, along with candid discussions with eyewitnesses and healthcare professionals to carefully cross-check every detail.

All incidents that occurred after 5th August must be given equal attention. Those responsible for the killings of police personnel and Awami League leaders, attacks on religious minorities, and coordinated assaults on cultural and heritage sites must be brought to justice. Failure to address these atrocities will severely undermine the validity and acceptability of the investigation. We demand that the United Nations thoroughly consider all aspects of the situation and implement necessary measures to uphold the rights of all victims and ensure justice is served.

Thanking you for your attention,

Signatories:

Atheist Alliance International

<https://www.atheistalliance.org/>

Atheists for Liberty

<https://www.atheistsforliberty.org/>

Ateizm Dernegi

<https://www.ateizmdernegi.org.tr/>

Libres penseurs athées

<https://www.atheologie.ca/>

Ateist Dergi

<https://ateistdergi.com/>



Progressive Atheists

<http://progressiveatheists.org/>

Humanist Society of Singapore

<https://humanist.org.sg/>

Atheism UK

<https://www.atheismuk.com/>

Alliance of Former Muslims (Ireland)

<https://allianceofformermuslims.com/>

Humanist Association for Leadership, Equity & Accountability

<https://haleaug.org/>

Israeli Atheist Association

Non Religious Citizens, India

<https://nrcindia.org/>

Women Chapter

<https://womenchapter.com/>

Burmese Atheists

<http://burmeseatheists.org/>

Ex Hindu Atheists

<http://www.exhinduatheists.org/>

Ateizm Dernegi International Foundation

<http://www.atheistrefugeesturkey.com/>

Humanistische Atheisten [Humanist Atheists]

<https://www.humanistische-atheisten.org/>

Internationaler Bund der Konfessionslosen und Atheisten e.V.

<http://www.ibka.org/>



Kazimierz Lyszczyński Foundation

<http://www.lyszczynski.com.pl/>

Säkulare Flüchtlingshilfe Deutschland e.V. (Atheist Refugee Relief)

<https://atheist-refugees.com/>

Nastik Nation

<http://nastiknation.org/>