

18–19 July 2024: Protests generalise, security forces apply lethal force

The general public took to the streets and joined the protests,[1539](#) including many high-school students.[1540](#) Protesters blocked key roads,[1541](#) and disrupted traffic across the country.[1542](#) Some protesters also engaged in vandalism and set dozens of government establishments and vehicles on fire.[1543](#) The police, RAB and BGB intensified their efforts to stop protests, and switched to 'a lethal force paradigm', as reported by UN OHCHR, making use of live ammunition.[1544](#) Police and security forces carried weapons commonly used for warfare,[1545](#) including automatic rifles and machine guns.[1546](#) Meanwhile, internet access was severely restricted, disconnecting Bangladesh from the world,[1547](#) up until 23 July 2024.[1548](#) Some sources accuse the government of shutting down internet to cover up serious violations.[1549](#)

Protesters clashed with police,[1550](#) and Awami League supporters,[1551](#) who carried out attacks and tandem against protesters.[1552](#) AFP reported on nation-wide clashes in almost half of the country's 64 districts.[1553](#) Security forces shot against protesters with, inter alia, military rifles, and shotguns loaded with metal pellets,[1554](#) in some cases at a 'point blank' range.[1555](#) UN OHCHR reported on an 'apparent pattern of security forces firing lethal ammunition at protesters who did not pose an imminent threat', and on situations where security forces 'deliberately' aimed at and killed protesters who were already incapacitated, including children.[1556](#) Approximately 100 people reportedly died on 18 July 2024, and almost 300 on 19 July 2024,[1557](#) including students, journalists and bystanders.[1558](#) AFP reported that more than half of the protest-related deaths recorded by this time had been caused by police fire.[1559](#) Netra News reported on hundreds of men, women and children, seeking care at one hospital in Dhaka alone 'after being attacked by the police'.[1560](#) Many also suffered injuries to their eyes after having been shot in the face by rubber and lethal bullets.[1561](#) In some cases, security forces obstructed medical care of protesters,[1562](#) for example by firing teargas in front of medical establishments.[1563](#)

The police stated that police cars were vandalised,[1564](#) and that hundreds of police officers were injured in clashes in Dhaka.[1565](#) According to Prothom Alo, 259 police staff received treatment at Dhaka's Central Police Hospital in 16–20 July 2024. Most suffered head injuries. Some police officers explained how their helmets had been removed during severe beatings with blunt weapons, or how they had been attacked merely by being recognised as police personnel, including off duty.[1566](#)

Clashes between protesters and the police and Awami League supporters took place in various locations in Dhaka City.[1567](#) The Daily Star described the neighbourhoods of Jatrabari, Shonir Akhra, Uttara, and Mohammadpur as 'protest hotspots' in the period 18–20 July 2024.[1568](#) The police fired teargas and charged with batons against protesters, who retaliated by throwing stones.[1569](#) The police and security forces opened fire against protesters in various neighbourhoods, including Uttara,[1570](#) Savar,[1571](#) Azimpur,[1572](#) and Badda/Rampura.[1573](#) Teargas was also launched from police or RAB helicopters in Mirpur, Mohakhali and Dhanmondi.[1574](#)

Following an violent attack against the state-run broadcaster Bangladesh Television, the government 'reinforced orders authorising security forces to resort to lethal force', and instructed BGB to 'use maximum force', according to UN OHCHR.[1575](#) According to the same source, referring to testimonies from senior

officials, the prime minister instructed security force officials to shoot protesters and to arrest, kill and hide the bodies of the movement's ringleaders.¹⁵⁷⁶ During the night to 19 July 2024, the DGFI and DB arrested six coordinators;¹⁵⁷⁷ some of them endured torture while in detention.¹⁵⁷⁸

On 19 July 2024, clashes between police and protesters escalated further in Dhaka.¹⁵⁷⁹ The Dhaka Metropolitan Police issued a ban on rallies,¹⁵⁸⁰ but nevertheless protesters 'occupied' various areas of the city.¹⁵⁸¹ Police fired rubber bullets at crowds, which triggered clashes and chases between police and protesters.¹⁵⁸² Various neighbourhoods descended into chaos,¹⁵⁸³ in particular Uttara, Jatrahari, Badda, Rampura, Mohakhali, Science Laboratory, Paltan, Mirpur-10, Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi, Nilkhet and Old Dhaka, according to Prothom Alo.¹⁵⁸⁴ Thousands of protesters armed with sticks and rocks clashed with police,¹⁵⁸⁵ torched government and private establishments, while the police fired 'huge amounts' of teargas, rubber bullets, stray bullets and sound grenades, according to Prothom Alo.¹⁵⁸⁶ Security forces moreover made use of helicopters to drop sound grenades and teargas at protesters,¹⁵⁸⁷ and according to some accounts also gunfire.¹⁵⁸⁸ Netra News reported on RAB helicopters firing 'indiscriminately' at crowds in Dhaka,¹⁵⁸⁹ inter alia killing a young child playing at a roof top.¹⁵⁹⁰ From this day onwards, 'BGB, Police and RAB, shot even more extensively at mixed crowds of peaceful protesters and violent rioters'; in some cases they 'deliberately killed or maimed victims, including children, by shooting them at point blank range', as reported by UN OHCHR. The same source reported on 'an apparent pattern' of the police, RAB and BGB resorting to 'indiscriminate' firing at entire crowds when some protesters engaged in violence.¹⁵⁹¹ This led to many bystanders, including children inside their homes being shot dead.¹⁵⁹² The BGB, RAB, and 'others' (including Awami League supporters¹⁵⁹³) also shot at crowds in many places in Dhaka and other parts of the country.¹⁵⁹⁴

In the evening of 19 July 2024, the government issued a national curfew, and deployed the military to maintain order.¹⁵⁹⁵ From that day on, security forces arrested many opposition leaders and activists of BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami¹⁵⁹⁶ and Bangladesh Jatiya Party.¹⁵⁹⁷ The police,¹⁵⁹⁸ DB,¹⁵⁹⁹ and RAB were reportedly involved in these arrests,¹⁶⁰⁰ and placed many victims in DB custody,¹⁶⁰¹ where they were 'extensively interrogated and often subjected to torture and other ill-treatment', according to UN OHCHR, that further reported on senior police officials sometimes being directly involved in such treatment.¹⁶⁰² Security forces furthermore carried out so-called 'block raids', in which entire housing blocks or areas were raided in several locations in Dhaka and other parts of the country.¹⁶⁰³ According to UN OHCHR, this was part of a campaign of 'mass arbitrary arrests' to quell protests.¹⁶⁰⁴

Some events on 18–19 July 2024 include:

Uttara (Dhaka City): on 18 July 2024, the police tried to violently disperse protesters¹⁶⁰⁵ that were blocking a road,¹⁶⁰⁶ by using teargas, rubber bullets, and sound grenades while being 'reinforced by RAB, Armed Police Battalions, BGB, Ansar' as well as 'armed Awami League supporters'.¹⁶⁰⁷ Protesters reportedly retaliated by throwing bricks at the police and also vandalised a traffic police box and two buses. A chase-counter chase broke out between protesters and the police.¹⁶⁰⁸ As the situation escalated in the early afternoon, police and the RAB reportedly fired military rifles at protesters from different locations, including the rooftop of Uttara Police Station and from an armoured vehicle driving at protesters.¹⁶⁰⁹ At least six deaths were recorded,¹⁶¹⁰ and hundreds suffered gunshot wounds,¹⁶¹¹ including some shot in the head¹⁶¹² or eyes.¹⁶¹³ In one case, security forces killed a young man distributing water to protesters by shooting him in the forehead.¹⁶¹⁴ On 19 July 2024, clashes resumed, with police and armed Awami League supporters storming alleys and firing 'indiscriminately'.¹⁶¹⁵ Among others, a 15-year-old girl was shot dead on her balcony while observing the clashes.¹⁶¹⁶ UN OHCHR reported that armed Awami League supporters, led by party officials, shot at protesters near the local Crescent Hospital.¹⁶¹⁷

Badda/Rampura (Dhaka City): on 18 July 2024, the police reportedly chased hundreds of protesters outside BRAC university, that retaliated by throwing brickbats.¹⁶¹⁸ As protests 'spilled over' into Rampura, protesters also vandalised a traffic police box and torched several motorcycles.¹⁶¹⁹ The police fired teargas into the BRAC university campus,¹⁶²⁰ an enclosed space, injuring 30 people.¹⁶²¹ One bystander told

Prothom Alo that he was shot with 22 pellets in his chest, forehead, hands and eyes.[1622](#) Chases and counter-chases took place,[1623](#) and some police officers sought shelter inside the Canadian University, from where they were rescued by RAB helicopters.[1624](#) In the evening, ‘several thousand protesters’[1625](#) stormed Bangladesh Television[1626](#) and set parts of the building on fire while staff were trapped inside.[1627](#) On 19 July 2024, protests escalated into widespread violence,[1628](#) with protesters clashing with police and BGB throughout the day.[1629](#) According to UN OHCHR, security forces tried to protect the headquarters of Bangladesh Television, and BGB and the police fired lethal ammunition ‘indiscriminately’ at crowds. Witnesses recounted how security forces cornered protesters from three sides before opening fire simultaneously, and on bullets ‘dropping down [...] like rain’.[1630](#) An Associated Press reporter witnessed the BGB firing rifles and sound grenades at over 1 000 protesters, while police fired teargas and rubber bullets. According to the reporter ‘[b]ullets littered the streets’.[1631](#) Some protesters threw bricks in retaliation, and also vandalised shops and government offices – including the Rampura Police station.[1632](#) UN OHCHR reported that security forces shot dead persons who posed no threat, at a very close range, including individuals trying to flee or pleading for their lives.[1633](#) People in nearby buildings were hit by bullets penetrating walls. ‘[O]ne hospital in the area received more than 600 injured patients and 20 dead bodies, including children as young as 10 years old’.[1634](#)

Jatrabari (Dhaka City): according to Bdnews24.com, Jatrabari turned into a ‘battlefield’, with clashes starting already in the evening of 17 July 2024 and the night to 18 July 2024, and continuing day and night for five days.[1635](#) On 18 July 2024, protesters clashed with the police that fired teargas, rubber bullets and sound grenades,[1636](#) while Awami League supporters ‘joined forces with police’ and attacked protesters by throwing bricks, according to the Daily Star. The same source reported on the police and RAB firing ‘several hundred rounds from shotguns’,[1637](#) while UN OHCHR reported that ‘the police fired shotguns with lethal metal pellets at mixed crowds’, including unarmed protesters. UN OHCHR further reported on the police firing from an anti-riot vehicle while running over protesters.[1638](#) A journalist was shot dead by police while covering the protest,[1639](#) his chest was reportedly ‘riddled’ with bullets.[1640](#) Hundreds of Awami League supporters also carried out an attack at Muzahid Nogar Central Mosque in Rayerbagh and killed two elderly men, according to UN OHCHR. According to the same source, 80 people were injured and three died in subsequent clashes.[1641](#) A violent mob beat two policemen to death and hung one of the bodies from the Rayerbagh bridge.[1642](#)

Mirpur (Dhaka City): Mirpur experienced ‘extreme violence’ on 18–19 July 2024.[1643](#) Protesters clashed with Awami League supporters and police,[1644](#) firing rubber bullets, pellets and bullets, causing at least 16 deaths and thousands of injuries, as reported by the Business Standard.[1645](#) A helicopter was reportedly ‘raining down gunfire’ on 19 July 2024, according to Netra News. A young child was shot dead inside his home, when looking out through the window, and his uncle was shot in his shoulder.[1646](#) ‘Unidentified individuals on motorcycles’ also reportedly fired guns at civilians.[1647](#) Protesters vandalised the metro station, smashing everything inside ‘to bits’[1648](#) and torched the office of the Road Transport Authority and a stadium.[1649](#)

Mohammadpur (Dhaka City): chase-counter chases between police and protesters broke out at around 8:00 and continued during the entire day on 19 July 2024. Police fired several rounds of rubber bullets and teargas, injuring several people[1650](#) which UN OHCHR described as ‘indiscriminate’ firing at mixed crowds of both peaceful and violent protesters.[1651](#) Netra News reported on stun grenades ‘raining down’ from a RAB helicopter.[1652](#)

Chattogram City: on 18 July 2024, students blocked a highway and reportedly threw stones at the police,[1653](#) which fired teargas.[1654](#) Two persons died,[1655](#) reportedly by bullet injuries.[1656](#)

Kishoreganj City: on 19 July 2024, the police reportedly fired into a crowd surrounding the Bhairab police station, injuring over 100 students.[1657](#)

Rangpur City: three protesters were reportedly killed outside a police station, which was attacked by 4 000 people on the same day.[1658](#)

Gazipur City: on 19 July 2024, Awami League supporters reportedly shot at protesters,[1659](#) that retaliated by beating the former mayor and killing his bodyguard.[1660](#)

Narsingdi City: on 18 July 2024, police fired ‘shotguns loaded with metal pellets’ at a crowd near the central jail, injuring many protesters, including children,[1661](#) and killing a 15-year-old boy. According to Prothom Alo, the boy died immediately after being hit by rubber bullets, and was thereafter displayed to the police, that fired at the child’s body again.[1662](#) According to UN OHCHR the child was laying incapacitated and was ‘deliberately’ killed by the police.[1663](#) On 19 July 2024, thousands protested outside the jail, and some stormed it, armed with makeshift weapons, firearms and tools.[1664](#) They released hundreds of inmates[1665](#) and looted firearms.[1666](#) According to UN OHCHR, police shot indiscriminately at the crowd with ‘military rifles and shotguns loaded with lethal ammunition’.[1667](#)

Cumilla City: on 18 July 2024, police and BGB reportedly shot teargas, sound grenades, rubber bullets and lethal ammunition, while Chhatra League supporters attacked protesters, and sexually assaulted some female protesters.[1668](#)

Sylhet City: on 19 July 2024, police opened fired at a BNP rally.[1669](#) Some reportedly retaliated and attacked the police with flag poles and bricks.[1670](#) A journalist was killed by police fire.[1671](#)

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