



BANGLADESH AWAMI LEAGUE

23 Bangabandhu Avenue, Dhaka

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Comments on the International Crimes Tribunal and the Verdicts Against Her

The verdicts announced against me have been made by a rigged tribunal established and presided over by an unelected government with no democratic mandate. They are biased and politically motivated. In their distasteful call for the death penalty, they reveal the brazen and murderous intent of extremist figures within the interim government to remove Bangladesh's last elected prime minister, and to nullify the Awami League as a political force.

Millions of Bangladeshis toiling under the chaotic, violent and socially-regressive administration of Dr Mohammad Yunus will not be fooled by this attempt to short-change them of their democratic rights. They can see that the trials conducted by the so-called International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) were never intended to achieve justice or provide any genuine insight into the events of July and August 2025. Rather, their purpose was to scapegoat the Awami League and to distract the world's attention from the failings of Dr Yunus and his ministers.

Under his aegis, public services have fallen apart. Police have retreated from the country's crime-ridden streets and judicial fairness has been subverted, with attacks on Awami League adherents going unpunished. Hindus and other religious minorities are assaulted, and women's rights suppressed. Islamic extremists inside the administration, including figures from Hizb-ut-Tahrir, seek to undermine Bangladesh's long tradition of secular government. Journalists are locked up and menaced, economic growth has stalled, and Yunus has delayed elections and then banned the country's most longstanding party (the Awami League) from participating in those elections.

All of this is established fact and verified by international media, NGOs and non-partisan bodies such as the IMF. I wish to add to that chorus of concern by reminding Yunus's remaining international admirers that not a single citizen of Bangladesh has cast a vote for him or been given the chance to do so. Bangladesh's future belongs to its people, and the election next year must be free, fair and inclusive.



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Concerning the ICT

For the record, I wholly deny the accusations that have been made against me in the ICT. I mourn all of the deaths that occurred in July and August of last year, on both sides of the political divide. But neither I nor other political leaders ordered the killing of protestors.

I comment further on the substance of the charges below. But first I note that I was given no fair chance to defend myself in court, nor even to have lawyers of my own choice represent me in absentia.

Despite its name, there is nothing international about the ICT; nor is it in any way impartial. Its agenda should be evident to anyone who considers the following incontrovertible facts:

- Any senior judges or even senior advocates who have previously expressed any sympathy for the previous government have been removed or intimidated into silence.
- The ICT has exclusively prosecuted members of the Awami League.
- It has done precisely nothing to prosecute or even investigate perpetrators from the other parties of documented violence against religious minorities, indigenous people, journalists and others.

Its guilty verdict against me was a foregone conclusion. But no genuinely respected or professional jurist in the world would endorse the Bangladesh ICT.

This same court was used to try the war criminals who undermined our fight for independence in 1971. There is no other motive than the personal pursuit of revenge against a democratically elected government that upheld the nation's independence and sovereignty.

I am not afraid to face my accusers in a proper tribunal where the evidence can be weighed and tested fairly. That is why I have repeatedly challenged the interim government to bring these charges before the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague.

The interim government will not accept this challenge, because it knows that the ICC would acquit me. The interim government also fears that the ICC would scrutinise its own record of human rights breaches in office.



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Our government was democratically elected by the people, and we were accountable to them. We sought their votes during elections and took pains to avoid any action that could harm ordinary citizens.

Dr Yunus, on the other hand, came to power unconstitutionally, and with the support of extremist elements. Under his rule, every protest — from students, garment workers, doctors, nurses, and teachers to professionals — has been met with suppression, some of it brutal. Peaceful demonstrators have been shot and killed. Journalists who attempt to report these incidents face harassment and torture.

After taking control, Yunus's forces carried out killings and attacks in Gopalganj, and even filed criminal cases against the wounded victims themselves — turning the persecuted into the accused. Across the country, homes, businesses, and properties belonging to hundreds of thousands of Awami League leaders and activists have been burned and destroyed.

Since July 15, 2024, those responsible for these retaliatory attacks, burnings and lynchings, which were carried out on Yunus' orders as part of his meticulous plan to seize power, have been granted indemnity. Instead, every criminal charge has been redirected against Awami League members through the presentation of false information by the ICT's compromised Chief Prosecutor to this bogus court.

Terrorists, extremists, and convicted killers have been released from prison, while the jails have been filled with Awami League leaders and activists

Concerning the charges of human rights abuses

As I have stated, what happened in July and August last year was a tragedy for our country and for many families who lost their loved ones. In taking the actions we did to try to stem the disorder, Bangladesh's political leaders acted in good faith and were trying to minimise the loss of life. We lost control of the situation, but to characterize what happened as a premeditated assault on citizens is simply to misread the facts.

Despite their lurid claims, the ICT's prosecutors produced no persuasive evidence to show that I ordered the use of lethal force against the people. Transcripts and audio files cited as evidence are fragmentary and have been taken out of context. The fact is that operational control rested with security forces on the ground, acting under established legal protocols.



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Between 6th and 14th July, students were permitted to protest freely. The government ensured their safety. Furthermore, I accepted all their demands. The situation worsened, however, from mid-July, with internet outages caused by protestors vandalizing critical communications infrastructure.

During the chaos, police stations and other government buildings were burned down, weapons looted, and government buildings attacked. Faced with this violence, the government acted in accordance with domestic and international law to preserve order and the constitution, and to protect lives.

ICT prosecutors have attempted to claim that the Awami League was responsible for burning down state buildings, even though various student leaders have cheerfully and publicly admitted they were responsible for these acts of arson and sabotage. Other evidence relied upon by prosecutors is also questionable. They repeatedly cited a United Nations report (UN) that is based on anonymous testimony from state employees under pressure to please the interim government. Many of these witnesses face misconduct charges of their own or have been coerced into providing false statements. Records that would have exonerated Awami League members and implicated those aligned with the interim government were withheld from UN inspectors.

There are numerous other mysterious elements to the violence that remain unexplained and have seemingly been covered up by the interim government. In particular, there are unresolved claims that provocateurs were involved in stirring up citizen violence at the outset of the unrest. Witness testimony and forensic evidence suggest these agitators were in possession of military-grade weapons and ammunition, including 7.62-calibre bullets, that they used to attack law enforcement personnel and other civilians, escalate violence and provoke public anger against the government. On July 18, 2024, I established a Judicial Inquiry Committee led by a High Court justice to investigate these incidents. The committee had already begun its work, but after Yunus took control of the government, he abruptly halted the investigation.

The UN's much-quoted fatality estimate of 1,400 deaths is also disputed. Bangladesh's own Ministry of Health's has a verified count of 834 deaths. The higher number seemingly includes unverified cases supplied by the National Security Intelligence and counts among the dead police officers and Awami League activists murdered by protestors. But only 614 families have received state assistance as families of martyrs.



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According to newspaper investigations, 52 of those individuals were not killed by gunfire — they died from illness, accidents, or other unrelated causes — and about 19 people reported dead were later found alive. So the picture is confused, and the interim government has refused to provide clarity by publishing an official list of the dead.

I reject the ICT's other allegations of human rights abuses as equally unproved. I am very proud of my government's record on human rights and development. We led Bangladesh to join the International Criminal Court in 2010, gave refuge to hundreds of thousands of Rohingya fleeing persecution in Myanmar, expanded access to electricity and education, and presided over a 450% GDP growth over 15 years, lifting millions out of poverty.

These achievements are a matter of historical record. They are not the acts of a leadership unconcerned by human rights. And Dr Yunus and his vengeful cronies can claim no achievements that are remotely comparable.

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