



## South Asia Democratic Forum

**Ms. Kajsa Ollongren**

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*Subject: Ban on Political Activities of the Bangladesh Awami League*

Dear Ms Ollongren,

SADF was very impressed by your letter dated 16 December 2025, which expressed your commitment to promoting a rights-respecting legal and judicial environment in Bangladesh. I wholeheartedly praise your words.

Unfortunately, reality did not evolve the way we would have liked. In spite of a slight and temporary easing of censorship and persecution of journalists, the overall situation of disregard for human rights and the rule of law seems to be consolidating. Shahriar Kabir remains in jail, and despite the public outrage that followed the uncovering of widespread corruption and injustice at the International Court Tribunal, nothing substantial has changed.

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Further to the past misdoings, the Bangladesh authorities are now on the course of consolidating the dictatorship through a blanket ban on the political activities of the Bangladesh Awami League, the historic main political force of the country. This ban, first imposed by an ordinance on 10 May 2025 by the interim government, has now been transformed into an Act of Parliament through amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act.

This decision undermines core guarantees under the Constitution of Bangladesh, including the supremacy of the Constitution, fundamental freedoms of expression, association, and assembly, and the right to due process and protection of law. Of particular concern is the effect of this ban on leaders and grassroots activists who are currently detained on fabricated criminal charges. The transformation of political affiliation into a basis for criminal stigma risks collective punishment, prejudgment, and prolonged pre-trial detention, in violation of the rule of law and principles of natural justice.

These developments also place Bangladesh in apparent breach of its binding obligations under international human rights law, notably the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, including Articles 19, 21, and 22. Established UN jurisprudence, and the findings of three UN Special Rapporteurs<sup>1</sup>, clarify that indiscriminate administrative bans on political parties and the suppression of political participation cannot be justified by abstract claims of public order or security.

We believe that the European Union's support for the voice of these three UN rapporteurs, reaffirming the necessity of political pluralism, due process, and individual criminal responsibility as cornerstones of democracy, is of the utmost importance.

We remain available to provide further legal analysis or documentation should that be of assistance.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> Established UN jurisprudence is reflected in the following three UN documents: a. UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association*, A/HRC/20/27, 21 May 2012, paras 52–56, 64–65 [[https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session20/A-HRC-20-27\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session20/A-HRC-20-27_en.pdf)]; b. UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression*, A/73/348, 29 August 2018, paras 13–15, 34–35, 58, [<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n18/270/42/pdf/n1827042.pdf>]; and c. UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers*, A/HRC/44/47, 18 June 2020, paras 22–24, 39–41, 61–62 [<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-independence-of-judges-and-lawyers>].



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Paulo

Casaca,

Director

South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF), 05 April 2026, Brussels, Belgium

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