

39th Session of the Human Rights Council

Agenda Item 6, UPR Outcomes: Bangladesh

Organisation: Christian Solidarity Worldwide

Speaker: Claire Denman



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free to believe

Thank you Mr President.

While CSW welcomes the number of recommendations made to protect human rights defenders and journalists in Bangladesh from harassment, we remain deeply concerned by the pervading climate of media suppression, especially the misuse of legislation.

In particular, CSW wishes to draw the Council's attention to Section 57 of the Information Technology Act which is being used to stifle media and political dissent, and criticism of the ruling party.

For example, renowned photographer Shahidul Alam who is still being detained, was arrested on 5th August after giving an interview to Al Jazeera about student protests over road safety. He was officially charged by police for making what is described as "provocative comments." At least 23 reporters were injured in deliberate attacks by members of the ruling party and its student wing while covering the road safety protests.

CSW urges the government to safeguard freedom of expression and address concerns regarding the draft Digital Security Act.

The attack on acting editor, Mahmudur Rahman, who was assaulted by the Bangladesh Chhatra League after leaving a court in western Bangladesh on 22 July and Shahjahan Bachchu, a progressive writer and publisher who was shot and killed on 11 June this year after being attacked by masked men on motorcycles, are also cases of particular concern.

CSW urges the government to respect the recommendations on HRDs, to uphold their rights and to allow them to carry out activities without fear of intimidation, arrest or prosecution.

In addition, CSW notes with regret that recommendations on freedom of religion or belief remain few and far between, considering that the situation facing religious minorities remains a serious concern. In particular, we remain concerned by instances of violence and rape against Hindu, Christian and indigenous girls and women from religious minority communities.

CSW urges the government to guarantee the rights of religious minorities, especially investigating sexual violence against Hindu women and girls.

Thank you