

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

15 KILLING **275** INJURED

UNDER SPECIAL POWERS ACT

340 ACCUSED
TOTAL ARRESTS 93

CUSTODIAL DEATHS

10 CUSTODIAL DEATHS

JOURNALISTS SUFFERED

42 PHYSICAL ATTACK **40** LEGAL HARASSMENT

RELIGIOUS MINORITIES FACED

38 CASES OF VIOLENCE

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES FACED

05 CASES OF VIOLENCE

Human rights conditions in Bangladesh continued to worsen in May 2025. Our data shows increasing political tensions, growing divisions between different groups, violence against minority communities, and fewer opportunities for civil society to operate freely. This report examines major human rights violations that occurred during the month, with particular focus on attacks against religious minorities, journalists, political activists, and vulnerable groups.

We have seen attackers vandalized and burned down 20 houses in the Motua community area in Jessore .



WOMEN ARE TARGETED

Hefazat-e-Islam held a large rally in Dhaka on 3rd may, where it demanded the abolition of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission and made numerous misogynistic remarks against women involved in reform efforts. Senior leaders publicly labeled women advocates as "mentally sick" and "prostitutes," and activists reportedly beat an effigy of a woman at Dhaka University—an act widely condemned by women's rights organizations. The use of such dehumanizing language in public forums fosters an environment of fear and intimidation, aiming to silence women from civic participation.

RIGHT TO ASSEMBLY

In May 2025, protests near 'Jamuna' (the Chief Adviser's residence) showed clear inequality in how authorities treated different groups. The National Citizens Party (NCP), Jamaat-e-Islami, and other Islamic parties demanded a ban on the Awami League. BNP supporters demanded that Ishraque Hossain be sworn in as mayor. These protests were allowed and even supported by the city corporation by spraying cool water on the protestors. But when TNZ Group garment workers and JnU students were blocked and attacked by police. This unequal treatment violates the right to peaceful assembly and shows clear state bias.

ANTI-TERRORISM ACT AMENDMENT

In May 2025, the Advisory Council of Bangladesh approved an amendment to the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009, allowing the government to ban the activities of any person or entity involved in terrorism. Two provisions added to this amendment (Sections 18 and 20) explicitly ban any form of publicity, gatherings, speeches, or online presence by such banned groups. Following this amendment, the Council moved to ban all activities of the Awami League under this law. The decision came after sustained demands from political and civil society groups, including the National Citizens Party (NCP), Jamaat-e-Islami, and others.

1. Overview

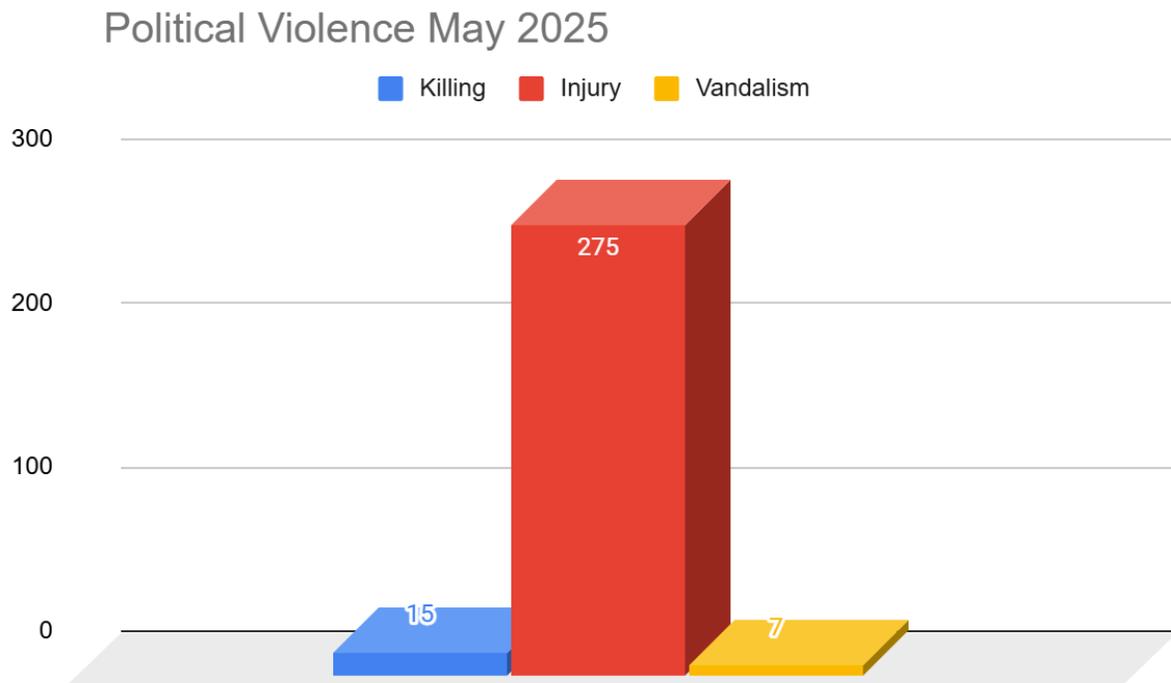
The human rights situation in Bangladesh deteriorated significantly in May 2025, as evident in the widespread patterns of violence, repression, and discrimination reported across various sectors of society. The month was marred by political conflict, violence against minority groups, attacks on journalists and cultural figures, and systemic failures in law enforcement and the judicial system. This report synthesizes key incidents into a comprehensive analysis under major themes of human rights violations and aims to contextualize these within broader socio-political dynamics.

Bangladesh's ongoing challenges stem from weak institutional accountability, politicized law enforcement, and an environment of impunity that emboldens perpetrators. Civil society actors, journalists, minority groups, and human rights defenders remain under threat, and democratic spaces continue to shrink. This report draws from documented incidents and media accounts to provide a human rights-based interpretation of these developments.

2. Political Violence

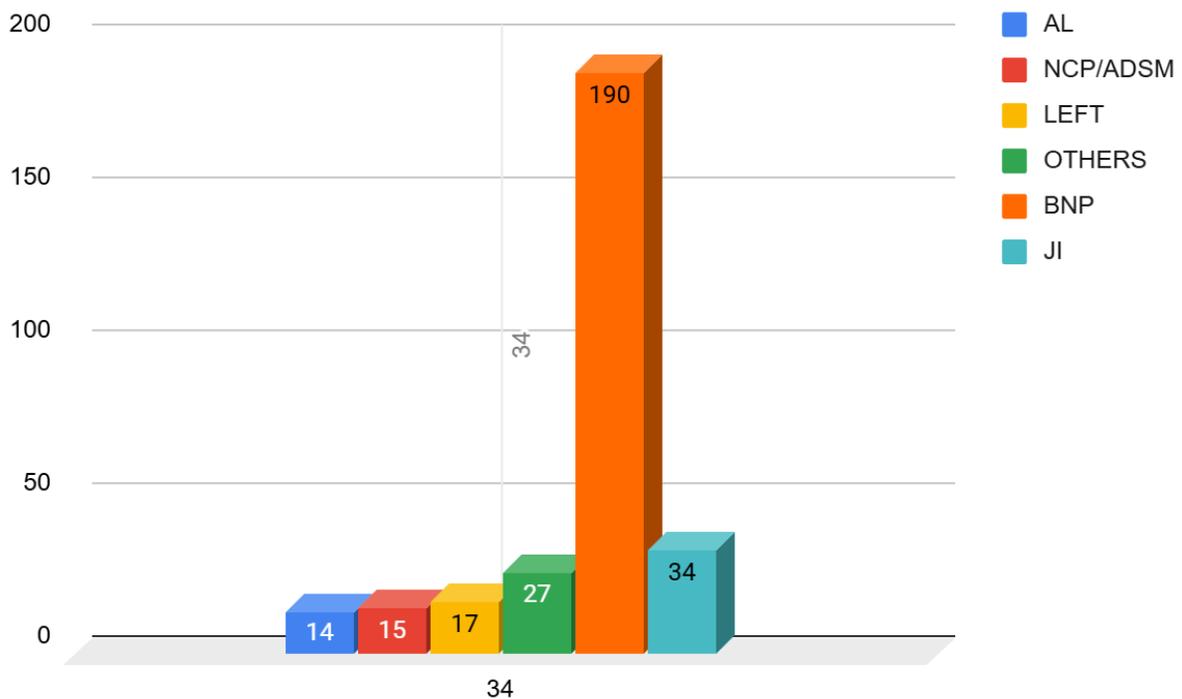
May 2024 witnessed 49 incidents of political violence resulting in 15 deaths and 275 injuries. Most of the violence occurred at the local level and often involved intra-party feuds within the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and confrontations between opposition groups and ruling party supporters. These incidents included targeted assassinations, public beatings, and attacks on student protestors. Despite the gravity

of the violence, few cases were investigated or led to arrests, illustrating a pattern of impunity.



A case study of the May 13 murder of [Shahriar Alam Samyo](#), a Dhaka University student and Chhatra Dal leader, shows how politically motivated violence is used to silence student leaders. No arrests were made, and the case received minimal media attention. Similarly, violent attacks on gatherings of the anti-discrimination student movement in Ashulia (May 14) and Rajshahi (May 27) resulted in injuries to students and journalists, highlighting state apathy and complicity.

We have seen supporters and leaders of the major political party, BNP, involved in confrontations and violence every month since August 2024, which is alarming. We are worried that the violence may escalate as the national election approaches.



The 15 deaths represent a serious escalation in the severity of political conflicts in the country. This pattern of violence continues trends seen in previous months, with local power disputes and internal party divisions driving most of the violent incidents rather than broader national political disagreements.

3. Violence Against Women

The report documents multiple incidents of violence against women, including rape, sexual harassment, and physical assault. The gang rape of a Hindu teenage girl on May 1 in Khagrachhari, and the sexual harassment of indigenous women in Mirsarai and Khagrachhari, are particularly alarming. Women from marginalized communities face compounded discrimination—both for their gender and their minority identity.

Boisakhi Islam Borsha, a female student leader assaulted in Faridpur on May 30, represents the double vulnerability of women in political activism. Her beating, which was broadcast live on social media, shows the extent of public violence against women activists and the normalization of such acts.

Misogynistic Speech and Attacks on Women's Rights Groups



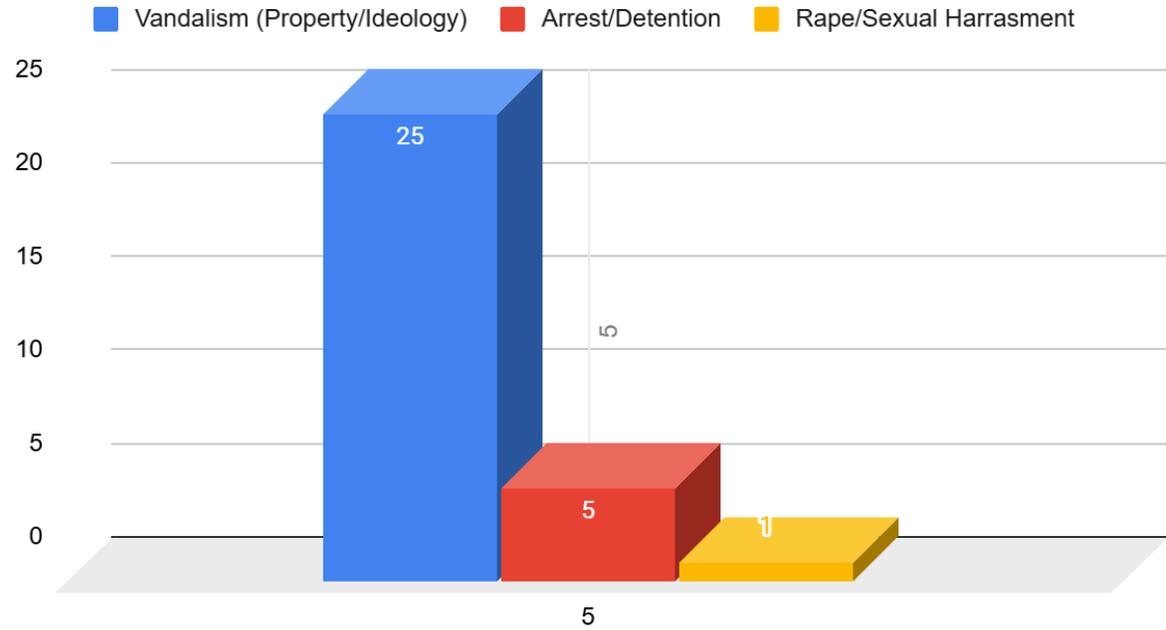
On 3 May 2025, Hefazat-e-Islam- a platform of Madrasha students and teachers held a large rally in Dhaka where it demanded the abolition of the Women’s Affairs Reform Commission and made numerous misogynistic remarks against women involved in reform efforts. Senior leaders publicly labeled women advocates as “mentally sick” and “prostitutes,” and activists reportedly beat an effigy of a woman at Dhaka University—an act widely condemned by women’s rights organizations. The use of such dehumanizing

language in public forums fosters an environment of fear and intimidation, aiming to silence women from civic participation. Later Hefazat-e-Islam issued a statement expressing regret over the ‘offensive’ speech of two leaders without taking any disciplinary action against them.

4. Violence Against Religious Minorities

Religious minorities faced 25 incidents of vandalism, five physical assaults, and two fatalities in May alone. These included attacks on Hindu temples, arson of homes, and mob violence, particularly targeting the Hindu Matua community after the death of Krishak Dal leader Tarikul Islam on May 22.

Attack on Religious Minority Groups May 2025



On May 22, 2025, following the murder of a local political leader, at [least 20 homes belonging to Hindu Matua families](#) in Dohor Moshiahati, Jessore, were violently

attacked, looted, and set on fire by unidentified assailants. Women and children were reportedly assaulted, vital documents were destroyed, and dozens of families were displaced. Despite clear evidence and a filed case, no arrests have been made in connection with the communal attack, prompting public outrage from the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council. Similarly, the desecration of the Kali temple in Moulvibazar on May 5 and the arson at Manikganj's temple on May 27 illustrate religiously motivated violence.

The lack of timely justice and accountability in this case signals a dangerous normalization of mob violence and deepens the vulnerability of religious minorities in the country.

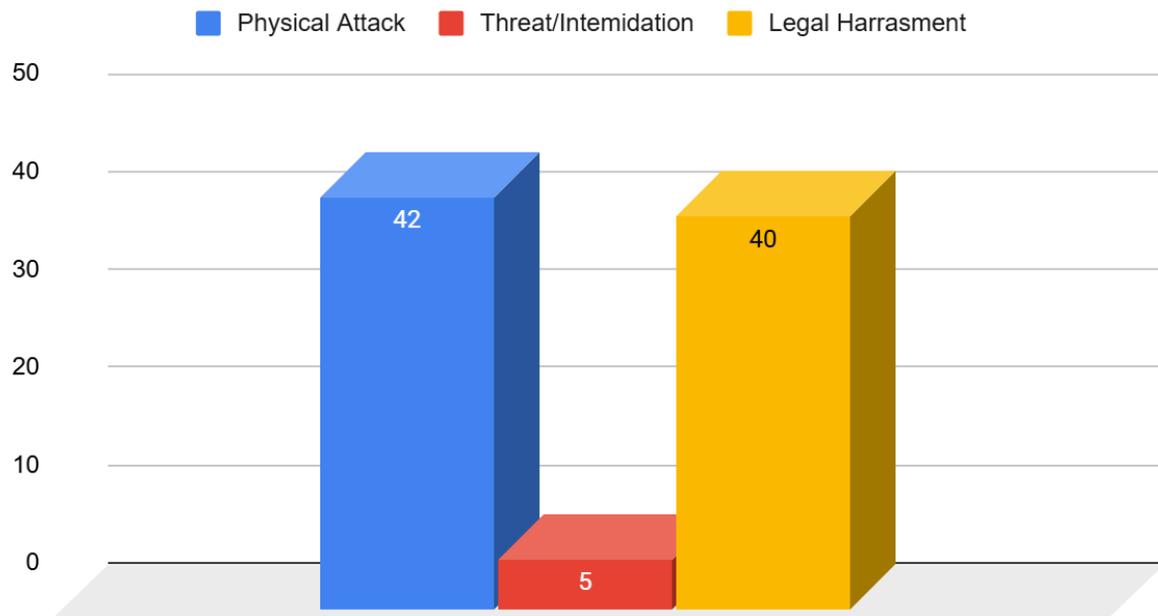
5. Freedom of Expression

A case study of Nadira Yasmin, a women's rights activist and professor, [shows the misuse of administrative power](#). Transferred as an Officer on Special Duty (OSD) without legal process, she was punished for her perceived critique of religion. This reflects a broader pattern where academic and civic voices are shut down through soft repression.

A. Harassment of Journalists

Freedom of expression, especially press freedom, was gravely threatened in May. At least 42 journalists were physically attacked, 40 were subjected to legal harassment, and 5 faced intimidation. Journalists were attacked by political actors and occasionally by law enforcement for reporting on corruption or participating in protests.

Attack On Journalists



On May 22, Thursday night, unknown miscreants [set fire to the home of writer and theater artist Prashanta Kumar Haldar](#) in Raghunathpur village, Kaliganj Upzila. The fire destroyed straw stacks, fuel supplies, and a cattle shed that were located within the family's property compound.

One alarming case occurred on May 13 in Chattogram, where [26 journalists were named in a case](#) accusing them of attempted murder. This politically motivated charge aims to silence press coverage of state and party misconduct. On May 26, [Chhatra Dal activists assaulted journalists](#) photographing protests at Titumir College, demonstrating how journalism is criminalized and suppressed.

B. Mass Arrest and Targeted Repression

Mass arrests and politically motivated charges were frequently used to silence dissent throughout May. Over 200 individuals were detained across the country, including students, opposition activists, and ordinary citizens attending protests.

For example, on May 19, journalist [Firoz Kamal Faruq was arrested](#) in Bogura under sabotage charges, despite the absence of evidence linking him to any violent act. Similarly, a mass legal case in [Tangail implicated 193 people](#)—including journalists and former ministers—accused of vote rigging. Such sweeping accusations serve more to intimidate than to seek justice.

C. Freedom of Assembly

In May 2025, protests near 'Jamuna' (the Chief Adviser's residence) showed clear inequality in how authorities treated different groups. The [National Citizens Party \(NCP\)](#), Jamaat-e-Islami, and other Islamic parties demanded a ban on the Awami League. BNP supporters demanded that [Ishraque Hossain be sworn in as mayor](#). These protests were allowed and even supported by the city corporation by [spraying cool water on the protestors](#).

But when [TNZ Group garment workers](#) demanded unpaid wages, and [Jagannath University students and teachers](#) demanded housing and campus expansion, they were blocked or attacked by police. This unequal treatment violates the right to peaceful assembly and shows clear state bias.

D. HRD's are Targeted

Human rights defenders (HRDs) in Bangladesh faced increased threats, harassment, and violence throughout May 2025, particularly those advocating for women's rights, minority protection, and freedom of expression.

On May 25, women's rights activist and professor Nadira Yasmin was transferred to a distant college as an Officer on Special Duty (OSD) without due process, following public pressure from religious hardline groups who accused her of blasphemy. Rather than investigating the threats against her, the government punished the victim, setting a dangerous precedent of state complicity in suppressing dissent.

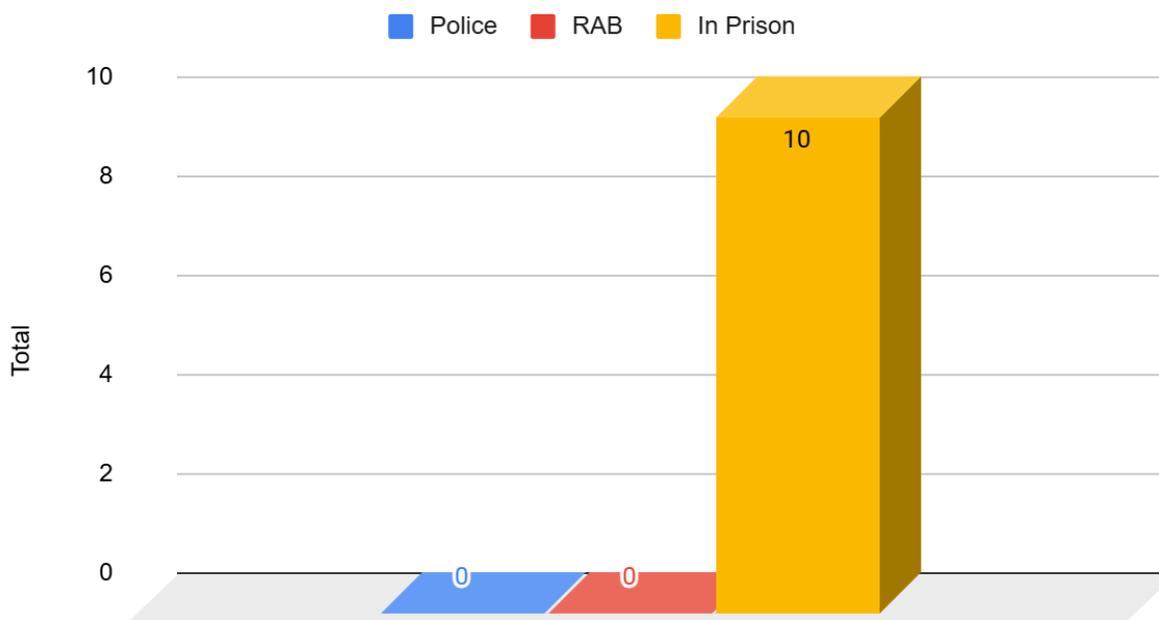
On May 22, unknown assailants set fire to the residence of writer and theatre artist Prashanta Kumar Haldar in Kaliganj, causing massive property damage. The arson followed a series of intimidation incidents, including night-time harassment and attacks on his home, indicating systematic targeting based on his public engagement and cultural work.

The government must urgently implement mechanisms to safeguard HRDs, investigate all forms of retaliation against them, and hold perpetrators accountable through transparent and independent legal procedures.

6. State Violence and Custodial Deaths

Ten custodial deaths were reported in May 2025, illustrating the deteriorating state of detention facilities and systemic abuses within the criminal justice system.

Death in Custody - May 2025



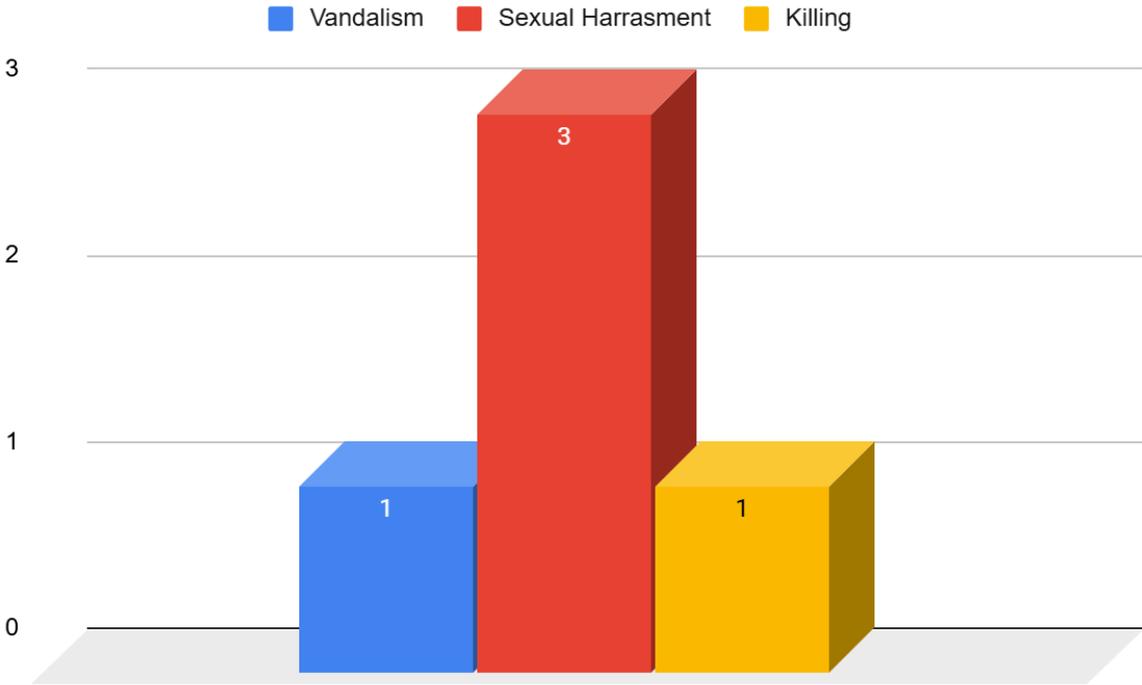
The case of Sohag Bhuiyan is especially troubling. Arrested in Daudkandi, he was reportedly tortured in transit and later [died in jail](#). His brother reported signs of severe beating, but no official inquiry has been opened.

Furthermore, detainees from ethnic communities, such as Lal Tneng Kim Bom of the Bom community, died under suspicious circumstances, raising concerns about ethnically discriminatory practices in detention.

7. Violence Against the Indigenous Community

Indigenous communities in Bangladesh faced serious human rights violations during May 2025. A total of at least 7 separate incidents were reported, including 4 cases of sexual violence, 1 death, and 2 instances of property destruction. These incidents

highlight the vulnerability of indigenous groups, especially women, in remote and militarized areas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and beyond.



On May 5, in Bandarban's Thanchi sub-district, the [body of a 29-year-old Kheyang woman was recovered](#) in a drain near the under-construction Thanchi-Remakreri-Laikri road. She had reportedly gone alone to plant rice in her jhum field but never returned. Her body was later discovered naked, showing signs of physical assault, indicating a possible case of rape and murder. On May 12, in Chittagong's Mirsarai, a Jubo Dal leader was accused of [attempting to rape a ninth-grade student from the Tripura community](#). On the same day in Rangamati, a Bengali youth was accused of sexually assaulting a 15-year-old Chakma schoolgirl. On May 21, in Bandarban's Alikadam, a [Buddha statue under construction at Meraitang Jadipahad was vandalized](#), causing outrage among the local Buddhist population. This act not only damaged property but

also constituted a direct attack on the cultural and religious identity of the indigenous Buddhist community.

These incidents reflect a pattern of gender-based and ethnically motivated violence against indigenous communities, often committed with impunity. Indigenous women in particular face intersecting forms of discrimination, being targeted both for their ethnicity and their gender. The consistent failure of law enforcement to provide justice or protection highlights a systemic bias and the urgent need for robust institutional safeguards.

8. Law and Order situation

Mob Violence

Alarming trend of mob violence continues with at least 34 incidents of mob lynching resulting to the death of 7 people and seriously injuring 38 persons.

Finding Unknown Dead Bodies

In May 2025, at least 55 unidentified bodies were recovered across Bangladesh, raising serious concerns about public safety and accountability. Cases include a body found inside a mosque in Nachol, a mutilated corpse in Chuadanga, a man with tied limbs near Khulna Shipyard, and an unconscious man later declared dead in Dhaka. A rickshaw driver with a slit throat was also found in Netrokona. Most cases remain unresolved. These deaths demand urgent and transparent investigation.

9. Conclusion

The human rights crisis in Bangladesh is deepening, driven by political repression, rising communal violence, and institutional failures. The state has repeatedly failed to protect its most vulnerable citizens—including women, minorities, indigenous people, and political dissenters. The impunity enjoyed by perpetrators, coupled with the suppression of civil liberties, presents a grave challenge to democratic governance and the rule of law.

The international community must hold the Bangladeshi government accountable to its treaty obligations, including the ICCPR, CEDAW, and CAT. Domestically, immediate reforms are necessary to depoliticize law enforcement, protect the rights of minorities and women, and ensure the freedom of the press. Only through transparency, accountability, and inclusive governance can Bangladesh begin to reverse this downward trajectory.