

Tarique Rahman, Babar, all accused acquitted in August 21 grenade attack case

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Online Desk : In the highly discussed 21st August grenade attack case, the High Court acquitted all the defendants, including BNP's acting chairman Tarique Rahman, who had been sentenced to life imprisonment, and former State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar, who had been sentenced to death. The High Court bench, comprising Justice AKM Asaduzzaman and Justice Syed Enayet Hossain announced the verdict on Sunday after considering two death references, the appeals of the accused, and jail appeals. Additionally, the court declared the trial court's verdict as invalid. Earlier, on November 21, the death reference (approval of the death sentence) and appeal hearings in this case were completed. On that day, the court kept the matter in the cause list (pending for judgment). The issue was later scheduled for today's proceedings.

The hearings for the case began on October 31 in the High Court. Deputy Attorney General Mohammad Jasim Sarkar represented the state while Senior Lawyers SM Shahjahan and Mohammad Shishir Monir argued on behalf of the accused. In the 21st August grenade attack case, the trial court on October 10, 2018, sentenced former State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar and BNP leader Abdus Salam Pintu, along with 19 others, to death. BNP's Senior Vice Chairman (currently Acting Chairman) Tarique Rahman and 19 others were sentenced to life imprisonment. The other 11 accused were given different prison terms.

On November 27, 2018, the trial court's verdict, along with the required documents was forwarded to the High Court's Death Reference section. At the same time, the convicted individuals filed appeals. On December 2022, the appeal hearings commenced before a bench led by Justice Shahidul Karim. The bench was subsequently restructured and the hearings were resumed before a new bench. On August 21, 2004, a deadly grenade attack occurred at an Awami League rally on Bangabandhu Avenue. Awami League President and then-opposition leader Sheikh Hasina narrowly escaped the attack. However, 24 people, including the party's Women's Affairs Secretary, Ivy Rahman (the wife of the late former President Zillur Rahman), were killed, and over 300 party leaders and activists were injured. The following day, Sub-Inspector (SI) Faruk Ahmed of the Motijheel Police Station filed a case.

Following the investigation, a charge sheet was filed on June 11, 2008, during the period of the former caretaker government. It named BNP leader Abdus Salam Pintu, his brother Maulana Tajuddin, HuJI leader Mufti Abdul Hannan and 22 others as defendants. When the Awami League government assumed power in 2009, the court instructed a further investigation after the state's appeal. Following two years of inquiry, a supplementary charge sheet was submitted on July 3, 2011 which included 30 more individuals as accused. Consequently, the total number of accused in the case rose to 52.