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# US commends Bangladesh army for 'restraint' after PM Sheikh Hasina flees

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WORLD

Tuesday, 06 Aug 2024  
12:37 AM MYT



FILE PHOTO: Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaks during the annual Munich Security Conference, in Munich, Germany February 17, 2024. REUTERS/Wolfgang Rattay/File Photo

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -The U.S. government commended Bangladesh's army on Monday for its "restraint" and urged the democratic formation of an interim government after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled the South Asian country.

Hasina's exit came after hundreds of people were killed in a crackdown on demonstrations that began as protests against preferential job quotas and swelled into a movement demanding her downfall.

General Waker-Uz-Zaman, Bangladesh's army chief, announced Hasina's resignation in a televised address and said an interim government would be formed.

"The United States has long called for respecting democratic rights in Bangladesh, and we urge that the interim government formation be democratic and inclusive. We commend the Army for the restraint they have showed today," a White House spokesperson said on Monday.

The White House and the U.S. State Department separately urged parties to refrain from violence and restore peace at the earliest.

"We welcome the announcement of an interim government," a State Department spokesperson told reporters.

Bangladesh has been engulfed by demonstrations and violence after student protests last month against quotas that reserved a high portion of government jobs for certain groups escalated into a campaign to oust Hasina, who won a fourth straight term in January in an election boycotted by the opposition.



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The State Department said in January that the elections were not free and fair. It had also said that Washington was concerned by reports of vote irregularities and violence.

The recent protests against Hasina and the crackdown on them included some of the worst violence since the birth of Bangladesh more than five decades ago.

Asked about how the change of government in Bangladesh could affect programs to aid Rohingya refugees who fled there from neighboring Myanmar, the State Department said it had no immediate comment. Since 2017 the U.S. has provided over \$2 billion in assistance for the refugees.

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