

Bangladesh Development Initiative (BDI)

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Bangladesh Development Initiative (BDI) Statement of Support for Professor Sadeka Halim and Colleagues Facing Disciplinary Action at Dhaka University

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The undersigned wish to express solidarity with Professor Sadeka Halim of the Department of Sociology at Dhaka University and with six colleagues named below, all of whom face suspension, removal from academic and administrative posts, or recommended dismissal following a Syndicate meeting held on 28 July 2026.

Affected faculty:

- Professor Dr Sadeka Halim, Department of Sociology, former Vice-Chancellor of Jagannath University and former Information Commissioner. Suspended and recommended for permanent dismissal.
- Professor Dr Md Shafiqul Islam, Department of Nuclear Engineering. Suspended.
- Professor Afroza Shelley, Department of Nuclear Engineering. Suspended.
- Professor Dr Md Abdul Muhit, Department of Clinical Pharmacy and Pharmacology. Relieved of academic and administrative duties.
- Professor Abu Sara Shamsur Rouf, Department of Pharmaceutical Technology. Relieved of academic and administrative duties.
- Professor Dr Mohammad Bahauddin, Department of Persian Language and Literature. Relieved of academic and administrative duties.
- Professor Dr Rafiq Shahriar, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies. Relieved of academic and administrative duties.

BDI takes no position on the underlying truth of any individual allegation. Our concern is the process by which these allegations are being resolved. According to the Dhaka University Teachers' Association, none of the named faculty were given a hearing before an inquiry committee or the chance to cross-examine whoever brought the complaints against them. Several of the charges, such as "conduct unbecoming of a teacher" and "moral turpitude," are general enough to cover almost any behavior a Syndicate wishes to punish.

This is not only a Bangladeshi problem. The American Association of University Professors identified the same maneuver in its 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, which conditions dismissal on adequate cause demonstrated before a faculty hearing body, on the reasoning that unstated cause is functionally indistinguishable from no cause at all. In the US, courts reached a related conclusion in *Baggett v. Bullitt* (1964), striking down a state loyalty oath statute on the ground that vague language discourages protected expression more effectively

than an explicit prohibition, since an accused person accused has no way to know in advance what conduct the law actually forbids. The charges facing Professor Halim and her colleagues share that vagueness, and they inherit its danger. Schueller and Dawson's *Dangerous Professors: Academic Freedom and the National Security Campus* documents how institutions rarely present an ideological purge explicitly as that. The purge is presented, instead, as a question of conduct, security, decorum, or institutional loyalty.

Dhaka University would do well to dismantle loyalty tests in the name of discipline, resist mob pressure, encourage critical engagement, and view political opposition as an opportunity to build democratic practice within the institution. A Syndicate that removes faculty through unaccountable procedures cannot produce a democratic culture in which students can thrive.

BDI calls on the Dhaka University authorities to:

1. Suspend further action against the faculty members named above until each is given a formal hearing, access to the evidence against them, the right to counsel, and the opportunity to cross-examine any complainant or witness.
2. Establish a standing grievance and appeals procedure, insulated from the political composition of any given Syndicate, so that due process survives changes in government.

An institution that wants to reform its culture in the name of the July uprising must build procedures that hold regardless of who is in power and who stands accused. We believe that no faculty member should have their career jeopardized because of their political affiliation.

Many of us are alumni and former faculty members of Dhaka University. We therefore write this statement to encourage administrative procedures that will strengthen Dhaka University's independence and, in the long run, enhance its global image and ranking, thus strengthening public higher education in Bangladesh.

Signatories:

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