



# South Asia Democratic Forum

## Press Release

**“The International Crimes Tribunals of Bangladesh: The New Government Must Stop the Political and Corrupt Proceedings”**

*[01 March 2026]* The South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF) expresses grave concern over the use of the International Crimes Tribunals of Bangladesh (ICTBD) to target the political leaders of Bangladesh Awami League (ALBD), Jatiyo Somajtantrik Dol (JaSod), Bangladesh Workers Party, journalists and the secular activists and human rights defenders, e.g., Shahriar Kabir, after the fall of the ALBD government on 5 August 2024. The organisation is also concerned with the release of persons, e.g. A. T. M Azharul Islam who the ICTBD sentenced earlier for committing crimes against humanity and genocide in 1971.

Paulo Casaca, the Founder and the Executive Director of the SADF, has recently commented on the situation as ‘unimaginable’ and raised his concern by terming the present ICTBD as “A special Court transformed into an extortion racket of the Jihadis!” following the recent allegations of extortion and corruption against Adv: Tajul Islam (the former Chief Prosecutor of the ICTBD), and his cohorts. SADF is further alarmed by the political appointment of the new Chief Prosecutor, who has a strong political alliance with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the present ruling party.

Earlier, on several occasions, SADF expressed concern about the political appointment of prosecutors and judges who were either defence lawyers in the same tribunal or active members of radical political parties, such as Jamat-e-Islami and AB Party. Previously, it strongly criticised the questionable judgment against former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and others (Press Release dated 17 November 2025), and named Shahriar Kabir, a secular activist, human rights defender, author, film director, and journalist, as an accused in a crime against humanity charge (joint statement with EBF). The organisation has noted that the current trials against the ALBD and the alliance leaders rely on several Ordinances that introduce unconstitutional amendments to the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, which the Yunus government passed without following due process. SADF considers that the Yunus government, in contravention of the principles of the rule of law and natural law, has used the ICTBD as a tool of discrimination, a practice that the present government continues.



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SADF urges the current government to halt the judicial persecution of journalists, leaders of ALBD and its allies, and individuals like Shahriar Kabir, who the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention recognises as a victim of arbitrary detention and to review immediately the investigation reports submitted by the ICTBD's Investigation Agency, the formal charges submitted by the Prosecution, and the decisions, orders, and judgments passed by the judges after 5 August 2024. SADF demands the release of all victims of arbitrary detention. The organisation reiterates that the ICTBD was established to try the offences committed in 1971 during the war of independence of Bangladesh, and the present BNP government would remain committed to the principles of the rule of law and would continue the trial of international crimes committed in 1971, not otherwise.

*Brussels, Belgium.*