

Please cite as: EUAA, '14–17 July 2024: Clashes with the Chhatra League and law enforcement ' in *COI Report - Bangladesh: Country Focus*, August 2025.

14–17 July 2024: Clashes with the Chhatra League and law enforcement

In the period 14–17 July 2024, student protests continued to mainly take place on or near university campuses across the country.1368 Chhatra League supporters, and at times also other Awami League supporters, launched attacks against protesters,1369 which were incited by senior officials, according to UN OHCHR. The same source reported that the police 'consistently failed to intervene' to protect students.1370 Students however continued to protest and often defended themselves1371 by fighting back.1372 Meanwhile, '[a]s the Chhatra League was outnumbered and unable to supress protests, the police 'assumed a more forceful role', as reported by UN OHCHR, and made use of, inter alia, teargas, rubber bullets, and live-loaded shotguns. In some cases, Awami League supporters carried out attacks 'in support of the police', according to the same source.1373 Security forces, including para-military units, were deployed to support the police in containing protests, including Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party, the Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB),1374 Armed Police Battalions1375 as well as the Directorate-General of Armed Forces Intelligence (DGFI).1376

14 July 2024: In the evening, Hasina escalated tensions by a comment that some viewed as insinuating that student protesters were descendants of razakars.1377 Several ministers subsequently overtly labelled student protesters as razakars in public statements.1378 Hasina's comment triggered countrywide protests the same evening, during which students chanted sarcastic slogans1379 such as 'Who are you? Who am I? Razakar, Razakar!'.1380 During the night, the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission instructed mobile operators to shut down mobile internet services around major universities.1381 At some campuses, students staging evening protests were attacked by armed Chhatra League supporters1382 including at:

- **Jahangirnagar University** (Dhaka Division): The Chhatra League attacked students with rods and sticks,1383 and threatened female students with sexual violence.1384

- **Begum Rokeya University** (Rangpur City): Chhatra League supporters attacked students with rods, sticks and knives, in an 'apparently premediated' attack, as reported by UN OHCHR.1385

- **Chittagong University** (Chattogram Division), students were attacked by Chhatra League supporters1386 that reportedly threw crude bombs.1387

- **Shahjalal University of Science and Technology** (Sylhet City), students were attacked by Chhatra League supporters[1388] – the Daily Observer reported on 2 000 students clashing with the Chhatra League in front of the central library.[1389]

Also at Dhaka University's campus, students held an evening protest,[1390] and female students broke through the night locks of their dormitories to join it.[1391] During the night, Awami League supporters were transported to the campus, some armed with sharp and blunt weapons, and 'established an intimidating presence'.[1392] The Chhatra League president addressed supporters on campus, saying that no razakars would be left on the streets the next day,[1393] and called upon Chhatra League leaders in 'every district, city, university, and educational institution' to 'deal' with protesters.[1394]

15 July 2024: senior Awami League officials mobilised the Chhatra League to carry out armed attacks against student protesters at several universities, according to UN OHCHR.[1395] Other sources reported on Quader publicly threatening 'to send the Chhatra League after student protesters' in response to their razakar slogan.[1396] Following violent clashes with protesters, the Chhatra League claimed to have been provoked by students 'self-identifying' as razakars, [1397] and mocking 'Bangladeshi independence'.[1398] About 300 people were reportedly injured in clashes, in which both sides engaged in stone-throwing and beatings with rods.[1399] Some events include:

- **Dhaka University**: competing protests between the student protests and the Chhatra League[1400] turned violent as the two sides eventually clashed in front of Bijoy Ekattor Hall.[1401] The situation escalated,[1402] with both sides throwing bricks and other objects at each other,[1403] and engaging in chases and counter-chases with iron rods and sticks. [1404] Chhatra League supporters prepositioned around campus, and many were wearing motorcycle helmets[1405] and were armed[1406] with wooden rods, hockey sticks, and steel pipes,[1407] and also machetes, axes, and in some cases, pistols, according to UN OHCHR. The same source reported on some students arming themselves in response, 'with sticks, pipes and bamboo rods'.[1408] In the afternoon, Chhatra League supporters launched an attack against student protesters.[1409] A witness told the Daily Star that they were chasing, kicking, and beating students with wooden rods.[1410] UN OHCHR reported that protesters could not escape the campus as Chhatra League supporters were blocking key exits, which pushed many protesters to defend themselves by force.[1411] Female protesters were also attacked.[1412] A victim told media that the Chhatra League attacked the front of the procession, where most female students were marching.[1413] Women protesters were struck with sticks,[1414] causing head injuries and severe injuries to their hands and feet.[1415] Witnesses described how some women were beaten while lying on the ground crying,[1416] and some were also threatened with rape.[1417] Some female protesters hid in a bus parked on campus,[1418] but a victim told local media that Chhatra League members dragged out and beat up people.[1419] The police arrived after 30 minutes, but did not intervene[1420] – even though violence was escalating.[1421] Hundreds of people were injured[1422] and many student protesters as well as Chhatra League supporters[1423] sought care at nearby Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).[1424] Chhatra League supporters entered the facilities several times and maintained presence outside, scaring off students approaching the hospital.[1425] In the evening, Chhatra

League supporters stormed the hospital,[1426] armed with sticks and wearing helmets,[1427] and beat up students seeking care.[1428] According to UN OHCHR, they caused additional injuries to already injured students, and also beat up medical personnel.[1429] The Daily Star reported that also three injured Chhatra League supporters were beaten up by students at the hospital,[1430] and both sides moreover engaged in chases[1431] and hurled brickbats in front of the hospital.[1432]

- **Jahangirnagar University** (Dhaka Division): students held a sit-in protest on campus in the evening.[1433] The situation escalated in to what local media describe a 'black night' [1434] of 'mayhem',[1435] as a large group of Chhatra League supporters attacked students. [1436] According to UN OHCHR, they were brought to the campus with vehicles, 'armed with cleavers, knives and firearms'.[1437] Students tried to seek shelter at the vice-chancellor's residence, but they were not let inside and got 'trapped' in front of it,[1438] while the Chhatra League[1439] and other Awami League supporters[1440] attacked them by throwing bricks, petrol bombs and other objects.[1441] Police arrived but initially did not intervene. [1442] According to Netra News, an award-winning investigative news platform founded by a journalist in exile,[1443] the police opened a gate which allowed for the attackers to pour in and clash with students trapped inside, 'creating total chaos for around an hour'.[1444] Thousands of other student protesters came to rescue and chased away the Chhatra League, and attacked the police.[1445] Police then fired teargas,[1446] blank shots,[1447] and used water cannons.[1448] There were subsequent confrontations between ruling party supports and students,[1449] and the police reportedly intervened to stop the violence at that points.[1450] At a nearby hospital, over 50 persons were reportedly treated overnight, including 30 with pellet wounds.[1451] Mainly students were injured,[1452] but also teachers and journalists,[1453] as well as 10–15 police officers, according to the police.[1454]

- **Eden Mohila College** (Dhaka City): Chhatra League supporters tried to stop women students from joining demonstrations at Dhaka University.[1455] Chhatra League supporters, both male and female,[1456] reportedly locked the university entrance so that students could not get out,[1457] then they beat up themstudents,[1458] and poured hot water on them.[1459]

- **Begum Rokeya University** (Rangpur City): Students were attacked by Chhatra League supporters[1460] which reportedly had taken position on campus and carried out several attacks and injured at least 15 students, according to Dhaka Tribune.[1461]

During the night, the mobile internet shutdown was expanded to 59 university areas.[1462]

16 July 2024: students clashed with police[1463] and Chhatra League members in several places across the country.[1464] UN OHCHR reported on the police, as of this day, engaging in 'use of force violations' to prevent students from protesting.[1465] Other sources reported on hundreds being injured in clashes,[1466] and six persons being killed.[1467] These were the first deaths connected to the protests,[1468] and among the victims was protest coordinator Abu Sayed, who was shot in the chest by police forces on a distance of 15 meters, while having his arms wide open towards them, 'posing no apparent physical threat', as described by Amnesty International.[1469] Footage of his killing circulated online, and mobilised more protesters.[1470]

Around this time, many students of private universities joined the protests, out of solidarity with public university students that had been violently attacked.1471 Following deadly clashes on 16 July 2024,1472 the University Grants Commission ordered all public and private universities to close, including dormitories, to ensure students' safety.1473 The government moreover filed leave to appeal the High Court verdict on the quota,1474 and Quader, the Awami League Secretary-General, called upon students to patiently await this coming court decision. Quader, however, again accused the movement of being infiltrated by the opposition, and 'on behalf of our leader' he called upon Awami League supporters to 'take position' in every ward across the country 'to resist the evil forces.'1475 Some events of this day included:

- **Dhaka University and other parts of Dhaka City**: Following the previous day's attacks, student protesters retaliated and violently ousted Chhatra League supporters from their dormitories.1476 Students reportedly stormed dorms in the morning, vandalised rooms of Chhatra League leaders, and chased away its supporters.1477 A large protest in Science Laboratory area close to Dhaka College,1478 was attacked by prepositioned Chhatra League supporters and 'affiliated local workers',1479 some of which were wearing helmets and carried sticks, machetes1480 and pipes.1481 Chases and counter-chases followed, 1482 and students threw bricks and used makeshift weapons. Students could stand their ground due to their superiority in numbers, according to UN OHCHR, that further reported on the clash continuing for hours without the police intervening.1483 Two persons died, 1484 reportedly by being beaten to death,1485 including one Awami League supporter. 1486 UN OHCHR reported on students protesting also in Bahadur Shah Park in Old Dhaka, where a dozen of Chhatra League supporters opened fire with small pistols, injuring at least four students.1487 The Associated Press, referring to local media, reported on violence continuing in the evening, with police firing teargas and rubber bullets at protesters blocking streets, detonating explosives, and setting a toll booth on fire.1488 The Daily Star reported on students protesting in front of the vice-chancellor's residence at Dhaka University in the evening, criticising the deaths of fellow students. Some carried sticks and iron rods, and a person suspected of being a Chhatra League member was reportedly beaten up by protesters.1489

- **Jahangirnagar University** (Dhaka Division): local media reported on a tense atmosphere following the violence of the previous night.1490 Students armed with sticks took strategic positions around campus in the morning.1491 As reported by Dhaka Tribune, students from at least five nearby educational institutions gathered at the gates in the morning, to express their solidarity with the student protest movement, and later over 1 000 students participated in demonstrations1492 lasting throughout the day.1493

- **Begum Rokeya University** (Rangpur City): thousands of students demonstrated around the university.1494 A group of students clashed with the Chhatra League outside one of the gates, and the police intervened.1495 According to UN OHCHR, police charged with batons and sticks at students, alongside the Chhatra League, and also fired teargas and 'shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets' at protesters.1496 Hundreds were injured,1497 including many students being injured by police fire,1498 as well as 10 journalists and several police officers.1499 One of those killed was protest coordinator Abu Sayed,1500

whose killing was referred to by UN OHCHR as a 'deliberate extrajudicial killing'.[1501] In the same evening, students torched the vice-chancellor's residence and looted the ground floor, while 15–20 staff members were inside the building.[1502]

- **Rajshahi University** (Rajshahi City): Somoy TV reported on day-long clashes between student protesters and the Chhatra League,[1503] as well as the police[1504] which reportedly fired teargas and rubber bullets.[1505]

- **Chattogram City**: as protesters approached the Sholoshahar Railway station, to repeat a protest staged the previous day,[1506] they were attacked by prepositioned ruling party supporters[1507] armed with sticks and firearms, according to the major local media outlet Prothom Alo.[1508] In response, students threw bricks, and a chase-counter chase broke out.[1509] According to Dhaka Tribune, 'cocktail explosions were reported during the chaos'.[1510] In the afternoon, 15 Chhatra League activists were reportedly 'severely beaten' by student protesters at a rooftop, from where they had been throwing bricks.[1511] Some Chhatra League activists were thrown off the six-storey building, while others were forced to fall while trying to escape by climbing down the pipes.[1512] Three persons died in clashes,[1513] including two students[1514] and a bystander.[1515] The police told media that they had not been using force,[1516] although the BGB was deployed in the city.[1517] However, one student told Dhaka Tribune that the police had been firing rubber bullets and teargas.[1518]

17 July 2024: protests continued and the police violently supressed them, in some cases with the support of paramilitary forces, as well as of Awami League supporters.[1519] In some 'protest hotspots' the police resorted to 'extensive shooting', according to UN OHCHR.[1520] At least 19 people, as reported by Deutsche Welle (DW), died in clashes between students and police.[1521] Another major protest was held on Dhaka University's campus, despite heavy presence of police, RAB and BGB, armed with rifles. Police deployed outside campus prevented people from joining, and Awami League supporters beat up and handed over protesters to the police, according to UN OHCHR.[1522] On campus, students held funeral prayers in absentia for those killed the previous day.[1523] Security forces initially did not intervene,[1524] but in the afternoon when the students were carrying symbolic coffins around campus[1525] the police fired rubber bullets,[1526] teargas and sound grenades,[1527] and reportedly also used batons.[1528] In response, students reportedly threw bricks.[1529] According to UN OHCHR, the police used 'unnecessary and disproportionate force' on orders of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police command. Police reportedly fired about '100 rounds of tear gas' in 40 minutes, 'causing many students to scramble to escape the toxic smoke'. A female student also told UN OHCHR that several police officers 'kicked, slapped and verbally abused her.'[1530]

In an address to the nation in the evening,[1531] Hasina called upon the students to be patient and await the appeal of the High Court verdict on the quota, scheduled for early August 2024.[1532] Hasina further expressed her condolences of those who had died, and announced the formation of a judicial inquiry to investigate their deaths. However, she attributed the violence to 'terrorists' taking advantage of the protest movement,[1533] and did not address the security forces' use of force. This reportedly made her statement come out as 'insincere' to students.[1534] The coordinators of the student movement therefore called for a 'complete shutdown' of

the country on the following day (18 July 2024).1535 BNP pledged support to the shutdown,1536 and later another main opposition party, Jamaat-e-Islami, also expressed solidarity with the student movement and called upon its members to support it.1537 The government made attempts to negotiate, but the students were 'no longer amenable', doubting its intentions following the violence against protesters, according to UN OHCHR.1538

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