

## Biweekly Election Update

8 - 21 January 2024

### Summary

ANFREL had observed that from 8 January to 21 January, Bangladesh had experienced significant political turmoil and controversy surrounding the 12th Parliamentary election which was held on 7 January.

Following the conclusion of the 12th Parliamentary Election, the Chief Election Commissioner had announced that the ruling Awami League (AL) had secured a victory in 222 out of 298 seats, while independent candidates had won 62 seats.<sup>1</sup> The Election Commission had officially disclosed a voter turnout of 41.8%, however this number has been heavily criticised due to multiple polling stations being entirely or nearly empty as a result of the opposition boycott.<sup>2</sup>

ANFREL had further observed that electoral violence had continued after the election across the country, with reports of attacks, vandalism, and clashes between supporters of winning and defeated candidates.<sup>3</sup> These clashes, mostly between the independent and AL candidates, had resulted in multiple injuries and even deaths.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/al-wins-222-seats-independents-62-turnout-418pc-cec-3514276>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222287/voter-turnout-418pc-in-bangladeshs-general-election-cec;>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/222325/its-a-vote-robbery-says-oli-ahmed;>

[https://netra.news/2024/election-comission-dashboard-shows-28-voter-turnout/;](https://netra.news/2024/election-comission-dashboard-shows-28-voter-turnout/)

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/222188/2715pc-votes-cast-until-300pm-ec-secretary>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222292/7-houses-establishments-of-al-supporters-vandalised-in-natore;>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/post-polls-violence-10-injured-50-houses-vandalised-jhenaidah-2-3514301;>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/222773/2000-activists-flee-home-over-100-beaten-alleges-latif>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/polls-violence-netrokona-3-injured-man-dies-dmch-3514506;>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/222853/one-more-dies-as-post-polls-violence-on>

International reactions regarding the election were mixed. Certain countries including the US and Canada had expressed their reservations regarding the election.<sup>5</sup> However, multiple observers had characterised the election as "free, fair, and safe," which had painted a sharp contrast against the remarks made by voters and local journalists.<sup>6</sup> Human rights groups and various CSO's including Transparency International Bangladesh and Right To Freedom had also criticised the election and raised concerns about repression and arrests leading up to the polls, as well as the reported vote-rigging.<sup>7</sup> ANFREL had also submitted a joint-statement, along with seven other human rights organisations, on 12 January regarding the poll-time irregularities, while also demanding a fresh election under an interim government.<sup>8</sup> The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights had also expressed concerns about the fairness of the election.<sup>9</sup>

The political landscape remained tense, with ongoing protests organised by opposition parties and alliances demanding for a fresh election under a neutral government, and accusations of internal conflicts within political parties.<sup>10</sup> The government defended the election's integrity, while opposition parties called for the annulment of the results.<sup>11</sup> As the situation unfolded, courts granted bail to several BNP leaders who were arrested last year ahead of the election, and the international community continued to monitor developments.<sup>12</sup> The aftermath of the 12th Parliamentary election continued to shape the political landscape in Bangladesh, with ongoing protests and calls for a reevaluation of the electoral process.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/canada-expresses-disappointment-over-jan-7-electoral-process-3515716>;

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/diplomacy/news/polls-not-free-fair-us-3515451>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222275/bangladesh-general-election-free-fair-and-safe-visiting-foreign-observers>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222459/right-to-freedom-demands-fresh-elections>;

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/51pc-seats-saw-vote-rigging-3521901>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://anfrel.org/joint-statement-csos-demand-the-release-of-political-prisoners-and-call-for-fresh-elections-in-bangladesh/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/01/turk-urges-bangladesh-change-course-create-conditions-truly-inclusive>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222357/most-opposition-parties-reject-polls-demand-fresh-election>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/223147/12th-js-polls-not-very-participatory-says-cec>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222901/hc-grants-anticipatory-bail-to-bnp-vice-chairman-mintoo>;

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/223067/mirza-fakhrul-khasru-get-bail-in-violence-cases>;

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/223204/bnp-leader-amir-khasru-gets-bail-in-4-more-cases>

Glossary				
Political Parties	Govt. Officials	Election Commission	International	Others

8 January	
	<p>BNP had demanded the cancellation of the 12th Parliamentary election, asserting that people unilaterally rejected the voting process. They had also called for the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and renewed their demand for a fresh election under a non-party polls-time government to establish a legitimate and accountable government. They had also announced a two-day mass contact program.<sup>13</sup></p>
	<p>Opposition political parties had organised protest rallies and processions in Dhaka, rejecting the results of the 12th general elections and demanding fresh elections in the country. The party leaders had asserted that the 'one-sided' election was conducted through vote rigging and irregularities, and the people largely boycotted the polls.<sup>14</sup></p>
	<p>Leaders of the Amar Bangladesh Party (AB Party) had declared their intention to continue their movement until the resignation of the government.<sup>15</sup></p>
	<p>The President of the Liberal Democratic Party, Oli Ahmed, had stated that the actual voter turnout in the general election was not more than 7-10%, emphasising that people boycotted the one-sided polls.<sup>16</sup></p>
	<p>Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader had stated that the general election would not be acceptable as it was held under the control of the ruling AL government.<sup>17</sup></p>
	<p>Islami Andolan Bangladesh had announced plans to hold a rally on 9 January, demanding the cancellation of the 'farcical general election' and calling for new elections under a national government.<sup>18</sup></p>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222279/bnp-demands-fresh-election-pm-hasinas-resignation>;  
<https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/politics/oez02iopig>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222357/most-opposition-parties-reject-polls-demand-fresh-election>

<sup>15</sup> <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/politics/ph8grp7sd0>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222325/its-a-vote-robbery-says-oli-ahmed>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222304/controlled-election-by-al-govt-wont-be-acceptable-gm-quader>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222300/islami-andolan-bangladesh-to-hold-rally-demanding-cancellation-of-election>

Four candidates, including an incumbent lawmaker, had demanded a re-election in Sylhet-2, alleging that AL had rigged the 7 January election. Meanwhile, another candidate from Sylhet-3, in a separate press conference, had described how ruling party supporters orchestrated irregularities in the election.<sup>19</sup>

Supporters of an independent candidate who was elected as a lawmaker for Natore-1 in the general polls, had allegedly vandalised at least seven houses and establishments in Bagatipara subdistrict of Natore district.<sup>20</sup>

At least 10 houses of supporters of the defeated AL candidate for the Jamalpur-4 constituency (Sarishabari) were attacked. A kindergarten school affiliated with the AL candidate Mahbubur Rahman Helal was also vandalised and locked, allegedly by the supporters of independent candidate Abdur Rashid, who had won in the polls.<sup>21</sup>

At least five people were injured and at least eight houses were vandalised in separate incidents of post-polls violence in Bera and Chatmohar subdistricts in Pabna, by supporters of AL and independent candidates.<sup>22</sup>

At least 10 people were injured, and 50 houses were vandalised in three villages of Jhenaidah Sadar. Supporters of Naser Shahriar Zahedi, the winning independent candidate from Jhenaidah-2, had reportedly looted houses of the supporters of defeated AL candidate Tahjib Alom Siddique in the villages.<sup>23</sup>

A youth who had sustained critical injuries in an attack allegedly carried out by supporters of the defeated AL candidate for Netrokona-3 in the district's Atpara subdistrict during the election, had died in Dhaka Medical College Hospital.<sup>24</sup>

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal had announced that AL had secured victory in 222 seats out of 298 in the 12th Parliamentary election, amidst boycotts by BNP and other major parties. After AL, independent candidates were the most successful winning 62 seats.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/5-candidates-call-polls-rigged-3514656>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222292/7-houses-establishments-of-al-supporters-vandalised-in-natore>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/post-polls-violence-al-candidates-house-vandalised-jamalpur-4-3514441>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/top-news/news/post-polls-violence-five-injured-houses-vandalised-pabna-3514366>

<sup>23</sup>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/post-polls-violence-10-injured-50-houses-vandalised-jhenaidah-2-3514301>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/polls-violence-netrokona-3-injured-man-dies-dmch-3514506>

Jatiya Party won 11 seats while Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal-Jasad, Bangladesh Workers Party, and Bangladesh Kalyan Party won one seat each.<sup>25</sup>

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal had announced that 41.8% of votes were cast in the 12th general election. He further said that the Election Commission had provided an accurate percentage of the voter turnout. He also added that the Commission will welcome anyone who wishes to challenge the data.<sup>26</sup>

Mobile courts across the country had sentenced a total of 61 people to various jail terms and fines for electoral misconduct during the general election. The Election Commission had reported that these sentences were given through summary trials by the first-class Judicial Magistrates.<sup>27</sup>

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, had condemned the violence and repression that occurred during the controversial elections, and urged the country to strengthen democracy.<sup>28</sup>

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had urged all parties in Bangladesh to reject any kind of violence and ensure the full respect of human rights and the rule of law.<sup>29</sup>

A three-member delegation from the Election Commission of India, which observed the elections, had appreciated the efforts of the election body of Bangladesh for the 'meticulous planning' made to conduct the 7 January Parliamentary election.<sup>30</sup>

Brussels-based independent research analyst Willem van der Geest had said that the boycott of the elections by some opposition parties meant that the elections were not fully participatory. He further added that the boycott did not invalidate the outcomes of the 12th national elections.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222281/al-gets-222-seats-independents-62>;

<https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/al-wins-222-seats-independents-62-turnout-418pc-cec-3514276>; Note: Note: The Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (National Socialist Party) is split into two factions - the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal-JSD, which supports the opposition, and the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal-Jasad, which supports the ruling party.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222287/voter-turnout-418pc-in-bangladeshs-general-election-cec>;

<https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/if-doubt-anyone-can-check-ecs-turnout-data-3514666>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222290/61-punished-for-electoral-misconduct-in-sundays-general-election>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222306/un-condemns-violence-repression-during-bangladesh-polls>;

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/01/turk-urges-bangladesh-change-course-create-conditions-truly-inclusive>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222367/un-urges-all-parties-in-bangladesh-to-reject-violence-ensure-human-rights>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/indian-polls-delegation-lauds-ec-meticulous-planning-3514481>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222359/boycott-by-some-parties-does-not-invalidate-polls-intl-observers>

Many visiting international observers had characterised the recently held 12th Parliamentary election as 'free, fair, and safe.'<sup>32</sup>

In separate statements, the United States of America and Canada had clarified that they did not deploy any election observers to monitor Bangladesh's national elections. This clarification came as a group of international observers found the one-sided polls to be free and fair. The Canadian Commission had clarified that any individual identifying as a Canadian observer is acting independently.<sup>33</sup>

At least two people lost their lives, and numerous others sustained injuries in clashes between supporters of winning and defeated candidates in various locations across the country following the 12th Parliamentary election. One individual, who had suffered injuries in post-poll violence in Atpara subdistrict of Netrakona, passed away at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.<sup>34</sup>

Tanore Police Station filed a case against at least 78 individuals in connection with the clash that occurred on 7 January night between law enforcement personnel and supporters of an independent candidate in the Mondumala municipality area of Tanore, Rajshahi.<sup>35</sup>

The Police had filed a case against 15 BNP leaders and 200 unidentified individuals in connection with clashes with law enforcement during the national election in Chandgaon, Chittagong.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222275/bangladesh-general-election-free-fair-and-safe-visiting-foreign-observers>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222280/us-canada-say-they-send-no-election-observers>;

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/222280/individual-identifying-as-canadian-observer-acting-independently-canadas-hc>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222346/two-killed-in-post-polls-violence>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222341/78-sued-for-attacking-police-bgb-in-rajshahi>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/cops-sue-15-bnp-leaders-200-others-ctg-3514601>

## 9 January

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir was formally arrested in nine more cases which were filed against him related to political violence in Dhaka centering around BNP's rally on 28 October, 2023.<sup>37</sup>

Yunus Ahmed, the Secretary General of Islami Andolan Bangladesh, had stated that the world had seen a party council disguised as a general election on 7 January, and had involved the employment of foreign individuals as fake observers to give a semblance of legitimacy to the dummy election.<sup>38</sup>

Fazle Hossain Badsha, the General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Bangladesh, had alleged irregularities and intimidation that he claimed led to his defeat in the election for the Rajshahi-2 constituency.<sup>39</sup>

Leaders of Ganatantra Mancha, a coalition comprising six political parties, had announced their determination to persist in their collective movement until their singular demand for the resignation of the AL government and the organisation of a free and fair election under a neutral government was fulfilled.<sup>40</sup>

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader had remarked that those who provided divergent statements about the election in Bangladesh, specifically referring to the US and UK, should take note of the positive comments made by observers from their respective countries.<sup>41</sup>

At least one AL supporter was reportedly killed in Jhenaidah, while numerous others sustained injuries in clashes that had occurred in various locations across the country. These clashes involved supporters of both winning and defeated candidates from the 12th Parliamentary elections.<sup>42</sup>

Two Union Parishad (UP) Chairmen were reportedly assaulted, with the incidents occurring on 8 January and 9 January. These assaults were alleged to have been carried out by supporters of newly-elected Member of Parliament (MP) Omor Faruk Chowdhury from Rajshahi-1. The

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/fakhrul-shown-arrested-nine-cases-3515011>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222445/govt-trying-to-legitimise-dummy-elections-thru-hired-observers-iab>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/fazle-hossain-badsha-raises-allegations-irregularities-3515396>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222374/mancha-vows-to-continue-simultaneous-movement>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/politics/news/contradicting-own-observers-quader-3515441>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222434/one-more-killed-in-post-polls-violence>

allegations had suggested that the chairmen were targeted for campaigning against him in the national election.<sup>43</sup>

Barisal City AL Vice President Anwar Hossain, who is also a supporter of independent candidate Salahuddin Ripon for Barisal-5, was reportedly attacked by supporters of the newly-elected AL MP Zahid Faruk.<sup>44</sup>

At least 20 BNP leaders and activists had sustained injuries when the Police wielded batons during a leaflet distribution program in Jashore. The Police had intervened while BNP members were distributing leaflets to people, congratulating them for abstaining from voting at Kapuriapatti in Jashore town.<sup>45</sup>

The High Court had suspended the election result of Awlad Hossain, who had been elected as an independent lawmaker from the Dhaka-4 constituency. The Court had directed the Election Commission to establish an inquiry committee within 10 days to investigate allegations of rigging and other irregularities. These allegations included manipulated results from 18 out of the 77 polling stations in the Dhaka-4 constituency.<sup>46</sup>

PM Sheikh Hasina had declared that the 12th Parliamentary election was conducted freely, fairly, neutrally, and with active participation from the people.<sup>47</sup>

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen had asserted that AL had no concerns about the opinions expressed by the US or the UK regarding the national election.<sup>48</sup>

Election Commissioner Md Alamgir had stated that they will refrain from making any comments on statements from the international community regarding the national election.<sup>49</sup>

The US had expressed that the 12th Parliamentary election was not deemed 'free and fair.' US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller had stated in a recent statement that the US

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/post-poll-violence-2-chairmen-assaulted-rajshahi-3515326>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/post-polls-violence-barisal-city-al-vice-president-attacked-3515401>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222386/20-injured-as-police-foil-bnps-programme-in-jashore>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222404/hc-orders-halt-to-dhaka-4-election-result>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222375/jan-7-election-is-the-most-free-fair-election-so-far-after-1975-hasina>

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222435/govt-not-worried-about-what-us-uk-say-fm>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/nothing-say-about-intl-communitys-comments-polls-ec-alamgir-3515046>



shared the view with other observers, regretting that not all parties participated in the elections.<sup>50</sup>

The UK had stated that standards of credible and fair competitions were not consistently met during the 12th Parliamentary election.<sup>51</sup>

The European Union had expressed regret over the fact that not all major parties took part in the general election. They had also urged the authorities in Bangladesh to ensure a thorough and prompt investigation into all reported election irregularities, emphasising the importance of transparency and accountability.<sup>52</sup>

Reporters Without Borders had denounced the acts of violence perpetrated against journalists during the general election. At least 12 reporters were subjected to attacks, expulsion from voting stations, or denial of entry. In the majority of instances, these incidents were attributed to AL supporters.<sup>53</sup>

The 12th Parliamentary election had resulted in the lowest number of parties represented in the Parliament, only five, with none from 23 parties securing seats.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/bangladeshs-elections-were-not-free-and-fair-us-3514856>;

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/diplomacy/news/polls-not-free-fair-us-3515451>;

<https://www.state.gov/parliamentary-elections-in-bangladesh/>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/standards-credible-fair-competition-not-consistently-met-uk-3514866>;

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/222362/bangladesh-people-did-not-have-fullest-range-of-voting-options-uk>;

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/diplomacy/news/polls-not-free-fair-us-3515451>;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fcdo-statement-on-bangladesh-election-january-2024>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222425/eu-regrets-not-all-major-parties-participated-in-bangladesh-polls>;

<https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/polls-irregularities-eu-calls-ensuring-timely-probe-3515626>;

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/01/09/bangladesh-statement-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-parliamentary-elections/>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222438/violence-against-bangladeshi-journalists-condemned>;

<https://rsf.org/en/bangladesh-general-elections-put-journalists-risk>

<sup>54</sup> <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/to54h6dpp7>

## 10 January

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir was denied bail in the case related to the alleged vandalism of the Chief Justice's residence. However, a Dhaka Magistrate Court had granted him bail in the nine new cases which were filed against him over clashes with law enforcement during the Party's grand rally on 28 October, 2023.<sup>55</sup>

Several hundred leaders and activists of the Jatiya Party had staged a demonstration in front of the Party Chairman's office. This occurred simultaneously with the swearing-in ceremony of the Party's newly elected lawmakers in Parliament. The protest was directed against the Party Chief and Secretary General as the Party incurred significant losses in this election, with blame placed on the perceived ineffective leadership of GM Quader and Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunnu. They had also issued a 48-hour ultimatum to GM Quader and Mujibul Haque Chunnu, demanding their resignation. They warned that if the Chairman and General Secretary did not step down within the stipulated time, they would be ousted, and a new leadership would be chosen through a council session.<sup>56</sup>

Trinamool BNP Secretary General Taimur Alam Khandakar had stated that the country is heading towards a one-party state. He had expressed this concern, asserting that the recently concluded 12th national election appeared to be a contest between "government vs. government", giving the impression of a move towards a one-party state in Bangladesh.<sup>57</sup>

Two independent candidates backed by AL who were defeated in the Rajshahi-1 and Rajshahi-6 constituencies, had demanded a re-election. They had raised allegations of vote rigging in these constituencies and made their demand known at two separate press conferences.<sup>58</sup>

Independent lawmaker Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury had announced that independent lawmakers from the 12th Parliament would collaborate to establish a coalition, intending to form the opposition bench in the National Parliament.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup> <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/ekcm34abi0>; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222465/fakhrul-gets-bail-in-9-cases>

<sup>56</sup>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/politics/news/jp-leaders-activists-gather-party-office-protest-failed-leadership-3515816>; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222509/jp-leaders-ask-gm-quader-chunnu-to-resign>

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/bangladesh-becoming-one-party-state-3516381>

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222533/two-defeated-independent-candidates-demand-re-election>

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222454/independent-lawmakers-to-form-coalition-nixon-chowdhury>

A clash had erupted in Dowarabazar, Sunamganj between supporters of the winning AL candidate and defeated AL-backed independent candidate from the area, following the Parliamentary election, and had resulted in more than 100 people being injured.<sup>60</sup>

Canada had conveyed its disappointment, stating that the electoral process in the parliamentary election held on 7 January did not meet the principles of democracy and freedom upon which Bangladesh was founded.<sup>61</sup>

Australia had expressed regret and stated that it was unfortunate that the elections took place in an environment where not all stakeholders could participate "meaningfully and substantially."<sup>62</sup>

Japan had expressed its welcome for the Bangladesh general election, and had acknowledged that overall, the election was conducted peacefully. However, Japan had noted that there were some reported irregularities in the general election.<sup>63</sup>

Right to Freedom had issued a press release and called for new elections in Bangladesh under neutral authorities. The statement had also asserted that the 7 January election was not deemed 'free and fair' and was non-participatory, and also argued that the election will not resolve the ongoing political crisis in Bangladesh.<sup>64</sup>

The US had affirmed that their desire to see the aspirations of the Bangladeshi people met, including the ability to conduct free, fair, and transparent elections, remained unchanged.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222513/fresh-clash-leaves-100-injured-in-sunamganj>

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/canada-expresses-disappointment-over-jan-7-electoral-process-3515716>; <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2024/01/statement-following-recent-parliamentary-elections-in-bangladesh.html>

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/regrettable-all-stakeholders-couldnt-participate-meaningfully-jan-7-polls-australia-3515876>; <https://www.dfat.gov.au/news/media-release/bangladesh-parliamentary-elections>

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222470/japan-notes-some-irregularities-in-bangladeshs-general-election>; [https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite\\_000001\\_00090.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite_000001_00090.html)

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222459/right-to-freedom-demands-fresh-elections>; <https://www.rtof.org/statement-on-bangladeshs-january-7-general-election/>

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222550/us-says-nothing-has-changed-about-bangladesh>

## 11 January

Major opposition parties had stated that the people of Bangladesh would reject the new government formed through a 'one-sided farcical election'.<sup>66</sup>

A group of BNP leaders and activists had entered BNP's central office at Naya Paltan in Dhaka after breaking open the lock on the main door, two months and 13 days after a closure was imposed and their office was locked by law enforcement agencies. Dhaka Metropolitan Police had claimed that they did not lock the main gate of the BNP office, asserting that a security guard took that action. BNP Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi contended that the Police had locked the gate and declined to provide the key despite requests.<sup>67</sup>

In a statement, Human Rights Watch had mentioned that Bangladesh authorities had suppressed dissent, including arresting individuals for criticising the government in social media posts. The statement had further noted that the authorities undermined promises of a free and fair vote through widespread repression and violence against opposition members before the national polls.<sup>68</sup>

Human Rights Watch had stated in their annual report that Bangladesh authorities had increased repression in 2023 leading up to the general election held on 7 January, 2024. The annual report highlighted that security forces conducted mass arrests of opposition members and, in certain instances, responded to protests with excessive force. The report also mentioned that these arrests seemed to align with the purported plans of senior Police officials, as outlined in leaked meeting minutes, to secure convictions of opposition members, thereby disqualifying them from contesting the election.<sup>69</sup>

Another individual, who was injured in post-polls violence in Kalkini subdistrict of Madaripur, had succumbed to injuries at a hospital in Dhaka. With this, the toll rose to at least four people killed in post-polls violence in various districts.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222614/opposition-parties-reject-new-govt;>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/222603/nagarik-oikya-calls-for-free-fair-polls>

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222545/bnp-leaders-break-open-lock-to-enter-central-office;>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/politics/news/dmp-refutes-bnps-claim-locking-nayapaltan-office-3517351>

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/rights/news/repression-abuses-discredit-election-hrw-3517381>

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222694/bangladesh-tightened-repression-in-2023-before-election-hrw>

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222612/post-polls-violence-death-toll-reaches-four>

The United Lawyers Front, a platform of pro-BNP lawyers, had declared their intention to organise black flag processions and stage demonstrations at all bar association premises across the country on 14 January. The aim will be to emphasise their demands for the resignation of the government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the annulment of the national polls held on 7 January.<sup>71</sup>

### 12 January

Ganatantra Mancha, a coalition of six political parties, had organised a demonstration rejecting the 7 January general election and demanding a fresh one under a neutral government.<sup>72</sup>

In a joint statement, six international human rights groups had called on Bangladesh authorities to conduct a free, fair, participatory, and inclusive fresh election under a neutral interim government. Additionally, the statement also urged the release of all political prisoners who have been held in custody over the preceding months.<sup>73</sup>

Akhtar Kabir Chowdhury, the Secretary of Shushasoner Jonno Nagarik (SHUJAN)'s Chattogram chapter, had expressed that everything was predetermined in this election, and that it was not participatory. That is why the voter turnout was 1% in some centres while it was 100% in other centres.<sup>74</sup>

Leaders and activists of left-leaning student organisations at Dhaka University had organised a torch procession, expressing their rejection of the 12th Parliamentary election. The leaders of the Democratic Students Alliance had stated that they were boycotting Sheikh Hasina, accusing her of extending her tenure through a 'farce election'. They had also called on the people of the country to protect their right to universal franchise.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/politics/news/pro-bnp-lawyers-call-demo-january-14-3517146>

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222682/mancha-stages-demo-for-fresh-polls>

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222635/intl-rights-groups-demand-fresh-inclusive-elections-release-of-politicians>

<sup>74</sup> <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/politics/ivms6nl1j>

<sup>75</sup>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/left-leaning-student-bodies-take-out-torch-procession-rejecting-polls-3517776>

### 13 January

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader had stated that the PM “did not care” about any sanctions or visa policies.<sup>76</sup>

An independent candidate from the Rangpur-2 constituency (Badarganj-Taraganj) had raised allegations of ballot-stuffing on the night before the 12th national election. Despite the allegations, the candidate had stated that he would remain in the electoral race due to his loyalty to AL President Sheikh Hasina.<sup>77</sup>

In the aftermath of the 7 January election, unidentified criminals had fatally shot Shaheduzzaman Palash who served as a polling agent for independent candidate Aaur Rahman Bhuiyan Manik in Noakhali-2 (Senbagh-Sonaimuri). Aaur Rahman, a former Vice-President of AL's Noakhali district unit, had reported that supporters of the ‘Boat’ symbol had been threatening Shaheduzzaman since election day. Shaheduzzaman had protested against the alleged vote rigging and illegal influence at the polling centre.<sup>78</sup>

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had strongly rejected a statement from six international civil society organisations concerning the 7 January national election, labelling it as biased and unjustified. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had asserted that the election was conducted in a free, fair, credible, and peaceful manner.<sup>79</sup>

Russia had expressed the view that the leadership of Bangladesh should be acknowledged for establishing favourable conditions that allowed the free expression of voters' will, despite external attempts to influence the election outcome.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222716/pm-doesnt-care-about-sanctions-says-quader>

<sup>77</sup> <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/local-news/og5yzns4hz>

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/polling-agent-losing-candidate-shot-dead-3519431>

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222723/govt-rejects-rights-groups-call-for-fresh-polls>;

<https://anfrel.org/joint-statement-csos-demand-the-release-of-political-prisoners-and-call-for-fresh-elections-in-bangladesh/>

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222711/russia-observes-external-attempts-to-influence-bangladeshs-election-result>

## 14 January

Internal conflicts within the AL regarding the 12th Parliamentary polls had resulted in a total of 13 deaths and over 300 injuries in various locations across the country until 14 January evening. This internal strife within the AL arose due to the Party fielding 'dummy candidates' against the official ones to prevent an unopposed victory, similar to the situation in 2014 when 153 candidates won without any contest.<sup>81</sup>

Jatiya Party's discontented and defeated candidates laid blame on the Party's Chairman, GM Quader, and Secretary General, Mujibul Haque Channu, for their failure in the 12th Parliamentary election on 7 January. They had also expressed dissatisfaction, stating that despite government assurances of a free and fair election, the election was neither free nor fair.<sup>82</sup>

Abdul Latif Biswas, who had lost in the 7 January election as an independent candidate, had alleged that at least 2,000 leaders and activists from the AL faction had left their homes, and over 100 were assaulted before and after the polls due to internal conflicts within the Party. He attributed the clashes to the supporters of Abdul Momin Mondol, the incumbent lawmaker from Sirajganj-5, who was re-elected in the 12th national poll representing AL.<sup>83</sup>

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had criticised the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), claiming that its recent statement on Bangladesh which was released on 8 January had exceeded its mandate. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had alleged that the OHCHR misinterpreted the ground reality and provided subjective and biased assessments to politicise human rights.<sup>84</sup>

Law Minister Anisul Huq had stated that leaders and activists of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami were not sent to jail for political reasons. He had emphasised that they were detained based on specific allegations, and the cases against them are still ongoing.<sup>85</sup>

A black flag procession of lawyers, demanding the cancellation of the 7 January election and the resignation of the government, was intercepted and blocked by the Police at the gate of

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222853/one-more-dies-as-post-polls-violence-on>

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222858/jp-leaders-blast-gm-quader-chunnu>

<sup>83</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222773/2000-activists-flee-home-over-100-beaten-alleges-latif>

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222809/un-rights-chief-oversteps-mandate-govt;>

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/01/turk-urges-bangladesh-change-course-create-conditions-truly-inclusive>

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/politics/news/bnp-jamaat-leaders-not-jailed-political-reason-law-minister-3519331>

Barishal District Judge Court. The protest march was jointly organised by the Nationalist Lawyers Forum and the United Lawyers Front.<sup>86</sup>

### 15 January

The High Court had granted anticipatory bail to Abdul Awal Mintoo, Vice-Chairman of BNP, in two cases related to an attack on the Chief Justice's residence during the Party's grand rally on 28 October, 2023.<sup>87</sup>

Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader and Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunnu had categorically rejected allegations that they had received money from AL to participate in the election. These allegations were raised by Jatiya Party leaders who had staged demonstrations against the Party Chief.<sup>88</sup>

ASM Abdur Rob, President of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal-JSD, had stated that the government lost its diplomatic balance by conducting a 'one-sided dummy election,' which was not accepted by the UN and the democratic world. He had also warned that hostile remarks such as the PM's comment, "United States is shameless, it is not warranted when they bring whom to power," against the US could lead the country into a diplomatic disaster.<sup>89</sup>

The EU Technical Team and the joint US NDI-IRI team, during their meetings with the Election Commission, had inquired about the voter turnout rate in the 7 January national polls. The Election Commission officials had informed the Teams that the Presiding Officers were instructed to report the voting rate every two hours via a software. However, not all officials were able to adhere to these instructions properly. Some officials had failed to promptly input the turnout figures in certain polling stations, particularly in three hill districts and several constituencies in other locations.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222878/police-intercept-lawyers-black-flag-march>

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222901/hc-grants-anticipatory-bail-to-bnp-vice-chairman-mintoo>

<sup>88</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/politics/news/did-not-take-money-run-the-election-3520196>

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/222951/pms-remark-on-us-undiplomatic-jsd>

<sup>90</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/eu-ndi-iri-teams-ask-ec-about-vote-cast-rate-3520176>



## 16 January

A factional clash between two groups within AL, in Rupganj subdistrict of Narayanganj, had resulted in seven people sustaining injuries and four vehicles being set on fire. The confrontation involved supporters of Golam Dastagir Gazi, the AL-backed lawmaker from Narayanganj-1, and Shahjahan Bhuiyan, a defeated candidate of the 7 January general election and the General Secretary of the Rupganj subdistrict unit of AL.<sup>91</sup>

The Election Commission had filed a lawsuit against Mohiuddin Bachchu, the newly-elected MP from Chattogram-10 and a member of AL. The charges included the distribution of donation cheques in mosques, temples, and pagodas prior to the 12th national election.<sup>92</sup>

Despite gathering the necessary one percent voter signatures to contest the national polls as independent candidates, approximately 36% of the independent candidates failed to secure even 1% of the vote in the 7 January Parliamentary election.<sup>93</sup>

## 17 January

A Dhaka court had granted bail to Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Secretary-General of BNP, and Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, Standing Committee Member of BNP. The bail pertained to two violence cases filed at Paltan Police Station on 28 October, 2023, on the day of BNP's grand rally in Dhaka.<sup>94</sup>

Zainul Abdin Farooque, a member of the BNP Chairperson's Advisory Council, and BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, had raised questions about the legitimacy of having 600 MP's in the 300 seats of the National Parliament. He had mentioned that the MP's from the 11th Parliament would remain in office until 29 January, and questioned how the new MP's took their oaths when the term of the outgoing Parliament had not yet expired. Farooque had

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/al-factional-clash-7-hurt-4-vehicles-torched-3521116>

<sup>92</sup>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/polls-code-violation-ec-sues-mohiuddin-bachchu-distributing-cheques-3520941>

<sup>93</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/signatures-they-got-not-votes-3520341>; Note: In 2008, the Representation of the People Order, 1972 was amended by adding section 12(3A), which states, "In the case of an independent candidate, every nomination paper shall have a list of signatures of one percent electors of the concerned constituency." The Election Commission had introduced the provision of requiring one percent voter support for independent candidates, to prevent an excessive number of independents from running, as having many independent candidates could potentially influence the results in favour of other contestants.

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/223067/mirza-fakhrul-khasru-get-bail-in-violence-cases>

also suggested that the people of the country would remove the AL regime through a robust movement.<sup>95</sup>

Several ministers had strongly responded to the findings of Transparency International Bangladesh, which characterised the 7 January general election as not free, fair, and one-sided. The ministers had expressed disagreement or disapproval of Transparency International Bangladesh's assessment of the electoral process.<sup>96</sup>

Out of the 44 registered political parties, only 28 participated, and among them, 23 failed to win any constituency in the election. Additionally, data from the Election Commission had also revealed that 27 polling stations recorded no votes, while two polling stations witnessed a 100% voter turnout. Furthermore, two centres had only one vote cast, and more than 500 centres saw less than 10% voter participation. In a notable contrast, over 90% of the votes were tallied at more than 100 centres.<sup>97</sup>

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal had stated that the 7 January general election was not highly participatory, acknowledging that a significant group not only boycotted but also sought to resist the polls. Despite the challenges, he had noted that the nation overcame a crisis through this election.<sup>98</sup>

Transparency International Bangladesh had said that the 7 January election was not conducted in a manner deemed free, fair, and participatory, and had released a research paper in this regard. They had highlighted that the absence of a participatory and free election was attributed to the conflicting and inflexible stances of the two major parties regarding the formation of a poll-time government.<sup>99</sup>

According to a report from the Human Rights Support Society, the electoral violence surrounding the 12th Parliamentary election had resulted in a grim toll. The report had disclosed that a minimum of 15 individuals had lost their lives, and over 2,200 others

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/223064/zainul-abdin-questions-legitimacy-of-parliament>;  
<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/politics/news/country-now-has-648-sworn-mps-3521961>

<sup>96</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/223199/ministers-blast-tib-findings-on-js-polls>

<sup>97</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/223032/all-candidates-of-19-parties-lose-deposits-in-js-polls>; Note: As per the Representation of People Order, 1972, a candidate stands to forfeit their security deposit if they are unable to secure a minimum of one-eighth of the total votes cast in a particular seat. In the context of National Parliament elections, the security deposit for a candidate is set at Tk 25,000.

<sup>98</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/223147/12th-js-polls-not-very-participatory-says-cec>

<sup>99</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/223054/january-7-election-not-free-fair-and-participatory-tib>;

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/51pc-seats-saw-vote-rigging-3521901>;  
<https://www.ti-bangladesh.org/articles/research/6895>

sustained injuries during the electoral violence. Additionally, the report had highlighted that over 100 people were subjected to gunfire, and more than 350 residences and businesses were targeted, facing acts of vandalism, arson, and looting.<sup>100</sup>

### 18 January

BNP had reportedly planned to carry out protest programs, such as hartals or laying siege to the Parliament building, on the first day of the Parliamentary session of the new government. This was intended as part of their movement advocating for a one-point demand.<sup>101</sup>

A Dhaka court had granted bail to Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, Standing Committee member of BNP. The bail pertains to four cases filed with Paltan and Ramna Police Stations in Dhaka, and related to political violence surrounding BNP's grand rally in Dhaka on 28 October, 2023.<sup>102</sup>

The US had dismissed any perception that it will not recognise PM Sheikh Hasina's fourth consecutive term in office. US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller had stated that they are currently urging the government of Bangladesh to conduct credible and transparent investigations into reports of violence and to hold the perpetrators accountable.<sup>103</sup>

### 19 January

Ganatantra Mancha, a coalition of six political parties, had called for a participatory re-election under a neutral government while demanding the annulment of the "farical 7 January dummy election."<sup>104</sup>

Three AL activists were reportedly hacked in Munshiganj in incidents of post-polls violence. The victims were supporters of Mrinal Kanti Das, who was defeated in the 7 January election as

<sup>100</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/223122/15-killed-2200-injured-in-electoral-violence-hrss>

<sup>101</sup>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/politics/hartalrallies/news/protesting-parliament-session-bnp-may-call-hartal-or-lay-siege-is-3522111>

<sup>102</sup>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/223204/bnp-leader-amir-khasru-gets-bail-in-4-more-cases>

<sup>103</sup>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/diplomacy/news/us-rules-out-possibility-not-recognising-sheikh-hasina-govt-3523076>

<sup>104</sup>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/223292/ganatantra-mancha-demands-participatory-re-election-under-neutral-government>

the AL's officially nominated candidate for the Munshiganj-3 constituency. The attackers were said to be affiliated with Mohammed Faisal, who contested the election as an AL-backed independent candidate and emerged victorious.<sup>105</sup>

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader had stated that the AL government was not at all uneasy about the statement made by the US regarding the 7 January general election. In a recent statement, the US had asserted that the 12th Parliamentary polls in Bangladesh were not free or fair.<sup>106</sup>

### 20 January

The Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad had urged for an end to the post-election violence targeting minority communities across the country.<sup>107</sup>

Many Bangladeshi expatriates around the world had expressed that they had missed the opportunity to exercise their voting rights, and attributed it to a lack of information and awareness initiatives by their respective embassies.<sup>108</sup>

### 21 January

BNP had declared a two-day black-flag procession program scheduled for 26-27 January. The program aims to demand the cancellation of the 12th Parliament and protest against the rising prices of essential commodities.<sup>109</sup>

A Dhaka court had granted bail to Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, Standing Committee Member of BNP, in two more cases. The bail pertains to two additional cases filed with Paltan and Ramna Police Stations in Dhaka, in relation to political violence surrounding BNP's grand rally in Dhaka on 28 October, 2023.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>105</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/223285/three-al-activists-hacked-in-post-polls-violence>

<sup>106</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/223220/govt-has-no-discomfort-over-us-statement-on-election-quader>

<sup>107</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/stop-post-polls-violence-3524411>

<sup>108</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/election-2024/news/news/expat-voting-allowed-left-out-3523861>

<sup>109</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/223399/bnp-to-hold-black-flag-processions-jan-26-27>

<sup>110</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/223415/amir-khasru-gets-bail-in-two-more-cases>

The High Court had instructed the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court to promptly accept and address the bail petitions of Mirza Abbas and Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Anee, both leaders of BNP. These cases are related to the violence that had occurred on 28 October, 2023 during BNP's grand rally in Dhaka.<sup>111</sup>

As of the latest draft update, the Election Commission had announced that the total number of voters in the country is now 121,775,450 voters. Ashok Kumar Debnath, the Additional Secretary of the Election Commission, had mentioned that this list was published taking into account the details of individuals eligible to vote as of 1 January, 2024.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/223406/hc-orders-dhaka-court-to-hear-bail-petitions-of-mirza-abbas-annie>

<sup>112</sup> <https://www.newagebd.net/article/223402/bangladesh-now-has-over-1217cr-voters-ec>