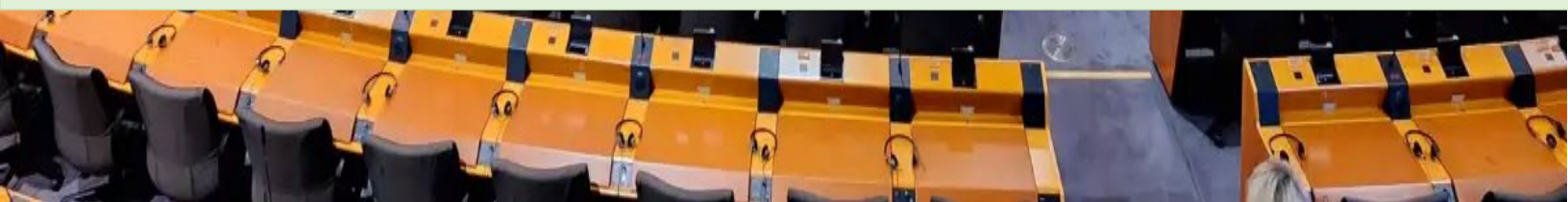




United Nations Press Release (UNPR)

Topic 1: Combatting the Lack of Press Freedom and Expression in Bangladesh.

President: Nusaybah Elbusaifi



President's Letter

Dear United Nations Press Release delegates,

It is my honour and pleasure to preside for one last time in UNPR. I am Nusaybah Elbusaifi, a senior at Modern Montessori School, and the Deputy Secretary General for MontessoriMUN'25.

In an era where technology dominates our daily lives, impacting our work, education, and personal interactions, it is crucial to wield this powerful tool with responsibility, justice, and fairness. Many of our voices are being silenced by governments and institutions that are meant to protect us. It is our duty to amplify these voices, helping to ensure that they resonate around the world.

MUN means something different for everybody; one might see it as an opportunity to get into a good university, another might see it as a way to make new relationships, but for me, it's an opportunity to get over my fears and become a better version of myself. MUN teaches you to speak, to empathize, and to write, all important skills that make us better people. People who not just speak, but rather take action, not only for themselves but also for others.

I write this letter to help alleviate any anxiety you may have, to guide you to becoming a better person than yesterday, and to enjoy your experience that will have a lasting impact on you.

Thank you and best of luck,

Deputy Secretary General

President of UNPR

Nusaybah Elbusaifi



Introduction to the committee

The United Nations Press Release Committee aims to discuss various topics that impact the only power we possess right now, our voices. In this committee, we debate resolutions regarding the topics of the press, journalism, and news. It addresses issues such as the lack of free speech, censorship problems in various states, and, most importantly, the protection of journalists who keep us informed during times of disaster and chaos.



Terminology

- **Free press:** The right to publish news, opinions, and information without government censorship or interference.
- **Digital Security Act (DSA):** A controversial law enacted in 2018 that broadly defines “digital security” and grants wide discretionary powers to authorities, often used to restrict press freedom, censor journalists, and limit online expression.
- **Press Freedom Index:** An annual ranking by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) measuring the level of press freedom globally; Bangladesh has consistently ranked low due to arrests, censorship, and violence against journalists
- **Censorship:** The suppression or restriction of news, opinions, or information by government or other powerful actors, often used against journalists reporting critically on the government or political matters.
- **Self-censorship:** When journalists or media outlets voluntarily refrain from publishing certain information or expressing opinions due to fear of repercussions such as violence, legal action, or harassment.

- **Independent Journalism:** Journalism free from undue government or political influence, crucial to democracy, but under threat in Bangladesh due to political pressure and laws.
- **Reasonable Restrictions:** Legal clauses in the constitution that allow limitations on freedom of expression on grounds like national security, public order, decency, or defamation, which are often broadly interpreted.



History

Fortunately, Bangladesh ranked 16 places higher in the World Press Reform Index (RSF) by 2025, rising to 149th of 180, which according to the RSF is still classified as “very serious”. Moreover, on World Press Freedom Day 2025, the Rights and Rights Analysis Group (RRAG) released a report revealing the targeting of at least 640 journalists through administrative harassment by the first 8 months of government led by Nobel Prize winner for Peace Dr Muhammad Yunus. However, these attacks occurred despite the prior suggestion by the Media Reform Commission to transition media organizations into public companies on March 22, 2025 to provide transparency. Additionally, World Press Day 2025 also introduced a national dialogue held by UNESCO, TIB (Transparency International Bangladesh) and the Embassy of Sweden reflecting upon journalism in Bangladesh and affirmed the urge for immediate action, along with UNESCO’s commitment to protecting said journalists.

Later in May, the new government of Dr Yunus announced it would repeal nine threatening sections of the Cyber Security Act as an attempt to restore public trust and foster freedom of expression. Although concerns remain about the enforcement laws that could still be used for suppression. By July 2025, 878 journalists were targeted, showing no real impact of the efforts made to fight the threats and harassment.

Put simply, Bangladesh has made some progress in improving its press freedom since the establishment of the Yunus government, yet threats to journalists, harassment

and a lack of development in independent press are ongoing. Many journalists are facing imprisonment and exile with little to no evidence even after a year under the new interim government.



Current situation

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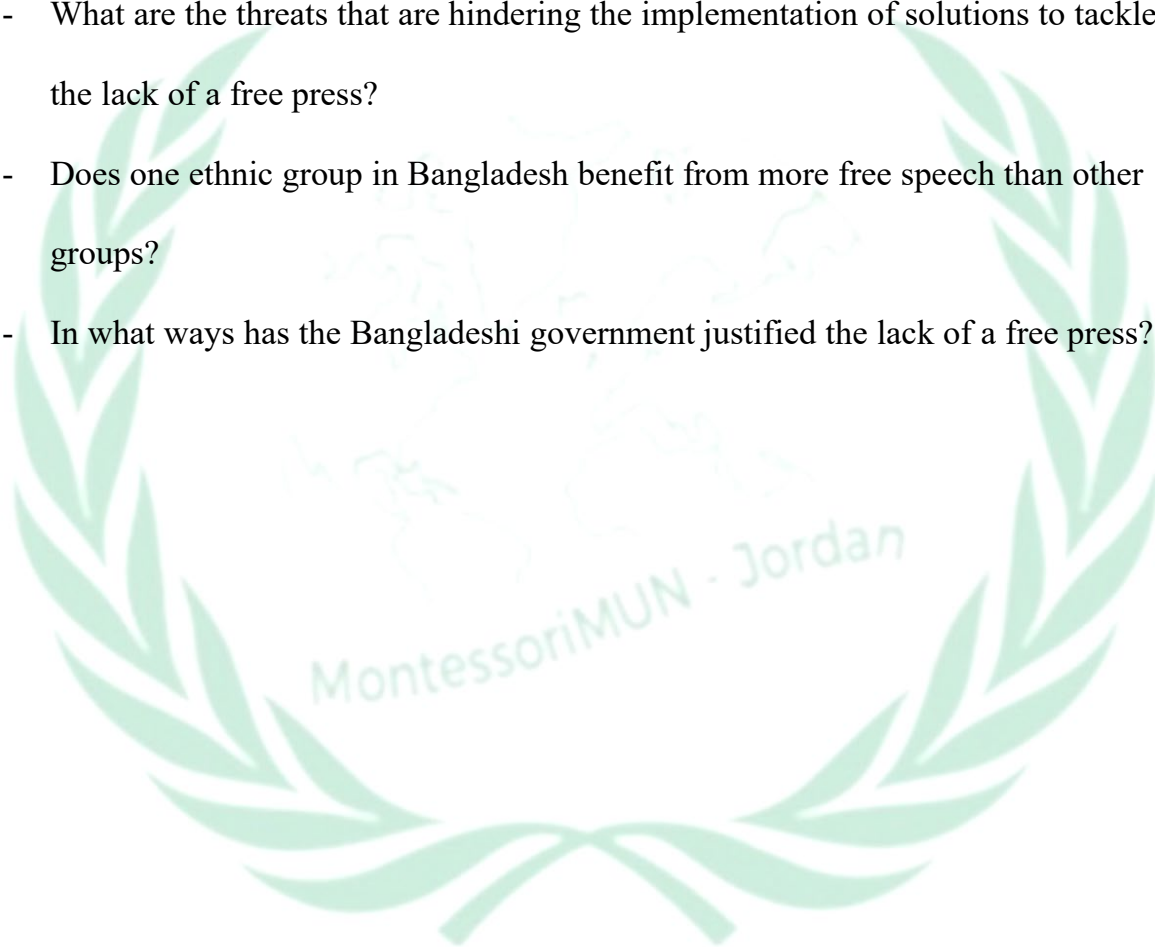
Parties involved

- **The Government of Bangladesh:** The government plays the leading role in shaping press freedom. Laws such as the Special Powers Act, the ICT act, and the Digital Security Act, have been used to restrict media activity. Officials justify these measures as protecting security and order, but critics see them as tools for silencing dissent.
- **Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP):** Both major political parties have been linked to restrictions on free expression. Successive governments under the AL or BNP have pressured media outlets, with political rivalry often fueling polarization in reporting.
- **Bangladeshi Journalists and Media Outlets:** Local journalists and independent newspapers such as The Daily Star and Prothom Alo play a crucial role in defending press freedom. Many face harassment, intimidation, or arrest for publishing critical stories.
- **Civil Society and Human Rights Organizations:** Domestic groups such as Odhikar campaign for greater freedom of expression. They provide legal aid, document violations, and advocate for reforms despite facing restrictions themselves.

- **International watchdogs and NGOs:** Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Human Rights Watch (HRW), and Amnesty International monitor conditions in Bangladesh and put international pressure on the government to protect journalists.
- **The United Nations (UN):** Through OHCHR and UNESCO, the UN has urged Bangladesh to respect international standards on freedom of expression and reform restrictive laws.
- **The United States of America and the European Union:** The U.S. and EU frequently raise concerns about arrests of journalists and misuse of the Digital Security Act. Both the aspects of cooperation and trade to improvements in rights protections.
- **Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ):** The CPJ documents violations against journalists in Bangladesh and lobbies internationally to ensure their safety and accountability for abuses.

Guiding questions

- How does the Bangladeshi government benefit from the lack of a free press?
- Are there NGOs and civil groups involved in tackling the issue?
- Has the Bangladeshi government addressed this issue before?
- What are the threats that are hindering the implementation of solutions to tackle the lack of a free press?
- Does one ethnic group in Bangladesh benefit from more free speech than other groups?
- In what ways has the Bangladeshi government justified the lack of a free press?



Helpful resources

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/brave-new-bangladesh-reform-roadmap-press-freedom>

<https://cpj.org/2025/08/a-year-after-new-bangladesh-leader-vows-reform-journalists-still-behind-bars/>

<https://rsf.org/en/index>

<https://www.rightsrisks.org/by-country/bangladesh/bangladesh-press-freedom-throttled-under-dr-muhammad-yunus/>

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/government-affairs/380517/adviser-amended-cybersecurity-ordinance>

<https://institute.aljazeera.net/en/ajr/article/3310>

<https://www.freiheit.org/bangladesh/bangladeshs-digital-security-act>