

EXPLORING AVENUES IN BANGLADESH FOR REPARATION FOR SURVIVORS OF TORTURE

Briefing Paper

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REDRESS

Ending torture, seeking justice for survivors

blast
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BLAST (Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust) is working with REDRESS to respond to the crisis in Bangladesh that began in July 2024 by seeking legal and policy reforms for accountability and reparation for torture, and enhancing survivors' access to justice and reparation.

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INTRODUCTION

The July-August 2024 crisis in Bangladesh was marked by gross human rights violations during the protests, including widespread torture and ill-treatment, extrajudicial killings and arbitrary detention.¹ This drew attention to the long history of such violations in the country. It highlighted the fact that torture and ill-treatment had become endemic in the practices of the law enforcement agencies and criminal justice system.² The difficulties faced by survivors, civil society members, and political activists, after the 2024 crisis to try to obtain accountability and reparation for victims of torture and other serious human rights violations have thrown a spotlight on the major legal and institutional barriers to progressing accountability and reparation claims. The obstacles include the lack of transparency around amounts of compensation awarded through administrative schemes, and a judicial process that, all too often, results in impunity for perpetrators. These factors have had a chilling effect on many survivors' willingness to participate directly in legal processes or even to make complaints to police in the first place.

The establishment of an interim government after the 2024 events, the introduction of several key legal and policy reforms (such as safeguards on arrest implemented through an amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure³), and the hope that more may follow (including beyond the tenure of the interim government itself), has opened up the possibility of changes being implemented. Those reforms could allow survivors of torture and ill-treatment to overcome some of the obstacles mentioned above, and to access meaningful accountability and reparation avenues for the human rights violations which they have suffered. For example, space has been created for United Nations (UN) Special Procedures and other mechanisms to generate decisions and findings of fact on the current situation, and in August 2025 the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) came into force.⁴ It is hoped that Bangladesh might also recognise the jurisdiction of the Committee against Torture (CAT) to decide on individual complaints under the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT).

This briefing paper is designed to highlight the reparation framework in Bangladesh and its limitations in providing comprehensive reparation to victims of torture and ill-treatment, measured against international standards. In light of this analysis, we provide recommendations for key stakeholders to improve access to justice and to ensure the right of survivors to reparation.

The briefing paper has been prepared jointly by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services (BLAST) and REDRESS as part of a wider project partnership seeking to address key issues in relation to accountability, justice, and reparation for torture in Bangladesh.

1 OHCHR, [Fact-Finding Report: Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests of July and August 2024 in Bangladesh](#) (OHCHR Fact-Finding Report), 12 February 2025, page i.

2 UN CAT, [Concluding observations on the initial report of Bangladesh: Committee against Torture](#), 26 August 2019, para. 7; see also Amnesty, [Bangladesh: End impunity for torture and uphold victims' right to reparation](#), 26 June 2024.

3 BLAST, [Press Release: BLAST welcomes safeguards on arrest introduced in amendment to Code of Criminal Procedure](#), 13 August 2025.

4 APT, [OPCAT Database: Bangladesh](#)

BACKGROUND

Summary of the socio-political and economic context prior to the violence, including the underlying causes of the July-August 2024 protests.

In June 2024, the Bangladesh High Court reinstated a 30% quota system for civil service jobs, reserving positions for children of 1971 Liberation War veterans.⁵ The policy has sparked ongoing debate and litigation over the definition of ‘freedom fighter,’ allocation percentages, and overall fairness, issues intensified by high unemployment and the prestige of civil service roles.

The June 2024 High Court decision triggered widespread protests, initially focused on the quota system but quickly expanding into broader opposition to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s government after her remarks perceived as branding demonstrators ‘razakars’, a term historically associated with liberation war traitors.⁶ Demonstrations, initiated by students, supported by political parties, trade unions, and civil society groups, raised concerns over electoral legitimacy, suppression of political opposition, increasing authoritarianism, and State control over all branches of government. Protesters also highlighted issues such as systemic corruption, enforced disappearances, restrictions on civic space, and deteriorating labour and voting rights, all against a backdrop of 40% youth unemployment, 10% food inflation, and rising inequality.⁷

Description of the violations committed during and after the protests.

In response to the large-scale peaceful protests in the early weeks of July, the government used increasingly excessive levels of force. On 15 July, the then-government encouraged supporters, notably the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the ruling party’s student wing, to participate in using force against protestors, as part of the State’s efforts to violently suppress the protests.⁸

The situation deteriorated further when on 16 July a student leader was shot dead by police,⁹ and the government deployed notoriously human rights-violating paramilitary units, including the Border Guard Bangladesh and the US-sanctioned Rapid Action Battalion (RAB).¹⁰ The government subsequently ordered schools and universities across the country to close indefinitely, imposed a country-wide curfew and nationwide internet shutdown, and issued ‘shoot-on-sight’ orders to the police.¹¹

The security forces’ violent response was widely recognised as unnecessary and disproportionate. Police and paramilitary forces used rubber bullets, sound grenades, and firearms with lethal metal

5 The Daily Star, [Freedom Fighters’ Children Quota in Civil Service | Cancellation of 30pc quota for freedom fighters’ children in civil service illegal: HC](#), 5 June 2024.

6 The Daily Star, [The ‘Razakar’ back and forth: Who said what?](#), 15 July 2024.

7 Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, [Explainer: What’s Behind Bangladesh’s Deadly Protests?](#), 31 July 2024.

8 Odhikar, [Annual Human Rights Report 2024](#), 10 February 2025 paras. 20-23.

9 The Daily Star, [Begum Rokeya University Student Abu Sayed’s death in police firing: Cops’ FIR runs counter to known facts](#), 27 July 2024.

10 US Treasury, [Treasury Sanctions Perpetrators of Serious Human Rights Abuse on International Human Rights Day](#), 10 December 2021.

11 The Guardian, [Bangladesh police given ‘shoot-on-sight’ orders amid national curfew](#), 20 July 2024.

pellets, escalating to open use of rifles, pistols, and shotguns from 18 July.¹² Demonstrators were largely unarmed or carried only bricks and sticks.¹³ The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Fact-Finding Report concluded that as many as 1,400 people may have been killed (the vast majority “by military rifles and shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets commonly used by Bangladesh’s security forces”), with thousands more suffering life-altering injuries.¹⁴

More than 11,700 people were arrested, many held incommunicado without court appearance or legal access.¹⁵ There were also reports of torture and ill-treatment in detention contexts, as well as violence, abuse, and sexual violence against women student protestors.¹⁶

Following the collapse of Hasina’s government on 5 August 2024 and her escape to India, over 100 people were estimated to have been killed in retaliatory attacks on police and ruling party figures, alongside attacks against some minority groups. Protestors also destroyed or damaged 450 out of the 639 police stations in Bangladesh.¹⁷

Documentation of acts of criminalisation and reprisals against human rights defenders in the aftermath of the protests.

Following the protests, there has been extensive documentation of events that occurred during this period. A preliminary analysis conducted by the OHCHR was published in August 2024,¹⁸ followed by the full report in February 2025 (the OHCHR Fact-Finding Report).

Civil society, including human rights groups and citizen initiatives, has also reported extensively on the violations committed during and after the protests, and the role of Sheikh Hasina in authorising the use of force.¹⁹ Their documentation highlights the widespread use of excessive force by security forces, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and instances of torture and ill-treatment in detention.²⁰ Reports by Odhikar emphasise the targeting of human rights defenders and activists, noting that many were subjected to harassment, intimidation, and violence in the aftermath of the protests.²¹

Overview of the interim government and its role in the current human rights landscape.

On 8 August 2024, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus was sworn in as the head of an interim government. He has since announced plans to hold national elections before Ramadan in February 2026.²² In the meantime, the interim government, lacking an electoral mandate, has remained cautious not to alienate the historically powerful army and security forces, and it is widely thought that this has

12 OHCHR Fact-Finding Report, para. 43.

13 Ibid., para. 100.

14 Ibid., page iii-iv and para. 58.

15 Ibid., page iv.

16 Ibid., para. 159.

17 Ibid., para. 214.

18 OHCHR, [Preliminary Analysis of Recent Protests and Unrest in Bangladesh](#), 16 August 2024.

19 See, for example: [The Daily Star, Sheikh Hasina Shoot Order July 2024 Leaked Call | ‘Shoot directly’: Hasina’s order and deadly aftermath](#), 24 July 2025; [Al-Jazeera, ‘Shoot them’: Sheikh Hasina ordered firing on Bangladesh protesters in 2024 | Investigation News](#), 24 July 2025.

20 See, for example: [Amnesty International, What is happening at the quota-reform protests in Bangladesh?](#), 29 July 2024; [Human Rights Watch, Bangladesh: Security forces target unarmed students](#), 22 July 2024; [Amnesty International, Further video and photographic analysis confirm police unlawfully used lethal and less-lethal weapons against protesters](#), 25 July 2024.

21 [Odhikar, Three-month Human Rights Report : July – September 2024](#), 14 November 2024, para. 34.

22 [BBC News, Bangladesh announces election as country marks year since ex-PM fled](#), 5 August 2025.

been one of the factors that has prevented the interim government from introducing wide-ranging reforms in the security sector. As the election date approaches, the government's focus will inevitably shift towards election preparation, further limiting the space and impact for advocacy efforts.

Elections in Bangladesh have often been marred by violence in the past, and concerns have been expressed about the risk that this might be replicated in the February 2026 elections.²³ Some civil society organisations have also pointed to ongoing threats to freedom of expression, press freedom, and civic space in the pre-election period.²⁴

23 See, for example: Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2025: Bangladesh Country Report](#), February 2025.

24 Article 19 and others, [Bangladesh: Defending free expression and electoral integrity in the digital age](#), Joint Statement to the Human Rights Council, June 2025.

BANGLADESH'S OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE REPARATION

Bangladesh's international legal obligations relevant to torture and ill-treatment

Bangladesh has made several international commitments to uphold human rights and prevent torture and other human rights violations. These commitments are reflected in its ratification of key international treaties. However, certain significant gaps remain in its acceptance of international oversight mechanisms.

Specifically, Bangladesh has already ratified, among others, the following treaties:

- a) UNCAT (ratified in 1998). In August 2025, Bangladesh ratified OPCAT, which is designed to create a system of domestic and international monitoring of places where people are detained.
- b) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (ratified in 2000).
- c) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (ratified in 1990).
- d) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (ratified in 1984).
- e) Convention for the Protection of all Persons against Enforced Disappearance (CED) (ratified in August 2024).

Unfortunately, Bangladesh has not yet recognised the competence of any of the relevant UN treaty bodies to examine individual complaints concerning alleged violations of the international obligations set out in these five treaties. Accepting this jurisdiction would not only strengthen State accountability and access to reparation for victims, but also play a crucial role in promoting the alignment of national laws and practices with international human rights standards. For example, the recent ratification of OPCAT paves the way for the establishment of an independent National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), which will be authorised to monitor places of detention, propose necessary reforms, and allows Bangladesh to benefit from the support and expertise of the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT).²⁵

International standards for reparation for torture and ill-treatment

These treaties require Bangladesh to provide redress to victims of human rights violations, including torture or ill-treatment. Article 14 of UNCAT requires every State party, “to ensure in its legal system that the victim of torture obtains redress and has an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation”. Article 2(3) of the ICCPR states that every State party must “ensure that any person whose rights are violated shall have an effective remedy”, which includes a duty to investigate and a duty to provide reparation.²⁶

²⁵ REDRESS, REDRESS and Partners Welcome Bangladesh's Steps to Strengthen Safeguards Against Torture, 29 July 2025.

²⁶ See also: UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), General Comment No. 31, CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.13, 26 May 2004, para. 16, and UN General Assembly, Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law (UN Basic Principles), A/RES/60/147, 16 December 2005. The HRC has also stated that States must not only provide remedies in law but must also ensure that these remedies are effective in practice (Sahadath v. Trinidad and Tobago (Communication No. 684/1996, para. 9)).

States have a dual obligation with regard to the right of survivors: a substantive obligation to provide reparation, and a procedural obligation to provide an effective remedy. CAT's General Comment No. 3 and the UN Basic Principles provide for five forms of reparation: restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition.²⁷ These should be envisaged as complementary to one another, rather than as alternatives. These different elements are described in more detail as follows.²⁸

Restitution. This consists of reinstating the victim to the situation they were in before the violation was committed. Given the nature of the crime, restitution is often not possible or appropriate in cases of torture, but it can be provided in relation to other violations perpetrated alongside torture. In any event, it should be accompanied by measures to address the structural causes behind the violation. This can include such things as restoring a person's liberty or reputation, employment, or property.

Compensation. Compensation is monetary in nature and should cover both pecuniary and non-pecuniary harm.²⁹ It is not sufficient by itself to provide relief to victims of torture and should be coupled with other forms of reparation.

Rehabilitation. This form of reparation should be holistic and include psychological and medical care as well as legal and social services. It should enable the victim to reintegrate into society and restore their dignity. Rehabilitation is a long-term form of reparation that cannot be fulfilled by the provision of a one-time service. It should be provided after obtaining the consent of the survivor and be tailored to each individual according to their needs and the circumstances surrounding their case, as well as their social context.³⁰

Satisfaction. This entails cessation of the violation, conducting an effective investigation into the violations and sanction of all those responsible, and disclosure of the truth (for instance, the whereabouts of a disappeared person, or the search for the bodies of those killed). The search for and disclosure of the truth should not jeopardise the victims' or witnesses' security. It also entails taking administrative sanctions where warranted, such as the delivery of public apologies, the building of memorials, and other such collective and commemorative measures that acknowledge the violations.

Guarantees of non-repetition. These are measures to prevent the future recurrence of the crime of torture and other violations. It might entail legislative reform as well as a change of policies and practices. For instance, implementing the UNCAT into domestic law is a clear example of this form of reparation. It also entails the training of police, detention, army, judicial authorities, medical staff, and all other relevant actors to anti-torture standards. It also touches on the transformation of social norms to end the climate of permissibility and impunity for such acts. It entails lifting any procedural or substantive barriers to the absolute prohibition of torture (for example the elimination of immunity of State officials).

27 UN CAT, *General Comment No. 3 (2012) on the implementation of article 14 by States parties* (General Comment No. 3), CAT/C/GC/3, 13 December 2012.

28 For additional information see: REDRESS. *Practice Note 10: Reparation for Torture Survivors*, February 2024.

29 For additional information see: REDRESS. *Practice Note 12: Compensation for Victims of Torture*, October 2024.

30 International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, *Global Standards on Rehabilitation of Torture Victims*, 6 October 2020.

Effective remedies

The right to an effective remedy includes access to justice and fair, impartial proceedings for victims of torture.³¹ It requires the criminalisation of torture in domestic law, as well as clear avenues for survivors to seek and obtain redress.³² It also obliges States to ensure that perpetrators of torture are held accountable, either through prosecution or extradition to jurisdictions where they can be prosecuted.

This right is closely linked to a State's investigative obligations under UNCAT. The Istanbul Protocol provides essential guidance on the standards and procedures for the effective investigation and documentation of torture.³³

In addition, mechanisms to seek relief should be made known and accessible to victims of torture.³⁴ This includes setting up adequate protection mechanisms and ensuring that the system to obtain reparation does not deter victims from making use of it (as a result of financial inaccessibility, for instance, or other obstacles).³⁵ These mechanisms and proceedings should be non-discriminatory and gender sensitive.

International human rights mechanisms have consistently urged Bangladesh to ensure effective and comprehensive reparation frameworks for victims of human rights violations, including torture and ill-treatment.³⁶ Most recently, in the aftermath of the July protests, the OHCHR Fact-Finding Report emphasised the need for a victim-centred reparation process.

31 UN Basic Principles, para. 12.

32 General Comment No. 3, para. 19.

33 OHCHR, Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment ('Istanbul Protocol'), 2022.

34 General Comment No. 3, paras. 23, 25.

35 Ibid., para. 30.

36 For example, see: CAT, Concluding Observations on the initial report of Bangladesh, CAT/C/BGD/CO/1, 26 August 2019, paras 44-45; OHCHR, UN experts urge Bangladesh to end reprisals against human rights defenders and relatives of the disappeared, 14 March 2022; OHCHR, Universal Periodic Review - Bangladesh, Fourth Cycle, Report of the Working Group, 13 November 2023.

CURRENT AVENUES FOR ACCESSING REPARATION

Judicial Mechanisms

Bangladesh's domestic legal framework provides several judicial avenues for seeking reparation for acts of torture. However, these mechanisms are largely ineffective and fraught with procedural and structural challenges.

Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act 2013

This Act is Bangladesh's primary statutory mechanism for addressing torture, enacted to fulfil its obligations under UNCAT.³⁷ While it criminalises torture and allows for limited compensation, its effectiveness as a tool for reparation remains limited in practice.³⁸

Under the Act, survivors of torture or their families may initiate proceedings in the Sessions Court against responsible officers. If convicted, the court is empowered to impose custodial sentences and award compensation. However, the compensation scheme amounts have been criticised by the CAT as being "very low",³⁹ providing only BDT 25,000 (around US\$200)⁴⁰ for survivors of torture and BDT 200,000 (around US\$1,600) in cases of death due to torture.⁴¹ This itself will discourage victims from making complaints in a country in which the average annual household income is around BDT 389,000⁴² (around US\$3,180).

Given the holistic nature of the international standards on reparation, it is striking that the Act only provides for compensation, and does not provide for any other forms of reparation, including rehabilitation, restitution, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition.⁴³ Even then, compensation is only payable upon conviction, with no provision for interim assistance, leading to undue delay in survivors receiving any compensation. In addition, the compensation must be recovered directly from the perpetrator, leaving survivors and families uncompensated if the perpetrator's assets are not adequate.

In the more than ten years since the Act was enacted, only one case is known to have resulted in a conviction, and no compensation has yet been paid, highlighting its ineffectiveness in practice. This case concerns the torture of two brothers, Ishtiaque Hossain Jonny and Imtiaz Hossain Rocky, by the police, which led to Jonny's death in 2014. Although the court sentenced the officers to life imprisonment and ordered the payment of compensation, as of June 2024 the victims' family had yet to receive any payment due to an ongoing appeal.⁴⁴

37 Government of Bangladesh, *Torture and Custodial Death (Prohibition) Act, 2013*, 2013.

38 OMCT, *Bangladesh: Government must comply with its obligations to uphold the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill treatment, end impunity and ensure access to justice for victims*, 26 June 2024. See also: BLAST, *Review of the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act 2013*, December 2015.

39 CAT, *Concluding Observations on the initial report of Bangladesh*, CAT/C/BGD/CO/1, 26 August 2019, para. 44.

40 Currency conversions as at December 2025.

41 *Torture and Custodial Death (Prohibition) Act, 2013*, Article 15(2).

42 Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2022*, 12 April 2023, page 11.

43 BLAST, *Review of the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act 2013*, December 2015, para. 4.7; CAT, *Concluding Observations on the initial report of Bangladesh*, CAT/C/BGD/CO/1, 26 August 2019, para. 44.

44 Amnesty International, *Bangladesh: End impunity for torture and uphold victims' right to reparation*, 26 June 2024.

Other Judicial Remedies

General Criminal Proceedings. Under s45(1)(b) of the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898, courts may order that fines imposed on perpetrators be used to compensate victims (including survivors of torture), but only where “substantial compensation is, in the opinion of the Court, recoverable by such person in a Civil Court”. The provision is discretionary and rarely invoked.⁴⁵ The Law Commission of Bangladesh noted in 2007, in proposing a Crime Victim Compensation Act, that s45 offers “no help to the victims of crime” and puts survivors through an expensive civil process to establish their eligibility for compensation, and relies on a perpetrator with assets to meet a compensation claim.⁴⁶

Constitutional Writ Petition. Survivors of torture may file writ petitions before the Supreme Court under Article 102 of the Constitution, seeking remedies for violations of fundamental rights.⁴⁷ The Court has discretion to award compensation and other forms of reparation, and a prior conviction is not needed.⁴⁸ This route is theoretically promising, particularly due to the availability of a mechanism which can ‘shift the burden of proof’, so that, rather than requiring the victim to prove the perpetrator’s responsibility for the torture, the perpetrator instead has to prove they were *not* responsible. Scholars have also noted that the Court is “increasingly willing to not only award much larger sums of public law compensation, but also award it for a much wider range of violations”.⁴⁹

However, in the case of *CCB Foundation v Bangladesh*, the Supreme Court held that the existence of a private law remedy may reduce public law compensation by up to one-third, which suggests that the judiciary sees this avenue as a temporary form of relief rather than a route to full reparation.⁵⁰ Further, practical challenges persist, including evidential difficulties, such as the difficulty in obtaining medical evidence (for example, a medico-legal report that complies with the Istanbul Protocol), and geographic limitations, as petitions can only be filed in the High Court Division in Dhaka (although practitioners have noted some isolated instances of regional domestic courts awarding reparations to survivors of torture).⁵¹

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). The NHRC can receive complaints and request government reports, but lacks enforcement powers.⁵² It cannot directly investigate allegations against the police⁵³ and is structurally compromised due to political appointments and staffing by government secondees. In 2015, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions downgraded the NHRC to B status, citing non-compliance with international standards as laid down in the Paris Principles.⁵⁴

45 The Daily Star, [Compensation for the crime victims](#), 9 January 2018.

46 The Law Commission of Bangladesh, [Final Report on a proposed law relating to payment of compensation and other reliefs to the crime victims](#), 15 February 2007, page 7.

47 See also: Farhaan Ahmed, [Constitutional Law of Bangladesh – Notes on Writs \(2015\)](#).

48 Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, [Civil Liability for Human Rights Violations](#), October 2022, para. 35.

49 Taqbir Huda, [Fundamental Rights in Search of Constitutional Remedies: The Emergence of Public Law Compensation in Bangladesh](#), June 2021, page 44.

50 Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, *ibid.*, para. 36.

51 *Ibid.*, para 38. See also: Taqbir Huda, [Fundamental Rights in Search of Constitutional Remedies: The Emergence of Public Law Compensation in Bangladesh](#), June 2021.

52 International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, [Report and Recommendations of the Session of the Sub-Committee on Accreditation \(SCA\)](#), March 2015, page 12.

53 Under s18 of the NHRC Act, ‘Disciplined Forces’ can only be investigated by the government itself, and recommendations can be made to the government. The definition of Disciplined Forces is found at s2(g) which refers to s152(1) of the Constitution of Bangladesh, in which a Disciplined Force is defined as military or police forces.

54 International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, March 2015, *ibid.*, pages 12-15. See also: Amnesty International, [Bangladesh: National Human Rights Commission must not be forgotten amid reform agenda](#), which highlights the lack of action by the NHRC during the July 2024 protests.

Civil Tort Claims. Victims may pursue compensation under tort law for ‘trespass to the person’ torts i.e. assault or battery. However, these types of claims are subject to a strict one-year limitation period.⁵⁵ Further, this route is hindered by procedural barriers, including a 2.5% deposit of the claim’s value (up to BDT 50,000 (around US\$400)),⁵⁶ and a judiciary with limited experience in tort litigation, leading to delays.⁵⁷

None of these judicial remedies provide for a holistic response to reparation for the survivors of torture. At best, they will only provide compensation, ignoring the other forms of reparation discussed above.

International Crimes Tribunal

The repurposing of Bangladesh’s International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) to address the 2024 violence marked a significant shift in the country’s transitional justice landscape.⁵⁸ The ICT was originally established in 1973, following Bangladesh’s independence, to prosecute international crimes committed by Pakistani authorities during the war of independence. Although no trials were held at that time, in 2009 the government revived the ICT Act to prosecute political opponents accused of having collaborated with Pakistan during the conflict, leading to several convictions. These proceedings were widely criticised for their alleged political motivation and lack of due process. In September 2024, the government appointed a new prosecutor to initiate proceedings against individuals allegedly responsible for international crimes connected to the July and August 2024 killings.⁵⁹ On 17 November 2025, the former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was sentenced to the death penalty by the ICT. The proceedings were conducted in absentia and were marked by several allegations of fair trial violations.⁶⁰

Since 2012, the Tribunal has had the power to impose fines and issue reparation orders “proportionate to the gravity of the crime”,⁶¹ and since November 2024, the Tribunal has had the power to award compensation to victims of international crimes in Bangladesh.⁶² This compensation is to be recovered from the perpetrator’s current assets, or, where unavailable, from future assets.⁶³ As with the general criminal scheme for compensation, this is again problematic given that those brought to trial may not have enough assets to satisfy a reparation claim, potentially leaving survivors and deceased victims’ families with nothing. In the case of high-level individuals who have been indicted, including the former Prime Minister, their assets may now be difficult to trace. It is worth noting that, under international standards, Bangladesh bears the primary obligation to ensure reparation for victims, even when perpetrators are unable or unwilling to provide it.⁶⁴

Despite these developments, the ICT’s reparation framework remains undeveloped and discretionary. There remains no statutory basis for quantum calculation or enforcement, and no provision for non-

55 Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, *ibid.*, para. 15.

56 General Comment No. 3, para. 29, which specifically states that, “civil proceedings should not impose a financial burden upon victims that would prevent or discourage them from seeking redress.”

57 Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, *ibid.*, para. 16.

58 Justice Info, [The second life of Bangladesh’s International Crimes Tribunal](#), 20 February 2025

59 *Ibid.*

60 Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), [One Year After the Fall of the Authoritarian Regime: Expectations and Realities – Executive Summary](#) (TIB Executive Summary), 04 August 2025; Al-Jazeera, [Bangladesh tribunal indicts ex-PM Hasina over protester deaths](#), 10 July 2025; BBC, [Ex-Bangladesh leader tells BBC she’s not guilty of crimes against humanity](#), 13 November 2025. The Guardian, [Ousted Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina sentenced to death for crimes against humanity](#), 17 November 2025.

61 ICT, [International Crimes Tribunal Rules of Procedure, 2010](#), Rule 46(3).

62 ICT Act 1973, s. 20A.

63 The Daily Star, [Compensation for victims of international crimes](#), 4 April 2025.

64 UN Basic Principles XI. 16.

monetary forms of reparation, such as restitution, rehabilitation, satisfaction, or guarantees of non-repetition.

In addition, concerns persist regarding the Tribunal's legitimacy and compliance with international standards. The OHCHR Fact-Finding Report emphasised its opposition to the Tribunal's powers to impose the death penalty, and called for it to address "continuing due process and fair trial concerns".⁶⁵

Administrative Mechanisms

Whilst such mechanisms theoretically provide a more immediate and accessible approach to post-crisis support, they are also fragmentary and lack transparency. It is important to note that these administrative mechanisms were established as forms of urgent support to the victims of the events, but were not designed as comprehensive reparation programmes compliant with international standards capable of delivering all of the relevant forms of reparation mentioned above.

July Shaheed Smriti Foundation

In the months after the July 2024 violence, the Interim Government established a series of administrative schemes aimed at providing immediate relief to survivors and bereaved families. Chief among these is the July Shaheed Smriti Foundation (also known as the July Martyrs Memorial Foundation), launched in September 2024 to support those killed, injured, or otherwise affected by the protests.⁶⁶

The Foundation initially received BDT 1 billion (around US\$8m) from the government to provide monthly allowances to the families of those who died.⁶⁷ Payments were reportedly made within months of the protests, an unprecedented pace in the Bangladeshi context.⁶⁸ At the end of 2024, the Foundation reported having distributed some BDT 480 million (around US\$3.9 million) to around 2,200 families of those killed and to those injured.⁶⁹ In January 2025, the Interim Government also announced that it would distribute a further BDT 6.38 billion (around US\$52m) in assistance to the wounded and the families of those killed.⁷⁰ In August 2025, it was estimated that the Foundation has disbursed approximately BDT 1.11 billion (over US\$8m) to support around 7,500 relatives of deceased and injured people.⁷¹

However, some survivors have complained that the initial BDT 100,000 (around US\$819) for survivors and BDT 500,000 (around US\$4,092) for victims' families is inadequate, and that bureaucratic hurdles hinder the making of applications to receive payments.⁷² Delays in disbursement have triggered public protests, including a 13-hour demonstration at a Dhaka hospital in November 2024,⁷³ and the vandalism of Foundation offices in July 2025.⁷⁴ Staff at the foundations have also indicated that funding shortfalls threaten the scheme's sustainability.⁷⁵

65 OHCHR Fact-Finding Report, paras. 347-349.

66 The Business Standard, [July Shaheed Smriti Foundation launched with Tk100cr donation from CA's welfare fund](#), 17 September 2024.

67 The Financial Express, [July Martyrs Foundation begins journey with Tk 1 billion given by CA's fund](#), 17 September 2024.

68 BSS News, [July Shaheed Smriti Foundation distributes donation among injured people](#), 13 October 2024.

69 The Business Standard, [Nearly six months later, injured protesters still face uncertainties](#), 4 January 2025.

70 OHCHR Fact-Finding Report, para. 263.

71 TIB Executive Summary, p. 14.

72 The Daily Star, [July Uprising Victims Compensation Bangladesh | Injured uprising victims: Compensation caught up in red tape](#), 5 February 2025.

73 Prothom Alo, [Treatment of the injured: Why the ongoing neglect?](#), 15 November 2024.

74 bdnews24, [Protesters injured in Uprising attack July Memorial Foundation office](#), 9 July 2025.

75 The Daily Star, [Snigdho resigns as CEO of July Foundation](#), 9 May 2025.

Structurally, the scheme itself has been criticised by civil society groups for lacking transparency, having no statutory basis and no legal classification of any payments it makes. It is also specific to the July 2024 protests and may not capture all instances of torture, such as those who suffered arbitrary detention, psychological trauma, and less visible forms of torture.⁷⁵ This selective recognition undermines the principle of equal treatment and may perpetuate secondary victimisation.

Interim Government Relief Fund

The Interim Government Relief Fund operates in tandem with the July Shaheed Smriti Foundation. It reflects an effort by the Interim Government to institutionalise State-led healthcare support for those injured or bereaved during the July protests, as well as compensation.

In August 2024, one of the Interim Government's first actions was to announce that it would cover the medical expenses of those injured during the protests. The Interim Government later announced that each deceased victims' family would receive BDT 3,000,000 (around US\$24,500) in compensation, to be disbursed through the July Foundation.⁷⁶ This has been followed by commitments in July 2025 to a promised monthly allowance of BDT 20,000 (around US\$160) to each family of those who were killed, as well as priority for government jobs.⁷⁷

Despite early commitments, the scheme has been plagued by bureaucratic delays, fuelling frustration and public protest.⁷⁸ Following demonstrations by survivors in November 2025, the Interim Government confirmed its promise of free lifelong healthcare to the injured, delivered via a government ID card.⁷⁹ In February 2025, it clarified that compensation for injuries would be based on a three-tiered harm classification system,⁸⁰ and in the same month the first instalments of compensation were disbursed.⁸¹ By June 2025 the government reported that 630 bereaved families had received payments, 15,393 individuals had received medical treatment, and a small number had been sent abroad for specialist care.⁸²

Other reparation initiatives

The Interim Government has embarked on a programme to rename playgrounds and sports stadiums in honour of those killed, and has established an Uprising Directorate under the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs to preserve the history and memory of the protests.⁸³

Survivors and families have welcomed these commitments, but the credibility of these schemes ultimately depends on timely, transparent, and inclusive delivery. Without a legal basis and sustained implementation, these narrow interim measures risk being perceived as reactive gestures rather than being part of a broad, durable framework for justice and accountability. For example, Bangladesh has not issued a formal apology or acknowledged its responsibility towards the victims, nor has it announced any other form of satisfaction measures.

76 OHCHR Fact-Finding Report, para. 263.

77 BanglaNews24, [Families of July martyrs to receive monthly allowance of Tk 20,000](#), 21 July 2025.

78 The Business Standard, [Jatiya Nagorik Committee demands compensation, rehabilitation for victims of July-August uprising](#), 29 November 2024.

79 Dhaka Tribune, [Injured protesters meet 6 advisers, present their demands](#), 14 November 2024.

80 Dhaka Tribune, [What are the categories for those injured during July uprising?](#), 17 February 2025.

81 Dhaka Tribune, [Govt starts providing financial aid to families of July uprising martyrs, injured](#), 10 February 2025.

82 Bangladesh News Gazette, [Government Allocates Tk 285 Crore for July Uprising Victims and Families](#), 6 June 2025.

83 OHCHR Fact-Finding Report, para. 264.

SITUATION OF SURVIVORS

Those who survived torture in the July 2024 protests continue to face significant physical, psychological, and socio-economic challenges. Many are struggling with the aftermath of the violence, which has deeply impacted their daily lives.⁸⁴ In general, there is a lack of attention by the government to provide full compensation or to offer comprehensive rehabilitation for those injured during the crisis.⁸⁵

Some survivors have expressed growing discontent with the current system, which focuses primarily on (inadequate) monetary compensation and particularly lacks any focus on rehabilitation.⁸⁶ This approach has been insufficient in addressing their needs. Many victims were the sole breadwinners in their families, and their inability to provide for their families has had a devastating impact, exacerbating financial instability and hardship.

Physical injuries from the protests continue to affect survivors' health and ability to work. Psychological trauma, including symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression, remains prevalent among survivors and their families.⁸⁷ The lack of adequate mental health support and rehabilitation services has hindered their recovery and reintegration into society, and highlights the need for more holistic reparatory measures, including rehabilitation, which encompasses medical and psychological care.

Challenges faced by survivors in obtaining accountability and reparation

While survivors and civil society partners often express a strong desire to pursue accountability for the violations committed during the protests, they face significant legal and institutional barriers.⁸⁸ For example:

- a) The judiciary is “politicized...[and] prone to corruption, political pressure and intimidation”,⁸⁹ which deters many survivors from participating directly in legal proceedings, and which has had a chilling effect on survivors' willingness to seek justice.
- b) The risk of revictimization, and confusion about what the legal process involves and how to navigate it. Many face threats or monetary incentives to withdraw their claims, and pressure from political party-affiliated lawyers to implicate numerous individuals in political motivated cases.⁹⁰
- c) The lack of witness protection laws and effective witness protection orders makes survivors reluctant to pursue direct legal support and increases their psychological distress.
- d) Despite the existence of urgent relief mechanisms, the absence of comprehensive domestic reparation mechanisms remains a major issue.

84 The Daily Star, [July 2024 Mass Protests Bangladesh Injuries | Shot, July heroes battle a harsh new reality](#), 3 December 2024.

85 TIB Executive Summary, 2025, p. 14.

86 Reports made to REDRESS in February 2025.

87 Reports made to REDRESS in February 2025.

88 OHCHR Fact-Finding Report, paras. 317-325.

89 Ibid., para. 323.

90 See, for example: Amnesty International. [Disturbing Pattern of Politically Motivated Prosecutions](#), 15th August 2025. The Business Standard. [A year since uprising: False cases, mass accusations threaten justice for July murder](#). 11 August 2025.

- e) The length of court processes and the lack of implementation of decisions.
- f) There is a widespread lack of understanding in Bangladesh regarding the concept of comprehensive reparation. State authorities, as well as many survivors and civil society organisations, tend to equate reparation solely with financial compensation. This narrow view limits the scope of State initiatives, restricts meaningful survivor participation in the design of programmes, and reduces the possibility of claiming other forms of reparation, such as restitution, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition.⁹¹

Currently, as noted above, survivors are unable to have recourse to international human rights mechanisms such as the individual complaints mechanisms to the CAT, CED and the UN HRC.

Together, these barriers create a hostile environment for accountability and reinforce a culture of impunity.

⁹¹ Reports made to REDRESS in February 2025.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The events surrounding the July 2024 protests and their aftermath have laid bare the urgent need for a comprehensive, victim-centred approach to justice and reparation for torture in Bangladesh. However, survivors continue to face significant risks and obstacles in their pursuit of reparation. We urge Bangladesh to adopt targeted reforms that strengthen access to justice and uphold its international human rights obligations. Key recommendations include the following:

- a) The State should conduct a comprehensive review of existing laws and develop provisions for comprehensive reparation in cases of torture, to include satisfaction, guarantees of non-repetition, restitution, and rehabilitation (including any necessary medical treatment), in addition to financial compensation which is proportionate to the harm caused. This review should include the effective participation of survivors, civil society organisations, the OHCHR and other stakeholders.
- b) The State should effectively investigate and prosecute the serious human rights violations that occurred during the July/August 2024 events — including torture, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and sexual violence — by adopting the measures recommended in the OHCHR Fact-Finding Report. These measures include, among others, the preservation of evidence, the establishment of a witness protection programme, and the removal of obstacles such as immunities.⁹²
- c) The State should ensure that whatever mechanisms are in place to deliver reparation for survivors of torture (whether judicial or administrative):
 - i. they are survivor-centred, sufficiently resourced, independent, impartial, equitable and transparent;
 - ii. they are accessible and culturally appropriate by adopting differential measures for more vulnerable groups;
 - iii. they adopt a gender sensitive approach in the different phases of the reparation process, especially in those cases of sexual violence;
 - iv. they are able to take into account medical evidence from independent medical practitioners as to the injuries and impacts suffered (ideally, in line with the Istanbul Protocol); and
 - v. they include the provision of training on the Istanbul Protocol to relevant medical practitioners, and to those staffing the mechanism(s) (including judges and decision-makers).

92 OHCHR Fact-Finding Report, paras. 337-341, and 344.

- d) The State and civil society organisations should promote greater awareness of the concept of comprehensive reparation by highlighting the importance of measures that complement financial compensation. These include satisfaction, restitution, guarantees of non-repetition, and rehabilitation, all of which are essential - both for individual reparations, and for an effective and sustainable peacebuilding process.
- e) The State should ensure that the current mechanisms that are in place for provision of interim relief measures (such as the administrative mechanisms discussed above) comply with international standards, including with regard to gender sensitivity, and have clear prioritization rules, transparent procedures, and controls to prevent and address the risk of corruption.
- f) The State should immediately review the current compensation limits in the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act to ensure that the amounts are proportionate to the harm caused.
- g) The State should introduce a robust witness protection mechanism to safeguard those who provide witness testimony as part of the pursuit of justice and accountability for the survivors of torture.
- h) The State should ensure the independence and impartiality of those in decision-making positions in the reparation mechanism(s), whether this be judicial or other staff. In the case of judges, this should include ensuring that a genuinely independent mechanism is responsible for the recruitment, suspension, removal and discipline of judges; protecting judges against intimidation and harassment; preventing inappropriate or unwarranted interference including politically motivated interference and corruption; and ensuring adequate remuneration and guaranteed tenure until retirement or expiration of judges' term of office.
- i) The State should develop and adopt effective measures to freeze and recover the assets of those responsible for the crimes committed in July/August 2024 and ensure that these assets are channelled into victim-centred reparation programmes. This requires promptly strengthening financial-investigation capacities, enhancing coordination with international partners for cross-border asset tracing, and establishing transparent mechanisms to guarantee that recovered funds are allocated exclusively for the benefit of victims. These measures should be adopted without delay to prevent the dissipation or concealment of assets and to secure meaningful, timely reparation.
- j) The State should accept the jurisdiction of the CAT, the CED, the UN HRC, and other treaty bodies, to hear individual complaints made against it.

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Quota reform movement 2024 in Bangladesh

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