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8.3.3. Treatment of human rights defenders

Under the former government, '[t]he human rights situation in the country was poor and worsening, making human rights defenders and human rights organizations' work perilous' as reported by CGS in 2023. According to the same source, 86 % of human rights defenders operating at grassroots level faced 'various obstacles' in their work, including threats and intimidation from law enforcement agencies, intelligence agencies and other government officials, and also non-state actors such as activists connected to the ruling party or the opposition party, and religious, extremist or criminal groups.966 Other sources also reported on human rights defenders facing harassment by the then ruling party [Awami League] and state authorities.967 In an interview with the Daily Star, the director of Odhikar stated that 'law enforcement was weaponised to detain and intimidate human rights defenders.' Moreover, the director of Odhikar expressed concern about a 'lack of dedicated institutional mechanism or framework to protect human rights defenders.'968

After the July-August 2024 protests, some human rights defenders were released from pending criminal charges969 or granted bail by the interim government,970 while others were detained 971 and arrested.972

In March 2025, Front Line Defenders reported that, after the change of government, targeted violence against human rights defenders continued, with reports of human rights defenders receiving threats.973 JusticeMakers Bangladesh in France (JMBF) and Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) reported on an attack against three defence lawyers by a group of students and members of the public.974

In February and March 2025, sources reported on two cases of human rights defenders sued by private citizens for blasphemy975 with one of the human rights defenders charged for blasphemy under the CSA in March 2025.976

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