

Torture of family members of victims in Bangladesh

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The July Revolution (2024) in Bangladesh ousted Sheikh Hasina after her 15 years of torture, political oppression, embezzlement, and human rights violations using the state machinery (United Nations, 2025; European Union Agency for Asylum, 2025; Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, 2025). After escaping on 05 August 2024, all her misdeeds were exposed to the public, which she did to stay in power. The people of Bangladesh had to endure various forms of torture for speaking out against her misdeeds. It is not only the opposition leaders and activists who were tortured by his forces, but also the family members of the victims have been tortured in various ways. For instance, a law enforcement agency arrested and detained the wife and 11-month-old child in Police custody for 19 hours in the absence of a victim (Rahman, 2015). Pregnant ladies, couples with children, and women with children were detained and interrogated (Daily Ittefaq, 2024; Islam, 2025). Even family members were taken away by law enforcement officers and later denied. Here, we report four incidents of torture on family members in addition to the victim to document how the victim's family was tortured.

This study utilised a qualitative case analysis method to evaluate events of torture. Data were collected from various secondary sources, including reports from human rights organisations, televised news, newspaper reports, and other media sources. All the cases were selected for in-depth analysis based on the severity and diversity of torture methods reported. We collected data from existing sources; therefore, we did not seek formal ethical approval from an institutional review board.

We report four illustrative cases of torture inflicted upon family members of opposition party leaders in Bangladesh,

identifying a range of tortures experienced as indirect victims of state-led repression (Table 1).

Case 1: Masood Sayedee, the son of Delwar Hossain Sayedee, a former Jamaat-e-Islami (opposition party) leader was sentenced to life imprisonment by the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) due to his alleged activity during the Independence War in 1971. Masood faced repeated harassment, including imprisonment and bail denial under allegedly false charges that described the experience of legal harassment.

Case 2: Humam Quader Chowdhury, the son of an opposition political party (BNP) leader, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, was convicted of alleged war crimes during the Independence War in 1971. Humam had forcibly disappeared in 2016 and released seven months later. His mother was met with police refusal to investigate complaints, illustrating the use of enforced disappearance and psychological trauma.

Case 3: Mir Ahmed Bin Quasem, the son of Mir Quasem Ali, the Jamaat-e-Islami leader who had been sentenced to death by the ICT due to his alleged activity during the Independence War in 1971. Quasem was abducted and forcibly disappeared for eight years due to his father's political affiliations.

Case 4: Former Brigadier General Abdullahil Amaan Azmi, the son of Ghulam Azam, the former Jamaat-e-Islami chief was sentenced to life by the same court. Azmi was abducted in 2016 and was missing for eight years. His family faced threats and intimidation, highlighting the long-term impact of official persecution.

This report highlights the torture of family members of opposition political parties in Bangladesh. The cases analysed reveal a wide spectrum of state-sanctioned tortures that extend beyond direct political targets, impacting entire families and communities. Such acts violate international human rights laws and show the gendered dimensions of political repression. Legal harassment emerged as another prominent strategy, as seen in many cases (Amnesty International, 2024; International Federation for Human Rights, 2022). The use of politically motivated charges, repeated detention, and denial of bail demonstrates how judicial processes are manipulated to sustain repression (The Daily Star, 2019). Amnesty International (2017) and Hu-

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Table 1. Excerpt of Torture on Families in Bangladesh

SN.	Name	Reference	Incident	Type of Torture
1	Masood Sayedee	The Daily Star, 2019	His father (Delwar Hossain Sayedee) is an opposition political party leader and a convicted war criminal. He faced repeated harassment, including imprisonment and bail denial under allegedly false charges.	Legal harassment
2	Humam Quader Chowdhury	Amnesty International, 2017; Human Rights Watch, 2017	Son of an opposition political party leader who was a convicted war criminal, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, was taken away by men in plainclothes on August 4, 2016, and was released on March 2, 2017. Abducted and remains missing. The police refused to accept the mother's complaints.	Enforced disappearance, psychological trauma
3	Mir Ahmad Bin Quasem	Human Rights Watch, 2017; The Financial Express, 2025	Son of an opposition political party leader, Mir Quasem Ali, was abducted and disappeared for 8 years due to his criticism of the tribunal.	Enforced disappearance and torture in Aynaghor
4	Abdullahil Amaan Azmi	Amnesty International, 2017	Son of an opposition political party leader, Ghulam Azam, who was convicted as a war criminal. Amaan Azmi was abducted on the evening of August 22, 2016, and found on August 6, 2024.	Enforced disappearance and torture in Aynaghor

man Rights Watch (2017) have revealed similar strategies used to silence critical voices through the court system.

Enforced disappearance was a recurrent theme across several cases (Cases 2-4). The abductions of Humam Quader Chowdhury, Mir Ahmad Bin Quasem, and Abdullahil Amaan Azmi demonstrate how enforced disappearance is used not only to eliminate political opposition, but also to inflict long-term psychological trauma on families (Amnesty International, 2017; Human Rights Watch, 2017; The Financial Express, 2025). These are violations of international obligations under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (United Nations, 2006). Families of the disappeared often face harassment when seeking information or justice, exacerbating their suffering and contributing to a climate of fear (Amnesty International, 2017).

These findings highlight the critical need for international attention and accountability procedures to address the widespread use of torture and human rights abuses in Bangladesh. Efforts should be made to document incidents, help victims and their families, and ensure necessary steps are taken to stop it. Addressing torture in this context is not just a matter of individual justice, but also a critical step toward preserving the rule of law and constitutional principles.

This report reveals that family members of victims in Bangladesh are subjected to torture (physical and psychological torture), legal harassment, and enforced disappearance. The findings suggest that these violations are not isolated incidents but rather part of a larger strategy of official persecution aimed at silencing dissent. Addressing these human rights violations is crucial to ensuring justice for victims, psychological support and upholding constitutional principles in Bangladesh.

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