

January 16, 2024

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister's Office
Old Sangsad Bhaban
Tejgaon, Dhaka-1215
Bangladesh

Dear Prime Minister Hasina,

We write urging you to use your recent re-election to help bring an end to the Bangladeshi government's persistent harassment of Nobel laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus – and to its pattern of abusing laws and the justice system to target critics of the government more broadly.

For more than a decade, Professor Yunus has faced more than 150 unsubstantiated cases brought against him in Bangladesh. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk and human rights organizations such as Amnesty International have noted irregularities in proceedings against him, particularly the most recent six month sentencing for allegedly violating the country's labor laws that is being appealed. These reputable organizations argue the speed and repeated use of criminal proceedings are indicative of politically motivated judicial abuses. Moreover, the repeated and sustained harassment of Yunus mirrors what many Bangladeshi civil society members also face in an increasingly restrictive environment.

Yunus' pioneering work on microfinance offered greater economic promise for many Bangladeshis and millions of impoverished people around the world. The United States Congress awarded him the Congressional Gold Medal in 2013, recognizing his pioneering contributions to the fight against global poverty. Such efforts should not be undermined over ongoing political vendettas, especially in a democratic nation of laws.

The United States values its longstanding relationship with Bangladesh based on shared democratic norms and numerous common interests. Ending the harassment of Professor Yunus, and others exercising their freedom of speech to criticize the government, will help continue this important relationship.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this matter.