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UK-trained security forces must stop extrajudicial executions in Bangladesh

Amnesty International is calling on the UK government to raise concerns about reports of torture, extrajudicial executions, and excessive use of force by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) with the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina.

Sheikh Hasina is in the United Kingdom this week amid a flurry of accusations about extrajudicial executions carried out by Bangladeshi security forces.

Amnesty International and other human rights organisations have documented repeated instances of human rights violations by the RAB in the past five years. More than 600 people are thought to have been killed by RAB personnel since 2004 when the battalion was created.

In most cases, victims have died in the custody of the RAB, but police authorities routinely reported that the victims were killed during "crossfire", police "shoot-outs" or "gun-battles".

Abbas Faiz, Amnesty International's Bangladesh researcher, said:

“Suggestions that these deaths in custody are just unrelated random incidents, as opposed to targeted executions, are simply not credible. The chances of this same fate befalling so many apprehended individuals defies belief and contradicts eye-witness testimony. These deaths amount to extrajudicial executions.”

“The deaths must stop now, and the responsible personnel must be brought to justice without delay,” Abbas Faiz said.

Comments and announcements from Bangladeshi government authorities over recent days have demonstrated a hostile defiance in response to national and international calls to address the claims.

The Bangladeshi Home Minister, Shara Khatun, yesterday denied that extra-judicial executions have ever taken place in Bangladesh during the time of the present government and today went on to accuse human rights organisations of "siding with the criminals"

Recently, Wikileaks sources alleged that UK police have been training the RAB in Bangladesh.

Abbas Faiz, added: “Any country that knowingly trains a force, which systematically violates human rights, might itself bear some responsibility for those violations.”