



# ASIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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Mr. Ban Ki Moon  
Secretary General of the United Nations  
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Pages: 02

## An Open Letter to the UN Secretary General by the Asian Human Rights Commission

Your Excellency, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki Moon:

### UN should act immediately to save Bangladeshi lives

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) is writing to you to bring to your attention the alarming reality in Bangladesh. In the lead up to the 5 January 2014 general election, citizens, identified by the incumbent government as supporters of the political opposition, are being extra-judicially executed, daily, by state agents. At the moment, a joint team of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and the Border Guards, Bangladesh (BGB) are engaged in rounding up people, and in burning down houses and businesses of persons, identified by the ruling political coalition as sympathizers of the opposition political groups in different districts.

Suppression of political opposition, by all means, including brute force, has been a priority for the political coalition in power. This has provoked violent retaliation by the opposition. The bloody saga is playing out daily in Dhaka and throughout the country.

Since the announcement of the election schedule on 25 November 2013, an estimated 105 persons have lost their lives in Bangladesh. These deaths are directly related to attempts by the government to hold partisan elections and attempts by the opposition parties to prevent the same. Such loss of life must end immediately. All efforts must be taken to ensure this.

The AHRC appreciates the efforts of your office, in sending a special representative, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, to Bangladesh with a brief to negotiate peace between the opposing political factions. The AHRC understands the enormous challenge that the UN Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, Mr. Fernandez-Taranco embarked upon.

While the UN representative has succeeded in bringing the antagonistic political forces to dialog, there has been no reduction in arbitrary executions in the country. The ruling political coalition has ordered their cadres, from December 15 onwards, to "assist" law enforcement agencies. The AHRC is extremely concerned that this "assistance" is translating into thugs associated with the ruling coalition joining forces with state agencies and engaging in murder, torture, and rape at will, unleashing terror upon the entire society.

Justice institutions in the country are virtually under the absolute control of the government.



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The government is using its capacity to manipulate the magistracy to justify prolonged periods of arbitrary detention of persons who have expressed public opinion against the government's gag on dissent. The country's media is silenced by threat and intimidation and are not allowed to report even massive human rights abuses. The state and its agencies target everyone acting against the will of the incumbent government.

Human rights defenders, and members of civil society who criticise the government, are not only being forced to give up on cases of human rights abuse, including cases of extrajudicial executions. They are in imminent danger. Such persons are being arrested and detained on fabricated charges. The AHRC has information that civil society members are under constant surveillance. They are receiving an increased number of life-threatening calls by unidentified officials, ordering them to stop informing the international community about the overwhelming violence in Bangladesh. The deterioration has reached a tipping point.

The AHRC believes that without extraordinary effort, initiated by the international community, which includes the Office of the UN Secretary General, the enormous scale of violence and brutality in Bangladesh will continue to escalate. We therefore request your kind office to take all possible measures to ensure that the international community is adequately briefed about the daily blood-bath taking place in Bangladesh.

The AHRC further requests your office to call for credible and verified information from all possible sources in Bangladesh to ascertain, on a day-to-day basis, the situation on the ground, so that every possible action is undertaken to end the violence immediately.

Sincerely



Bijo Francis  
Executive Director  
Asian Human Rights Commission, Hong Kong



CC:

Ms. Navanethem Pillay  
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR-UNOG, SWITZERLAND

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*About: The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) is a Hong Kong based organization that monitors human rights in the region. To protect & promote these rights, the AHRC documents violations, advocates for justice, & proposes institutional reform.*