

Bangladesh Development Initiative

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BDI Statement on Recent Political Developments in Bangladesh

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The undersigned members of the *Bangladesh Development Initiative* (BDI), a non-partisan think tank dedicated to research and scholarship on Bangladesh, wish to express our deep concern regarding recent events in Bangladesh, which threaten to undermine our moral foundations and democratic aspirations at a critical juncture in nation's history.

First, we extend our deepest condolences to the family of Mr. Sharif Osman Bin Hadi, poet, activist and co-founder of *Inqilab Moncho*, who was shot on December 12, 2025, and died on December 18, 2025. Mr. Hadi, a relatively young man of 33, father of an eight-month-old child, was a leader of the student-led mass movement of July-August 2024, which overthrew the autocratic and tyrannical government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. A few days prior to his tragic death by the assassin's bullet, he had announced his candidacy for elections to the Bangladesh National Parliament for the Dhaka-8 constituency. His tragic and untimely death is a major blow to the rule of law, and the nation's march towards returning to democracy. This tragedy was mourned by millions of his fellow citizens, many of whom attended his janaza prayers. Mr. Hadi's assassination triggered a series of tragic events which have adversely impacted Bangladesh's image as a nation of laws, where every citizen, including minorities, lives in peace and harmony.

We join the UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who strongly condemned the killing of Osman Hadi, and advised the government to conduct "a prompt, an impartial, a thorough and transparent investigation, in line with international human rights standards," while urging all to "refrain from violence, reduce tensions and exercise maximum restraint in order to preserve a peaceful electoral environment."

Second, we strongly condemn the barbaric killing of Mr. Dipu Chandra Das, a 27-year-old garment worker, father of a three-year-old daughter, and a member of the minority Hindu community. He was beaten by a mob and then burned alive. We note that the authorities have already arrested several individuals suspected in his killing, and urge swift so that every single perpetrator responsible for this crime is brought to justice. The constitution protects every citizen, regardless of ethnicity, faith, or political persuasion, and provides everyone with the right to practice their faith in peace and under the full protection of the law. This crime is an affront to our shared humanity, our commitment to communal harmony, and our common responsibility to advance the collective good.

Third, we wish to express our dismay at the attacks on press and media, which are an important pillar of democracy. The attack, whether spontaneous or planned, on the offices of *The Daily Star* and *Prothom Alo*, cannot be justified. The lack of intervention by the authorities to prevent this attack on free press is unfortunate. The government must thoroughly investigate the incident and take steps to punish those involved in this assault on media. Those responsible for maintaining public order must also face discipline for their perceived failings.

The freedom of press is an important foundation of democracy, and only extremists who oppose democracy would participate in such vandalism. Mr. Hadi would never condone such acts of violence against the free press or an innocent member of the minority community. We urge all concerned, the citizens and the state, to be vigilant to prevent such violence in the future. These incidents of mob-led vandalism, threaten Bangladesh's move towards democracy, and the positive image the nation has painstakingly built in the global arena.

In the days leading to the *Jatiya Sangsad* elections, we urge all citizens, community leaders, and public officials to help the government maintain law and order, and take special care to protect minorities and other vulnerable communities. The patriotic citizens of Bangladesh must unite to ensure law and order so that credible elections can be held in a free and peaceful environment on February 12, 2026.

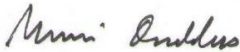
Bangladesh has made tremendous social and economic progress in recent decades. No doubt, significant challenges remain, such as overcoming persistent poverty and inequities in income and wealth, eliminating corruption, improving human rights, ensuring gender equity, strengthening democracy, and protecting the country's environment. However, we remain optimistic about a bright future for Bangladesh. The courage, wisdom and patriotism demonstrated by our youth during the July-August 2024 movement for justice and democracy in which some 1,400 young people lost their lives with many more injured, and the spontaneous support they received from the ordinary citizens in toppling an entrenched dictatorship, makes us hopeful about a bright future for the country.

As citizens of a nation of 175 million citizens, the 8th largest in the world, we must demonstrate to the world that we are united as a people, despite our differences in religion and ideologies, that we aspire to be responsible citizens of the global community, and that we are fully committed to inclusive development, poverty alleviation, and communal harmony. It is only through building a country committed to human rights, constitutional norms and economic justice, that we can fully redeem the sacrifices that so many Bangladeshis have made over so many years.

We commit ourselves to building a nation free of corruption, oppression, and communalism, where people of all faiths, socio-economic background, and political ideologies would live in peace and experience social and economic justice.

Signed by:

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