



Home Office

# **Country Policy and Information Note**

## **Bangladesh: Religious minorities and Atheists**

**Version 4.0**

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# Executive summary

Bangladesh is a majority Islamic country with around 91% of the population Sunni Muslims. Other religions include Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity.

The constitution and other laws hold that Islam is the state religion but ensure equal status and equal rights for all religions. The government has implemented policies to protect religious minority rights and publicly declared its commitment to support religious diversity. The law provides for the prosecution of offences committed against places of worship and religiously motivated offences against individuals. However, there are some examples of these laws and those under the Digital Security Act (DSA), which was replaced by the Cyber Security Act in 2023, being used to arrest and detain people for allegedly speaking out against or insulting the principles of Islam.

Religious minorities can practice their faith freely throughout Bangladesh without harassment. There are instances of sporadic communal violence, most recently tied to political upheaval, which continue to result in deaths, injuries, assaults and damage to property. During the August 2024 political unrest in Bangladesh, members of religious minorities faced harassment and violence. However, many cases were politically motivated rather than based on religious differences.

Atheism is uncommon, unpopular and unlikely to be publicly professed. Atheists may face discrimination and violence, particularly if a person attempts to convince others to adopt their beliefs. If a person is reported to the police, they may face criminal sanctions.

Claims based on a person being from, or perceived to be from, a religious minority fall under the Refugee Convention ground of actual or imputed religion.

Religious minorities are unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state and/or non-state actors.

Members of religious minority groups are unlikely to be arrested and charged with offences related to insulting Islam. Where a person is arrested and charged on this basis, including atheists and secularists, they are likely to face imprisonment which is disproportionate and discriminatory and amounts to persecution.

The state takes reasonable steps to prevent persecution of religious minorities. The government deploy law enforcement personnel at religious sites, festivals, and events considered potential targets for violence. The police arrest and charge those involved in violence against religious minorities.

Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from a non-state, local official or rogue state actor, they are likely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk.

Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

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# Assessment

Section updated: 6 June 2025

## About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of **whether, in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by the state because of a person's involvement with a religious minority group or atheist.
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- a claim, if refused, is likely or not to be certified as 'clearly unfounded' under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

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## 1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

### 1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check, when such a check has not already been undertaken (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).
- 1.1.4 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person's claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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## 1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons to apply one (or more) of the exclusion clauses. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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## 2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Actual or imputed religion
- 2.1.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason
- 2.1.3 In the absence of a link to one of the 5 Refugee Convention reasons necessary for the grant of asylum, the question is whether the person will face a real risk of serious harm to qualify for Humanitarian Protection (HP).
- 2.1.4 Where the person qualifies for protection under the Refugee Convention, decision makers do not need to consider if there are substantial grounds for believing the person faces a real risk of serious harm meriting a grant of HP.
- 2.1.5 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 3. Risk

### 3.1 Risk from the state

- 3.1.1 Religious minority groups including Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and Ahmadis are unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.1.2 Members of religious minority groups are unlikely to be arrested and charged with offences related to insulting Islam. Where a person is arrested and charged on this basis, including atheists and secularists, they are likely to face imprisonment which is disproportionate and discriminatory and amounts

to persecution. Each case must be considered on its facts.

- 3.1.3 Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country. The 2022 census showed 91% of the population belonged to the Sunni sect of Islam, an increase from 89% recorded in 2013. Religious minorities account for less than 9% of the population. The total population of Bangladesh in 2024 was estimated to be over 168 million (see [Religious demography and population](#)).
- 3.1.4 The largest religious minority are Hindus, who make up approximately 8% (around 13 million) of the population. Large Hindu populations live in the south, east and north of the country, with the highest number residing in Sylhet. There are estimated to be around 40,000 Hindu temples, which is one for every 305 Hindus, throughout Bangladesh which operate without restriction (see [Demography](#)).
- 3.1.5 The remaining 1% (about 1.5 to 2 million) of the population is made up of:
- Christians, who number around 500,000 and live across the country with high concentrations in Barishal, Gopalganj, Dhaka City, Gazipur and Khulna (see [Demography](#)).
  - Buddhists, who number around 1,000,000 and mainly reside in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and the north of the country (see [Population](#)).
  - Others include Ahmadis, who number around 100,000 and Sufis (see [Population](#)).
- 3.1.6 Atheists are estimated to number around 171,100 or 0.1% of the total population (see [Population](#)).
- 3.1.7 Bangladesh is a secular pluralist parliamentary democracy. The constitution and other laws hold that Islam is the state religion but ensure equal status and equal rights for all religions, specifically mentioning Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. The constitution prohibits the abuse of religion for political purposes and discrimination or persecution of anyone protecting any religion. It provides for the right to profess, practice, or propagate all religions 'subject to law, public order, and morality', and allows people to establish and manage their religious institutions. The constitution prohibits students being forced to participate in religious activities or teachings that are not part of their own faith in any educational institution. The law, however, does not specifically consider the rights of those who hold no faith or who believe there is no god or gods (see [Constitution and Penal code](#)).
- 3.1.8 The government has implemented policies to protect minority rights and publicly declared its commitment to support religious diversity. In November 2024 the head of the army addressed the National Buddhist conference to advocate for religious harmony. In December 2024 interim leader of the government, Muhammad Yunus, met with leaders from religious minorities to address their concerns and reiterate the importance of equality (see [Government attitudes and policies](#)).
- 3.1.9 The law provides for the prosecution of offences committed against places of worship such as criminal damage and trespassing, and religiously motivated offences committed against individuals, such as intentional insulting words or behaviour. However, the penal code and the Digital Security Act (DSA) were, as noted by the US State Department report on International Religious

Freedom, used by the previous Hasina led government to take legal action against those allegedly speaking out against or insulting the principles of Islam. In September 2023 the DSA was repealed and replaced with the Cyber Security Act (CSA) which contains the same provisions on religious sentiment but reduces the maximum punishment to 2 years imprisonment and/or a 500,000 Bangladeshi Taka (about £3,187) fine. The interim government formed in August 2024 has announced that the CSA is under review and parts of it are likely to be repealed. In January 2025 a draft Cyber Security Ordinance bill was published, although it has been criticised for retaining several provisions from the CSA which limit freedom of expression. In March 2025, the interim government announced the withdrawal of 410 cases which related to 'speech offences' under the CSA, although it did not specify how many of these cases related to religious defamation.(see [Penal code](#) and [Blasphemy/religious defamation](#)).

- 3.1.10 Atheists who publish material or post their views publicly on social media may attract attention and subsequently face arrest for offences relating to harming religious sentiment. However, there is limited information on how frequently this occurs and how often cases proceed to prosecution. In sources consulted there is only one example, in the last 5 years of the atheist blogger Selim Khan, being arrested and detained under the CSA and penal code in November 2023. He has repeatedly been denied bail and until this was eventually granted on 13 March 2024 but despite this he remained in prison at the time of writing (see [State treatment: Atheists and secularists](#)).
- 3.1.11 Hindus can express and practice their faith freely throughout Bangladesh without harassment. However, leaders of religious minority communities claim laws such as the DSA now replaced by the CSA are applied unfairly, to Hindus whereby courts issue harsher penalties against them for posting allegedly derogatory information online than Muslim perpetrators of retaliatory violence (see [State treatment: Hindus](#)).
- 3.1.12 Buddhists are a small minority and there is limited information about their experiences specifically. Most Buddhists are indigenous people living in the CHT in communities with those of the same faith. There are 1,000 Buddhist monasteries established across Bangladesh. There is no indication the state restricts access to these or restricts Buddhists ability to worship. Some Buddhists face difficulties in relation to land rights and cultural preservation, however there is little evidence to suggest that they face systematic state discrimination (see [Geographical breakdown of religious minorities and State treatment: Buddhists](#)).
- 3.1.13 Christians can express and practice their faith freely without harassment. There is little evidence to suggest that Christians face state discrimination. There are no exact figures of the total number of Christian churches, but churches operate across Bangladesh without restriction. In the sources consulted there is one example of an evangelical Church build being halted by local Awami League officials in 2022. However, there is no information to suggest such treatment occurs regularly or is systematic (see [State Treatment: Christians and Geographic distribution](#)).
- 3.1.14 There is no evidence that Ahmadis and other minority groups are prevented from practicing their faith by or face discrimination from the state (see [State treatment: Ahmadis](#)).



- 3.1.15 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 3.2 Risk from non-state actors

- 3.2.1 Religious minority groups including Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Ahmadis and atheists are unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from non-state actors. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.2.2 Bangladesh is densely populated, religiously diverse and minorities live throughout the country. Inter-religious relations and coexistence are generally positive and peaceful, with many religious festivals jointly celebrated by people of different faiths. Religious minorities are generally able to practice their faiths freely and without harassment from non-state actors throughout Bangladesh (see [Societal treatment and inter-religious relations](#)).
- 3.2.3 There are instances of sporadic communal violence, often linked to periods of political upheaval and most recently during the downfall of the Awami League government in July and August 2024, which has resulted in deaths, injuries, assaults and damage to property. In January 2025 the Bangladesh Police Force (BPF) examined 1,769 attacks and acts of vandalism against religious minorities between 4 and 20 August 2024 reported to it by the non-governmental Bangladesh Hindu Buddha Christian Unity Council. The BPF considered 1,234 of these attacks to be politically motivated and 20 being communal in nature (see [Societal treatment](#)).
- 3.2.4 There are varying figures on violence against religious minorities, particularly post August 2024. Ain o Salish Kendra reported a total of 926 violations against religious minorities and indigenous groups between January and December 2024, and 27 violations against religious minorities and indigenous groups between January and February 2025. However, the Bangladesh Buddhist Hindu Christian Unity Council reported 2184 incidents of violence against religious minorities between 4 August 2024 and 31 December 2024 and 92 incidents in violence between January and February 2025. The difference in reported figures is due to some cases being characterised as sectarian rather than politically motivated violence or violence rooted in economic or personal reasons. The report of 2,200 cases of violence against Hindus in 2024 was highly contested and described as misleading and exaggerated by Bangladeshi authorities and independent human rights organisations. Violations against religious minorities tend to increase during political turmoil, however, this is not always due to religious intolerance and the number of violations has decreased in 2025 (see [Statistics on violence against religious minorities](#)).
- 3.2.5 In August 2024 during and after the demonstrations that led to the removal of the ruling Awami League from power Hindu homes, businesses and places of worship were targeted, particularly in rural and historically tense areas such as Thakurgaon and Lalmonirhat. Reports indicated that this violence was especially prevalent in areas perceived to be sympathetic to the Awami League. (see [Societal treatment: Hindus](#)).
- 3.2.6 There is limited reporting on Christians facing societal discrimination or harassment. According to Open Doors, a Christian charity, during the 2024

Christmas period, there were reports that churches in north Bangladesh were sent threatening letters in regard to Christmas celebrations. The same organisation reported during the recent political unrest at least 7 incidents against Christian converts across Bangladesh including a man being held at knifepoint, homes being looted, and churches being illegally occupied. However, in the context of an estimated Christian population of just under 500,000 numbers are low and appear isolated in nature (see [Societal treatment: Christians](#)).

- 3.2.7 There is limited reporting on adverse societal treatment of Buddhists or their experience of religiously motivated crime. Reports indicate that Buddhist indigenous groups have sometimes clashed with Muslim Bengali settlers, but this was usually in relation to land ownership in the CHT rather than religious differences. Incidents reported in September and October 2024 include vandalism and looting of shops belonging to indigenous communities and attacks on temples (see [Societal treatment: Buddhists](#)).
- 3.2.8 Ahmadis identify as Muslim but many Muslims in Bangladesh regard them as non-Muslim as they believe in an additional prophet who came after the prophet Muhammed. Ahmadis are generally able express their faith openly however, there have been reports of occasional localised societal violence. In March 2023, hundreds of people attacked the Ahmadi community during its annual convention in Panchagarh after a local mosque broadcast rumours about the deaths of anti-Ahmadi activists. Two people were killed during the attacks, including one Ahmadi, and dozens were injured (see [Societal treatment: Ahmadis](#)).
- 3.2.9 In addition, during the recent political unrest, Ahmadis faced targeted violence with 7 incidents reported between the 5 and 9 August 2024. The UN's Office for High Commissioner for Human Rights reported credible allegations that a group led by Islamic religious clerics attacked several members of the Ahmadi community in Panchagarh, causing the destruction of houses and a mosque, and injuries to a 16 year old boy who later died (see [Societal treatment: Ahmadis](#)).
- 3.2.10 There is limited information on the societal treatment of atheists or secularists. Most reporting refers to incidents around 2015 and focuses on the situation for atheist bloggers. Between 2013 and 2018, several atheist and secular bloggers were attacked and many of them were killed, for example Avijit Roy, an atheist author was murdered in 2015, and Shahzahan Bachchu, a secular political activist was murdered in 2018. There were no specific recent examples of societal violence against atheists or secularists (see [Societal treatment: Atheists](#)).
- 3.2.11 The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) observed in 2022 that Atheism is uncommon, unpopular and unlikely to be publicly professed. Atheists may face discrimination and violence, particularly if a person attempts to convince others to adopt their beliefs. If a person is reported to the police, they may face criminal sanctions (see [Societal treatment: Atheists and Risk from the state](#)).
- 3.2.12 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) and [Country Policy and Information Note: Political Situation](#).

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## 4. Protection

- 4.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to obtain protection.
- 4.1.2 A person who has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from a rogue state actor and/or a non-state actor is likely to obtain protection from the state.
- 4.1.3 Atheists and people accused of 'hurting religious sentiment' who are open about their beliefs are unlikely to be afforded effective protection. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 4.1.4 Bangladesh has taken reasonable steps to prevent persecution by operating an effective legal system for the detection, prosecution and punishment of acts constituting persecution and a person is generally able to access the protection. However, whilst there is a functioning criminal justice system, the effectiveness and conduct of the police varies.
- 4.1.5 Corruption, sympathy or weakness of some individuals in the system of justice does not mean that the state is unwilling to afford protection.
- 4.1.6 The government deploys law enforcement personnel to religious sites, festivals, and events considered potential targets for violence, including during Durga Puja, Diwali, Christmas, Easter, and Buddha Purnima (see [State treatment: Overview](#))
- 4.1.7 Some religious groups have accused law enforcement agencies of apathy during periods of violence. During 3 and 4 March 2023, Ahmadi leaders said police and government officials of standing by as hundreds of Islamic extremists attacked the Ahmadi community during their annual convention in the Panchagarh district. Following the attack, police filed cases against more than 8,000 individuals and arrested more than 80 others and local authorities distributed 10 million (£63,673) in aid to affected Ahmadis. In response to physical attacks and violence against Ahmadis and other groups during August 2024 the interim government declared its intention to protect minority communities (see [Protection](#)).
- 4.1.8 The police and judiciary arrest and charge those involved in violence against religious minorities. Following the violence against religious minorities in August 2024, the Bangladeshi police have arrested 70 individuals in connection with 88 cases although there has been no reporting in regard to charges against any individuals to date. Additionally, reporting indicates that in some cases violations against Hindu temples those involved have been arrested and subsequently charged. However, in some cases police have been accused of apathy during attacks against religious minorities (see [Protection](#) and [Societal treatment and inter-religious relations](#)).
- 4.1.9 There have been recent reports of an increased number of Sufi shrines being vandalised and attacked by Islamic extremists. It was alleged that police were present during some attacks, but they did not intervene. The Additional Inspector General stated that police have been instructed to take a strong stance to prevent attacks and that those involved would be 'identified and dealt with' (see [Societal treatment: Sufis](#)).
- 4.1.10 A survey carried out in October 2024 by Voice of America (VOA) since the interim government took over indicates that the majority of the people (64.1

per cent of the respondents) in Bangladesh believe that the interim government is providing more security to religious and ethnic minorities than the previous one (see [Protection](#)).

- 4.1.11 Although unable to offer protection, the Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC) is one of the main religious organisations in Bangladesh, who work to protect the human rights of the religious and ethnic minorities and challenge the government to better support minorities (see [Civil society organisations](#)).
- 4.1.12 See also [Country Policy and Information Note Bangladesh: Actors of protection](#).
- 4.1.13 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from a non-state or rogue state actor, they are likely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 This is because in general, there are parts of country such as but not limited to Dhaka where it will be reasonable to expect group to relocate there. The population of Bangladesh in 2022 is estimated to be over 167 million, including around 15 million religious minorities of whom about 13 million are Hindus (see [Demography](#)).
- 5.1.3 Article 36 of the constitution guarantees citizens the right to move freely throughout Bangladesh and to reside and settle in any place (except for certain legal restrictions in CHT). DFAT noted in 2022 that Bangladeshis can and do relocate for a variety of reasons (see [Country Policy and Information Note Bangladesh: Internal Relocation](#)).
- 5.1.4 Hindus mainly reside in the north and southwest of the country, though concentrated numbers of Hindus can also be found in the south, east and north of the country. Christians mainly reside in Barisal, Khulna and Gazipur, Buddhists, mainly reside in CHT and the north of the country and Ahmadis reside in Dhaka, Brahmanbaria and Kishoreganj (see [Geographic distribution](#)).
- 5.1.5 For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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# Country information

## About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment which, as stated in the [About the assessment](#), is the guide to the current objective conditions.

The structure and content follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **6 June 2025**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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## 7. Demography

### 7.1 Population

7.1.1 The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights published on 12 February 2025 a fact-finding report on human rights violations and abuses related to the protests of July and August 2024 in Bangladesh (OHCHR 2025 FF report) ‘... based on more than 230 confidential in-depth interviews, which OHCHR’s fact-finding team conducted in Bangladesh and online, with victims, witnesses, student and other protest leaders... and various other experts and persons of relevance’<sup>1</sup>. The report noted that: ‘Bangladesh is home to diverse communities and groups that are religiously, ethnically or linguistically distinct from the large majority of the population, who are Bangla-speaking Sunni Muslims of Bengali ethnicity.’<sup>2</sup>

7.1.2 Estimates of Bangladesh’s population vary. The Bangladesh Population and Housing Census (BPHC) conducted in June 2022<sup>3</sup> estimated the total population was 165 million<sup>4</sup>. The CIA World Factbook estimated that the total population was over 168 million in 2024<sup>5</sup>, while the World Bank, citing various sources, stated the country’s population was around 171 million in 2023<sup>6</sup>.

7.1.3 The BPHC breakdown of population by religion is set out below<sup>7</sup> :

Religion	Population	% of population
Muslim	150,415,066	91.08%
Hindu	13,143,749	7.96%

<sup>1</sup> OHCHR, [Human Rights Violations and Abuses ...](#) (paragraph 5), 12 February 2025

<sup>2</sup> OHCHR, [Human Rights Violations and Abuses ...](#) (paragraph 228), 12 February 2025

<sup>3</sup> BBS, [Population and Housing Census 2022, National Report](#) (page xxxvii), November 2023

<sup>4</sup> BBS, [Population and Housing Census 2022, National Report](#) (page 59), November 2023

<sup>5</sup> CIA, [The World Factbook: Bangladesh](#), 19 March 2025

<sup>6</sup> World Bank, [Data](#) (Population, total – Bangladesh), no date

<sup>7</sup> BBS, [Population and Housing Census 2022, National Report](#) (page 67), November 2023



Buddhist	1,001,927	0.61%
Christian	488,555	0.30%
Other	101,195	0.06%
Total religious minority population	14,735,426	8.92%

- 7.1.4 The 2022 census analysis did not provide a breakdown of which religions fell into the 'Other' category of the population of different Muslim sects<sup>8</sup>. The 2022 census showed a decrease in religious minorities and atheists compared to the 2013 census which recorded that they accounted for 11% of the total population<sup>9</sup>.
- 7.1.5 Aid to the Church in Need, described as a '... pontifical foundation of the Catholic Church ...'<sup>10</sup>, Religious Freedom Report published in June 2023, covering the period January 2021 to December 2022 (ACN 2023 Religious Freedom Report) estimated the population share of Atheists as 0.1%<sup>11</sup> or 171,100 of the total population (figure by CPIT).
- 7.1.6 The US State Department 2023 Bangladesh Report on International Religious Freedom (USSD RIRF 2023 Bangladesh report) published on 26 June 2024, covering the period 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2023, noted:  
  
'According to the 2022 national government census, Sunni Muslims constitute approximately 91 percent of the population and Hindus approximately 8 percent. The remainder of the population includes Christians, with approximately 400,000 Roman Catholics, approximately one million Theravada-Hinayana Buddhists and small numbers of Shia Muslims, Ahmadi Muslims, Baha'is, animists, International Society for Krishna Consciousness members, agnostics, and atheists.'<sup>12</sup>
- 7.1.7 Human Rights Defense International (HRDI), an NGO focused on human rights issues, including for ethnic and religious minorities in Bangladesh<sup>13</sup>, noted in its report dated 10 December 2024: 'Hindus, who were once over 20% of the population at the time of independence [1971], now account for approximately 8-10%. This decline has been attributed to factors such as economic migration, the exodus of minority communities during periods of religious and political strife, and lower birth rates among Hindus compared to Muslims.'<sup>14</sup>
- 7.1.8 Pew Research Center (PRC), described as a '... nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping the world ...'<sup>15</sup>, report on religious conversion dated 9 March 2025, based on data from the 2024 Global Attitudes Survey which analysed participants current and childhood religious identification<sup>16</sup> with Bangladesh data based on face-to-

<sup>8</sup> BBS, [Population and Housing Census 2022, National Report](#) (page 68), November 2023

<sup>9</sup> USSD, [2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (page 2), 12 May 2021

<sup>10</sup> ACN, [Our Mission](#), no date

<sup>11</sup> ACN, [2023 Religious Freedom Report: Bangladesh](#), June 2023

<sup>12</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (Section 1), 26 June 2024

<sup>13</sup> HRDI, [About us](#), no date

<sup>14</sup> HRDI, [The Changing Religious Demography of Bangladesh](#), 10 December 2024

<sup>15</sup> PRC, [About Pew Research Center](#), no date

<sup>16</sup> PRC, [Methodology](#), 26 March 2025

face interviews conducted on 9 March 2024 with 1,046 participants<sup>17</sup>. The PRC 2024 report noted: 'Nearly all people who were raised Hindu in ...Bangladesh still identify as Hindu today ...in Bangladesh ... Most people who currently identify as Hindus say they were raised Hindu. For example, all the Bangladeshi Hindus surveyed say they were raised Hindu.'<sup>18</sup>

- 7.1.9 The same report stated: 'In Bangladesh, 100% of people raised Muslim are still Muslim.'<sup>19</sup>
- 7.1.10 On 27 September 2024, a Union of Catholic Asian (UCA) News, described as '... the leading independent Catholic media service from Asia.'<sup>20</sup>, article reported there are an estimated 100,000 Ahmadi Muslims in Bangladesh<sup>21</sup>. This article cites Human Rights Watch as a source, with this information coming from a 2005 article titled '[Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in Bangladesh](#)', therefore it is likely that the population figures have changed. In the other sources consulted there was no breakdown or update on the population of Ahmadi Muslims (see [Bibliography](#)).

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## 7.2 Geographic distribution

- 7.2.1 The Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade Bangladesh Country Information Report published November 2022 (DFAT 2022 report), '... based on DFAT's on-the-ground knowledge discussions with a range of sources in Bangladesh...' <sup>22</sup> stated: '... DFAT understands that there are large Hindu populations in the south, east and north of the country, but reliable figures are not available and demographic trends are subject to change. Census data shows that the number of Hindus (and other religious minorities) is falling over time ... Buddhists are a small minority in Bangladesh. They are mostly Indigenous and live in the CHT [Chittagong Hill Tracts] ...' <sup>23</sup>
- 7.2.2 The Bangladesh 2022 Population and Housing Census analysis noted: 'Division-wise analysis shows that the proportion of the Muslim population is the dominant [faith] in all the divisions, and it is reported as the highest, 95.57% in Mymensingh among the divisions. On the other hand, the [highest] percentage of Hindu[s] is ...13.51% in Sylhet [Northern Eastern region]'.<sup>24</sup>
- 7.2.3 The USSD RIRF 2023 report noted:
- 'Ethnic minorities concentrated in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and northern districts generally practice non-Islamic faiths. The Garo in Mymensingh are predominantly Christian, as are some of the Santal in Gaibandha. Most Buddhists are members of the indigenous populations of the CHT. Bengali and ethnic minority Christians live in communities across the country, with relatively high concentrations in Barishal City and Gournadi in Barishal District, Baniarchar in Gopalganj District, Monipuripara and

<sup>17</sup> PRC, [Country-Specific Methodology](#), no date

<sup>18</sup> PRC, [Around the World, Many People Are Leaving...](#) (Chapter 5), 26 March 2025

<sup>19</sup> PRC, [Around the World, Many People Are Leaving...](#) (Chapter 4), 26 March 2025

<sup>20</sup> UCA News, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>21</sup> UCA News, [Bangladesh turmoil proving a nightmare for Ahmadiyya Muslims](#), 27 September 2024

<sup>22</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report ...](#) (paragraph 1.4), 30 November 2022

<sup>23</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Bangladesh](#) (paragraphs 3.42, 3.50), 30 November 2022

<sup>24</sup> BBS, [Population and Housing Census 2022, National Report](#) (page 67), November 2023

Christianpara in Dhaka City, and in the cities of Gazipur and Khulna.<sup>25</sup>

- 7.2.4 The Christian Religious Welfare Trust, a Bangladeshi Christian society<sup>26</sup> on an undated website page provides a [list of Christian churches](#) which are located across Bangladesh<sup>27</sup> (The Christian Religious Welfare Trust is published in Bengali and translated by CPIT using a free online translator therefore 100% accuracy cannot be guaranteed).
- 7.2.5 Buddhistdoor Global, described as an English language online Buddhist journal<sup>28</sup>, in its article dated 7 January 2025 noted: ‘... most Buddhist devotees reside in the southern part of Bangladesh, the Theravāda monks within the different monasteries of the Chattogram division provide Buddhist ways of teaching and community guidance. There are approximately 1000 Buddhist monasteries throughout Bangladesh.’<sup>29</sup>
- 7.2.6 Buddhanet, a website affiliated with the Buddha Dharma Education Association provides a [directory of Buddhist associations](#), temples and organisations<sup>30</sup>. The website does not provide information on how often this directory is updated or how the information on Buddhist organisation is obtained.
- 7.2.7 On 14 May 2024, the Daily Star described as the largest English-language daily newspaper in Bangladesh<sup>31</sup>, published an article on the top 5 Buddhist sites in Bangladesh which noted: ‘... Although Buddhism comprises a very small percentage of the population, there are Buddhist temples and monasteries aplenty, especially due to Bengal's rich Buddhist heritage.’<sup>32</sup>
- 7.2.8 In regard to the location of Buddhist places of worship, Arab News, a Saudi Arabian English language newspaper<sup>33</sup>, reported:
- ‘... Rangkut Banasram in the forest of Cox’s Bazar is the oldest monastery in Bangladesh... Only around 1 million people profess Buddhism in Bangladesh ... Most of them live in the country’s coastal southeast where, as legend has it, Buddha had himself chosen to become a teaching center... “Around 150 Buddhist structures are situated in different parts of Cox’s Bazar district,” Mahathero [Rangkut Banasram caretaker] said.
- “There are around 50,000 Buddhists in this district area, while the district’s population is around 600,000. Buddhists were the majority of the population here 100 years ago.”’<sup>34</sup>
- 7.2.9 On 20 Feb 2024, Ei Samay, a Bengali daily newspaper<sup>35</sup>, (the Ei Samay article is published in Bangla translated by CPIT using a free online translation tool therefore 100% accuracy cannot be guaranteed) reported:
- ‘... according to the Hindu religion organization there, there are about 40,000 temples in Bangladesh. In 2011, there were 40,438 Hindu temples in

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<sup>25</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 1), 26 June 2024

<sup>26</sup> CRWT, [Mission & Vision](#), 23 September 2024

<sup>27</sup> CRWT, [Church List](#), 19 September 2015

<sup>28</sup> Buddhistdoor Global, [Mission Statement](#), no date

<sup>29</sup> Buddhistdoor Global, [Buddhism in Modern Bangladesh](#), 7 January 2025

<sup>30</sup> Buddhanet, [World Buddhist Directory](#) (Bangladesh), no date

<sup>31</sup> The Daily Star, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>32</sup> The Daily Star, [5 top Buddhist sites in Bangladesh](#), 14 May 2022

<sup>33</sup> Arab News, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>34</sup> Arab News, [Ancient monastery stands witness to Bangladesh's rich Buddhist past](#), 11 Jan 2024

<sup>35</sup> Ei Samay, [About Us](#), no date



Bangladesh, according to official statistics from the Hindu Religious Welfare Trust. ... According to one estimate, there is one temple for every 305 Hindus in Bangladesh. ... There are many old temples in different areas including Rajshahi, Jessore, Ravishal, Chittagong, Khulna. However, Dhakeshwari Temple is known as the largest temple in Bangladesh.<sup>36</sup>

- 7.2.10 For information on the location of Rohingya Muslims, migrants from Myanmar, see [Country Policy and Information Note, Myanmar: Rohingya \(including Rohingya in Bangladesh\)](#)

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## 8. Legal context

### 8.1 Constitution

- 8.1.1 The [Constitution of Bangladesh](#) outlines the following articles concerning religious freedom:

- ‘Article 2A The state religion: ‘The state religion of the Republic is Islam, but the State shall ensure equal status and equal right in the practice of the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and other religions ...
- ‘Article 12 Secularism and freedom of religion:  
The principle of secularism shall be realised by the elimination of -
  - (a) communalism in all its forms ;
  - (b) the granting by the State of political status in favour of any religion;
  - (c) the abuse of religion for political purposes ;
  - (d) any discrimination against, or persecution of, persons practicing a particular religion ...
- ‘Article 28 Discrimination on grounds of religion etc:
  - (1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
  - (2) Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life.
  - (3) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to any place of public entertainment or resort, or admission to any educational institution.
  - (4) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making special provision in favour of women or children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizens ...
- ‘Article 41 Freedom of Religion:
  - (1) Subject to law, public order and morality –
    - (a) every citizen has the right to profess, practise or propagate any religion;
    - (b) every religious community or denomination has the right to

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<sup>36</sup> Ei Samay, [How many Hindu temples are there in Bangladesh](#), 20 February 2024

establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions.

(2) No person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction, or to take part in or to attend any religious ceremony or worship, if that instruction, ceremony or worship relates to a religion other than his own.’<sup>37</sup>

- 8.1.2 In regard to the legal protections for religious minorities, on 24 August 2023 the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights published a summary of stakeholders’ submissions on Bangladesh [OHCHR 2023 report] which stated: ‘ADF [Alliance Defending Freedom International] noted that the Constitution of Bangladesh establishes secularism, prohibits discrimination based on religion, and protects freedom of association, thought, conscience, expression, and religion, but despite these constitutional guarantees, various criminal laws in Bangladesh unduly restrict the exercise of these freedoms.’<sup>38</sup>

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## 8.2 Penal code

- 8.2.1 Chapter XV of the [Bangladesh Penal Code of 1860](#) outlines the following articles for offences relating to religion:

- ‘Article 295 Injuring or defiling place of worship, with intent to insult the religion of any class:  
‘Whoever destroys, damages or defiles any place of worship, or any object held sacred by any class of persons with the intention of thereby insulting the religion of any class of persons or with the knowledge that any class of persons is likely to consider such destruction, damage or defilement as an insult to their religion, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both
- ‘Article 295A Deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs: Whoever, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of the citizens of Bangladesh, by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations insults or attempts to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of that class, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both
- ‘Article 296 Disturbing religious assembly: Whoever voluntarily causes disturbance to any assembly lawfully engaged in the performance of religious worship, or religious ceremonies, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both.
- ‘Article 297 Trespassing on burial places, etc: Whoever, with the intention of wounding the feelings of any person, or of insulting the religion of any person, or with the knowledge that the feelings of any person are likely to be wounded, or that the religion of any person is likely to be insulted thereby, commits any trespass in any place of worship or on any place of

<sup>37</sup> GoB, [The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh](#), November 1972

<sup>38</sup> OHCHR, [Summary of stakeholders’ submissions on Bangladesh](#) (paragraph 14), 24 August 2023

sempulchre, or any place set apart for the performance of funeral rites or as a depository for the remains of the dead, or offers any indignity to any human corpse, or causes disturbance to any persons assembled for the performance of funeral ceremonies, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both.

- ‘Article 298 Uttering words, etc., with deliberate intent to wound religious feelings: Whoever, with the deliberate intention of wounding the religious feelings of any person, utters any word or makes any sound in the hearing of that person or makes any gesture in the sight of that person or places any object in the sight of that person, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both.’<sup>39</sup>

#### 8.2.2 The USSD RIRF 2023 noted:

‘Under the penal code, statements or acts made with a “deliberate and malicious” intent to insult religious sentiments are subject to fines or up to two years in prison. Although the code does not further define this prohibited intent, the courts have interpreted it to include insulting the Prophet Muhammad. The criminal code allows the government to confiscate all copies of any newspaper, magazine, or other publications containing language that “creates enmity and hatred among the citizens or denigrates religious beliefs.” The law applies similar restrictions to online publications...’<sup>40</sup>

See also [Blasphemy](#)

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### 8.3 Blasphemy/religious defamation

#### 8.3.1 The USSD RIRF 2023 stated:

‘... While there is no specific blasphemy law, authorities use the penal code, as well as a section of the Information and Communication Technology Act and DSA [Digital Security Act] to charge individuals for acts perceived to be a slight to Islam. The Information and Communication Technology Act criminalizes several forms of online expression, including “obscene material,” “expression(s) likely to cause deterioration of law and order,” and “statements hurting religious sentiments.” The DSA continues to criminalize publication or broadcast of “any information that hurts religious values or sentiments.”’<sup>41</sup> The USSD RIRF 2023 did not provide statistics on the number of arrests under the DSA or indicate the frequency, however they provided specific examples see [Arrests and prosecutions for insulting Islam](#) and [State treatment: Hindus](#)

#### 8.3.2 The OHCHR 2023 report stated:

‘... JS9 [Joint submission 9 submitted by: South Asia Forum for Freedom of Religion or Belief (SAFFoRB), Mumbai, (India); Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC), Dhaka (Bangladesh)] and JS16 [Joint submission 16 submitted by: Set my people free, Gnosjö (Sweden); Jubilee

<sup>39</sup> GoB, [The Penal Code of 1860](#), 6 Oct 1860

<sup>40</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

<sup>41</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

Campaign, Virginia (United States of America); Christian freedom international, Virginia (United States of America)] raised concerns about blasphemy laws affecting religious minorities. JS16 recommended repealing anti-blasphemy laws and ensuring protection for religious minorities, including refugees. ADF and ECLJ [European Centre for Law and Justice] expressed fears about the lack of protection for Christians, calling for promoting religious tolerance, and recommended respecting religious freedoms, repealing blasphemy laws, and promoting interfaith dialogue, and religious tolerance.<sup>42</sup>

8.3.3 On 18 September 2023, the Cyber Security Act 2023 was enacted and the Digital Security Act 2018 repealed<sup>43</sup>.

8.3.4 On 8 August 2024, Amnesty International published a report on the Cyber Security Act (CSA), noting section 28 states:

‘Publication, broadcast, etc. of information in website or in any electronic format that hurts the religious values or sentiment. (1) If any person or group willingly or knowingly publishes or broadcasts or causes to publish or broadcast anything in website or any electronic format which hurts religious sentiment or values, with an intention to hurt or provoke the religious values or sentiments, then such act of the person shall be an offence. (2) If any person commits an offence under sub-section (1), he shall be punished with imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 (two) years, or with fine not exceeding Taka 5 (five) lac [£3,187<sup>44</sup>], or with both.’<sup>45</sup> The full version of the law is [available in Bengali](#).

8.3.5 The same report stated:

‘CSA similarly retains Section 28 of the [Digital Security Act] DSA verbatim which criminalises any speech that “hurts the religious values or sentiment”. The only qualifier for this broad offence remains that the act must be carried out with the knowledge of or intention to hurt or provoke religious values or sentiments. Although Section 295A of the colonial Penal Code 1860 also has a comparable offence which criminalises ‘deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings’, courts could only take cognizance of this offence if the complaint was made by order of, or under authority from, the government, or some officer empowered by the government. This procedural restriction significantly limited the number of cases that could be filed under Section 295A of the Penal Code, when compared to cases filed for hurting religious sentiments under Section 28 of the DSA and CSA.’<sup>46</sup>

8.3.6 The same Amnesty report opined:

‘The right to freedom of expression extends even to statements that are deeply offensive ...The ICCPR [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights] requires the prohibition – but not necessarily the criminalization – of only the narrow category of expression that amounts to “advocacy of... hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.” However, Section 28 does not fit within this narrow exception on incitement, which Section 31 can and should be amended to cover. It is for this reason

<sup>42</sup> OHCHR, [Summary of stakeholders' submissions on Bangladesh](#) (paragraph 14), 24 August 2023

<sup>43</sup> GoB, [Cyber Security Act 2023](#), 18 September 2023

<sup>44</sup> Xe.com, [500,000 BDT to GBP - Convert Bangladeshi Takas to British Pounds](#), 25 March 2025

<sup>45</sup> AI, [Bangladesh: Repackaging Repression...](#), 8 August 2024

<sup>46</sup> AI, [Bangladesh: Repackaging Repression...](#), 8 August 2024

that the OHCHR recommended that Section 28 be repealed in its entirety. The punishment for offences under Section 28 has been reduced from up to five years' imprisonment and/or a 1 million BDT (8,512 USD) [£6,354<sup>47</sup>], to up to two years' imprisonment and/or 500,000 BDT (4,256 USD) [£3,187<sup>48</sup>] fine. However, it continues to criminalise protected speech.<sup>49</sup>

- 8.3.7 On 1 November 2024, the Clooney Foundation for Justice TrialWatch initiative which describes its mission as exposing '... injustice, help to free those unjustly detained and promote the rule of law around the world'<sup>50</sup>, published a whitepaper alongside the Centre for Governance Studies, which it was described as '...an independent, non-profit think-tank and research organization established in Bangladesh...' <sup>51</sup> on cases under the previous Information and Communication Technology Act (ICT) of 2006 and Digital Security Act. The paper noted that cases filed under the previous Information and Communication Act, including repealed provisions, were continuing to be prosecuted<sup>52</sup>.
- 8.3.8 The Clooney Foundation for Justice TrialWatch initiative report also noted: 'The interim government has announced that these laws are under review and that the CSA, or portions of it, are likely to be repealed. Further, the interim government is reportedly categorising all pending cases under the three cyber laws as related to either "speech offences" (where filed for online speech) or "computer offences" (involving computer hacking or digital fraud etc.) and plans to withdraw speech offence related cases. The interim government has not announced when such cases will be withdrawn.'<sup>53</sup>
- 8.3.9 In regard to an update on free speech cases being withdrawn, on 29 March 2025 Bangladesh Sangbade Sangstha (BSS) News, described as '...the country's national news agency ...'<sup>54</sup> reported: 'A total of 410 cases, lodged with the Cyber ?? [sic] Tribunals in eight divisions across the country from 2019 to 2024, have been scrapped ... Of the scrapped cases under the Cyber Act, 21 are in Dhaka division, 130 in Chittagong division, 103 in Sylhet division, 53 in Khulna division, 48 in Barisal division, 40 in Rangpur division, 13 in Mymensingh division and two in Rajshahi division ... Prof Dr Asif Nazrul, the Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Adviser to the Interim Government, said the cases filed under the Cyber Act on charges of expression of opinion (speech offence) are being withdrawn ...'<sup>55</sup>
- 8.3.10 In regard to the Cyber Security Act, the interim government has brought forward the Draft Cyber Protection Ordinance 2025 to replace Cyber Security Act 2023. On 3 February 2025, Article 19 '...an international think-do organisation that propels the freedom of expression movement local and globally ...'<sup>56</sup> published an article which noted:

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<sup>47</sup> Xe.com, [1,000,000 BDT to GBP - Convert Bangladeshi Takas to British Pounds](#), 25 March 2025

<sup>48</sup> Xe.com, [500,000 BDT to GBP - Convert Bangladeshi Takas to British Pounds](#), 25 March 2025

<sup>49</sup> AI, [Bangladesh: Repackaging Repression...](#), 8 August 2024

<sup>50</sup> CFJ, [The Information and Communication Technology Act of 2006...](#), 1 November 2024

<sup>51</sup> CFJ, [The Information and Communication Technology Act of 2006...](#), 1 November 2024

<sup>52</sup> CFJ, [The Information and Communication Technology Act of 2006...](#) (page 1), 1 November 2024

<sup>53</sup> CFJ, [The Information and Communication Technology Act of 2006...](#) (page 16), 1 November 2024

<sup>54</sup> BSS News, [BSS Profile](#), no date

<sup>55</sup> BSS News, [410 cases over 'speech-based' offences under cyber laws scrapped](#), 29 March 2025

<sup>56</sup> Article 19, [About us](#), no date



‘... The draft ordinance has faced harsh criticism in Bangladesh. Journalists, lawyers, teachers, human rights defenders, and activists have severely criticised it, as the proposed law uses many terms that lack clear definitions, creating opportunities for misuse due to their vagueness and ambiguity. Members of civil society have questioned the drafting process, noting the lack of an inclusive and meaningful consultation process. Initially, the interim government allowed only three days for comments on the draft law. Amid widespread criticism, the government has uploaded an amended version of the draft ordinance on the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Division website and reopened the opportunity for comments from 22 January 2025 to 6 February 2025.

‘The newly-approved draft retains several provisions from its predecessors, which had been widely criticised for suppressing freedom of expression ...’<sup>57</sup>

- 8.3.11 In regard to the draft Cyber Security Ordinance Act restricts on freedom of religion, the same source opined:

‘Section 26 criminalises the publication of information, in any form, that intends to spread hate. This provision is inconsistent with international standards on freedom of expression, as it seeks to protect religious values or feelings rather than an individual’s right to freedom of religion. Vague terms like “hate” can be misinterpreted or exploited to suppress legitimate criticism or dissent, especially on sensitive topics like religion, where such provisions have been used disproportionately against minority groups, journalists, activists, and political opponents. In addition, by criminalising speech that “intends to spread hate,” the provision risks creating a chilling effect, where individuals refrain from discussing or critiquing religious practices, institutions, or policies out of fear of legal repercussions. This discourages open dialogue restricting people’s right to freedom of expression and may disproportionately target minority voices.’<sup>58</sup>

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## 8.4 Personal status laws

- 8.4.1 In regard to family law, the DFAT 2022 Bangladesh report stated ‘Family law (concerning marriage, divorce, inheritance and adoption) contains specific provisions for Muslims, Hindus and Christians, but the same secular courts hear cases for all religious communities. There is a separate civil family law for mixed faith families or adherents of faiths other than Islam, Hinduism or Christianity.’<sup>59</sup>
- 8.4.2 The Bertelsmann Stiftung, a German private foundation, in its Transformation Index 2024 country report on Bangladesh (BTI 2024 Bangladesh report), covering the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023 which assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 127 countries through country experts<sup>60</sup>, stated: ‘.... In Bangladesh, the judiciary system is predominantly secular and inherited from British colonial laws. Only in the two fields of marriage and property inheritance does religion play an

<sup>57</sup> Article 19, [Bangladesh: ARTICLE 19 urges consultation on Draft Cyber Protection...](#), 3 Feb 2025

<sup>58</sup> Article 19, [Bangladesh: ARTICLE 19 urges consultation on Draft Cyber Protection...](#), 3 Feb 2025

<sup>59</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Bangladesh](#) (paragraph 3.35), 30 November 2022

<sup>60</sup> BTI, [Methodology](#), no date

important role.’<sup>61</sup>

8.4.3 In regard to anti-discrimination laws, the OHCHR 2023 report noted:

‘AI [Amnesty International] noted that the long-anticipated Anti-Discrimination Bill, introduced in parliament in April 2022, remained pending. If enacted, it would outlaw discrimination on various grounds, including gender, religion, ethnicity, place of birth, caste, and occupation, and also introduce a complaints mechanism for victims of discrimination to seek remedies.’<sup>62</sup> According to the sources consulted by CPIT, the draft Anti-Discrimination Bill has still not been enacted into law.

8.4.4 In regard to family and civil law, the USSD RIRF 2023 noted:

‘Family law concerning marriage, divorce, and adoption contains separate provisions for Muslims, Hindus, and Christians. These laws are enforced in the secular courts that apply to each religion. A separate civil family law applies to mixed-faith families or those of other faiths or no faith. The family laws of the religions of the two parties concerned govern their marriage rituals and proceedings ... Hindu men may also have multiple wives, while a Christian man may marry only one woman.

‘Officially, Hindus have no options for divorce, although informal divorces do occur. Hindu women may not inherit property under family law. Divorced Hindus and Buddhists may not legally remarry, although informal remarriages that afford no legal rights and protections occur for people of these faiths. Divorced and widowed men and women of religions other than Hinduism or Buddhism may remarry. Marriage between members of different religious groups occurs only under civil law. To be legally recognized, Muslim marriages must be registered with the state by either the couple or the cleric performing the marriage; however, some Muslim marriages are not registered. Registration with the state of marriages for Hindus and Christians is optional and rare, and other faiths may determine their own guidelines.’<sup>63</sup>

8.4.5 The USSD RIRF 2023 report noted: ‘Under the Muslim family ordinance, a Muslim man may marry women of any Abrahamic faith; however, a Muslim woman may not marry a non-Muslim ...’<sup>64</sup>

8.4.6 In regard to Hindus, the same report noted:

‘In May [2023], the High Court asked the government to explain why the deprivation of Hindu women’s rights regarding divorce, guardianship, and equal property inheritance should not be considered illegal. The lawyer for the petitioners who brought the challenge to the Court said that Hindu women were being deprived of many rights despite the constitution’s guarantee of equal rights irrespective of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. Other Hindu activists and Hindu women’s groups in the country continued their campaign to reform Hindu family law to allow Hindu women greater rights.’<sup>65</sup>

8.4.7 A paper by Ahmad Nasir Mohad Yusoff and AHM Shafiquil Islam, ‘The Legal System of Bangladesh: The Duality of Secular and Islamic Laws’, published

<sup>61</sup> BTI, [BTI 2024 Country Report: Bangladesh](#) (p7), 19 March 2024

<sup>62</sup> OHCHR, [Summary of stakeholders’ submissions on Bangladesh](#) (paragraph 18), 24 August 2023

<sup>63</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

<sup>64</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

<sup>65</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

in the International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences on 23 November 2024 noted: ‘Bangladesh’s legal system operates as a dual structure, where secular laws govern public domains, and Islamic law applies mainly to personal and family issues for Muslims. This distinctive feature presents challenges in achieving consistent application across domains.’<sup>66</sup>

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## 8.5 Registration for religious groups

### 8.5.1 The USSD RIRF 2023 stated:

‘Individual houses of worship are not required to register with the government. Religious groups seeking to form associations with multiple houses of worship, however, must register as NGOs with either the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB) under the Prime Minister’s office if they receive foreign assistance for development projects, or with the Ministry of Social Welfare if they do not. The law requires the NGOAB to approve and monitor all foreign-funded projects. The NGOAB Director General has the authority to impose sanctions on NGOs for violating the law, including fines of up to three times the amount of the foreign donation, or closure of the NGO. NGOs are also subject to penalties for “derogatory” comments about the constitution or constitutional institutions (i.e., the government). Expatriate staff must receive a security clearance from the National Security Intelligence, the Special Branch of Police, and Directorate General of Forces Intelligence, but the standards for these clearances are not specified.

‘Registration requirements and procedures for religious groups are the same as for secular associations. Groups that register with the Ministry of Social Welfare must certify that the name being registered is not already taken. Groups must also provide the bylaws/constitution of the organization; confirmation of security clearances for leaders of the organization from the National Security Intelligence; minutes of the meeting appointing the executive committee; a list of all executive committee and general members and photographs of principal officers; a work plan; a copy of the deed or lease of the organization’s office and a list of property owned; a budget; and a recommendation by a local government representative. Requirements for religious groups that register with the NGOAB are similar.’<sup>67</sup>

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## 8.6 Religious conversion

### 8.6.1 The DFAT 2022 report stated: ‘There are no laws prohibiting religious conversion, but the practice is nonetheless risky because families and communities might violently object ...’<sup>68</sup>

### 8.6.2 See also [Societal treatment: Christians](#)

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## 9. Political and civic rights

### 9.1.1 In regard to minorities political participation, the USSD 2023 Human Rights

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<sup>66</sup> Yusoff, A N M, Islam, A S, [The Legal System of ...](#) (page 1,979) 23 November 2024

<sup>67</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

<sup>68</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Bangladesh](#) (paragraph 3.36), 30 November 2022



report, covering January to December 2023 noted: 'No laws limited participation of...members of minorities in the political process, and they did participate.'<sup>69</sup>

9.1.2 In relation to religious education, the USSD 2023 RIRF report stated:

'Religious studies are compulsory and part of the curriculum for grades three through 10 in all public and government-accredited schools. Private schools do not have this requirement. Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian students receive instruction in their own religious beliefs, although teachers are not always adherents of the students' faith. According to the representative of the Holy See in Bangladesh, the Catholic Church is the second largest provider of education after the government, with approximately 270 schools.'<sup>70</sup>

9.1.3 In relation to treatment of religious prisoners, the same report noted:

'The code regulating prisons allows for observance of religious commemorations by prisoners, including access to extra food on certain national and religious holidays – such as Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and Independence Day – or permission to fast for religious reasons. The law does not provide for prisoners to have regular access to clergy or regular religious services, but prison authorities may arrange special religious programs for them. Prison authorities are required to provide prisoners facing the death penalty access to a religious figure from a faith of their choice before execution.'<sup>71</sup>

9.1.4 The European Union Election Expert Mission (EU EEM) report on the January 2024 Bangladesh elections noted minorities '... These communities face numerous obstacles to full participation in political life, including fear of reprisals and the destruction of their property ...'<sup>72</sup> The report did not provide a breakdown of representatives from religious minorities or provide further detail on the obstacles faced by minorities.

9.1.5 Regarding the inclusion of religious minorities in ongoing government reform, on 24 October 2024 Prothom Alo a Bangladeshi newspaper<sup>73</sup>, reported:

'The commissions formed for reforms in six areas, including the constitution and the judiciary, are not inclusive ...there is no representation of religious and ethnic minority communities ... Raja Debashish Roy, the head of Chakma Circle, expressed his frustration on Facebook regarding the lack of representation for ethnic and religious minorities in the reform commissions.

'In a post on 13 October [2024], he wrote, "In the reform commission, representatives of tribal groups, religious minorities, women, and other marginalised or disadvantaged communities are either completely absent or significantly underrepresented. This has tarnished the image of a government led by a Nobel laureate." ... Regarding the lack of representation in the reform commissions, an advisor to the interim government told Prothom Alo that the commissions will formulate their recommendations or proposals based on input from all parties, including civil society, minority

<sup>69</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Bangladesh](#) (section 3), 22 April 2023

<sup>70</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

<sup>71</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

<sup>72</sup> EU EEM, [European Union Election Expert Mission Bangladesh...](#) (page 16), 7 Jan 2024

<sup>73</sup> Prothom Alo, [About Us](#), no date

representatives, and political groups. As a result, the government believes that the opinions of all segments of society will be reflected.<sup>74</sup>

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## 10. State attitudes

### 10.1 Government attitudes and policies

#### 10.1.1 In regard to land rights, the USSD RIRF 2023 report stated:

‘Minority rights groups again stated the government made little progress on land restitution cases during the year, although they also said that recent information for all cases was not available...

‘Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, and members of other minority religious communities, who were also sometimes members of ethnic minority groups, continued to report property and land ownership disputes and forced eviction cases, including some involving the government, that remained unresolved at year’s end. Some human rights activists said it was often difficult to determine whether these disputes and evictions were the result of deliberate government discrimination against religious minorities or of government inefficiency ...’<sup>75</sup>

#### 10.1.2 The OHCHR August 2023 report stated ‘JS9 acknowledged the government’s efforts to protect religious freedom but questioned the effectiveness of certain initiatives ...’<sup>76</sup>

#### 10.1.3 The HRDI report noted: ‘Political parties may exploit religious sentiments to rally support, which can exacerbate social divisions and promote policies that marginalise minorities.’<sup>77</sup>

#### 10.1.4 International News Agency Pressenza published the article *Is Bangladesh Living Up to Its Promise of Religious Harmony?* written by Tanim Jasim an Assistant Professor at the University of Dhaka on 12 December 2024. This noted: ‘Bangladesh always focuses on collective progress among people of all faiths. The country has implemented policies to protect minority rights, including financial support for religious and cultural activities across different communities. The interim government reiterated its position to uphold religious harmony, emphasizing that Bangladesh serves as a model for peaceful coexistence on the global stage.’<sup>78</sup>

#### 10.1.5 Pressenza noted:

‘Internationally, Bangladesh has reaffirmed its commitment to protecting minority rights at forums such as the United Nations (UN). Ambassador Tareq Md Ariful Islam emphasized that ensuring safety for every citizen—including those from minority communities—is a cornerstone of governance in Bangladesh. He noted that despite recent tensions attributed to political factors rather than sectarianism, the government remains vigilant in its efforts to maintain religious harmony.’<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Prothom Alo, [Reform commissions: Less women, no members of the...](#), 24 October 2024

<sup>75</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

<sup>76</sup> OHCHR, [Summary of stakeholders’ submissions on Bangladesh](#) (paragraph 27), 24 August 2023

<sup>77</sup> HRDI, [The Changing Religious Demography of Bangladesh](#), 10 December 2024

<sup>78</sup> Pressenza, [Is Bangladesh Living Up to Its Promise of Religious Harmony?](#), 12 December 2024

<sup>79</sup> Pressenza, [Is Bangladesh Living Up to Its Promise of Religious Harmony?](#), 12 December 2024

10.1.6 On 9 November 2024, Prothom Alo reported:

‘[Bangladesh] Army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman on Friday said people from all religions including Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians want to build a beautiful Bangladesh ... Saying that Buddhist devotees from various places of the country congregated here [the International Buddhist Monastery in Merul Badda in Dhaka], Waker-Uz-Zaman added, “We want to see you regularly observing your religious ceremonies. You will live in peace. We will do whatever we need to do. Previously, we provided security during Durga Puja and it has been celebrated beautifully. We thanked everyone concerned for this. Whatever help and cooperation you need, we will provide.”’<sup>80</sup>

10.1.7 In regard to the interim government’s attitudes towards religious minorities, on 4 December 2024 the Dhaka Tribune reported:

‘Chief Adviser Professor Dr Muhammad Yunus has said that despite differences in religion, caste, and opinion, all people in Bangladesh are part of the same family

““We are not enemies of one another despite our differences,” he made the statement during a meeting with leaders of various religious communities at the Foreign Service Academy in Dhaka on Thursday afternoon.

‘Addressing concerns about minority rights, Dr Yunus sought advice from religious leaders on gathering free and truthful information about their challenges.

‘He said: “We must ensure that information is collected safely, without causing embarrassment to those providing it.”

‘At the meeting, Dr Yunus reiterated the importance of equality, saying: “We are all members of one family, and everyone has equal rights. Those who are guilty must be held accountable for their actions.”

‘He shared his reflections on the atrocities reported against minorities, noting that when he assumed office, he visited Dhakeshwari National Temple to hear the community’s demands. “Their key demand was equality: the right to speak, the right to practice religion, and the right to work. These rights stem from our constitution, and it is the state’s duty to uphold them.” ...

‘He concluded with a vision for a better future: “We want to build a New Bangladesh—a nation that ensures equality and justice for all. This is not a matter of rhetoric. It must be done, and it must be done quickly.”

‘The meeting included leaders from Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim communities, as well as representatives from indigenous hill tribes.’<sup>81</sup>

10.1.8 By 13 August 2024, 634 out of 639 police stations had resumed operations, including all 110 metropolitan police stations and 524 out of the 529 district police stations<sup>82</sup>. Police Headquarters issued a press release on 20 September 2024 stating that mob justice would not be tolerated and offenders would be punished<sup>83 84</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> Prothom Alo, [Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, all want to build a beautiful...](#) 9 Nov 2024

<sup>81</sup> Dhaka Tribune, [Yunus to religious leaders: We are not each other's enemies](#), 4 December 2024

<sup>82</sup> Business Standard, [Major rehuffle in police high-ups](#), 13 August 2024

<sup>83</sup> Dhaka Tribune, [Police HQ: Stern actions to be taken for taking...](#), 20 September 2024

<sup>84</sup> Business Standard, [Police to take stern actions against anyone taking law...](#), 20 September 2024

- 10.1.9 In relation to the interim government's attitude towards violence against religious minorities, on 14 September 2024 the Business Standard, a news platform based in Dhaka<sup>85</sup>, reported: 'The interim government has strongly condemned the recent attacks on Sufi shrines and mazars across the country pledging strict action against those responsible.'<sup>86</sup>
- 10.1.10 On 12 March 2025, Asian News International (ANI) News, described as '...South Asia 's leading multimedia news agency...' <sup>87</sup> reported: On 18 March 2025, JusticeMakers Bangladesh in France (JMBF) [a non-profit human rights organisation '...dedicated to defending human rights ...in Bangladesh and beyond.'<sup>88</sup>] published a statement: '... strongly condemns the ongoing violence and systematic persecution of religious minorities and indigenous communities in Bangladesh during the tenure of the current interim government led by former Nobel Laureate for Peace, Professor Muhammad Yunus...' <sup>89</sup>
- 10.1.11 The OHCHR FF 2025 report noted: ' ...However, the information available to OHCHR has not shown that such incidents were orchestrated or organised by these parties' national leaderships, which also took steps to condemn violence targeting minority groups.'<sup>90</sup>
- 10.1.12 On 2 May 2025, BBC Monitoring reported:
- 'Bangladesh's High Commissioner to the UK, Abida Islam, reaffirmed the interim government's commitment to transparency, accountability, and the protection of minority rights during a meeting at the British parliament ...Speaking at the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Bangladesh on 30 April [2025], Islam said the government "welcomes international observers" to verify the alleged violent incidents against minorities ...She also underscored Bangladesh's policies guaranteeing "religious freedom and legal protection for all communities" ...'<sup>91</sup>

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## 11. State treatment

This section provides information about the situation for minority religious groups in general. Sources often refer to religious minorities collectively, but the experiences of each group may differ. Where information is available, the sections below will refer to and consider the treatment of each group discretely

### 11.1 General

#### 11.1.1 The ACN 2023 Religious Freedom Bangladesh report noted:

'Generally, the Awami League government has sought to curb Islamist influences in society and politics, which in theory increases the security of religious minorities as well as social and civic space for religious freedom ...Striking back at these efforts by the Awami League, Islamist militants have initiated a massive campaign of violent attacks targeting secular bloggers,

<sup>85</sup> Business Standard, [About Business Standard](#), no date

<sup>86</sup> Business Standard, [Govt condemns attacks on shrines, vows to take strict actions](#), 12 Sept 2024

<sup>87</sup> ANI News, [About Asian News International](#), no date

<sup>88</sup> JMBF, [About us](#), no date

<sup>89</sup> JMBF, [Press & Public Statement: JMBF Strongly Condemns the Continuous...](#), 18 March 2025

<sup>90</sup> OHCHR, [Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests...](#) (page iii), 12 Feb 2025

<sup>91</sup> BBC-M, Bangladesh reaffirms commitment to protecting minority rights, 2 May 2025

human rights activists, as well as religious minorities, particularly Hindus and Christians. While this campaign has ebbed and flowed over the last decade, it has seen an increase in viciousness and intensity in the last two years.<sup>92</sup>

11.1.2 HRDI noted: ‘Buddhists and Christian ... communities often face unique challenges in terms of socio-political representation and access to resources.’<sup>93</sup>

11.1.3 In relation to land rights HRDI also noted:

‘One of the most significant challenges is the appropriation and sale of land and properties belonging to religious minorities. This issue is often compounded by complex legal battles and bureaucratic hurdles that make it difficult for minority communities to reclaim or protect their assets. Religious minorities frequently face difficulties in proving ownership due to inadequate record-keeping or biased legal proceedings. The lack of legal safeguards and delayed justice processes contribute to the vulnerability of these communities, further deepening their socio-economic divide.’<sup>94</sup>

11.1.4 The OHCHR 2025 FF report stated: ‘...BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and Students against Discrimination leaders as well as the Chief Advisor of the Interim Government all made public statements condemning the violence.’<sup>95</sup>

11.1.5 In regard to the interim government’s measures to manage hardline Islamic groups, the January 2025 UCA News article noted:

‘...The Yunus administration has initiated reforms to establish democratic systems and processes in state bodies.

‘However, it has come under criticism for its failure to control Islamic fanaticism.

‘Radical groups, suppressed by the Hasina regime for years, are now accused of attacking religious minorities and liberal Muslims...’<sup>96</sup>

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## 11.2 Arrests and prosecutions for insulting Islam

11.2.1 The USSD RIRF 2023 stated:

‘Leaders of religious minority communities continued to say laws such as the DSA were used to target members of religious minority groups, particularly Hindus, for “hurting the religious sentiments” of Muslim populations. In almost all cases, courts took harsher measures against members of religious minorities for posting allegedly derogatory information on Facebook than against the perpetrators of retaliatory violence.’<sup>97</sup>

11.2.2 In regard to state treatment of those who publicly make ‘derogatory’ remarks about Islam or the Prophet Muhammed, on 10 May 2023, New Age, described as an English language daily based in Dhaka<sup>98</sup>, and the USSD RIRF 2023 reported in May 2023 in the Dhaka Cyber Tribunal a student of Begum Badrunnesa Govt Girls’ College was convicted and sentenced to two

<sup>92</sup> ACN, [Religious Freedom Report 2023: Bangladesh](#), June 2023

<sup>93</sup> HRDI, [The Changing Religious Demography of Bangladesh](#), 10 December 2024

<sup>94</sup> HRDI, [The Changing Religious Demography of Bangladesh](#), 10 December 2024

<sup>95</sup> OHCHR, [Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests...](#) (page 56), 12 Feb 2025

<sup>96</sup> UCA News, [Bangladeshi Sufi shrine drops devotional music over Islamist threat](#), 31 January 2025

<sup>97</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom ...](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

<sup>98</sup> New Age, [About Us](#), no date



years and seven months in prison in a case filed under the Digital Security Act following her arrest in November 2020 for allegedly making derogatory remarks against the Prophet Muhammad in a Facebook post. The student pled guilty and apologised for the post<sup>99100</sup>. Neither source states the religion of the accused, and as the DSA applies to all Bangladeshi nationals it is not clear whether it has been applied to a person from a religious minority or not.

- 11.2.3 In regard to state treatment for individuals who ‘demean’ Islam, on 23 May 2023 New Age reported:

‘A Rangpur court on Tuesday sentenced a man to 10 years in jail for demeaning Islam and its prophet through a Facebook post that led to an arson attack in a Hindu village in the Thakurpara of the district on November 10, 2017... The court also fined convicted Titu Ray Tk 50,000 [£318<sup>101</sup>] or five months in jail for default ... Titu Ray was the lone accused in one of the two cases filed in this connection, under Section 57 of the ICT Act.’<sup>102</sup>

- 11.2.4 On 24 May 2023, the Business Standard reported that Titu Ray was a Hindu youth<sup>103</sup>

- 11.2.5 In reference to the same case, the USSD RIRF 2023 report noted ‘In May [2023], a court sentenced Titu Ray to 10 years in prison for demeaning Islam and the Prophet Muhammad in a 2017 Facebook post ...’<sup>104</sup>

For more information on the Titu Ray case see [Protection](#) and [Societal treatment Hindus](#)

- 11.2.6 On 16 March 2024 the UCA News reported on the bail hearing of a man accused of hurting religious sentiments under the Cyber Security Act:

‘Two judges of the Bangladesh High Court have triggered a national debate with their suggestion that the parliament may consider introducing a law against blasphemy with a provision for capital punishment.

‘On March 12, the two-judge bench ... made the observation during the bail hearing of Selim Khan, who was accused of hurting religious sentiments.

‘The 20-year-old Muslim was accused of defaming Prophet Muhammad and Quran through a comment on Facebook last November. He was arrested and charged with hurting religious sentiments under the Cyber Security Act (CSA)...

‘... Khan was granted bail on the condition that he must pay a bank guarantee of 2.5 million taka [£15,891<sup>105</sup>].

‘The judges recited verses from the Quran in the courtroom and rebuked Khan for his derogatory remarks, saying even some of the world’s greatest scientists never raised questions about the holy book.

“The judges wanted stricter punishment for hurting religious feelings and recommended to the parliament to introduce death and life sentences,” said

<sup>99</sup> New Age, [Badrunnessa student jailed in DSA case](#), 10 May 2023

<sup>100</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

<sup>101</sup> Xe.com, [50,000 BDT to GBP - Convert Bangladeshi Takas to British Pounds](#), 25 March 2025

<sup>102</sup> New Age, [Rangpur man jailed for 10 years for defaming Islam](#), 23 May 2023

<sup>103</sup> The Business Standard, [Hindu youth gets 10 years' jail for anti-Islam comments](#), 24 May 2023

<sup>104</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

<sup>105</sup> Xe.com, [2,500,000 BDT to GBP - Convert Bangladeshi Takas to British Pounds](#), 25 March 2025

AKM Amin Uddin, deputy attorney general.’<sup>106</sup>

- 11.2.7 In regard to the same case, on 29 April 2024 FSSPX. News, described as the ‘...communication agency of the Priestly Society of St.Pius X’<sup>107</sup>, reported ‘The case, which dates back to November 2023, concerns a 20-year-old Muslim man, Selim Khan. Victim of reckless outpourings on social networks, the suspect is accused of having attacked the reputation of the founder of Islam on Facebook. Judges are now calling for the introduction of the death penalty to punish the offense of “blasphemy against Islam.”’<sup>108</sup>
- 11.2.8 Regarding the same case, on 10 June 2024 Amnesty International noted: ‘Selim Khan is an atheist blogger from Bangladesh. He was part of a private Facebook group for like-minded atheists where he expressed his views privately. Another member photographed his comment and shared it publicly, causing public agitation. A ruling party member then filed a case against him “under the newly enacted Cyber Security Act and the Penal Code”. Selim was arrested on 4 November 2023 and was refused bail repeatedly even though these were bailable offences. He was finally granted bail on 13 March 2024 but he remains in jail due to procedural delays. Selim must be released immediately and unconditionally.’<sup>109</sup> Amnesty International identify Selim as an Atheist, however other sources consulted identified Selim as a Muslim.
- 11.2.9 In the sources consulted, CPIT could not find an update on the status of Selim Khan’s detention (see [Bibliography](#)).
- 11.2.10 On 14 December 2024, a Dhaka Tribune reported: ‘On December 3, a young man named Akash Das, 20, from Monglargaon village under Dowarabazar Police Station made a derogatory post on Facebook criticising Islam. Although the post was deleted, screenshots of it circulated, sparking tension among locals. Upon receiving the information, Dowarabazar police detained Akash Das on the same day. However, a group of people attempted to snatch him from police custody.’<sup>110</sup> For information on this incident see [Protection](#) and [Societal treatment Hindus](#)
- 11.2.11 In regard to treatment of those accused of hurting religious sentiment, the OHCHR report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and Human Rights in Bangladesh published on 30 April 2024 covering the visit which occurred from 17 to 19 May 2023 noted: ‘The Special Rapporteur was informed about the arbitrary and worrying use of the Digital Security Act to arrest individuals under a wide range of offences – such as hurting religious sentiments ...’<sup>111</sup>
- 11.2.12 The Freedom House report (FH report 2024) published on 26 February 2025, covering events in 2024, produced by in-house and external analysts who used a range of sources from news articles to on-the-ground research to inform the report<sup>112</sup>. Concerning religious freedom, the FH 2024 report noted: ‘... Although religious minorities have the right to worship freely, they

<sup>106</sup> UCA News, [Proposal for blasphemy law raises eyebrows in Bangladesh](#), 16 March 2024

<sup>107</sup> FSSPX. News, [About us](#), no date

<sup>108</sup> FSSPX. News, [Bangladesh: Political Islam Asserts Itself](#), 29 April 2024

<sup>109</sup> Amnesty International, [Urgent Action: Blogger Arbitrarily Detained Despite Bail](#), 10 June 2024

<sup>110</sup> Dhaka Tribune, [4 arrested over attack on Hindu community in Sunamganj](#), 14 Dec 2024

<sup>111</sup> OHCHR, [Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty...](#) (paragraph 12), 30 April 2024

<sup>112</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World Research Methodology](#), no date

occasionally face legal repercussions for proselytizing or alleged blasphemy...<sup>113</sup> The FH 2024 report did not provide any specific examples on which religious minorities have faced legal repercussions for proselytising or blasphemy or what the legal repercussions included.

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### 11.3 Hindus

#### 11.3.1 In relation to Hindus arrested under the Digital Security Act, on 12 June 2022 the Daily Star reported on a conference “Victims of Digital Security Act and Real Culprits”:

‘Jhuman Das of Sunamganj said, “I was put behind bars for writing against Mamunul Haque [Hefazat-e Islam leader] and praising Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I received death threats in jail. I’ve become broke for fighting the legal battle. I want respite.”

‘Two other accused in DSA cases; Rasaraj Das, a fisherman from Brahmanbaria, and Joydev Sheel, a student from Patuakhali; also spoke at the discussion.

Former Supreme Court judge Justice Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik said Rasaraj studied up to class-IV and he does not know how to operate Facebook.

“How will he post a Facebook status? Like him, every other victim of the Digital Security Act was subjected to conspiracies in one way or the other. Now, policemen have become bigoted,” he told the event.

He said the law has been misused more against the people from the Hindu community. “On the other hand, Islamic clerics like Enayet Ullah Abbasi and Charmonai Pir are making anti-state and anti-religion remarks in violation of section 295 of the Penal Code and section 28 of the DSA. But no case was filed against them.”<sup>114</sup>

#### 11.3.2 In regard to violence against Hindu’s during the political unrest, the FH 2024 report stated: ‘The interim government has struggled to protect these groups... The interim government claimed most of this violence was politically motivated, rather than communal. Hindu groups held large rallies calling for more protection from the interim government.’<sup>115</sup>

#### 11.3.3 The USSD 2023 RIRF report noted:

‘... in February [2023], a judge sentenced Poritosh Sarkar, a Hindu teen, to five years in prison in a DSA case filed against him for a social media post he made in 2021 that police said sparked communal violence in Rangpur district. He was charged under the provision in the DSA that criminalizes publication of anything that “creates enmity, hatred or hostility among different classes or communities of the society or destroys communal harmony.” Local Muslims filed the case saying he made a derogatory social media post that hurt religious sentiment. In response to the post, a local mob set fire to a fishing village, razing homes inhabited by Hindus. Authorities kept the teen in solitary confinement for eight months of pretrial detention, although there is no provision in the criminal code to do so, before releasing

<sup>113</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2025: Bangladesh](#) (section D2), 26 Feb 2025

<sup>114</sup> The Daily Star, [“Relieve us of this nightmare”: Plead those accused in DSA cases](#), 12 June 2022

<sup>115</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2025: Bangladesh](#) (section D2), 26 Feb 2025



him in 2022 after his third request for bail. Prison authorities told the teen's family he was being kept in solitary confinement "for his safety." <sup>116</sup>

- 11.3.4 In regard to the same case of Poritosh Sarkar, on 9 February 2023, the Daily Star reported:

'A Hindu teenager was convicted yesterday under the Digital Security Act in a case filed after the violence that left an entire Hindu fishing village burned to the ground in Rangpur's Pirganj in October 2021.

'Poritosh Sarkar, who was a 10th grader [15/16 years old] at the time, was sentenced to five years in prison for "hurting the religious sentiments" through a derogatory social media post.

'However, as of now, no evidence has been found that Poritosh had made any such derogatory post as his phone was broken beyond repair and the Criminal Investigation Department of police was unable to conduct forensic tests on it ...

'Poritosh was put into solitary confinement for eight months while he underwent trial ... Poritosh was denied bail three times by the Rangpur Cyber Tribunal. He was finally released on bail on May 9, 2022, after a High Court order was issued in this regard. But on February 5, Judge Abdul Mojib sent him to jail again to await the verdict ... <sup>117</sup>

- 11.3.5 In relation to the case of Poritosh Sarkar, on 30 May 2024 New Age reported:

'The High Court on Thursday scrapped a lower court verdict that jailed Paritosh Sarkar, a resident of Pirganj in Rangpur, for five years on charge of hurting Muslim religious sentiments.

'The bench of Justice Md Ashraful Kamal also acquitted 21-year-old Paritosh, of the charge as the prosecution failed to prove charges in the case filed against him under the Digital Security Act 2018 on the allegation of hurting the religious sentiments...

'The High Court observed that law enforcers had filed the DSA to cover up their failure to protect houses of the Hindi people ... <sup>118</sup> For more information on police protection of Hindus see [Protection](#)

- 11.3.6 The US Commission on International Freedom Annual Report '...assesses religious freedom violations and progress in 28 countries during calendar year 2024 ... <sup>119</sup> published 25 March 2025 reported:

'... In November [2024], police charged a Hindu priest, Chinmoy Krishna Das, with sedition charges for denigrating Bangladesh's flag while demonstrating for the protection of Hindus. The arrest sparked clashes between thousands of Das's supporters and police, resulting in the death of a Muslim lawyer. The same month, an estimated 30,000 Hindus gathered demanding government protection from attacks and harassment. <sup>120</sup>

- 11.3.7 In relation to the Chinmoy Krishna Das case, on 5 May 2025 ANI News

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<sup>116</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

<sup>117</sup> The Daily Star, [DSA Case: Poritosh gets 5 years in jail](#), 9 February 2023

<sup>118</sup> New Age, [HC scraps Paritosh Sarkar's 5-year jail for hurting religious sentiment](#), 30 May 2024

<sup>119</sup> USCIRF, [2025 USCIRF Annual Report](#) (page 2), 25 March 2025

<sup>120</sup> USCIRF, [2025 USCIRF Annual Report](#) (page 76), 25 March 2025

reported:

‘Chinmoy Krishna Das, spokesperson of the Bangladesh Sanatani Jagran Jote and a former ISKCON leader, has been accused of insulting the national flag of Bangladesh and is facing sedition charges.

“There is no specific allegation against him for flag dishonour. We argued with all documents in favour of him, and the court was satisfied and granted bail ...we hope he will be freed within a week from Chittagong Central Jail ...The government is trying to stay in [sic] [the] order ...But there is no sign of his speech or motivation or anything against Chinmoy Prabhu of sedition. Still, after seven months, there is no police investigation report”, he [Chinmoy’s lawyer Apurba Kumar Bhattacharjee] said.’<sup>121</sup>

- 11.3.8 The same article reported following being granted bail, Chinmoy was arrested on four additional charges: “A judge in Chittagong has shown arrested Chinmoy Krishna Das in four cases in connection with the murder of lawyer Saiful Islam Alif”, Ashraf Hossain Razzak, General Secretary of Chittagong Bar Association, told ANI over the phone.

On November 26 [2024], Saiful Islam Alif, a lawyer practicing at the Chittagong Court, [was] fatally attacked with sharp weapons by unidentified assailants during a protest demanding the release of Chinmoy Krishna Das.’<sup>122</sup>

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## 11.4 Buddhists

- 11.4.1 HRDI noted 'The Buddhist community, primarily concentrated in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, has historically faced issues related to land rights and cultural preservation.’<sup>123</sup>
- 11.4.2 In regard to state reaction to the cancellation of a Buddhist festival in the Chittagong Hill, on 9 October 2024, Buddhistdoor Global, described as an English language online Buddhist journal<sup>124</sup>, reported Concerned by the monks’ decision, the deputy commissioner of Rangamati District, Mosharraf Hossain Khan, convened a meeting on 7 October, urging them to reconsider, stating that the law-and-order situation in the CHT had returned to normal ...’<sup>125</sup> For more information see [Societal treatment: Buddhists](#)
- 11.4.3 In the sources consulted, CPIT could not find any more recent reports on state treatment of Buddhists (see [Bibliography](#)).

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## 11.5 Christians

- 11.5.1 The USSD RIRF 2023 report noted:

‘Construction of an evangelical Christian church in Tangail District had not resumed, after it was halted by local ruling party officials in 2022. A local source reported that government officials did not respond to requests for assistance, that construction materials at the work site were stolen, and that

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<sup>121</sup> ANI News, [Bangladesh: Hindu priest Chinmoy Krishna Das...](#), 5 May 2025

<sup>122</sup> ANI News, [Bangladesh: Hindu priest Chinmoy Krishna Das...](#), 5 May 2025

<sup>123</sup> HRDI, [The Changing Religious Demography of Bangladesh](#), 10 December 2024

<sup>124</sup> Buddhistdoor Global, [Mission Statement](#), no date

<sup>125</sup> Buddhistdoor Global, [Indigenous Buddhists in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts...](#), 9 Oct 2024

the local Muslim community warned the Christians not to resume construction. The small Christian community there remained without a church.<sup>126</sup>

- 11.5.2 The same report stated: 'According to international media, Patrick D'Rozario, Archbishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Dhaka, said in June [2023] that the Christian minority in the country was supported by the government which "took a decisive stance in defense" of the Christian community.'<sup>127</sup>
- 11.5.3 In the sources consulted CPIT could not find any further reports on state treatment of Christians (see [Bibliography](#)).

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## 11.6 Atheists

- 11.6.1 In sources consulted there was limited recent information on the treatment of atheists by the state (see [Bibliography](#)).
- 11.6.2 For information on Selim Khan, who was accused of hurting religious sentiments and was reported by sources as both a Muslim and an atheist, see [Arrests and prosecutions for insulting Islam](#).

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## 11.7 Ahmadis

- 11.7.1 In the sources consulted there was no information of the state actively targeting Ahmadis (see [Bibliography](#)).
- 11.7.2 For information of state inaction against societal violence aimed at Ahmadis see [Protection](#).

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## 11.8 Protection

- 11.8.1 For general information about the criminal justice system, see the Country Policy and Information Note: Actors of protection.
- 11.8.2 In regard to state protection around major religious events the DFAT 2022 report noted: '...The state sometimes provides armed security at churches, especially around sensitive dates like Easter and Christmas...'<sup>128</sup>
- 11.8.3 In regard to state action taken to prevent violence against religious minorities, the USSD RIRF 2023 report stated: 'The government continued to deploy law enforcement personnel at other religious sites, festivals, and events considered potential targets for violence, including during Durga Puja, Diwali, Christmas, Easter, and the Buddhist festival of Buddha Purnima.'<sup>129</sup>
- 11.8.4 In regard to state inaction against societal violence aimed at Ahmadis, the USSD RIRF 2023 report noted:
- 'On March 3-4 [2023], according to media reports and Ahmadi Muslim leaders, law enforcement and government officials stood by as hundreds of persons attacked the Ahmadi community during its annual convention in Ahmednagar, Panchagarh District ... The government said the Border Guard

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<sup>126</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (Section II), 26 June 2024

<sup>127</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

<sup>128</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Bangladesh](#) (paragraph 3.58), 30 November 2022

<sup>129</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

Bangladesh and the Rapid Action Battalion responded to quell the violence but were overwhelmed by the crowds. Ahmadi leaders said, however, that the district administration and police let the attack happen, with police and other security forces present but reluctant to come to victims' aid despite promises to protect the Ahmadis from what authorities termed Islamist extremists.

'The attack continued for hours, according to media reports, and only subsided when the Ahmadi Muslim convention was postponed. Police filed cases against more than 8,000 individuals and arrested more than 80 others, according to the district police superintendent on March 7. A police leader told the media that the violence against the Ahmadis was "pre-planned." By May, police said 260 individuals had been arrested in connection with the violence, including those who initiated the incident, who were identified using video and closed-circuit television footage and intelligence sources. On March 15, local authorities distributed 10,000,000 taka (\$88,500) [£63,673<sup>130</sup>] in humanitarian aid to the affected Ahmadi Muslim families, provided by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. On May 24, a visiting international team from the IHRC met with local officials and Ahmadi leaders.'<sup>131</sup>

- 11.8.5 In relation to the same incident, the OHCHR 2025 FF report stated: '... OHCHR is not aware of any steps taken by the authorities to ensure accountability for these incidents, including for the killing of the boy.'<sup>132</sup> For more information on this case see [Societal treatment: Ahmadis](#)
- 11.8.6 On 12 August 2024 Open Doors described as a Christian charity which supports 'persecuted Christians' around the world<sup>133</sup>, and according to its website '...the sources of our information are almost always based on direct eyewitness accounts from our contacts...'<sup>134</sup>) opined: '...The lack of police protection is adding to their [Christians] vulnerability...'<sup>135</sup>
- 11.8.7 The HRDI report noted: 'While Bangladesh's constitution guarantees freedom of religion, the reality for religious minorities often differs. Legal challenges related to the protection of minority rights are compounded by inconsistent enforcement of laws and the political environment that sometimes fosters division rather than unity. The fear of potential backlash or threats discourages many from pursuing justice or speaking out against discrimination ...'<sup>136</sup>
- 11.8.8 On 3 December 2024, Voice of America (VoA) published the results from a poll conducted by Org-Quest Research (a research and consultancy firm based in Dhaka<sup>137</sup>) in late October 2024 on a random sample of 1000 respondents which found that 64.1% believed the interim government was doing a better job providing security for ethnic and religious minority groups and 63.2% believed the government was doing a better job maintaining law

<sup>130</sup> Xe.com, [10,000,000 BDT to GBP - Convert Bangladeshi Takas to British Pounds](#), 25 March 2025

<sup>131</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

<sup>132</sup> OHCHR, [Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests...](#) (page 56), 12 Feb 2025

<sup>133</sup> Open Doors, [About](#), no date

<sup>134</sup> Open Doors, [FAQs](#), no date

<sup>135</sup> Open Doors, [Rising number of converts targeted ...](#), 12 August 2024

<sup>136</sup> HRDI, [The Changing Religious Demography of Bangladesh](#), 10 December 2024

<sup>137</sup> OrQuest, [Overview & Guiding Principle](#), no date

and order<sup>138</sup>

- 11.8.9 In regard to law enforcement prosecuting individuals for attacks on Hindus, the USSD 2023 report highlighted a specific case: ‘In March [2024], a court sentenced 13 persons to four years in prison each for setting fire to a Hindu temple in 2016. According to the case statements, vandals burned the temple after a rumor spread of an allegedly derogatory Facebook post on Islam.’<sup>139</sup>
- 11.8.10 In reference to the Titu Ray case, the USSD RIRF 2023 report stated: ‘...The post sparked vandalism and arson of several houses and temples in a Hindu village, and conflict between rioters and police, in which one rioter was killed and 20 persons, including 15 police, were injured. No charges were filed against those who participated in the violence. Ray’s attorney said he would appeal.’<sup>140</sup> For more information on the Titu Ray case see [Arrests and prosecutions for insulting Islam](#)
- 11.8.11 The same report noted:
- ‘Hindu leaders continued to criticize the government for failing to adequately punish the perpetrators of anti-Hindu communal violence during Durga Puja celebrations in 2021. They noted, however, that the government took steps such as deploying additional law enforcement resources and organizing interreligious dialogue workshops to encourage religious harmony ahead of the 2023 Durga Puja celebrations in October. There were no reports of communal violence during those celebrations. By year’s end, police had completed their investigation into 141 of the 142 cases opened following the 2021 violence. Hindu leaders said they did not expect all the temples destroyed in that violence to be fully reconstructed.’<sup>141</sup>
- 11.8.12 On 2 December 2024, the UK Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs in a response to an urgent parliamentary question on attacks on the Hindu community in Bangladesh stated ‘...On the Hindu community in Bangladesh specifically, I was given assurances by the interim Government in Bangladesh that support was available for minority communities in Bangladesh in the lead up to Durga Puja—a national festival. We were pleased to see the establishment of a special policing unit, which was active in protecting mandaps—the Hindu worship sites ...’<sup>142</sup>
- 11.8.13 In relation to the Akash Das case and the violence perpetuated against local Hindus, the December 2024 Dhaka Tribune article stated:
- ‘Police have arrested four individuals in connection with the attack and vandalism targeting houses, shops, and a temple belonging to the Hindu community in Dowarabazar upazila of Sunamgani... Police have stated that they are conducting an in-depth investigation to identify those involved in the incident. Following the investigation, a case has been filed against 12 named suspects and 150–170 unidentified individuals for their alleged involvement.’<sup>143</sup> For more information on this case see [Arrests and](#)

<sup>138</sup> VoA, [Survey: 4 months after uprising, most Bangladeshis want new elections](#), 2 December 2024

<sup>139</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (Section II), 26 June 2024

<sup>140</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section II), 26 June 2024

<sup>141</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (Section II), 26 June 2024

<sup>142</sup> UK Parliament, [Bangladesh: Attacks on Hindu Community](#), 2 December 2024

<sup>143</sup> Dhaka Tribune, [4 arrested over attack on Hindu community in Sunamganj](#), 14 December 2024



[prosecutions for insulting Islam.](#)

11.8.14 In regard to the Poritosh Sarkar case, the USSD 2023 RIRF report noted: 'Police arrested 74 persons following the 2021 arson and communal violence in Rangpur, but all were released on bail at various times during 2023 and none were convicted.'<sup>144</sup> For more information on this case see [State treatment: Hindus](#)

11.8.15 In relation to sentencing and release of those who have incited violence against Atheists, on 27 August 2024 the Print, an Indian news platform<sup>145</sup> reported Jashimuddin Rahmani, chief of the Islamist extremist group Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) who had been convicted and sentenced to 5 years in jail for abetting the murder of atheist blogger Bajib Haider in 2013 was released in August 2024 under the interim government. In addition, Rahmani was pending trial under terrorism and murder in 5 other cases<sup>146</sup>.

11.8.16 The same article noted: 'Rahmani's ABT had taken responsibility for the murders of several bloggers and writers, such as Avijit Roy, Oyasiquir Rahman Babu, Ananta Bijoy Das, and AKM Shafiul Islam, a professor of Rajshahi University between 2013 and 2016.'<sup>147</sup>

11.8.17 In regard to the police response of attacks on a Sufi shrine, on 12 September 2024 the Dhaka Tribune reported:

'He [Firoz Mia, caretaker of the Hazrat Shah Paran Shrine in Sylhet] said that the police were present during the attack, but the incidents still occurred in their presence. "We have filed a case. More police have been deployed to the shrine, but it pains us that this is the first time an attack has happened at the shrine and devotees were beaten."...

'Additional Inspector General (AIG) Inamul Haque Sagar said: "The police headquarters had already instructed the police to take a strong stance to prevent such attacks. Those involved in the attacks will be identified and dealt with."

'However, he could not provide the total number of attacks, the number of cases filed, or how many people have been arrested across the country.'<sup>148</sup>

For more information see [Societal treatment: Sufis](#)

11.8.18 In regard to police response to threats against a Sufi shrine, on 31 January 2025 UCA News stated: '...District police superintendent Kazi Akhtar UI Alam said the shrine was asked to refrain from "having songs and dance."

"This is a precautionary measure" to avoid possible violence from hard-line groups, he told UCA News...' <sup>149</sup> For more information on this incident see [Societal treatment Sufis](#)

11.8.19 On 22 March 2025, East Asia Forum, described as a '...platform dedicated to publishing accessible analysis on Asia ...'<sup>150</sup> reported:

'The collapse of the Hasina regime in August 2024 marked a significant shift

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<sup>144</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

<sup>145</sup> The Print, [About](#), no date

<sup>146</sup> The Print, [Who is Jashimuddin Rahmani, pro-al-Qaeda chief...](#), 27 August 2024

<sup>147</sup> The Print, [Who is Jashimuddin Rahmani, pro-al-Qaeda chief...](#), 27 August 2024

<sup>148</sup> Dhaka Tribune, [Why attacks on shrines remain rampant in Bangladesh?](#), 15 September 2024

<sup>149</sup> UCA News, [Bangladeshi Sufi shrine drops devotional music over Islamist threat](#), 31 January 2025

<sup>150</sup> EAF, [About](#), no date

in Bangladesh's political landscape. Despite fears of widespread violence ... Minorities were not specifically targeted on the basis of religious identity, though some faced retaliation due to their political affiliations ...

Under former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's leadership, the Awami League (AL) frequently exploited pro-Hindu sentiments to garner support from India while failing to address the systemic issues faced by minorities in Bangladesh. Over [3600 attacks on minorities](#) were reported between 2013 and 2021 during Hasina's tenure, yet none resulted in completed judicial trials, raising questions about the sincerity of her commitment to minority protection... The fall of the Hasina government following the violent student-led revolution in August 2024 ... saw accusations that Hindu mass protests were orchestrated by the AL ...<sup>151</sup>

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## 12. Societal treatment and inter-religious relations

This section provides information the situation for minority religious groups in general. Sources often refer to religious minorities collectively, but the experiences of each group may differ. Where information is available, the sections below will refer to and consider the treatment of each group discretely.

### 12.1 General

#### 12.1.1 The USSD RIRF 2023 report noted:

'Human rights organizations and religious leaders continued to say that social media contributed to religious polarization and an increase in attacks on religious minorities. In March [2023], a member of the Ahmadi community said that a series of posts on the BasherKella social media account, widely considered by observers to be pro-Jamaat-e-Islami, condemned police efforts to stop anti-Ahmadi violence at the Ahmadi convention in Ahmednagar. The social media posts left the Ahmadi community "shocked and bewildered." Members of the community accused those who posted on BasherKella of using the platform to instigate further attacks against them.

'Hindu leaders noted social media was increasingly used to target Hindu communities. BHBCUC General Secretary Rana Dasgupta stated that many of the instances of violence against Hindu communities following social media posts that were allegedly derogatory toward Islam were instigated deliberately. He said that in many cases, "miscreants" opened Facebook accounts in the name of poor people from the Hindu community to spread propaganda. They then spurred attacks on the houses of Hindu community members using the pretext that the social media post hurt religious sentiment.'<sup>152</sup>

#### 12.1.2 The USSD 2023 Bangladesh report stated: 'Societal pressures limited freedom of expression. Atheist, secular, religious minority ...writers and bloggers reported they continued to receive death threats from extremist organizations.'<sup>153</sup>

#### 12.1.3 The FH 2024 report stated: 'Open discussion of sensitive religious issues is

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<sup>151</sup> EAF, [Minorities in Bangladesh caught within political upheaval](#), 22 March 2025

<sup>152</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom ...](#) (section 3), 26 June 2024

<sup>153</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 22 April 2024

constrained by fears of harassment and violence from religious fundamentalists. Religious fundamentalists have retaliated against those who publicly discuss LGBT+ rights, atheism, or criticism of Islamist movements.<sup>154</sup> The previous FH 2023 report contained the same statement<sup>155</sup>

- 12.1.4 The same FH 2024 report noted: ‘...Those with secular or nonconformist views can face societal opprobrium and attacks from hardline Islamist groups. Members of minority groups—including Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, and Shiite and Ahmadiyya Muslims—face harassment and violence, including occasional mob violence against their houses of worship. Violence against religious minorities has been deliberately provoked on social media.’<sup>156</sup>
- 12.1.5 The same report noted: ‘... Pressure and intimidation from Islamist groups also limited NGO activities on some issues such as ... protection for religious minorities ...’<sup>157</sup>
- 12.1.6 The BTI 2024 Bangladesh report reported:  
‘Incidents of repression against ethnic and religious minorities have increased significantly. Between 2008 and 2021, there have been 4,007 incidents of repression against religious and sectarian minorities, mostly against Hindu, Christian, Ahmadi, and Buddhist groups. The attacks on religious minorities have also coincided with land seizures. In July 2022, a group led by a local AL leader attacked a temple in Tangail and vandalized three effigies.’<sup>158</sup> The BTI report did not provide any specific examples in reference to the incidents of repression against religious minorities over the 14 year period to enable an understanding of the type of treatment encountered.
- 12.1.7 A 12 August 2024 Open Doors article stated ‘A rising number of Christian converts and other religious minorities in Bangladesh are being targeted by radical groups in the wake of ongoing political and social unrest ...’<sup>159</sup>
- 12.1.8 HRDI noted:  
‘Attacks on temples, churches, and other places of worship have occurred, fueled by religious extremism and political factors. While such violence is not ubiquitous, it remains a concern for many minority communities ... Religious intolerance can manifest through violent acts such as mob attacks, desecration of religious sites, and targeted harassment. Such incidents are often reported as sporadic, yet their cumulative impact can be significant, contributing to a climate where minorities feel vulnerable and threatened.  
‘...Beyond economic and physical threats, religious minorities often face cultural and social exclusion. This can take the form of discrimination in daily interactions, negative stereotypes perpetuated by media and public discourse, and limited representation in national narratives. The invisibility of minority voices in mainstream cultural and political discussions further isolates these communities, making them feel marginalized. Celebrating their

<sup>154</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2025: Bangladesh](#) (section D4), 26 Feb 2025

<sup>155</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024: Bangladesh](#) (section D4), Feb 2024

<sup>156</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2025: Bangladesh](#) (section E2), 26 Feb 2025

<sup>157</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2025: Bangladesh](#) (section E2), 26 Feb 2025

<sup>158</sup> BTI, [BTI 2024 Country Report: Bangladesh](#) (page 16), 19 March 2024

<sup>159</sup> Open Doors, [Rising number of converts targeted ...](#), 12 August 2024



festivals and traditions can be met with indifference or hostility, reinforcing feelings of exclusion.<sup>160</sup>

12.1.9 The OHCHR 2025 FF report observed:

'[Religious minority] ... communities and groups have been subject to structural and ingrained social discrimination, grounded also in historical events and a constitutional framework that, despite prohibitions of discrimination, emphasises the Bengali and Islamic identity of the country. Especially in times of political upheaval, these groups have been the subject of scapegoating and hate crimes. Their genuine concerns have often been the subject of misinformation, distortion and manipulation for broader national and regional political ends not related to their own plight.'<sup>161</sup>

12.1.10 The same report also stated:

'In early August 2024, as the former Government was increasingly losing control of the country, crowds engaged in retaliatory killings and other serious revenge violence targeting, in particular, Awami League officials and real or perceived supporters of the Awami League, the police and the media seen as supportive of the Awami League. During and after the protests, members of the Hindu community, Ahmadiyya Muslims and indigenous groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, were also subject to violent attacks by mobs, including burning of homes and some attacks on places of worship. Different and often intersecting motives drove these attacks, ranging from religious and ethnic discrimination to perceived opportunities for revenge against Awami League supporters among minorities, local communal disputes, including about land, and interpersonal issues. Some Jamaat-e-Islami and BNP supporters, members and local leaders were also involved in revenge violence and attacks on distinct religious and indigenous groups.'<sup>162</sup>

12.1.11 In regard to the motivation behind attacks on religious minorities during the recent political unrest, the same report stated:

'During the protests and in their aftermath, human rights abuses were inflicted on some members of Bangladesh's Hindu, Ahmadiyya Muslim and indigenous communities. The majority of cases concern vandalising, looting and burning of homes and business, but there were also attacks on religious places, aggravated physical assaults and at least one killing. The perpetrators acted with different and often overlapping motives, including political revenge against Awami League supporters among minorities, religious and ethnic discrimination, settlement of personal disputes, and localized communal conflict. While some members, supporters and local leaders of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami took part in some of the abuses that occurred, the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami leadership condemned this violence. OHCHR found no information showing that such human rights abuses were orchestrated at a national leadership level.'<sup>163</sup>

12.1.12 The same report noted:

'There has been a longer record of attacks on places of worship, especially temples and shrines, in Bangladesh. In terms of the period under

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<sup>160</sup> HRDI, [The Changing Religious Demography of Bangladesh](#), 10 December 2024

<sup>161</sup> OHCHR, [Human Rights Violations and Abuses ...](#) (paragraph 228), 12 February 2025

<sup>162</sup> OHCHR, [Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests...](#) (page iii), 12 Feb 2025

<sup>163</sup> OHCHR, [Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests...](#) (page 68), 12 Feb 2025

consideration in this report, between 5 and 15 August [2024], media and other local sources reported attacks on places of worship associated with Hindu, Ahmadiyya, Buddhist and Christian communities across several regions. According to information submitted to OHCHR, in Burashardubi, Hatibandha, Lalmonirhat three temples were attacked and set ablaze, along with the looting of approximately 20 houses, reflecting significant levels of community unrest. There was also an arson attack in Meherpur on a temple of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). Specific incidents reported to OHCHR also underlined the complexities surrounding these attacks. For example, the Kali temple in Nandipara was attacked on August 7 [2024], but, upon investigation, it became clear that the damage stemmed not from religious intolerance, but rather a local dispute over land ownership.<sup>164</sup>

12.1.13 On 30 October 2024 Netra News, an online independent news platform on Bangladesh<sup>165</sup>, article reported:

‘In a far-reaching report released on 19th September [2024], the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council said the killings of nine Hindu men were part of a wave of anti-Hindu “communal atrocities” raging through the nation following Sheikh Hasina’s ouster six weeks earlier.

‘But an investigation by Netra News found none of the deaths bore clear signs of religious or sectarian motives. Instead, seven of the fatalities resulted from a mix of political retribution, mob violence, and criminal homicides. In some instances, the Unity Council’s assertions were undercut by the very news reports they cited and by their own grassroots officials.

‘Netra News has drawn its assessment from over two dozen first-hand interviews—including conversations with witnesses, family members and associates of the deceased, local journalists, public officials, and even regional Unity Council members—as well as official records, social media posts, previously unpublished media interviews, and numerous press accounts.’<sup>166</sup> See also [Statistics on violence against religious minorities](#)

12.1.14 In regard to violence post August 2024, on 11 December 2024 the New Indian Express, an Indian newspaper<sup>167</sup> reported:

“The number of cases and arrests is likely to increase as new incidents of violence have been reported in Sunamganj, Gazipur, and other areas,” Alam [press secretary of interim government] stated, according to PTI.

‘Authorities believe that not all attacks were faith-based. Alam suggested that some victims were members or affiliates of Sheikh Hasina’s former ruling party, the Awami League, and may have been targeted due to political affiliations or personal disputes.

“Some attacks targeted individuals who were former members of the ruling party or were the result of personal disputes. Nevertheless, since violence occurred, the police are taking appropriate action,” he said... the Bangladeshi government has maintained that many incidents were not driven by religious intolerance... Alam also disclosed that details of incidents

<sup>164</sup> OHCHR, [Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests...](#) (page 57), 12 Feb 2025

<sup>165</sup> Netra News, [About](#), no date

<sup>166</sup> Netra News, [Claims of sectarian motives in nine Hindu deaths falter under scrutiny](#), 30 Oct 2024

<sup>167</sup> The New Indian Express, [About Us](#), no date

occurring after October 22 [2024] will be shared in a subsequent report, hinting at the possibility of additional cases coming to light.’<sup>168</sup>

12.1.15 The South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), described as ‘... the largest website on terrorism and low intensity warfare in South Asia, and creates the database and analytic context for research and analysis of all extremist movements in the region...’<sup>169</sup>, Bangladesh assessment covering 2024 reported: ‘Minorities have been subjected to lynching, arrest, robbery, desecration of their temples, land grabbing, etc. The affected Districts were Kishoreganj, Netrokona, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar in the east; Mymensingh, Rangpur, Kurigram, Dinajpur in the north; Khulna, Patuakhali and Lakshmipur in the south; Rajshahi in the west; and Rangamati in the CHT, among others ...’<sup>170</sup> The SATP Bangladesh assessment did not provide specific examples of violations towards religious minorities.

12.1.16 The ANI March 2025 article stated: ‘The Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, the largest minority group in Bangladesh, claimed on Wednesday that violence against religious and ethnic minorities, as well as indigenous peoples, continues unabated ...’<sup>171</sup>

12.1.17 On 30 January 2025, the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC) published a report on ‘Communal Atrocities committed upon the Religious-Ethnic Minorities in Bangladesh’ (BHBCUC 2025 report), based on various newspaper reports, noted in regard to cases of violence against religious minorities:

‘... As of that date [10 December 2024], 70 individuals had been arrested in connection with 88 cases... on January 11, 2025, the Chief Adviser’s Press Wing, citing police investigations, confirmed that out of the 2,010 reported incidents, 1,769 cases of attacks and vandalism were verified. Among them, 1,415 incidents had been investigated, with 354 still under review. Based on these findings, 62 cases were filed, 951 general diaries (GD) recorded, and 35 perpetrators arrested. The Press Wing further reported that of the 1,769 incidents, 1,234 were politically motivated and 20 were purely communal in nature.’<sup>172</sup> See also [Statistics on violence against religious minorities](#)

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## 12.2 Statistics on violence against religious minorities

12.2.1 Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), described as ‘... a national legal aid and human rights organisation, provides legal and social support to the disempowered, particularly women, working children and workers ...’<sup>173</sup> quarterly and annually documents violence against religious minorities based on public news reports. The table below outlines reported violations against Hindus between January 2022 and February 2025<sup>174 175 176 177</sup> (Table by CPIT):

<sup>168</sup> The New Indian Express, [Bangladesh acknowledges attacks on minorities...](#), 11 December 2024

<sup>169</sup> SATP, [About us](#), no date

<sup>170</sup> SATP, [Bangladesh: Assessment- 2025](#), no date

<sup>171</sup> ANI News, [Violence against minorities continues in Bangladesh, says Minority group](#), 12 Mar 2025

<sup>172</sup> BHBCUC, [Report on Communal Atrocities committed upon...](#) (page 4), 30 Jan 2025

<sup>173</sup> ASK, [About us](#), no date

<sup>174</sup> ASK, [Violence against Religious Minorities Jan-Dec 2022](#), 3 January 2023

<sup>175</sup> ASK, [Violence against Religious Minorities Jan-Dec 2023](#), 8 January 2024

<sup>176</sup> ASK, [Violence against Religious Minorities Jan-Dec 2024](#), 31 December 2024

<sup>177</sup> ASK, [Violence against Religious Minorities Jan-Feb 2025](#), 11 March 2025

	2022	2023	2024	2025 (Jan – Feb)
Incident	12	21	127	3
Attack on house	3	5	230	-
Arson on house	1	-	14	-
Attack on business	8	1	108	1
Arson on business	-	-	1	-
Attack on temple/monastery	4	11	26	2
Arson on temple/monastery	3	1	4	-
Attack on statue	11	43	92	13
Land grab	-	-	5	-
Injured	5	19	58	4
Dead	-	-	3	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>668</b>	<b>23</b>

12.2.2 ASK's reports on violations against religious minorities reported 2 violations against Buddhists between January 2022 and February 2025 which were labelled as 1 incident and 1 incident of a temple, monastery or statue being set on fire<sup>178179180181</sup>

12.2.3 The table below outlines ASK'S reports on violations against religious minorities including violations against Ahmadis between 2022 and February 2025<sup>182183184185</sup> (Table by CPIT):

	2022	2023	2024	2025 (Jan – Feb)
Incident	0	1	6	0
Attack on house	0	103	156	0
Arson on house	0	0	0	0
Attack on business	0	4	0	0
Arson on business	0	29	0	0
Attack on temple/monastery	0	0	6	0
Arson on temple/monastery	0	1	0	0
Attack on statue	0	0	0	0
Land grab	0	0	0	0
Injured	0	62	22	0
Dead	0	1	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>0</b>

12.2.4 ASK's report on violations against religious minorities reported 27 violations against Christians between January 2022 and February 2025 which occurred between January and December 2024 and included: 8 incidents, 10 attacks on houses, 5 arson attacks on houses, 2 attacks on businesses, 1

<sup>178</sup> ASK, [Violence against Religious Minorities Jan-Dec 2022](#), 3 January 2023

<sup>179</sup> ASK, [Violence against Religious Minorities Jan-Dec 2023](#), 8 January 2024

<sup>180</sup> ASK, [Violence against Religious Minorities Jan-Dec 2024](#), 31 December 2024

<sup>181</sup> ASK, [Violence against Religious Minorities Jan-Feb 2025](#), 11 March 2025

<sup>182</sup> ASK, [Violence against Religious Minorities Jan-Dec 2022](#), 3 January 2023

<sup>183</sup> ASK, [Violence against Religious Minorities Jan-Dec 2023](#), 8 January 2024

<sup>184</sup> ASK, [Violence against Religious Minorities Jan-Dec 2024](#), 31 December 2024

<sup>185</sup> ASK, [Violence against Religious Minorities Jan-Feb 2025](#), 11 March 2025

temple, monastery or statue set on fire and 1 person injured<sup>186187188189</sup>.

- 12.2.5 In reference to ASK's statistics on violations against religious minorities, the USSD RIRF 2023 report noted:

'ASK, which monitors incidents across the country, stated there were 22 incidents of violence against religious minorities from January to December [2023]. Two people were killed (including one Ahmadi) and 81 injured (62 Ahmadis and 19 Hindus) in the incidents. There were attacks on 103 Ahmadi homes, 33 Ahmadi business, one Ahmadi mosque, one Ahmadi health clinic, and six Hindu temples, five Hindu homes, one Hindu business, and 43 Hindu statues. The NGO did not publish specific details about each incident. From January-December 2022, ASK reported 12 incidents of violence against religious minorities, which injured five Hindus and damaged one Hindu home, eight Hindu businesses, four Hindu temples and 11 statues. ASK reported no Ahmadi casualties in 2022. According to media analysis, the uptick in general political violence in advance of the January 2024 national elections likely accounted for the increase in incidents from 2022 to 2023; media said such violence was often directed at minorities, in particular Hindus.'<sup>190</sup>

- 12.2.6 On 10 July 2024, Vatican News, a Catholic Church news platform<sup>191</sup>, reported on the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council annual report, based on media reports from July 2023 to June 2024, which totalled 1,045 cases against minorities, including: 45 murders, 10 attempted murders 36 death threats, 479 persons attacked and 102 attacks, acts of vandalism, looting and arson against minority homes and businesses<sup>192</sup>. The article did not provide a further breakdown of figures by religion and in the sources consulted CPIT could not find the original report (see [Bibliography](#)).

- 12.2.7 The SATP 2024 Bangladesh assessment reported: '... According to partial data collated by SATP, since August 5, 2024, there have been at least 27 instances of minority persecution in Bangladesh... On August 13 [2024], the Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Mahzor (BJHM), an alliance of 23 Hindu religious organisations, said that following the fall of the Hasina government, the Hindu community faced attacks and threats in 278 locations across 48 districts ...'<sup>193</sup>

- 12.2.8 In relation to violence following the political unrest, the December 2024 News Indian Express article stated:

'Bangladesh has confirmed 88 cases of communal violence targeting minorities, primarily Hindus, since the departure of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August [2024]. Interim government head Muhammad Yunus' press secretary, Shafiqul Alam, revealed the figures ...adding that 70 individuals have been arrested in connection with the

<sup>186</sup> ASK, [Violence against Religious Minorities Jan-Dec 2022](#), 3 January 2023

<sup>187</sup> ASK, [Violence against Religious Minorities Jan-Dec 2023](#), 8 January 2024

<sup>188</sup> ASK, [Violence against Religious Minorities Jan-Dec 2024](#), 31 December 2024

<sup>189</sup> ASK, [Violence against Religious Minorities Jan-Feb 2025](#), 11 March 2025

<sup>190</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom ...](#) (section III), 26 June 2024

<sup>191</sup> Vatican News, [About us](#), no date

<sup>192</sup> Vatican News, [Report records 1,045 cases of violence against minorities...](#), 10 July 2024

<sup>193</sup> SATP, [Bangladesh: Assessment- 2025](#), no date



attacks.<sup>194</sup>

12.2.9 The 2025 BHBCUC report noted incidents of communal violence against minorities, some of which affected multiple families in the same incident as outlined in the table below (Table by CPIT)<sup>195</sup>

Type of Communal Violence	Number of incidents
Killing/murder	23
Violence against Women/Rape/Gang Rape	9
Attacks on places of worship, vandalism, looting & arson	64
Arrests and torture on the alleged of insulting religion	15
Attacks on houses & business establishments, vandalism, looting & arson	38
Occupying the houses, land & business establishments	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>

12.2.10 The same report noted: ‘... On September 19, 2024, the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council presented a report at a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters’ Unity, detailing 2,010 communal violence incidents between August 4 and August 20, 2024 ...’<sup>196</sup> In the sources consulted, CPIT could not find a copy of the September 2024 report (see [Bibliography](#))

12.2.11 The Centre for Democracy, Pluralism and Human Rights (CDPHR), a human rights organisation based in New Dehli<sup>197</sup>, published a report in 2024 based on field investigations, news reports and fact finding reports with partnered minority groups in Bangladesh covering violence against minorities since the political unrest which noted:

‘The CDPHR Ground Report exposes the horrors within the first four days of Hasina’s resignation [5 August 2024 – 8 August 2024]: 190 cases of looting and vandalism, 32 homes burned post-loot, eight instances of illegal land and temple occupation, 16 temple desecrations, two abductions, two rapes, and two murders. Further, on August 6 alone, reportedly around 200 Hindu homes and businesses were vandalized, and 15-20 temples were looted and destroyed. By August 20, around 2,010 incidents of violence, including desecration of 69 temples and attacks on 157 Hindu families were recorded by different Human Rights Organisations’<sup>198</sup>

12.2.12 The same report noted:

‘The 64 districts of Bangladesh are grouped and administered under 8 divisions namely Barisal, Chattogram, Mymensingh, Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, Rangpur and Sylhet. According to the Ground Report collected

<sup>194</sup> The New Indian Express, [Bangladesh acknowledges attacks on minorities...](#), 11 December 2024

<sup>195</sup> BHBCUC, [Report on Communal Atrocities committed upon...](#) (page 4), 30 Jan 2025

<sup>196</sup> BHBCUC, [Report on Communal Atrocities committed upon...](#) (page 3), 30 Jan 2025

<sup>197</sup> CDPHR, [About us](#), no date

<sup>198</sup> CDPHR, [Report on Bangladesh Minorities Under Siege](#) (page 2), 13 December 2024



majority of the cases of attacks on Hindus, their houses, shops and temples occurred in Chattogram, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna and Rangpur divisions. Most affected districts were Sherpur, Mymensingh, Noakhali, Khulna, Jashore, Narayanganj, Chittagong, Tangail and Rajbari.<sup>199</sup>

12.2.13 On 12 March 2025 ANI, a South Asia media news agency, published a news article which referenced a Bangladesh Buddhist Hindu Christian Unity Council press release which noted 92 incidents of violence including 11 murders, the rape of 3 women and 25 attacks on temples in January and February 2025. The article claimed that between 4 August and 31 December 2024 there were 2,184 incidents of violence against minorities including 32 murders, 13 cases of sexual violence and 133 places of worship attacked<sup>200</sup>. However, it did not specify whether these were committed by state or non-state actors, or provide detail about the incidents, how the information was collected and verified.

12.2.14 In regard to the figures around violence against religious minorities, on 26 March 2025 Tvista, described as a non-partisan news and fact-checking platform<sup>201</sup>, published a fact-check which noted:

‘... claims that more [than 2,200 cases of violence against Hindus](#) were recorded in Bangladesh in 2024... cited by Indian government officials... who allegedly referenced data from minority and human rights organizations... has been widely contested by Bangladeshi authorities and independent human rights organizations. The Chief Adviser's press wing in Bangladesh has described this figure as “misleading and highly exaggerated.”... many of the so-called cases of religious violence were rooted in personal, societal, or economic conflicts, and not the result of sectarian violence.’<sup>202</sup>

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## 12.3 Hindus

12.3.1 HRDI noted: ‘Despite the shrinking numbers, Hindu culture and traditions remain an integral part of Bangladesh’s social fabric, contributing to the country’s festivals, cuisine, and arts.’<sup>203</sup>

12.3.2 In regard to the mob violence involved in the Titu Ray case, a Hindu who demeaned Islam online, the 23 May 2023 New Age article reported: ‘...According to the case statement, on November 10, 2017, a mob torched 10 houses and vandalised seven houses and two temples in a Hindu village in the Thakurpara area of Rangpur, protesting at a Facebook status of Titu Ray defaming Islam and Prophet Muhammad (SM) ...’<sup>204</sup>

12.3.3 On 6 August 2024, BBC News reported:

‘After Ms Hasina fled the country, social media was flooded with reports of Hindu properties and temples being attacked. India’s Foreign Minister S Jaishankar [told parliament, external](#) on Tuesday: “What was particularly worrying was that minorities, their businesses and temples also came under

<sup>199</sup> CDPHR, [Report on Bangladesh Minorities Under Siege](#) (page 12), 13 December 2024

<sup>200</sup> JMBF, [Press & Public Statement: JMBF Strongly Condemns the Continuous...](#), 18 March 2025

<sup>201</sup> Tvista, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>202</sup> Tvista, [Fact-Check: Claims of Widespread Religious Violence...](#), 25 March 2025

<sup>203</sup> HRDI, [The Changing Religious Demography of Bangladesh](#), 10 December 2024

<sup>204</sup> New Age, [Rangpur man jailed for 10 years for defaming Islam](#), 23 May 2023

attack at multiple locations. The full extent of this is still not clear."

However, young Muslim groups were also protecting Hindu homes and shrines to prevent further vandalism ...<sup>205</sup>

12.3.4 The same report also noted 3 examples of mob violence against Hindus across Bangladesh following the student-led protests due to being viewed as supporters of the Awami league. However, in one example north of Dhaka, '... local Muslims rallied to form protective rings around Hindu homes and temples.'<sup>206</sup>

12.3.5 On 18 August 2024 BBC News reported on allegations of violence against Hindus in the aftermath of the student-led protests:

'...While reports on the ground have found violence and looting impacted Hindu people and properties, far-right influencers in neighbouring India shared false videos and information that gave a misleading view of the events. They claimed to show communal violence against Hindus purportedly carried out by "Islamist radicals" with a violent agenda. 'One viral post claimed to show a temple set on fire by "Islamists in Bangladesh".

'However, BBC Verify has determined that this building, identified as the Navagraha Temple in Chittagong, was undamaged by the incident which actually occurred at a nearby Awami League party office...

'Other viral posts which have since been debunked include a claim that a Bangladeshi Hindu cricketer's home had been burned down. BBC Verify has established the house in fact belongs to a Muslim MP from the Awami League.

'Then there was the school that burned down, which the BBC visited. Again, the reasons behind the attack appear to be political rather than religious.

'All of these posts have been shared by multiple accounts, many of which support Hindu-nationalist values.

'Inter-religious strains have been present in Bangladesh for many decades, says Professor Sayeed Al-Zaman, an expert in hate speech and disinformation in Bangladesh.

'Following the hasty departure of Sheikh Hasina, matters have come to a head once again, "as Hindus felt insecure in the absence of the government and effective law and order", says Prof Al-Zaman.

'The false narratives have made the situation worse. "Fear-mongering by these influencers is inflaming the tension."<sup>207</sup>

12.3.6 The same article noted:

'Many real incidents and attacks have taken place across the country, but the motivations are difficult to assess: religion or politics.

'The two are closely entwined: one Hindu resident explained how the minority are largely viewed as supporters of Sheikh Hasina's secular Awami League party.

'AFP fact-checker for Bangladesh, Qadaruddin Shishir, told the BBC that

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<sup>205</sup> BBC News, ['There is no law and order. And Hindus are being targeted again'](#), 6 August 2024

<sup>206</sup> BBC News, ['There is no law and order. And Hindus are being targeted again'](#), 6 August 2024

<sup>207</sup> BBC News, ['The far-right videos distorting the truth of Bangladesh minority attacks'](#), 18 August 2024

there have been attacks on Hindu-owned properties. But, he said, “right-wing Indian accounts are spreading these politically motivated attacks as religious ones.”

‘Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, a non-profit established to protect minority human rights, reported five Hindu people killed. Two have been confirmed as Awami League members.’<sup>208</sup>

For more information on violence during recent protests see: [Country Policy and Information Note Bangladesh: Political situation](#)

12.3.7 In relation to support from Muslims in the community during August 2024 violence the same article reported:

‘When false claims about attacks on Hindus went viral online, some Muslim protesters decided to guard Hindu temples. “It’s our responsibility to protect them,” said Moinul, who stood watch last week in front of a temple in Hatharazi, outside of Chittagong. “Viral social media posts were trying to “incite conflict between Hindus and Muslims,” said Moinul. “But we are not falling for it.”

“Choton Banik, a local Hindu in the area who attended the temple, asked that they continue their effort “through this critical time.” “I hope that we will continue to live together in this independent Bangladesh in the future,” he said.’<sup>209</sup>

12.3.8 In regard to societal treatment of Hindus during the recent political uprising the FH 2024 report stated: ‘ ... In the first two weeks after Hasina’s resignation, there was a spike in attacks on houses and businesses, as well as at least two deaths, in minority, primarily Hindu, communities across Bangladesh. The interim government claimed most of this violence was politically motivated, rather than communal ... In November, further violence flared following the arrest of a Hindu priest for sedition.’<sup>210</sup> For more information on the arrest of a Hindu priest see [State treatment: Hindus](#)

12.3.9 The FH 2024 report stated: ‘In recent years, Hindu homes, businesses, and temples have been vandalized or destroyed.’<sup>211</sup>

12.3.10 Pressenza’s 12 December 2024 article noted:

‘Despite ... efforts [to protect minority rights], challenges persist. The current government faces criticism for its handling of incidents involving minority groups, particularly in light of claims that [the International Society for Krishna Consciousness] ISKCON has been unfairly labeled as a radical organization. The Dhaka High Court recently declined to impose a ban on ISKCON’s activities after being informed that necessary actions had already been taken by the government to maintain law and order. This legal stance underscores the delicate balance between ensuring security and upholding the rights of all citizens to practice their faith freely.’<sup>212</sup>

12.3.11 The OHCHR 2025 FF report noted:

‘In the aftermath of the former Government’s fall, widespread attacks were

<sup>208</sup> BBC News, [The far-right videos distorting the truth of Bangladesh minority attacks](#), 18 August 2024

<sup>209</sup> BBC News, [The far-right videos distorting the truth of Bangladesh minority attacks](#), 18 August 2024

<sup>210</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2025: Bangladesh](#) (section D2), 26 Feb 2025

<sup>211</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2025: Bangladesh](#) (section D2), 26 Feb 2025

<sup>212</sup> Pressenza, [Is Bangladesh Living Up to Its Promise of Religious Harmony?](#), 12 December 2024

reported against Hindu homes, businesses, and places of worship, especially in rural and historically tense areas such as Thakurgaon, Lalmonirhat, and Dinajpur, but also in other places such as Sylhet, Khulna, and Rangpur. This destruction was especially prevalent in areas perceived to be sympathetic to the Awami League, as Hindus have often been stereotypically associated with this political faction.<sup>213</sup>

12.3.12 The same report stated:

‘Witnesses and victims accounts provided to one source indicated that attacks were primarily carried out by individuals involved in "victory processions" celebrating the former Government’s collapse. While the identity of the perpetrators in these attacks was not always clear, witnesses to some of the incidents testified that the attackers were local supporters of the BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, and other organized groups. However, there were also interventions from these political parties condemning the violence. After 6 August, there were localized efforts by BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, student groups, and social organizations to protect houses and places of worship of the Hindu community ...’<sup>214</sup>

12.3.13 The same report noted:

‘National Security Intelligence (NSI) information provided to OHCHR through the Interim Government details 37 violent attacks targeting minorities that occurred between 5 and 15 August [2024]. These attacks occurred in Jessore, Noakhali, Patuakhali, Natore, Dinajpur, Chandpur, Shariatpur, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Khulna, Mherpur, Barguna, Barisal, Rajbari, Thakurgaon, Faridpur, Pirojpur, and Netrakona. Most of the reported attacks involved the vandalising, looting or burning of one or several homes or businesses. Four attacks targeted temples. In some of these cases the victims were physically assaulted, including one woman whose throat was slit and a man who was injured with sharp weapons. Nine of the identified victims were associated with Awami League political activity. In respect of five attacks, the NSI report identified BNP supporters among the attackers. In January 2025, Bangladesh Police published a report that examined 1,769 attacks and acts of vandalism against minorities reported by the non-governmental Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Unity Council that took place in Bangladesh from 4-20 August [2024]. According to the Police’s findings, 1,234 of these attacks had a political background, 20 were communal in nature and 161 were false claims.’<sup>215</sup>

12.3.14 The findings of the OHCHR FF 2025 report noted: ‘Some local members and supporters of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami opposition parties bear responsibility for human rights abuses committed during revenge attacks, including against members of the Hindu community.’<sup>216</sup>

12.3.15 In regard to recent violent attacks on Hindus following political unrest, the USCIRF 2025 report stated:

‘Religious freedom conditions in Bangladesh declined amid a series of attacks against religious minority communities. Following a violent crackdown on protests that resulted in 200 deaths and the removal of Prime

<sup>213</sup> OHCHR, [Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to...](#) (page 55-56), 12 Feb 2025

<sup>214</sup> OHCHR, [Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests...](#) (page 56), 12 Feb 2025

<sup>215</sup> OHCHR, [Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests...](#) (page 56), 12 Feb 2025

<sup>216</sup> OHCHR, [Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests...](#) (page 62), 12 Feb 2025

Minister Shiekh Hasina, Hindu groups claimed an increase in attacks against their communities and temples. These attacks included vandalism and mob violence. Simultaneously, traditional and social media proliferated false or unsupported claims of violence to discredit the interim caretaker government led by Mohamed Yunus. Hundreds of Hindus were reportedly killed in the violence following Prime Minister Hasina's departure, though reporting suggests the killings were likely related to political affiliation rather than religion ...'<sup>217</sup>

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## 12.4 Buddhists

- 12.4.1 The DFAT 2022 report: '...Buddhists are generally able to receive instruction in their faith as part of the school curriculum, but teachers are not necessarily Buddhist. Sources told DFAT that Buddhists can generally access health care and there are some junior Buddhist doctors. Sources also told DFAT that minorities, including Buddhists, sometimes need to pay more than others in bribes in order to access services.'<sup>218</sup>
- 12.4.2 The DFAT 2022 report noted: 'As with other religious minorities, many Buddhists prefer to live in communities with people of the same faith to avoid discrimination.'<sup>219</sup>
- 12.4.3 The DFAT 2022 report noted: '... Muslim Bengali settlers and CHT Indigenous groups of minority religion (Buddhist or Christian) clash frequently, especially in relation to land ownership and usage. While some of these disputes take on religious or racial overtones, religion and race are not the main factors; rather, the main factor is land.'<sup>220</sup>
- 12.4.4 See also [Christians](#)
- 12.4.5 The USSD RIRF 2023 report stated: 'In July, unidentified individuals attacked and stabbed an 86-year-old Buddhist monk in his house in Cox's Bazar, according to media reports. The victim died in the hospital. Although there were conflicting accounts of the incident, the monk's son said his father may have been attacked because he was carrying money from the temple. Police opened an investigation.'<sup>221</sup>
- 12.4.6 The October 2024 Buddhist Global article stated:
- 'A grouping of 15 Buddhist monastic organizations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh have for the first time decided not to celebrate the traditional Kathin Civar Dan (Kathina robe-offering ceremony), a major Buddhist festival, this year, because of ongoing civil security concerns ... The president of the Parbatya Bhikkhu Sangha, Venerable Shraddhalankar Mahathera, ... reported that between 18–20 September [2024], and on 1 October [2024], hundreds of shops belonging to indigenous communities had been vandalized, looted, and set ablaze in Khagrachari and Rangamati districts. He added that Bengali settlers had also targeted Buddhist temples, vandalizing Buddha statues and looting donation boxes. Four indigenous people were killed in those incidents and many others were injured ...

<sup>217</sup> USCIRF, [2025 USCIRF Annual Report](#) (page 76), 25 March 2025

<sup>218</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Bangladesh](#) (paragraph 3.51), 30 November 2022

<sup>219</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Bangladesh](#) (paragraph 3.51), 30 November 2022

<sup>220</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Bangladesh](#) (paragraph 3.50), 30 November 2022

<sup>221</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section II), 26 June 2024



However, the monks remained determined to halt the festival.’<sup>222</sup>

12.4.7 Buddhistdoor Global in its 7 January 2025 article noted:

‘Buddhist festivals among the Buddhist communities ... are diverse and unique and are usually held in local Buddhist temples ... [and] several festivals [are celebrated] at the monasteries ... surviving Buddhist communities in contemporary Bangladesh continue their heritage, culture, and traditions despite experiencing communal attacks and violence and facing massive obstacles in practicing their religious rights.’<sup>223</sup> The source did not expand or provide more detail about the ‘massive obstacles’ faced by Buddhists.

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## 12.5 Christians

12.5.1 HRDI noted ‘Christians, who are scattered throughout the country, contribute to the educational and healthcare sectors but often grapple with limited social visibility and periodic religious intolerance.’<sup>224</sup>

12.5.2 The DFAT 2022 report stated: ‘A potential for violence from anti-Christian Islamist groups exists....’<sup>225</sup>

12.5.3 The DFAT 2022 report observed:

‘Christians are able to access schools, hospitals and other services provided by their churches. Churches run extensive social welfare, health and education facilities, which are open to non-Christians and often serve the poor. This reputation for care can help reduce social isolation and discrimination against Christians. However, DFAT understands from sources that such organisations experienced financial trouble during the COVID-19 pandemic, and some have been less able to provide services as a result.

‘... Discrimination against Christians does nonetheless occur occasionally, for example the denial of goods or services or accommodation. The experience of discrimination depends on individual circumstances. Many Christians live in communities together and experience less discrimination as a result.

‘... Some people convert to Christianity, mostly lower caste Hindus and Indigenous People, who often convert as a group, for example as an entire family or village community. Some experience discrimination and violence following that conversion, and some do not. According to sources, converts do not generally experience discrimination from families and communities – this can be in part due to the fact that conversion often takes place at the community or family level. The potential for family or community discrimination and violence cannot be ruled out; but it would depend on the individual family or community circumstances. Some sources told DFAT that baptisms sometimes occur in secret to avoid attracting attention and potential discrimination or violence, demonstrating that risk of violence and discrimination can attach to at least some conversions.

‘... A potential for violence from anti-Christian Islamist groups exists...

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<sup>222</sup> Buddhistdoor Global, [Indigenous Buddhists in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts...](#), 9 Oct 2024

<sup>223</sup> Buddhistdoor Global, [Buddhism in Modern Bangladesh](#), 7 January 2025

<sup>224</sup> HRDI, [The Changing Religious Demography of Bangladesh](#), 10 December 2024

<sup>225</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Bangladesh](#) (paragraph 3.58), 30 November 2022



Sources told DFAT that they generally feel safe at church ... Isolated incidents of death threats and murders have also been reported. As with Buddhists, because many Christians are Indigenous, violence may in fact be related to land disputes or race discrimination, rather than religious belief. DFAT is aware of one incident in July 2021, reported by PIME Asia News (a Catholic news website), in which Buddhists attacked Christian converts to try to get them to return to Buddhism. Sources told DFAT that, while Christians mostly worship freely, many keep a low profile to avoid violence. For example, after Friday prayers at local mosques, some Christians try to conduct their church services quietly to avoid attracting attention ...'<sup>226</sup>

- 12.5.4 In its assessment of the information available at the time of writing in 2022, DFAT '... assessed that Christians face a moderate risk of societal violence in the form of localised incidents and the possibility of mob violence. Like other minorities, Christians face a risk of sporadic attacks. The risk is higher for Muslims who convert to Christianity (or any other religion) in the context of a lone conversion without the support of their community or family, but the risk would then depend on individual circumstances ...'<sup>227</sup>

See also [Religious conversion](#)

- 12.5.5 The USSD RIRF 2023 report stated:

'In its World Watch List report covering 2023, the Christian NGO Open Doors said converts to Christianity in the country faced "severe restrictions and attacks" and were "often accused of betraying their community." The NGO said that converts "often gather in small house churches due to the risk of attack." According to the NGO, "Any churches that evangelize among the Muslim majority face persecution" and "even historical denominations like the Roman Catholic Church are increasingly targeted by death threats and attacks." Monotosh Banajaree, President of the Bangladesh Lutheran Church Mission (BLCM), told the NGO International Christian Concern that the Catholic Church "faces persecution" in the country, but "Protestants tend to face more widespread persecution." Banjaree said "although some anti-Christian incidents are perpetrated by Hindus, the vast majority are perpetrated by Muslims." He said "if a Muslim converts to Christianity and declares their allegiance to Jesus publicly, they face immediate threats and violence. These new Christian believers stand to lose their families, communities and very lives."<sup>228</sup>

- 12.5.6 In regard to how Christians are persecuted, Open Doors World Watch List 2025, covering the period 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, based on '... country researchers and their in-country networks to collect detailed data on the nature of the various pressures and violence faced by Christian communities worldwide. The contributions of external experts are used to cross-check the results ...'<sup>229</sup>, Bangladesh profile stated:

'Converts – whether from a Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist or an ethnic/tribal background – face the most severe restrictions, discrimination and attacks in Bangladesh. Fearing attack from extremists, they often gather in small house churches or secret groups. Persecution against men is often more public than that against women; men can be beaten, tortured and threatened,

<sup>226</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Bangladesh](#) (paragraphs 3.55 to 3.60), 30 November 2022

<sup>227</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Bangladesh](#) (paragraph 3.60), 30 November 2022

<sup>228</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

<sup>229</sup> Open Door, [World Watch List 2025 Parliamentary Report](#) (page 38), 14 Jan 2025

whilst women can face sexual assault, harassment, forced marriage and divorce ... Churches that evangelise among the Muslim majority face persecution, but even traditional churches such as the Roman Catholic Church may experience attacks or threats made to their clergy.<sup>230</sup>

12.5.7 In relation to which Christians are most at risk of persecution, the same report opined:

‘Converts (mostly from Islam, but also from Hinduism, Buddhism or traditional religions) are most at risk of persecution in Bangladesh.

‘Women and girls – particularly converts – are most vulnerable to both religious and human rights violations from their immediate family, extended family, friends, neighbours and local community.

‘Christians belonging to ethnic or refugee communities, where they are in a religious minority, can be subject to significant violence.’<sup>231</sup>

12.5.8 In regard to why Christians may face persecution, the same source stated: ‘Conversion to Christianity is viewed as a betrayal, leading to hostility from the community, local leaders and even their own families. Christians who belong to ethnic minorities can experience persecution on two fronts – first for their ethnicity; second for their faith.’<sup>232</sup> Open Doors World Watch List did not provide any specific examples or incidents in the report or provide any direct sources.

12.5.9 The 12 August 2024, Open Doors article reported ‘... Converts from Islam to Christianity are among those targeted. At least seven incidents have been reported across Bangladesh. In one incident, a man nearly died when a man approached him with a knife. His home was also ransacked ... Other homes have been attacked and looted, and churches have been illegally occupied. Many openly professing converts are in hiding, seeking safety because of threats from local radical leaders ...’<sup>233</sup>

12.5.10 On 19 December 2024 Open Doors reported churches in north Bangladesh received a threatening letter regarding the churches’ plans for Christmas celebrations which ‘... made the church members panic and fear for their safety and protection, especially those from a Muslim background...’<sup>234</sup>

12.5.11 In regard to attitudes towards Christian converts in north Bangladesh, the same article noted:

‘... these dark threats follow persistent opposition to the Christian community in that region of Bangladesh – particularly targeting [converts]....

“Recently, I have been called by a couple of Muslim religious leaders,” shares a local church leader. “They threatened he [sic] not to ‘convert Muslims’ and not to do ministry among the Muslims and Christians from a Muslim background, saying, ‘The situation is in our favour. If you do not listen to our request and continue converting Muslims, we will take strong action against you. So be careful from now on.’”<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Open Doors, [World Watch List 2025: Bangladesh](#), 14 Jan 2025

<sup>231</sup> Open Doors, [World Watch List 2025: Bangladesh](#), 14 Jan 2025

<sup>232</sup> Open Doors, [World Watch List 2025: Bangladesh](#), 14 Jan 2025

<sup>233</sup> Open Doors, [Rising number of converts targeted ...](#), 12 August 2024

<sup>234</sup> Open Doors, [Christmas services get death threats in Bangladesh](#), 19 December 2024

<sup>235</sup> Open Doors, [Christmas services get death threats in Bangladesh](#), 19 December 2024

12.5.12 Open Doors also reported on 25 February 2025 that a woman who had converted from Islam to Christianity had been stripped naked by female villagers as ‘...some Muslims believe that Christians have a literal ‘mark’ or ‘seal’ on them... In a culture where women are expected to be very modest, this attack was especially appalling and shaming to Jorina.’<sup>236</sup>.

12.5.13 The same report noted that after Jorian converted to Christianity:

‘Intense opposition came quickly from the couple’s family and community, and continues to this day. “My husband received death threats from all sides, even from his nephew,” says Jorina. “They were saying, ‘In all our generations, they are the only ones ruining our family’s reputation in society by becoming Christians.’ When my mother-in-law passed away, they didn’t even allow us to attend the funeral service.”’

‘Jorina’s two children also experience discrimination. She remembers her son coming to her one day saying: “My friends always tell me that, since we are Christians, we have no religion and can’t go to Heaven. They tell me that they will burn us alive.”’<sup>237</sup>

12.5.14 On 23 January 2025 International Christian Concern, a non-profit focused on persecuted Christians<sup>238</sup>, reported:

‘Thomas, a Christian in Bangladesh, said that many people “express their desire for conversion” to Christianity, but they don’t follow through with it due to the real threats of persecution and even death.

‘Many children in Bangladesh “grow up with a nasty mentality to hate other faiths,” Thomas added. In villages, these children often target Christian families “to steal and destroy farms and gardens.” He added that things become more aggressive when Christians protest such behavior.

‘In the cities, Thomas said, anti-Christian sentiment can surface through harassment from non-Christian employees or having non-Christian employees refuse to cooperate with the Christian employee. The Christian employee might also get stuck with job duties on a Sunday, so they might have to choose between attending church or keeping their job.

‘Thomas isn’t sure exactly what percent of Bangladeshi Muslims support acts of persecution against Christians.

‘However, he said, it doesn’t take much to spoil the “full bucket of milk.”’<sup>239</sup>

12.5.15 In regard to perceived attitudes towards Christians, the same source noted:

‘Thomas said that “anti-Christian mentality is present throughout” the country among Muslims who are either uneducated or who study in fundamentalist madrassas that teach that Bengali is not a Muslim language, and that Islam is the only legitimate religion. “It’s enough to make a soft brainchild into a violent fanatic,” Thomas said.’<sup>240</sup>

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## 12.6 Atheists

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<sup>236</sup> Open Doors, [Shamed for her faith. Will Jorina see change?](#), 25 Feb 2025

<sup>237</sup> Open Doors, [Shamed for her faith. Will Jorina see change?](#), 25 Feb 2025

<sup>238</sup> ICC, [Who we are](#), no date

<sup>239</sup> ICC, [Beyond the Headlines: ‘Ever-Present’ Persecution in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka](#), 23 Jan 2025

<sup>240</sup> ICC, [Beyond the Headlines: ‘Ever-Present’ Persecution in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka](#), 23 Jan 2025

#### 12.6.1 The DFAT 2022 report stated:

‘Atheism is uncommon and unpopular ... An atheist blogger, Avijit Roy, was killed in 2015 by members of the terrorist group Ansar al-Islam. His killers were sentenced to death in 2021 by an anti-terrorism tribunal. DFAT is not aware of more recent examples of harm coming to professed atheists ...

‘Publicly professed atheism is very uncommon and could lead to violence, but DFAT is not aware of a pattern of incidents that can be analysed to assess risk. A publicly professed atheist would probably face social discrimination and violence, especially if they attempted to convince others to adopt their beliefs. Accusations of atheism can be used as a weapon to foment violence; acts of blasphemy are sometimes concocted and then blamed on innocent parties ... which may lead to mob violence or lynching.’<sup>241</sup>

#### 12.6.2 In relation to attitudes towards secular thoughts, on 21 February 2021 Benar News, a news website providing updates on security, politics and human rights<sup>242</sup>, reported:

‘The climate for freedom of secular thought in Bangladesh remains bleak a decade after religious zealots murdered blogger Avijit Roy as he left a literary festival in Dhaka, family members, researchers and human rights advocates said... Ten years on, the South Asian country is still unsafe for the secular community because the threat from violent extremism remains alive despite last year’s fall of the authoritarian government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, according to observers ...’<sup>243</sup>

#### 12.6.3 Humanists International, described as a NGO which ‘...campaign on humanist issues. We defend humanists at risk of persecution and violence ...’<sup>244</sup>, Freedom of Thought Report Bangladesh profile last updated 11 April 2025 included the following testimony “‘Bangladesh is a country where even if you kill or rape, no one will hate you as much as if they find out you are an atheist. You might already know about the killing of bloggers and atheists in Bangladesh? Since 2013, more than 20 atheists have been hacked to death by Islamic groups. I have received thousands of death threats as a human rights filmmaker and writer.” Sahadat, 14 June 2023.’<sup>245</sup>

#### 12.6.4 In regard to violence against atheists, the same report stated:

‘Between 2013-2018 several humanist or freethinking authors, bloggers and secular publishers were attacked, many of them killed. In February, 2013, the atheist blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider (pen name: Thaba Baba), was murdered in a machete attack at his home. Avijit Roy, an author of books on humanism and science, was killed in February 2015 outside the International Book Fair at Dhaka University, his wife Rafida Ahmed was also seriously hurt in the same attack; Washiqur Rahman Babu, a young blogger known as a “progressive freethinker”, was killed in March 2015; Ananta Bijoy Das, who blogged against fundamentalism, in favour of science, justice, and free expression, was struck down in May 2015; Niladri Chatterjee (penname: Niloy Neel), a humanist known as much for his blogging on minority and

<sup>241</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Bangladesh](#) (paragraphs 3.39 & 3.41), 30 Nov 2022

<sup>242</sup> BenarNews, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>243</sup> BenarNews, [Freedom for secular thought still eludes Bangladesh...](#), 21 February 2025

<sup>244</sup> Humanists International, [About Humanists International](#), no date

<sup>245</sup> Humanists International, [The Freedom of Thought Report: Bangladesh](#), 11 April 2025

women's rights as much as for his atheistic views, was killed in his own home in front of his partner in August 2015; and on 31 October 2015, coordinated gun and machete attacks on two publishing houses in Dhaka – both publishers of books by Avijit Roy and other secular authors – took the life of Faysal Arefin Dipon (Jagriti publishers), and seriously injured Ahmed Rashid Tutul (Shuddho-Shor publishers), author and blogger Randipam Basu and poet Tareq Rahim; Xulhaz Mannan, founder of the nation's first LGBTQ+ magazine was killed at his home in April 2016; that same month, writer Rezaul Karim Siddique, an English professor, and Nazimuddin Samad, an atheist blogger, were killed in separate attacks; in 2018, after a year-long break in killings, publisher, blogger and secular political activist, Shahzahan Bachchu was killed.<sup>246</sup>

#### 12.6.5 On 27 August 2024, the Print reported:

'Jashimuddin Rahmani, chief of the Islamist outfit Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), has been freed by the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government in Bangladesh... Rahmani is convicted for abetting the murder of a blogger-activist, and a vocal supporter of the terror outfit Al-Qaeda and its offshoot Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS).

He was released Monday from Gazipur's Kashimpur High Security Central Jail, where he had been lodged since August 2013, when he was arrested on the charge of abetting the murder of blogger Rajib Haider. He was blamed for multiple such targeted killings of secular bloggers and journalists between 2013 and 2016, for which ABT claimed responsibility... He was convicted in December 2015 and handed a five-year jail term for abetting the murder of blogger Rajib Haider in 2013. Pending trial in five other cases linked to terrorism implied that he had to remain lodged in the jail.

According to reports in Bangladeshi media, all such cases against Rahmani have now been withdrawn paving the way for his release...

Rahmani's ABT had taken responsibility for the murders of several bloggers and writers, such as Avijit Roy, Oyasiqur Rahman Babu, Ananta Bijoy Das, and AKM Shafiul Islam, a professor of Rajshahi University between 2013 and 2016 ...<sup>247</sup>

#### 12.6.6 There are no recent reports in regard to violence against atheists in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

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### 12.7 Ahmadis

#### 12.7.1 The DFAT 2022 report noted:

'Ahmadis identify as Muslims, but many Muslims in Bangladesh regard them as non-Muslim (and some would regard them as apostates) because they believe in an additional prophet who came after the prophet Muhammad. This has resulted in societal discrimination, harassment and violence, including physical attacks, boycotts of businesses and demands for the state to label Ahmadis as non-Muslims, as is the case in Pakistan ...<sup>248</sup>

#### 12.7.2 In its assessment of the information available at the time of writing in 2022,

<sup>246</sup> Humanists International, [The Freedom of Thought Report: Bangladesh](#), 11 April 2025

<sup>247</sup> The Print, [Who is Jashimuddin Rahmani, pro-al-Qaeda chief of Islamist...](#), 27 August 2024

<sup>248</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Bangladesh](#) (paragraph 3.62), 30 November 2022



DFAT stated: ‘... Ahmadis face a moderate risk of societal violence in the form of occasional localised incidents. Like other minorities, Ahmadis face a risk of sporadic attacks or mob violence. The risk of violence is higher if Ahmadis engage in proselytising activities. Ahmadis face a moderate risk of societal discrimination, but this moderate risk is in a context where Ahmadis may deliberately try to conceal their religious identity.’<sup>249</sup>

12.7.3 Regarding societal violence against Ahmadis, the USSD RIRF 2023 report noted:

‘...Media said most of the violence began after Friday prayers and increased on Saturday after a local mosque broadcast rumors about the deaths of anti-Ahmadi activists. Two individuals were killed in the clashes, including one Ahmadi, and dozens injured, including Ahmadis and policemen, according to media and NGOs. An Ahmadi spokesman identified one of those killed as Zahid Hasan, a security guard for the Ahmadi Muslim event. A spokesman for the International Human Rights Committee (IHRC) said that police and local authorities should have been better prepared given smaller-scale looting and violence that began in the area on March 2 [2023] in protest of the convention that was to begin the next day ...The crowds also looted and/or destroyed hundreds of Ahmadi houses in five villages, the media reported, citing local Ahmadi leaders and eyewitnesses. The IHRC said that one Ahmadi mosque and an Ahmadi health clinic were also destroyed.’<sup>250</sup> For information on police response to this incident see [Protection](#)

12.7.4 In regard to attacks of Ahmadi’s from hardline Islamists, on 9 October 2024, UCA News reported:

‘Ahmadiyya Muslim sect leaders and members have accused hardline Islamists of a fresh hate campaign to seek withdrawal of cases filed over mob attacks on the community in Bangladesh.

‘They alleged that Islamist extremists have been attempting to persecute the minority group amid a lax law and order situation following the ouster of the longtime autocratic regime of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in early August.

‘On Oct. 7 [2024], a group of hardline Muslims formed a human chain in the northern Panchagarh district demanding the withdrawal of 23 cases Ahmadiyya members filed following two incidences of mob violence last year.

‘The participants called Ahmadiyya heretics and demanded the interim government led by Professor Muhammad Yunus to amend the constitution to declare the community officially ‘non-Muslims’ as in Pakistan...

‘An Islamist mob attacked Ahmadiyya-majority Ahmadnagar village in Panchagarh on March 3 last year after some Muslims reportedly opposed their Jalsa, a nighttime annual religious gathering.’<sup>251</sup>

12.7.5 The OHCHR 2025 FF report noted:

‘The Ahmadiyya Muslim community emphasizes its inclusion within the

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<sup>249</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Bangladesh](#) (paragraph 3.64), 30 November 2022

<sup>250</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh](#) (section 2), 26 June 2024

<sup>251</sup> UCA News, [Bangladeshi Ahmadiyyas targeted by hate campaign](#), 9 October 2024



broader Muslim community, but still experience hostility and discrimination by some adhering to other Islamic schools of belief. This community faced targeted violence in the aftermath of the protests, with seven incidents reported between 5 and 9 August. OHCHR received credible allegations that, on August 5, a group led by religious clerics attacked several members of Ahmadiyya community in Panchagarh district and caused the destruction of houses and a mosque, with significant additional property losses. OHCHR also documented the case of a 16-year-old boy who was severely injured during this 5 August attack in Panchagarh... later dying from his injuries ...'

<sup>252</sup> For more information on this attack see [Protection](#)

- 12.7.6 In relation to violence since the political unrest in August 2024, the USCIRF 2025 report stated: '...Ahmadiyya Muslim communities also reported physical attacks and vandalism to their property ...'<sup>253</sup>

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## 12.8 Sufis

- 12.8.1 On 7 May 2016, a BBC news article noted: '... Sufism is popular in rural Bangladesh but considered deviant because of its mysticism by many of the country's majority Sunni Muslims ...'<sup>254</sup>

- 12.8.2 In regard to societal treatment of Sufis, on 20 November 2023 the Daily Star published an opinion piece which included an interview of a Sufi:

'Though Islam in Bangladesh has always been a highly syncretic religion, in recent years, many Sufi traditions have come under fire as efforts to impose a more orthodox and fundamentalist version of Islam have been fostered by certain groups in the country. My friend spoke of the soft persecution that many Sufis in Bangladesh face, citing an instance where he witnessed some *hujurs* in Sunamganj shutting down singing at a traditional *urs* ceremony (held annually to honour the death anniversary of a saint). He said that sharing his family history is always scary for him, and that he tends not to elaborate on his faith with anyone apart from close friends. He has ended up in many debates with people who criticise his beliefs and religious practices.

On occasion, this "soft persecution" has had severe impacts. In January 2020, Baul singer Shariat Sarkar was arrested when an Islamic cleric filed a case against him after he'd argued that the Quran did not prohibit the practice of music. Later in the year, two cases were filed against Rita Dewan for "hurting religious sentiments" during a *pala gaan* performance. Both cases were filed under the now suspended Digital Security Act ...'<sup>255</sup>

- 12.8.3 On 15 September 2024, the Dhaka Tribune, a Bangladeshi newspaper reported on damage to Sufi shrines:

'In the changing circumstances in Bangladesh, attacks on shrines have reached an alarming level. Despite the police headquarters alerting all police stations across the country, they do not have an accurate count of how many shrines have been attacked. However, those associated with the shrines

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<sup>252</sup> OHCHR, [Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests...](#) (page 56), 12 Feb 2025

<sup>253</sup> USCIRF, [2025 USCIRF Annual Report](#) (page 76), 25 March 2025

<sup>254</sup> BBC News, [Bangladesh: Sufi Muslim murdered by suspected extremists](#), 7 May 2016

<sup>255</sup> The Daily Star, [The scattered legacies of Bengal's Sufis](#), 20 November 2023

claim that more than 50 shrines, both large and small, have been attacked.

'The Office of the Chief Adviser also issued a statement on Saturday, expressing concern and condemnation over these attacks, calling for the identification and exemplary punishment of those responsible.

'The statement mentioned that attacks on shrines have been occurring for several days, though the police headquarters could not confirm whether anyone had been arrested in connection with the incidents.

'On the night of September 5, the Dewanbagh Darbar Sharif in Narayanganj was attacked and set on fire. Since then, more shrines across the country have been targeted. In some shrines, even playing music has been stopped...

'Followers of these shrines are now living in fear and have taken to the streets to protest.

'Syed Golam Moinuddin Bhuiyan, the chief caretaker of the Yajoor Darbar Sharif in Nangalkot, Comilla, said: "On September 9, the shrine was attacked and heavily damaged. After the attack, the shrine was set on fire. In our area, another seven to eight shrines were attacked. At least 50 shrines have been attacked nationwide. Those involved in these attacks are students of Qawmi madrasas. A self-serving group has used teachers and students from several local madrasas." ...

'There are more than 3,000 shrines across the country, and followers of all these shrines are now concerned ...

'Firoz Mia, caretaker of the Hazrat Shah Paran Shrine in Sylhet, said: "At around 3am on September 9, an attack occurred during the urs celebration at the shrine. They vandalized the shrine, destroyed the CCTV cameras, and took them away. They also beat the devotees (known as pagla). During the attack, the attackers said, 'There will be no music at the shrine. No one will be allowed to consume marijuana.' ..."<sup>256</sup>

12.8.4 In regard to the increased attacks on Sufi shrines, on 18 September 2024, the Economic Times described as India's largest business news platform<sup>257</sup>, reported:

'After the fall of Sheikh Hasina government on August 5, there has been a massive rise of hate speech and attacks on different religious groups and minorities in Bangladesh. One such group is the Sufi community of Bangladesh.

'Although [the] Sufi community in Bangladesh has a very large number of followers and supporters but due [to] its non-violent nature, they faced ire of hardliners and radicals [sic].

'The initial attack on Sufi shrines was reported on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> August. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, an unruly crowd comprising students, hardliners and local mosques imam along with locals stormed the premisses of Hazrat Shah Poran Shrine in Sylhet after Friday prayers. Following the incident a well-known Jamat e Islam facebook ID "Basharkella" welcomed the protests and called for attacks and more protest against sufi shrines, and Khanqa's (Sufi places of prayers) throughout the country, the attacks on Sufi shrines

<sup>256</sup> Dhaka Tribune, [Why attacks on shrines remain rampant in Bangladesh?](#), 15 September 2024

<sup>257</sup> The Economic Times, [Products](#), no date

increased sharply after the post. Bangladesh has never seen this kind of attack on Sufi Shrines...'<sup>258</sup>

- 12.8.5 In regard to further violence that occurred during the attacks on Sufi shrines, on 1 October 2024, UCA News reported:

'... An Islamist mob attacked the residence of Kazi Jaber Ahmed, 40, a Sufi Muslim leader in Savar, about 25 kilometers from the national capital Dhaka, on Sept. 29-30. Ahmed who has a considerable following was injured in the attack along with other family members and over 40 followers present in his residence.

"The perpetrators are Wahhabi Muslims. The reason for their militant attacks is they detest Sufis," he told UCA News, alleging that the attackers were armed with sticks and sharp weapons.

'Ahmed filed a complaint with the local police, but no one has been arrested yet. Police were not available for comment.

'He alleged the attacks were pre-planned as hardline Islamists, including a local Imam and madrasa principal, mobilized crowds through meetings held in the area for over a week...'<sup>259</sup>

- 12.8.6 On 31 January 2025, UCA News reported:

'Muslim hard-liners' threats have forced a shrine of the mystic Sufi branch of Islam to abandon the customary devotional music and dance program during its annual celebration ...

'The decision came amid Islamic hardliners' rallies in the district demanding a ban on music and dance in the shrine, saying those are forbidden in Islam.

'Hardliners oppose Sufism, which began as a branch of Islam in the Middle East in the 8th century. Hardliners consider Sufi traditions like singing, dancing, and shrine visits to be forbidden in Islamic law.

'Visiting Sufi shrines and praying to Sufi saints is popular in Muslim Bangladesh, which is home to thousands of shrines dedicated to Sufi missionaries who preached Islam centuries ago.

'The protesters threatened to attack the shrine if the local administration failed to stop what they called the shrine's anti-Islamic practices.

"Islamists are threatening Sufi shrines all over Bangladesh, saying that singing and dancing are un-Islamic,' said Hasan Shah Sureshwari Dipu Nuri, leader of Sufi group, Global Sufi Organization.

'They also accuse the Urs celebration as a façade for drug abuse, which is a ploy to malign the program to facilitate the agenda of the conservative interpretation of Islam, he explained ...'<sup>260</sup>

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## 13. Avenues of redress

### 13.1 Formal complaints mechanisms

- 13.1.1 In regard to the lack of an Ombudsman in Bangladesh, on 14 August 2024,

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<sup>258</sup> The Economic Times, [Sufi shrines across Bangladesh target of radicals...](#), 18 Sep 2024

<sup>259</sup> UCA News, [Fanatics target Sufi shrines, minorities in Bangladesh](#), 1 October 2024

<sup>260</sup> UCANews, [Bangladeshi Sufi shrine drops devotional music over Islamist threat](#), 31 January 2025

the Daily Star reported: ‘ ... Implementing the Ombudsman institution in Bangladesh could have transformative effects. It would provide citizens with a formal channel to voice grievances and seek redress, potentially reducing public discontent and unrest. Additionally, the Ombudsman could serve as a check on the executive branch, deterring corruption and abuse of power, and strengthening the rule of law.’<sup>261</sup>

13.1.2 The Pressenza 12 December 2024 article noted:

‘In response to growing unrest and calls for stronger protections for minorities, there have been demands for establishing a dedicated ministry for minority affairs in Bangladesh. Advocates argue that such a ministry would provide a formal mechanism to address the unique challenges faced by minority communities and ensure their voices are heard in national discourse. Moreover, initiatives like the Vested Property Return Act of 2013 aim to return properties confiscated from Hindus during previous regimes; however, many claim these measures have not been effectively implemented. The act was intended to rectify injustices stemming from historical discrimination but has faced bureaucratic hurdles that prevent its successful execution.’<sup>262</sup>

13.1.3 In the sources consulted CPIT could not find further information related to complaints mechanisms specifically for religious minorities (see [Bibliography](#)).

13.1.4 For more information on the National Human Rights Commission see [Country Policy Information Note: Bangladesh Actors of Protection](#)

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## 13.2 Civil society organisations

13.2.1 An undated website page for the Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist & Christian Unity Council, USA (BHBCUC, USA) stated their mission as being ‘... dedicated to protecting the human rights of the religious and ethnic minorities [sic] of Bangladesh. We enlist the legislators, NGOS, members [sic] of the civil societies, and governments of democratic nations including Bangladesh to help the minorities of Bangladesh [sic] regain their rights as equal citizens of the country and live there with human dignity.’<sup>263</sup>

13.2.2 Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) mission is ‘To protect and promote human rights of the disempowered and disadvantaged people through community activism and social mobilisation, capacity building, legal services, advocacy and policy intervention, by using rights based approach that encompasses the principles of human rights, equality, equity, secularism, rule of law, social justice and democracy.’<sup>264</sup> ASK publish statistics on human right violations against religious minorities monthly, provide legal aid and support services and publish reports on human rights violations<sup>265</sup>

13.2.3 Odhikar is described as ‘... one of the leading human rights organisations of the country. It has developed a strong network of partners and human rights

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<sup>261</sup> The Daily Star, [The urgent need for an Ombudsman in Bangladesh...](#), 14 Aug 2024

<sup>262</sup> Pressenza, [Is Bangladesh Living Up to Its Promise of Religious Harmony?](#), 12 December 2024

<sup>263</sup> BHBCUC, [Our Mission](#), no date

<sup>264</sup> ASK, [Mission](#), no date

<sup>265</sup> ASK [What We Do](#), no date

defenders not only all over Bangladesh, but also in the region.’<sup>266</sup> Odhikar publish annual human rights reports which detail violations against religious minorities, advocate and promote human rights and monitor elections<sup>267</sup>.

- 13.2.4 The FH 2024 report noted ‘Under the interim government, NGOs reported operating without fear of surveillance or state reprisal, but bureaucratic barriers to operations, including corruption, continued.’<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Odhikar,, [About Odhikar](#), no date

<sup>267</sup> Odhikar, [Mission](#), no date

<sup>268</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2025: Bangladesh](#) (section E2), 26 Feb 2025

# Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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# Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Legal context
  - Constitution
  - Personal status laws
  - Blasphemy laws
  - Penal Code
  - Conversion laws
- Religious demography and geographical breakdown
- Political representation and participation
- State treatment of religious minorities
- Societal treatment of religious minorities
- Avenues of redress
  - Existence of NGOs and government accountability

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# Version control and feedback

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **4.0**
- valid from **6 June 2025**

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### **Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section**

The information on this page has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

### **Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section**

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## Changes from last version of this note

Update to country information

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## Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

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## Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support them in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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