

600 plus killed in students' movement in Bangladesh : UN

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Online Desk : More than 600 people were killed during the recent students' quota reform movement, says a report of the Office of the High Commissioner of the United Nations Human Rights. The report titled 'Preliminary Analysis of Recent Protests and Unrest in Bangladesh' released today reveals that according to available public reports by media and the protest movement itself, over 600 people were killed between July 16 and August 11. Of these, nearly 400 deaths were reported from July 16 to August 4, while about 250 people were reportedly killed following the new wave of protests between 5 and August 6. The report shows the number of reported killings in revenge attacks since that time still remains to be determined. A number of deaths were reported between 7 and August 11, including those who died while undergoing medical treatment for injuries sustained in the violence.

Those killed include protesters, bystanders, journalists covering the events and a number of members of the security force. Thousands of protesters and bystanders have been injured, with hospitals overwhelmed by the influx of patients. The reported death toll is likely an underestimate, as information collection has been hindered by restrictions on movement due to the curfew and the internet shutdown. Also, hospitals were reportedly prevented by the state authorities from providing details of those killed and injured, the report says. The majority of deaths and injuries have been attributed to the security forces and the student wing affiliated with the Awami League, the UN observes.

It says the casualties resulted from the use of live ammunition and other force against protesters while acting violently reportedly were not armed, or only lightly armed, as well as from instances of security forces unlawfully using lethal force against protesters posing no apparent threat, unarmed protesters, and bystanders, including at least four journalists and at least 32 children, with many more injured and detained – a number of whom were seemingly deliberately targeted.

It reveals that from July 12 to August 3, at least 450,000 unknown persons and 2000 identified persons were reportedly registered for offenses in at least 286 criminal cases in Dhaka alone, including a combination of named and unnamed individuals-many members of the opposition reportedly among them. In Bangladesh, hundreds of individuals are often included as "unnamed" in a "First Information Report", increasing the risk of widespread arbitrary arrest and detention.

Triggered by the reinstatement of a quota system for allocation of civil service positions, initially peaceful student protests in Bangladesh that started in mid-June 2024 were followed by violence and serious human rights violations committed by security forces. In a rapid and dramatic series of developments in Bangladesh, following broad-based protests and unrest, the government resigned on August 5 2024 and was replaced by a civilian interim government to oversee a transition to fresh elections, the report says.