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Asia - Bangladesh

Unjustified charge

Prime minister accuses newspaper of inciting terrorism

23 February 2015

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina violated the media's right to inform when she accused the English-language Daily Star newspaper of supporting the banned radical Islamist group Hizb-ut-Tahrir by publishing a report about its recent poster campaign, Reporters Without Borders said today.



Headlined "Fanatics raise their ugly head again," the *Daily Star* article of 11 February included a photo taken in the Dhaka district of Banglamotor of one of the posters, which called for a revolt within the Bangladeshi army.

Speaking in parliament on 18 February, the prime minister announced that "[legal] action will be taken against those who tried to patronise Hizb-ut-Tahrir by publishing its poster."

Her announcement came three days after a lawyer filed a complaint in a Dhaka magistrate's court against Daily Star editor and publisher **Mahfuz Anam**, chief news editor **Syed Ashfaqul Haque** and chief photographer **SK Enamul Haq**.

"We condemn these disproportionate reactions to the *Daily Star* article and we request that no judicial action be taken against this newspaper," said Benjamin Ismail, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Asia-Pacific desk.

"Covering the activities of a radical Islamist group, even one that has been outlawed, is not the same as supporting it. You just have to look at the international media coverage of Islamic State to understand that. The prime minister's statement was surprising, to say the least, and represented a denial of the right to information."

Tension has been growing between the media and certain political parties, whose supporters have been using violence against journalists. The authorities are also taking a tougher line with news outlets they regard as overly critical.

Media freedom declined in 2014 in Bangladesh, which is ranked 146th out of 180 countries in the latest annual [press freedom index](#) that Reporters Without Borders published last week.