



Committee to Protect Journalists

January 29, 2026

Sent via email

To
Dr. Shafiqur Rahman
The Amir
Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh

Sent via email

Subject: Strengthening press freedom and journalist safety in Bangladesh through electoral commitment

Honorable Dr. Shafiqur Rahman,

As Bangladesh prepares for its upcoming national election, the Committee to Protect Journalists, an independent, nonprofit press freedom organization, urges Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh to commit to upholding press freedom and protecting journalists in its electoral platform and public messaging. We also ask that elected representatives from your party continue to fulfill those commitments following the February 12 vote.

A free press is essential to any credible election. Journalists play a vital role in informing voters, scrutinizing power, and enabling meaningful public debate. Political parties and movements, regardless of ideology, have a responsibility to ensure that journalists can do their job without fear, intimidation, or violence.

CPJ research indicates that risks to journalists have escalated sharply in the pre-election period. In December, mobs attacked the offices of the country's two largest newspapers, Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, briefly trapping journalists inside the burning premises. Reporters, editors, and commentators have also faced intensified digital harassment, ideological labelling, threats, and coordinated hate campaigns linked to political polarization. This form of abuse was enabled by the previous government to intimidate journalists and remains prevalent, despite a change in administration and promises of media reforms.

Real reform means breaking from the past, not replicating its abuses. All political parties must respect journalists' right to report as the country is set to elect its representatives.

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Bangladesh remains one of Asia's leading jailers of journalists, with [five](#) currently imprisoned on criminal and [national-security charges](#) that appear to be connected to their reporting or [perceived political affiliations](#). At the same time, there is continued impunity in cases of violence against journalists, including the murders of [Hasan Mehedi](#) and [Abu Taher Md Turab](#) who were killed while reporting on the quota protests in July 2024.

Taken together, these press freedom violations have had a chilling effect on journalism and have compromised the broader information environment in which citizens must make informed electoral choices.

Key press-freedom concerns that warrant urgent attention include:

- Impunity: Attacks, threats, and violence against journalists are rarely investigated or prosecuted, creating a climate of fear and intimidation.
- Legal safety: Journalists face criminal and national-security charges, multiple criminal cases, prolonged pre-trial detention, and denial of bail, particularly when reporting on political unrest.
- Physical safety: Journalists covering rallies, protests, or sensitive political issues face threats, intimidation, and mob violence. News outlets have been attacked during periods of unrest.
- Digital safety and censorship: Surveillance, content monitoring, online hate campaigns, and digital harassment increasingly expose journalists to both virtual and real-world threats.
- Access to information: Barriers to official information, press briefings, and public records weaken fair and accurate election coverage.

As the election approaches, we propose Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh include the following commitments in its election manifesto and public statements:

- Publicly affirm the role of independent journalism as essential to free and fair elections.
- Explicitly reject violence, threats, and intimidation against journalists, including by supporters, affiliates, or associated groups.
- Condemn ideological labelling and rhetoric that place journalists at risk, including accusations that frame journalists as enemies of religion or the state.
- Refrain from endorsing or justifying the misuse of criminal, national-security, or counter-terrorism laws against journalists for their work.
- Respect editorial independence and the right of journalists to cover political and religious issues without obstruction.



Freedom of expression and of the press are guaranteed under Article 39 of Bangladesh's Constitution and under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Bangladesh is a party. These protections apply irrespective of political or religious affiliation.

CPJ urges Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh to make clear commitments to uphold these principles and to act in a way that protects journalists and strengthens the democratic environment during the election period.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

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