



News | Protests

# Police fire tear gas as Bangladesh protests against job quotas rage

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina vows to punish those responsible deaths of six people at protests.



Bangladesh police personnel fire tear shells as students protest against quotas in government jobs [Munir Uz Zaman/AFP]

17 Jul 2024



Police have fired tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse students protesting against the Bangladesh government's job quota system in the capital, Dhaka, as authorities ordered the [closure of all public and private universities](#) for an indefinite period.

On Wednesday, authorities deployed units of the paramilitary Border Guard force alongside riot police outside the University of Dhaka campus as students chanted: "We will not let our brothers' blood go in vain".

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Police fired tear gas and rubber bullets and lobbed sound grenades at the students as they marched in processions carrying coffins in solidarity with those killed, Nahid Islam, the coordinator of the anti-quota protests, told the news agency Reuters.

"Our protests will also continue no matter how much violence they can unleash on us," University of Dhaka student Chamon Fariya Islam told the AFP news agency.



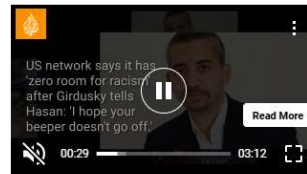
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Anti-quota protesters join in a coffin rally at the University of Dhaka [Mohammad Ponir Hossain/Reuters]

The job quotas, which include a 30 percent reservation for family members of fighters from the 1971 war of independence from Pakistan, have caused anger among students who say the system benefits children of pro-government groups who back Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who won her [fourth consecutive term](#) in a general election in January that was boycotted by the opposition.

Students also say the quotas won't fix high youth unemployment rates in the country, with nearly 32 million young Bangladeshis not in work or education out of a total population of 170 million people.

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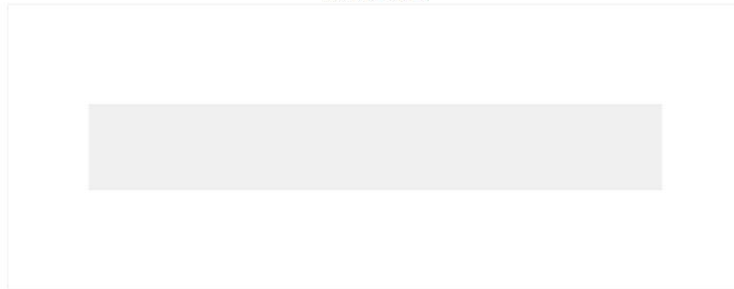
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[Demonstrations](#) intensified and turned violent after Hasina, the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who led Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan, refused to meet the protesters' demands. She labelled those opposing the quota as "razakar" – a term used for those who allegedly collaborated with the Pakistani army during the 1971 war.

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On Tuesday, six people, including at least three students, were killed during clashes, police said.



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Hasina has condemned the killings and insisted that perpetrators would be brought to justice.

“I condemn every murder,” she said in a televised address to the nation on Wednesday evening.

“I firmly declare that those who carried out murders, looting and violence – whoever they are – I will make sure they will be given the appropriate punishment.”

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud added that the government was sympathetic towards the students and their movement and blamed the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its ally Jamaat-e-Islami party for the violence.

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Police also raided the BNP headquarters and arrested seven members of its student wing, in an effort to stop the violence. Detective branch chief Harun-or-Rashid told reporters that officers had found a cache of Molotov cocktails and other weapons at the BNP offices.



Meanwhile, internet users around Bangladesh reported widespread outages of Facebook, the main platform used to organise the protests. Online freedom watchdog NetBlocks said “multiple internet providers” in Bangladesh had completely restricted access to the social media platform in the wake of Tuesday’s crackdown.

Rights watchdog Amnesty International and the US Department of State have both condemned this week’s clashes and urged Hasina’s government not to crack down on peaceful demonstrators.

SOURCE: NEWS AGENCIES

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