



Bangladesh

Foreign Nationals and the Death Penalty

Death Penalty Overview

According to the data collected by the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights, there were at least 2,000 people on death row in Bangladesh in June 2022. Bangladesh retains the death penalty for 33 offences, including murder, violent robbery, terrorism, rape, sedition, and drug trafficking. It can also apply for certain attempted crimes and assault offences, not resulting in death. The mandatory death penalty applies to those who commit murder for a dowry payment under the Women and Children Repressive Prevention Act 2000 or for those who commit murder while already sentenced to life imprisonment.

In December 2018, Bangladesh introduced the death penalty for non-lethal drug offences under the Narcotics Control Act.

The International Federation for Human Rights notes that 75% of capital offences (25 out of 33) in Bangladesh are 'non-lethal', which is a violation of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Between 2018-2022, Amnesty International estimate that at least 13 people were executed in

Bangladesh and 912 people were sentenced to death. The state method of execution is by hanging.

International human rights watchdogs have reported that multiple death sentences have been imposed in Bangladesh without meeting international fair trial standards. For instance, in 2021 alone, 33 death sentences were imposed without the defendant being present.

A study by the University of Dhaka highlights that three-quarters of death row prisoners come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, are the sole earners in their family, and have not been educated beyond school level due to family poverty.

Death row prisoners are reportedly kept in prolonged and isolated detention, without adequate access to family visits or legal representation. Research has also shown the use of torture in investigations to elicit false confessions.

A study by Dr Carolyn Hoyle and Saul Lehrfreund (2019) found that sentencing judges in Bangladesh recognised and defended the use of torture in investigations as a 'necessary evil' to serve the greater good of deterrence instilled by the death penalty, despite no evidence to sustain this belief.



A mass trial where several Bangladeshis were sentenced to death, which was criticised for not meeting international fair trial standards.

Foreign Nationals

While there are approximately 10 million foreign nationals living and working in Bangladesh (5% of the population), foreign nationals are not often sentenced to death or executed.

The only known foreign national currently on death row in Bangladesh is a British national, who was sentenced to death in 2018 for drug trafficking.

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For more research see:

foreign-nationals.uwazi.io or tinyurl.com/mappingdeathrow