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8.3.2. Treatment of journalists and media workers

Under the former government, the media landscape was diverse and growing, but journalists were subjected to intimidation and arbitrary arrests, and many resorted to self-censorship.931 Furthermore, as reported by Freedom House, 'attacks on media workers were enabled by a climate of impunity'932 and other sources indicated that journalists and media outlets criticising the then government were targeted by it as well as by its supporters.933 Journalists had criminal cases launched against them under repressive laws such as the 2018 Digital Security Act (DSA),934 and later the 2023 CSA935 – that have been replaced with the 2025 Cyber Security Ordinance936 as outlined above. In May 2025, the head of the Media Reform Commission however criticised the 'growing climate of fear and self-censorship in the media, fuelled by threats on social media and orchestrated 'mob violence' stating that while the government is supposed to 'strictly control' such behaviour, 'little progress is evident'.937

During the protests in July–August 2024, journalists were targeted by police, ruling party supporters and protesters.938 In the period 15 July–5 August 2024, at least six journalists were killed and 200 were injured, according to UN OHCHR.939 According to Amnesty International, female journalists stated that they were targeted by the police, groups affiliated with the Awami League, and protesters for their coverage of July-August 2024 protests.940After the interim government assumed power in August 2024, sources reported on continued attacks against journalists941 by police,942 BNP supporters,943 and mobs.944

On 7 October 2024, the interim government formed an eight-member committee to monitor harassment cases against journalists.945 On 18 November 2024, the interim government announced the formation of the 11-member Media Reform Commission, with a senior journalist as its chief.946 The Commission submitted its report to the interim government in late March 2025,947 with recommendations to improve the quality of journalism and its independence, including by a minimum starting salary for journalists and restrictions on media ownership.948

Between late October 2024 and early November 2024, the interim government's Press Information Department revoked the credentials of 167 journalists.949 The revocation was criticised by press groups,950 including Reporters Without Borders (RSF) that stated that it

’encourages self-censorship’ and is ‘incomprehensible.’951 In April 2025, three TV journalists were terminated from their respective media organisations952 due to alleged lack of professionalism while interviewing a government official, as stated by Bangladeshi Journalists in International Media (BJIM), who implied that the dismissals were retributive.953

Sources reported on journalists perceived as supportive of the former prime minister being arrested in criminal cases.954 In August 2024, over 24 journalists were charged with crimes against humanity for the death of a protester in July 2024.955 In September 2024, a case was filed by a private citizen against 28 journalists from Chattogram for allegedly attempted abduction, assault, and publishing ‘fake news’ during the student protests.956 In November 2024, RSF reported on nearly 140 journalists accused of allegedly killing protesters which RSF described as ‘[e]xtremely grave but baseless accusations.’957 In April 2025, BJIM expressed concern over Dhaka Metropolitan Police issuing a summon letter to a journalist who was investigating police corruption.958

In 2024, local human rights organisation ASK recorded 531 cases of harassment of journalists 959 with the majority of cases taking place in July–September.960 In January–June 2025, ASK recorded 196 cases,961 in contrast to the same period the previous year when 145 cases were recorded by the organisation.962 In February 2025, human rights organisations including BJIM, IFJ, RSF, and CPJ reported on the rise in violence against journalists since the beginning of the month.963 In March 2025, local sources reported on a gang-rape of a female journalist.964 Article 19 referred to the attack as characterising of a general increase in violence against women and girls in Bangladesh.965 More information on women and girls is available in section 8.4. Women and girls.

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