

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/bangladesh-nine-journalists-attacked-in-two-07-06-2011,40408.html>

Asia - Bangladesh

Reporters beaten

Nine journalists attacked in two incidents in past four days

7 June 2011

Reporters Without Borders condemns violence by political party supporters against journalists, especially photographers and TV crews, who are more visible because of their equipment. They are paying the price of an increase in tension between rival parties due to ongoing local government elections.

Five journalists were injured in violence by ruling party supporters on 5 June in the town of Comilla, 100 km southeast of Dhaka, and two of them had to be hospitalized. Two days before that, four journalists were attacked and injured by the employees of a company that is restoring a cultural site in the western district of Kushtia.

"The supporters of the ruling Awami League have no respect for the democratic process or for journalists, whose courage we salute," Reporters Without Borders said. "The large number of people involved in the violence in Comilla and the fact that they were armed with knives underline its gravity.

"The Awami League is directly responsible for its supporters' attacks on press freedom and the entire democratic process, the legitimacy of which is consequently undermined. The party's leaders must condemn this violence and call their supporters to order, while the authorities should take statements from the journalists and launch investigations in order to arrest those responsible."

According to various sources including Abul Kashem Hridoy, the Comilla correspondent of *Channel-i TV* and the *Bdnews24.com* news agency, the 200 to 250 young thugs responsible for the violence in Comilla were members of the Bangladesh Awami Jubo League, the Awami League's youth wing.

Pradip Dey, a cameraman with *Bangladesh Television (BTV)* who was hospitalized with serious injuries, told Reporters Without Borders that they rampaged through a polling centre located in a state primary school in the Comilla district of Sanichow, scaring voters and polling officers, and then attacked journalists who had arrived to cover the incident. The police made no arrests.

As well as Dey, the following journalists were injured: *BTV* correspondent **Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury** (who also heads the Comilla Press Club), *Dainik Destiny* correspondent **Zakaria Manik**, *Amadher Arthoniti* correspondent **Imtiaz Ahmed Jitu**, and **Delawar Hossain Zakaria**, a reporter for the *INB* news agency.

Dey, whose *BTV* camera was damaged by the assailants, was admitted to Comilla Medical College Hospital with a broken right leg, badly bruised hands and chest pains. He was threatened with reprisals if talked about the incident.



The four journalists injured in the Kushtia incident on 3 June were *Prothom Alo* correspondent **Touhidi Hossain** (Towhidi Hasan), *RTV* correspondent **Shiekh Hossain Belal**, *Ekushey Television* correspondent **Zahurul Islam** and *Ekushey Television* cameraman **Ahmed Sajeeb**.

Hossain's injuries were the most serious. He was admitted to Kushtia General Hospital with multiple fractures but doctors said his life was not in danger. The others were discharged from hospital after receiving primary treatment

The incident took place at a heritage site in Shilaidaha, a village in the Kumarkhali subdistrict, where residents had complained to the contractor, leading Awami League member Ali Hossain, about the poor quality and slow progress of the renovation work. As the contractor reacted by threatening them, they referred the matter to the Kushtia press club.

A group of journalists went to the site on the morning of 3 June. As they were recording interviews with site engineers from the archaeology department and the site's custodian, and shooting video and still photos, they were suddenly attacked by thugs armed with clubs, steel bars and hockey sticks. Touhidi Hossain sought refuge in the custodian's office but the thugs broke down the door, dragged him out and beat him with their steel bars batons. Officials finally rescued him, drove him to a police station and then to the hospital.

Police went to the site, rescued the three other besieged journalists and took them to the hospital for treatment. Two of the assailants have since been arrested and the police are looking for their suspected leader and his accomplices.

Bangladesh is ranked 126th out of 178 countries in the 2010 [Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).
