

Please cite as: EUAA, '6.2. Islamist extremism ' in *COI Report - Bangladesh: Country Focus*, August 2025.

6.2. Islamist extremism

As reported in the 2024 EUAA COI report Bangladesh – Country Focus, the former government initiated an intense crackdown on Islamist militancy after 2016.481 During the late 2010s, perceived Islamist militants were tortured and disappeared.482 Islamist militancy subsequently entered a 'dormant phase' in 2018 according to Shafi Mostofa, associate professor at World Religions and Culture in the Faculty of Arts at Dhaka University,483 although several violent Islamist groups have reportedly remained active in Bangladesh, including regional groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, and the Islamic State as well as domestic groups including Ansar al-Islam, also known as Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HuJI),484 and Neo-JMB.485 State authorities made use of a 'terrorism narrative' to target individuals and groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) inter alia to motivate the continued presence of state security forces in the area.486 The Diplomat reported on 'anti-terrorist' raids also being staged elsewhere under the former government. Interviewed victims said that they had been arrested months before being public revealed as 'militants'.487

According to Kanchan Lakshman, an Indian security analyst specialising on terrorism and radicalisation, radical groups have increased their organisational activities in Bangladesh since August 2024, including JMB, that allegedly seeks to align with the largest Islamic advocacy organisation in Bangladesh, Hefazat-e-Islami.488 Corroborating information could not be found within the time constraints of this report. According to the Inspector General of Prisons, 174 prisoners linked to militant outfits (such as JMB) were released on bail in the period 5 August–5 December 2024,489 including key figures of banned terrorist groups,490 such as the leader of Ansar al-Islam.491

Islamic political parties were heavily supressed under the former government,492 but following the powershift Islamist elements have resurged.493 The interim government lifted the ban on the country's largest Islamic party, Jamaat-e-Islami,494 which had been banned during the student protests in 2024.495 The Supreme Court also lifted its 2013 ban on the party to run in elections.496 In April 2025, the New York Times reported that 'smaller extremist outfits that want to upend the system entirely, and more mainstream Islamist parties that want to work within the democratic system, appear to be converging on a shared goal of a more conservative Bangladesh.' Representatives of several Islamist parties and organisations stated that they were 'working to push Bangladesh in a more fundamentalist direction.'497

In 2025, there have been protests calling for people disrespecting Islam to be punished with the death penalty498 and violent protests involving 'Islamists' lead to the cancellation women's football games in Dinajpur,499 Joypurhat (January 2025)500 and Taraganj (Feburary 2025).501

Moreover, on 7 March 2025, Hizb ut-Tahrir held its first public demonstration since being banned in 2009.[502] Protesters called for Bangladesh to become an Islamic caliphate.[503] Police dispersed the protest as it broke away from police barricades,[504] and several Hizb ut-Tahrir members were arrested the following day.[505] As reported by the New York Times in early April 2025, 'Islamists' forced the police to release a man who had harassed a woman not covering her hair in public and celebrated him with flower garlands.[506]

Hefazat-e-Islam has reportedly demanded 300 criminal cases against the group's leaders and activists to be withdrawn.[507] The group has further called for the Women's Affairs Reform Commission to be abolished, in particular due to the commission's references to Islamic inheritance and family law as discriminatory against women.[508]

There has reportedly been a rise in violence and discrimination against LGBTIQ persons,[509] including by Islamist extremist elements who have gained ground under the interim government.[510] Islamic fundamentalists have also attacked numerous Sufi shrines.[511] More information is available in sections 8.2 Ethnic and religious minorities and 8.5 LGBTIQ persons.

- 481

  Hasan, M. and Macdonald, G., The Persistent Challenge of Extremism in Bangladesh, USIP, url, pp. 4–5, 9

- 482

  Odhikar, Bangladesh: Annual Human Rights Report 2023, 4 January 2024, url, paras. 43, 53

- 483

  Shafi, M. M., Understanding Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh, May 2021, Journal of Asian and African Studies, May 2021, url, p. 5

- 484

  Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report, Bangladesh, 2024, url, p. 35

- 485

  Daily Star (The), 8yrs of Holey Artisan attack: Militants turning to apps to draw new recruits, 1 July 2024, url

- 486

  Daily Star (The), Paradoxes of terrorism in Bangladesh, 23 February 2023, url

- 487

Diplomat (The), Terrorism in Bangladesh: Political Manipulation, Ideological Roots, and Western Influence, 15 February 2025, url

- 488

Lakshman, K., The upsurge of radical and fundamentalist Islamic elements in Bangladesh, 24 March 2024, url

- 489

Daily Star (The), Over 700 escaped prisoners still at large, 5 December 2025, url

- 490

BBC News, Facing Islamist threats, Bangladesh girls forced to cancel football matches, 18 February 2025, url; Firstpost, Bangladesh: Muhammad Yunus' Govt Releases Al-Qaeda Linked Terror Group Chief Jashimuddin Rahmani, 28 August 2024, url; BD Digest, Extremist Leader Mohibullah Released Amid Anti-Discrimination Movement Pressure, 5 February 2025, url

- 491

BBC News, Facing Islamist threats, Bangladesh girls forced to cancel football matches, 18 February 2025, url; Firstpost, Bangladesh: Muhammad Yunus' Govt Releases Al-Qaeda Linked Terror Group Chief Jashimuddin Rahmani, 28 August 2024, url

- 492

New York Times (The), As Bangladesh Reinvents Itself, Islamist Hard-Liners See an Opening, 3 April 2025, url; Federal (The), Bangladesh: Islamist parties bond to form grand alliance, creating new concerns for India, 8 September 2024, url

- 493

New York Times (The), As Bangladesh Reinvents Itself, Islamist Hard-Liners See an Opening, 3 April 2025, url; Hindu (The), Hefazat-e-Islam, Return of the hardliners, 15 September 2024, url; Erasing 76 Crimes, Commentary: With priority given to political reorganization, social protections falter, 2 December 2024, url

- 494

Al Jazeera, Bangladesh’s interim government lifts ban on Jamaat-e-Islami party, 28 August 2024, url

- 495

DW, Bangladesh: Are Islamist parties growing in influence?, 25 October 2024, url

- 496

Al Jazeera, Bangladesh Supreme Court lifts ban on Jamaat-e-Islami party, 1 June 2025, url

- 497

  New York Times (The), As Bangladesh Reinvents Itself, Islamist Hard-Liners See an Opening, 3 April 2025, url

- 498

  New York Times (The), As Bangladesh Reinvents Itself, Islamist Hard-Liners See an Opening, 3 April 2025, url; Netra News, What NYT got right — and missed — in Bangladesh Islamist story, 3 April 2025, url

- 499

  Times of India (The), 'Girls football is un-Islamic': Bangladesh cancels football match after hundreds of protesters march field, 30 January 2025, url

- 500

  Al Jazeera, Women's football match cancelled in Bangladesh after religious protests, 29 January 2025, url

- 501

  BBC News, Facing Islamist threats, Bangladesh girls forced to cancel football matches, 18 February 2025, url

- 502

  Indian Express (The), Banned Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir holds first public rally in Bangladesh since 2009, 7 March 2025, url

- 503

  Reuters, Bangladesh police use tear gas to disperse Islamist march in Dhaka, 7 March 2025, url

- 504

  AP, Police in Bangladesh use batons and tear gas to disperse rally by banned Islamist group, 7 March 2025, url

- 505

  Somoy TV, 36 members of Hizb-ut-Tahrir arrested, 8 March 2025, url

- 506

  New York Times (The), As Bangladesh Reinvents Itself, Islamist Hard-Liners See an Opening, 3 April 2025, url

- 507

  DW, Bangladesh: Are Islamist parties growing in influence?, 25 October 2024, url

- 508

  Prothom Alo, Hefazat-e-Islam seeks cancellation of Women’s Affairs Reform Commission, 20 April 2025, url

- 509

  JMBF, State of LGBTQI+ Rights in Bangladesh 2024, 17 May 2025, url, p. 17

- 510

  Erasing 76 Crimes, Commentary: With priority given to political reorganization, social protections falter, 2 December 2024, url

- 511

  BBC News, Facing Islamist threats, Bangladesh girls forced to cancel football matches, 18 February 2025, url; Daily Star (The), Silence of the shrines, 23 February 2025, url

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu