

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/bangladesh-journalists-endangered-by-26-02-2013,44128.html>

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Asia - Bangladesh

Threats and attacks

## Journalists endangered by Islamists and authorities

26 February 2013

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Reporters Without Borders expresses its concern over growing dangers to media workers, ranging from threats to murder. The worsening climate grows out of a trial of former leaders of Islamist parties accused of war crimes.

Pro-Islamist blogs have posted threats to 19 bloggers. These come amid an already worsening climate for press freedom.

One blogger was savagely murdered this month. Previously, another was gravely injured by stab wounds. And on 22 February, at least 23 journalists were injured during confrontations between Islamist militants and police that arose during street demonstrations prompted by the war-crimes trial, which centres on events during the 1971 war of independence from Pakistan.

"Threats and violence against media professionals and bloggers are unacceptable," the press freedom organization said. "We deplore the fact that political party leaders and members are inciting hate against those covering a trial that raises issues of great importance to the country, exposing dark episodes from the country's early history."

Political parties should be trying to reduce tensions, RWB said, rather than inflame them.

Journalists covering the demonstrations, which have shaken the country, are caught between two forces: Islamists who don't tolerate coverage of anyone who opposes them, and the authorities, who respond to demonstrations with gunfire, the press freedom organization said.

Threats by the Islamist party did prompt the government to shut down a number of Islamist websites, including [sonarbangladesh.com](http://sonarbangladesh.com). Some of the Islamists' critics have continued speaking out despite the risks. But others, whose portraits have been disseminated, have gone into seclusion in fear for their lives.

Those fears are well-founded. On 15 February, **Ahmed Rajib Haider**, 30, was [found hacked to death](#) near his home in the Palashnagar neighbourhood in a residential area of Dhaka, the capital. Previously, on 14 January, **Asif Mohiuddin**, 29, was [stabbed repeatedly](#) outside his Dhaka office. He remains in critical condition.



*Demonstration by Islamists brandishing the photos of four bloggers.*

On 22 February, demonstrations organized by the Islamic party alliance led to clashes in which reporters and photographers were injured, many by gunfire from riot police.

The most serious incidents occurred in the southern city of Chittagong. After Friday prayer, Islamist militants broke into the press club office and the headquarters of the Chittagong Union of Journalists, accusing the journalists present of sheltering and praising demonstrators who demanded severe punishment of those responsible for war crimes during the 1971 conflict.

Photographers **Kutub Uddin Chowdhury** of *Dainik Inquilab*, **Rajesh Chakrabarty** of *Dainik Jugantor* and **Miah Altaf** of *Dainik Purbakone* were injured in the attack. So were **Farid Uddin** and **Amit Das**, reporters for the *ATN Bangla* television network, and **Sanjeeb Babu** and **Rabiul Hossain Tipu**, journalists with *Machranga Television*. Chowdhury is in serious condition at Chittagong Medical Hospital.

On 23 February, the press organizations held a protest rally to publicize their condemnations of the attacks and their demand that those responsible be arrested.

In Dhaka, police deployed armoured cars, and used water cannons, pepper spray and tear gas in responding to a demonstration by Islamists at the Baitul Mukarram national mosque. At least 10 journalists were injured during the clashes that followed.

Islamists deliberately targeted journalists during that confrontation. **Abdullah Tuhin**, a correspondent for *Machranga Television*; **Imran Tuhin**, a reporter for *ATN Bangla*; **Ferdous**, a reporter for *ATN News*; and **Mir Ahmed Miru**, a photographer with *Dainik Azmar Desh*, were dragged into the mosque and attacked. Police eventually intervened and took the journalists to hospital.

In addition, **Masadur Rahman**, reporter for *Gazi TV*, **Nurul Islam** of the *Independent Television* network and *Bangladesh Television (BTV)*, the state network; **Arifuzzaman Pias** of *Ekattor TV*; and **Sayed Bablu** of *Dainik Sangbad* were wounded by gunfire.

Also in the capital, **Aminul Islam Bhuiyan**, elected member of the executive committee of Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU), was hospitalized after suffering a rubber bullet wound to the

leg.

In the north-eastern city of Sylhet, **Shafiq Ahmed Sofi** of *Channel 24*; **Shihabuddin Shihab**, a reporter for *Boishaki Television*; **Alauddin** of *Channel S*; **Nurul Islam**, a photographer for *Dainik Uttorporbo*; and **Sohar Ahmad** of *Machranga Television* were hospitalized with injuries.

On the same day before the demonstrations, Islamist militants attacked press photographers **Nazmul Kabir Pavel** of *Bangladesh Pratidin* and **Sheikh Abdul Majid** of *Sylhet Sanglap*. They were rescued by activists of an anti-Islamist party.

The street clashes were accompanied by a cyber-attack on 22 February on the website of the *Daily Star*, a national, English-language newspaper. Hackers who remain unidentified broke into the site to insert large headlines favouring Jamaat-e-Islami. The site had published a number of reports on violence by Islamists throughout the country. The *Daily Star* regained control of its site within hours.

On 24 February, the Islamist alliance led by Khelafat Andolon threatened a boycott of media that he said misrepresented the conflict between Islamists and "atheist" bloggers. Laying down an ultimatum, the alliance demanded that the government arrest these bloggers for "blasphemy" or face demonstrations after Friday prayer on 28 February.

On 25 February, a number of journalists and media organizations reported receiving telephone threats of unknown origin.

Bangladesh is ranked 144th of 179 countries in the [2013 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

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