

28 May 2026

Mr. Volker Türk
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
Office of the UNHCHR
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Email: ohchr-InfoDesk@un.org

Dear High Commissioner,

I am writing in my capacity as legal counsel to Sheikh Hasina, the former Prime Minister of Bangladesh and President of the Awami League – the largest political party in Bangladesh – to raise serious concerns about the Fact-Finding Report published by your Office on 12 February 2025 entitled “*Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests of July and August 2024 in Bangladesh*” [the “Report”]. It has come to light – even based on the official records of the Interim Government that spread false and inflammatory information to justify the violent overthrow of Prime Minister Hasina’s Government – that the Fact-Finding Report’s conclusion that 1,400 protestors were killed during this period was highly inaccurate. The Official Gazette now confirms that the actual figure is about half of what is contained in the UN Report. Other more impartial reports put the figure even lower, at a fraction of the figure widely circulated.

It is of serious concern that a UN Report has arrived at a conclusion that diverges so far from the truth. It puts into question the credibility of the fact-finding process and sets a disturbing precedent for the use of such erroneous findings for incitement and legitimisation of political violence. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that your Office issue a correction and public retraction to set the record straight.

This unfortunate situation appears to have resulted from the failure of the UN team to critically examine politicised allegations against Prime Minister Hasina. The Report states that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights conducted an “independent fact-finding inquiry into alleged human rights violations and abuses that occurred between 1 July and 15 August 2024” “at the invitation of the Interim Government of Bangladesh”.¹ Since coming to power on 8 August 2024 the

¹ Report – Executive Summary p. i

Interim Government led by Dr Muhammad Yunus has been implicated in committing widespread human rights abuses that have been documented by numerous NGOs² and the subject of an Article 15 Communication in respect of crimes against humanity to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.³ Moreover, Dr Yunus himself has explicitly acknowledged that the movement which led to ousting Sheikh Hasina was a carefully planned, disciplined operation rather than a spontaneous uprising. He identified his special assistant, Mahfuz Alam, as the mastermind behind the nationwide anti-government operation.⁴

The extent to which the OHCHR fact-finding mission to Bangladesh was under the influence of Dr Yunus and the Interim Government raises serious concerns about the impartiality and independence of the UN Report in circumstances where the political opponents of Prime Minister Hasina evidently played a dominant role in facilitating the fact-finding process. A further concern, as acknowledged by the Report itself, is the temporal time frame of the fact-finding process, limited to alleged abuses between “1 July and 15 August 2024”. This plainly prevented the OHCHR from investigating on-going abuses committed by the Interim Government itself – including widespread violence against elected members of the Awami League and religious minorities – while echoing the false accusations that allowed it to usurp power through unconstitutional means.

Notwithstanding the above concerns, at this stage the matter of most profound concern is the Report’s conclusion that “as many as 1,400 people could have been killed during the protests, the vast majority of whom were killed by military rifles and shotguns loaded with metal pellets commonly used by Bangladesh’s security forces”.⁵ The OHCHR states that it arrived at the 1,400 ‘estimate’ by comparing “Ministry of Health data with detailed list of report deaths compiled by other sources, including civil society organisations, and removed duplicates”.⁶ The Report states that “based on this data, OHCHR assesses that there could have been as many as 1,400 protest related deaths”.⁷ It further states that 78% of all deaths “(which would equate to well over a thousand of OHCHR’s estimate of 1,400 overall deaths) were caused by firearms typically wielded by state security forces”.⁸ It is now confirmed, in the Official Gazette⁹ of the Interim Government itself (attached) that the number of

² Human Rights Watch, [Bangladesh: Back UN Investigation into Grave Abuses](#), 26 August 2024; Human Rights Watch, [‘Bangladesh: Reforms Needed to Restore Democracy’](#), 27 January 2025; Human Rights Watch, [‘Bangladesh: Uphold Impartiality in Law Enforcement’](#), 12 February 2025; Human Rights Watch, [‘Bangladesh Review Laws and Protect Human Rights Standards’](#), Human Rights Watch, [Bangladesh: Interim Government Should Protect Freedom of Expression and Opinion](#), 21 March 2025; 21 May 2025; Human Rights Watch, [‘Bangladesh: Year since Hasina Fled, Rights Challenges Abound’](#), 30 July 2025; J. Allen, Amnesty International, [‘Disturbing Pattern of Politically Motivated Prosecutions’](#), 22 August 2025; and Committee to Protect Journalists, [‘Journalists supportive of ousted Bangladesh leader targeted with arrest, criminal cases’](#), 19 September 2024.

³ <https://www.doughtystreet.co.uk/news/article-15-communication-filed-prosecutor-international-criminal-court-relation-alleged-crimes>

⁴ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/yunus-reveals-brains-behind-well-organised-protest-that-ousted-hasina/articleshow/113675382.cms>

⁵ Report – Executive Summary pp. iii-iv

⁶ Report para. 58

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ Report para. 61

⁹ “*The Gazette of Martyrs of the July Uprising 2024*”, published the Interim-Government on 15 January 2025

casualties is closer to 834, or close to half the figure cited in the UN Report. Even the figure of 834 cannot be trusted because of the political motivations of the Interim Government. For instance, the student-led Anti-Discrimination Movement, that was opposed to the Government of Sheikh Hasina, puts the number of deaths even lower at 650.¹⁰ The actual number is likely to be even lower, if there was an investigation based on independent and impartial sources.

It is of course a profound tragedy that so many people were killed amidst violent protests, and Sheikh Hasina's Government was in the process of establishing a commission of inquiry to investigate the disproportionate use of force by the police and security forces. The much higher figure, however, was used to exaggerate the nature and extent of the violence, and to portray Prime Minister Hasina as having ordered the mass-murder of peaceful protestors; an accusation that was central to the campaign to overthrow her Government. That a Report of your Office has been used in this context to confirm manifestly false and inflammatory misinformation, and to legitimise the violent overthrow of the Government, is unfortunate and sets a troubling precedent for the potential manipulation of the UN human rights procedures.

Considering the obvious and significant error in the number of claimed casualties in the Report, and to ensure the integrity of the fact-finding process conducted by your Office, the OHCHR is respectfully requested to issue a public retraction and correction of this aspect of the Report regarding the figure of 1,400 protestors killed. This is necessary to ensure that the UN does not become an instrument for perpetuating a false narrative by misrepresenting the true picture of what actually occurred in Bangladesh in July/August 2024.

Please accept, High Commissioner, the assurances of my highest consideration, and deep appreciation for your kind attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Steven Powles KC

¹⁰ See details on <https://shohid.info/?lang=en>, a website of the Anti-Discrimination Movement, which puts the number of those killed at 650 plus.