

BANGLADESH

PEACE AND SECURITY



Bangladesh: Peace and Security



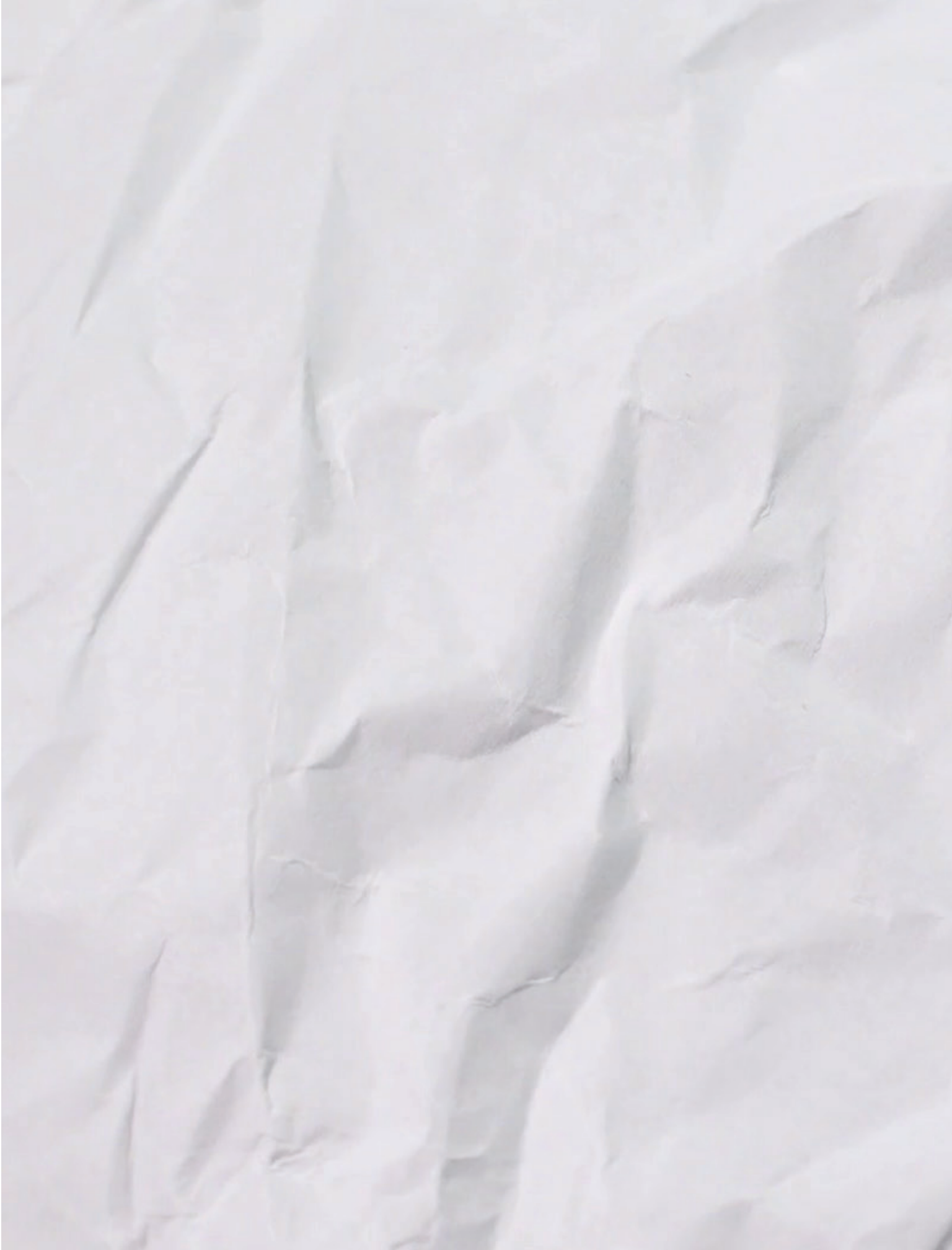


Table of contents

Introduction

01. Preventing Violent Extremism	05
02. The Fight Against Terrorism	08
03. Tackling Terrorism Financing	09
04. Countering Terrorism	11
05. Bangladesh in UN Peacekeeping	13
06. People's Perception of Security	14

Introduction

In recent years Bangladesh's commitment to combating extremism and terrorism has received glowing appraisal at both home and abroad. In particular, since the current Awami League government under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina came to power in 2009, Bangladesh ceased being a safe haven for national and transnational terrorists, a notoriety the country garnered during the first years of the 2000s. Bangladesh has also been leading the global efforts to maintain peace and security in conflict-ridden parts of the world by being one of the highest contributors of troops to various United Nations Peacekeeping missions. Bangladesh has also played a commendable role in global peace by sheltering more than a million forcibly displaced Rohingyas who fled violence against them in Rakhine, Myanmar.

In today's world, national and global security face their toughest challenge from the twin menaces of terrorism and violent extremism. In recent years, Bangladesh too has been subjected to increased threats from terrorists and violent extremists. As a responsible and active member of the global community, and under the determined leadership and zero-tolerance policy of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh has been taking the fight to terrorists and violent extremists. The country is also breaking new grounds in adopting new strategies for preventing violent extremism through faith-based education, awareness programmes and mainstreaming those most vulnerable to the threat of radicalism.

In this publication, we will be looking at the efforts and successes of Bangladesh in preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism and the role the country is playing in terms of maintaining global peace and security.



01 Preventing Violent Extremism



Apart from the legal and institutional arrangements, the government has also integrated the civil society, NGOs and media in strengthening the campaign against terrorism and militancy. Apart from emphasizing the role of educational institutions to provide an effective counter-narrative to messages of hate and extremism, the current government has also been engaging the civil society sections, cultural organizations and social activists to raise public awareness about the dangers of radicalization, extremism and militancy.

The country is working to prevent, as well as counter, terrorism and violent extremism through undertaking a plethora of social, educational and religious measures. In 2010, the government formulated a strong anti-extremism National Education Policy, which highlights the need for reforming the Madrassa Islamic religious school curriculum.

The government also introduced anti extremism chapters in academic text books. Additionally, the Ministry of Education has been organizing awareness programs against terrorism in different schools and colleges. The government is developing a standard national curriculum that includes language, math, and science; and minimum standards of secular subjects to be taught in all primary schools, up to the eighth grade, in order to make sure that students of all

mediums receive the appropriate type of education.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and the National Committee on Militancy Resistance and Prevention is working with Imams (Islamic religious leaders) and religious scholars to build public awareness against terrorism. Under the auspices of the Government-run Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, around 70,000 Imams have been trained in a variety of topics, including building awareness against terrorism and violent extremism. Anti-terrorism sermons are being delivered in mosques across the country since 1 July, 2016.

The relevant law enforcement agencies are engaging religious leaders in the fight against violent extremism by helping to counter militant propaganda with appropriate scripture-based messages and engaging Imams to speak to surrendered terrorists to explain that the Holy Quran does not support terrorist violence. The police also are continuing community policing efforts and working with local universities to identify missing students and to curb radicalization of university students. Local research institutions, including private think tanks and both public and private universities, have begun to engage in research and awareness activities on preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism.

In 2014, Bangladesh became a board member and pilot country for the Global Fund for Community Engagement and Resilience, a public-private global fund to support local, grassroots efforts to counter violent extremism. So far, programmes under the GCERF have been rolled out in three districts: Satkhira, Cox's Bazar and Chapainawabganj. In 2016-17, Bangladesh organizations continued cooperative activities through the Community Support Mechanism (CSM) under the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). The CSM signed grants with three local organizations as principal recipients of GCERF funds.

The government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has undertaken two major initiatives to use the power of faith and religion themselves to counter those who seek to besmirch their names by engaging in violence. They are: first, a mega mosques and Islamic cultural centers project; and Second, by mainstreaming one of the largest faith-based groups, the students and graduates from the Qawmi Madrassah education system. The Awami League Government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has launched a billion

dollar nationwide mosques and Islamic Cultural Centre project. Under this project, being implemented by the Islamic Foundation under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Bangladesh Government will build 560 model mosques across the country to preach accurate and correct Islam and to counter the religious misconceptions which cause terrorism and violent extremism. The model mosques will have special features including research facilities, seminar rooms, and libraries to provide religious education and "spiritual revival".

The Government of Bangladesh last year recognized the Dawah E Hadith qualification of Qawmi Madrasahs as being equivalent to Masters (MA) in Islamic Studies or Arabic. Qawmi Madrasahs are one of two main types of Islamic faith schools in Bangladesh, the other being the Government-regulated Aliyah Madrasahs. As a result of the recognition, graduates of Qawmi education can now apply for jobs meant for master's degree holders for the first time. Already, this recognition has yielded positive results for the Qawmi graduates, as on 5 March 2018, a total of 1,010 Qawmi madrasa graduates



joined the government service for the first time. The graduates joined as teachers of the Qawmi Faculty at Darul Arkam Ibtedaye Madrasha under a project titled 'Mosque Based Children and Mass Education Programme' being implemented by Islamic Foundation (IF).

This was a big step from the current government in their aim of mainstreaming Qawmi education. Efforts are currently underway to formulate the Bangladesh Qawmi Madrasa Education Authority Act. To that end, an Analysis Committee has been formed to properly draft this legislation. As per the recommendations, an examination board under the board will be formed, consisting of representatives from the six existing Qawmi Madrasah boards. Qawmi Madrasahs are now working to ensure that apart from the core religious teachings of their institutions, they have formulated 60 textbooks on general education for students of Classes 1 to 8. These books include subjects such as Bangla, English, Mathematics, Geography, Social Studies, General Knowledge and Grammar etc. Thus, steps such as

recognition has resulted in the otherwise very guarded Qawmi education system to open up to more general subjects of teaching as opposed to only religious teachings.

The steps taken by the Sheikh Hasina Government in mainstreaming Qawmi education are crucial in terms of preventing any violent extremism among Qawmi graduates. This is principally because according to a 2015 research by the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, there are around 14,000 Qawmi Madrasahs in Bangladesh with a total of around 1.4 million students. Every year, a large percentage of youths graduate from these institutions. Traditionally, their future roles have only been restricted to religious employment and scholarships. Recognizing their highest qualification would help bring them into the mainstream education and society and ensure employment opportunities. This would prevent any sense of disenfranchisement for a large among of youths.





02 The Fight Against Terrorism



In terms of terrorist groups in Bangladesh, the most active and violent has been the Jamaatul Mujaheedin Bangladesh (JMB). The fight against the JMB has been bloody, but the country has been able to almost break their entire operations network as a result of high profile operations, prosecutions and convictions. Between July 2016 and July 2017, in a span of 12 months, 20 major anti-terrorism raids were conducted across the country which resulted in the arrests of 41 terrorists belonging to neo-JMB. During these raids, as law enforcers faced off with armed terrorists, 57 such terrorists were killed in gunfights. 11 valiant law enforcement officers, at the apex of the fight against terrorism, gave their lives during these operations.

So far, 50 cases have been lodged against the arrested terrorists under the prevalent anti-terrorism and arms and explosives laws of the country. Even before the crackdown following the 1 July 2016 attack, 200 terrorists belonging to JMB and other groups were arrested, while 13 were killed in fight with law enforcers. According to experts and analysts, the extensive crackdowns on the terrorists after the attack on Holy Artisan have broken down backbones of the armed activists. The groups have lost their organizational capacity to carry out attacks on a large scale as security officials are constantly detecting their locations and

movements with intensified intelligence vigilance. The activities of JMB have been brought under strict control as the law enforcers have successfully stopped regrouping of the neo JMB as most of their top leaders are now behind bars or killed in action.



Tackling Terrorism Financing

Bangladesh improved 28 positions in the anti-money laundering and counter terrorist financing (AML/CTF) index of the Basel Institute on Governance. The country came in at no. 82 out of 146 in the 2017 edition of the Basel AML Index, up from its previous spot of 54. A total of 14 indicators dealing with AML/CTF regulations, corruption, financial standards, political disclosure and the rule of law are aggregated into one overall risk score for the index. The Switzerland-based institute prepares score on the basis of a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 to 3.3 being low-risk, 3.3 to 6.6 medium-risk and 6.6 to 10 high-risk. Bangladesh's score this year was 5.79, down from its last year score of 6.40. As per the score, Bangladesh is among the 100 medium-risk countries, including India that managed a score of 5.58. In South Asia, only India ranked ahead of Bangladesh: 88. Pakistan ranked 46, Sri Lanka 25, Nepal 14, Myanmar 13 and Afghanistan 2.

The report said Bangladesh saw a big jump in its ranking due to the results of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) (Mutual Evaluation Report in October 2016). In fact, Bangladesh is one of the 10 countries that made the most progress, along with China, Israel, Germany, France, Australia, Luxemburg, Latvia, Greece and Sudan. According to the FATF report, Bangladesh has made significant progress since its last evaluation report in 2009, reflecting political commitment



and leadership on AML/CTF. The positive changes were seen in developing preventive measures for the financial sector and applying significant resources to raise awareness of AML/CTF.

According to the central bank of Bangladesh, the country has implemented all 40 of the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering's recommendations. The country managed full compliance in 6 categories, near full compliance in 22 and partial compliance in 12. A positive seal of approval came also from the 19th annual general meeting of the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering, the regional watchdog, held on August 7, 2016 in the USA. There, Bangladesh retained its position as a country free of risk of money laundering and terror financing. The latest APG report showed Bangladesh's rating is substantial in three areas, moderate in four and low in four. Bangladesh is ahead of Sri Lanka in this ranking. The country was not found non-compliant in any of the indicators.





04

Countering Terrorism

Law Enforcement

To better coordinate efforts to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism, the government in 2009 formed a 17-member “National Committee on Militancy Resistance and Prevention”, headed by the Minister for Home Affairs and comprising of representation from relevant ministries and security agencies. By the same token, the government also formed an eight-member “National Committee for Intelligence Coordination,” with the Prime Minister as the Chairperson, to coordinate between law enforcement and intelligence services as regards terrorism and violent extremism.

In December 2015, Bangladesh formed a 600-member police unit specializing in combating terrorism and violent extremism. The “Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime” unit has been formed to combat terrorism, cybercrimes, terrorism financing and mobile banking related crimes. The unit, led by a Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police, has been formed with members from Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT), bomb disposal unit, and the dog squad. The unit collects information and data on terrorists and transnational criminals at home and abroad, monitors their activities, and arrests them.

Law and Policy

After the Awami League Government came to power in 2009, Bangladesh enacted for the first time, specific legislation designed to combat terrorism: the Anti-Terrorism Act 2009. To bring this anti-terror legislation in line with the UN's Action Plan on Counter Terrorism Strategy and other resolutions, it has been amended twice subsequently. In the last such amendment, the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act 2013, provisions were made for the courts to accept videos, still photographs and audio clips used in social media as evidence. The amended law also provides for capital punishment and stiff financial penalties for terrorism and subversive activities, depending upon the gravity of the crimes.

The broad language of the legislation provides several mechanisms by which Bangladesh can implement UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2178, which requires nations to address the foreign terrorist fighter threat. In 2011, the government formulated a “National Counter Terrorism Strategy”. In August of that year, Bangladesh acceded to the Palermo Convention against Transnational Organised Crimes. Reforms have also been undertaken in the area of terrorism financing. In 2012, the government

enacted the Money Laundering Prevention Act 2012, which is the first legislation in Bangladesh making specific provisions for money laundering and terrorism financing. The Financial Intelligence Unit of the Bangladesh Bank has taken effective steps to curb terrorism financing. Since 2009, the government has banned five extremist outfits, namely, Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HUJI-B), Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT), Shahadat-e-Al Hikma and Ansarullah Bangladesh Team (ABT). Apart from these known local groups, all terrorist groups designated as such by the UN Security Council Committee have also been banned.

The Bangladesh Government is set to establish seven Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunals in seven divisions as fast track courts for quick disposal of cases involving terrorism and militancy. The Law Ministry has created posts of seven judges to be appointed in seven tribunals and have already obtained required approvals from the Public Administration and Finance Ministries. Initiatives are now underway to set up the first two tribunals in Dhaka and Chittagong and judges of these two fast track courts were expected to be appointed "soon" along with 10 other related officials and staff.

International Cooperation

In 2012, Bangladesh also enacted the Mutual Legal Assistance Act 2012 which provides a legal framework for inter-country cooperation in carrying out enquiries, prosecutions and trial of criminal activities. This law empowers the government of Bangladesh to freeze properties of criminals and terrorists and their equipment used in criminal activities in line with the request of a foreign country. In July 2013, Bangladesh secured membership of Egmont group, a global body of 131 member nations to combat money laundering, financing of terrorism and other financial crimes. Bangladesh also became a member of the Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering, which is an autonomous and collaborative international organization consisting of 41 members and a number of international and regional observers.

On January 28, 2013, Bangladesh and India signed an extradition treaty for disrupting the regional connections and networks among terrorist outfits in South Asia. Additionally,

Bangladesh and India has agreed to implement a Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP) and has agreed to increase the number of joint patrolling with a view to curbing criminal activities, including terrorism, along the long and porous border. On 22 October 2013, Bangladesh signed an agreement with the USA which aims to enhance counterterrorism cooperation between the two countries in terms of capacity building, information sharing, and ensuring increased exchanges between law enforcement agencies. Bangladesh and USA are currently undertaking multifaceted cooperation in terms of developing the former's capacity to fight terrorism, which has resulted in enhanced security of its borders and land, sea, and airports of entry. Bangladesh continues to participate with the US State Department, Department of Justice, U.S. Special Operations Command Pacific to capacitate its own personnel to apprehend, prosecute and fight terrorism and violent extremism. Bangladesh is party to various counterterrorism protocols under the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and is bringing the country's counterterrorism efforts in line with the four pillars of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. From 2016, Bangladesh is also working closely with Austria, Germany and Norway in the area of countering terrorism and violent extremism.





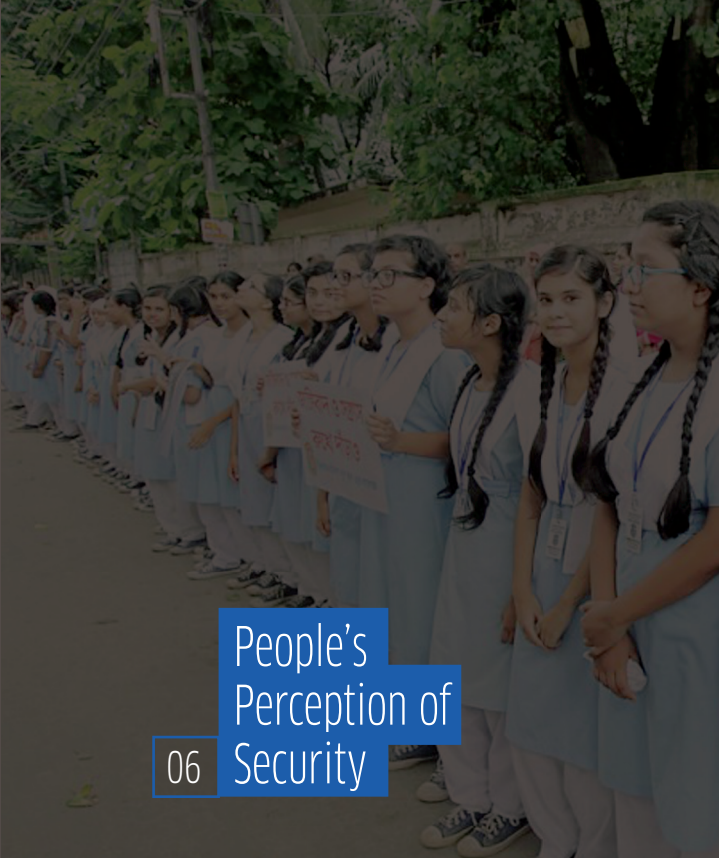
05 Bangladesh in UN Peacekeeping

As of 30 April 2018, Bangladesh is the second largest personnel contributor to United Nations peacekeeping missions with 6,992 police, military experts and troops on the ground in various conflict ridden parts of the world. There are multiple instances of Bangladeshi peacekeepers laying down their lives in the service of world peace. In terms of troops and police contributions, Bangladesh is currently the fourth largest contributor to UN peacekeeping missions around the world. Due to Bangladesh's role in this regard, the United Nations had the following to say recently:

“Bangladesh is one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping operations. The South Asian nation first deployed uniformed personnel to serve with the Organization in 1988 when they were deployed to help monitor the armistice between Iran and Iraq. Over the past three decades, the contributions of these brave men and women in the countries in which they serve have been immense...Bangladeshi peacekeepers work in various roles – some provide protection, others heal and design roads – but all serve under the blue flag to support the governments and peoples of the countries in which they serve...In Haiti, an all-female Bangladeshi Formed Police Unit served with the UN mission, known

as MINUSTAH, from 2015 until October 2017, when the mission completed its work...UN peacekeepers from Bangladesh work in some of the world's hotspots, including the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and the Darfur region of Sudan...In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Bangladeshi troops regularly patrol villages to ensure security...Members of the Bangladeshi contingents play different roles in UN peacekeeping missions around the world. UN peacekeepers from Bangladesh provides free medical consultations to residents of a community in the Central African Republic...In 2017, Bangladesh sent two female combat pilots to the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) – Flight Lieutenant Nayma Haque and Flight Lieutenant Tamanna-E-Lutfi...Bangladeshi engineers serving with the UN mission in South Sudan are leading efforts to improve a 78-kilometre stretch of road between Gumbo and Mangalla, on the artery between Juba and Bor. The road connects local communities, allowing them to more easily bring goods to the market...”

“Bangladesh: Three decades of service and sacrifice in UN peacekeeping”, United Nations, 02.02.2018



People's Perception of Security

06



All recent public opinion polls show that a majority of Bangladeshis are satisfied with the security situation in their country and the way the government has been handling all security matters.

As per the opinion poll by International Republican Institute (IRI) conducted in May 2018, 68% respondents felt that the current security situation in Bangladesh is either very good or somewhat good. This has been a recurring theme in the last few years. 45% respondents opined in the coming days that the security situation will further improve.

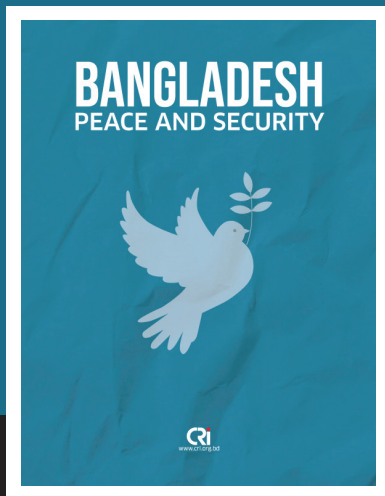
According to an opinion poll by Washington-based Democracy International in October 2016, majority Bangladeshis are satisfied with security situation and counter terrorism efforts of the government. As per the survey, 77% Bangladeshis feel the Awami League Government is doing a good or excellent job in preventing extremist attacks. The same survey showed that 72% Bangladeshis feel that the current government is doing a good or excellent job in making people feel safe.

The polls also show very high confidence rating for the law enforcement agencies like RAB (87%) and police (76%). Similar optimism and satisfaction was also demonstrated in an opinion poll commissioned by the Independent

newspaper and carried out by Research Development Centre (RDC) in the first quarter of 2017. 63% of the respondents stated that their family's physical security has improved, compared to 16.9% who do not feel that there has been any improvement in this regard. 20% answered that the state of physical security of their families is the same as before.

According to the Global Peace Index (GPI) 2016, Bangladesh ranked 3rd most peaceful country in South Asia after Bhutan and Nepal. Bangladesh stood 83rd in overall GPI rankings while Bhutan and Nepal 13th and 78th respectively, revealed the GPI 2016, conducted by the Sydney-based Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) and published in November 2016. South Asia's position remained unchanged at eighth out of the nine regions, according to the Index. Iceland again remained world's most peaceful country, according to the GPI 2016.





Bangladesh: Peace and Security

Published by Centre for Research and Information(CRI), September 2018

H 2, R 11(New), 32(Old), Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka- 1209

Email: info@cri.org.bd

www.cri.org.bd

CRI Centre for Research
and Information

