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Human Rights Abuses in Policing During the 2024 July Revolution in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The human rights violations by law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh, are a wider and systematic pattern of oppression grounded in the instrumentalization of coercive power by politicizing the police department. The study analyzes patterns of police misconduct that emerged during the 2024 July Revolution in Bangladesh and its relation to world trends of state repression in the global south, using qualitative document analysis. The paper evaluates the oppressive incidents through international Human Rights laws and Bangladesh's constitutional guarantees. Five interconnected issues identified in this study: 1. disproportionate and fatal force 2. arbitrary detentions and remands 3. restrictions on digital communications 4. torture and maltreatment and 5. inadequate accountability for police and paramilitary entities. The findings of the study show that disproportionate force, arbitrary arrests under the Digital Security Act (2018), and AI-driven surveillance were the main tools in Bangladesh's 2024 July Revolution, reflecting strategies employed to stifle dissent in authoritarian-developmental countries. The atrocities highlight systemic injustices, as armed forces such as the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) institutionalized a culture of impunity, and policing institutions strengthened elite domination by targeting marginalized pupils. The study argues that such oppression mirrors a worldwide trend of "algorithmic authoritarianism," in which governments use digital technologies with colonial-era legislation to punish opposition.

Keywords: 2024 July Revolution, Policing, Human Rights Violations, Authoritarianism, Bangladesh

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1.0 Introduction

With its rich cultural legacy along with its rapidly changing sociopolitical environment, Bangladesh has long served as a hub for social change and activism. Students have historically been at the forefront of demanding political accountability and social justice, from the Language Movement of 1952 and the fight for independence in 1971 to the pro-democracy uprisings of the 1990s (Rahman, 2024). However, Bangladesh still faces serious human rights issues, especially in its law enforcement sector, despite achievements in many other areas e.g., economic and social sectors. This was

made abundantly clear during the July–August 2024 student-led mass uprising, in which hundreds of thousands youth demonstrated against institutionalized prejudice in government policies, employment and education policies (Siddik. 2024; OHCHR 2024). In reaction, the police force's extensive use of excessive force, arbitrary arrests, and other abuses brought to light serious problems with the country's approach to policing and human rights (Human Rights Watch 2024; Amnesty International 2024a).

With a particular focus on the role of policing and how these abuses mirror larger criminological trends in developing nations, this study analyzes the human rights violations that took place during the student-led movement in Bangladesh in 2024. The research will be structured around Conflict Theory, which asserts that societal power imbalances result in systemic violence (Bari 2022; Dornschneider-Elkink & Henderson, 2024; Shimul et al., 2025), and State-Centered Theories, which indicate that state power and authoritarian frameworks frequently lead to abuses in policing (Adil 2023). This study answers two questions: 1. What patterns of police abuse emerged during the 2024 July revolution? 2. How do these reflect broader trends of state repression in the Global South?

The demonstrations were sparked by grievances over a discriminatory civil service quota system that increased youth unemployment and class-based disparities by allocating 56% of government jobs to particular groups (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2024). The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and other police and paramilitary units responded using strategies similar to those used by authoritarian governments around the world, such as using firearms on unarmed crowds and using AI-driven surveillance to target activists (OHCHR 2024; Bartusevičius et al. 2023). These violations reflect the broader patterns in developing countries, where governments deploy military enforcement and legal systems as weapons to quell opposition (Thaler et al. 2023; Hossain, 2025; Shay, 2021). The Digital Security Act (2018) in Bangladesh illustrates this phenomenon, facilitating the arbitrary detention of protesters and journalists (Amnesty International 2024b). These actions have diminished public trust in institutions, with 78% of youth perceiving police as “agents of repression” (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2024), a sentiment reflected in contexts such as Sudan and Chile (OHCHR 2019; Thaler et al. 2023). In order to contribute to the discussions on authoritarian durability and rights-based policing, this research analyzes these trends using comparative criminology. The paper examines the structural and institutional factors that facilitated human rights abuses during the 2024 July revolution and their alignment with global repression tactics. The results highlight the importance of international accountability procedures and institutional reforms needed to address systemic violence in policing.

1.1 The Context and Background of 2024 July Revolution

Student-led protests in Bangladesh escalated in July and August 2024 as a direct result of decades-long institutional discrimination and economic disparities within both government operations and education infrastructure. A controversial quota system that reserved 56% of civil service positions for specific groups including freedom fighter children and women along with ethnic minorities became the direct instigator of the student uprising (Rahman, 2024). The formal intention of this policy was to encourage inclusivity, but opponents claimed the system intensified nepotism by displacing meritorious applicants who mostly came from lower-income and rural backgrounds (Siddik, 2024). The students' increasing dissatisfaction with Bangladesh's civil service system was fueled by both the oppressive means of the ruling Awami League and the existing problems of unemployment and corruption present since their 2008 controversial electoral triumph (Riaz, 2021).

The political landscape of Bangladesh under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has exhibited signs of democratic regression. The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), a counterterrorism unit, has been associated with more than 600 extrajudicial killings since 2018, indicating a prevailing culture of impunity (U.S. Department of State, 2023). Despite an average annual economic growth of 6%, inequality persists, as 20% of the population remains below the poverty line (World Bank 2023). According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2024), students were further alienated by youth unemployment, which stood at 12.3%. They see the quota system as a symbol of elite privilege. The government's reliance on repressive institutions like the police and RAB to keep power mirrors a more general tendency of "authoritarian durability" throughout South Asia, where governments mix developmental rhetoric with repression (Dornschneider-Elkink & Henderson, 2024).

1.2 Timeline of Key Events

The student-led mass uprising was divided into three phases, such as:

1.2.1 Phase One: Mobilization (July 1–10, 2024)

Protests started at Dhaka University, as students planned rallies asking for quota changes. Demonstrations had spread to 30 campuses by July 5; attendees were using nonviolent strategies including sit-ins and social media campaigns (Amnesty International, 2024a). Police used tear gas and rubber bullets against protesters on July 8 which resulted in injuries of over 200 students (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

1.1.2 Phase Two: State Crackdown and Escalation (July 11–25, 2024)

The movement became more radical when government authorities refused to negotiate with protesters. On July 15 students established blockades that shut down highways throughout Dhaka and Chittagong. The security forces carried out mass arrests that included 1500 activists through the Digital Security Act which Amnesty International (2024b) criticizes for suppressing free speech. Multiple firsthand reports revealed that student leaders sustained custodial torture through electric shocks and physical beatings (OHCHR, 2024).

1.2.3 Phase Three: Suppression and Climax (July 26–August 10, 2024)

On July 28, the movement reached its pinnacle when 500000 protesters united at Dhaka's Shahbagh Square. Paramilitary forces sent by authorities caused 12 deaths and 1000 injuries ((Siddik, 2024)). Through internet shutdowns combined with media blackouts the government restricted opposition mobilization while official media outlets portrayed protesters as "anti-state conspirators" (The Daily Star, 2024). The government's use of excessive force caused 1400+ fatalities (United Nations, 2025), 30000 injuries, and 12000 arrests, and more than 600,000 people were accused in 950 cases filed nationwide (Human Rights Support Society, 2024).

2.0 Literature Review

The existing work on policing and human rights violations during protests in Bangladesh and other developing countries shows consistent patterns of state-sponsored violence, a culture of impunity for law enforcement, and socio-political marginalization. This literature review combines prevalent research into three subsections: (1) historical and current trends of policing abuses in Bangladesh; (2) comparative analysis from similar protests around the world; ; and (3) scholarship on police reform, institutional legitimacy, and the role of the police as an institution in Bangladesh.

For many years, law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh have faced criticism because of their widespread human rights violations through extrajudicial killings, custodial torture, and suppressing dissent (Hossain et al., 2021). Bari (2022) reveals that the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) stands as the main responsible group for over 600 "crossfire" operations between 2018 and 2023 which led to extrajudicial killings. These practices are formalized through legal frameworks such as the Digital Security Act (2018), which provides law enforcement with extensive authority to detain activists and journalists for online dissent (Adil, 2023). Uddin (2024) conducts historical analyses that link these abuses to colonial-era legislation, notably the 1860 Penal Code, which criminalizes assembly and free speech, thereby sustaining a culture of state impunity.

Numerous scholars emphasize that political protection given to police forces leads to misconduct and violence. The Bangladesh Awami League government uses its police forces to attack opposition specifically during election periods, according to Riaz (2021). For example, the road safety demonstrations of 2018 led to two fatalities and 100 injuries when police discharged live ammunition against students who protested (Human Rights Watch, 2018), and this pattern repeated in 2024 July Revolution. These patterns correspond with state-centered theories of authoritarianism, in which coercive institutions prioritize regime security above citizen rights (Dornschneider-Elkink & Henderson, 2024). Additionally, recent research highlights the connection between repression and class. The recent protests revealed that law enforcement agencies used excessive violence primarily against students from rural areas and low-income communities rather than targeting the students from wealthy urban centers (Rahman, 2024). This illustrates the structural inequalities inherent in Bangladesh's governance, wherein policies such as the quota system perpetuate elite control (Siddik, 2024).

The 2024 July Revolution in Bangladesh adopted the same methods of suppression which other countries in the Global South have employed. The Nigerian military targeted demonstrators with sniper fire as they tried to end police brutality during the 2020 #EndSARS protests (Amnesty International, 2020). Likewise, India implemented mass internet shutdowns and arbitrary detentions using anti-terror laws to control the 2020–2021 farmer protests; this same tactic was adopted by Bangladesh (Human Rights Watch, 2021). The suppression of dissent through militarized police approaches represents a worldwide phenomenon (Stavro & Welch, 2024). Examples from Latin America further elucidate the function of authoritarian governance. In the context of the 2019 anti-inequality protests in Chile, the actions of carabineros included the deployment of tear gas within hospital premises and the use of rubber bullets, resulting in the blinding of numerous individuals. This behavior indicates a deliberate state strategy aimed at imposing collective punishment (Thaler et al., 2023). In Sudan, the 2019 revolution was marked by security forces conducting raids on hospitals to apprehend injured protesters, a strategy that was subsequently employed by Bangladeshi police during the 2024 crackdown (OHCHR, 2019). Moreover, the implementation of digital surveillance in Bangladesh sets it apart from its regional counterparts. Authorities utilized AI-driven facial recognition technology to identify and capture activists, a technique that is more frequently linked to the Xinjiang region of China (Bartusevičius et al., 2023). This technological escalation indicates a worldwide transition towards a form of governance characterized by “algorithmic authoritarianism,” wherein governments utilize digital instruments to intensify repression (Shay, 2021).

Additionally, the 2024 crackdown fostered distrust among the public toward the institutions of Bangladesh especially policing. A Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2024) survey revealed that 78% of youth rejected police as agents of protector while viewing them as "agents of repression." This decline in legitimacy mirrors the situation in post-2019 Chile, where 67% of the population expressed distrust towards carabineros following their aggressive reaction to protests (Thaler et al., 2023).

A number of studies place the 2024 incidents in a broader context of the difficulties the Bangladesh police have faced in establishing trust among the public as an institution. Tyler's (2003) model of procedural justice claims that citizens give legitimacy to lawful authorities and thus willingly submit to their authority when they feel the authorities are exerting their authority in a fair, transparent, and respectful manner and thus treating citizens with respect and dignity, rather than coercion. On the other hand, when citizens feel that their treatment is arbitrary or abusive, legitimacy decreases (Tyler 2003; Sunshine and Tyler 2003). This lack of legitimacy is deeply entrenched in Bangladesh, where the police is still governed by the Police Act of 1861, designed by the colonial rulers to oppress the local population rather than serve them, and where there are no mechanisms to ensure civilian oversight or to hold police accountable for misconduct (Al-Hossienie et al., 2019). Alongside conflict theory and state-centered theory, this literature implies that the violence committed by the police during the 2024 July Revolution was not unusual; they are the expected product of an institution whose laws, chain of command, and accountability structure have never been significantly reformed since 1861. While the existing literature covers the history of police abuse in Bangladesh and a comparative pattern of repression, a framework for policing duties and reform opportunities within a legally structured analysis of the 2024 July Revolution has received less attention. This article aims to fill that void by structuring the 2024 abuses according to legal principles and by examining the institutional function of the police and paramilitary forces. The contribution is thus analytical yet practical, it elucidates the reasons the crackdown infringed upon rights and outlines how reforms might be structured to avert recurrence.

3.0 The Objectives of the Study are:

i. To identify the human rights problems that emerged during the July-August 2024 Revolution in Bangladesh, including arbitrary detention, excessive force, custodial torture, and digital surveillance, and to evaluate specific obligations Bangladesh holds under international laws.
ii. To carefully examines the institutional, structural, and sociopolitical factors that contributed to policing abuses including weak judicial oversight, politicized policing, militarized public order management.

iii. To contribute to international discussions on reducing state violence in authoritarian-developmental environments and to suggest evidence-based changes for rights-aligned policing tactics in Bangladesh.

4.0 Methodology

The methodology employed in this study is document analysis and interpretive content analysis method. The method is appropriate as the primary inquiry focuses on patterns of abuse, institutional meaning, and legal assessment rather than quantitative causal estimation. This study relies on interpretivist principles to discover institutional impunity and patterns of state violence alongside socio-political marginalization. The data for the study are drawn from international fact-finding reports, reports of human rights organizations, legal documents, media-based chronologies, and scholarly publications on policing, state repression, and human rights. To ensure methodological robustness, the research method includes three sequential stages, e.g., data collection, thematic interpretation, and data triangulation (Bryman, 2016). The study obtained data from three main sources. Initially, it examines peer-reviewed articles and books that address policing practices in Bangladesh and other developing nations, with particular focus on theoretical frameworks like conflict theory and state-centered authoritarianism (Bari 2022; Dornschneider-Elkink & Henderson, 2024). Secondly, reports from international organizations (OHCHR 2024; Human Rights Watch 2024) together with local NGOs (e.g., Human Rights Support Society (HRSS) and Odhikar) document abuses throughout the 2024 protests. The Daily Star and Prothom Alo maintained media archives containing time-based records and first-hand documentation. Finally, cross-national patterns are identified through analysis of protests in Sudan (2019 revolution), Chile (2019 anti-inequality protests), and Nigeria (#EndSARS) (Amnesty International, 2020; Thaler et al., 2023). Moreover, the research inclusion system focused on materials published between 2010–2024 yet made exceptions for basic theoretical literature like Galtung 1969. This study eliminated non-English sources owing to barriers regarding accessibility.

Additionally, data were coded initially more systematically to identify repeated themes and patterns that emerged regarding “excessive force,” “legal impunity,” and “digital repression.” These codes were combined into more general themes that fit the theoretical framework, like structural inequality, human rights norms, and authoritarian governance. To improve validity, methodological triangulation incorporated document analysis, comparative case studies, and theoretical frameworks (Denzin, 1978). For example, the information about arbitrary arrests published by Amnesty International in (2024b) was verified through both academic analysis of Bangladesh's legal system presented in Adil

(2023) and analogous instances in India (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Reflexivity was upheld by recognizing the researcher's positionality as an external analyst, which helped to reduce bias regarding NGO claims through the use of peer-reviewed corroboration.

However, the study has some limitations. It depends on secondary data, and access to official police operational records, chain of command documents, full arrest registers, and detailed medical data remains limited. Moreover, secondary data collection methods used in this research may introduce biases since NGO reports tend to advocate particular narratives. Casualty figures differ among sources and over time. Furthermore, restrictions in police data accessibility together with government secrecy about police operations in Bangladesh constrained the thoroughness of empirical analysis. Lastly, research gaps would be resolved by interviewing protesters, lawyers, journalists, police, doctors, and the study of court records and official investigation files, if available.

5.0 Result and Discussion

The results indicate that the July-August 2024 crackdown comprised a series of reinforcing practices. Force on the street, arrests in police stations and courts, communications restrictions on the internet, and poor accountability following abuse were interconnected issues. They established a cohesive strategy for managing protests. The table below provides a summary of the principal human rights issues, applicable legal standards, and analytical results of this study.

Table 1. Human rights standards and observed policing problems during the 2024 July Revolution

Observed policing problem	Relevant human rights standard	Analytical finding
Use of live ammunition, e.g., rubber bullets, shotgun pellets, tear gas, and armored deployment against protesters.	Right to life; freedom from cruel treatment; necessity and proportionality under the UN Basic Principles; Articles 31, 32 and 37 of Bangladesh Constitution; ICCPR Articles 6 and 21.	Evidence shows a systemic failure to differentiate between violent and nonviolent participants and a failure to withhold potentially lethal force from threats that do not involve imminent danger to life. This is evidence of illegal and excessive use of force.
Remand, mass arrests, and detention of protesters and organizers.	Articles 9 of the ICCPR, articles 31, 32 and 33 of the Bangladesh Constitution, guarantees of due process and protections against arbitrary arrest.	It is clear that arrests have not only been utilized to investigate specific offenses, but also to disrupt the mobilization and intimidate the participants, thereby undermining legality and individualized suspicion.

Observed policing problem	Relevant human rights standard	Analytical finding
Custodial torture, threats, ill-treatment, and denial of medical care.	The Convention against Torture, the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013 and the ICCPR Articles 7 and 10.	The reports of custodial abuse and poor investigations reveal the difference between law and practice.
Digital surveillance, internet shutdowns, and digital profiling concerns.	Bangladesh constitution Article 39; ICCPR Articles 19, 21 and 22; legality, necessity and proportionality tests for restrictions.	Digital restrictions the street-level repression exacerbated by reducing the ability to organize, to convey information, to document abuse, and to seek emergency assistance.
Low accountability of police, RAB, intelligence actors and politically connected violence.	The principles of right to effective remedy, duty to investigate unlawful deaths under the Minnesota Protocol, and command responsibility and independent oversight.	Recurrence is a structural problem that can be driven by impunity. The responsibility issue must involve commanders, planners and political authorization, not just individual officers.

(Source: prepared by authors)

Under international human rights law specific guidelines define what constitutes legal police behavior during public gathering events. According to the 1990 UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials law enforcement must only apply force in emergency situations, applied proportionately, and accompanied by accountability for any violations (OHCHR, 1990). Likewise, Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which Bangladesh ratified in 2000, ensures fundamental rights to peacefully assemble as well as freedom of expression and protection against unlawful detention (UN General Assembly, 1966). Nonetheless, during the 2024 July revolution, Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies deliberately violated the established human rights principles. For example, excessive force by law enforcement against unarmed students with live ammunition clearly violated the proportionality principle during the events (Human Rights Watch, 2024). Moreover, the Digital Security Act (2018) permitted law enforcement to make unwarranted arrests of online dissenters, thus contravening ICCPR Article 9 rights to lawful detention (Amnesty International, 2024b).

The OHCHR (2024) and Human Rights Watch (2024) have stated that detained student leaders have been subjected to torture in custody, including beatings and electric shocks, which are subject to distinct and more rigorous legal frameworks. Bangladesh ratified the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) on 5

October 1998, a convention that demands of the state under Article 2 ‘take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent any act of torture’ and under Article 4 that torture is a criminal offense under domestic law (UN General Assembly, 1984). The prohibition against torture is non-derogable. This means that the state cannot suspend it in case of emergencies, and even if the individual commits the crime on the orders of his superiors. Bangladesh's practices are deficient in both aspects. Until now, the country has never introduced a definition of torture as an independent offence based on CAT Article 1, and instead, the country has the more restrictive Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act 2013, where few of the complaints have resulted in prosecution (Hasan et al., 2017). The killings of unarmed protesters further violate ICCPR Article 6, the right to life, which allows for the use of lethal force as a “last resort” to “safeguard the lives of others”, and only where strictly unavoidable. The use of live ammunition against unarmed crowds, as recorded at Shahbagh Square and other locations, fails to satisfy this stringent necessity criterion (Human Rights Watch 2024; United Nations 2025). All considered, proportionality breaches under the 1990 Basic Principles and violations of the right to life under ICCPR Article 6 and torture under CAT highlight the fact that the crackdown of 2024 violated not just one norm but the entire framework of the international policing norms that Bangladesh is legally required to adhere to.

The legal system in Bangladesh follows an exceptionalist approach where human rights come second to maintaining regime security according to Adil (2023). The UN 2024 Human Rights Committee's preliminary report critiques Bangladesh’s “systemic disregard for international norms” due to its inability to investigate abuses and hold perpetrators accountable (OHCHR, 2024). This illustrates a wider trend observed in developing countries: governments engage with human rights treaties in a ceremonial manner while continuing to uphold repressive practices, a phenomenon referred to as “ritualistic compliance” (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui ,2005).

The student-led protest of 2024 in Bangladesh highlights the systematic interaction of authoritarian government, socio-economic inequality, and institutionalized oppression in forming policing behaviour. The police force and other law enforcement agencies used excessive force alongside arbitrary arrests and digital surveillance to silence protesters, mirroring trends recorded in other authoritarian-developmental countries (Bari 2022; Dornschneider-Elkink & Henderson, 2024).

The 2024 July revolution also showcased the existence of structural violence as described in conflict theory. State forces focused their repressive measures against rural students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who faced disproportionate repression through mechanisms like the civil service

quota system (Rahman 2024). This corelates to the Chambliss's (1975) statement that policing as a "tool of the ruling class" that supports their pursuit of socio-political dominance. The Bangladesh case demonstrates significant details regarding techniques of state repression found in hybrid political systems. State-centered theories explain how authoritarian governments like Bangladesh's Awami League consolidate power via coercive institutions, using techniques including strategic repression and legal exceptionalism (Davenport 2007; Levitsky and Way 2010). An example of "algorithmic authoritarianism" is the use of AI-driven surveillance to spy on activists. This kind of government control is becoming more common in countries like Rwanda and China (Bartusevičius et al. 2023; Shay 2021).

Even more concerning is the fact that a large majority of Bangladeshi youth, specifically 78%, see police as "agents of repression" (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2024; Thaler et al. 2023). This trend is similar to what has happened in post-protest contexts such as Chile and Sudan.

Table 2. Comparative protest-policing patterns

Country	Event	Main policing or Tactic Used	Human Rights Concern
Bangladesh	July Revolution (2024) |	AI surveillance, Live ammunition, less-lethal weapons, curfew, internet shutdowns, mass arrests, RAB and other security deployment.	Right to life, peaceful assembly, liberty, expression, freedom from torture, and effective remedy.
India	Farmer protests and civic mobilizations	Internet restrictions, preventive detention, and broad security laws.	Assembly, Expression, association, and arbitrary detention.
Nigeria	#EndSARS (2020)	Lethal force against protesters, Sniper fire, arbitrary detention	Right to life and accountability for police violence.
Chile	Anti-inequality Protests (2019)	Tear gas, Rubber bullets, serious eye injuries, and excessive crowd-control force.	Proportionality, injury prevention, and accountability.
Sudan	Revolution (2019)	Raids on hospitals, mass arrests, security force attacks.	Right to life, medical neutrality, liberty, and remedy.

(Source: prepared by authors)

The occurrence of excessive force as well as arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial killings during protests tends to be more common in states with poor judicial oversight. In Nigeria, for example, live ammunition killed 56 civilians during the 2020 #EndSARS rallies against police brutality (Amnesty International, 2020). Likewise, India's reaction to farmer protests in 2021 was the same: internet bans and large-scale arrests under anti-terror laws (Human Rights Watch, 2021). The Digital Security Act of 2018 in Bangladesh and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act of 1967 in India provide police authorities with unrestricted powers to arrest activists without conducting trials while reviving colonial-era sedition legislation (Adil, 2023). Militarized policing, clear in the deployment of armored vehicles and sniper teams, further deepens violence as a means of social control ((Stavro & Welch, 2024).

The 2024 Bangladeshi uprising follows typical patterns which have been observed throughout Latin America and Africa. The 2019 Chilean protests against economic inequality led to police deploying tear gas into metro stations and hospitals, resulting in 2,500 people injured (Thaler et al., 2023). Similarly, the 2019 revolution in Sudan saw security forces raid hospitals to detain wounded demonstrators, a strategy mirrored in Bangladesh (OHCHR, 2019). Regional countries express identical underlying factors that affect the uprisings. Pakistan's Frontier Corps, through enforced disappearances has continuously suppressed Baloch and Pashtun movements, and Sri Lanka justifies extrajudicial killings through its anti-drug campaigns (Bari 2022; U.S. Department of State 2023). These instances show a "security-first" model in which governments sometimes with silent international backing, prioritize national stability over rights (Shay, 2021). But Bangladesh is different in one important way, it used AI and digital surveillance to hunt down protesters. (OHCHR, 2024). The use of technology in reducing societal freedoms has become a global trend because face recognition and data mining tools enable states to execute targeted suppression (Bartusevičius et al, 2023).

6.0 Policy Recommendations

Multiple reforms must be implemented to solve the problems identified in this study.

i. Parliament should review and change the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act of 2013 to provide more meaningful definition of torture that should align with CAT Article 1, remove procedural barriers in the act, and ratify the Optional Protocol to the CAT to allow for independent inspections on detention facilities, as the UN Committee Against Torture

has recommended since 2019 (Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, 2019).

ii. Judicial reforms must either eliminate or modify the Digital Security Act (2018) and all other repressive laws to meet ICCPR requirements. Post-authoritarian states like Indonesia should serve as examples for establishing independent bodies which will investigate police abuses (OHCHR, 2024).

iii. Amend or repeal sections of Criminal Procedure Code that allow for arbitrary arrest and extended remand, particularly sections 54 and 167 as they are applied in practice. Guarantee immediate access to lawyers, notice of family members, expedited judicial review, and public arrest records during protest actions.

iv. An effective solution to transform police operations includes reducing paramilitary forces such as the RAB through implementation of UN Human Rights Committee de-escalation techniques for all officers (OHCHR, 2024).

v. The Police Act of 1861 necessitates complete replacement rather than mere amendment, with new legislation that incorporates the essential elements absent in the colonial statute: a truly independent Police Commission endowed with authority over recruitment, transfer, and discipline; a permanent public complaints mechanism; and oversight by Parliament, rather than solely by the executive branch.

vi. Implement a binding national framework for the use of force rooted in legality, necessity, proportionality, precaution, differentiation, and accountability. Avoid allowing firearms in assembly management unless they are absolutely necessary to save a life.

vii. Investigate commanders, planners, and political officials who ordered or authorized or failed to prevent or conceal violations. Establish a special prosecution or independent investigative unit for July-August 2024 abuses.

7.0 Conclusion

The 2024 July revolution in Bangladesh underscores the persistent conflict between state authority and human rights within the context of authoritarian governance and systemic inequality. Using conflict theory, state-centered theories, and human rights frameworks, this research investigates policing abuses during protests, exposing how institutional impunity and systemic injustices allow state violence. The findings indicate that the use of excessive force, digital repression and arbitrary arrests constitutes a global trend among authoritarian regimes that utilize law enforcement as a tool to stifle dissent (Dornschneider-Elkink & Henderson, 2024; Bari 2022). This analysis provides theoretical insights that underscore the limitations of international human rights norms in mitigating

state violence, particularly when legal and institutional frameworks favor regime security at the expense of accountability (OHCHR, 2024).The application of colonial-era laws alongside contemporary surveillance technologies in Bangladesh illustrates how states modify repressive strategies to uphold control, a phenomenon also evident in Nigeria's #EndSARS protests and the 2019 anti-inequality demonstrations in Chile (Amnesty International 2020; Thaler et al. 2023). Conflict theory further illustrates how policing abuses perpetuate socio-economic hierarchies, as evidenced in the targeting of marginalized students opposing the quota system (Rahman, 2024).

The abuses create major social consequences, with eroding 78% public trust in law enforcement in Bangladesh, and follow worldwide patterns of state violence leading to decreased civic engagement (Shay 2021; OHCHR 2019). The multiple policy recommendations focus on creating structural changes which require the abolition of the Digital Security Act and the disarmament of policing units, along with establishing independent oversight bodies (Riaz 2021; Human Rights Watch 2024). Comparative lessons from Latin America and Africa demonstrate that grassroots movements and transnational advocacy networks can magnify pressure for change even in oppressive circumstances (Thaler et al. 2023; Amnesty International 2020). Ultimately, The 2024 student-led mass uprising in Bangladesh functions as a powerful demonstration about the continuous fight for rights-based policing within authoritarian-developmental states. Institutional transformation alongside governance reorganization that focuses on justice and equity needs to address the mentioned challenges.

Authors' Declaration

We declare that the submitted manuscript is our original work and has not been published, nor is it under consideration for publication elsewhere. All sources have been appropriately cited, and the work is free from plagiarism, falsification, and fabrication. Any use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in preparing this manuscript has been transparently disclosed, and full responsibility for the content rests with the authors.

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