

January 29, 2026

Sent via email

To
Mr. Ghulam Muhammed Quader
Chairman
Jatiya Party

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

Honorable Mr. Quader,

As Bangladesh prepares for its upcoming national election, the Committee to Protect Journalist, an independent, nonprofit press freedom organization, urges the Jatiya Party 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 central to the credibility of any election. Journalists play a vital role in informing voters, scrutinizing those in power, and enabling meaningful public debate. By reaffirming its commitment to press freedom, the Jatiya Party can improve election reporting and help address longstanding threats to journalism at a time of democratic transition for Bangladesh.

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 their representatives.

Bangladesh remains one of Asia's leading jailers of journalists, with [five](#) currently imprisoned on criminal and [national-security charges](#) that appear to

CHAIR
Jacob Weisberg

CEO
Jodie Ginsberg

Vice CHAIR
Lydia Polgreen THE NEW YORK TIMES

DIRECTORS
Diane Brayton THE NEW YORK TIMES
Sally Buzbee REUTERS
Susan Chira

Sheila Coronel COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
Caoilfhionn Gallagher
DOUGHTY STREET CHAMBERS

Alessandra Galloni REUTERS

Lester Holt NBC NEWS

Roula Khalaf FINANCIAL TIMES

Jonathan Klein GETTY IMAGES

Peter Lattman EMERSON COLLECTIVE

Kati Marton

Michael Massing

Geraldine Fabrikant Metz THE NEW YORK TIMES

Graciela Mochkofsky
CUNY CRAIG NEWMARK GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

Alan Murray
WSJ LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Julie Owono
INTERNET SANS FRONTIÈRES and
META OVERSIGHT BOARD

Julie Pace THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

David Remnick THE NEW YORKER

Maria Ressa RAPPLER

Maria Teresa Ronderos

Jacqueline Simmons BLOOMBERG

Nika Soon-Shiong
FUND FOR GUARANTEED INCOME

Roger Widmann

Jon Williams

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
Press Freedom Center
P.O. Box 2675
New York, NY 10108
Phone: +1 (212) 465-1004
Fax: +1 (212) 465-9568
info@cpj.org



be in retaliation for 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 election-related reporting and compromised the broader information environment in which citizens vote.

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 that the Jatiya Party 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.
- Commit to protecting journalists from harassment, arbitrary detention, violence, and intimidation, including by party supporters or affiliated groups.
- Refrain from supporting or endorsing the misuse of criminal, national-security, or counter-terrorism laws against journalists for their reporting or commentary.
- Safeguard digital rights by opposing unlawful surveillance, censorship, and arbitrary content restrictions.
- Support editorial independence and media pluralism by rejecting actions that pressure news outlets or journalists to adopt political positions.



Committee to Protect Journalists

- Promote transparency by ensuring fair access to information, official briefings, and timely responses to journalists' inquiries throughout the campaign period.

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 state party. These obligations apply irrespective of political affiliation or electoral outcome.

CPJ urges the Jatiya Party to make clear electoral commitments to strengthen press freedom and, should it hold legislative or executive authority in the future, to work toward implementing the above recommendations.

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

Sincerely,

Kunāl MAJUMDER
Asia-Pacific Program Coordinator
Committee to Protect Journalists
kmajumder@cpj.org