

Policy Brief

National Integrity
System Assessment
Bangladesh

POLICE



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BANGLADESH

Social movement against corruption

Police

The Bangladesh Police is overseen by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) the primary responsibility of which is to ensure the law and order and internal security of the state. The Police Department comprises several specialised branches including Traffic Control, Special Branch (SB), Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), Metropolitan and 'Range' police. The Range police are stationed across districts, circles, thanas (police stations) and outposts.

The police force in Bangladesh has over the years drawn flak for often failing to protect citizens and deviating from democratic policing. Undermining the rule of law, the police have been used by successive governments and major political forces to protect the arbitrary authority of the regime in power. They have been found to operate above and beyond the law, oppress and suppress political opponents, conduct mass arrests, commit torture in remand, carry out extra-judicial killings, and overall, enjoy impunity and political patronage by corrupt officials. This state of affairs has seriously impeded the independence of the police force, weakened accountability structures and created public distrust of their ability and willingness to function in the public interest.

Strengths

- Increased investment in modern arms, equipment and vehicles.
- Initiatives to beef up number of police personnel and introduce allowances (investigation allowance, risk allowance).
- Police reform measures on-going (model thanas, victim support centres, community policing, increase in the number of women police).

Weaknesses

- Low pay, overwork and inadequate logistical support.
- Recruitment /transfer/promotion of the police is dependent on political patronage, nepotism and bribery.
- The police force is invariably hostage to the ruling party. The police incur backlash for disobedience/deviation including dismissal from service.
- The police have questionable links with bureaucracy, business and criminal syndicates.
- Police administration is characterised by corruption, inefficiency and partiality.
- Police work is outside public scrutiny. Citizens are afraid to complain against police wrongdoing/misconduct.
- Absence of sanctions against the police based on political considerations/ personal gain breeds a culture of impunity.

Recommendations

- The legal framework for the police force must be reformed to include extensive transparency, accountability, independence, professional integrity and no impunity provisions in police operations.
- The police must be kept free from political /administrative influence.
- Strict punishment must be ensured for police officials and staff who are guilty of corruption, human rights violation and other offences.
- The police must be incentivised and capacitated through increased resource allocation in terms of salaries and benefits, training, modern equipments, IT support, forensic facilities, etc.

About Policy Brief Series

One of the key strategic areas of TIB's research has always been the institutions of democracy and specialized pillars of governance and accountability, which constitute the National Integrity System (NIS), a collective of institutions and practices that are crucial to maintaining integrity and accountability in government, non-government and private sector. The NIS in Bangladesh broadly consists of the following institutions: Parliament, Executive, Judiciary, Public Administration (bureaucracy), Local Government, Police (law enforcement agency), Comptroller and Auditor General (supreme audit institution), Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, National Human Rights Commission, Information Commission, Political Parties, Civil Society, Media, and Business.

TIB has conducted a series of research, surveys and diagnostic studies on many such institutions, by which it has not only created demand, but also catalysed a number of significant legal, institutional and policy changes. Against this background, this policy brief series attempts to diagnose and analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the NIS in Bangladesh and recommend implementable measures to strengthen these institutions.

This policy brief draws on *National Integrity System Assessment Bangladesh 2014* available at: <http://ti-bangladesh.org/nicsa/2014/en/>

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