



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Bangladesh - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Tuesday 8 March 2016

Information on the politicisation of the police force, including how they deal with the Awami League and BNP respectively

A report issued in September 2015 by the *Guardian* notes:

“Ataur Rahman, chairman of the independent Bangladesh Political Science Association, said the government’s high-handed behaviour was damaging faith in democracy in Bangladesh and risked provoking a popular backlash. “There is a growing authoritarian trend towards one-person rule. The result is that we are on the brink of a loss of democracy,” Rahman said. “Most government institutions, like the police and the judiciary, are losing their autonomy” (The Guardian (21 September 2015) *Bangladesh's PM rejects claims of repression: 'I do politics for the people'*).

In December 2015 the *Asian Human Rights Commission* states that:

“The Bangladesh police – as an institution, throughout the decades – has trained its personnel to become a lethal force to serve the ruling party of the day” (Asian Human Rights Commission (15 December 2015) *Bangladesh: Institutions Cultivate Authoritarianism*).

A document produced in January 2016 by the *United States Institute of Peace* states:

“Elements of the country's police and army operate as political militias rather than provide nonpartisan security. Allegations of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and opposition harassment damage the legitimacy of the democratic process” (United States Institute of Peace (14 January 2016) *Preventing Violent Extremism through Inclusive Politics in Bangladesh*).

In March 2016 *Odhikar* notes in a report that:

“On February 17, 2016 grassroots leaders and activists of BNP and the possible UP Chairman candidate from BNP were gathered in the courtyard of the house of BNP leader Farooq Haolader in Sreerampur Village under Dumaki Upazila of Patuakhali District. At that time, the Officer-in-Charge of Dumki Police Station, Azmi Farooq, attacked the meeting to stop it. Later, police vandalized chairs and took them away” (Odhikar (1 March 2016) *Human Rights Monitoring Report: February 1 – 29, 2016*).

This report also states:

“Allegations of acts of harassment, torture, extortion, attacks and killing against police are becoming more and more common. Odhikar believes that as law enforcement agencies are being used for political gain and to suppress political opposition, many members of law enforcement agencies believe that they are above the law” (ibid).

In March 2016 *Bertelsmann Stiftung* states in a report that:

“While the politicization of bureaucracy and the police is nothing new in Bangladesh, it has surpassed all previous levels in recent years” (Bertelsmann Stiftung (March 2016) *BTI 2016 | Bangladesh Country Report*, p.29).

No further information on this issue could be found among sources available to the RDC.

References

Asian Human Rights Commission (15 December 2015) *Bangladesh: Institutions Cultivate Authoritarianism*

<http://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/bangladesh-institutions-cultivate-authoritarianism>

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The Guardian (21 September 2015) *Bangladesh's PM rejects claims of repression: 'I do politics for the people'*

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/21/bangladesh-prime-minister-rejects-accusations-of-authoritarian-rule>

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted

Amnesty International

BBC News

Electronic Immigration Network

European Country of Origin Information Network
Freedom House
Google
Human Rights Watch
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
International Crisis Group
IRIN News
Lexis Nexis
Minority Rights Group International
Online Newspapers
Refugee Documentation Centre E-Library
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
Reliefweb
Reuters
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UNHCR Refworld