

Minority Report

**An Investigation
into the Attacks on Hindu Minority
in the Post-Hasina Bangladesh**

Prepared by:

SAPI
South Asian
Policy Initiative

February 2025



**Minority Report: An Investigation into the Attacks
on Hindu Minority in the Post-Hasina Bangladesh**

<https://southasianpolicyinitiative.org/>

Copyright © South Asian Policy Initiative Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of SAPI.

Authors Dr. Faroque Amin, Dr. Hasmat Ali Sikder

Contributing Editors Wohid Islam, Shibly Sohail

Research Coordinator: Masud Rahman

Authorised by: Dr. Mahmudur Rahman

Illustration by: Tariq Adnan

Published on: 06 February 2025

About South Asian Policy Initiative (SAPI)

South Asian Policy Initiatives Inc (SAPI) is a transnational research-oriented initiative. It analyses, deliberates, and evaluates policies aimed at promoting human rights and democracy in the South Asian region. SAPI envisions upholding and promoting authentic and constructive endeavours of civil society groups dedicated to human rights and democracy, with the goal of enhancing safeguards in accordance with international norms and standards across South Asian countries. Its primary focus is to generate knowledge through research on state policies, critically examining them from normative perspectives. SAPI seeks to inform and impact decision-making processes in the region, maintaining credibility and transparency in its approach.

To further its objectives, SAPI has launched Global Voice for Humanity (GVH), an inclusive platform dedicated to advancing human rights activities at both regional and international levels. The GVH collaborates with civil society organizations, policymakers, academics, and various stakeholders to advocate for the rights of dissidents and victims facing persecution under authoritarian and corrupt kleptocratic regimes. Through advocacy efforts, educational programs, and initiatives aimed at raising awareness, the GVH works towards fostering a more equitable, just, and democratic society in South Asia. By combining research and advocacy, SAPI and GVH work together to drive meaningful and positive changes within the region and beyond.

SAPI's organizational structure consists of an executive board, research fellows, and general members who collectively contribute to its mission. The executive board plays a crucial role in providing strategic direction. Distinguished research fellows contribute their expertise to shape the intellectual framework and aid policy formulation. Members actively engage in implementing policies and projects, working in various capacities to support SAPI's mission. Further details can be found on the official website of the South Asian Policy Initiatives, <https://southasianpolicyinitiative.org/>.

Introduction

August 2024 marked a historic turning point for Bangladesh as the nation rose against the authoritarian rule of Sheikh Hasina, forcing her and the Awami League into exile amidst a mass uprising and state-orchestrated violence. In the wake of this seismic political shift, a coordinated campaign of misinformation was unleashed, falsely portraying Bangladesh as a nation descending into communal chaos. Following Sheikh Hasina's escape, a well-orchestrated disinformation campaign was launched to fabricate communal violence narratives, orchestrated deception, and weaponizing falsehoods to destabilize Bangladesh's transition to democracy. This report aims to analyse the nature, spread, reasons and impact of this intentional disinformation campaign, as well as efforts to counter it. As any coordinated and communal attack on a minority in a society is a serious threat to human rights, religious rights and democratic rights, this issue deserves attention and truthful examination.

Background

Bangladesh, a country of approximately 165.7 million people, has a population that is 91% Muslim and 8% Hindu, with other religious minorities making up the remainder.¹ The country has a complex history of communal relations, often influenced by political dynamics and regional tensions. Hindus are historically perceived as staunch supporters of the Awami League and loyalists to neighbouring India. ('Our lives don't matter': Bangladeshi Hindus under attack after Hasina exit, Al Jazeera English, published on 12 December 2024, available at:<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/12/12/our-lives-dont-matter-in-post-hasina-bangladesh-hindus-fear-future>).

¹ 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh, U.S. Department of State, available at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/bangladesh/>

A Misinformation Campaign

Following Sheikh Hasina's fleeing to India, a barrage of fabricated narratives began circulating, primarily through social media and certain news outlets. These narratives often exaggerated the scale and nature of attacks on Hindu communities.

Investigative fact-checking organizations have systematically dismantled these false claims, exposing a pattern of deliberate deception aimed at tarnishing Bangladesh's reputation.

This report investigated and highlighted some significant findings, including:

- A viral post claiming the Navagraha Temple in Chittagong was set on fire by "Islamists" was debunked. The incident actually occurred at a nearby Awami League party office, leaving the temple undamaged.
- False claims about a Bangladeshi Hindu cricketer's home being burned down were disproven. The house belonged to a Muslim MP from the Awami League.
- Contrary to the false narratives pushed by vested interests, the evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that these incidents were political reprisals against Awami League loyalists, not communal violence targeting religious minorities. The misinformation sought to manipulate global perception by fabricating an artificial religious crisis.
- Investigations by international and Bangladeshi fact-checking organisations, such as AFP Fact Check and Rumor Scanner Bangladesh, have identified numerous false reports spread by Indian and Hindutva media outlets. These reports include fake letters, misrepresentations of events, and misleading videos. Some examples are:
- Clip of vandalised mosque in India falsely linked to attack against minorities in Bangladesh, AFP Fact Check, published on 10 January 2025, available at: <https://factcheck.afp.com/doc.afp.com.36T33HX>
- Video shows 2018 Chinese theme park Halloween prop, not 'torture' of Hindus in Bangladesh, AFP Fact Check, published on 26 December 2024, available at: <https://factcheck.afp.com/doc.afp.com.36QX7PM>
- Charity video from Bangladesh falsely shared as 'Hindu monk forced to convert to Islam', AFP Fact Check, published on 24 December 2024, available at: <https://factcheck.afp.com/doc.afp.com.36QP8JD>

- Video of Indian temple ritual falsely linked to Hindu attacks in Bangladesh, AFP Fact Check, published on 17 December 2024, available at: <https://factcheck.afp.com/doc.afp.com.36P24WW>
- Old Incident Video of India Falsely Peddled as Hindu Woman Raped and Killed in Bangladesh, Rumor Scanner Bangladesh, published on 26 January 2025, available at: <https://rumorscanner.com/en/fact-check-en/hindu-woman-raped-killed-bd/136686>
- Land Dispute Between Two Hindu Families Falsely Portrayed as Communal Clash, Rumor Scanner Bangladesh, published on 5 January 2025, available at: <https://rumorscanner.com/en/fact-check-en/this-is-not-an-incident-of-communal-violence-or-a-planned-attack-by-the-interim-government/133773>
- Video of Cow Beating in India Falsely Circulated as Attack on ISKCON Cow Farm in Bangladesh, Rumor Scanner Bangladesh, published on 7 December 2024, available at: <https://rumorscanner.com/en/fact-check-en/iskcon-cow-farm-bangladesh/130431>
- Fact-Check: False Claim of 27,000 Hindus Killed by Bangladesh Army in Three Months, Rumor Scanner Bangladesh, published on 25 November 2024, available at: <https://rumorscanner.com/en/fact-check-en/claim-of-27000-hindus-killed-by-bangladesh-army-is-fake/129260>
- Trace of Misinformation About Bangladesh in 72 Indian Media Outlets in 2024, Rumor Scanner Bangladesh, published on 18 January 2025, available at: <https://rumorscanner.com/en/india-en/indian-misinformation-on-bangladesh-2024/135322>

Nature of Post-Hasina Violence: Political vs. Communal

The Annual Human Rights Report, 2024, published by Bangladesh's leading human rights organisation Odhikar on February 10, 2025, presents a critical analysis of the aftermath of Sheikh Hasina's removal from power. The report documents allegations of attacks on Hindu households in various parts of Bangladesh, a narrative that gained significant traction both domestically and internationally. However, a detailed examination of these incidents reveals that 98.4% were politically motivated, while only 1.59% were driven by communal factors. This distinction challenges prevailing claims that Bangladesh experienced widespread religious violence following Hasina's departure (Annual Human Rights Report 2024, Odhikar, published on 10 February 2025, available at: https://odhikar.org/ahrr-2024_odhikar_english/)

The report further indicates that 1,415 complaints were filed regarding attacks on Hindu citizens in the post-Hasina period. Despite the extensive circulation of such reports, official investigations led to the registration of only 88 cases, resulting in the arrest of 70 individuals. These findings suggest that rather than an escalation of sectarian strife, the post-Hasina period was characterised by targeted political reprisals. This evidence contradicts efforts by certain interest groups to depict Bangladesh's transition as a descent into communal disorder. The report highlights the necessity of rigorous fact-based analysis in politically volatile contexts to counteract misinformation and ensure an accurate understanding of the situation.

Political Motives

The post-Hasina misinformation campaign is not just an attack on Bangladesh's sovereignty but a calculated assault on truth itself. By fabricating a communal crisis, Awami League sympathizers and their foreign backers seek to delegitimize the nation's transition from dictatorship, destabilize its democratic resurgence, and justify external interference. Weaponizing communal narratives, they aim to manipulate global perception and obstruct Bangladesh's path to justice, stability, and self-determination. Exposing and countering this orchestrated deception is imperative—not only to safeguard the nation's future but to ensure that propaganda does not triumph over reality. This narrative is used to justify the Indian government's stance on Bangladesh, support for the ousted Awami League party and garner support for the Hindutva ideology. The

reports often exaggerate the scale of attacks on Hindus and link them to Islamist forces, despite evidence to the contrary. This issue has been used as a tool to hinder the country's transition to reestablishing democracy and human rights (Bangladesh's New Democracy Under Threat From Flood of Misinformation, The Diplomat, published on 14 August 2024, available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2024/08/bangladeshs-new-democracy-under-threat-from-flood-of-misinformation/>).

Gobinda Chandra Pramanik, a prominent Hindu leader in Bangladesh, stated in an interview with Al Jazeera, that no Hindu households without connections to the Awami League were attacked. He said, "As a leader of the Hindu community, I can confirm that these attacks were politically motivated, not communal. Across the country, 10 times more Muslim households affiliated with the Awami League were attacked." ('Islamophobic, alarmist': How some India outlets covered Bangladesh crisis, Al Jazeera English, published on 8 August 2024, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/8/8/islamophobic-alarmist-how-some-india-outlets-covered-bangladesh-crisis>).

Sources and Spread of Misinformation

Role of Indian Media

Investigations revealed that numerous Indian media outlets were involved in spreading false information. A fact-finding study by Rumor Scanner, a Bangladeshi fact-checking organisation, found that 49 Indian media outlets spread at least 13 false reports about Bangladesh between August 12 and December 5, 2024 (49 Indian media outlets spread at least 13 fake reports about Bangladesh since 12 Aug: Rumor Scanner, The Business Standard, published on 27 January 2025, available at: <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/49-indian-media-outlets-spread-least-13-fake-reports-about-bangladesh-12-aug-rumor>).

Social Media Amplification

Misinformation spread rapidly through social media platforms, often using hashtags such as #HindusAreNotSafeinBangladesh, #Hindus, #SaveHindusinBangladesh, #AllEyesOnBangladeshiHindus, #HelpBangladeshiHindus, and #HindusUnderAttack (Disinformation About Attacks on Minorities Threaten Stabilization Efforts in Bangladesh, The Diplomat, published on 26 August 2024, available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2024/08/disinformation-about-attacks-on-minorities-threaten-stabilization-efforts-in-bangladesh/>).

Impact of the Disinformation Apparatus

Communal Tensions

The spread of false information heightened fears among minority communities and risked deepening social divisions

Bangladesh-India Relations

The deliberate spread of misinformation has become a destabilizing force in Bangladesh-India relations, exacerbating tensions and fueling distrust. By promoting false narratives, Indian media outlets and Hindutva-aligned groups have actively contributed to diplomatic friction, jeopardizing regional stability. The false accusations have led to increased tensions and mistrust between the two countries. The interim government headed by Dr. Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh has condemned the disinformation campaign and emphasised the importance of maintaining strong bilateral ties. (No objection to AL contesting polls: Yunus tells The Hindu, The Business Standard, published on 18 November 2024, available at: <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/hasina-must-return-face-trial-no-objection-al-contesting-polls-yunus-tells-hindu-996751>, and Dr Yunus' interview with Al Jazeera English on 18 November 2024, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRbxFxxJm88>)

International Relations

The autocratic dictator Sheikh Hasina and her party Awami League made Bangladesh known as the international capital of enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killing over the last 15 years. The kleptocracy and grand corruption of this regime severely damaged the economy of the country. While Bangladesh, its new interim government along with its people are trying to recover, this coordinated disinformation campaign certainly affects the country's reputation and its diplomatic relations with various countries and their people.

Conclusion: Navigating Truth in a Complex Political Landscape

The dissemination of misinformation following Bangladesh's political transition in August 2024 highlights the profound impact that unverified narratives can have on public perception, communal harmony, and diplomatic relations. While incidents against minorities did occur, many reports were exaggerated or fabricated, emphasizing the necessity for robust fact-checking mechanisms, responsible journalism, and media literacy initiatives. While incidents against minorities did occur, many reports were exaggerated or fabricated, emphasizing the necessity for robust fact-checking mechanisms, responsible journalism, and media literacy initiatives. While some incidents did occur, many were exaggerated or fabricated, often for political purposes. This underscores the critical need for responsible journalism, effective fact-checking mechanisms, and media literacy to combat the spread of misinformation in times of political change.

The political transition in Bangladesh during August 2024 revealed more than just a power shift—it exposed how easily false stories can spread and threaten social harmony. Despite relentless attempts to fabricate a communal crisis, the reality stands in stark contrast: Bangladeshis, regardless of faith, rejected the divisive propaganda and upheld the nation's longstanding tradition of religious harmony. This failed disinformation campaign serves as a testament to the resilience of the Bangladeshi people against both internal corruption and foreign manipulation. Bangladeshi people from various religious and political backgrounds worked together to prevent potential conflicts, showing remarkable restraint and unity.

Indian media outlets, often pushing biased narratives, tried to portray the situation as a potential religious crisis. However, these attempts largely failed because of the grassroots-level understanding and commitment to peace among ordinary Bangladeshis. What emerged was a powerful reminder, Bangladesh has maintained religious harmony for 53 years, a significant achievement in a region often marked by communal tensions. Mostly the country's people, not politicians, have been the true guardians of this delicate social balance. Political parties must now play a more active role in bridging potential divides and protecting the social fabric that makes Bangladesh prosperous, religiously harmonious and democratic.

Further Reading:

- Agent Provocateurs: Online Hindutva Groups' Misinformation Campaign Amid Bangladesh's Political Crisis, Global Network of Extremism & Technology, published on 8 October 2024, available at: <https://gnet-research.org/2024/10/08/agent-provocateurs-online-hindutva-groups-misinformation-campaign-amid-bangladeshs-political-crisis/>
- Tensions peak as Bangladesh blames India for 'spreading misinformation', Voice of America, Published on 10 December 2024, available at: <https://www.voanews.com/a/tensions-peak-as-bangladesh-blames-india-for-spreading-misinformation-/7895753.html>
- Sorting Fact From Fiction as Fear Engulfs Bangladesh's Hindus, New York Times, published on 24 December 2024, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/24/world/asia/bangladesh-hindus.html>