

## Bangladesh: Extend the Mandate of the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances to Ensure Truth and Accountability



We, the undersigned international human rights organizations, urge the Interim Government of Bangladesh to extend the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances until at least December 31, 2025. While the Commission's mandate is set to expire on June 30, victims and their families deserve adequate time for the Commission to complete its mandate to conduct independent, impartial, and credible investigations into the disappearances that took place under Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government over the past fifteen years. We applaud the initial steps the Interim Government has taken by establishing the Commission and acceding to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED) in August 2024. However, to end the work of the Commission prematurely, in the midst of its fact finding and prior to its completion of a final report, would undermine the Interim Government's efforts thus far to secure justice, truth, and reparations for those who suffered these gross violations.

Since the Commission was established last August, it has [received](#) over 1,850 complaints. It has conducted investigations into 1,350 complaints, as victims and their families have courageously come forward after years of pervasive fear of speaking out, but it needs time to complete the remaining work. The Commission has found that security forces under Sheikh Hasina and top Awami League leaders used disappearances to target political opponents, activists, and others expressing dissent. Security forces [involved](#) in disappearances include specialized police units—the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), Detective Branch, Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crimes—and the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI).

Victims were frequently held and subjected to torture and ill-treatment at secret detention sites, including a notorious site within DGFI's headquarters referred to as [Aynaghar](#) or "House of Mirrors," and similar secret sites run by RAB. Some victims disappeared for weeks or months before being brought to court to face fabricated criminal charges, while others were detained for years or extrajudicially killed. Although a few victims were released in August 2024, many families are still waiting to learn the truth about their loved ones' fate. When the Commission inspected secret detention sites run by DGFI and RAB, it found recent attempts to conceal and [destroy evidence](#) of these abuses, such as the removal of walls to enlarge cramped cells, fresh paint over walls on which victims had carved their names, and at the RAB-1 site, a [bricked-over](#) entrance to cells so small that victims could not lie down.

Following the submission of the Commission's second interim report on June 4, the need for the Interim Government to extend the Commission's mandate until at least December 31 is clearer than ever. In submitting its interim report, the Commission [stated](#) that the fate of over 300 victims of disappearances remains undetermined, and Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus instructed the Commission to make short-term policy recommendations for the Interim Government to implement. Therefore, an extension of at least six months is crucial to ensure the Commission can conduct thorough investigations into all remaining cases, propose concrete actions for reform, and prepare a final, public report that advances processes of truth and accountability for victims and their families.

Further, the extension of the Commission's mandate will provide the needed time to set up a permanent framework to ensure that credible investigations into disappearances continue after this temporary Commission concludes. While the Interim Government recently proposed the draft Ordinance on Enforced Disappearance Prevention and Redress to create such a framework and implement the ICPED, the draft has serious shortcomings. International human rights organizations have expressed [strong concerns](#) that it fails to adhere to international standards. The draft ordinance should be revised following robust public consultations, with enough time for meaningful feedback to address major problems with the draft.

The Interim Government should provide its full support to the Commission to conduct thorough investigations into all cases by extending its mandate until at least December 31, while ensuring the Commission has adequate staffing and resources to complete its work. Security forces should fully cooperate with the Commission by guaranteeing unfettered and ongoing access to all detention centers in Bangladesh, providing free access to records regarding those seized or detained, and ensuring members of security forces participate in good faith in fact-finding interviews requested by the Commission.

We strongly urge the Interim Government to ensure the Commission's vital efforts are not cut short so continued work on these cases may lead to truth, justice, and reparations which has been desperately sought by victims and their families.

Signed by:

- Amnesty International
- Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN)
- Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD)
- Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
- Capital Punishment Justice Project
- Euro-Mediterranean Federation Against Enforced Disappearances (FEMED)
- Fortify Rights
- Human Rights Watch
- International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)
- International Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances (ICAED)
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- International Truth and Justice Project (ITJP)
- Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of Disappeared-Detainees (FEDEFAM)
- Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
- Tech Global Institute
- World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)