



SUBMISSION TO THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN RESPONSE TO THE CALL FOR INPUTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTION 53/13 ON CIVIL SOCIETY SPACE¹

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iProbono² submits this document in response to the call for inputs issued by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to inform their thematic report on challenges and best practices in regularly assessing civic space trends to be presented at the 56th session of the Human Rights Council.

This submission emphasises that civic space is diminishing in Bangladesh and focuses on the restrictive legal environment for civil society organisations, challenges in data generation/collection and use and threats faced by civil society, including the arrest and detention of key activists and journalists. We conclude with recommendations including a dialogue between the government of Bangladesh, civil society organisations, media, and the international community to (1) acknowledge and assess diminishing civic space and (2) undertake a comprehensive review of legislation and policy to strengthen the functioning of civil society organisations in the country.

1. Introduction

Over the past few years, Bangladesh has experienced notable advancements in economic and infrastructural development, as well as strides in poverty alleviation.³ Despite these positive developments, there is a concerning trend emerging - the diminishing influence of human rights activists, journalists, and civil society organisations in the country.⁴ In the run-up to the upcoming 12th national election in 2024,⁵ the current government is increasingly cracking down not only on opposition political activists but also rights activists and civil society organisations.⁶ These events have led to a negative impact on the operation of civil society organisations in the country, which are adapting by scaling down their criticism or activities or adjusting their positions on issues in order to align with government policies and activities.

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² iProbono's mission is to enable people to access their rights in pursuit of a just society. By promoting active citizenship and engaging a holistic model we advance justice for all by representing people in need, strengthen the impact of civil society, and advocate for policies that promote social equity and end discrimination. iProbono provides holistic counsel with a strong, lean team that delivers strategic direction and execution, while also leveraging the expertise and commitment of a wide community of pro bono lawyers. iProbono started working in Bangladesh in 2016 and provides pro bono legal representation, transactional legal support to civil society organisations, capacity-building, research and advocacy. For more information, please visit our website - www.i-probono.com

³ Rashid M, *Bangladesh at 50: Achievements and Challenges Ahead* | CGS. (n.d.). Available at: <https://cgs-bd.com/article/2228/Bangladesh-at-50--Achievements-and-Challenges-Ahead>

⁴ *Correspondent, D.* (2023, October 8). Space for civil society shrinks under authoritarian regime: Experts. Prothomalo. Available at: <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/ig0w5utdgh>

⁵ *Next nat'l election on Jan 7.* (2023, November 15). The Daily Star. Available at: <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/elections/news/next-natl-election-jan-7-3470736>

⁶ *Bangladesh: Government continues targeting activists and criminalising opposition members ahead of UN human rights review - Civicus Monitor.* (n.d.). Civicus Monitor. Available at: <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/bangladesh-government-continues-targeting-activists-and-criminalising-opposition-members-ahead-of-un-human-rights-review/>

2. Implementation of Laws on Freedom of Expression, Association, and Assembly

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh guarantees freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, and the freedom of thought, conscience, and speech.⁷ However, these freedoms are subject to reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of public order and morality. Over the past decade, the freedom of civil society organisations has been increasingly restricted through various laws and regulations.

Key laws such as the Digital Security Act, 2018 (DSA), the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act, 2016, and the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, 2006, have faced criticism for curtailing freedom of expression, association, and assembly. These laws provide authorities with extensive discretionary powers, raising concerns about potential misuse and the stifling of dissent.

For instance, the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898 grants broad discretion to the District Magistrate to prohibit acts, including public gatherings.⁸ In 2013, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police issued a circular requiring organisations to obtain written permission from the Commissioner of Police seven days in

⁷The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1972, available at: <http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-details-367.html>, Article 36, Freedom of Movement: Subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the public interest, every citizen shall have the right to move freely throughout Bangladesh, to reside and settle in any place therein and to leave and re-enter Bangladesh;

Article 37, Freedom of Assembly: Every citizen shall have the right to assemble and to participate in public meetings and processions peacefully and without arms, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of public order or public health.

Article 38, Freedom of Association: Every citizen shall have the right to form associations or unions, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of morality or public order: Provided that no person shall have the right to form, or be a member of the said association or union, if- (a) it is formed for the purposes of destroying the religious, social and communal harmony among the citizens; (b) it is formed for the purposes of creating discrimination among the citizens, on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or language; (c) it is formed for the purposes of organising terrorist acts or militant activities against the State or the citizens or any other country; (d) its formation and objects are inconsistent with the Constitution.

⁸ The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, Section 144- Power to issue Order: (1) In cases where, in the opinion of a District Magistrate, 1[or any other Executive Magistrate] specially empowered by the Government or the District Magistrate to act under this section, there is sufficient ground for proceeding under this section and immediate prevention or speedy remedy is desirable, such Magistrate may, by a written order stating the material facts of the case and served in manner provided by section 134, direct any person to abstain from a certain act or to take certain order with certain property in his possession or under his management, if such Magistrate considers that such direction is likely to prevent, or tends to prevent, obstruction, annoyance or injury, or risk or obstruction, annoyance or injury, to any person lawfully employed, or danger to human life, health or safety, or a disturbance of the public tranquillity, or a riot, or an affray. (2) An order under this section may, in cases of emergency or in cases where the circumstances do not admit of the serving in due time of a notice upon the person against whom the order is directed, be passed, ex parte. (3) An order under this section may be directed to a particular individual, or to the public generally when frequenting or visiting a particular place. (4) Any Magistrate may, either on his own motion or on the application of any person aggrieved, rescind or alter any order made under this section by himself or any Magistrate subordinate to him, or by his predecessor in office. (5) Where such an application is received, the Magistrate shall afford to the applicant an early opportunity of appearing before him either in person or by pleader and showing cause against the order; and, if the Magistrate rejects the application wholly or in part, he shall record in writing his reasons for so doing. (6) No order under this section shall remain in force for more than two months from the making thereof; unless, in cases of danger to human life, health or safety, or a likelihood of a riot or an affray, the Government, by notification in the official Gazette, otherwise directs. (7) The provisions of this section shall not apply to a Metropolitan Area. Available at: <http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-75/section-20789.html>

advance for assemblies, meetings, or public gatherings.⁹ This guideline became effective in seven other metropolitan areas of Bangladesh.¹⁰ As per the guidelines, the Commissioner of Police's refusal to allow the assembly is definitive, and police have the indemnity for any action or decision.¹¹

Additionally, public spaces in Dhaka traditionally used for meetings, such as Shahbagh, Press Club, Muktangan, Teacher-Student Center of Dhaka University, Paltan Mor, Doel Chattar, and Shapla Chattar, have been affected by infrastructure development for the newly launched Dhaka Metrorail. Metro stations have been built at some of these locations and parking zones at others, reducing available gathering spaces in the capital.¹²

The most significant legislative encroachment on free speech occurred with the enactment of the Digital Security Act, 2018,¹³ which was recently re-enacted as the Cyber Security Act of 2023 with minor amendments.¹⁴ This law has stifled voices across various sectors and civil organisations in Bangladesh. More than 1000 people have been arrested under the law since its enactment and have been subjected to a wide range of human rights violations, including enforced disappearance, detention and torture simply for exercising their right to freedom of expression.¹⁵ In February 2021, a writer died after spending 10 months in prison without trial solely for criticising the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁶

While citizens face jail for expressing opinions, government intelligence agencies like the Intelligence Cell of Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), National Security Intelligence (NSI), and Directorate General of Forces

⁹ The right of peaceful assembly in Bangladesh. (2021, May 4). Available at: <https://www.rightofassembly.info/country/bangladesh>

¹⁰ The Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance, 1976, section 29, Power of Police Commissioner to prohibit assembly or procession| Available at: <http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-511/section-13553.html>; The Chittagong Metropolitan Police Ordinance, 1978, section 30, Power of Police Commissioner to prohibit assembly or procession| Available at: <http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-578/section-17948.html>; The Khulna Metropolitan Police Ordinance, 1985, section 30, Power of Police Commissioner to prohibit assembly or procession| Available at: <http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-692/section-19160.html>; The Sylhet Metropolitan Police Act, 2009, section 31, Prohibition of public gatherings and processions in public interest| Available at: <http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-details-1012.html>;

¹¹ The Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance, 1976, Section 105:Indemnity: Available at: <http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-511/section-13811.html>

¹² *Shrinking public spaces in Dhaka*. (n.d.). New Age | The Most Popular Outspoken English Daily in Bangladesh. Available at: <https://www.newagebd.net/article/125681/shrinking-public-spaces-in-dhaka>

¹³ *The Digital Security Act, 2018*. Available at: <https://www.cirt.gov.bd/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Digital-Security-Act-2020.pdf>

¹⁴ Sengupta, D. M. (2023, September 20). *Bangladesh revised a digital security law. Is it really less severe?* Bangladesh's Cyber Security Act Could Still Be as Severe as Past Law - Rest of World. <https://restofworld.org/2023/south-asia-newsletter-bangladesh-cyber-security-act/>

¹⁵ *Stop Bangladesh's crackdown on freedom of expression online* - Amnesty International. (2021, August 23). Amnesty International. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/petition/stop-crackdown-on-freedom-of-expression-online-in-bangladesh/#:~:text=More%20than%20100%20journalists%20have,criminalising%20legitimate%20forms%20of%20expression.>

¹⁶ Mahmud, F. (2021, February 26). *Anger in Bangladesh over dissident writer's death in prison*. Al Jazeera. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/26/anger-in-bangladesh-over-prominent-writers-death-in-prison>

Intelligence (DGFI) are exempted from the purview of The Right to Information Act 2009.¹⁷ Although these agencies must disclose information regarding corruption and human rights, such disclosure is bound by the approval of the Information Commission - diluting accountability and hampering access to impartial information. There are allegations of enforced disappearances and operation of secret prisons by the DGFI.¹⁸ It is noteworthy that the United States has imposed sanctions on RAB due to allegations of extrajudicial killings and rights violations.¹⁹

The government is also amending the Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration and Control) Ordinance 1961,²⁰ which currently governs the registration of social welfare organisations in the country. The proposed amendments include the prohibition of the organisation's executive council members from being involved in 'anti-national', 'prohibited political' or 'anti-constitutional' activities with risk of imprisonment, fine and/or cancellation of registration.²¹ These provisions are likely to further government supervision and narrowing and making conditional the right to freedom of association. Additionally, the Bureau of NGO Affairs under the Prime Minister's Office must oversee registration for receiving funds in accordance with the Foreign Donations Act 2016 and its 2021 Rules, with wide-ranging powers to cancel or withhold the registration of NGOs for anti-state activities, making malicious and derogatory statements against the Constitution and constitutional bodies of Bangladesh, subversive activities, financing and sponsorship of terror and militancy, and trafficking in women and children.²² As a result, the Prime Minister's office is directly in charge of all civic organisation activities.

3. Generation and Use of Public/Citizen Data

The generation and use of public/citizen data face limitations due to government surveillance, hindering open participation. Concerns about safety lead to self-censorship among many rights-based organisations in producing and publishing data.

The Special Powers Act (SPA) 1974 directly affects the data generation by civil society organisations and the media and its utilisation by various stakeholders.²³ The SPA criminalises journalists and media houses

¹⁷ Section 32, Right To Information Act 2009, unofficial translation available at:

https://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/ai/rti/international/laws_papers/bangladesh/bangladesh_rti_act_2009_summary.pdf

¹⁸ *Secret prisoners of Dhaka*. (2022, August 15). Netra News — নেত্র নিউজ. Available at: <https://netra.news/2022/secret-prisoners-of-dhaka/>

¹⁹ (*Treasury Sanctions Perpetrators of Serious Human Rights Abuse on International Human Rights Day*, 2023), available at: <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0526>

²⁰ The Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration and Control) Ordinance 1961 available at:

https://dss.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dss.portal.gov.bd/law/1cbe4342_6739_4ecc_9633_16364e690f79/1961.pdf

²¹ Pratidin, B. (n.d.). নজরদারিতে আসছে স্বৈচ্ছাসেবী সংগঠন | বাংলাদেশ প্রতিদিন. বাংলাদেশ প্রতিদিন. <https://www.bd-pratidin.com/last-page/2023/11/12/938529>

²² Library of Congress, *Bangladesh: Controversial New Law Regulating Work and Activities of Foreign NGOs*, available at:

[https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2016-11-25/bangladesh-controversial-new-law-regulating-work-and-activities-of-foreign-ngos/#:~:text=\(Nov.,funded%20nongovernmental%20organizations%20\(NGOs\).](https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2016-11-25/bangladesh-controversial-new-law-regulating-work-and-activities-of-foreign-ngos/#:~:text=(Nov.,funded%20nongovernmental%20organizations%20(NGOs).)

²³ *Still waiting for a free press*. (2015, December 13). The Daily Star. Available at: <https://www.thedailystar.net/supplements/still-waiting-free-press-186673>

for publishing prejudicial reports, making it a punishable and non-bailable offence. The broad definition of "prejudicial act" allows for misuse.²⁴ Even accurate reports that displease the ruling authorities may be subject to the SPA, granting the State extensive powers of arrest and detention without a trial. Additionally, members of civil society organisations are also being persecuted under the Digital Security Act (now Cyber Security Act). For instance, Odhikar, a civil society organisation, faced legal action for publishing a fact sheet on the 2013 Shapla Chattar rally crackdown, resulting in two members being sentenced in 2023.^{25 26}

Ain O Salish Kendra is a human rights organisation that compiles monthly statistics on various forms of human rights violations based on reported incidents in newspapers.²⁷ The reluctance of other human rights organisations to publish their records is rooted in concerns about safety. Fear of reprisals and the potential risk to the safety of those reporting data contribute to a climate of self-censorship within these organisations. These difficulties underscore the broader challenges faced by human rights organisations in Bangladesh, where concerns for safety and restrictions on civic space create obstacles for organisations dedicated to monitoring and reporting on human rights issues.

The scope of using digital tools and online platforms to collect data in Bangladesh is rather limited. The underutilisation of digital tools and online platforms for data collection stems from various challenges. High service charges, coupled with a lack of digital literacy and awareness of the benefits of digital tools, pose financial and knowledge barriers.²⁸ Poor telecommunication systems, characterised by unreliable networks, hinder the accessibility and functionality of online platforms. Government policies and a low buying power further impede the widespread adoption of digital tools, limiting their use in data collection processes. The absence of institutional support and a substantial urban-rural divide compound these

²⁴ Section 2(f), Special Powers Act 1974 -

"prejudicial act" means any act which is intended or likely-

(i) to prejudice the sovereignty or defence of Bangladesh; (ii) to prejudice the maintenance of friendly relations of Bangladesh with foreign states; (iii) to prejudice the security of Bangladesh or to endanger public safety or the maintenance of public order; (iv) to create or excite feelings of enmity or hatred between different communities, classes or sections of people; (v) to interfere with or encourage or incite interference with the administration of law or the maintenance of law and order; (vi) to prejudice the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community; (vii) to cause fear or alarm to the public or to any section of the public; (viii) to prejudice the economic or financial interests of the State; available at:

<http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-462.html>

²⁵ *Case under ICT Act: Odhikar's Adilur, Elan jailed for 2yrs.* (2023, September 14). The Daily Star. Available at:

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/case-under-ict-act-odhikars-adilur-elan-jailed-2yrs-3419036>

²⁶ It is important to note that the Digital Security Act incorporates the repealed Sections 54, 55, 56, 57, and 66 of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act 2006. The Cyber Security Act of 2023 has now replaced the Digital Security Act with minor amendments. Therefore, the Cyber Security Act is now the successor to Sections 54, 55, 56, 57, and 66 of the ICT Act.

²⁷ *Statistics on Human Rights Violations | Ain o Salish Kendra(ASK).* (2023, November 9). Ain O Salish Kendra(ASK). Available at: <https://www.askbd.org/ask/statistics-on-human-rights-violations/>

²⁸ *Digital Literacy in Rural Bangladesh: Survey 2019 - BRAC Institute of Governance and Development.* (2023, January 3). BRAC Institute of Governance and Development. <https://bigd.bracu.ac.bd/publications/digital-literacy-in-rural-bangladesh/>

challenges, making it difficult for individuals and organisations to effectively leverage online platforms for data collection across the country.²⁹

Despite the potential for citizen-generated data to offer valuable insights into various aspects of society, the prevailing atmosphere of government surveillance has hindered its widespread use. The government's pervasive monitoring of any data generated by citizens has created an environment of fear and inhibition, discouraging open participation and information sharing.

In the health sector, where some citizen-generated data is employed, the focus is primarily on health needs rather than broader human rights issues.³⁰ The limited use of citizen-generated data in the health sector highlights a more cautious approach by individuals and organisations in selecting areas that are perceived as less likely to attract adverse attention from the government.

4. Data on Threats and Attacks against Civil Society

Civil society organisations face a variety of threats and attacks on their functioning. These include the weaponisation of laws like the Foreign Donations Regulation Act to regulate the independence and operation of organisations and the concerning trend of mass arrests and legal actions against citizens, activists, journalists, and political figures ahead of the 2024 elections.

The intricate nature of foreign financial support and the approval process for projects by government authorities is a significant concern for civil society organisations. State actors have instituted stringent laws and regulations, notably the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act 2016³¹ and the Prime Minister's Office Circular 2021, which lay out specific compliance requirements for NGOs operating with foreign donations.³² The enforcement of these laws has compelled most social organisations in Bangladesh to submit to the scrutiny of the government's intelligence agencies, such as the Special Branch of Bangladesh Police and NSI, as a prerequisite for registration.³³

Regrettably, the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act 2016, ostensibly designed to combat terrorist financing, has been weaponised as a political tool by the current authoritarian

²⁹ Zaman, M. H. A. M. A. (2023, June 14). *Digital divide points to disparity in rural-urban internet access*. The Daily Star. available at: <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/digital-divide-points-disparity-rural-urban-internet-access-3345526>

³⁰ Chowdhury, O. H., & Osmani, S. R. (2010). Towards Achieving the Right to Health: The Case of Bangladesh. *The Bangladesh Development Studies*, 33(1/2), 205–273. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23339888>

³¹ *Bangladesh: New law designed to stifle civil society must be repealed* - Amnesty International. (n.d.). Amnesty International. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa13/4996/2016/en/>
The Foreign Donation (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act' 2016: Available at: https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/Bangladesh_FDVA.pdf

³² The Prime Minister Office Circular 2021 is available at: https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/Bangladesh_BangladeshCircular-.pdf

³³ Raja, K. (2023, March 21). *How To Register Non-profit Organization In Bangladesh*. Relin Consultants. <https://relinconsultants.com/how-to-register-non-profit-organization-in-bangladesh/>

government.³⁴ The legislation, now a strict and intricate law, coupled with the NGO Affairs Bureau's mandate for the registration of foreign aid-supported activities under the Prime Minister's Office, has imposed additional challenges³⁵ on social organisations seeking to operate independently.³⁶

As the nation approaches the 2024 national elections, a concerning trend has emerged. Human rights activists, labour rights activists, journalists, and political activists are facing mass arrests and police action by the government.³⁷ Notably, all rights workers, including Nobel Laureate Dr. Muhammad Yunus,³⁸ are now being subjected to rule by law instead of rule of law. In October and November 2023, the government's response to the garment workers' minimum wage hike movement was marked by police brutality,³⁹ resulting in 24 cases filed against 18,000 workers, including the indictment and arrest of trade union leaders.⁴⁰

The government's use of these legal cases as a tool against citizens, including human rights activists, is cause for grave concern. Notable human rights organisations in Bangladesh, such as the ASK, Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik, Transparency International Bangladesh, and Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), are grappling with challenges in carrying out their regular activities due to government pressure. The complexity of the situation is further compounded by the lack of information on the government's crackdown on civil society organisations in the media.

Additionally, threats from religious fundamentalists are extremely common when engaging with issues related to gender and the well-being of sexual minorities.⁴¹

5. Recommendations

In view of the shrinking civil society space in Bangladesh, iProbono recommends the following:

³⁴ *Bangladesh: New Law Will Choke Civil Society*. (2016, October 19). Bangladesh: New Law Will Choke Civil Society | Human Rights Watch. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/19/bangladesh-new-law-will-choke-civil-society>

³⁵ With the introduction of Rule 6 in a circular by the Prime Minister's Office In 2021, domestic NGOs can no longer offer financial assistance to another domestic NGOs or organisation. The recipient organisation must first secure registration from the Bureau of NGO Affairs. This Circular is available at: https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/Bangladesh_BangladeshCircular-.pdf

³⁶ NewAge Bangladesh, (2021, August 17). *Bangladesh to enhance monitoring over NGOs*. Available at: <https://www.newagebd.net/article/146617/bangladesh-to-enhance-monitoring-over-ngos>

³⁷ Correspondent, S. (2022, December 23). *Police at Zillur Rahman's home to 'collect information.'* Prothomalo. Available at: <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/uxgs1mxnle>

³⁸ *UN rights body 'concerned' by harassment of Nobel laureate Mohammad Yunus*. (2023, September 5). Al Jazeera. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/5/un-concerned-by-harassment-of-human-rights-defenders-in-bangladesh>

³⁹ Begum, T., & Ahmed, R. (2023, November 15). *Bangladesh garment workers fighting for pay face brutal violence and threats*. The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/nov/15/bangladesh-garment-workers-fighting-for-pay-face-brutal-violence-and-threats>

⁴⁰ *24 cases against 18,000 keep Bangladesh RMG workers on run*. (n.d.). New Age | the Most Popular Outspoken English Daily in Bangladesh. Available at: <https://www.newagebd.net/article/217351/24-cases-against-18000-keep-bangladesh-rmg-workers-on-run>

⁴¹ Javed J, *Do Pride Month Celebrations Help Bangladeshi Queer People?* Available at: <https://i-probono.com/articles/do-pride-month-celebrations-help-bangladeshi-queer-people/>

1. Critical stakeholders, such as the government, civil society, media, and the international community, should actively participate in renewed dialogue and partnership to acknowledge and confront the diminishing civic space.
2. An impartial assessment of the status of civil society in Bangladesh must be initiated by the United Nations, along with appropriate recommendations to ensure the robust functioning of civil society organisations and enable cooperation amongst stakeholders.
3. A comprehensive review and modification of restrictive legislation must be undertaken by the Government of Bangladesh to reinforce the safeguarding of human rights activists and defenders in line with international human rights standards. Any revisions to the law must involve consultation with concerned stakeholders, and efforts must be made to ensure that due process is at the core of any legal processes.
4. The Government of Bangladesh must review, amend and/or abolish legislations that impede the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and sensitise police and law enforcement stakeholders on upholding these rights.
5. The Government of Bangladesh must also ensure the autonomy of crucial institutions, including the National Human Rights Commission to encourage a climate that prioritises the upholding of fundamental rights and liberties of human rights activists, civil society organisations, journalists, and all Bangladeshi citizens.
6. A simplified process to access foreign funding must be made available by the Government of Bangladesh to civil society organisations to encourage collaboration and ensure the robust functioning of civil society organisations.
7. A national committee to protect civil society space, comprised of a board representation of CSOs, should be established within the framework of any functioning National Human Rights Commission.