



BANGLADESH:

PRESS FREEDOM UNDER ATTACK

Journalists face attacks,
judicial harrassment

PRESS FREEDOM VIOLATIONS IN BANGLADESH

(OCTOBER 2022 - MARCH 2023)

Press freedom in Bangladesh is deteriorating at an alarming rate. Journalists routinely face intimidation, attacks, and arrest by state law enforcement and judicial authorities.

IPI documented at least **42 press freedom violations** in the six-month period between October 2022 and March 2023.

42

There were at least **21 documented cases of physical, verbal, or online attacks against journalists**. In multiple cases, journalists were assaulted while reporting on the news or at political rallies ahead of Bangladesh's 2023 parliamentary elections. In December 2022, two journalists were attacked by members of the Chhatra League while reporting near the National Press Club and a photojournalist was seriously injured by police at a Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) rally. In January 2023, a group of BNP leaders and activists of the Kamrangirchar district attacked a video journalist and damaged his equipment at a rally in Nayapaltan, Dhaka. At least 9 journalists were assaulted by police on the steps of the Supreme Court in Dhaka in March 2023 while reporting on elections held by the Supreme Court Bar Association.



On January 9, 2023, journalist Ashiqul Islam, a 27-year-old correspondent for Daily Monitor and Brahmanbaria Patrika, was killed in a knife attack by unknown men at a park in Brahmanbaria. Authorities have arrested a suspect.

In some cases, journalists were targeted in retaliation for publishing stories on government officials. In December 2022, a journalist was abducted, threatened at gunpoint, and beaten at a local government office in the Rangunia region of Chittagong for his reporting on illegally operating brick kilns. In March 2023, the brother of an investigative journalist was brutally beaten with iron rods by a group of unknown men outside his home. The men stated he was being punished for his brother's critical reporting on corruption and human rights abuses committed by the ruling Awami League.





Independent media are silenced under a series of laws, which include the Digital Security Act (DSA), the criminal code, and the colonial-era Official Secrets Act. During this monitoring period, at least 9 journalists were charged under the DSA, a draconian and broadly-worded law that has been deployed since 2018 to punish and jail hundreds of journalists in retaliation for reporting critical news.

In November 2022, a **case was filed against six journalists under the DSA** for publishing a report on corruption by a local businessman and a **criminal defamation case was filed against two reporters** by textile conglomerate Noman Group.

In January 2023, a correspondent was arrested under unknown charges for his reporting on landless people and land disputes in the Satkhira district. According to the correspondent, he was beaten, tortured, and threatened by police. In January 2023, a Dhaka court re-launched an investigation into journalist Rozina Islam, who faces ongoing charges under the criminal code and Official Secrets Act for her reports on government corruption during the pandemic. In March 2023, a group of 15 police arrested a correspondent for Prothom Alo under the DSA following an alleged complaint by a local political leader of the Awami League who accused the journalist of publishing “false news.” The editor of Prothom Alo has also been sued under the DSA for the same article. An editor of The Daily Shahnama and Barisal Khabar news website continues to face a years-old case under the DSA in court for allegedly filming a local mayor. The mayor filed a complaint following publication of a report critical of the city’s response to flooding.

During this period, authorities ordered a number of measures to censor news and restrict press freedom.



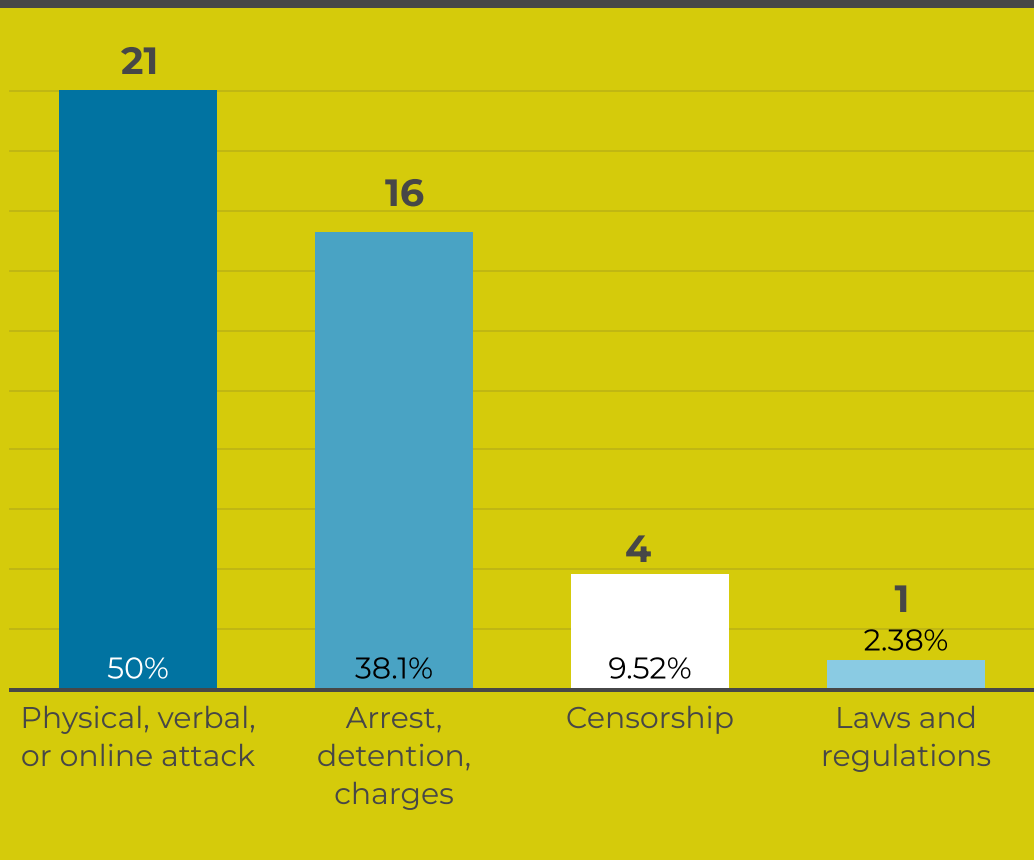
👉 The government shut down publication of Dainik Dinkal, the Bengali-language newspaper of Bangladesh’s main opposition party, the BNP. The decision was upheld by the Bangladesh Press Council.

👉 The government has proposed amendments to the Press Council Act, which would empower the quasi-judicial Bangladesh Press Council with broad authority to investigate and impose fines on media that publish news undermining state security and to cancel the accreditation of convicted journalists.

👉 The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting ordered the government’s telecoms regulator to block 191 news sites for publishing “anti-state news.”

👉 The government ordered mobile network operators to slow the speed of mobile internet during a number of BNP political rallies in cities across Bangladesh.

42 press freedom violations



Violations impacted

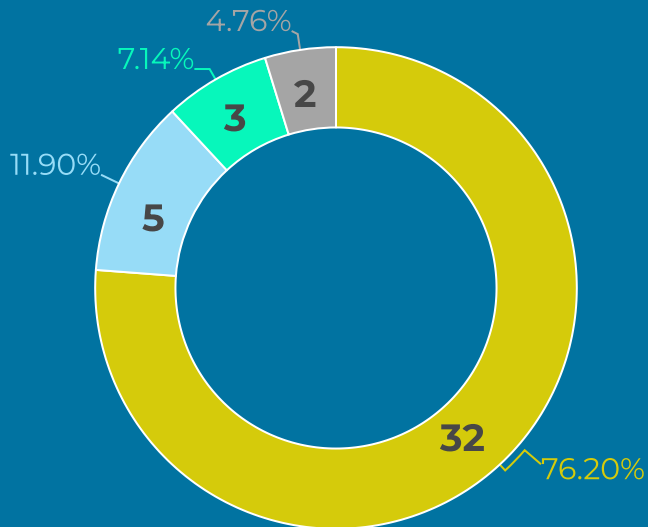
35
MALE

1
FEMALE

JOURNALISTS



Source of incidents



- State actor
- Non-state actor
- Both
- Unknown



ONE JOURNALIST KILLED

Ashiquil Islam

On January 9, 2023, journalist Ashiquil Islam, a 27 year-old correspondent for Daily Monitor and Brahmanbaria Patrika, was killed in a knife attack by unknown men at a park in Brahmanbaria. According to reports, authorities arrested a suspect.

IPI monitors and collects data on press freedom violations in Bangladesh as part of a cross-border project that brings together partner media outlets in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal to create public awareness about attacks on journalists and highlight the decline of press freedom across South Asia.



To report a violation:
info@ipi.media

