



Bangladesh - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 25 March 2014

Information on the Awami league including when it came to power and key events.

Citing external sources, a report published in March 2012 by *Country of Origin Research and Information* states:

“The BBC reports that the Awami League was formed under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1949 to campaign for East Pakistan’s autonomy from West Pakistan. In 1972 Rahman became Prime Minister of the newly independent Bangladesh, in 1975 he became President, but was assassinated later that year in a military coup. The BBC reports that the Awami League was the ruling party in Bangladesh during the following periods; 1971-1975, 1996 – 2001, 2008 – current.” (Country of Origin Research and Information (March 2012) *CORI Country Report: Bangladesh*, p.19)

IRIN News in February 2014 notes:

“...the disputed general election on 5 January, in which the ruling Awami League retained power...” (IRIN News (4 February 2014) *Concern over extrajudicial killings in Bangladesh*)

A report published by the *International Crisis Group* in October 2006 states:

“The AL was founded by Shiekh Mujibur Rehman to struggle for Bengali rights in Pakistan before the 1971 split. Its manifesto has long been based on four principles: nationalism, secularism, socialism and democracy.” (International Crisis Group (23 October 2006) *Bangladesh Today*, p.4)

This report also points out that:

“When the Awami League (AL) of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Sheikh Mujib) won enough seats to form the national government in Pakistan’s first general elections in 1970, the military blocked it.” (ibid, p.2)

This document also notes:

“Under Sheikh Mujib the AL won a landslide victory in 1973 but his style rapidly turned authoritarian. He neglected institution building, attempting to establish one-party rule. From his death until the successful democracy movement of 1990, Bangladesh saw a succession of military governments dominated by General Zia and then General H.M. Ershad.” (ibid, p.3)

In September 2012 a report issued by the *United Kingdom Home Office* states:

“The AL was established in 1949 to campaign for East Pakistan's independence, appealing to the province's Bengali identity. It rejected the notion that the Muslim provinces of British India should be united in a single, Muslim state. In 1970, the AL

led by Sheikh Mujib ur-Rahman won the elections in East Pakistan, but West Pakistan refused to recognise the results. Following a period of mass unrest, East Pakistan unilaterally proclaimed independence in March 1971 and established the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Sheikh Mujib's term in office was characterised by corruption, economic collapse and civil unrest. Shortly after he assumed the presidency and declared one-party rule in 1975, Sheikh Mujib was assassinated. The AL had to wait for more than two decades before it came back to power under Sheikh Mujib's daughter, Sheikh Hasina. She overturned the indemnity given to her father's killers, a group of five army officers. They were finally executed in January 2010, after long delays in the trial process while the AL was out of power. An AL-led Grand Alliance swept the general election in December 2008, which marked the country's return to democratic rule, winning 262 seats in the 300-seat parliament (including 230 seats for AL). Hasina began her second term as prime minister in January 2009 as an avowedly secular party; the AL government has also sought to curtail the influence of religion in politics. In October 2009, the government banned the non-violent proselytising group, Hizb ut-Tahrir for its anti-government and anti-democracy stance, and has encouraged constitutional amendments banning religious-based parties. Despite its landslide victory in the elections, the AL is riven by opposing factions at the local level, which has often translated into violence, particularly in universities. In March 2010, the party's presidium began a month-long tour of the country aimed at resolving disputes and instilling a stronger sense of unity, recognising the need to shore up support at a time when the BNP was going on the political offensive.' "(United Kingdom Home Office (30 September 2012) *Bangladesh, Country Of Origin Information (COI) Report*, P.150)

A chronology is also included in this report listing major events between 1947 and 2012. (ibid, pp.145-149)

A report issued in June 1996 by *Human Rights Watch* comments on events between 1971 and 1995, states that:

"Political violence has marred Bangladesh's history as an independent nation. In its twenty-five years of existence the country has experienced nineteen reported coup attempts, two full-scale military takeovers and two assassinations of supreme leaders. The area today known as Bangladesh was part of the British dominion of India from 1772 to 1947 when it became the eastern wing of an independent Pakistan. In December 1971, after a bloody nine-month war with West Pakistan, Bangladesh became a sovereign nation. Independence leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman emerged as the new country's first president and, later, prime minister after his Awami League won an overwhelming mandate in a general election in 1973. Mujib, along with most of his family, was killed in a coup led by young army officers on August 15, 1975. A turbulent period followed with the assassination of other political leaders and further coups until November 1975, when Deputy Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Ziaur Rahman consolidated power as chief martial law administrator of Bangladesh. In 1979 Zia became president as leader of the BNP -- which he had founded the previous year -- and he remained at the helm until he was assassinated in an abortive military coup in 1981. The country was rocked by yet another coup in 1982 that brought Army Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Hossain Mohammad Ershad to power. In 1984 Ershad launched the Jatiya [National] Party and ruled as president until he was toppled in 1990 by a united opposition movement led by the BNP and the Awami League. In 1991 parliamentary democracy was restored following a legislative election hailed as the country's first fairly held poll. The widow of Ziaur Rahman and leader of the BNP, Begum Khaleda Zia, formed a government with the support of the rightist Islamic party, the Jamaat-e-Islami; the Awami League, headed by Mujib's

daughter Sheikh Hasina, became the largest opposition party followed by Ershad's Jatiya Party. Bangladesh's incipient democracy soon ran into trouble, however, as the BNP and an alliance of the major opposition parties -- including the Jamaat-e-Islami, which withdrew its initial support from the government -- became involved in a bitter and frequently violent political standoff that devastated the economy and culminated in Zia's ouster after two strife-torn years. The crisis began when the opposition MPs (predominantly from the Awami League, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and some marginal parties) walked out of parliament on March 1, 1994. The walk-out was triggered by the parliament speaker's refusal to table for discussion the opposition's corruption allegations against several cabinet ministers and by a skeptical comment by Information Minister Nazmul Huda impugning the Muslim credentials of the main opposition. The row deepened when a BNP candidate won a key parliamentary by-election on March 20 in the Magura...constituency, made vacant by the death of the Awami League incumbent who had held the seat for four consecutive terms. The poll was marred by violence between supporters of rival candidates and by the opposition's allegations of massive vote-rigging by the ruling party. The by-election had strategic significance for both the Awami League and the BNP as it came on the heels of the BNP's stunning loss to the Awami League of the two key mayoralties of Dhaka and Chittagong in local elections. Opposition leaders demanded a new vote under a caretaker authority, declaring that the flawed Magura election proved that the BNP government could not be trusted to hold free and impartial polls. The fallout over Magura became the basis for the opposition parties' intensified accusations of corruption and incompetence against the BNP government and for their related demand that Begum Zia hand over power to a neutral interim government to oversee early legislative elections. Begum Zia consistently labeled the opposition's call "unconstitutional and undemocratic." The opposition's prolonged boycott of parliament and simultaneous anti-government agitation led to legislative paralysis, economic disruption and civil strife that, according to Begum Zia, derailed her government's efforts to liberalize and reform the economy and attract much-needed foreign investment. On December 28, 1994, opposition legislators resigned en masse from parliament in a bid to heighten pressure, after the collapse of a last-minute compromise deal over procedures for the next election due in 1996...The departing MPs also vowed to boycott, and hence delegitimize, any future by-elections held by the government to fill their recently vacated seats. On November 25, 1995, when it became clear that the opposition would not participate in by-elections for over 140 parliamentary seats planned for December 15, President Abdur Rahman Biswas dissolved parliament on the advice of Prime Minister Zia, whom he asked to remain in office as head of the executive branch." (Human Rights Watch (June 1996) *Bangladesh, Political Violence On All Sides*)

In March 2014 a report published by *BBC News* lists:

"1947 - British colonial rule over India ends. A largely Muslim state comprising East and West Pakistan is established, either side of India. The two provinces are separated from each other by more than 1,500 km of Indian territory.

1949 - The Awami League is established to campaign for East Pakistan's autonomy from West Pakistan.

1970 - The Awami League, under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, wins an overwhelming election victory in East Pakistan. The government in West Pakistan refuses to recognise the results, leading to rioting. Cyclone hits East Pakistan - up to 500,000 people are killed.

Independence

1971 - Sheikh Mujib arrested and taken to West Pakistan. In exile, Awami League leaders proclaim the independence of the province of East Pakistan on 26th March.

The new country is called Bangladesh. Just under 10 million Bangladeshis flee to India as troops from West Pakistan are defeated with Indian assistance.

1972 - Sheikh Mujib returns, becomes prime minister. He begins a programme of nationalising key industries in an attempt to improve living standards, but with little success.

1974 - Severe floods devastate much of the grain crop, leading to an estimated 28,000 deaths. A national state of emergency is declared as political unrest grows.

1975 - Sheikh Mujib becomes president of Bangladesh. The political situation worsens. He is assassinated in a military coup in August. Martial law is imposed.

1976 - The military ban trade unions.

1977 - General Ziaur Rahman assumes the presidency. Islam is adopted in the constitution.

1979 - Martial law is lifted following elections, which Zia's Bangladesh National Party (BNP) wins.

1981 - Zia is assassinated during abortive military coup. He is succeeded by Abdus Sattar.

The Ershad era

1982 - General Ershad assumes power in army coup. He suspends the constitution and political parties.

1983 - Limited political activity is permitted. Ershad becomes president.

Bangladeshi leader Hussain Muhammad Ershad seized power. He later stepped down following popular protests

1986 - Parliamentary and presidential elections. Ershad elected to a five-year term. He lifts martial law and reinstates the constitution.

1987 - State of emergency declared after opposition demonstrations and strikes.

1988 - Islam becomes state religion. Floods cover up to three-quarters of the country. Tens of millions are made homeless.

1990 - Ershad steps down following mass protests.

1991 - Ershad convicted and jailed for corruption and illegal possession of weapons. Begum Khaleda Zia, widow of President Zia Rahman, becomes prime minister.

Constitution is changed to render the position of president ceremonial. The prime minister now has primary executive power. Cyclonic tidal wave kills up to 138,000.

Awami League returns

1996 - Two sets of elections eventually see the Awami League win power, with Sheikh Hasina Wajed, the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, becoming prime minister.

1997 - Ershad is released from prison. The opposition BNP begins campaign of strikes against the government.

1998 - Two-thirds of the country devastated by the worst floods ever. Fifteen former army officers sentenced to death for involvement in assassination of President Mujib in 1975.

2000 September - Sheikh Hasina criticises military regimes in a UN speech, prompting Pakistani leader General Musharraf to cancel talks with her. Relations strained further by row over leaked Pakistani report on 1971 war of independence.

2000 December - Bangladesh expels Pakistani diplomat for comments on the 1971 war. The diplomat had put the number of dead at 26,000, whereas Bangladesh says nearly three million were killed.

2001 April - Seven killed in bomb blast at a Bengali New Year concert in Dhaka.

Sixteen Indian and three Bangladeshi soldiers killed in their worst border clashes.

2001 April - High Court confirms death sentences on 12 ex-army officers for killing Mujib. Only four are in custody.

2001 June - Bomb kills 10 at Sunday mass at a Roman Catholic church in Baniarchar town. Bomb at Awami league office near Dhaka kills 22. Parliament approves bill providing protection for Hasina and her sister Sheikh Rehana, who feared that the killers of their father Mujib were out to get them too.

2001 July - Hasina steps down, hands power to caretaker authority, becoming the first prime minister in the country's history to complete a five-year term.

Coalition government

2001 September - At least eight people are killed and hundreds injured as two bombs explode at an election rally in south-western Bangladesh.

2001 October - Hasina loses at polls to Khaleda Zia's Nationalist Party and its three coalition partners.

2001 November - Law repealed which guaranteed lifelong security to former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and sister Sheikh Rehana.

2002 March - Government introduces law making acid attacks punishable by death amid public anger over escalating violence against women.

Ramadan prayers outside National Mosque of Bangladesh Islam was made the state religion in 1988

2002 May - Government orders tightening of safety standards after up to 500 people die when a river ferry goes down in a storm.

2002 June - President Chowdhury resigns after ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) accuses him of taking an anti-party line.

2002 July - Pakistani President Musharraf visits; expresses regret over excesses carried out by Pakistan during 1971 war of independence.

2002 September - Iajuddin Ahmed sworn in as president.

2002 December - Simultaneous bomb blasts in cinemas in a town north of Dhaka kill 17 and injure hundreds.

2004 Opposition calls 21 general strikes over the course of the year as part of a campaign to oust the government.

2004 May - Parliament amends constitution to reserve 45 seats for female MPs.

Bomb attack on Muslim shrine in north-eastern town of Sylhet kills two and injures UK high commissioner and 50 others.

2004 July onwards - Worst flooding in six years leaves nearly 800 people dead, millions homeless or stranded, and an estimated 20m in need of food aid.

September's floods in Dhaka are said to be the worst in decades.

2004 August - Grenade attack on opposition Awami League rally in Dhaka kills 22 people. Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina survives the attack.

2005 January - Prominent Awami League politician Shah AMS Kibria is killed in a grenade attack at a political rally. The party calls a general strike in protest.

Bomb attacks

2005 17 August - Around 350 small bombs go off in towns and cities nationwide.

Two people are killed and more than 100 are injured. A banned Islamic group claims responsibility.

2005 November - Spate of bombings, blamed on Islamic militants, hits Chittagong and Gazipur.

2006 February - Opposition Awami League ends year-long parliamentary boycott.

Political crisis

Bangladesh opposition protesters, 2006 Political antagonism spilled over into the streets in 2006

2006 October - Violent protests over government's choice of a caretaker administration to take over when Premier Zia completes her term at the end of the month. President Ahmed steps in and assumes caretaker role for period leading to elections due in January 2007.

2006 November - A 14-party opposition alliance led by the Awami League campaigns for controversial election officials to be removed. Chief election commissioner MA Aziz steps aside.

2006 December - Election date set at 22 January. Awami alliance says it will boycott the polls. Awami leader Sheikh Hasina accuses President Ahmed of favouring her rival. Blockade aimed at derailing parliamentary elections paralyzes much of the country.

2007 January - A state of emergency is declared amid violence in the election run-up. President Ahmed postpones the poll. Fakhruddin Ahmed heads a caretaker administration.

2007 March - Six Islamist militants convicted of countrywide bomb attacks in 2005 are hanged. They include the leaders of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh and Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen.

2007 April - Sheikh Hasina is charged with murder. Begum Khaleda Zia is under virtual house arrest. Several other politicians are held in an anti-corruption drive.

2007 August - Government imposes a curfew on Dhaka and five other cities amid violent clashes between police and students demanding an end to emergency rule.

2007 November - Cyclone Sidr kills thousands.

2008 June - Sheikh Hasina is temporarily freed to get medical treatment in the US.

2008 August - Local elections take place, seen as a big step towards restoring democracy. Candidates backed by the Awami League party perform strongly.

2008 November - The authorities say general elections will be held on 18 December. Sheikh Hasina returns to lead her party in the poll.

Awami League win

2008 December - General elections: Awami League captures more than 250 of 300 seats in parliament. Sheikh Hasina is sworn in as prime minister in January.

2009 February - Around 74 people, mainly army officers, are killed in a mutiny in Dhaka by border guards unhappy with pay and conditions. Police arrest some 700 guards. A further 1,000 guards are detained in May.

Continue reading the main story Bangladesh at 40Bangladeshi war crimes suspect Sayedee Mr Sayedee became the first suspect charged by a tribunal probing the 1971 independence struggle

Bangladesh confronts war crimesFirst war crimes charges The challenges aheadScars of independence war

2009 June - In a ruling on the decades-old dispute between two main political parties, the High Court decides that it was the father of PM Sheikh Hasina, and not late husband of her arch-rival Khaleda Zia, who proclaimed independence from Pakistan in 1971.

2009 October - The government bans the local branch of the global Islamist organisation Hizb-ut Tahrir, saying it poses a threat to peace.

2010 January - Five former army officers are executed for the 1975 murder of founding PM Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

2011 June - Constitutional change scraps provision for a neutral caretaker government to oversee elections.

2012 January - Army says it has foiled a coup planned by "fanatical officers".

2012 May-June - Key figures from the main Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami, including leader Motiur Rahman Nizami, are charged with war crimes by a government tribunal investigating alleged collaboration with Pakistan during the 1971 independence struggle. Jaamat-e Islami supporters clash with police repeatedly in following months in protest at the trial.

2012 October - Muslim rioters attack Buddhist villages and shrines in south-east Bangladesh after an image said to show a burnt Koran was posted on Facebook. The government denounces the attacks as "premeditated and deliberate acts of communal violence against a minority".

2013 January - War crimes tribunal sentences prominent Muslim cleric Abul Kalam Azad to death for crimes against humanity during the 1971 independence war. He was tried in absentia, as he had fled abroad.

2013 April - Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina vetoes Islamist bill to outlaw criticism of Islam.

Parliament elects Abdul Hamid as Bangladesh's new president, following the death in March of Zillur Rahman.

2013 May - European retailers promise to sign an accord to improve safety conditions in factories after a garment factory building collapsed in April, killing more than 1,100 people. Worker protests close hundreds of factories and extract a government pledge to raise the minimum wage and make it easier to form unions.

2013 July - At least two people are killed as police clash with thousands of protesters after the conviction of Ghulam Azam, leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami party, for war crimes committed during the 1971 war of independence.

2013 November - Opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jamaat-e-Islami supporters clash with police in protests at the government's refusal to make way for a caretaker administration to oversee parliamentary elections in January, as is the usual custom.

2013 December - Supreme Court upholds death sentence on Islamist leader Abdul Kader Mullah of the Jamaat-e-Islami party, who was convicted in February of crimes against humanity during the 1971 war of independence.

2014 January - Opposition BNP boycotts parliamentary elections, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina returned for third term in office.

2014 March - Khaleda Zia and other BNP opposition leaders sent for trial in April on corruption charges over alleged embezzlement of charitable funds." (BBC News (19 March 2014) *Bangladesh profile*)

References

BBC News (19 March 2014) *Bangladesh profile*

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12651483?print=true>

(Accessed 25 March 2013)

Country of Origin Research and Information (March 2012) *CORI Country Report: Bangladesh*

<http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=50618c6f2>

(Accessed 25 March 2013)

Human Rights Watch (June 1996) *Bangladesh, Political Violence On All Sides*

<http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1996/BANGLA.htm>

(Accessed 25 March 2013)

International Crisis Group (23 October 2006) *Bangladesh Today*

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/bangladesh/121-bangladesh-today.aspx>

(Accessed 25 March 2013)

IRIN News (4 February 2014) *Concern over extrajudicial killings in Bangladesh*

http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/268773/383472_en.html

(Accessed 25 March 2013)

United Kingdom Home Office (30 September 2012) *Bangladesh, Country Of Origin Information (COI) Report*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bangladesh-country-of-origin-report-30-september-2012>

(Accessed Tuesday 25 March 2013)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints.

This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted

Amnesty International
BBC News
Electronic Immigration Network
European Country of Origin Information Network
Freedom House
Google
Human Rights Watch
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
International Crisis Group
IRIN News
Lexis Nexis
Minority Rights Group International
Online Newspapers
Refugee Documentation Centre E-Library
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
Reliefweb
Reuters
United Kingdom Home Office
United States Department of State
UNHCR Refworld