



---

*Plenary sitting*

---

**B8-0542/2018**

13.11.2018

## **MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on the human rights situation in Bangladesh  
(2018/2927(RSP))

**Marietje Schaake, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Petras Auštrevičius, Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea, Dita Charanzová, Gérard Deprez, Fredrick Federley, Nadja Hirsch, Ivan Jakovčić, Petr Ježek, Louis Michel, Urmas Paet, Maite Pagazaurtundúa Ruiz, Jozo Radoš, Robert Rochefort, Pavel Telička, Ramon Tremosa i Balcells, Johannes Cornelis van Baalen, Hilde Vautmans, Cecilia Wikström, Filiz Hyusmenova, Ilhan Kyuchyuk**  
on behalf of the ALDE Group

**European Parliament resolution on the human rights situation in Bangladesh  
(2018/2927(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Bangladesh,
  - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
  - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),
  - having regard to the Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and Bangladesh on Partnership and Development of 2001,
  - having regard to its previous resolutions on Myanmar and on the situation of the Rohingya,
  - having regard to the Council conclusions of 26 February 2018 on Myanmar/Burma,
  - having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. Whereas the EU has long-standing relations with Bangladesh, including through the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development; whereas respect for and promotion of human rights and democratic principles underpin the domestic and international policies of the parties and must be an essential part of EU external action;
- B. Whereas violations of fundamental freedoms and human rights, especially violence, harassment, intimidation, censorship and arbitrary arrests of journalists and bloggers, continue to be widespread in Bangladesh;
- C. Whereas in 2018 Bangladesh ranks 146 out of 180 on the World press index;
- D. Whereas a new legislative act, the Digital Security Act, was passed by the Parliament in Bangladesh in September 2018; whereas serious concerns have been raised with regard to the wide scope and vague content of this law which foresees long prison sentences for online speech that disturbs the law and order situation, affects religious feelings or ruins communal harmony; whereas, in addition, it confers to the police increased powers of search and arrest without prior judicial control and allows the Government to restrict and intercept digital information;
- E. Whereas the Bangladeshi photojournalist Shahidul Alam, an internationally recognised and award-winning photojournalist, teacher and activist was forcibly abducted from his home on 5 August and has been imprisoned after speaking out on recent student protests in Bangladesh and criticising the use of violence by the authorities;

- F. Whereas 63-year old Mr Alam faces up to 14 years of prison if he is convicted under the Information and Communication Technology Act;
- G. Whereas the Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said she is convinced that Shahidul Alam instigated trouble by spreading what she described in August as “false news” about protests against her rule;
- H. Whereas the government’s response to the protests has been extremely worrying, with protestors and journalists being beaten and detained by security forces; whereas reports of physical and sexual violence by supporters of the ruling party have been circulated widely across social media;
- I. Whereas mobile networks have been shutdown and Bangladeshi security forces have been reportedly trying to buy electronic surveillance equipment from the international market;
- J. Whereas on December 4th 2017, former Ambassador and Bangladeshi national Maroof Zamaan disappeared on his way to Dhaka airport, amid a worrying increase in the number of enforced disappearances in Bangladesh, although many disappearances are not reported due to fear for reprisals;
- K. Whereas the Government of Bangladesh continues to intensify its crackdown on civil society, media, and critics; whereas authorities have killed and disappeared members of the political opposition, while failing to protect bloggers, LGBTI rights activists, and religious minorities from violent and often fatal attacks by militant groups, including brutal attacks which led to the murder of multiple secularist and atheist bloggers in recent years;
- L. Whereas the response of the Government of Bangladesh to extremist violence has perpetuated security forces’ long-standing use of arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings;
- M. Whereas significant efforts and changes are of the utmost importance in view of guaranteeing democratic, safe and fair general elections in December 2018;
- N. Whereas in 2018, Bangladesh received a massive influx of over 700,000 Rohingya refugees escaping a campaign of ethnic cleansing by the Burmese military and remain in dire need of humanitarian assistance;
- O. Whereas the EU is Bangladesh's main trading partner and as a Least Developed Country (LDC), Bangladesh benefits from the most favourable regime available under the EU's Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP), namely the Everything But Arms (EBA) arrangement;
- P. Whereas with regards to the textile industry, progress has been made since the collapse of the Rana Plaza building five years ago but working conditions remain worrying;

1. Recalls that freedom of the press and media are fundamental rights and vital elements for democracy and open society;
2. Strongly condemns the detention of Dr. Shahidul Alam; believes that his detention goes against the principles of democracy and freedom of opinion and calls for his immediate and unconditional release;
3. Expresses concern at the large number of enforced disappearances in Bangladesh reported since 2009, currently estimated at over 500; notes that many disappearances are not reported due to fear for reprisals; Calls on the Bangladesh authorities to conduct independent investigations into reports of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and excessive use of force, and to bring those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
4. Remains deeply concerned about the whereabouts of former Ambassador and Bangladeshi national Maroof Zamaan and calls for his immediate and unconditional release and for those responsible for his disappearance to be held to account;
5. Notes the Bangladeshi government's decision at the beginning of 2018 to repeal the Information and Technology Act which has in the past been used to crackdown on dissidents and human rights defenders;
6. Deeply regrets the Government's decision to enact the Digital Security Act which actually expands and reinforces the powers of the police to crackdown on free speech, including on social media, ahead of national elections in 2018; Calls on the Bangladesh authorities to urgently revise the Digital Security Act and the Information and Communication Technology Act and bring them in conformity with the international conventions on human rights to which Bangladesh is a party;
7. Condemns the arrests and disappearances of and violence against people who exercised their freedom of expression to criticize the government;
8. Urges the Bangladesh authorities to condemn the continuing horrendous acts against freedom of expression and to act to put an immediate end to all acts of violence, harassment, intimidation and censorship against journalists, bloggers and civil society;
9. Calls on the HR/VP together with the Commission to assess the current backsliding of Bangladesh in relation to democracy, human rights and the rule of law in terms of Bangladesh's commitments under the Anything but Arms scheme;
10. Expresses its appreciation to the Government of Bangladesh for its efforts to provide protection and assistance to the Rohingya refugees, and calls for the EU, its Member States and the international community to address the need for increased and long-term humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya people in Bangladesh;
11. Calls on the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh to immediately suspend the proposed repatriation of Rohingya refugees, scheduled for mid-November and emphasises believes that returning refugees may put their lives and liberties at risk, as the United Nations human rights investigators have warned that there is a high risk of

persecution and conditions in Rakhine State are not yet conducive for returns; Expresses concern over the fact that UNHCR was not consulted on the repatriation plans;

12. Emphasises the importance of improving working conditions for people working in the textile industry and urges all parties to keep supporting the so-called Bangladesh Accord, including granting access to factories for international inspections;
13. Reiterates its call for an EU-wide ban on the export, sale, update and maintenance of any form of security equipment which can be or is used for internal repression, including Internet surveillance technology to states with a worrying human rights record such as Bangladesh;
14. Calls for the EU to use all available instruments to support the Government of Bangladesh in respecting its international human rights obligations;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the European External Action Service, the European Commission, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, and the Government and Parliament of Bangladesh