

6.2. Islamist extremism

As reported in the [2024 EUAA COI report Bangladesh – Country Focus](#), the former government initiated an intense crackdown on Islamist militancy after 2016.[481](#) During the late 2010s, perceived Islamist militants were tortured and disappeared.[482](#) Islamist militancy subsequently entered a ‘dormant phase’ in 2018 according to Shafi Mostofa, associate professor at World Religions and Culture in the Faculty of Arts at Dhaka University,[483](#) although several violent Islamist groups have reportedly remained active in Bangladesh, including regional groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, and the Islamic State as well as domestic groups including Ansar al-Islam, also known as Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HuJI),[484](#) and Neo-JMB.[485](#) State authorities made use of a ‘terrorism narrative’ to target individuals and groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) inter alia to motivate the continued presence of state security forces in the area.[486](#) The Diplomat reported on ‘anti-terrorist’ raids also being staged elsewhere under the former government. Interviewed victims said that they had been arrested months before being public revealed as ‘militants’.[487](#)

According to Kanchan Lakshman, an Indian security analyst specialising on terrorism and radicalisation, radical groups have increased their organisational activities in Bangladesh since August 2024, including JMB, that allegedly seeks to align with the largest Islamic advocacy organisation in Bangladesh, Hefazat-e-Islami.[488](#) Corroborating information could not be found within the time constraints of this report. According to the Inspector General of Prisons, 174 prisoners linked to militant outfits (such as JMB) were released on bail in the period 5 August–5 December 2024,[489](#) including key figures of banned terrorist groups,[490](#) such as the leader of Ansar al-Islam.[491](#)

Islamic political parties were heavily suppressed under the former government,[492](#) but following the powershift Islamist elements have resurged.[493](#) The interim government lifted the ban on the country’s largest Islamic party, Jamaat-e-Islami,[494](#) which had been banned during the student protests in 2024.[495](#) The Supreme Court also lifted its 2013 ban on the party to run in elections.[496](#) In April 2025, the New York Times reported that ‘smaller extremist outfits that want to upend the system entirely, and more mainstream Islamist parties that want to work within the democratic system, appear to be converging on a shared goal of a more conservative Bangladesh.’ Representatives of several Islamist parties and organisations stated that they were ‘working to push Bangladesh in a more fundamentalist direction.’[497](#)

In 2025, there have been protests calling for people disrespecting Islam to be punished with the death penalty[498](#) and violent protests involving ‘Islamists’ lead to the cancellation women’s football games in Dinajpur,[499](#) Joypurhat (January 2025)[500](#) and Taraganj (February 2025).[501](#) Moreover, on 7 March 2025, Hizb ut-Tahrir held its first public demonstration since being banned in 2009.[502](#) Protesters called for Bangladesh to become an Islamic caliphate.[503](#) Police dispersed the protest as it broke away from police barricades,[504](#) and several Hizb ut-Tahrir members were arrested the following day.[505](#) As reported by the New York Times in early April 2025, ‘Islamists’ forced the police to release a man who had harassed a woman not covering her hair in public and celebrated him with flower garlands.[506](#)

Hefazat-e-Islam has reportedly demanded 300 criminal cases against the group’s leaders and activists to be withdrawn.[507](#) The group has further called for the Women’s Affairs Reform Commission to be abolished, in particular due to the commission’s references to Islamic inheritance and family law as discriminatory against

women.[508](#)

There has reportedly been a rise in violence and discrimination against LGBTIQ persons,[509](#) including by Islamist extremist elements who have gained ground under the interim government.[510](#) Islamic fundamentalists have also attacked numerous Sufi shrines.[511](#) More information is available in sections [8.2 Ethnic and religious minorities](#) and [8.5 LGBTIQ persons](#).

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