

ABC News has a fresh look We've made it easier to find the stories that matter to you with a new homepage, personalised sections and more.

# Bangladeshi prime minister Sheikh Hasina resigns after month of protests

By Aoife Hilton with wires

World Politics

Mon 5 Aug



Bangladeshi prime minister Sheikh Hasina has resigned and fled the country.

### In short:

Bangladeshi prime minister Sheikh Hasina has resigned and fled the country after weeks of deadly anti-government protests.

Military chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman said he would form an interim government after holding talks with Ms Hasina's main opposition party and civil society members.

### What's next?

Ms Hasina is expected to receive safe passage in India, having reportedly landed in the eastern city of Argatala with her sister.

abc.net.au/news/bangladesh-pm-resigns-followi...



Share article

Bangladeshi prime minister Sheikh Hasina has resigned and fled the country after weeks of deadly anti-government protests.

Ms Hasina and her sister have reportedly landed in a military helicopter in the eastern Indian city of Argatala and the Indian government is expected to offer her safe passage.

A source close to Ms Hasina said she left first by motorcade but then was flown out, without disclosing her destination.

"Her security team asked her leave. She did not find any time to prepare."

"She was later evacuated on a helicopter."

## Military chief says interim government to take charge



### Top Stories



Federal Government

Labor minister says PM 'hasn't played favourites' with Qantas despite flight perks



Retail Industry

Retailer behind Rivers, Katies and Millers enters voluntary administration, putting 3,000 jobs at risk



The vast crowds flooded the streets and tore down police barriers. (Reuters: Mohammad Panir Hossain)

Military chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman confirmed Ms Hasina's resignation and departure in a televised address.

He said he would speak to Bangladeshi President Mohammed Shahabuddin about forming an interim government, but did not specify whether he would lead it.

The general said the move came after "fruitful" talks with Ms Hasina's main opposition party and civil society members, but not her Awami League.

"The country is going through a revolutionary period," he said.

"I promise you all, we will bring justice to all the murders and injustice. We request you to have faith in the army of the country. I take full responsibility and I assure you to not get disheartened."

**"The country has suffered a lot, the economy has been hit, many people have been killed. it is time to stop the violence."**

"I request you all to be a little patient, give us some time and together we will be able to solve all the problems."

"If the situation gets better, there is no need for emergency."

"Now the task of the students is to keep calm and help us."

"Please don't go back to the path of violence and please return to non-violent and peaceful ways."

"I hope after my speech, the situation will improve."



Thousands of people have entered Ganabhaban, the Bangladesh prime minister's residence. (Reuters: Mohammad Panir Hossain)

Tarique Rahman, the exiled acting chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, said Ms Hasina's resignation "proves the power of the people".

"Together, let's rebuild Bangladesh into a democratic and developed nation, where the rights and freedoms of all people are protected," he posted to social media platform X.

Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Washington-based Wilson Center, warned Ms Hasina's departure



Analysis by Jacob Greber

Jim Chalmers declared the LNP's win 'decisive', countering the existing Queensland election narrative



Courts and Trials

\$22bn company taken to court over claims of 'greenwashing' its environmental targets



Courts and Trials

Man who killed two Melbourne sex workers in 24 hours strikes manslaughter deal

"would leave a major vacuum" in the Bangladesh government.

"If it's a peaceful transition, with an interim set-up taking over until elections are held, then stability risks would be modest and the consequences would be limited," he said.

"But if there is a violent transition or a period of uncertainty, that could risk more destabilisation and problems inside and outside."

## Protesters raid Hasina's residence



Thousands marched on the city centre to demand Ms Hasina's resignation.

Local media reports thousands of people have entered Ganabhaban, the prime minister's residence.

Television visuals showed crowds in the drawing rooms of the residence. Some people could be seen carrying away televisions, chairs and tables from what was one of the most protected buildings in the country.

"She has fled the country, fled the country," some shouted.

Bangladeshi newspaper the Business Standard estimated as many as 400,000 protesters were on the streets but it was impossible to verify the figure.

Before the protesters stormed the compound, Ms Hasina's son urged the country's security forces to block any takeover.

"Your duty is to keep our people safe and our country safe and to uphold the constitution," her son, US-based Sajeeb Wazed Joy, said in a post on Facebook.

"It means don't allow any unelected government to come in power for one minute, it is your duty."

Soldiers and police using armoured vehicles and barbed wire barricaded routes to Ms Hasina's office in Dhaka on Monday morning, but the vast crowds flooded the streets and tore down the barriers.

Bangladesh's Channel 24 broadcast images of crowds running into the compound and waving to the camera as they celebrated.

Protesters in Dhaka also climbed atop a large statue of independence leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Ms Hasina's father, and began chiselling away at the head with an axe.

### Violent Bangladesh protests leave bloody memories



Student protesters in Bangladesh want an ingrained system of nepotism for some government jobs removed and replaced with a merit-based approach but their demonstrations have led to fatal clashes with authorities — even for those only there to hand out water.





Protesters also climbed atop a statue of independence leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Ms Hasina's father. (AP: Rajib Dhar)

"The time has come for the final protest," Asif Mahmud, one of the key leaders in the nationwide civil disobedience campaign, said.

Bangladeshi newspaper the Daily Star reports at least six people have been killed in Monday's clashes between protesters and police in the Jatrabari and Dhaka Medical College areas.

## At least 300 dead after weeks of protests

The protests began on July 1 as a student movement against civil service job quotas.

They became deadly on July 16, when clashes between students and police saw six people killed.

The government imposed an internet blackout over the country two days later.

The quota scheme reserved more than half of government jobs in Bangladesh for certain groups.



Protesters called for Ms Hasina to step down after protests which began as a student movement against a government jobs quota. (AP: Rajib Dhar)

Ms Hasina promised last year to turn all of Bangladesh into a "prosperous and developed country" but about 18 million young Bangladeshis are out of work, according to government figures.

The demonstrations escalated despite the scheme being scaled back by Bangladesh's top court on July 21, having evolved to reflect broader frustrations about the economy, corruption and the country's authoritarian turn under Ms Hasina's government.

The anti-government movement attracted people from across society in the South Asian nation of about 170 million people, including film stars, musicians and singers.

Security forces supported Ms Hasina's government throughout the unrest, but the protesters defied curfews and deadly force.

The government declared the indefinite nationwide curfew starting at 6pm, local time, on Sunday and also announced a three-day general holiday starting from

### Bangladesh's top court scales back jobs quota



The Supreme Court orders 93 per cent of government jobs to be allocated on a merit-based system, scaling back previous legislation that saw 30 per cent of such jobs saved for relatives of veterans.

Monday.

Sunday marked the deadliest day of the unrest, with at least 94 people killed, 14 of whom were police officers.

Violence was reported in 39 of the country's 64 districts over the weekend.

Bangladesh Railway said it had suspended all services indefinitely due to the unrest.

Garment factories in the country, which supply apparel to some of the top brands in the world, have also been closed indefinitely.

A spokesperson for fashion retailer H&M, which has many suppliers in Bangladesh, said their team was "continuously monitoring the developments" in the country.

"We are concerned about the developments and the violence and hope for a peaceful agreement," they said.



The anti-government movement attracted people from across Bangladesh society. (AP: Rajib Dhar)

Protesters and government supporters countrywide battled each other with sticks and knives, and security forces opened fire.

The day's violence took the total number of people killed since the protests began to at least 300, according to an AFP tally based on data from police, government officials and doctors at hospitals.

"Let's be clear: the walls are closing in on Hasina. She's rapidly losing support and legitimacy," Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Washington-based Wilson Center, told AFP.

**"The protests have taken on immense momentum, fuelled by raw anger but also by the confidence that comes with knowing that so much of the nation is behind them."**

A respected former army chief demanded the government "immediately" withdraw troops and allow protests.

"Those who are responsible for pushing people of this country to a state of such an extreme misery will have to be brought to justice," ex-army chief General Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan told reporters on Sunday.

Ms Hasina denied using excessive force against the protesters, saying they "are not students but terrorists who are out to destabilise the nation".

Mr Waker told officers on Saturday that the military "always stood by the people", according to an official statement.

**Hasina's rule saw forced disappearances, extra-judicial killings**



Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina has resigned following weeks of deadly protests. (AP: Christophe Ena)

### Related stories



#### Demonstrations

Students wanting better work opportunities in Bangladesh have instead been left injured or dead



#### World Politics

Bangladeshi court scales back jobs quota that triggered deadly unrest which killed scores



#### Civil Unrest

Bangladesh police accused of removing protest leaders from hospital

Ms Hasina was the longest-serving female leader in the world.

She first served as prime minister in 1996 but lost to Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) five years later.

The military declared an emergency in January 2007 after widespread political unrest and installed a military-backed caretaker government for two years.

Both Ms Hasina and Ms Zia were imprisoned on corruption charges in 2007 after the coup.

But the charges were dropped and they contested an election the following year, which Ms Hasina won in a landslide. She had been in power ever since.

Ms Hasina won a fourth straight term in the country's January elections, which were boycotted by the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party.

She survived numerous assassination attempts and jail time.

But her time in office was rife with accusations of forced disappearances, extra-judicial killings and a crackdown on her critics — which she denies.

Five top Islamist leaders and a senior opposition figure were executed over the past decade after convictions for crimes against humanity committed during the brutal 1971 liberation war.

The United States imposed sanctions in 2021 on an elite branch of Bangladesh's security forces and seven of its top officers over charges of widespread human rights abuses.

Ms Hasina insisted in the face of the mounting protests that she had worked for her nation and toured areas of Dhaka damaged during days of deadly unrest last month.

"Over 15 years, I've built this country," she told reporters.

"What didn't I do for the people?"

ABC/Wires

Posted Mon 5 Aug 2024 at 3:29pm, updated Mon 5 Aug 2024 at 5:40pm



#### Bangladesh protest leaders allegedly taken from hospital



Staff and family members of the three leaders say they have been taken to an unknown location by police.

### Related topics

- Activism and Lobbying Asia Bangladesh Demonstrations Government and Politics Unrest, Conflict and War World Politics

### Top Stories



2 Retail Industry Retailer behind Rivers, Katies and Millers enters...

### Just In

Recipes 2m ago A Bite To Eat With Alice: Tasty recipes in one place