



Media Monitoring Report

**Striking Cases Impacting Digital
and Civic Space and Gender
Disinformation in Bangladesh**



March 2025

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**Project Name: Collaborative Actions for Promoting Digital
and Civic Space and Combating Gender Disinformation**

March 2025



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Striking Cases Impacting Digital and Civic Space and Gender Disinformation in Bangladesh

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Abbreviations

SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
GD	Gender Disinformation
HRD	Human Rights Defender
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and the + holds space for the expanding and new understanding of different parts of the very diverse gender and sexual identities
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DSA	Digital Security Act
CSA	Cyber Security Act
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
DCS	Digital and Civic Space
TFGVBV	Technology-facilitated Gender-based Violence
DMP	Dhaka Metropolitan Police
RAB	Rapid Action Battalion
VOICE	Voices for Interactive Choice and Empowerment

Executive Summary

This report, *“Striking Cases Impacting Digital and Civic Space and Gender Disinformation in Bangladesh,”* presents a detailed account of the digital and civic rights landscape in Bangladesh, with a specific focus on the threats faced by journalists, HRDs, activists, and politically active women and gender diverse community. It is the result of a six-month-long monitoring and documentation effort conducted under the project *“Collaborative Actions for Promoting Digital and Civic Space and Combating Gender Disinformation,”* jointly implemented by VOICE and *The Daily Ittefaq*, with support from the European Union, Free Press Unlimited, and Article 19. The report is grounded in extensive, systematic monitoring of print and online media, television broadcasts, social media platforms, undertaken between October 2024 and March 2025. It documents a pattern of digital and offline risks that persistently undermine free expression, press freedom, and civic participation in Bangladesh.

The July Uprising of 2024 had raised hopes of a shift toward a more open and democratic civic space. Many believed it marked a turning point that would lead to improved governance, protection of critical voices, and a safer environment for activism and free speech. While there were early signs of progress, these gains were short-lived. Over the monitoring period, numerous incidents of killing, harassment, physical assault, abduction, arbitrary detention, violence against women journalists, vexatious lawsuits, including those filed under the controversial Cyber Security Act, media censorship, state’s resistance against freedom of assembly, and targeted gender disinformation campaigns were identified. These actions reflect a deteriorating digital and civic space that continues to silence dissent and penalize independent voices which are quite contradictory to the anti-discriminatory spirit of the July uprising.

In particular, extremist groups have begun to reassert influence, targeting cultural expression and limiting women’s public presence and freedom. Politically active women, have been subjected to highly invasive and sexually charged deepfake campaigns, an insidious form of gender disinformation designed to shame, delegitimise, intimidate, silence, and exclude women from public life. Rooted in patriarchal norms, socio-cultural prejudices, and discriminatory political or religious

narratives, GD disproportionately targets women and LGBTQIA+ individuals. It manifests in online harassment, character assassination, and coordinated disinformation campaigns.

The report highlights these pressing concerns through a series of detailed case studies, which collectively provide a comprehensive situation analysis. This documentation is not only crucial for shaping evidence-based advocacy but also central to the project's aim of strengthening the CSO-media alliance to defend digital and civic space and counter gender disinformation. Additionally, the findings presented here contribute to the broader tracking of global commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), by examining how emerging threats and policy environments in Bangladesh impact civic participation and gender rights in the digital realm. By shining a light on these violations and the structural challenges they represent, this report serves as a critical advocacy tool for all stakeholders working toward a safer, more inclusive, and rights-based digital and civic space in Bangladesh.

Chapter 1. Background and Context

Over the past decade, Bangladesh's civic and digital spaces have steadily contracted under successive waves of restrictive legislation and state surveillance. Once heralded as platforms for vibrant public discourse and accountability, DCS bears the imprint of state control that grant broad powers to intercept communications, detain critics, and impose censorship on dissent voices. Social media blackouts, website blocks, and takedown orders have become routine tools

“
**Without a free press,
democracy cannot survive.**
**Without freedom of expression,
there is no freedom.**
”



António Guterres
United Nations Secretary-General, 15 September 2022

of control, fostering an atmosphere of fear that chills free expression and drives self-censorship. Journalists, HRDs, and activists, especially women and those from marginalized communities, have found their ability to

document corruption, advocate for reform, or simply report the news increasingly imperiled.

A major driver of this shrinkage has been the deliberate use of legal and regulatory instruments to suppress critical voices and curtail the free flow of information. Bangladesh's digital landscape had seen a disturbing evolution of state control, especially during the previous regime; starting with the ICT Act of 2006, which paved the way for widespread surveillance. Over time, more repressive legal mechanisms such as the Digital Security Act (2018) and the Cyber Security Act (2023) have been introduced. These laws, instead of safeguarding users, have enabled lawful interception by intelligence agencies and allowed authorities to detain, invade privacy, harass, or silence dissenters on broad and often vague grounds.

July 2024's mass uprising briefly rekindled hope for a more open civic sphere. Spurred by widespread frustration with authoritarian governance, citizens took to the streets in unprecedented numbers, demanding justice, transparency, democratic participation, and the protection of fundamental freedoms. For thirteen days, even an internet blackout could not suppress the uprising's energy or the expectation that a new era, where dissenting voices would no longer be criminalized, was dawning. Yet, once the protests subsided, many early gains unraveled. Civic space that had appeared to widen quickly narrowed again, as existing repressive measures were reactivated, new exploitive law was drafted hurriedly to control the citizens, and so on, contrasting the promise of genuine reform.

Meanwhile, extremist elements have resurfaced, attacking cultural events and targeting women's autonomy, further shrinking the civic margins. Violence against journalists and HRDs, ranging from physical assaults, harassment, to intimidation while on professional duty, occurs with near impunity, leaving victims without recourse. Collectively, these trends represent a profound setback for SDG 16's vision of peace, justice, and strong institutions, while simultaneously undermining

women's fundamental right to participate in civic life, an essential pillar of SDG 5 on gender equality.

Civil society, journalists, and activists have long played a vital role in Bangladesh's democratic evolution, amplifying grassroots voices, holding power to account, and pushing for inclusive rights-based reforms. This tradition of resistance and public accountability came into sharp focus during the July Revolution, when citizens mobilized to demand free speech, democratic governance, and protection of civil liberties. The revolution underscored the people's desire for a more open civic sphere where dissent would be safeguarded, not silenced.

However, that aspiration remains under threat. The DCS is shrinking with alarming speed and precision. Restrictive laws and their ambiguity, politicized legal instruments, newly emerged media trial and so-called mob justice along with manipulation of information are eroding fundamental freedoms that impacts DCS immensely. The rise of GD, the strategic spread of harmful and false narratives based on gender and sexual identity, has become one of the most potent tools for silencing dissent.

Civic engagement which encompasses digital activism, public protests, campaigning, and participation in governance, has been significantly undermined in this repressive environment, despite repeated assurances from the interim government of an 'unprecedented' era of freedom. The decline in civic space is further compounded by a culture of impunity surrounding violence and retribution against journalists, human rights defenders, and activists which was very much present in the previous fallen regime. Threats, harassment, defamation, physical attacks, and arbitrary detentions have become distressingly common. The perpetrators of these violations often enjoy protection, while victims are denied justice. This erosion of civic freedoms and lack of accountability still threatens the core democratic fabric of the country.

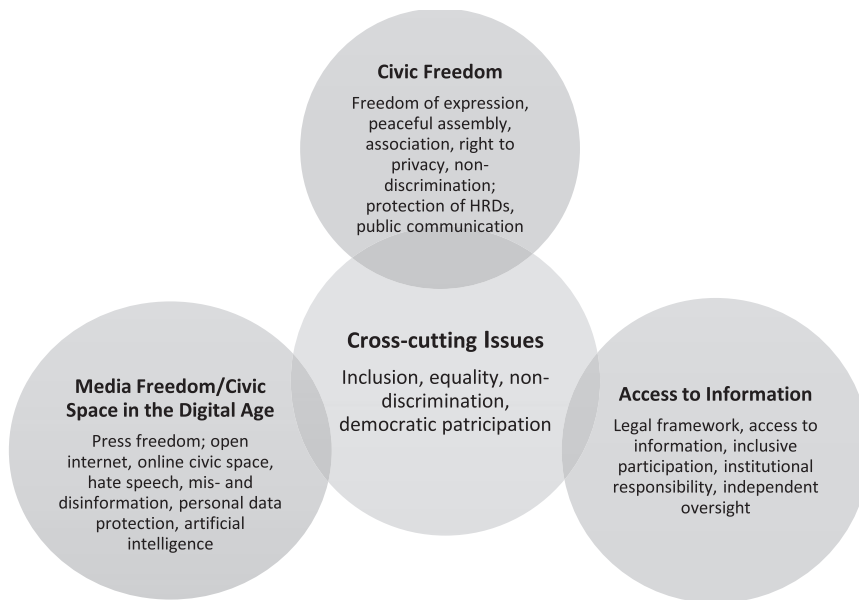


Figure 1: The Dimensions of Digital and Civic Space

Among the emerging threats in this environment is gender disinformation, a particularly insidious form of false information deliberately targeting women and gender-diverse individuals. GD, which constitutes a type of online gender-based violence, is aimed at silencing free expression and attacking personal credibility. Rooted in deep-seated patriarchal attitudes and discriminatory social norms, these campaigns circulate misleading narratives about women and LGBTQIA+ persons, exploiting both digital and traditional media channels. Such attacks not only endanger the safety and mental well-being of those targeted but also hinder their ability to engage in public discourse and civic space. By shaping public perception through manipulated content, GD reinforces stereotypes and marginalizes underrepresented voices.

This sustained shrinking digital and civic space stands in direct violation of the principles enshrined in the UDHR, particularly Articles 18 to 22. These provisions uphold freedom of thought and expression (Articles 18 and 19), the right to

peaceful assembly and association (Article 20), political participation (Article 21), and access to social protection and security (Article 22). In the digital age, these rights extend to online environments where disinformation, surveillance, and censorship distort public narratives, undermine democratic engagement, and deepen existing inequalities.

The current publication is grounded in this complex and concerning context. It is the outcome of six months of daily media monitoring (October 2024 to March 2025), conducted across print newspapers, online portals, television broadcasts, and social media platforms, supported by automated tools like Google Alerts. The report aims to capture and analyse critical violations against media professionals, HRDs and activists including women, ranging from killing, arbitrary detentions, torture, false cases, harassment to censorship, online criminalization and CSA cases, limiting cultural expression, enforce mechanism, violence and alleged false cases against women journalists, etc. presented in detailed case story format. In doing so, it aims to inform strategic interventions that can strengthen the alliance between civil society and the media, promote an open civic environment, and counter the pernicious spread of gender disinformation.

Chapter 2. Legal Framework

Bangladesh's legal framework for safeguarding digital and civic spaces and addressing gender-based disinformation has evolved over time, with a mix of older penal provisions and newer digital laws. However, the overall landscape remains fragmented, with several overlapping, ambiguous, and at times contradictory regulations that risk undermining fundamental rights. There is indeed a significant political divide among various groups, including student organisations, political parties, and non-government and CSOs, regarding the newly proposed Cyber Safety Ordinance. The government and law enforcement agencies prioritize their own interests, often seeking to ensure that the ordinance serves to reinforce their power and control over the citizens. The ultimate influence over the ordinance lies largely in the hands of political parties and bureaucrats, whose decisions are shaped by their own agendas and priorities. While the government seeks to enact policies that consolidate authority and control, CSOs are advocating for a more balanced and inclusive approach, one that protects fundamental rights and freedoms in the civic and digital space. The government, backed by law enforcement agencies, is likely to push for measures that silence dissent and suppress any opposition to its actions, especially if those opposing views challenge the government's control over the DCS while GD gets less priority as the law, to some extent, does not protect interests of women and gender diverse community.

The recently approved Cyber Safety Ordinance 2024 has triggered significant alarm among legal experts, journalists, and rights groups. The interim government has made some positive strides such as, scrapping nine contentious provisions from the draft Cyber Safety Ordinance that were remnants of the Cyber Security Act 2023 and the Digital Security Act 2018. These provisions criminalised, among others, defamation, cyberbullying, 'hurting of religious sentiments', and allowed for search and arrests without warrants. Even though vague wording like 'hurting of religious sentiments' was removed from the new draft, it, however, includes a provision criminalising the dissemination of content that incites hatred among religious and ethnic communities.

Nonetheless, Section 26 of the new ordinance continues to raise red flags by criminalizing any publication that ‘intends to spread hate’ among religious and ethnic communities. Although government officials claim the provision will be interpreted in line with the Penal Code, its open-ended language invites broad interpretation and misuse. In practice, such laws have historically been applied disproportionately against religious and ethnic minorities, freethinkers, writers, artists, journalists, and political opponents, threatening freedom of expression and creating a chilling effect on public discourse.

The Ordinance further proposes the establishment of a National Cybersecurity Council, chaired by the Head of State and composed of high-ranking officials from intelligence and defence. Section 8 gives the director general of the National Cybersecurity Agency sweeping powers to remove or block any content deemed a cybersecurity risk, without judicial oversight. This centralization of authority without adequate checks and balances risks politicization, overreach, and suppression of diverse opinions, especially in the absence of an independent review mechanism.

Provisions such as Sections 33 and 35, which empower the police to enter, search, seize, and arrest in cases involving cybersecurity threats, lack proper safeguards and judicial scrutiny. Although the government claims such powers are now limited to threats against critical infrastructure, vague definitions and prior precedents suggest that these provisions could be weaponized to harass critics, stifle disagreements, and promote a culture of fear and self-censorship. This raises broader concerns about the erosion of democratic discourse and the potential for abuse under the guise of cybersecurity enforcement which heightens tension for those advocating for protection and promotion of DCS.

In addition to threats to civic space, the legal framework remains inadequate in addressing TFGBV, a key element of which is gender disinformation. Although laws such as the Pornography Control Act (2012), the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act (2000), and the Bangladesh Telecommunication Act (2001) aim to

address digital harms against women and children, they were largely formulated without considering the complexities of modern digital platforms. For example, although Section 8 (1) of the Pornography Control Act prohibits the use of coercion and deception in producing pornographic content, and Section 69 of the Telecommunication Act criminalizes the transmission of obscene or threatening messages, enforcement of these laws remains inadequate. The 2009 High Court guideline on sexual harassment established important precedents, defining various forms of sexual misconduct across workplaces and public spheres. Similarly, the Children Act of 2013 criminalizes publishing any identifying information of a child involved in legal proceedings but falls short in addressing digital exploitation and grooming. However, the enforcement of these laws in the online domain remains limited which is reflected in the conviction rate of such cases. A 2018 report highlighted the alarming trend of low conviction rates in cybercrime cases in Bangladesh. Out of 3,659 cases filed over six years, only 1,575 reached the Cyber Tribunal. Of these, just 522 were resolved, with convictions in only 25 cases, i.e., less than 1%¹.

The newly approved Cyber Safety Ordinance has been criticized for lacking specific provisions on protecting women, children, and marginalized communities in digital space. Legal experts have pointed out its failure to define or address cyberbullying, sexual harassment online and other hate crimes, leaving victims of gendered digital abuse with limited recourse. In the absence of gender-sensitive frameworks and clear investigative protocols, survivors often face secondary victimization, emotional trauma, and legal inaction. These challenges are further compounded by societal pressure to withdraw complaints or settle with perpetrators, mostly against their will.

Despite the existence of these legal tools, gaps in clarity, coordination, and enforcement continue to pose significant barriers to the protection of digital and civic rights and gender justice. There is an urgent need to harmonize national legislation with global human rights frameworks such as the ICCPR and CEDAW,

¹ <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/court/172608/3-659-cybercrime-cases-filled-over-6-years-only>

and to ensure that emerging laws like the Cyber Safety Ordinance are informed by principles of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. Unless independent oversight mechanisms are established and legal frameworks are brought in line with international standards, legal landscape of Bangladesh will remain inadequate in ensuring the protection of digital and civic space and the safety of vulnerable groups in the current technologically advanced era.

Chapter 3: Disruption in DCS

The current state of press freedom in Bangladesh, which critically influences DCS, is deeply concerning, especially in light of recent developments. Since October last year, VOICE has documented at least 80 significant incidents of DCS violations and GD reported in prominent newspapers and online platforms. Here is a consolidated data on the monitored cases:

October 2024 – March 2025	
Nature of Violence	Number of Incidents
Access to information	2
Harassment and intimidation	8
Bodily injury and assault	25
Killing	4
Media freedom and censorship	4
Alleged vexatious case	5
Arbitrary detention	3
Abduction	3
CSA case against public	3
CSA case against journalist	1
Threat	3
Violence against woman journalist	2
Restricting freedom of assembly	4
Enforcement mechanism	2
Gender disinformation	11
Total	80

Source: Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, BBC Bangla, Independent TV, Dhaka Tribune, The Business Standard, Somoynews, bdnews24.com, Kalbela, Ittefaq, Financial Express, Bangla Tribune, Samakal, New Age, Jago News, Daily Country Today, Dhaka Post, Channel 24, Dainik Banglar Barta, Kaler Kantho, The Daily Observer, UNB, Fact Watch, Rumour Scanner

A selection of the most striking incidents involving violations against journalists and curbs on free speech are outlined below.

Case 1

Journalist Swapan Bhadra hacked to death in Mymensingh

Swapan Bhadra, a 55-year-old journalist and former vice president of the Tarakanda Press Club, was known for his fearless reporting on local issues, particularly regarding crime, drug trafficking, and corruption in Mymensingh. He was associated with both local and national newspapers and had a reputation for taking an outspoken stance against illegal activities. On the morning of October 12, 2024, Swapan Bhadra was brutally hacked to death outside his home in Tarakanda upazila, Mymensingh. He was attacked while reading a newspaper. According to law enforcement officials, the prime suspect in the attack is a local drug dealer named Sagar, with whom Bhadra had a longstanding dispute. Eyewitnesses reported that Sagar approached Bhadra and launched a sudden and violent assault using a sharp weapon, inflicting fatal injuries. Despite efforts by bystanders to rush him to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, Bhadra succumbed to his injuries. Following the incident, the Officer-in-Charge of Kotwali Model Police Station confirmed that law enforcement authorities were actively pursuing the suspect. Investigations were underway to determine whether Sagar acted alone or had accomplices. Legal procedures to formally prosecute the perpetrator were also in motion. The murder highlights the risks journalists face when covering sensitive topics, particularly those related to crime and corruption. It underscores the dangers faced by journalists who report on criminal activities. It raises critical concerns about press freedom, journalist safety, and the need for institutional mechanisms to protect reporters from violent retaliation.

Type of violation: Killing

Source: The Business Standard

Link: <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/crime/journalist-hacked-death-mymensingh>

Case 2

Journalist Pradip Chowdhury Arrested Amid Political Tensions in Khagrachhari

Pradip Chowdhury, president of the Khagrachhari Journalist Union and district correspondent for the daily Samakal, was arrested amid a turbulent political landscape. His arrest came shortly after a significant political shift on August 5, leading to a series of legal actions against him. Five separate cases have been filed against Pradip, four of which were lodged by BNP leaders and activists. These cases accuse him of orchestrating attacks on BNP leaders and vandalizing party offices. Additionally, he has been implicated in a case related to a confrontation with anti-discrimination student protesters. The situation has taken a dire turn as six other journalists from Khagrachhari have also been named in similar cases, raising concerns about press freedom in the region. Journalists in neighbouring Rangamati have responded with strong opposition, calling Pradip's arrest an act of "assault and interference with independent journalism." In protest, they staged a symbolic strike and submitted a memorandum to the chief adviser through the Rangamati deputy commissioner. Their demands include the unconditional release of all arrested journalists and the withdrawal of what they term as false cases. The incident underscores the increasing challenges faced by journalists in politically volatile environments.

Type of violation: Arbitrary detention

Source: Dhaka Tribune

Link: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/journalist-arrested-in-khagrachari>

Case 3

Journalist Attacked While Covering Event in Jamalpur

Shahidul Islam Nirob, Jamalpur district correspondent for The Daily Star, was brutally attacked in November last year while on duty, covering an event organised by the Bangladesh Chhatra Union, the student wing of the Communist Party of Bangladesh. The assault highlights growing threats against journalists, even in public spaces where they are simply performing their professional duties. According to reports, a group of miscreants launched the attack after mistakenly identifying the gathering as a Chhatra League conference. Despite clearly

identifying himself as a journalist, Nirob was not spared from the violence. Witnesses described how he was assaulted in broad daylight, suffering injuries that required hospital admission. The attack has sparked concerns among media professionals and press freedom advocates, who view such incidents as direct threats to the safety of journalists in Bangladesh. Many have called for immediate action against the perpetrators and stronger protections for journalists working in politically charged environments. As Nirob recovers from his injuries, his case stands as yet another grim reminder of the increasing risks journalists face while reporting on events, even those unrelated to political conflicts. Media watchdogs have urged authorities to take swift action to prevent further violence against journalists.

Type of violation: Bodily injury and assault

Source: Dhaka Tribune

Link: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/journalist-injured-in-attack-by-miscreants-in>

Case 4

Government Revokes Press Accreditation of 167 Journalists Amid Political Shift

In a sweeping move, the government has revoked the permanent and temporary press accreditation cards of 118 more journalists, including editors, reporters, and TV station executives. The Press Information Department under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting issued the latest order on November 7, 2024. With this, the total number of journalists stripped of their accreditation now stands at 167. Press accreditation cards are essential for media personnel to access the Secretariat, a crucial hub for governmental reporting. The crackdown began on October 29, with 20 journalists losing their accreditation, followed by another 29 in early November. The government has justified the cancellations by citing various reasons, including failure to renew cards, excessive card issuance, alleged unethical journalism, political involvement, criminal charges, and misuse of accreditation for personal benefits. The notice also controversially mentioned 'negative roles in student movements', 'incitement to unrest', and affiliations with 'fascist' elements as grounds for the decision. However, in a new development, the

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting issued a notice on December 19, 2024, stating that the interim government would reconsider the revocations after the fall of the Awami League government. Affected journalists may submit written requests for reinstatement, signalling a potential reversal of this sweeping action.

Type of violation: Enforcement mechanism

Source: The Daily Star

Link: <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/govt-strips-118-more-journos-accreditation>

Case 5

Narail Journalist Receives Death Threats Over Investigative Report

Md. Raju Sheikh, a Narail-based journalist and *Prothom Alo* correspondent, has filed a general diary after receiving death threats and verbal abuse following his report on the vandalism of a memorial and mural at Narail Government Victoria College on January 25. After diligently gathering statements from all relevant parties, Raju published the report on *Prothom Alo*'s website. Just hours later, he received a call from an unknown number, where the caller verbally abused him and threatened to falsely implicate him in a criminal case if he continued his reporting.

Targeted simply for upholding his journalistic duty, Raju and his family now live in fear. The threats against him have ignited outrage among journalists in Narail, underscoring the escalating risks faced by media professionals for exposing the truth.

Type of violation: Threat

Source: Prothom Alo

Link: <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/3n9ts7340f>

Case 6

Journalist's House Attacked in Rupganj, Narayanganj

In a chilling incident in Rupganj, Narayanganj, the house of Jahangir Mahmud, a correspondent for the daily Kalbela, came under attack. Miscreants fired at his residence, and police later recovered a bullet shell from the scene. Jahangir has

accused Masudur Rahman, the former vice-chairman of Narayanganj Chhatra Dal, and his followers of being behind the attack. Jahangir had been reporting on several illicit activities in the region, including drug dealing and land grabbing involving Md Yasin Mia, the former co-vice president of Narayanganj Chhatra Dal. Jahangir claims that Yasin had been pressuring him for Tk 2 lakh, especially after the recent fall of the Awami League government. Adding to the tension, Jahangir reports a prior incident on November 16, 2024, when Yasin and his supporters allegedly broke into his house and physically assaulted him. In response to the attack, the Organizing Secretary of the Rupganj Press Club has filed a case, calling for justice. The attack has raised serious concerns about the safety of journalists in Narayanganj, particularly those reporting on corruption and political influence. The case highlights the growing risks faced by journalists when investigating powerful political figures.

Type of violation: Threat, harassment and intimidation, bodily injury and assault

Source: bdnews24.com

Link: <https://bangla.bdnews24.com/samagrabangladesh/6743dbaa27b9>

Case 7

Desh Rupantor Journalist Abul Hossain Ripon Granted Bail in Controversial Case

Abul Hossain Ripon, Sonagazi correspondent for Desh Rupantor, has been granted bail in a case related to casualties during an anti-discrimination student movement. Ripon was detained by the RAB on November 18, 2024, following a case filed by Abdur Rob, a CNG driver. The case, which named 142 individuals and implicated 70 unidentified persons, listed Ripon as the 52nd defendant. In court, Abdur Rob testified that he did not know Ripon personally and claimed that BNP-Jamaat leaders had given him BDT 10,000 to sign blank stamp papers. This revelation raised doubts about the legitimacy of Ripon's inclusion in the case. Ripon, who has been working as a journalist for over two decades, strongly refuted the allegations. He suggested that personal animosity could have played a role in his wrongful inclusion. The case, which highlights ongoing tensions surrounding the student movement, has raised concerns about the potential misuse of legal processes to target journalists. Ripon's bail has been seen as a temporary relief,

but it continues to underline the challenges journalists face when caught in politically charged situations.

Type of violation: Alleged vexatious case

Source: Desh Rupantor

Link: <https://rb.gy/cmwwvf6>

Case 8

Journalist Abdullah Al Mahmud Attacked in Brahmanbaria

Abdullah Al Mahmud, a journalist, was attacked while covering an incident in Brahmanbaria on the morning of February 21, at the local Shaheed Minar. The situation unfolded when BNP's student and youth wings accused two activists of the National Citizens' Committee of being members of the Chhatra League. As tensions escalated, Mahmud, who was present to report the incident, began recording the event on his mobile phone. In response, a group of 10-12 BNP activists, led by KM Bashir Uddin Tuhin, general secretary of BNP's upazila unit, reportedly turned violent. They forcibly snatched Mahmud's phone and physically assaulted him, targeting his face, eyes, head, neck, and other parts of his body. The journalist sustained severe injuries, raising alarm over the safety of reporters in politically charged environments. This attack highlights the growing risks faced by journalists attempting to cover events in volatile political settings. Mahmud's assault has drawn attention to the need for stronger protections for the press, especially as incidents like these threaten press freedom and the ability to report on unfolding events without fear of retribution.

Type of violation: Assault and bodily injury

Source: The Daily Star

Link: <https://youtu.be/3w9hxxVAbvI>

Case 9

Lalon Festival Disrupted by Threats from Tawhidi Janata in Naryanganj

The annual Mohoti Sadhusanga and Lalon Mela, a two-day cultural and spiritual festival held in Naryanganj to honour the mystic poet Lalon Shah, was abruptly halted due to mounting protests and threats from the local group 'Tawhidi Janata.'

The festival, which draws hundreds of attendees, was disrupted when a large group of demonstrators marched through Narsinghpur village, vocally demanding the cancellation of the event. The situation escalated as the protesters gathered at the Eidgah field near Muktidham Ashram, where Abdul Awal, the Central Nayeb-e-Ameer of Hifazat-e-Islam, delivered a speech in which he threatened to forcibly halt the festival. The demonstrators, with strong backing from the group, submitted a memorandum to the district commissioner, reiterating their demand to stop the event. The protest, rooted in concerns over religious sentiment and practices associated with the festival, underscores the growing tensions between cultural events and religious groups in Bangladesh. The disruption has raised serious questions about the limits of freedom of expression and cultural practices in the face of rising religiously motivated protests. Local authorities are yet to comment on the status of the event, which had been a significant part of the region's cultural heritage for years.

Type of Violation: Limiting cultural expression

Source: bdnews24.com

Link: <https://bangla.bdnews24.com/samagrabangladesh/c20f2f2ace0a>

Case 10

Women's Football Match in Joypurhat Disrupted by Protests

A women's football match in Joypurhat was abruptly called off after a group of locals and madrasa students staged a protest, calling the event 'anti-Islamic'. The unrest began when demonstrators gathered at the Independence Square and raised objections to the match, which had been organised as part of a local sports initiative. Claiming the event went against Islamic values, the protesters marched towards the football pitch, where tensions escalated. Once at the venue, the protesters vandalised the area, tearing down the fence around the pitch in an act of defiance. The incident, which was broadcast live on Facebook, quickly gained widespread attention. The disruption forced event organisers to cancel the match, leaving players and spectators in distress.

The situation highlighted the growing divide between conservative views and the promotion of women's sports in some regions. Despite the controversy, the

cancellation of the match sparked a conversation about the challenges women face in pursuing sports in certain cultural contexts. Local authorities are investigating the incident, with calls for better regulation of public events to prevent such disturbances in the future.

Type of Violation: Harassment and intimidation

Source: The Daily Star

Link: <https://www.thedailystar.net/girls-football-match-called-after-venue-vandalised>

Case 11

Poet Sohel Hasan Galib Arrested over Allegations of ‘Hurting Religious Sentiment’

On February 13, 2024, poet and essayist Sohel Hasan Galib was arrested by the Detective Branch of the DMP on charges of ‘insulting’ Prophet Muhammad. The arrest followed an investigation into his writings, which allegedly contained offensive content regarding the Prophet. Galib, known for his thought-provoking poetry and essays, was taken to the Detective Branch office for further questioning after his arrest. The allegations, stemming from specific posts and statements made by Galib, sparked public outrage, and his arrest quickly became a point of contention in discussions about freedom of expression and religious sensitivities. This incident highlights the ongoing tension between artistic freedom and the protection of religious sentiments in Bangladesh. Galib’s arrest raises critical questions about the limits of free speech, particularly for writers and intellectuals who often challenge societal norms. Following the arrest, discussions erupted on social media and in public forums, with some condemning the arrest as an infringement on artistic freedom, while others supported it, citing the protection of religious values. The case is set to continue to unfold as authorities investigate the alleged offense further.

Type of Violation: Limiting cultural expression

Source: New Age

Link: <https://www.newagebd.net/police-arrests-poet-essayist-sohel-hasan-galib>

Case 12

NCTB Member Rakhal Raha Sued Under Cyber Security Act

Rakhal Raha, also known as Sajjadur Rahman, a member of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board's (NCTB) textbook revision and modification committee, has been sued under the Cyber Security Act for allegedly hurting religious sentiments. The case, which accuses him of posting content online that disrespected religious beliefs, highlights the ongoing legal and political complexities surrounding digital laws in Bangladesh. This legal action comes amid broader concerns over the misuse of the CSA, a law that has faced significant backlash from rights activists, lawyers, CSOs, digital rights experts, academicians, and cultural activists. Despite growing calls for its repeal, particularly after the July revolution, the government has not yet introduced a replacement law. The proposed Cyber Protection Ordinance, intended to replace the CSA, has also drawn criticism for similar provisions that could restrict freedom of expression. While public pressure has mounted for the repeal of the CSA, its continuation, coupled with the absence of a finalised alternative, creates a legal void that further complicates the situation. Critics argue that such laws are often used to target individuals for their online activities, leading to self-censorship and stifling free speech. The case against Rahman, therefore, becomes emblematic of the broader struggle over digital freedoms in Bangladesh, where legal uncertainty continues to weigh heavily on online discourse.

Type of Violation: CSA case against public

Source: The Daily Observer

Link: <https://www.observerbd.com/news/514772>

Case 13

Mob Intimidation and Temporary Detainment of Journalist Munni Saha

On the night of November 30, 2024, senior journalist Munni Saha was surrounded by an agitated crowd after leaving the office of *Ek Takar Khobor* (her the then workplace) in Karwan Bazar. A video published by *The Daily Ittefaq* shows a man confronting her with accusations of involvement in the 2012 murders of journalists Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi, spreading misinformation during the BDR

mutiny, and acting as an agent for India's RAW. The mob echoed these claims, chanting that she played a role in turning Bangladesh into an Indian province and in the downfall of Hefazat-e-Islam.

Police arrived at the scene shortly after the incident was reported and took Saha into custody. Tejgaon Police Station officer-in-charge later stated that she had four pending cases against her and was transferred to the Detective Branch office. After four hours, DB Joint Commissioner Harun-or-Rashid Mallik announced her release, saying she had been rescued due to the volatile situation and her safety as a woman. The incident has raised serious concerns over the safety of journalists and the growing use of public harassment to silence media voices.

Type of violation: Violence against woman journalist

Source: The Daily Ittefaq's YouTube channel

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aar43ARokp0>

Case 14

Assault on Journalist Following Report on Political Leader

Sujan Mahmud, a local journalist serving as the Rajibpur upazila correspondent for the Daily Khola Kagoj, came under attack allegedly for publishing a news report against a local political leader. The incident took place in Char Rajibpur upazila of Kurigram district. According to Sujan, the attack occurred at night while he was with fellow journalists at Computer Goli in Rajibpur Bazar. Suddenly, a group of 30 to 35 men, allegedly followers of Mokhlesur Rahman, former president of Char Rajibpur upazila BNP, launched an assault on him. The attackers reportedly beat him without provocation, in what Sujan believes was a direct retaliation for a report he had published earlier. The report, dated January 3, 2024, contained allegations of irregularities involving Mokhlesur Rahman, which Sujan claims sparked the outrage among the BNP leader's loyalists. Sujan sustained multiple injuries in the assault and was taken to the Char Rajibpur Upazila Health Complex. Dr Hasibur Rahman, the resident medical officer at the facility, confirmed that Sujan received primary treatment for his injuries. When contacted, Mokhlesur Rahman, who was reportedly in Dhaka at the time of the incident, denied any knowledge of the attack. He stated that he would investigate the matter and act

against any followers found guilty, once he returns to Rajibpur. Meanwhile, Char Rajibpur Police Station's Officer-in-Charge, Taslim Uddin, acknowledged hearing about the incident. However, he said the police are yet to receive a formal complaint.

Type of Violation: Bodily injury and assault

Source: The Daily Star

Link: <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/journo-assaulted-after-writing-against-bnp-leader>

Case 15

Protest for Teacher Appointments Dispersed by Police with Force

A peaceful protest by teachers demanding the reinstatement of 6,531 assistant teacher appointments in government primary schools turned violent when police used force to disperse the demonstrators. The teachers, who had been protesting the High Court order that annulled their recruitment, marched towards the Secretariat, hoping to bring attention to their cause. However, law enforcement intercepted the protestors in front of *Shikkha Bhaban*. The situation escalated when police charged batons on the male protesters and deployed water cannons to target the female demonstrators. Tear gas shells and sound grenades were also used to disperse the crowd, creating chaos and panic among the protesters. Sanjeedul Alam, a teacher from Tangail, described the harsh response, stating that the male protesters were subjected to baton charges, while the female protesters were hit with powerful jets of water. The teachers have been rallying for the cancellation of the High Court ruling, which had scrapped their appointments as assistant teachers in government primary schools. The protest turned into a clash with police, highlighting the growing tension between the protesting teachers and law enforcement. The use of force has raised concerns about the handling of peaceful demonstrations and the rights of the protestors.

Type of Violation: Restricting freedom of assembly

Source: Dhaka Tribune

Link: <https://www.thedailystar.net/water-cannons-batons-used-disperse-protesters>

Case 16

Journalist Beaten Amid Clashes Over 'Adivasi' Graffiti in Textbooks

DBC reporter Jewel Marak was viciously assaulted during a violent clash outside the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) building, where ethnic minority demonstrators faced off against members of Students for Sovereignty.

Marak, a journalist from the Garo community, joined the protest in solidarity with Aggrieved Adivasi Students, who were advocating for the reinstatement of a graffiti illustration featuring the term 'Adivasi' on a school textbook cover. The term's inclusion had sparked heated debate, with Students for Sovereignty opposing it, arguing that it misrepresented historical events. Marak was attacked while trying to protect a fellow Bengali protester. He was brutally beaten with a cricket stump, sustaining severe injuries that later required hospitalization.

Type of Violation: Assault and bodily injury (attack against journalist/indigenous rights activist)

Source: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/'students-for-sovereignty'-allegedly-attacks>

Source: Dhaka Tribune

Case 17

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Bans Protests Near Key Government Areas

In a move that has raised concerns about public expression, the DMP issued a statement banning rallies, demonstrations, and sit-ins near key government buildings, including the State Guest House Jamuna and the Secretariat in the capital. The ban, which also applies to the surrounding areas such as Shahbagh intersection, Hotel Intercontinental intersection, Kakrail intersection, and Mintu Road, was enforced citing DMP Ordinance Section 29. The order, effective immediately, has sparked reactions from political activists and civil rights organizations, who see it as an attempt to stifle public dissent. Authorities justified the measure by citing concerns over security and the need to maintain public order near sensitive government facilities. However, critics argue that such restrictions infringe upon the right to peaceful assembly and protest, essential elements of

democratic expression. This development comes amidst growing political tensions and public dissatisfaction, with many fearing that the move could escalate into a broader crackdown on free speech and political participation. The DMP's action has prompted calls for dialogue on balancing security concerns with fundamental rights in a democratic society, as citizens and groups weigh the implications for future protests in the capital.

Type of Violation: Restricting freedom of assembly

Source: bdnews24.com

Link: <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/ec4209ec570e>

Case 18

Columnist Sued for 'Hurting Religious Sentiments' in Kurigram

A case has been filed against Nahid Hasan, a columnist and trustee of the Bangladesh Artists Welfare Trust Board, for allegedly hurting religious sentiments through a social media post. The case was lodged at Chilmari Police Station by Golam Mostafa, a resident of Chotokushtari village in Thanahat union. He accused Nahid of creating public outrage by sharing a screenshot of a follower's post that allegedly demeaned Islam. The case has been filed under the Cyber Security Act. Nahid, a teacher and organiser from Ramna Mistripara in Chilmari, is accused of promoting content deemed offensive to religious values. Though the original post was not made by him, his act of sharing it on social media has drawn criticism and legal consequences. Following the filing of the case, members of the Tawhidi Muslim Janata held a protest march in Chilmari, demanding the arrest and punishment of the accused. The protest drew significant attention in the locality, further intensifying pressure on law enforcement. Police confirmed that operations are ongoing to locate and arrest Nahid. The case comes amid broader concerns over the use of the Cyber Security Act to regulate online speech, especially around sensitive religious topics.

Type of Violation: CSA case against public

Source: The Daily Star

Link: <https://www.thedailystar.net/columnist-nahid-sued-hurting-religious-sentiments>

Case 19

Transgender Activist Shila Brutally Murdered in Rangamati

Transgender rights activist Shila was brutally murdered in her home in Betbunia, Rangamati, on the night of February 2, 2025. Her decapitated body, bearing multiple stab wounds, was discovered by neighbors, sending shockwaves through Bangladesh's human rights and LGBTQ+ communities. According to police reports, five unidentified individuals visited Shila's home. Concerned neighbors, unable to reach her, broke in the next day and found her lifeless body. Authorities have described the killing as a premeditated act, launching an investigation to track down the perpetrators.

Shila, originally from Hathazari, Chattogram, was a relentless advocate for transgender rights. She fought for legal recognition, healthcare access, and social inclusion for Bangladesh's transgender and third-gender communities. However, a prominent Bangla media outlet has framed the murder in a way that subtly criminalizes the victim, focusing on her sexual orientation, personal relationships, and alleged involvement in drug dealing. This approach exemplifies gender-insensitive reporting, diverting attention from the brutality of the crime and undermining the broader issue of violence against transgender individuals.

Despite government recognition of third gender individuals in 2013, the community continues to face violence, discrimination, and exclusion from essential services. Shila's murder adds to the growing list of attacks against transgender individuals in Bangladesh. A 2022 study by the Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB) found that over 65% of transgender people in the country have faced violence, with most cases going unpunished.

Type of Violation: Killing (murder of rights activist)

Source: Bangla Tribune, The Business Standard, Website: Erasing 76 Crimes, Share-Net Bangladesh

Link:

- <https://bangla.dhakatribune.com/রাঙ্গামাটিতে-হিজড়া-‘লিডার’-শিলাকে-গলা-কেটে-হত্যা>
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- <https://76crimes.com/2025/02/12/bangladesh-trans-activist-murdered/>
- <https://www.share-netbangladesh.org/transgender-activist-shila-slain-in-brutal-attack-in-rangamati/>

Case 20

Female Journalist Gang-Raped in Dhaka’s Pallabi

A female journalist was tragically gang-raped by a group of men in Dhaka’s Pallabi area on March 17, 2025. According to police, the victim, who works for an online news portal, was lured to an under-construction site in Barontek with a promise of gathering news about illegal activities in the area. The victim, unaware of the malicious intent, was led to one of the high-rise buildings under construction, where she was held captive and assaulted. The perpetrators, a group of men, reportedly took advantage of the vulnerable situation, subjecting the victim to a harrowing ordeal. The police have made two arrests in connection with the crime, though authorities are continuing their investigation into the incident.

This horrific attack has sent shockwaves through the journalism community, sparking outrage over the safety of female reporters in the country. The victim’s colleagues and international organizations like Article 19, have condemned the attack, calling for swift justice and stronger protections for journalists². This case underscores the growing concerns regarding the security of journalists, particularly female reporters, in Bangladesh, where violence against media professionals remains a pressing issue.

Type of Violation: Violence against woman journalist

Source: bdnews24.com

Link: <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/572386e79c10>

² <https://www.article19.org/resources/bangladesh-gender-must-inform-journalist-rape-investigations/>

Chapter 4. Cases of Gender Disinformation

Gender disinformation in Bangladesh targets women and LGBTQIA+ individuals through online abuse, smear campaigns, and character attacks aimed at silencing and excluding them. Rooted in patriarchy and spread via media and social platforms, GD reinforces harmful norms and limits civic participation. The following four cases illustrate how GD operates and impacts lives in the Bangladeshi context.

Case 1

False Propaganda Targets Anti-Discrimination Activist Nusrat Tabassum

A recent wave of online harassment has targeted Nusrat Tabassum, a central executive committee member of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement and a student of Dhaka University's Department of Political Science. A video, falsely claimed to be a "leaked secret video of coordinator Nusrat," has gone viral on social media, accompanied by malicious captions such as "Bedi Coordinator Nusrat Tabassum is finished" and "Bedi Coordinator Nusrat Tabassum gifted the nation 3 minutes and 12 seconds." These derogatory texts have fuelled a smear campaign against her, aiming to tarnish her reputation and undermine her activism. Upon investigation, Rumour Scanner found that the video in question had been circulating online since 2022 and did not feature Nusrat Tabassum. The video, which was being presented as a recent leak, was revealed to have no connection to her, debunking the false claims. The spread of this disinformation highlights the growing challenges activists face in the digital age, where online harassment and defamation are often used as tools to silence voices of dissent. Nusrat Tabassum has yet to publicly respond to the smear campaign, but the incident underscores the need for vigilance against the harmful effects of fake news and online abuse.

Source: Rumour Scanner

Link: <https://rumorscanner.com/fact-check/coordinator-nusrat-tabassum-fake-video/136350>

Case 2

Deepfake Scandal Involving Press Secretary's Daughter Sparks Outrage

A disturbing case of deepfake manipulation has emerged, involving the daughter of Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam. The incident centres around doctored images that went viral, showing the public figure's daughter in explicit content. The manipulated images were created by replacing the face of a porn actor with that of the Press Secretary's daughter, a blatant attempt at character assassination. The incident has raised alarm among both the public and authorities, highlighting the growing menace of AI-generated image manipulation and its potential to cause irreparable damage to individuals' reputations. Fact Watch, an organisation dedicated to combating misinformation, has confirmed that the images circulating online were heavily doctored, exposing the malicious use of deepfake technology for spreading falsehoods. This case has sparked outrage, with many questioning the ethics and accountability of individuals behind such content. It has also underscored the increasing vulnerability of public figures and their families to such attacks in the digital age. Authorities are investigating the matter, with calls for stricter regulation of AI manipulation and measures to protect individuals from online character assassination. As the case unfolds, it serves as a stark reminder of the dangers posed by digital misinformation.

Source: Fact Watch

Link: <https://www.fact-watch.org/press-secretary-daughter-altered-photo/?sfnsn=wa>

Case 3

False AI-Generated Image Targets Syeda Rizwana Hasan and Actress Mehazabien

A fabricated and degrading narrative has emerged involving Syeda Rizwana Hasan, the Forest and Environment Advisor, and Mehazabien Chowdhury, a renowned Bangladeshi actress and model. An AI-generated photocard falsely depicts Mehazabien in an absurd scenario, wearing a dress made from 'environmentally friendly condoms'. The altered image, paired with a humiliating caption, seems aimed at tarnishing the reputations of both individuals. In the fabricated narrative, Advisor Rizwana is wrongfully portrayed as endorsing this bizarre and inappropriate use of condoms, adding to the absurdity and harm of the content. The intent behind this manipulation is clear: to degrade and ridicule both the

celebrity and the environmental advocate. Such misleading content, driven by technology, highlights the growing dangers of AI manipulation in the media. It raises serious concerns about the spread of false narratives that target public figures, potentially causing lasting damage to their personal and professional lives. In this case, the combination of celebrity culture and environmental advocacy has been used to create a shameful and harmful portrayal, revealing the need for greater vigilance and responsibility in media representation.

Source: Fact Watch

Link: <https://perma.cc/KK6Z-YPA2>

Case 4

Circular Claiming Puja Cherry as Advisor to ‘Chhatra Shibir Women Wing’ Surfaces across Social Media

A false circular last year circulated on social media, attributed to the women’s wing of Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir, the student organisation linked to the Jamaat-e-Islami political party. The circular falsely claimed that popular Bangladeshi actress Puja Cherry had been appointed as the law and human rights advisor for the group’s “non-Muslim” wing. The misleading claim quickly gained traction, causing confusion and concern among social media users. In response, Puja Cherry took to social media to firmly deny the allegation, labelling it as a rumour. She emphasised that she had no association with the position or the organisation, aiming to protect her reputation and distance herself from the false claim. Fact-checking organisations and media outlets scrutinised the circular, exposing it as a fake. They highlighted several inconsistencies, such as the use of unofficial language and the absence of credible sources, casting doubt on its authenticity. These fact-checkers urged caution when sharing unverified information, particularly in the era of widespread digital misinformation. Monjurul Islam, president of Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir, also publicly refuted the rumour, declaring the claim completely baseless and dismissing it as an attempt to sow confusion. This incident underscores the critical need for careful fact-checking in the digital age.

Source: Somoy Entertainment

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJ4akM7LweI>

Case 5

Dr. Tasnim Zara, Joint-convenor of Jatiya Nagorik Committee, Associates with Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir

Dr. Tasnim Zara has strongly refuted the online disinformation falsely linking her to Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami political party. She categorically denied any association with the organization, emphasizing that the claims were baseless and misleading. Additionally, she dismissed allegations regarding any familial ties to the Advisor to the Ministry of Environment, Forest, Climate Change, and Water Resources, Rizwana Hasan, stating that such misinformation was deliberately spread to misrepresent her background and affiliations.

Source: Bangla Tribune

Link: <https://bangla.dhakatribune.com/তাসনিম-জারা-কখনোই-শিবির-বা-কোনো-রাজনীতির-সঙ্গে>

Chapter 5. Recommendations

The documentation and analysis of major civic space violations and gender disinformation over the past six months indicate a persistent trend of narrowing democratic space, marked by increasing media restrictions, suppression of cultural activities, and a decline in the rights to free speech and peaceful protest. In response to these alarming trends, a series of actionable recommendations have emerged from consultations with stakeholders, media professionals, civil society actors, and legal experts under several project activities. These insights aim to safeguard civic and digital rights, protect journalists, and ensure accountability from both state and non-state actors. The following recommendations offer a strategic pathway to foster a more inclusive, transparent, and rights-based environment in Bangladesh:

- **Rights-based legal frameworks should be developed** to hold digital platforms accountable for harmful and gender-based content, ensuring this does not compromise civil liberties.
- **National laws must be revised** to align with international and regional human rights standards, particularly concerning freedom of expression and protection from digital abuse.
- **Structured, inclusive consultations are essential**, legal reforms should be informed by input from journalists, legal experts, civil society organizations, and affected communities.
- **Legal provisions that enable arbitrary arrests or surveillance should be condemned**, as these can suppress dissent and further constrict civic space.
- **Transparency and accountability need to be institutionalized** within the legal system, balancing the regulation of online harm with the preservation of personal freedoms.
- **Journalists must be protected from both online and offline threats**, with specific measures to ensure their safety and shield them from retaliation.
- **Media regulatory bodies should be reformed** to operate independently and uphold ethical journalism through stronger oversight mechanisms.

- **Ethical journalism must be encouraged**, including efforts to curb ‘media trials’ that jeopardize legal due process and mislead public opinion.
- **Regular ethics and multimedia training should be integrated** into newsrooms to combat sensationalism and foster responsible, evidence-based reporting.
- **Sensitive and inclusive reporting must be promoted**, especially in coverage related to women, children, and all vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- **A network of credible sources should be established** to coordinate the sharing of verified information and counteract disinformation. Coalition of media and CSO can play a vital role in this regard.
- **Victims of DCS violation and GD, need one-stop support system**, comprehensive services for reporting, counseling, legal aid and access to any relevant information.
- **Mapping of relevant service providers must be undertaken** to streamline responses and ensure accessibility for victims.
- **Community-level digital literacy should be prioritized**, equipping the public with tools to identify mis- and disinformation, protect privacy, and understand civic rights.
- **Civil society organizations must be actively involved in fact-checking ecosystems**, serving as liaisons with platforms to strengthen content moderation and grievance redress.
- **Evidence-based research on DCS and gender disinformation should be supported**, enabling CSOs to document trends and influence policy through data-driven advocacy.
- **Grassroots advocacy and capacity building need to be enhanced**, sustaining long-term efforts to promote inclusive digital engagement and protect civic freedoms.

Concluding Remarks

As Bangladesh continues to navigate the complexities of a rapidly evolving digital landscape, the findings of this report underscore a stark reality, civic and digital spaces are shrinking, often at the expense of fundamental rights and democratic values. From the harassment of journalists and suppression of dissent to the deceptive spread of gender disinformation, the erosion of press freedom and online safety is not only a threat to individuals, it undermines the foundations of accountability, transparency, and inclusive governance.

This report, grounded in six months of rigorous media monitoring and documentation, serves as both a record of ongoing violations and a call to action. The outlined recommendations are not merely policy suggestions but urgent imperatives for building a society where freedom of expression is protected, gender justice is prioritized, and institutions are held to account.

To meet the objectives of SDG 16 and SDG 5 by 2030, guaranteeing access to information, safeguarding fundamental freedoms, and advancing gender equality, Bangladesh must embrace a rights-driven, inclusive, and participatory pathway. Achieving these goals requires unified action from the government, civil society, media, and international stakeholders, with a strong focus on the people at the centre. Restoring public trust, reclaiming civic space, and ensuring that digital platforms serve as tools for empowerment, not instruments of harm, are essential steps forward.

This moment demands urgent and decisive action.

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