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# 8.1.1. Awami League officials and supporters

Hasina and her party, the Awami League, were in power for 15 years, from 2009 to 2024.693 The party relied on a historical association with Bangladesh's independence movement during the 1971 independence war,694 but its government administration became increasingly authoritarian,695 with policies favouring its allies.696 The violent governmental crackdown on the student protests in July–August 2024, which caused many deaths and injuries to protesters, 'shattered' the party's public image,697 and party affiliates have been reportedly facing 'widespread hostility',698 including retaliatory violence.699

On 23 October 2024, the interim government banned the Awami League's student wing Chhatra League under the Anti-Terrorism Act700 and later on 12 May 2025 it also banned all activities of the Awami League.701 The interim government has furthermore taken steps to remove references to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family by altering school textbooks,702 renaming several institutions703 (including public hospitals,704 universities,705 and military institutions 706), changing banknotes with Rahman's portrait707 and abolishing eight national holidays,708 including 15 August (national mourning day for the assassination of Rahman and most of his family).709

Many Awami League top officials face criminal charges at the ICT-BD and ordinary criminal courts,710 and there have been reports of Awami League affiliates being arbitrarily arrested.711 More information on criminal charges brought against Awami League officials and supporters is available in section 2.4 Accountability efforts and arrests. Awami League members have been blamed for the increase in violent crime since the fall of the former government,712 including by the interim government.713 'Operation Devil Hunt', launched in February 2025 to curb violent crime, has led to over 12 000 arrests,714 and some sources stated that many of those arrested were Awami League members.715 In April–May 2025, over 48 000 people were arrested in one month according to police data, and meanwhile the Daily Star reported on an increase in arrests of Awami League members as the interim government officially banned all activities of the organisation in May 2025. Among those arrested were activists as well as party leaders and former ministers of parliament.716 Custodial deaths of Awami League members have also been reported,717 including the death of four Awami League leaders in Bogura jail in November–December 2024.718 On 8 May 2025, the Awami League claimed that 21 of their

leaders and activists had died in custody.[719] These figures could not be corroborated within the time constraints of drafting this report.

During the protests in July–August 2024, Awami League officials and supporters faced retaliatory violence in clashes with protesters.[720] According to the UN OHCHR, the 'most serious incidents' took place from 4 August 2024 and onwards (with their reporting period ending on 15 August 2024), especially in the aftermath of Hasina's flight to India on 5 August 2024.[721] Awami League officials and supporters were beaten to death by crowds, and in some cases attacked and stabbed to death.[722] According to Prothom Alo, 87 Awami League members and affiliates were killed in the period 4–6 August 2024, out of 326 people killed in total.[723] In contrast, International Crisis Group reported on estimates of 250 people being killed in the slightly longer period 5–11 August 2024, and that most were Awami League members.[724] Crowds also vandalised, looted and torched government offices, official residences, homes and businesses belonging to Awami Leage leaders and government officials,[725] 'or their close family members' as reported by UN OHCHR.[726] UN OHCHR documented one case of sexual violence against a female Chhatra League member, including sexual harassment and rape. Furthermore, she was reportedly denied healthcare due to her political affiliation. UN OHCHR believed that 'substantially more cases of sexual violence' occurred than what they could document in the period 1 July–15 August 2024.[727]

During a debate organised by International Crisis Group in November 2024, Thomas Kean, analyst with International Crisis Group, and Zafar Sobhan, journalist and political analyst, stated that, despite some attacks, there had been no major purges of Awami League supporters or others associated with the previous government since its downfall. Sobhan noted that dozens had been incarcerated and that hundreds were in hiding, but thousands still remained in the country – although they kept a low profile.[728] Other sources also reported on Awami League leaders and prominent supporters living in hiding,[729] and on many having escaped the country or trying to leave[730] to avoid reprisals.[731]

The International Crisis Group later reported that BNP made efforts to control their rank-and-file in the immediate aftermath of the former government's downfall and that many families have members on 'both sides of the political divides' which might explain why revenge killings were not more extensive.[732] UN OHCHR reported that some retaliatory attacks were carried out during the protests and their aftermath by members of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, with overlapping motives such as political revenge, religious and ethnic discrimination, personal disputes and local communal conflicts. UN OHCHR however did not find any information supporting claims that the top leadership orchestrated such violence.[733] They noted that reports of revenge violence had continued after 15 August 2024.[734]

Human Rights Watch stated that '[t]he authorities have failed to protect individuals affiliated with the Awami League from attacks'.[735] Violent mobs have attacked Awami League leaders

and activists at court hearings[736] and a former minister of parliament was attacked by a mob upon his release from jail after being granted bail.[737]

In January–April 2025, ASK recorded the following instances of political violence:

- 23 incidents involving the Awami League and the BNP, leaving 4 dead and 329 injured;
- 5 incidents involving student wings of the Awami League and other parties, injuring 26 people;
- 5 internal clashes of the Awami League and affiliated branches, leaving 3 dead and 66 injured.[738]

Odikhar also recorded instances of intra-party violence, documenting six incidents involving the Awami League in the period January–March 2025, leaving 4 dead and 26 injured.[739]

Under the former administration, some Awami League leaders and government officials exploited their power position to engage in crime such as land grabbing and embezzling government assets,[740] while corruption was institutionalised[741] and endemic.[742] According to TIB, reporting in November 2024, there were complaints of 'persistent influence' of the former government's 'allies' on the bureaucracy,[743] and Odikhar reported in May 2025 that criminal elements were still 'influential in politics' and that violence and extortion were continuing.[744] During its 15 years in power, the Awami League politicised state institutions,[745] which 'permeated the entire security sector',[746] with allegations of actors within law enforcement and other security agencies engaging in human rights abuse, sometimes on the order of top government officials.[747] According to Netra News referring to local media, the party's student wing, the Chhatra League, allegedly engaged in violent acts, rape and killings of other students during the Awami Leagues' years in power. Members engaging in such crime were allegedly awarded by receiving more senior roles and better opportunities.[748] The Chhatra League and security forces also violently cracked down on protesters during the July–August 2024, leading to deaths and injuries.[749] More information is available in Annex 1: Timeline of the protests in July–August 2024, 2.4. Accountability efforts and arrests and 3.1.2. Involvement in human rights abuse.

Journalists and media outlets perceived as favouring the Awami League and the former government have also been targeted in violent acts,750 as well as Hindus.751 More information is available in 8.3. Actors of civil society and the media and 8.2. Ethnic and religious minorities.

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