



OSAC Country Security Report Bangladesh

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This report is intended to supplement the U.S. Department of State Bangladesh Travel Advisory and [Bangladesh Country Information Page](#).

Embassy & Consulate Contact Information

U.S. Embassy Dhaka

Madani Avenue, Baridhara, Dhaka, 1212

Tel: +(88) (2) 5566-2000

After-Hours Emergencies: +(88) (2) 5566-2000. Hours: Sunday through Thursday from 0800-1630.

OSAC Country Chapters

The Dhaka Country Chapter meets bi-annually, or as-needed. When not holding in-person meetings, the Dhaka Country Council engages its WhatsApp channel for alerts and security assessments.

Contact [OSAC's Asia team](#) with any questions.

Bangladesh Travel Advisory

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses that travelers should reconsider travel to Bangladesh due to crime, terrorism, civil unrest, and kidnapping.

Do not travel to the Khagrachari, Rangamati, and Bandarban Hill Tracts districts (collectively known as the Chittagong Hill Tracts) due to communal violence, crime, terrorism, kidnapping, and other security risks.

Crime

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Dhaka as being a **HIGH**-threat location for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Crime "C" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Bangladesh, indicating that there may be widespread violent crime and/or organized crime present in the country, and/or that local law enforcement may have limited ability to respond to serious crimes.

The emergency line in Bangladesh is **999**.

Criminal activity in Bangladesh's major cities primarily includes muggings, burglaries, assaults, and illegal drug trafficking, though foreigners are not specifically targeted based on nationality and crime rates affecting foreign visitors tends to be comparatively low. Violent crimes such as homicides, sexual assaults, robberies, and residential break-ins occur at levels comparable to major U.S. cities, with most incidents involving perpetrators familiar with their victims rather than random acts. Travelers should remain vigilant against petty crimes like pickpocketing in crowded areas, though credit card and ATM use is generally safe, especially in venues catering to international clientele.

Travel to the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)—comprising Khagrachari, Rangamati, and Bandarban districts—poses heightened risks due to communal violence, terrorism, kidnappings, and other security concerns. Recent attacks by the Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF), including IED explosions and shootings that killed Bangladeshi soldiers in mid-2023, underscore the dangers. Foreigners require prior approval from the Government of Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and registration with the Deputy Commissioner's Office (DC Office) to visit CHT. U.S. government personnel must also use armored vehicles for travel to Chittagong and Cox's Bazar.

In Cox's Bazar, rising crime in Rohingya refugee camps exacerbates longstanding issues such as limited education, employment opportunities, and prospects for repatriation to Myanmar. The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) operates as an organized crime group, engaging in human and drug trafficking and coercing men to join their ranks. Civil society and international aid personnel often leave the camps before nightfall for safety reasons.

Factional violence among indigenous groups in CHT, such as the Chakma and Marma communities, stems from territorial disputes and power struggles. Clashes between factions of the United Peoples' Democratic Forum (UPDF) and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti often involve extortion and smuggling of money, drugs, and arms.

The U.S. government may have limited ability to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens in Bangladesh due to current travel restrictions, inadequate infrastructure, and limited host government emergency response resources.

Kidnapping Threat

The U.S. Department of State has included a Kidnapping "K" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Bangladesh, indicating that criminal or terrorist individuals or groups have threatened to and/or have seized or detained and threatened to kill, injure, or continue to detain individuals in order to compel a third party (including a governmental organization) to do or abstain from doing something as a condition of release.

Kidnappings are typically related to either a domestic or familial dispute. Avoid traveling to the CHT where, among other security concerns, kidnappings have occurred, including those

motivated by domestic or familial disputes, and those targeting members of religious minorities.

Terrorism

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Dhaka as a **HIGH**-threat location for terrorism directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Terrorism 'T' Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Bangladesh, signaling that terrorist attacks have occurred and/or specific threats against civilians, groups, or other targets may exist.

The U.S. government assesses that a credible terrorist threat against foreigners persists in Bangladesh. U.S. citizens in the country should remain vigilant, take precautions, and stay alert to local security developments. While there has been no significant terrorist attack in Bangladesh since March 2017, the country remains a target for several foreign terrorist organizations, and terrorist elements retain a presence. Attacks can occur with little or no warning, targeting public areas such as tourist locations, transportation hubs, markets, shopping malls, restaurants, places of worship, school campuses, and government facilities. In 2019, ISIS claimed responsibility for six improvised explosive device (IED) attacks targeting the Bangladesh Police and an Awami League office, though no casualties resulted.

In previous years, ISIS viewed Bangladesh as a strategic base for establishing a caliphate and facilitating attacks inside India, a symbolic and significant target. Since 2017, ISIS has claimed responsibility for several bombings in Bangladesh, including two suicide attacks near Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (DAC) targeting security forces. In 2019, six IED attacks were attributed to ISIS, and in January 2020, police arrested two suspected militants involved in these attacks. Between 2017 and 2019, local media and law enforcement agencies reported the Bangladesh government's success in conducting counterterrorism raids, though reported operations are sometimes exaggerated.

Anti-Western terrorist groups remain active in Bangladesh, including Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami/Bangladesh (HUJI-B), ISIS (locally known as Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh or 'Neo-JMB'), Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS, locally known as Ansar al-Islam), Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, and Ansarullah Bangla Team. HUJI-B advocates for Islamic rule in India and Bangladesh and supports Rohingya insurgents in Myanmar's Rakhine province. Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh aligns with al-Qa'ida's global Islamist ideology and operates primarily in the border regions between India and Bangladesh. Ansarullah Bangla Team has been implicated in multiple crimes, including attacks on journalists and bloggers, as well as a bank heist. The most recent small-scale attack occurred in 2019, when two militants were killed after their IEDs detonated during a standoff with police in Bosila, Bangladesh.

The U.S. Department of State continues to warn of the ongoing potential for extremist violence in Bangladesh. Travelers should exercise appropriate caution, maintain a high level of vigilance, and critically assess reports of counterterrorism operations, which are sometimes overstated.

Political Violence and Civil Unrest

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Dhaka as being a **MEDIUM**-threat location for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Civil Unrest “U” indicator on the Travel Advisory for Bangladesh, indicating that demonstrations, protests, and/or strikes occur frequently, and/or that local law enforcement may have limited ability to respond adequately.

Civil unrest can develop quickly without prior notice, often interrupting logistics and services. Avoid demonstration activity, as even those planned to remain peaceful have the potential to turn violent.

Elections/Political Stability

In the summer of 2024, mass student protests in Bangladesh escalated into violence, culminating in the collapse of Awami League (AL) rule and the flight of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India on August 5, 2024. The ensuing instability prompted the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka to implement an Ordered Departure for personnel, though normal operations resumed later that year after the interim government restored order. Throughout the crisis, the Regional Security Office (RSO) maintained communication with OSAC country chapter members, ensuring situational awareness for U.S. stakeholders.

Bangladesh is now governed by an interim administration led by Muhammad Yunus, a prominent economist and civil society leader, who has served as chief adviser since 2024. National elections are scheduled for February 2026, representing a pivotal moment for the country’s political trajectory.

Bangladesh’s political landscape has long been marked by voter intimidation, irregularities, and sporadic violence, particularly during elections. In 2020, low voter turnout and targeted violence against opposition-nominated candidates marred several elections, while opposition activists frequently faced criminal charges. Political rallies often resulted in clashes between rival party supporters or demonstrators and police, leading to injuries.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the AL secured a third consecutive five-year term in the 2018 parliamentary elections, which observers widely criticized as neither free nor fair due to significant irregularities. Since then, Freedom House has reported that the prior government harassed, jailed, and prosecuted critics, including political opponents, journalists, and civil society activists. AL-affiliated groups, such as the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), reportedly engaged in violence and intimidation with impunity, often targeting opposition figures.

Bangladesh’s economic challenges have further fueled political tensions, resulting in violent clashes between BNP and AL supporters and police. In August 2022, for example, 45 people were injured during clashes between BNP supporters and police in Chittagong, with sporadic violence continuing in subsequent years. During periods of heightened unrest, the U.S. Embassy

has restricted personnel and their families to the Diplomatic Enclave (Banani, Baridhara, and Gulshan neighborhoods) for safety.

In early January 2024, Bangladesh held elections that were boycotted by the BNP and won by Hasina and the AL. The day after the election, the U.S. Department of State expressed concern over the arrests of thousands of opposition members and reports of election-day irregularities, stating that the elections 'were not free or fair.'

Protests & Demonstrations

Demonstrations in Bangladesh can escalate into violent clashes, resulting in injuries, deaths, property damage, and blocked highways. Security forces often use tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse crowds, and political activists have targeted rail lines during unrest, creating safety risks and frequent cancellations. The U.S. Embassy advises travelers to avoid rallies and protests, as even peaceful demonstrations can turn violent, sometimes prompting harsh police responses. Travelers should monitor local news for updates on road blockages and disturbances, as these are common protest tactics.

Election-related violence, particularly in Dhaka, has been a recurring issue due to longstanding rivalries between the two main political parties. While U.S. and Western interests are not typically targeted, collateral damage can occur near protests. The Diplomatic Enclave, including Gulshan 1 and 2, is generally less affected by demonstrations, though isolated incidents, such as cocktail explosions, have occurred during past elections. Internet blackouts are also common during unrest, as seen in 2018 when mobile internet was shut down during student protests and online news portals were blocked ahead of elections.

Religious minority communities in Bangladesh often face violent attacks motivated by extremism, political prejudice, economic disputes, or property conflicts. These incidents can spark further protests, as seen in 2021 when communal violence against Hindu communities erupted after a provocative video spread on social media. Thousands of protesters marched through Dhaka, both in support of and against the affected communities, highlighting the potential for religious tensions to spill into the capital.

In July 2024, protests erupted across Bangladesh after a High Court decision reinstated a quota system for civil service jobs. Initially peaceful, the demonstrations turned violent, leading to the resignation and flight of Sheikh Hasina in August. A large amount of people were injured, maimed, and killed during weeks of unrest, underscoring the potential for political grievances to escalate into widespread violence.

Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

While terror groups in Bangladesh adhere to anti-Western and anti-U.S. ideologies, they are not known to specifically target U.S. citizens or interests. However, in recent months, police have assisted the U.S. Embassy with security augmentation in response to unspecified threat reporting and Palestinian solidarity protests held at the U.S. Embassy.

Law Enforcement

The Bangladesh Police serve as the nation's primary law enforcement agency, with the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) overseeing security in the capital. The DMP and its Diplomatic Security Division have historically provided enhanced security in Gulshan 1 and 2, areas frequented by international visitors.

Under the former Awami League government, reports of arbitrary and extrajudicial killings, as well as enforced disappearances targeting suspected militants, civil society members, and opposition party figures, were widely documented by media and human rights organizations.

Bangladesh's security forces, including the national police, border guards, and counterterrorism units like the Rapid Action Battalion, are responsible for internal and border security, while the military focuses on national defense and some domestic security roles. Security forces report to the Ministry of Home Affairs, while the military reports to the Ministry of Defense, with civilian authorities maintaining effective control.

Following the Interim Government's takeover in August 2024, significant reshuffles occurred within the Bangladesh Police, with widespread transfers of senior and mid-level officers across various units.

Police Response

The Bangladeshi police's ability to deter, prevent, respond, investigate, and solve violent crimes is limited because of a lack of comprehensive tactical response and investigative skills. These deficiencies continue to hamper law enforcement efforts to apprehend and prosecute crime suspects. Additionally, police are heavily reliant on partner-nation provided professional development, equipment donations, and in-service and sustainment training opportunities for most mid and senior-level personnel.

Travelers with Special Considerations

For [specific traveler concerns](#) in Bangladesh, review the local laws and circumstances on the Department of State's Country Information Page.

- [Women Travelers](#)
- [LGB Travelers](#)
- [Travelers with Disabilities](#)
- [Student Travelers](#)
- [Faith-Based Travelers](#)

Rule of Law, Arbitrary Detention, Official Harassment, Corruption, & Transparency

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Risk of Wrongful Detention “D” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Bangladesh.

The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, but the law permits authorities to arrest and detain an individual without an order from a magistrate or a warrant if authorities perceive the individual may constitute a threat to security and public order, or if authorities perceived the individual was involved with a serious crime. The constitution provides for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court, but the government does not generally observe these requirements.

Corruption remained a serious problem. Freedom House’s annual report noted “corruption is endemic, and anticorruption efforts have been weakened by politicized enforcement.” While the government has established legislation to combat bribery, embezzlement, and other forms of corruption, enforcement is inconsistent. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is the main institutional anti-corruption watchdog. With amendments to the Money Prevention Act, the ACC shares responsibility for investigating corruption-related offenses with the Bangladesh Police (Criminal Investigation Department), the National Bureau Revenue, and the Department of Narcotics Control.

Cybersecurity

Bangladesh’s cybersecurity and data protection framework is governed by the Information Communication Technology Act 2006 and the Digital Security Act (DSA) of 2018. The DSA, enacted after sectarian violence linked to Facebook posts, includes Section 21, which imposes life imprisonment and fines for “propaganda” or campaigns against national symbols or figures such as the “spirit of the liberation War,” “father of the nation,” the national anthem, or national flag. While the government defends the law as necessary to combat cybercrime, critics argue it restricts journalistic investigations into corruption and punishes certain forms of political expression. Bangladesh has also faced allegations of using Pegasus spyware to hack communication devices of journalists, political leaders, civil society activists, and private sector members.

Cybersecurity threats in Bangladesh have grown significantly, with ransomware identified as a major challenge for organizations. In 2016, hackers transferred \$1 billion from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York to Bangladesh Central Bank, resulting in a loss of \$81 million. Financial institutions have also faced increased whaling and spear-phishing campaigns targeting employees as entry points for cyberattacks.

Import/Export Restrictions

Bangladesh strictly regulates Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), commonly known as drones, imposing import and flight restrictions. Failure to obtain proper permissions can result in detention, arrest, and confiscation of the RPAS. For importing telecommunications equipment and satellite phones, the U.S. Department of State advises consulting the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the primary authority for telecommunications regulation.

The Import Policy Order 2015-2018, introduced on February 15, 2016, governs imports in Bangladesh, emphasizing the facilitation of raw material imports for export-oriented industries. Non-commercial importers may bring in goods worth up to \$7,000 for personal use, with higher values requiring prior permission.

Bangladesh bans certain imports on religious, social, health, or economic grounds, including illegal drugs, materials offensive to religious sensitivities, specific agricultural products, and certain reconditioned equipment. Goods from Israel and shipments on Israeli-flagged vessels are also prohibited. Restricted items may require prior permission or be limited to authorized users, such as industrial users (e.g., pharmaceutical enterprises) or government agencies (e.g., arms and ammunition).

A country-specific listing of items goods prohibited from being exported to the country or that are otherwise restricted is available from the U.S. International Trade Agency [website](#).

Additional resources and reports can be found in the [OSAC Traveler Toolkit](#).