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<http://www.rsf.org/bangladesh-is-government-really-interested-in-15-09-2011,40990.html>

Asia - Bangladesh

Abuse of authority

Is government really interested in what happens to journalists?

15 September 2011

Reporters Without Borders is disturbed by the latest case of violence against journalists by a special police unit known as the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and by recent media freedom violations by members of the government.

"A climate of violence persists for journalists in Bangladesh," Reporters Without Borders said. "The current government initially allowed the media to work without being exposed to threats but recent press freedom violations have cast doubt on the firmness of its undertakings. We urge the authorities to put a stop to illegal acts of violence by the RAB."

Employees of *Bangla Vision*, a privately-owned TV station based in the Dacca neighbourhood of Kathalbagan, were physically attacked on 12 September by members of the RAB, who took advantage of a dispute to abuse their authority and target journalists.

The RAB intervened in response to a request by United Leasing, a privately-owned company located in the same building, during a dispute with *Bangla Vision*. When six RAB members arrived, dressed in plain clothes, they fired shots in the air and attacked the TV station's employees.

Bangla Vision employee **Hasanul Islam Raihan** was detained for two hours and was badly beaten. Reporter **Zahida Rahman**, cameraman **Russel Mizan** and another employee identified only as **Monju** were also injured.

After a meeting between senior RAB officers and *Bangla Vision*'s management at around 8 p.m. the same day, RAB representative Mohammad Sohail said a "commission of enquiry" would be set up. Raihan was released and was hospitalized for treatment of his serious injuries.

The government meanwhile published a bill on 12 September that would ban privately-owned TV and radio stations from broadcasting programmes that threaten national security and sovereignty or reflect negatively on national figures. It would also oblige them to broadcast certain government-generated content such as speeches by the president or prime minister.

In another development, shipping minister Shahjahan Khan banned around 60 journalists from covering a news conference that the ministries of the interior, shipping and communication gave on 11 September. Although invited by the communication ministry, the journalists were ordered to leave and had to wait outside. The three ministries have recently been criticized by the media.

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