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Photo by ISHARA S. KODIKARA/AFP via Getty Images

July 25, 2024

## Bangladesh: Further video and photographic analysis confirm police unlawfully used lethal and less-lethal weapons against protesters

Bangladeshi authorities have continued to use unlawful force against student protesters, amid six days of shutdown and communication restrictions, during the quota-reform protest across the country, said Amnesty International today as it released a second part to its evidence analysis [series](#).

The nationwide internet access was partially restored on 23 July after six days of complete shutdown amidst a volatile period marked by crackdown on protesters, the deployment of army, a curfew and the issuing of shoot-on-sight orders. The limited

information coming out of the country has been an impediment to human rights monitoring. Amnesty International has responded to the evolving situation through verification and analysis of available video and photographic evidence. Amnesty International and its Crisis Evidence Lab has verified videos of three incidents of unlawful use of lethal and less lethal weapons by law enforcement agencies while policing the protests.

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**Amnesty International urges the Government of Bangladesh and its agencies to respect the right to protest, end this violent crackdown and immediately lift all communications restrictions.**

**Deprese Muchena, Senior Director at Amnesty International**

“The continued verification and analysis by Amnesty International of video and photographic evidence that is trickling out of Bangladesh provides a grim picture. The egregious human rights records of the Bangladeshi government and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), which has been deployed to police the protests, provides little reassurance that the protesters’ rights will be protected in the absence of active international monitoring with internet and communication restrictions still partially in place,” said Deprese Muchena, Senior Director at Amnesty International.

“Amnesty International urges the Government of Bangladesh and its agencies to respect the right to protest, end this violent crackdown and immediately lift all communications restrictions.”

*\* Viewer discretion advised while opening linked videos of the violence in the analysis below*

## Abusive use of less-lethal weapons; failure to provide medical assistance

On 18 July, videos surfaced on social media of a protester, **later identified** as Shykh Aashhabul Yamin, a student at the Military Institute of Science and Technology, who was reportedly **injured** and **killed** during clashes with police officers at a protest near a bus station in Savar, near the capital Dhaka.

The **first video** shows an Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) driving down the Dhaka-Aricha Highway with Yamin's unconscious body on top. A **second video** shows an officer attempting to lift Yamin's body by the arms while another officer grabs him by the legs and violently yanks his body down off the vehicle, causing Yamin's head to hit the pavement as his body falls. The **final video** begins with two officers in full riot gear stepping out of the APC and seemingly looking down at Yamin's body on the ground in front of them. Eventually the officers pull Yamin from the ground and drag his body over the road's median barriers, dropping him on the other side next to another group of officers. Eventually the APC drives away leaving Yamin's body on the road. News reports claim that Yamin died later that day from his injuries.

In the three videos verified by Amnesty International, none of the 12 officers visible attempted to provide medical aid to Yamin. Section 5(c) of the United Nations Basic Principle on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials requires law enforcement officials to ensure that assistance and medical aid are rendered to any injured or affected persons at the earliest possible moment. Derrick Pounder, an independent forensic pathologist who examined photographic evidence of the wounds to Yamin's chest, told Amnesty International that the cause of his death could reasonably be presumed to have been due to the birdshot pellet injuries to the left front chest visible on his body. Amnesty International considers the use of birdshot to be absolutely inappropriate for law enforcement and it should never be used in the policing of protest.

## Dangerous use of tear gas

In another **video** posted on 18 July, an officer fires tear gas through a closed gate at BRAC University in Dhaka where **violent** clashes took place between police and student protesters. A **video filmed from inside the university** suggests that a crowd

of student protesters were gathered on the other side of an enclosed courtyard as the Bangladeshi Police officer fired into the crowds through the university gates.

In these videos, verified by Amnesty International, the actions of the police officer clearly constitute unlawful and unnecessary use of force. Law enforcement must never fire tear gas into an enclosed space with no obvious means of escape from the effects of chemical irritant. Local news reports claim that at least 30 people suffered injuries due to the use of tear gas on BRAC University's campus.

## Use of lethal firearms

A video clip circulating on social media since 20 July shows an officer firing an AK-pattern assault rifle during the protests. The seven second video verified by Amnesty International was filmed in front of a bank on DIT Road in the Rampura neighbourhood of Dhaka. It shows several officers from the Bangladesh Police and Border Guard Bangladesh standing alongside an APC. One of the officers points a Chinese type 56-1 assault rifle towards off-screen targets and fires two rounds.

Firearms are not an appropriate tool for the policing of assemblies; they must only be used when strictly necessary to confront an imminent threat of death or serious injury.

In another video, also filmed in Rampura neighbourhood sometime on or before 19 July, police officers in full riot gear are seen marching down a road alongside an APC, equipped with 12-gauge shotguns and 37/38mm grenade launchers. Some of the police officers fire multiple shots from shotguns at off-screen targets.



**An independent and impartial investigation into all human rights violations committed by security forces, including the high death toll of protesters, must be urgently conducted.**

## Deprose Muchena

“Authorities must immediately lift the shoot-on-sight orders, fully restore internet access across the country and end the use of army and paramilitary forces in the policing of protests. They must also guarantee that shoot-on-sight curfew orders and internet shutdowns will not be used in the future. These repressive measures are a deliberate attempt to crush both these protests and any future dissent,” said Deprose Muchena.

“An independent and impartial investigation into all human rights violations committed by security forces, including the high death toll of protesters, must urgently be conducted and all those found responsible must be held fully accountable. Victims of unlawful police use of force, including those who have been injured and family members of those who have been killed, must also receive full reparations from the state.”

## Background

According to media reports there have been 2,500 arrests and nearly 200 deaths and several thousand injuries since the protests turned deadly on 16 July 2024. Other reports state 61,000 have been charged with violence related to the protests.

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