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<http://www.rsf.org/bangladesh-journalists-repeatedly-attacked-in-30-05-2012,42700.html>

Asia - Bangladesh

Serial violence

Journalists repeatedly attacked in police reprisals against media

30 May 2012

Reporters Without Borders calls on the government of Bangladesh to take action against members of the police who assaulted three journalists yesterday in the presence of witnesses in the premises of the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, and to take steps to halt violence against the media, which has risen sharply since the start of the year.

"When not directly responsible for attacks on journalists, the police appear powerless, even passive, in the face of the violence that is seriously undermining freedom of information in the country," the press freedom organization said.

"In the past few months, we have called several times on the government to respond to the growing violence and the climate of impunity that has been created. So far, nothing has been done.

"Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who recently pointed out what she had done to promote democracy, must intervene urgently to guarantee the safety of all journalists and the basic right to inform the public. The protection of a free press not subject to threats and reprisals is necessary for democracy to function properly."

Assaults by police

Police burst into the court building and assaulted three journalists and two lawyers in the presence of two senior officers, Salahuddin Khan, the officer in charge at Kotwali police station, and Rajib Al Masud, an assistant police commissioner.

The three journalists, **MA Jalil Uzzal**, of the *Dainik Kaler Kantho*, **Tuhin Hawlader** of the *Bangladesh Protidin* and **Prasanta Kormokar** of the *Prothom Alo*, accused sub-inspectors Zaman and Jahangir of abusing a 15-year-old girl several hours earlier and beating up her father who tried to defend her. The teenager subsequently sought help from lawyers at the Dhaka court.

On 26 May, the photojournalists **Zahidul Karim**, **Sajid Hossain** and **Khaled Sarker** of the newspaper [Prothom Alo](#) were attacked by police officers while they were covering a student demonstration in the capital. After being beaten up in the street, they were arrested and taken to a police station. Their injuries included multiple fractures to the legs and hands. Their cameras were seized.

Following the attack, nine officers were suspended and three others were brought to justice. They are due to appear before a Dhaka court on 5 June.

Machete attack

Two days ago, nine journalists of [bdnews24.com](#) were brutally attacked at the news portal's Dhaka office. A group of men armed with machetes burst into the newsroom and indiscriminately attacked journalists, seriously injuring three.

Sub-editor **Newaz Mohammad Rifaat** and reporter **Salahuddin Wahed Pritom** received leg injuries and office worker **Ruhul Amin** was injured in the upper body. The three were taken to hospital. Other members of staff were also injured and several vehicles vandalized.

There was no claim of responsibility and the perpetrators and their motives are still unknown.

The *bdnews24.com* staff are said to have been shocked by the incident and have asked that those responsible be arrested immediately. The media community held a demonstration yesterday outside the National Press Club to express support for *bdnews24.com*.

More violence

On 19 May, **ABM Fazlur Rahman**, a reporter for the newspaper *Samakal*, was ambushed by men armed with machetes on the campus of Government Edward College in the central town of Pabna. He said an anonymous caller had asked him to go to the campus where he would give him information about irregularities at the college. His right arm was slashed and he was taken to hospital for treatment.

The attack may be linked to a report he wrote on an obscene dance performance at the campus.

On 15 May, **Abdullah Al Mamun**, a correspondent in Pabna for the newspaper *Kaler Kantho*, was beaten up in public by the nephew of the state minister for home affairs, Shamsul Hoque Tuku. The journalist had written about alleged corruption among members of the minister's family.

On 6 May, five television reporters were ambushed by a group of men affiliated to the Jubo League, a youth organization linked to the Awami League. The journalists were covering a meeting of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party in the southern town of Jessore. They were identified as **Akram Hossain** of *Channel i*, **Mamun** of *Desh TV*, **Ruhul Das** of *Maasranga Television*, **Torikul Islam Tarek** of *Diganta TV* and the latter's cameraman **Jubair Hossain**.

Since the start of the year, working conditions for journalists have worsened significantly in Bangladesh, which is ranked 129th of 179 countries listed in the [2011-2012 World Press Freedom Index](#) compiled by Reporters Without Borders.

