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4–5 August 2024: Last days of protests, Hasina flees the country

On 4 August 2024, thousands of protesters took to the streets and ‘engaged in pitched battles’ against police and Awami League supporters, as reported by Prothom Alo.1850 The Daily Star reported on Dhaka and all other major towns turning into ‘battlefields’ between ‘students alongside common people and government forces’.1851 Almost 100 people were killed,1852 in day-long clashes.1853 The Daily Star reported on intense clashes in Jatrabari, ‘in the final days’ of fighting, without specifying a date, where police and security forces shot at protesters from vehicles and helicopters and made use of drones to identify their exact positions. A protester described how bodies were piling up, and stated that ‘[p]olice only stopped shooting at protesters when they ran out of ammunition’.1854 Protest-related deaths were reported, inter alia, in the cities of Dhaka, Feni and Lakshmipur (Chattogram Division).1855 Police and Awami League supporters attacked protesters by firing lethal ammunition in Ashulia (Savar),1856 in Mirpur, and other places in Dhaka,1857 and also clashed with protesters blocking important roads and starting fires in Uttara1858 and also in Bogura1859 where three died by bullet injuries and 35 more were injured by gunfire, according to Prothom Alo.1860 Prothom Alo also reported on chases and counter-chases in Munshiganj, between protesters and Awami League supporters, while the police fired teargas. Many protesters, about 40–50 people, were injured by bullets. 1861

Awami League supporters attacked protesters with firearms in several areas,1862 including in Cumilla, where armed Awami League supporters reportedly carried out attacks in formations for the second day and fired at protesters from buildings.1863 In Chattogram City, a combined force of police and Awami League members shot at and injured at least 24 people. According to Prothom Alo, Awami League shot several rounds before police arrived at the scene and fired teargas and sound grenades.1864 In Feni, 300–400 Awami League supporters attacked protesters.1865 Eight persons reportedly died1866 and 79 were injured.1867 Awami League supporters also chased and shot at protesters at Dhanmondi Road 27 in Dhaka,1868 in Narsingdi, where they shot at least four individuals blocking an important highway1869 and in Rangpur, where Awami League supporters, including the city councillor, shot at protesters.1870 In Narsingdi and Rangpur, protesters retaliated and lynched their attackers.1871 According to UN OHCHR protesters in Rangpur dragged the local councillor’s body through the streets.1872 Journalists were also reportedly ‘severely beaten’ during clashes in Rangpur, when identified as media personnel.1873

From 4 August 2024 and on, ‘the most serious revenge killings’ against police and Awami League supporters took place, according to UN OHCHR, as the government was ‘increasingly loosing control of the country’.1874 In Sirajganj, 22 people were killed1875 including 15 policemen at the Enayetpur police station, and five local Awami League officials alongside a journalist during an attack against an Awami League office in Rayganj.1876 As reported by UN OHCHR, one of the Awami League officials ‘was beaten to death after first being publicly humiliated, by being forced to do squats while holding his ears.’1877 In Shahbagh, several thousand protested, and some chased and clashed with Awami League supporters chanting slogans outside Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University. Protesters reportedly went inside the hospital looking for ruling party activists and vandalised 35 vehicles,1878 including an ambulance.1879

Mobile internet was shut down again,1880 and the government declared an indefinite ‘shoot-on-sight’ curfew,1881 and three days of public holiday starting on 5 August 2024.1882 Meanwhile, the student movement announced the programme ‘March on Dhaka’ to take place the next day and called on protesters across the country to march towards the capital.1883

On 5 August 2024, many defied the curfew in the early morning, despite heavy police and military presence.1884 The Daily Star reported on at least a million people marching from different parts of the country, and that hundreds of thousands approached Hasina’s official residence.1885 According to UN OHCHR, the army and security forces were ordered to stop the march by force, but while ‘[t]he police shot and killed many protesters’, the army and BGB ‘largely stood by’ and let them pass. UN OHCHR however noted one case where soldiers shot ‘indiscriminately’ at protesters at Jamuna Future Park, shooting one man to death at a very close range, and thereafter beating protesters with sticks to disperse them.1886

Sources noted a peak in violence on 5 August 2024.1887 UN OHCHR estimated that almost 400 people were killed on this day, many due to government efforts to stop the ‘March on Dhaka’. 1888 Police fired at protesters in various places,1889 and ‘indiscriminate’ police fire was reported in Chankharpul in Dhaka Division,1890 and the Dhaka City neighbourhoods of Ashulia, 1891 Azampur and on Rampura bridge.1892

Law enforcement also opened fire at protesters assembling outside police stations, including in the Dhaka neighborhood of Jatrabari, killing at least 30 people.1893 UN OHCHR reported that the police stormed out of the station in the afternoon ‘in formation while shooting their rifles and shotguns’, and that they ‘intentionally shot and killed several unarmed protesters at close range’.1894 Police also shot at protesters assembling outside and attacking police stations in Uttara, killing at least 10 people,1895 in the city of Kushtia, killing at least eight people,1896 in the village of Baniachang in Sylhet Division,1897 and in Shibganj (Rajshahi Division).1898 Protesters also attacked a police station in Ashulia (Dhaka Division), by throwing bricks and other objects. Police reportedly responded with ‘indiscriminate’ fire,1899 ‘using military rifles loaded with lethal ammunition’.1900 The police later piled dead bodies into a van and set it on fire.1901 According to UN OHCHR, this was carried out on the order of senior police officials, with the apparent intent to ‘create the false impression that the victims had been killed by protesters’.1902 According to Human Rights Watch, at least one person was burned alive while being handcuffed, and police fatally shot people trying to put out the fire.1903

The army chief decided that the army would not open fire on civilians to enforce the curfew,[1904] and informed the prime minister's office in the afternoon of 5 August 2024 that the army would not be able to prevent protesters from reaching Hasina's official residence. Just before protesters stormed it, around 14:00, Hasina left the country in a helicopter flying to India.[1905] As Hasina escaped, retaliatory violence surged.[1906] Many Awami Leage leaders and activists, as well as their houses, were attacked.[1907] Retaliatory violence also targeted the police, media outlets and 'others perceived as affiliated with the Awami League'. Some religious and indigenous groups were also attacked.[1908] Out of 326 deaths recorded by Prothom Alo on 4–6 August 2024, 87 were Awami League supporters and 36 were police.[1909] The same source reported on government installations being attacked in 39 districts on 4 August 2024, including '[h]ouses of public representatives, Awami League offices, [and] police stations'.[1910] The parliament was also stormed[1911] and vandalised,[1912] as well as the official residence of Hasina.[1913] The Zabeer International Hotel in the city of Jashore, reportedly owned by a prominent local Awami League leader,[1914] was also set on fire,[1915] causing the deaths of 24 people.[1916]

According to the police, 450 out of 639 police stations were either destroyed or damaged.[1917] Crowds attacked and torched police stations in various places. They also killed police officers,[1918] including by lynching them.[1919] In the Dhaka neighbourhoods of Jatrabari,[1920] Uttara, and the Dhaka suburb Ashuila, the bodies of killed police officers were 'strung up in public places', as reported by UN OHCHR.[1921] On 6–7 August 2024, DMCH received 15 bodies of police officers beaten or shot to death, and some bodies were mutilated.[1922] Some police officers continued to shoot at crowds after Hasina left the country; some people, including children, were for example shot during celebration parades.[1923]

Mobs attacked and torched several media outlets, including Ekattor TV, Somoy TV, ATN Bangla,[1924] Channel 24,[1925] ATN News TV,[1926] and reportedly also DBC News, My TV, Bijoy TV, Gazi TV,[1927] and Gaan Bangla TV.[1928]

More information on the aftermath of the fall of the former government and the violence that followed is available in section 6.1. Public order, crime and mob violence.

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