

# CA PEACE REPORT

*an initiative of BPO*



Centre for  
**ALTERNATIVES**  
Since 2003

Volume 7, Issue 4, 2024



**Crime and Violence Update  
in Bangladesh:  
An Analysis from BPO**

**Contemporary Rise of Mob  
Violence and Mob Injustice in  
Bangladesh**

**Understanding Mob  
Psychology and  
Misimpression of Justice**

**CA PEACE REPORT**  
*an initiative of*  
**BPO- Bangladesh Peace Observatory**



**Volume 7, Issue 4**  
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## From the Editor's Desk

*“Whoever fights monsters should see to it that, in the process, he does not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you.”*

- Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

In contemporary times, any discussion on mob violence must begin by discarding the misnomer ‘mob justice’! This is because there is no ‘justice’ in mob violence. It is purely a case of mob *injustice*. This would be yet another example of what Chris Hedges refers to as ‘logocide,’ the killing of words.<sup>1</sup> As is the case with words such as ‘truth,’ ‘wisdom,’ ‘liberty,’ and ‘love,’ which mean one thing to the pluralist secular world and quite another to a singular fundamentalist world, the former getting increasingly eroded by the latter at the hands of the empowered state and disempowered society, so is the case with the word ‘justice.’ The meaning gets twisted and stands for something diametrically opposite to the original meaning of ‘justice’ when the word ‘mob’ gets attached to it. The media, including some distracted activists and public intellectuals, unwittingly use the word ‘mob justice’ without realizing its impact, particularly in distorting and belittling the conceptualization of ‘justice’ itself. This is sad and tragic because the user's goal, if anything at all, is to ensure justice. Here, one must see the profound significance of Nietzsche’s warning because any distortion or belittling of the word ‘justice’ could rob of its impact, creating space for humans to become monsters!

The individual-collective dichotomy plays a critical role in mob injustice. Although we are individuals with individual human rights, when it comes to mob injustice, the collective organizes and

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Hedges, *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America* (New York: Free Press, 2006), p. 14.

enforces violence against the individual by targeting the latter. The violent collective considers the individual as a representative of the erstwhile collective. Mob injustice, while targeting the individual, otherwise takes the form of collective punishment. This is true as much in communal or political violence in Bangladesh and India, for instance, as it is in racial or ethnic violence in developed countries, including France, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

This makes it difficult to understand what triggers mob injustice. However, some critics quickly blame such incidents on misgovernance and weak democratic institutions.<sup>2</sup> This may be the case but remains weak when it comes to evidence. Developed countries, even with solid governmental institutions and democratic traditions, have failed to stop mob violence. The fate of the Romas in Europe and the episodes of lynchings and riots against the Afro-Americans and other minorities in the United States are solid examples.<sup>3</sup> Some critics, for instance, when referring to the United States and invoking Foucauldian contention, see ‘the spectacle and theatricality’ reproducing lynchings in the United States. As Terry Anne Scott justifiably argued:

American lynch mobs fashioned spectacles designed to integrate punishment with pleasure, in acts whose very publicity amounted to declarations of their legitimacy. As in Foucault, the spectacle was an assertion of the public will. In Texas lynchings, mobilizing the citizenry for pomp-filled, public displays of torture and death served as a visual manifestation of white racial dominance and Black subjugation in the midst of vast and unsettling changes that appeared to challenge the racial hierarchy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> H.M. Fazle Rabbi, “The state of mob justice in Bangladesh,” *The Daily Star*, 6 September 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Rorke, et al., *Mob Justice: Collective Punishment Against Roma in Europe* (Brussels: European Roma Rights Centre, March 2019); Terry Anne Scott, *Lynching and Leisure: Race and the Transformation of Mob Violence in Texas* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2022); Philip V McHarris, “The George Floyd protests are a rebellion against an unjust system,” *The Guardian*, 4 June 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Terry Anne Scott, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

This brings us to the Jungian argument that the archetype of revenge is as much hereditary as it is a construction and historically reproduced. As Carl Gustav Jung noted, “Revenge is human. God does not know revenge. He knows only power and creation.”<sup>5</sup> The archetype of revenge otherwise plays a critical role in mob violence. Put differently, violence reproduces violence, and it impacts our brains and becomes a new normal with morbid and devastating consequences. But then, does this mean that state violence, as has been the case with some developed and developing countries, including Bangladesh, is equally complicit in reproducing mob violence?

Not surprisingly, Gandhi had good reasons to advocate the confluence of *upaya* (means) and *upeya* (end). Since violence begets violence, a peaceful, non-violent end, as Gandhi argued, cannot be achieved violently or through violent means.<sup>6</sup> The mind and the practices otherwise must be addressed if one seeks to understand the origins, development, and continuity of state and mob violence and plans to work for their transformation and demise. In this context, one cannot help but paraphrase the UNESCO preamble and declare, “Since violence begins in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed.” This is more easily said than done. This would require a fundamental transformation in our thinking and practices, including creating tolerant structures at various levels in the state and society. A tall prescription, no doubt, but a credible one! Nothing short of addressing the mind and practices would work if we were to build a world free of mob violence.

**Professor Imtiaz Ahmed**  
Executive Director,  
Centre for Alternatives

20 November 2024

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<sup>5</sup> C.G. Jung, *The Black Books 1913-1932: Notebooks of Transformation* (London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2020), p. 252.

<sup>6</sup> Imtiaz Ahmed, *State & Foreign Policy: India's Role in South Asia* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1993), p. 129.

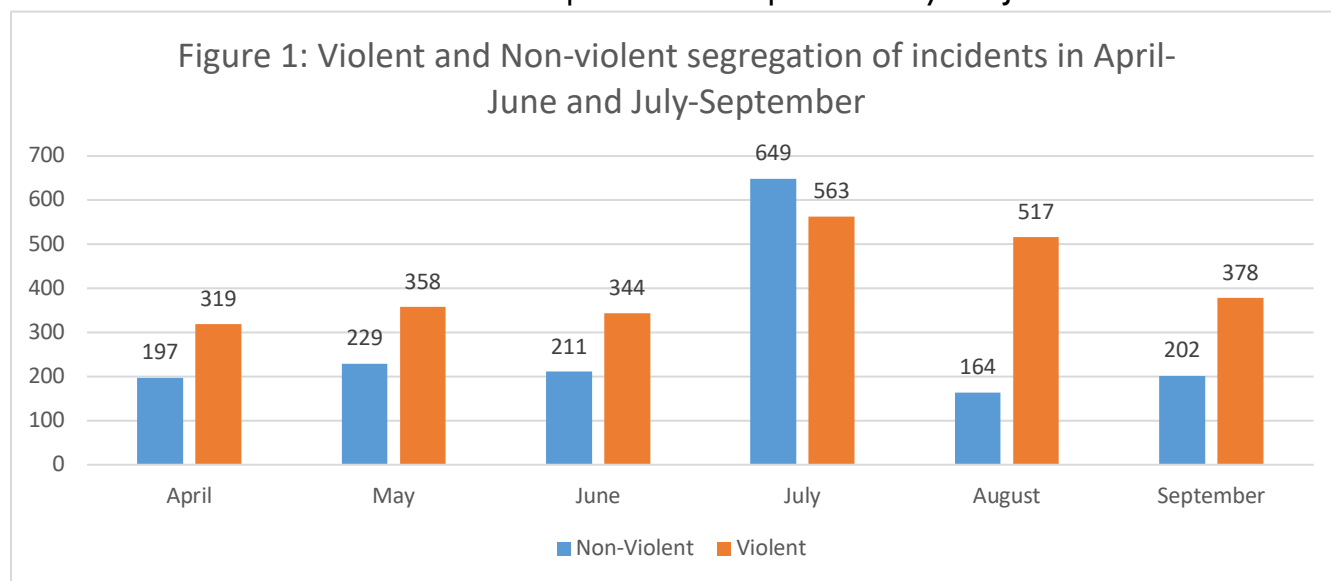
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## Crime and Violence Update in Bangladesh: An Analysis from BPO

### July-September 2024

The Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO) brings together different streams of publicly available data on violence using news reports from prominent national and regional dailies. From July to September 2024, BPO has recorded 2479 violent<sup>7</sup> and 1652 non-violent<sup>8</sup> incidents. Figure 1 shows the monthly segregation of the violent and non-violent incidents that occurred this quarter

alongside the monthly segregation of the previous quarter (April- June 2024). Drawing a comparison between these two quarters, it is noticeable that violent incidents increased significantly in July-September 2024 than in April-June 2024. On the other hand, the non-violent incidents, save July 2024, went down in the following two months compared to May and June 2024



<sup>7</sup> Violent Incident: According to the BPO Codebook, The reported incident involved the intentional use of physical force by an individual or group against another individual or group in a manner that resulted or could have resulted in death, injury, or any other form of physical harm to persons or property.

<sup>8</sup> Non-violent Incident: According to the BPO Codebook, the reported incident did not involve the intentional use of physical force by an individual or group against another individual or group in a manner that resulted or could have resulted in death, injury, or any other form of physical harm to persons or property, e.g., Arrest, Peaceful Protest, Rescue, and Recovery.

Table I summarises the updates on major violence types that constitute the most violent incidents. The Annex provides a brief description of each category. It shows that most of the violent

incidents fall under the Assault, Clash, Destruction of Property, Mob Violence, and Sexual Assault categories.

**Table I: Major violence types from July to September 2024**

Major Violence types	July	August	September
Assault	351	272	249
Clash	136	161	76
Destruction of property	11	60	12
Mob violence (large group assault)	5	30	17
Sexual assault	19	10	13
Fight	24	4	10
Violence against civilians	18	10	4
Violent demonstration	17	2	1
Abduction/hostage	2	7	6
Unspecified	0	4	3
Other	4	1	0
Sabotage	4	0	0
Unclear	2	1	1
Gunfight	2	0	0

The July-September 2024 quarter saw a significant increase in nearly all types of violence and related consequences, except for abduction and sexual assault, which experienced a decline. The total numbers for deaths, injuries, and arrests surged

dramatically compared to the April-June quarter. Table 2 reveals that the number of fatalities rose by 128.5% (from 656 to 1,499), injuries increased by 347% (from 2,709 to 12,110), and arrests grew by 340.3% (from 2,878 to 12,673). In contrast, the

number of abductions and sexual assaults decreased by 10.8% and 19.4%, respectively.

**Table 2: Major violence types from July-September 2024**

Quarters	Total Killed	Total Injured	Total abducted	Total Sexually Assaulted	Total Arrested
July	488	5174	3	28	10975
August	757	4748	10	10	1044
September	254	2188	20	12	654
Total in this quarter	1499	12110	33	50	12673
Total in previous quarter (April-June)	656	2709	37	62	2878
Increase/Decrease	128.5	347.0	-10.8	-19.4	340.3

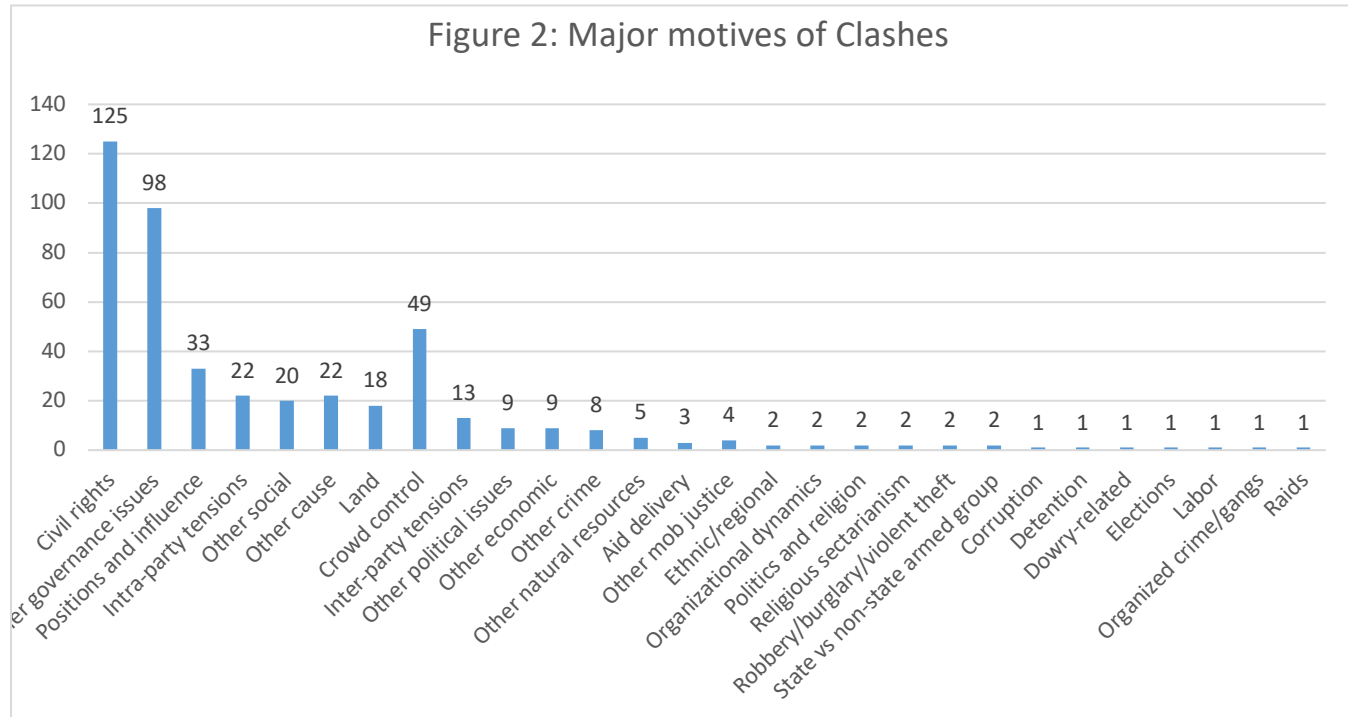
July marked an unprecedented turning point in the history of Bangladesh. What began as the Quota Reform Movement quickly evolved into the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, culminating in the downfall of the Awami League regime. The situation escalated dramatically by mid-July, leading to the tragic loss of numerous lives, including students, children, and other innocent individuals. Across the country, many suffered injuries ranging from minor to severe, while law enforcement agencies launched an extensive crackdown in an attempt to control the unrest. These combined factors resulted in a staggering surge in deaths, injuries, and arrests, leaving a profound impact on the nation.

### **Understanding the High Number of Assaults**

BPO categorizes interpersonal attacks—carried out by individuals or groups against others for various motives—under the assault category. Between July and September 2024, the BPO recorded 872 cases of assault. Many of these incidents were linked to the Quota Reform and Anti-Discrimination Movement, politically motivated violence, domestic abuse, dowry disputes, land-related conflicts, economic grievances, social and personal rivalries, criminal attacks, and suicide attempts.

A total of 1,370 deaths were recorded under the assault category during this period. This included 288 cases of suicide and attempted suicide, which

deaths in this quarter more than doubled that of the previous quarter (133 reported suicides and 137 deaths). Additionally, the recovery of



resulted in 295 fatalities, including 150 women. The number of reported suicides and related

unidentified dead bodies was also classified under this category.

### Motives of Clashes

Figure 2 illustrates the motives behind clashes reported during July-September 2024. Clashes categorized under civil rights and other governance issues primarily represent incidents related to the Quota Reform and Anti-

Discrimination Student Movement. The third and fourth most common motives also reflect political underpinnings.

Violent confrontations between the public, students, and law enforcement agencies erupted when the latter attempted to suppress the

movement. The motives on the right side of Figure 2 represent more general and commonly reported causes of clashes. While their numbers remained relatively stable, the high volume of movement-related clashes in July made these appear comparatively lower.

### **Lynching/Mob Injustice and Destruction of Property**

A sharp increase in mob violence and property destruction was observed during this quarter, peaking after August 5. One hundred sixty-seven incidents involving large groups of people were recorded, with 52 incidents primarily initiated by mobs. These events resulted in 215 fatalities and 374 injuries. The violence was predominantly politically motivated.

In July and August, vandalism spread across the country. During the mass upsurge, various government structures, including the BTV building and sections of the Metrorail, were targeted by miscreants and agitated individuals. Following 5 August, widespread vandalism erupted nationwide, with the fallen regime's party offices

and police stations becoming primary targets. Reports also emerged of firearms being looted from police stations.

In Jashore, miscreants and enraged groups set fire to the Zabeer International Hotel, resulting in 24 deaths. Similarly, in Cumilla, the residence of Awami League councilor Shah Alam was set ablaze, claiming the lives of seven individuals.

### **Violence-Population Nexus**

Figure 3 provides a spatial glimpse into the divisional distribution of the recorded violent and non-violent incidents. The Dhaka, Chattogram, and Rajshahi divisions have the highest incidents. The number of violent incidents is higher than the number of non-violent incidents in all the divisions, a trend similar to the last quarter. One reason for this could be because the police, whose members led the main assault against the public, itself became the target of the public's wrath and, therefore, could not carry out its regular 'non-violent' activities, like arrest. This only showed the institutional weaknesses of policing in Bangladesh.

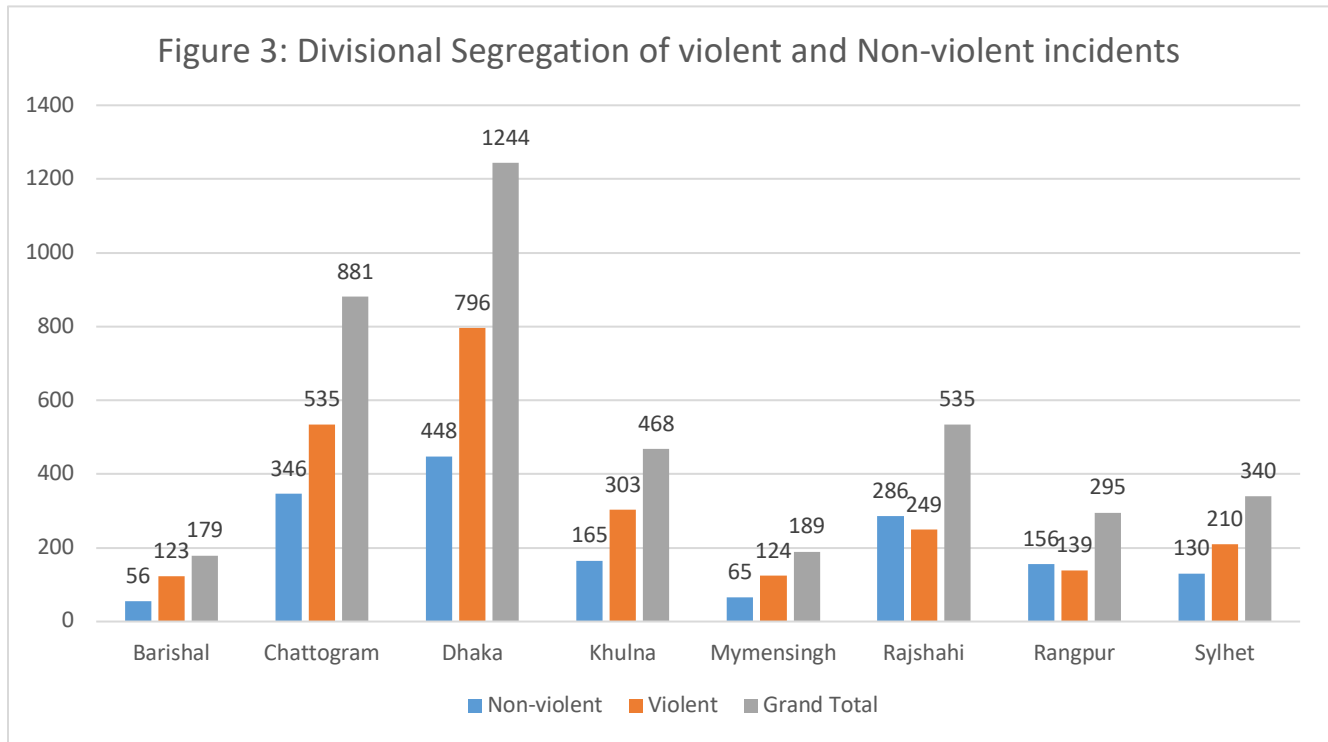


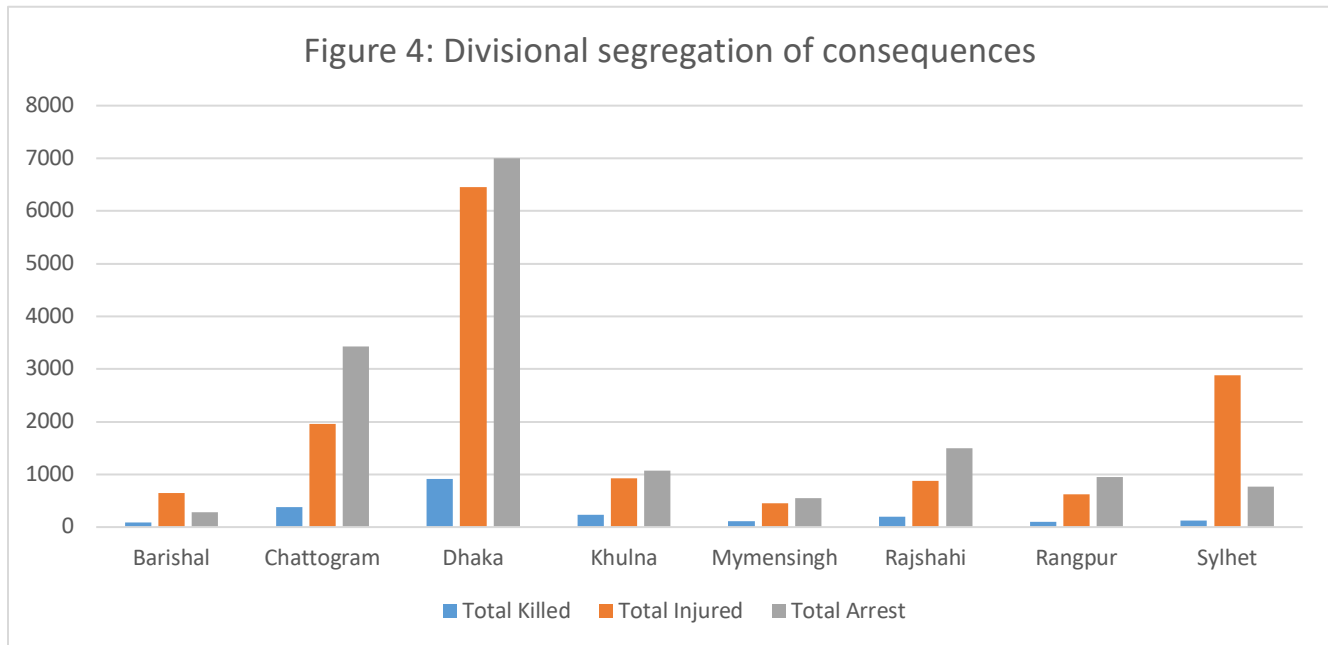
Figure 4 illustrates Dhaka, Chattogram, and Khulna as the first, second, and third in terms of death. The Sylhet Division has the second-highest

injury count, and the Khulna Division has the third-highest one.

However, a different picture emerges if the population ratio<sup>9</sup> is applied to understand the incidence prevalence and consequences. According to the projected yearly incident rate per 100,000 population, the Sylhet Division has the highest incident rate, and the Dhaka and Chattogram Divisions were second and third, respectively. The Dhaka, Chattogram, and Rangpur are the top three divisions consecutively

in terms of death rate. The highest sexual assault rate was seen in the Chattogram Division, along with the second-highest female death rate.

In the July-September quarter, the overall violence scenario was heightened due to the change in political scenario. This factor contributed to the rise of specific types of violence, especially political violence.



<sup>9</sup> The population data is based on the Preliminary report on the Population & Housing Census 2022, Bangladesh, by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. Cited

in: [https://sid.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/sid.portal.gov.bd/publications/01ad1ffe\\_cfef\\_4811\\_af97\\_594b6c64d7c3/PHC\\_Preliminary\\_Report\\_\(English\)\\_August\\_2022.pdf](https://sid.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/sid.portal.gov.bd/publications/01ad1ffe_cfef_4811_af97_594b6c64d7c3/PHC_Preliminary_Report_(English)_August_2022.pdf)

**Table 3: Comparison of projected Yearly rate of incidents and consequences in the Divisions**

<b>Divisions</b>	<i>Incident number in 3 months</i>	<i>Yearly rate by per 100,000</i>	<i>Total Death in 3 months</i>	<i>Yearly rate by per 100,000</i>	<i>Female death in 3 months</i>	<i>Yearly rate by per 100,000</i>	<i>Total Injury in 3 months</i>	<i>Yearly rate by per 100,000</i>	<i>Sexual Assault in 3 months</i>	<i>Yearly rate by per 100,000</i>
<b>Barishal</b>	179	<b>7.87</b>	88	<b>3.87</b>	26	<b>1.14 (1<sup>st</sup>)</b>	652	<b>28.66 (3<sup>rd</sup>)</b>	5	<b>0.22</b>
<b>Chattogram</b>	881	<b>10.61 (3<sup>rd</sup>)</b>	381	<b>4.59 (3<sup>rd</sup>)</b>	79	<b>0.95 (2<sup>nd</sup>)</b>	1960	<b>23.61</b>	32	<b>0.39 (1<sup>st</sup>)</b>
<b>Dhaka</b>	1244	<b>11.25 (2<sup>nd</sup>)</b>	910	<b>8.23 (1<sup>st</sup>)</b>	106	<b>0.96 (2<sup>nd</sup>)</b>	6453	<b>58.38 (2<sup>nd</sup>)</b>	36	<b>0.33</b>
<b>Khulna</b>	468	<b>10.75</b>	231	<b>5.31</b>	37	<b>0.85</b>	927	<b>21.29</b>	11	<b>0.25 (2<sup>nd</sup>)</b>
<b>Mymensingh</b>	189	<b>6.18</b>	112	<b>3.66</b>	18	<b>0.59</b>	447	<b>14.63</b>	4	<b>0.13</b>
<b>Rajshahi</b>	535	<b>10.51</b>	199	<b>3.91</b>	41	<b>0.81</b>	879	<b>17.27</b>	12	<b>0.24 (2<sup>nd</sup>)</b>
<b>Rangpur</b>	295	<b>6.7</b>	105	<b>2.38</b>	27	<b>0.61</b>	618	<b>14.04</b>	5	<b>0.11</b>
<b>Sylhet</b>	340	<b>12.32 (1<sup>st</sup>)</b>	129	<b>4.68 (2<sup>nd</sup>)</b>	22	<b>0.8</b>	2883	<b>104.51 (1<sup>st</sup>)</b>	7	<b>0.25 (2<sup>nd</sup>)</b>

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## Contemporary Rise of Mob Violence and Mob Injustice in Bangladesh

Khandakar Tahmid Rejwan<sup>10</sup>

### Context

Mob violence and mob injustice, while manifesting in various forms around the world, typically involve groups acting outside of legal systems to address grievances, frequently with violent consequences.<sup>11</sup> Mob violence, also known as collective or community violence, occurs when a crowd becomes aggressive, which is commonly caused by factors such as social inequity, racial or religious tensions, or political dissent.<sup>12</sup> This form of violence, which can include riots and lynchings, can cause significant harm and property damage. It frequently reflects underlying societal discontent, especially when official authorities are considered inefficient or unjust. Situations of racial or religious conflict, as seen in riots throughout history in places such as the United States and Northern Ireland, demonstrate how communal rage may drive broad unrest and bloodshed. Mob

injustice, often known as vigilante injustice, is a type of mob violence that seeks to punish perceived wrongdoers personally. It occurs when communities lose trust in the legal and judicial systems, frequently due to high crime rates or inefficient law enforcement.<sup>13</sup> In locations like South Africa, for example, communities may take the law into their own hands due to anger with delayed or failed responses from officials. These activities frequently result in harsh, extrajudicial consequences that might be fatal, creating severe ethical and legal considerations. While mob injustice may appear to restore order in communities, it often undermines the rule of law, resulting in unfair punishment based on hearsay or assumptions rather than facts. Academic theories on mob violence emphasize psychological processes such as deindividuation in which individual accountability lowers in crowds, making people more aggressive. Sociocultural elements,

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<sup>10</sup> Research Data Analyst, Centre for Alternatives (CA). The author has consistently used the word ‘mob injustice’ and not ‘mob justice,’ as the latter is a misnomer, as explained in the Editor’s notes.

<sup>11</sup> “The state of mob justice in Bangladesh,” 6 September 2024. Cited in <https://www.thedailystar.net/law-our-rights/news/the-state-mob-justice-bangladesh-3695721>. Accessed on 20 October 2024.

<sup>12</sup> Tim Newburn, “The Causes and Consequences of Urban Riot and Unrest,” *Annual Review of Criminology*, 6 July 2020.

<sup>13</sup> “What are the causes behind ‘mob justice?’” 23 September 2024. Cited in <https://www.observerbd.com/news/491480>. Accessed on 20 October 2024.

such as community solidarity or group identity, also contribute to such behaviors, demonstrating the motivations behind these violent acts' complexities.<sup>14</sup> To address mob injustice and violence, law enforcement and judicial processes must be strengthened to repair trust and lessen individuals' desire to seek justice independently.

### **Societal Effects of Mob Violence**

Mob violence and mob injustice can substantially affect communal connections and security, roughly characterized as a community's perception of safety and stability in the face of dangers, whether caused by foreign violence, internal conflict, or systemic failings. When mobs take matters into their own hands, a community's cohesion can be severely strained. This phenomenon frequently occurs when citizens lose faith in formal justice systems, perceiving them as ineffectual, corrupt, or biased. As a result, societal trust erodes when people turn to vigilantism rather than lawful processes, eroding communal stability.<sup>15</sup>

In countries where mob injustice is prevalent, people may feel compelled to take matters into their own hands, rationalizing such actions to restore order.<sup>16</sup> This tendency can lead to cycles of violence and fear within communities, causing divides and undermining the rule of law. Research on mob injustice in Africa, for example, discovered that this extrajudicial violence violates democratic ideals by interrupting due process and international human rights norms. Furthermore, public perceptions of law enforcement ineffectiveness in regions of Africa and Latin America have been connected to an increase in mob violence, which contributes to a continuous breakdown of trust and security within these communities. Social media exacerbates the problem since digital platforms allow for the real-time coordination and justification of mob violence, intensifying its growth and acceptance. In Nigeria and South Africa, for example, the normalization of violence in internet discourse has contributed to further desensitizing communities to mob activities, increasing the likelihood of people participating in or condoning violent

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<sup>14</sup> S. D. Reicher, R. Spears & T. Postmes, "A Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Phenomena," *European Review of Social Psychology*, 1995.

<sup>15</sup> Kronyan Nawin Jappah, "Causes, Effects and Amelioration of Mob Justice in Liberia: A Case Study of Paynesville Joe Bar in Monrovia," Cited in <https://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1874&context=thesis>. Accessed on 21 October 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Brian Ikejiaku and Jasmine Osabutey, "The Effects of Mob Justice on the Rule of Law and Democratisation in Africa: a Case Study of Ghana," *Peace Human Rights Governance*, December 2022.

crimes.<sup>17</sup> This virtual endorsement leads to a broader culture of acceptance, promoting mob injustice as a perceived solution to systemic difficulties while undermining society's security by eroding the relationships of trust, cooperation, and lawful order necessary for healthy communities.

In short, mob violence not only causes immediate injury to victims but also destabilizes social cohesion and weakens the fundamental pillars of communal security.<sup>18</sup> Addressing this issue involves structural reform to restore public trust in judicial institutions and social initiatives to lessen cultural acceptance of mob injustice.

### **Mob Violence in South Asian Context**

Mob violence and mob injustice are major social issues in South Asia, and profound sociopolitical and economic complications frequently fuel them. Religious intolerance, communal tensions, economic inequality, and lax law enforcement are typical causes of these events throughout the region. In South Asia, mob injustice is influenced by various variables, including religious fervor,

socioeconomic difficulties, and weak law enforcement.<sup>19</sup> These incidents highlight the crucial need for more robust legal frameworks, more public awareness, and government engagement to prevent mob violence from escalating. They are tackling the underlying factors, such as communal tensions, caste prejudice, or disinformation, which are critical for reducing similar instances throughout the region. Here is a summary of previous cases of mob injustice in the eight South Asian countries and significant examples highlighting each country's underlying difficulties.

#### **I. India**

Mob violence in India is typically associated with religion and caste divisions. The prevalence of Hindu nationalism has occasionally increased communal clashes, particularly those between Muslim and Dalit populations. One such case occurred in 2015, when a mob in Uttar Pradesh lynched Mohammad Akhlaq, a Muslim man, on rumors of cow slaughter. Since then, mob lynchings for alleged livestock slaughter have

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<sup>17</sup> “The ruralisation of violence and the criminalisation of conflict in Nigeria,” 25 April 2024. Cited in <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/the-ruralisation-of-violence-and-the-criminalisation-of-conflict-in-nigeria/>. Accessed on 25 October 2024.

<sup>18</sup> “Threats to Social Cohesion And Democratic Resilience: A New Strategic Approach” March 2024. Cited in <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65fdbfd265ca>

[2ffef17da79c/The\\_Khan\\_review.pdf](https://www.southasiamonitor.org/spotlight/mob-justice-growing-threat-bangladeshs-stability/). Accessed on 27 October 2024.

<sup>19</sup> “Mob justice: A growing threat to Bangladesh’s stability,” 14 October 2024. Cited in <https://www.southasiamonitor.org/spotlight/mob-justice-growing-threat-bangladeshs-stability/>. Accessed on 28 October 2024.

resumed, with perpetrators typically emboldened by perceived official leniency.<sup>20</sup> This tendency demonstrates a problematic use of mob violence to assert social and religious supremacy, frequently with implicit political support.

## 2. Pakistan

Blasphemy charges in Pakistan are a significant source of mob violence, with religious minorities being targeted. Salman Taseer, the governor of Punjab, was slain in 2011 by his guard for supporting blasphemy law reforms. In 2021, a mob in Sialkot killed Priyantha Kumara, a Sri Lankan man, on identical charges.<sup>21</sup> This tendency highlights the potency of religious extremism in Pakistan, where mob injustice is frequently practiced with impunity in the guise of safeguarding religious principles, exposing minority groups' vulnerabilities within the legal structure.

## 3. Bangladesh

Economic grievances and distrust of the court system have impacted mob injustice in Bangladesh. Vigilante activities are commonplace in rural

areas, where people may take matters into their own hands owing to delays in law enforcement. For example, in 2019, a series of mob attacks broke out across the country in response to rumors of child abductions for human sacrifice.<sup>22</sup> Numerous innocent individuals were killed, demonstrating how misinformation and weak government can increase mob injustice. Social media plays a crucial role in propagating such rumors, frequently escalating the issue.

## 4. Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has a history of mob violence, particularly during and during the civil war. Ethnic and religious conflicts between Sinhalese Buddhists and Muslim minorities have resulted in isolated occurrences of mob injustice. Following the Easter bombings by Islamist militants in 2019, anti-Muslim riots erupted, killing numerous people and causing extensive property damage. Mob violence in this area is firmly entrenched in ethnic and religious anxieties, which political players have previously used to garner the support of majority groups.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> "Why India man was lynched over beef rumours" 1 October 2025. Cited in <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-34409354>. Accessed on 30 October 2024.

<sup>21</sup> "Explaining the Salman Taseer Murder" 7 January 2011. Cited in <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/explaining-salman-taseer-murder>. Accessed on 30 October 2024.

<sup>22</sup> "Bangladesh lynchings: Eight killed by mobs over false child abduction rumours," 24 July 2019. Cited in <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-49102074>. Accessed on 30 October 2024.

<sup>23</sup> "After Sri Lanka's Easter Bombings: Reducing Risks of Future Violence" 27 September 2019. Cited in <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/302->

## 5. Nepal

In Nepal, mob violence is frequently related to caste inequality and economic disparities. Dalit populations are commonly subjected to violence by higher caste groups, particularly in rural areas. In 2020, the murder of six Dalit males in Rukum District, who were allegedly killed for attempting to marry outside their caste, drew widespread attention.<sup>24</sup> This incident demonstrated how caste bias still exists in Nepal and is occasionally manifested through mob violence, as marginalized communities lack proper legal protections.

## 6. Bhutan

While Bhutan has lower rates of mob violence than other South Asian countries, there are occasional incidences involving economic grievances and property disputes. When land and resource disputes go unsolved, some rural residents take matters into their own hands. Although specific examples are fewer and less publicized, Bhutan's court system sometimes needs help to respond promptly to rural conflicts, forcing residents to handle issues informally, occasionally leading to mob actions.

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after-sri-lankas-easter-bombings-reducing-risks-future-violence. Accessed on 30 October 2024.

<sup>24</sup> “Life sentences for 24 in 2020 murder of six Dalit youths,” 5 December 2023. Cited in <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2023/12/05/24-get-life->

## 7. Maldives

Mob violence in the Maldives is uncommon. However, vigilantism does occur, particularly in drug-related offenses. The increase in radicalization has sometimes resulted in mob violence against people accused of espousing secular or liberal beliefs. In 2012, a crowd attacked blogger Ismail Rasheed for criticizing Islamist radicalism.<sup>25</sup> Although mob injustice is uncommon in Maldivian society, such events emphasize the connection between religion and justice, where individuals may risk extrajudicial punishment for voicing opposing opinions.

## 8. Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, mob injustice has strong roots, with tribal norms and Taliban influence frequently surpassing official law. Local Taliban officials continue to use mob injustice tactics such as honor killings and public executions. In one prominent example in 2015, Farkhunda Malikzada, a woman accused of burning the Quran, was slain

sentence-for-rukum-west-massacre. Accessed on 30 October 2024.

<sup>25</sup> “Human right defender Ismail Rasheed assaulted,” 6 June 2012. Cited in <https://www.omct.org/en/resources/urgent-interventions/human-right-defender-ismail-rasheed-assaulted>. Accessed on 1 November 2024.

by a mob in Kabul despite the baseless claims.<sup>26</sup> This event highlighted the devastating repercussions of unbridled mob violence, as well as the difficulties that the Afghan government faced in establishing judicial authority.

### **Mob Violence in the Developed Countries**

Mob violence is frequently associated with political instability or economic hardship in developing countries. However, recent events have revealed that developed industrialized countries are also dealing with this phenomenon, which is fueled by sociopolitical tensions, misinformation, and institutional difficulties.

Racist and xenophobic violence has increased in the United Kingdom, particularly against immigrants and minority communities. Far-right extremists attacked mosques and immigrants during recent riots in several locations, which were sparked by rumors about a deadly stabbing.<sup>27</sup> Social media platforms aggravated the situation by disseminating misinformation and raising

emotions.<sup>28</sup> The rioting, which injured dozens of police officers and caused extensive property damage, demonstrates how digital misinformation can spark real-world violence, even in established democracies. Nearly 400 people were arrested linked with the recent UK far-right protests.<sup>29</sup>

In France, mob violence has been related to gang rivalry and systematic socioeconomic inequities. A recent incident in Poitiers between rival drug gangs escalated into a violent clash involving hundreds of people holding homemade weapons.<sup>30</sup> These examples demonstrate how urban areas in industrialized countries may become flashpoints for violence when societal tensions go unchecked.

In sections of the European Union, the Roma population is frequently subjected to mob violence and collective punishment motivated by solid prejudice. Forced evictions and harsh police raids show systemic discrimination against marginalized communities.<sup>31</sup> These crimes not

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<sup>26</sup> “Flawed Justice After a Mob Killed an Afghan Woman,” 26 December 2015. Cited in <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/27/world/asia/flawed-justice-after-a-mob-killed-an-afghan-woman.html>. Accessed on 1 November 2024.

<sup>27</sup> “The U.K.’s far right has stirred violent, racist attacks in British cities,” 6 August 2024. Cited in <https://www.npr.org/2024/08/06/nx-s1-5065633/the-u-k-s-far-right-has-stirred-violent-racist-attacks-in-british-cities>. Accessed on 18 November 2024.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*

<sup>29</sup> “Nearly 400 arrested after six days of violence,” 6 August 2024. Cited in <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cyvpp3e7mn4o>. Accessed on 18 November 2024.

<sup>30</sup> “France: Shooting leads to mass gang brawl in Poitiers,” 1 November 2024. Cited in <https://www.dw.com/en/france-shooting-leads-to-mass-gang-brawl-in-poitiers/a-70663573>. Accessed on 18 November 2024.

<sup>31</sup> “Mob Justice: Collective Punishment Against Roma in Europe” March 2019. Cited in [https://www.errc.org/uploads/upload\\_en/file/5136\\_file1\\_m](https://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/5136_file1_m)

only violate human rights but also prolong cycles of poverty and division, threatening the rule of law.

Meanwhile, the United States has seen politically charged mob violence. For example, masked mobs attacked a pro-Palestine encampment at UCLA, using physical assault, irritants, and intimidation techniques.<sup>32</sup> The slow reaction of law enforcement intensified the disorder, raising questions about institutional accountability. Mob violence has also broken out across the country, driven by partisan divides.<sup>33</sup> Protests following George Floyd's death revealed tensions over racial injustice, with armed right-wing organizations countering the demonstrations. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the instability, as disagreements over public health policies fueled political polarization. Misinformation and harsh language during the 2020 election fueled unrest, culminating in Capitol riots on January 6, 2021,

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ob-justice-collective-punishment-against-roma-in-europe-march-2019.pdf. Accessed on 18 November 2024.

<sup>32</sup> "Police let violent mobs attack UCLA students. This is what lawlessness looks like" 6 May 2024. Cited in <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/commentisfree/article/2024/may/06/ucla-protester-mob-attack>. Accessed on 19 November 2024.

<sup>33</sup> "Risks of Violence around the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election: A Primer," 29 October 2024. Cited in [https://www.crisisgroup.org/united-states/united-](https://www.crisisgroup.org/united-states/united-states/risks-violence-around-2024-us-presidential-election-primer)

states/risks-violence-around-2024-us-presidential-election-primer. Accessed on 19 November 2024.

when a mob stormed Congress seeking to overturn election results.<sup>34</sup>

These events demonstrate that mob violence in developed industrialized countries results from unresolved societal fissures, such as societal divisions exacerbated by political manipulation and systematic inequality. To avoid further escalation, these difficulties must be addressed by vibrant governance, countering misinformation, and creating social solidarity.

### **Fall of Sheikh Hasina and the Rise of Mob Violence in Bangladesh**

Mob violence and mob injustice are becoming increasingly widespread in Bangladesh, particularly in rural and disadvantaged areas. Mobs frequently develop in response to allegations of theft, sexual assault, blasphemy, and political provocations.<sup>35</sup> The slow pace of the legal system, along with a lack of public trust in law enforcement, leads civilians to take issues into their own hands.

states/risks-violence-around-2024-us-presidential-election-primer. Accessed on 19 November 2024.

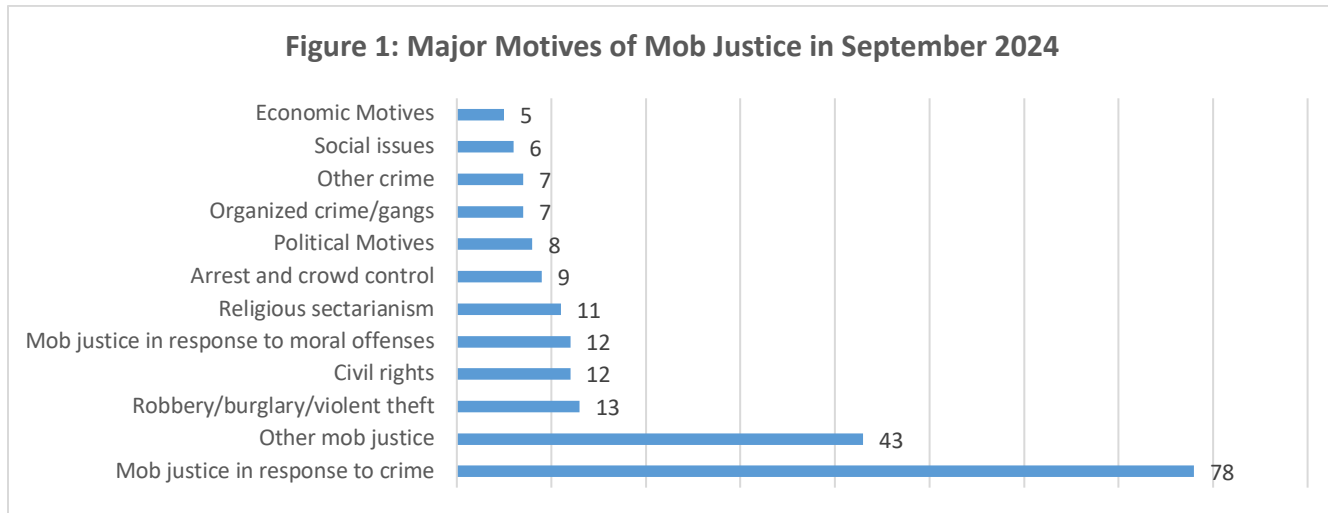
<sup>34</sup> "What the perpetrators of mob violence get wrong," 21 July 2022. Cited in <https://www.washingtonpost.com/made-by-history/2022/07/21/what-perpetrators-mob-violence-get-wrong-why-its-dangerous/>. Accessed on 19 November 2024.

<sup>35</sup> "Why is mob violence surging in Bangladesh?" 25 September 2024. Cited in <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/why-is-mob-violence-surging-in-bangladesh/3341435>. Accessed on 1 November 2024.

Rumors spread through social media and word-of-mouth in many situations, inciting a crowd practically instantaneously. Unfortunately, these episodes usually result in violence, with mobs attacking individuals based on unsubstantiated allegations. The scale of this tendency increased drastically after former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled Bangladesh on August 5 following a popular insurrection.<sup>36</sup> Her departure constituted a watershed moment, causing tremendous turmoil and chaos across the country. As political authority collapsed, Bangladesh devolved into anarchy, with various forms of mob violence

spreading across the country. The lack of a clear leader or governing system created a power vacuum filled in many locations by local groups or mobs enforcing their norms of justice.

A primary motivation behind mob violence mainly lies in response to crime. These crimes can range from typical theft to various socially unacceptable acts like domestic violence, murder, and robbery. In most cases, the perpetrators get caught by the mass people or the local public. Apart from that, mob injustice and its fatalities are grounded in political, religious, and other reasons.



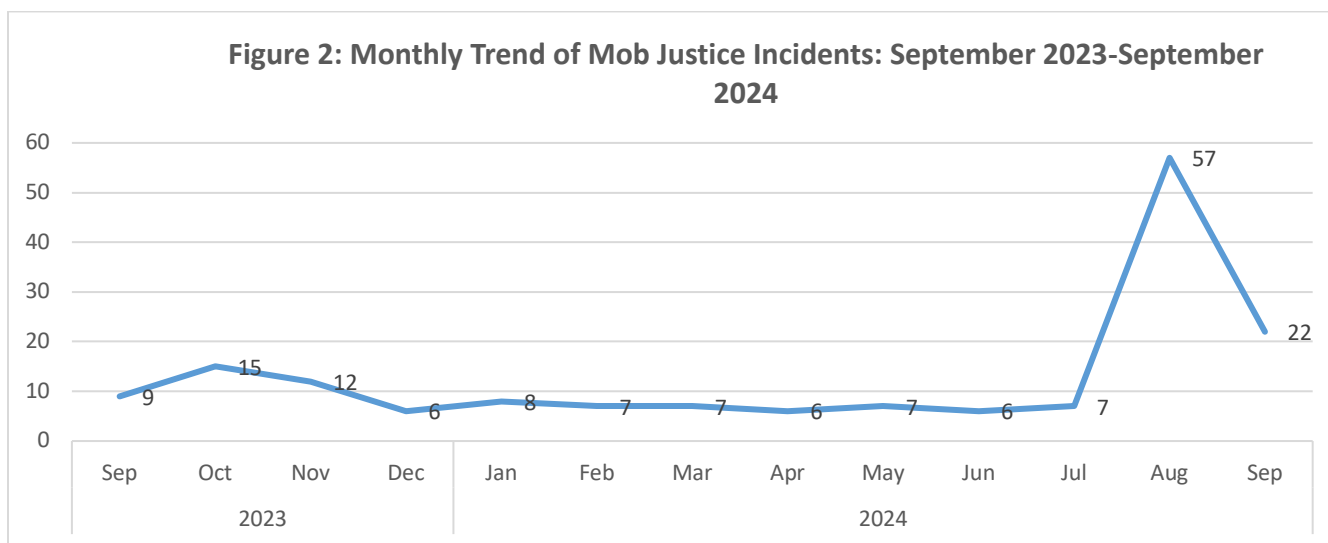
Source: BPO

<sup>36</sup> “The violence in Bangladesh after Hasina’s ouster stirs fear within the country’s Hindu minority,” 13 August 2024. Cited in <https://apnews.com/article/bangladesh-violence-hindu->

[sheikh-hasina-85fe6619c38e1b07e407441cb054a74e](https://apnews.com/article/bangladesh-violence-hindu-sheikh-hasina-85fe6619c38e1b07e407441cb054a74e). Accessed on 1 November 2024.

In Dhaka, Chittagong, and other major cities, mobs attacked prominent figures, former officials, and business owners affiliated with Hasina's administration, accusing them of corruption and persecution.<sup>37</sup> Vigilante injustice became commonplace, with people using the unrest to settle personal scores or vent their frustrations.<sup>38</sup> In some cases, mobs gathered around suspicions of political cooperation or embezzlement, breaking into homes and plundering property to punish the "corrupt." Such activities remained unnoticed as law enforcement officials tried to

keep order and were overwhelmed by the sheer volume of crimes. Rural communities saw a different type of mob injustice, sometimes based on long-standing complaints. In some communities, factions sought vengeance for long-running property disputes or social problems that had been quelled by local law enforcement or government officials. With the police stretched thin and the administration in chaos, people took advantage of the circumstances to address their matters through force, which frequently resulted in violent clashes and loss of life.



Source: BPO

<sup>37</sup> "The day after in Dhaka: Young people replace police in Bangladesh capital" 6 August 2024. Cited in <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/8/6/the-day-after-in-dhaka>. Accessed on 1 November 2024.

<sup>38</sup> "137 killed in violence after fall of Hasina" 7 August 2024. Cited in <https://www.newagebd.net/post/politics/241866/137-killed-in-violence-after-fall-of-hasina>. Accessed on 2 November 2024.

The trend of mob violence remained more or less the same, ranging from a maximum of 15 incidents to at least six incidents from September 2023 till July 2024. (see, Figure 2) After the demise of the Awami League regime, the incidents related to mob violence skyrocketed as people and political rivals of the fallen government expressed their outbursts of anger and committed revenge attacks in a group. This is evident as after 5 August, numerous people affiliated with Awami League and its affiliated groups were targeted, and their offices and established were destroyed and set on fire.

Religious sentiments also fueled mob violence during this period of unrest.<sup>39</sup> Accusations of blasphemy or apostasy sparked mob gatherings in conservative areas when people considered to be defying religious standards were attacked. Incidents were reported in towns where claimed offenses were publicized via social media or local gossip, attracting large audiences who carried out their kind of retribution. These occurrences were worsened by extremist groups who took advantage of the chaos, encouraging violence

against religious minorities and individuals perceived to oppose specific beliefs.

Following Hasina's departure, Bangladesh experienced a complicated web of localized power conflicts, social grievances, and economic discontent, all expressed through mob injustice and violence. The anarchy exposed deep-rooted flaws in Bangladesh's social and political fabric, obscured by authoritarian rule. The breakdown of centralized power highlighted these divisions, demonstrating how fast law and order can dissolve without reliable authority and strong institutions to protect community cohesiveness. This episode of mob violence has highlighted the crucial need for institutional reform in Bangladesh.<sup>40</sup> Addressing public complaints, strengthening the judiciary, and rebuilding trust in law enforcement will prevent such chaos and foster long-term stability.

## Conclusion

The patterns of mob violence and mob injustice in South Asia indicate complex, interconnected societal challenges caused by economic inequality, ethnic and religious tensions, political instability,

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<sup>39</sup> "Violence in Bangladesh After Hasina's Ouster Stirs Fear Among Hindu Minority" 13 August 2024. Cited in <https://thediplomat.com/2024/08/violence-in-bangladesh-after-hasinas-ouster-stirs-fear-among-hindu-minority/>. Accessed on 2 November 2024.

<sup>40</sup> "Deadly mob violence underscores Bangladesh's security breakdown" 21 September 2024. Cited in <https://www.voanews.com/a/deadly-mob-violence-underscores-bangladesh-s-security-breakdown/7793384.html>. Accessed on 3 November 2024.

and weaker legal systems. Bangladesh, in particular, exemplifies the hazards of an unrestrained people following the fall of a central government. The turbulent aftermath of Sheikh Hasina's departure highlighted the vulnerability of public order when trust in governance and justice erodes. Incidents in urban and rural regions demonstrated the potential for collective action and the dangers of groups acting on grievances and misinformation without legal monitoring. Mobs targeting perceived corruption, revenge for unsolved disputes, and supposed religious breaches exposed the lack of official authority and the resulting hazardous power vacuum. The surge in mob activities across Bangladesh emphasizes

the crucial need for structural reform, with a focus on both judicial accountability and attempts to restore public trust in the police. As demonstrated, the normalization of mob injustice has serious consequences: it destabilizes communities, undermines respect for the rule of law, and frequently leads to excessive violence based on hearsay rather than proof. Building resilience in social institutions, increasing legal protections, and establishing channels for nonviolent conflict resolution will be critical steps in preventing recurrent cycles of violence. Only via such measures can Bangladesh and other South Asian countries combat the spread of mob injustice and create a more unified, secure society.

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## Understanding Mob Psychology and Misimpression of Justice



*Interview with Psychologist Saidul Islam<sup>41</sup>*

### **Q: What drives individuals to adopt mob mentality, and how does it manifest in a crowd?**

Mob mentality arises from psychological, emotional, and social factors. Humans often rely on mental shortcuts, especially in collectivist cultures like Bangladesh. This leads individuals to follow others' opinions and actions rather than engaging in critical thought.

Crowd psychology focuses on understanding the behaviors of individuals within a group and the collective dynamics of the crowd. People in a mob often act in ways they would typically consider immoral or unjust, mainly because the anonymity and lack of accountability afforded by the group setting encourage them to bypass personal

responsibility. This shift from rational and conscious behavior to emotional and unconscious reactions is a characteristic of mob psychology.

### **Q: What theories help explain crowd psychology?**

Various theories provide insights into crowd behavior. Carl Jung's Collective Unconscious posits that humans share a universal unconsciousness shaped by archetypes like the concept of a "great mother." On the other hand, Freud suggested that a crowd suppresses the moral center (superego), allowing primitive emotions to take over.

The Deindividuation Theory explains how individuals lose their boundaries in a crowd, leading to a "mental unity" that diminishes

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<sup>41</sup> Asst. Student Counselor, North South University, Dhaka

accountability. Meanwhile, the Convergence Theory argues that crowds form when like-minded individuals with shared goals come together, as seen in peaceful protests. In contrast, the Contagion Theory highlights how emotions and behaviors spread within a group, often leading to irrational or disproportionate actions. Finally, the Emergent-Norm Theory combines elements of convergence and contagion, emphasizing that shared emotions and anonymity drive collective behavior.

**Q: What are the critical causes of mob mentality in Bangladesh?**

Various factors drive mob mentality in Bangladesh. Social emotions, such as pride or shame, often play a significant role as individuals compare themselves to others. Being part of a group diminishes self-awareness and leads to actions inconsistent with personal values. Frustration with systemic dysfunction and personal grievances can ignite mob actions.

Other factors include anonymity and the diffusion of responsibility, as individuals feel “invisible” in a large crowd, reducing personal accountability. Social contagion spreads emotions and behaviors rapidly, influencing group actions, while group polarization intensifies extreme viewpoints during interactions. Leadership, even if informal, can steer a group's actions. A shared perception of

threats also unites groups, prompting collective action.

Distrust in systems and perceptions of justice further exacerbate the issue in Bangladesh, leading individuals to take justice into their own hands. Mob actions like lynching are sometimes viewed as righteous or heroic by sections of the community.

**Q: Can you give an example of mob injustice in Bangladesh?**

A notable example is the tragic murder of Renu in 2018. Renu visited a school to inquire about her child's admission, but a rumor labeling her a child abductor quickly spread. A mob dragged her out and brutally beat her to death in front of hundreds of witnesses. Disturbingly, those involved included individuals with no prior criminal records, such as street vendors and mothers.

This incident underscores the relevance of Contagion Theory in Bangladesh, where mass hysteria can transform otherwise law-abiding individuals into perpetrators of violence. Community validation and passive witnessing also play a role, as bystanders often encourage or fail to intervene in such actions.

**Q: What are the signs of mob mentality, and how can individuals recognize it?**

Mob mentality exhibits several warning signs. Conformity is common; individuals alter their thoughts or actions to align with the majority. People's fear of missing out drives them to participate. Dissent is often suppressed, discouraging contrary opinions, while rationalization is used to justify the group's perspective and dismiss alternatives.

Other signs include anonymity and diffused responsibility, as individuals feel less accountable for their actions within a crowd. Groupthink, or the belief that everyone agrees due to suppressed dissent, is also a critical indicator. Recognizing these signs is essential to resisting the pull of mob behavior.

**Q: How can individuals escape mob mentality, especially in a country like Bangladesh?**

Breaking free from mob mentality begins with cultivating self-awareness. Regular reflection on personal values and decisions helps individuals distinguish between internal beliefs and external pressures. Embracing critical thinking allows for thoughtful and impartial decision-making, even in emotionally charged situations.

Seeking diverse perspectives is another powerful tool. Engaging with people from varied backgrounds broadens understanding and challenges preconceived notions, fostering a more nuanced view of issues. Finally, developing comfort with uncertainty can help individuals resist the urge to conform merely to feel secure in a group.

By fostering self-awareness, critical thinking, and inclusivity, individuals in Bangladesh and beyond can counteract the dangerous dynamics of mob behavior and make informed, independent choices.

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## Annex

Some definitional clarification according to BPO Codebook.

**Gunfight.** A shootout between law enforcement agencies and criminals, militants, or other irregular forces, including the latter, does not match the definition of a non-state armed group.

**Clash.** Two-sided violence between groups outside of the context of war or insurgency. Example: supporters of rival political parties fight each other.

**Assault.** One-sided violence by an individual or small group against another individual or small group. Example: stabbing or shooting of someone by a perpetrator

**Fight.** Two-sided violence between individuals or small groups. Example: brawl between 3-4 people.

**Sexual assault.** One-sided sexual violence, such as rape or attempted rape, by an individual or small group against another individual or small group.

**Destruction of property.** One-sided violence is perpetrated with the intent of damaging property—examples are vandalism and arson.

**Mob violence (large group assault).** One-sided violence by a mob or large group against an individual or a comparatively small and defenseless group. Examples: the lynching of a thief, looting of shops and houses owned by a religious minority



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