

Transparency International EU

The global coalition against corruption

Transparency International calls for urgent EU sanctions to support Bangladesh

Pia Engelbrecht-Bogdanov · Monday, September 30th, 2024

The following letter was submitted by Transparency International EU, the Transparency International Secretariat and Transparency International Bangladesh to the EU's High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell. Access it as a PDF file [here](#).

September 17, 2024

Urgent action to support a transparent, accountable, inclusive and democratic future for Bangladesh with EU sanctions

Dear Mr. Borrell,

We are Transparency International (TI), a global movement working in over 100 countries to end corruption by exposing systems and networks that enable corruption to thrive. Our mission is to promote transparency, accountability and integrity at all levels and across all sectors of society. The EU has been building ties with Bangladesh in [various sectors](#) such as economic development, human rights, good government and the environment for over 50 years. Today, by revenue, over half of Bangladesh's exports go to the EU, and the country enjoys a significant trade surplus with the Union.

In July the EU expressed "[deep concern](#)" over the violence and tragic loss of over 1000 lives that has occurred in Bangladesh during the unprecedented crackdown on the student-led quota reform and anti-discrimination people's uprising between July 15 and August 5, 2024. The country is now going through a major historical transition, while its population is experiencing increasing levels of inequality and corruption attributed to the previous Bangladeshi government. Corruption allegations involving former ministers, public representatives, bankers, senior public officials and enforcement authorities are staggering.

The EU must show it is on the side of the victims of government abuse. To build a more democratic, transparent, accountable and inclusive future, any misappropriated assets in the EU and other countries must be identified, frozen and recovered to help the people of Bangladesh. The EU has a responsibility to help the government transition with restrictive measures. The process to recover those assets should begin as soon as possible.

We call upon the EU to provide critical support to the interim Bangladeshi government to address

corruption and money laundering in the following ways:

1. The EU should work on an urgent basis with the Governments of the US, Canada, Australia, EU, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and UAE (particularly Dubai), and with the interim government, and in-country experts including civil society within Bangladesh, to identify key targets for imposing financial sanctions and visa bans.
2. The EU should call upon Asset Recovery Offices and other competent national authorities to trace and identify whether any assets looted by any Bangladeshi individual or company are recoverable in the EU, and act swiftly to impose property and account freezing orders as the first step to facilitate their repatriation to Bangladesh and hold the perpetrators to account.
3. The EU should offer urgent expertise, including forensic accountants, lawyers and law enforcement, to support reforms and capacity building of Bangladesh's relevant institutions such as the Anti-Corruption Commission, Financial Intelligence Unit, Criminal Investigation Department, National Board of Revenue and Attorney General's Office, so that they can identify stolen assets, build a robust evidence base for freezing these assets, and facilitate swift law enforcement action to recover those assets.

In the wake of the new legislature, we urge the EU to impose sanctions against those who have enabled any misappropriation of assets from Bangladesh, whether this be lawyers, or any other professional enabler in the EU.

As a longstanding partner of Bangladesh, the EU should support the country at this crucial time by playing a proactive role in helping the people of Bangladesh recover the assets belonging to them in order to build an accountable and democratic future.

Yours sincerely,

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