

# The Military Must Not Be Undermined

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**Online Desk :** The Bangladesh Army stands as the guardian of the nation in times of crisis. It symbolises national unity, integrity, and international recognition. Throughout history, the military has always stood by the people, defying conventional command structures to safeguard public interest. Today, however, deliberate efforts are being made to drag the army into controversy. Despite its crucial role in maintaining peace, stability, and national unity, the army is being subjected to baseless allegations. Attempts are being made to question its integrity for vested interests. At a time when the nation is experiencing political volatility, such a smear campaign is both dangerous and unacceptable.

On 5 August last year, the army played a decisive role in ending authoritarian rule in Bangladesh. Its actions should be evaluated based on its sacrifices and goodwill. Just as the military sided with the people during the 1990 mass uprising against General Ershad, it again stood with the people against Sheikh Hasina's oppressive regime. If the army had instead supported her government, the country would have descended into civil war. The military, under the leadership of General Waqar-uz-Zaman, chose to stand with the people, breaking conventional command structures to support the movement.

A military that has played such a crucial role in safeguarding democracy cannot and should not be subjected to baseless accusations. Following the fall of the autocratic government on 5 August, General Waqar-uz-Zaman mediated discussions among political leaders, leading to the appointment of Professor Muhammad Yunus as head of the interim government. Without this intervention, chaos would have spread further across the nation. Unlike many countries in Africa and Pakistan, where generals frequently seize power, Bangladesh's military has demonstrated remarkable restraint. Since 1982, no military leader has attempted to usurp power. Their commitment to constitutional governance is evident. However, despite their continued service to the country, certain groups are now attempting to malign the army's reputation.

Since September last year, the military has been assisting in maintaining law and order due to the absence and inaction of the police. It has played a crucial role in stabilising the situation. Despite this, coordinated efforts are being made to create confusion and unrest regarding the army's involvement. If political and social groups continue to exploit these narratives, national security could be at risk. On 15 March, at the annual commemoration of the BDR massacre, Army Chief General Waqar-uz-Zaman warned that internal conflicts and division among citizens pose a grave threat to national sovereignty. He made it clear that the army's primary objective is to restore stability and return to the barracks after ensuring a safe transition.

General Waqar-uz-Zaman also highlighted that law enforcement alone cannot maintain order. With 200,000 police officers, the RAB, and other security forces, it is crucial for civil institutions to function effectively. The military, with only 30,000 personnel deployed at any time, cannot single-handedly manage the country's security crisis. For the past seven months, the army has worked tirelessly in the field, ensuring public safety under extreme conditions. Without their presence, the country's law and order situation would have spiralled out of control. Crime, including robbery, murder, and extortion, has increased significantly. The police, lacking morale, have struggled to maintain order. In many cases, they have even suffered attacks and had detainees snatched from them. Against this backdrop, the military has been an indispensable force in stabilising the country.

Recognising the army's critical role, the government has extended its executive authority under martial provisions. Since 17 September last year, military officers have been granted executive magistracy powers to maintain stability. This measure has been renewed multiple times due to the worsening law and order situation. The Bangladesh Army is the only institution whose members take an oath to sacrifice their lives for national sovereignty. Unlike politicians, police officers, or even the prime minister, military personnel pledge their lives to protect the country. Their commitment must be respected. Over the years, numerous

conspiracies have been hatched against the Bangladesh Army, but none have succeeded. Any current attempts to discredit or weaken it will also fail. The people of Bangladesh are now more politically aware than ever before. No amount of propaganda can turn them against an institution that has consistently served the nation with dedication. Those who engage in these conspiracies will only end up discrediting themselves.