

Politics

Bangladesh Army to Install Government After PM Flees Country

- Army chief says he's met with political leaders in the country
- Hasina faced calls to step down after weeks of deadly protests



Sheikh Hasina *Photographer: Christopher Pike/Bloomberg*

By [Arun Devnath](#)

August 5, 2024 at 11:17 AM GMT+2

Updated on August 5, 2024 at 5:42 PM GMT+2

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled the country on Monday after resigning under pressure from millions of protesters, with the nation's army chief saying he'll work to form an interim government.

Army Chief Waker-Uz-Zaman said in a televised address that he'd met with political leaders in the country and will hold talks with President Mohammed Shahabuddin on the matter. The army expects to reach a solution tonight, he said.

“An interim government will be formed,” the army chief said. “Justice will be served for each death. Keep faith in the army.”

Hasina, 76, left Bangladesh shortly before the army's announcement and was on her way to London via India, according to people familiar with the matter. She'd faced pressure to resign for weeks following demonstrations that had turned deadly.

Read more: [How Bangladesh PM Was Toppled After Deadly Protests: QuickTake](#)

Local TV channels showed protesters storming her official residence on Monday afternoon, ransacking the building and taking away chicken, fish and vegetables.

At a press conference late Monday, the protest organizers announced that they will propose an interim government in 24 hours after meeting with the political parties. Nahid Islam, a protest organizer, demanded the release of everyone arrested with ties to the protest. He did not clarify whether Hasina's party would be involved in the discussions.



Anti-government protesters near Sheikh Hasina's residence in Dhaka, on Aug. 5. *Photographer: Munir Uz Zaman/AFP/Getty Images*

What started out in late June as peaceful protests seeking to abolish a government jobs quota turned into deadly unrest in recent weeks with demonstrators seeking to oust Hasina. Her resignation follows a weekend

of student-led clashes with pro-government supporters that left about 100 dead. About 200 were killed in unrest in July.

Earlier Monday, thousands of students defied a government-imposed curfew to march through Dhaka, chanting “We will not go back.” TV channels showed troops trying to control huge crowds of people who had walked through the night to the capital to take part in the protests. A few jubilant demonstrators were seen hugging soldiers as they awaited the army chief’s speech.

Hasina was the world’s longest serving female head of a government, winning a fourth term as prime minister in an election in January that was boycotted by her opponents and voters. The US, the biggest buyer of Bangladesh’s exports, had criticized the polls, and imposed visa curbs on members of Hasina’s party and law enforcement officials in September.

While her ruling Awami League party controls nearly 80% of seats in parliament, the army chief invited none of its members to talks on forming an interim government. The constitution, if it were followed, requires any prime minister to command majority support in parliament.

Hasina didn’t make any public comments Monday and officials in her Awami League party didn’t answer calls when contacted for comment.

Hasina’s father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was killed in a coup in 1975 when he was prime minister. TV footage Monday showed protesters taking hammers to a statue of the independence leader in Dhaka.



Protesters in Dhaka on Aug. 4. *Photographer: Zayed Hasnain Chowdhury/NurPhoto/Getty Images*

The political turmoil is a setback for the economy, which is reliant on financial aid from the International Monetary Fund and other donors, and earns most of its foreign exchange from exports of garments. Major clothing brands like Hennes & Mauritz AB, Adidas AG, Wal-Mart Inc. and Gap Inc. have operations in the country.

Bangladesh has taken a \$10 billion hit to the economy from the curfews and the internet blackouts, according to an industry group. The unrest has made it difficult for garment manufacturers to operate, impacting the country's foreign exchange earnings. Reserves dropped to \$21.8 billion in June.



Soldiers in Dhaka, on Aug. 5. Photographer: Munir Uz Zaman/AFP/Getty Images

While Hasina had overseen rapid growth in the economy and helped lift millions out of poverty, those achievements were often overshadowed by what critics contend is her authoritarianism, and accusations she's used state institutions to stamp out dissent and stifle the media.

Unemployment in the country has become more acute since the pandemic, especially among young people, with the private sector struggling to expand.

For more on Bangladesh, see:

[Shutdowns May Cost Bangladesh \\$10 Billion, Industry Group Says](#)

[S&P Cuts Bangladesh Ratings After Curfew, Protests Slow Economy](#)

[Bangladesh PM Blames Rivals for Deadly Unrest as Curfew Extended](#)

– *With assistance from Anup Roy and Sudhi Ranjan Sen*

(Updates with protestor's comments sixth paragraph.)

©2024 Bloomberg L.P. All Rights Reserved.
