

Struggling for Voices: A Tale of Political Harassment in Bangladesh

Abstract

This case study unveils the pervasive political harassment in Bangladesh, shedding light on the gradual erosion of democratic values and the increasing autocratic tendencies of the ruling government. It illustrates how law enforcement authorities resort to intrusive measures, such as checking citizens' personal mobile phones, to identify affiliations with opposition parties. The study is based on in-depth interviews from four different groups, totalling 25 participants: voters (6), Election Commission Officials (6), civil society members (7), and politicians (6). Conducted with adherence to ethical protocols from Charles Darwin University and Bangladesh, the interviews were structured using semi-structured questionnaires. After obtaining consent, responses were recorded, and interview records were securely stored. Following coding and analysis, all recordings will be destroyed. Through two-hour in-depth interviews, the study underscores the imperative of upholding democratic principles and safeguarding citizens' rights in Bangladesh. Providing a comparative analysis of the 2014, 2018, and 2024 general elections, it reveals common experiences of arbitrary political arrests, particularly among opposition supporters and politicians. Notably, the study exposes the repeated arrests of one individual before each national election, highlighting politically motivated charges and severe treatment, including torture and threats of extrajudicial killing. Thematic analysis uncovers structural issues contributing to political repression, including voter intimidation and electoral manipulation. This case study underscores the importance of upholding democratic principles in Bangladesh and the imperative to safeguard the rights of its citizens.