1. Please give a brief update on the treatment of Bangladesh National Party (BNP) supporters in Bangladesh.

The time of the Bangladesh Caretaker government, from October 2006 to December 2008, saw a decline in levels of political violence in Bangladesh. The year leading up to October 2006 had seen over 300 persons killed in political violence under the rule of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) with most of those killed belonging to opposition groups.\(^1\) Under the Caretaker Government the number of persons killed in political violence per month dropped to single figures for the first time since November 2002.\(^2\) With the return of party politics political violence in Bangladesh is again on the rise and “a total of 251 persons have reportedly died and 15,559 persons have been injured in political violence in 2009”.\(^3\) Attacks upon supporters of the BNP, now in opposition, have been regularly reported although casualties amongst Awami League government supporters, as well as from inter-factional BNP clashes, are also reported. While outbreaks of violence are reported on a weekly basis the days following elections have seen pronounced numbers of outbreaks.

Clashes between activists of the BNP and activists of the Awami League (including affiliated youth and student wings) are reported on a weekly basis in the Bangladesh national press (and clashes between competing factions of BNP organisations are reported almost as frequently).\(^4\) Such incidents most often occur in the manner of street or university campus brawls and in the context of competing political rallies or events. The violence is typically short-lived and is often brought to an end by the intervention of police. Arrests, however, are reported infrequently with police generally appearing only to restore order.\(^5\) Reports of such brawls typically detail injuries to many participants and, less frequently, deaths. Election periods, in

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\(^2\) See Odhikar figures supplied as ‘Table 2a) Reported Number of Political Killings in Bangladesh (2002-2007)’ in Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2007, DFAT Report No. 723 – Bangladesh: RRT Information Request: BGD32419, 1 November – Attachment 55.

\(^3\) Odhikar 2010, Human Rights Report 2009, 1 January, p.9

\(^4\) ‘BNP factions clash in Pabna’ 2010, bdnews24.com, 13 April

\(^5\) ‘One killed, 15 hurt as AL, BNP clash in Natore’ 2009, Daily Star, 9 May


particular, often see frequent outbreaks of political violence. According to Odhikar (a respected Bangladesh human rights NGO): “14 persons (10 from BNP and 4 from AL) were reportedly killed” in clashes which followed the Upazila Parishad (local Sub-District Council) elections of January 20096 while “17 persons (9 from BNP and 8 from AL) were reportedly killed” in the aftermath of the December 2008 national election. Overall:

…a total of 251 persons have reportedly died and 15,559 persons have been injured in political violence in 2009.8 Most of the deaths have been due to clashes between followers of the Awami League and BNP or internal party clashes. During this period, 38 people were reportedly killed and 6092 were injured due to internal conflicts within the Awami League while 02 were killed and 865 injured due to clashes between factions of the BNP.9

Over the recent year the aggressors in such inter-party incidents are more often reported to be activists aligned with the ruling Awami League,10 although on some occasions BNP supporters have reportedly also acted as aggressors.11

Aside from street and university campus brawls there have also been a handful of targeted assaults12 upon BNP figures over the recent year and, in some instances, the victims of these

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6 Odhikar 2010, Human Rights Report 2009, 1 January, p.8  
8 Note: Odhikar does not provide an overall “by party” break down of persons killed in inter-party violence in 2009.
9 Odhikar 2010, Human Rights Report 2009, 1 January, p.9  
10 For Awami League aggression, see: ‘10 BNP activists injured in attack by AL men’ 2009, New Age, 15 March  
11 For BNP aggression, see: ‘50 hurt in AL-BNP clash’ 2009, Daily Star, 4 June  
12 For assaults on BNP identities, see: ‘Attempt on Moulvibazar JCD leader’ 2009, Daily Star, 14 October  
assaults have suffered fatal injury.\textsuperscript{13} Assaults launched by Awami League student groups upon BNP aligned students have been particularly prominent since the Awami League’s December 2008 national election victory and have remained ongoing over the recent year.\textsuperscript{14} There have also been attacks upon the homes and properties of BNP supporters with Odhikar reporting that, in the immediate aftermath of the December 2008 election, “AL activists attacked the houses and shops of the BNP and Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami supporters and vandalised their property”.\textsuperscript{15}

Historically, Bangladesh politics has seen a trend wherein the supporters of the ruling party have been able to attack opposition supporters with a certain level of impunity,\textsuperscript{16} and “the broad powers the law gives the government have made control of police one of the spoils of an electoral victory”.\textsuperscript{17} While there have been no reports of the Awami League actively employing the police against its political rivals since assuming power there have been BNP claims, on some occasions, that the police have failed to take action against Awami League acts of aggression.\textsuperscript{18} Odhikar assessed the months following the December 2008 Awami League victory as follows:

The security forces or police were rarely recorded as being perpetrators or victims of the violence during this post-election period. While on one hand this suggests that the security forces were not acting as agents fostering election-related violence, on the other hand this also suggests that they may not have been playing an effective role in trying to counter the violence (on the assumption that more security forces would have been recorded as victims if this was the case).\textsuperscript{19}


Of the few reports which have detailed arrests following incidents of political violence in the recent year reports of the arrest of BNP activists have been the more frequent; though some reports of the arrest of Awami League activists have also appeared. It is also worth noting, finally, that the Awami League government’s recent move to have politically motivated charges withdrawn from the Bangladesh courts has sought to aid two BNP identities as well as Awami League figures. According to the US Department of State: “Initially, the majority of the cases recommended for withdrawal appeared to be those brought against AL members. However, in August and September the committee recommended withdrawal of cases against BNP members Moudud Ahmed and Tarique Rahman.”

2. Do reports suggest that political groups target family members (including infants) of opponents, using kidnapping/extortion, etc. as a political tool?

Recent years have seen no reports of Bangladesh political groups targeting the families of rival political actors in any way; either by kidnapping, extortion or any other means. Certain individuals affiliated with the Awami League and BNP have been accused of engaging in practices of kidnapping and extortion targeting rivals and targets of financial opportunity. There have also been regular reports of kidnappings for ransom by criminal groups (often targeting the children of wealthy businessmen) in the Bangladesh press along with instances of Bangladesh police foiling such activities. This noted, there is no information to indicate that the family members of BNP or Awami League members are being targeted in this way, be it for monetary or political ends.

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3. Do reports suggest that returnees from abroad are targeted for extortion, kidnapping, etc? If so, do these appear to be opportunistic criminal acts, or based on some criteria such as political background, etc?

No information was located which suggested the existence of a trend in which returnees from abroad are targeted for extortion, kidnapping, etc. Information was located, as is noted above, to suggest that kidnapping and extortion has been a problem in Bangladesh more generally with the families of wealthy businessmen being particular targets.\(^{27}\) There has also been a trend of Bangladeshi business men being lured to foreign locales (outside Bangladesh) and then held there for ransom. In March of this year there were also reports that a “transnational gang is abducting Bangladeshi workers for ransom in countries in the Middle East, deceiving them with false promises of lucrative jobs in Europe”\(^{28}\) and then holding the abductees in Pakistan for ransom.\(^{29}\) The story came to light as charges were pressed against members of the gang in Dhaka. In April 2010 another such transnational incident was reported with police in South Africa raiding a house where persons from Bangladesh were being held for ransom.\(^{30}\)

**Attachments**


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\(^{30}\) ‘Five held after men found in cupboard’ 2010, *Pretoria News Weekend*, 24 April – Attachment 53.


31. ‘6 BNP men hurt in BCL attack’ 2009, New Age, 30 October  
32. ‘BCL, JCD clash in Nilphamari’ 2009, Daily Star, 2 November  
33. ‘BCL activists stab JCD man at RU’ 2009, Daily Star, 11 November  
34. ‘JCD, BNP men beaten in Feni’ 2009, Daily Star, 12 December  
35. ‘JCD leader arrested for provocative comments’ 2009, Daily Star, 22 October  
37. ‘BNP men clash with cops’ 2010, Daily Star, 19 February  
38. ‘7 Jubo Dal men held on extortion charge’ 2009, Daily Star, 11 November  
41. ‘Brothers freed from captors’ 2004, Daily Star, 25 June  
42. ‘Trader abducted for ransom rescued, three arested’ 2010, Daily Star, 27 April  
43. ‘Two rescued 6 days into kidnap’ 2010, Daily Star, 18 April  

52. ‘Bangladesh: Over 50 Bangladeshis held hostage in Pakistan’ 2010, *Plus News Pakistan*, 22 March. (FACTIVA)

53. ‘Five held after men found in cupboard’ 2010, *Pretoria News Weekend*, 24 April. (FACTIVA)

