



Committee to Protect Journalists

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 ENDISON COLLECTIVE  
Kati Marton  
Michael Massing  
Geraldine Fabrikant Metz THE NEW YORK TIMES  
Graciela Mochkovsky 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  
María 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



Committee to Protect Journalists

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.

- 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](mailto:kmajumder@cpj.org)