



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

Catherine West MP
Minister for Indo-Pacific

King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Email:
fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk

To: All MPs
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

24 July 2024

Dear Colleague,

SITUATION IN BANGLADESH

I am writing to you about the situation in Bangladesh in recent days. With more than 700,000 people of Bangladeshi heritage across the UK, many of you will have a constituency interest in what is happening there.

On Monday, I offered an all-party parliamentary briefing on the situation and was delighted to see so many of you at short notice. It was clear from our conversation yesterday, that there is interest in Bangladesh, what is happening there and how this affects constituents.

Over the last week, we have seen protests across Bangladesh, including in Dhaka and Sylhet where there are strong connections with communities in the UK. The UK is deeply concerned by the violence. We have raised our concerns about the interruption to access to the internet and communications services and the imposition of a curfew. I am aware of how this will be impacting constituents who have family and friends in Bangladesh.

I issued a statement on 22 July making clear the need for an end to the violence and to the loss of life. In the statement, I reflected the importance of the right to protest, to peacefully assemble and to express different political views.

Recognising the importance of the connections between the people of our two countries, my statement highlighted the importance to access to internet and communications services. Internet and communication services are vitally important so that people in Bangladesh can be fully connected with their friends and families in the UK and around the world. I called on all sides to find ways to restore calm across Bangladesh.

This statement has been translated into Bengali. I have also made a video message, to help make this information accessible.

I issued an initial statement about the situation on 18 July and spoke to Bangladesh High Commissioner Saida Muna Tasneem on 19 July 2024 and 23 July 2024 to reiterate my concern about the events unfolding in Bangladesh.

Due to the security situation, curfew and the disruption to local services including communications, dependants of UK staff working at the British High Commission have been temporarily withdrawn from the country. The British High Commission continues with essential work to support British nationals who remain our utmost priority.

We have updated our travel advice for British nationals regularly. Our travel advice makes clear that people should only travel to Bangladesh if they consider their travel essential. It draws attention to the violence, the lack of access to communications and the curfew. The travel advice provides contact details for British nationals needing assistance.

If your constituents are a friend or family member of a British national and are concerned for their safety, they are able to contact the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office on +44 (0)20 7008 5000. Should you receive any pieces of correspondence relating to the FCDO on this issue, please forward to Fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk.

The Consular Contact Centre also has a dedicated hotline for MP enquiries. To be clear, the FCDO cannot offer assistance to non-British Nationals.

There have been some protests in the UK about the situation in Bangladesh. You know how seriously we protect the right to peaceful assembly and protest and the rights of freedom of expression. Where there have been concerns about the safety of the protests, the Police have responded.

If you have any concerns about community tensions, these are best directed towards MHCLG who lead on community tensions for HMG.

As part of the UK public response, you can help by:

- Retweeting my recent statement. This has been shared on the Foreign Secretary and my own account on X (Twitter).
- Retweeting and sharing my recent video statement on the violence in Bangladesh.
- Outlining your concern regarding the violence in Bangladesh on your own social media platforms.
- Reposting essential travel advice changes to your social media platforms so that more people can have access to our evolving advice.
- Reaffirming that the UK government is deeply concerned by the violence in Bangladesh. And that we are calling on all sides to end the violence and find a peaceful way forward when you are meeting with relevant/appropriate stakeholders.

This letter will be placed in the library of the House of Commons.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Catherine West". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

Catherine West MP
Minister for Indo-Pacific
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office