



# THE FUTURE

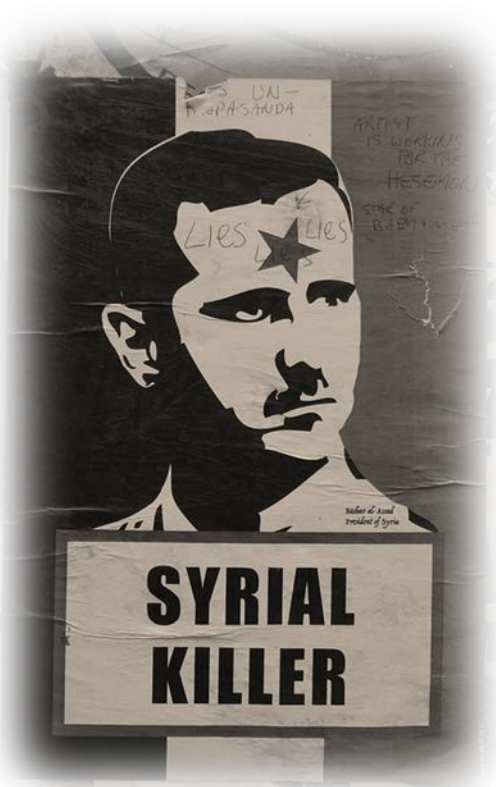
DECEMBER 2024

ISSN 2753-3670

The Future is a newsletter periodically published by The Future Institute from Marlyon Road, Ilford, United Kingdom.

This newsletter aims to chronicle the major events and developments in the societies of emerging nations with the potential to impact their future. This publication offers snippets of news analysis that might be advantageous to academics, policymakers, social and political workers, students and various organisations.

If you are interested in engaging with or participating in any TFI project or publication, please write to us at: [admin@tfiuk.org](mailto:admin@tfiuk.org)



### Topics in this issue

SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION OF MINORITIES IN INDIA AND ITS RIPPLE EFFECTS ON BANGLADESH .....3

THIRTEEN MONTHS OF THE GAZA WAR; UNEASY LEBANON CEASEFIRE ..... 6

SYRIAN REGIME COLLAPSES AS BASHAR AL-ASSAD FLEES SYRIA.....7

DONALD TRUMP WINS US ELECTIONS; GAZA ISSUE A FACTOR IN DEMOCRATS LOSS..... 9

ICC ISSUES ARREST WARRANTS FOR ISRAEL PM BENJAMIN NETANYAHU AND FORMER DEFENCE MINISTER YOAV GALLANT ..... 11

US JURY AWARDS 42 MILLION TO ABU GHRAIB VICTIMS OF TORTURE ..... 12

INDIA-SUPPORTED EXTREMIST HINDUTVA MEMBERS KILL BANGLADESHI LAWYER – THE IMPLICATIONS ..... 13

WHY DOES GERMANY KEEP ARMING AND SUPPORTING ISRAEL DESPITE A GENOCIDE? ..... 14

WHAT HAPPENED AT COP 29 AND IS IT ENOUGH TO COMBAT CLIMATE EMERGENCY? ..... 15

POLLUTION IN SOUTH ASIA REACHES RECORD LEVELS ..... 17

BILLIONAIRE ADANI CHARGED WITH FRAUD IN US AS ADANI POWER COMES UNDER INCREASING SCRUTINY FOR UNFAIR POWER AGREEMENT WITH BANGLADESH ..... 17

## Special Article

# Systemic Oppression of Minorities in India and Its Ripple Effects on Bangladesh

- *S. M. Riazul Islam\**

India has long relied on the cooperative relationship fostered by Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League in Bangladesh, prioritizing political alliances at the party level over fostering genuine connections with the broader Bangladeshi populace. However, after being ousted from power and fleeing to India, Sheikh Hasina is grappling with mounting challenges and a complex political transition. India's response to this situation, has raised significant concerns and uncertainties within the region. Indian government-backed narratives, amplified by media and certain religious extremist groups, have increasingly spread disinformation and hostility toward Bangladesh's interim government and its people. Such actions not only exacerbate domestic tensions within Bangladesh but also risk alienating the Bangladeshi public. This erosion of goodwill threatens to undermine bilateral ties and diminish India's influence in its immediate neighbourhood. Rather than resorting to disinformation and sowing hatred toward a neighbouring country for political gain, India herself should focus on addressing the systemic injustices and discrimination faced by its own minority communities.

Over the decades, India, branded as the world's largest democracy, has faced growing criticism for systemic discrimination and marginalization of its minority communities. These issues have gained international attention, particularly with the rise of Hindu nationalist ideologies under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its ideological parent, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Muslims, the largest religious minority, have borne the brunt of these policies, though other communities, such as Christians, Dalits, and tribal groups, have also faced targeted oppression. Compounding these domestic concerns, India's treatment of minorities has introduced diplomatic challenges with Bangladesh, its Muslim-majority neighbour.

This article examines key incidents and policies exemplifying the systemic oppression of minorities in India, their far-reaching societal impacts, and how these developments are influencing India's evolving relationship with Bangladesh amidst a complex and shifting political landscape.

### **A History of Systemic Oppression**

In December 1992, the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya was demolished by Hindu nationalist mobs who claimed it was built on the birthplace of Lord Ram. This act, supported by political mobilization from the RSS and BJP, sparked riots across India, leading to over 2,000 deaths, predominantly of Muslims. The event marked a turning point, embedding religious polarization into India's political and social landscape.

In 2002, a train fire in Godhra, allegedly started by Muslims, became the catalyst for some of India's deadliest communal violence. Over 1,000 people, mostly Muslims, were killed, with reports of mass sexual violence and displacement. The Gujarat government, led by then Chief Minister Narendra Modi, was accused of complicity, with allegations of tacit support for Hindu nationalist mobs. Survivors of the riots continue to struggle for justice amidst delays and systemic hurdles.

The BJP government revoked Article 370, stripping Jammu and Kashmir—India's only Muslim-majority state—of its special constitutional status. This move was accompanied by curfews, communication blackouts, and arrests of political leaders. Critics argued that the decision was aimed at diluting the region's demographic and political identity, further alienating its Muslim population.

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019 introduced religion-based criteria for granting Indian citizenship, explicitly excluding Muslims while favouring other religious minorities from neighbouring countries. Combined with the National Register of Citizens (NRC), these policies sparked fears of disenfranchisement among Indian Muslims and protests nationwide. The response included violent crackdowns, particularly in Muslim-majority areas, deepening mistrust between communities.

In 2002, the BJP-led state government in Karnataka banned the wearing of hijabs in educational institutions, citing uniform policies. Critics labelled this as a thinly veiled attempt to target Muslim girls, restricting their access to education and undermining religious freedoms. A split verdict by the Supreme Court left the issue unresolved, exacerbating community anxieties.

BJP-ruled states have increasingly used property demolitions as punitive measures against Muslim protesters and alleged rioters, often without due process. Public flogging of Muslim men, as seen in Gujarat in 2022, has further normalized extrajudicial punishments. These actions have drawn criticism for violating constitutional rights and disproportionately targeting minorities.

In 2023-24, ethnic violence in Manipur between the Meitei (majority Hindu) and Kuki (predominantly Christian) communities reflects the fragile state of minority protections. The central government's delayed intervention and allegations of bias have raised concerns about India's commitment to safeguarding all its citizens.

Underlying these events is the rise of Hindutva, an ideology promoted by the RSS and its affiliates, which seeks to redefine India as a Hindu nation. Since the BJP's ascent to power in 2014, this ideology has increasingly influenced state policies, public discourse, and societal behaviour. Human Rights Watch has documented how BJP leaders and aligned organizations frequently depict Muslims as threats to national security, promoting baseless theories like "love jihad" and justifying violence under the pretext of protecting Hindu sentiments.

The international community has expressed growing concern over India's trajectory. Reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have criticized the government's failure to uphold constitutional protections for minorities. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has repeatedly called for India to be designated a "country of particular concern" due to worsening religious freedom conditions. Yet, domestic mechanisms for accountability remain weak, with judicial delays and societal polarization undermining justice.

### **Impact on Bangladesh**

The systemic oppression of minorities in India, particularly Muslims, has had notable implications for its neighbouring country Bangladesh, both in terms of societal impacts and diplomatic relations. Given Bangladesh's status as a Muslim-majority nation with a shared history and border with India, these issues have introduced tensions, reshaping bilateral interactions in various ways.

Policies such as the CAA and the NRC sparked significant protests in Bangladesh. The exclusionary nature of these measures, particularly their focus on non-Muslim refugees, was seen as discriminatory and anti-Muslim, generating outrage among Bangladeshi citizens and political groups. India's threats to deport Rohingya refugees and its limited support for Bangladesh in managing the crisis have caused discontent. Bangladesh hosts over a million Rohingya refugees and has expressed frustration with India's lack of cooperative efforts despite being a regional power. Anti-Muslim violence in India, such as during the Gujarat riots or the Delhi riots, is often highlighted in Bangladeshi media, reinforcing concerns about the marginalization of Muslims in a neighbouring secular democracy.

The CAA created fears that millions of people labelled as "illegal immigrants" under the NRC in Assam and other northeastern states could be pushed into Bangladesh. This was seen as a direct challenge to Bangladeshi sovereignty and triggered diplomatic protests from Dhaka. India's claims that Bangladeshi immigrants were a burden on its economy added to the strain, with Bangladesh rejecting these allegations. Bangladesh government expressed concerns over the communal tone of these laws. Despite growing trade and infrastructure ties, such as India providing lines of credit for development projects in Bangladesh, social and political tensions over India's domestic policies have occasionally overshadowed economic progress. India's actions risk alienating Bangladesh at a time when China is increasing its influence in South Asia. If India's policies are perceived as hostile or discriminatory toward Muslims, they could push Bangladesh closer to China for strategic and economic partnerships.

India's treatment of Muslims has also raised security concerns for Bangladesh. Fear of displacement and migration caused by India's policies, such as the NRC, has raised alarm in Bangladesh, which is already burdened with refugee populations. Anti-Muslim narratives in India can fuel radicalization and extremism within Bangladesh, potentially

destabilizing the region and complicating counterterrorism efforts. Bangladesh's position as a Muslim-majority nation often places it in solidarity with global Islamic sentiment. India's actions, particularly when perceived as targeting Muslims, risk isolating it within the broader Muslim world, with Bangladesh voicing concerns at international platforms like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

While India and Bangladesh have a history of collaboration, particularly under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, whose government had maintained a favourable approach to India, India's relations with Bangladesh are currently strained, particularly following Sheikh Hasina's flight to India in August 2024 amidst mass protests. The development marked a new low point in the deterioration of bilateral relations, as India's response has raised concerns about its acceptance of Hasina's departure and subsequent asylum. Tensions escalated further following the arrest of Chinmoy Krishna Das, an ISKCON leader and Sanatani Jagran Jote spokesperson. This arrest provoked violent attacks by radical Hindutva extremists on the Bangladesh Mission in Agartala, including the vandalism and burning of Bangladesh's national flag. Despite India issuing a statement of regret and acting against some security lapses, these incidents—combined with additional provocations like protests against Bangladeshi diplomatic missions in Kolkata—reveal a pattern of hostility. Such actions, fuelled by Indian politicians and media, have intensified feelings of anger and resentment among the Bangladeshi population.

### **Toward Regional Harmony**

India's secular fabric, enshrined in its constitution, is under strain. The systemic oppression of minorities, whether through discriminatory legislation, mob violence, or state inaction, challenges the foundational principles of equality and pluralism. These challenges not only deepen internal divides but also have significant repercussions for India's diplomatic relationships, particularly with Bangladesh. India's reliance on strategic political alliances while neglecting genuine grassroots diplomacy has contributed to the erosion of trust among the Bangladeshi population. The marginalization of Muslims and other vulnerable communities has strained bilateral ties, stirred public outrage, and fuelled fears of instability across borders.

To preserve its democratic ideals and regional partnerships, India must address these systemic issues with a renewed commitment to secularism and pluralism. Grassroots movements and judicial interventions offer glimmers of hope, but meaningful change will require sustained pressure from both domestic stakeholders and the international community. Indian responses to critical situations, such as the attacks on diplomatic missions, suggest a need for India to return to diplomatic norms and exercise restraint. Similarly, open dialogue between India and Bangladesh can help mitigate tensions and reinforce their cooperative relationship, which is vital for regional stability and development. Failure to address these intertwined challenges risks undermining India's democratic foundations, alienating its neighbours, and compromising its standing on the global stage. Safeguarding the rights of all communities is not just a constitutional mandate but a prerequisite for harmony and progress in a diverse and interconnected South Asia.

*\* S. M. Riazul Islam is an Associate Professor (Senior Lecturer) of Computing Science at the University of Aberdeen. He writes from time to time on various social issues.*



## Thirteen months of the Gaza war; uneasy Lebanon ceasefire

After more than a year of continuing genocide and Israeli incursion into Lebanon, the world still struggles to come to terms with an active ongoing Israeli genocide, with many shying away from even acknowledging it is happening. The US support for Israel remains adamant and steadfast as ever, with Biden approving 680 million arms sales to Israel despite making statements that it was committed to pushing for ceasefire talks. On the northern front of the conflict with Hezbollah and Lebanon, the Israelis declared a sixty-day ceasefire in the face of a failed attempt at incursion into Lebanon and staunch resistance from Hezbollah. It continues to hold for now despite repeated reports of Israeli violations and has been a source of relief for Lebanese who are trying to return back to their homes in cities heavily affected by Israeli attacks. However, no such relief is in sight for Gazans, as northern regions in Gaza like Beit Lahia, Khan Younis and Jabalia refugee camps bear the full brunt of Israel's genocidal assault, with all humanitarian aid blocked and hospitals such as Kamal Adwan Hospital regularly bombed, and patients arrested or killed in cold blood. Many organisations such as the UN, Amnesty, Human Rights Watch and others have published articles saying that what is occurring in Gaza is clearly a genocide; even the Pope has asked for an investigation into whether this is the case.

While Netanyahu and his cabinet have largely tried to dismiss mounting criticism from outside Israel by slapping the label of antisemitism, they have also had to deal with instances of criticism from within Israel, such as the Haaretz newspaper, from which the government has distanced itself by announcing that it was pulling out all advertisements. US double standards regarding conducting negotiations with Hamas for a ceasefire and the release of hostages led to Qatar announcing that it was suspending its media efforts due to a lack of sincerity on the part of the US and Israel. Israel's heavy-handedness and genocidal thirst regarding Palestine is only set to get stronger with the election of Donald Trump in the US. His election also seems to have emboldened Netanyahu further; the Israeli PM has further entrenched his position by firing Yoav Gallant as the Defence Minister, although both share the infamous notoriety of being part of the same arrest warrant issued by the ICC for crimes of genocide against the Palestinians.

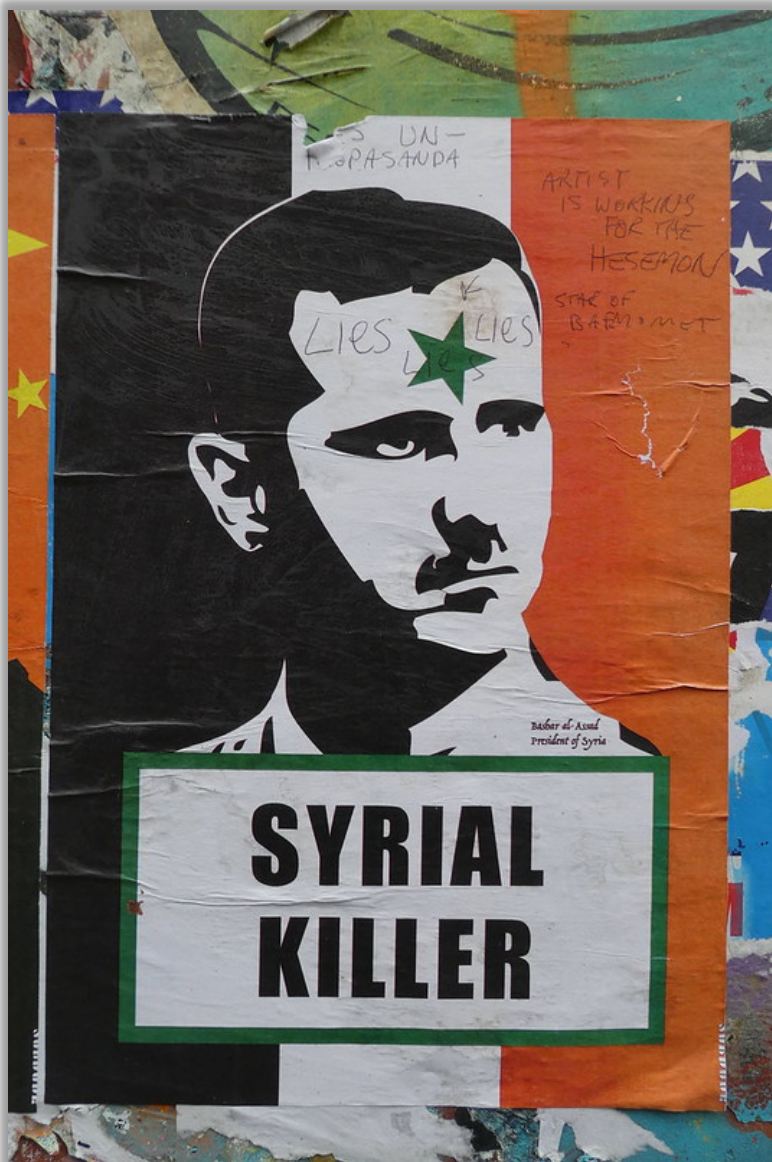
The number of Palestinian casualties in Gaza as of December 6 is at least 44,612 dead, including more than 17,492 children, while the number of Palestinians wounded has reached more than 105,834. Last July, according to a study published in the Lancet, it was reported that the accumulative effects of Israel's war on Gaza could mean the true death toll could reach more than 186,000 people in Gaza alone; and current estimates are much higher with the expansion of the war into other areas of the region. The number of missing people is more than 11,000, most of whom are reported missing due to being trapped in building rubble and might have been killed as well. In the Occupied West Bank, there have been at least 806 deaths, of whom more than 169 are children, while more than 6,250 are injured. According to the latest data from the UN, WHO and the Palestinian government as of December 1, more than half of Gaza homes have been destroyed or damaged, 80% of commercial facilities, 87% of school buildings, 17 out of 36 hospitals are partially functioning, 68% of road networks and 68 per cent of cropland have been damaged. Every hour in Gaza, 15 people are killed, of whom 6 are children, while 35 people are injured and 12 buildings are destroyed. As of November 20, more than 150 journalists, predominantly Palestinians, had been killed since October 7. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), 120 Palestinian, three Lebanese, and four Israeli journalists were killed.

#### References:

- Ebrahim, N. (2024, November 18). Pope Francis calls for investigation into Gaza genocide allegations. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/11/18/middleeast/pope-israel-gaza-genocide-allegations-intl/index.html>
- Full text of the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Lebanon. (2024, November 27). Middle East Eye. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/full-text-ceasefire-agreement-lebanon-and-israel>
- Israel committing 'ethnic cleansing' in Gaza, says human rights watch. (2024, November 14). Middle East Eye. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-committing-ethnic-cleansing-gaza-says-human-rights-watch>
- Israel sanctions Haaretz due to articles that 'hurt' Israeli state. (2024, November 24). Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/11/24/israel-sanctions-haaretz-due-to-articles-that-hurt-israeli-state>
- Jaber, S. (2024, November 14). It is time for Israel to be removed from the United Nations. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/11/14/it-is-time-for-israel-to-be-removed-from-the-united-nations>
- Qatar suspends its mediation efforts on Gaza and the Hamas office there may have to leave. (2024, November 10). AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-war-lebanon-hezbollah-11-09-2024-e97ca8ab4ac8151281bab6895bb04404>
- Staff, A. J. (2024, November 27). Biden OKs \$680m Israel arms sale despite new Gaza ceasefire push: Reports. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/11/27/biden-oks-680m-israel-arms-sale-despite-new-gaza-ceasefire-push-reports>
- UN committee says Israel's actions 'consistent with characteristics of genocide'. (2024, November 14). Middle East Eye. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/un-report-says-israels-actions-consistent-characteristics-genocide>
- Image attribute: © Pax Christi USA from Flickr under Creative Commons License.

## Syrian regime collapses as Bashar al-Assad flees Syria

Syrian rebels launched their winter offensive in northern Syria the same day a fragile ceasefire went into effect between Hezbollah and Israel. Stripped of support from its allies Iran and Russia, both of them mired in their own quagmires, the Assad government folded like a pack of cards. Within a week, Syrian rebels captured large swathes of land around Aleppo and Hama, and were reportedly getting closer to the strategic city of Homs, as Syrian government officials kept saying they were regrouping outside the lost cities. On 8 December 2024, following the lightning advance across, opposition fighters finally entered Damascus, and the 24-year rule of President Bashar al-Assad collapsed. Thousands of prisoners were set free from the numerous prisons and detention centres, including the notorious Sednaya Prison where thousands of opposition activists were imprisoned and killed over the years. Joyous celebrations erupted in Damascus and other parts of the country, including along the border with neighbouring Lebanon and Turkiye, with many displaced Syrians deciding to return home. The stunning opposition victory came after 13 years of brutal war, putting an end to more than half a century of the al-Assad family rule.



The spectacular collapse of the regime was hailed as a seismic event in the region, and raised many questions about the Syrian army's fighting capabilities, and why it had failed to fight off rebel advances, despite seeming to have largely won the civil war over the past four years and bring about a show of stability with the staunch support of Iran, Hezbollah and Russia. It is clear that the earlier coalition arrangement had largely faded away, with Russian involvement in Ukraine, and Iranian and Hezbollah weakening in one year of war with Israel. But there is also the added factor of the 'maturing' of the rebel factions – particularly that of the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), one of the largest factions. who have become better at effectively governing parts of Syria, as well as building a coalition that has absorbed rival factions as well as defectors from the regime's army. HTS was also able to easily procure a large stockpile of weapon supplies most recently from Turkiye, and earlier from the Arab states.

Although there was initially talk of a political solution accommodating both the regime and the rebels, this became meaningless in light of Assad fleeing the capital for asylum in Russia. This sudden collapse of the Syrian army, according to experts, is a reflection of a more general collapse in state institutions in Syria - its years-long economic crisis, increased repression and continued instability may have contributed to a general lack of morale and organisation in government-held areas. Addressing the ongoing situation in Syria just a couple of days before the fall of Damascus, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had wished the march of opposition forces towards Damascus would continue "without accidents," saying that the target was Damascus. Just months earlier, Turkiye had tried normalizing relations with Assad, but the lack of a positive response prevented any further communication.



In the meantime, the rapid retreat of Asad's forces from eastern parts of Syria has also allowed the Kurdish militia and US ally SDF to take over new areas, something that could trigger tensions with Ankara, since the SDF is synonymous with YPG/PKK, which is listed as a terror organization by Türkiye and its allies, and its territorial expansions could cement the actualization of an autonomous Kurdish state in the region. As of now, the region is highly volatile and the situation is changing rapidly.

#### References:

- Turkey's Erdogan backs rebel offensive in Syria. (2024, December 6). Middle East Eye. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-erdogan-backs-rebel-offensive-syria>
- Türkiye wishes Syrian opposition's march to continue 'without accidents': President Erdogan. (2024, December 6). Anadolu Ajansı. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkiye-wishes-syrian-oppositions-march-to-continue-without-accidents-president-erdogan/3416234#>
- Why the Syrian army collapsed so quickly in northern Syria. (2024, December 6). Middle East Eye. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/why-syrian-army-collapsed-so-quickly-northern-syria>
- Opposition fighters declare Syria's Damascus 'liberated', al-Assad ousted. (2024, December 8). Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/8/opposition-fighters-take-syrian-capital-damascus>
- Staff, A. J. (2024, December 8). What happened in Syria? How did al-Assad fall? Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/8/what-happened-in-syria-has-al-assad-really-fallen>
- Suleiman, A. H. (2024, December 8). Joyous celebrations across Syria after al-Assad's fall. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2024/12/8/joyous-celebrations-across-syria-after-al-assads-fall>
- World reacts to Bashar al-Assad's fall, capture of Damascus. (2024, December 8). Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/8/world-reacts-to-bashar-al-assads-fall-capture-of-damascus>
- Image attribute: @ duncan cumming from Flickr under Creative Commons License.

---

## Donald Trump wins US elections; Gaza issue a factor in Democrats loss

The 2024 U.S. elections, held on November 5, concluded with a significant victory for Republican candidate and former President Donald Trump, who defeated incumbent Vice President Kamala Harris by attaining 312 electoral college votes compared to the latter's 226 electoral votes. Republicans also gained control of the Senate, as well as the House of Representatives, which underscores a national shift in voter sentiment, driven by concerns over the economy, immigration, and energy policies. In fact, all 50 states shifted red in 2024; Republicans won a larger share of votes in every state in 2024 compared to 2020, and they managed to win all the seven battleground/swing states – Pennsylvania, Georgia, North Carolina, Michigan, Arizona, Wisconsin and Nevada.

While this is being seen as a big win for right-wing conservatism in US politics, the reality is that there are a host of factors that have contributed to the loss of the Democrats. While many have shied away from discussing it in the open, the ongoing genocide in Gaza and US complicity was in fact a significant factor in the Democrats' loss. Biden has faced significant opposition from the grassroots "Uncommitted movement," which drew widespread support from Arab Americans in places such as Michigan and Pennsylvania, making a foreign policy issue a national one. It is important to note that while Democrats were on the back foot in many places, those candidates supporting the issue of Palestine, such as Rashida Tlaib or Ilhan Omar, were comfortably re-elected.

Although Trump largely espouses an America-first foreign policy, it is really difficult to make the claim that it would be less interventionist. With the world facing innumerable challenges – from the climate crisis to the wars in Ukraine, Gaza and Lebanon – the direction Trump takes on foreign policy will have wide-reaching effects. The Trump administration will be expected to be even more hawkish on support for Israel, as well as be harsher towards Iran and China. His expected efforts in Ukraine could see less assistance for Ukraine, and more leeway to Russia. Trump has also previously derided international bodies such as the UN and NATO, as well as withdrew from climate agreements such as the Paris Agreement, and there is an indication that such policies could continue in his second term, in effect speeding up the deterioration of the current world order.

In the case of the Israel-Gaza war, while Trump has appealed to voters that he will end the war and bring calm to the region if re-elected, his critics believe that it will be more of the same, if not worse. His first term was marked by a series of bold pro-Israel moves, including relocating the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and recognising Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, as well as initiation of the Abraham accords towards normalisation, which incidentally was cited as one of the reasons behind the Oct 7 Hamas attack on Israel. This turn, he has made several social media statements asking Israel to wrap up the war before he takes office on January 20, which has had the strange effect of making Israel even more ruthless in its genocide and destruction. Trump has also nominated several national security picks who are staunch supporters of Israel, and some of whom even deny Palestinians the right to exist. This, as noted by analysts, is simply a continuation of past US foreign policy regarding Israel since its foundation.

#### References:

2024 United States elections. (2023, September 20). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved December 5, 2024, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024\\_United\\_States\\_elections](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_United_States_elections)

Haddad, M. (2024, November 10). US election results map 2024: How does it compare to 2020? Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/11/10/us-election-results-map-2024-how-does-it-compare-to-2020>

Kestler-D'Amours, J. (2024, November 6). What does Trump 2.0 mean for US foreign policy? Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/11/6/what-does-trump-2-0-mean-for-us-foreign-policy>

Khouri, R. G. (2024, December 3). This year, Arab-American political power came to the fore. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/12/3/this-year-arab-american-political-power-came-to-the>

Mitrovica, A. (2024, November 19). On genocide, Trump will be no different from Biden. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/11/19/on-genocide-trump-will-be-no-different-from-biden>

Trump says 'hell to pay' if captives in Gaza not released. (2024, December 2). Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/2/trump-says-hell-to-pay-if-captives-in-gaza-not-released>

Image attribute: @ President Of Ukraine from Flickr under Creative Commons License.



## ICC issues arrest warrants for Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu and former defence minister Yoav Gallant

In a significant development, the International Criminal Court (ICC) finally issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former defence minister Yoav Gallant on 21 November, six months after chief prosecutor Karim Khan requested them. This is significant as being the first instance in the court's 22-year history where it has issued arrest warrants for western-allied senior officials. As part of the same process, the Hague-based court also issued a warrant for Mohammed Diab Ibrahim al-Masri, the Hamas military chief better known as Mohammed Deif, despite Israeli claims that he was already killed in Gaza. All 124 states that ratified the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the court, are now under an obligation to arrest the wanted individuals and hand them over to the ICC in the Hague, since a trial cannot commence in absentia. However, since the court does not have enforcement powers, it is reliant on the cooperation of member states to arrest and surrender suspects. Joseph Borrell, the EU's foreign policy chief, said the ICC's decision is binding on all EU member states.

While the current ICC warrants are connected to the war crimes investigations on the situation in Palestine launched in 2021, the Israeli leaders in question are also currently under investigation for genocide charges by the ICJ. In its reports, the ICJ has said that there are reasonable grounds to believe that Netanyahu and Gallant "intentionally and knowingly deprived the civilian population in Gaza of objects indispensable to their survival, including food, water, and medicine and medical supplies, as well as fuel and electricity, from at least 8 October 2023 to 20 May 2024", adding that Israel's severe restrictions on delivery of humanitarian aid, in addition to cutting off electricity and reducing fuel supply, had a "severe impact" on the supply of water in Gaza and the capacity of hospitals to provide urgent care. In her response to the issue of the arrest warrants, United Nations special rapporteur Francesca Albanese has doubled down on her criticism of Israel and world leaders for failing to stop the "colonial erasure" of Palestinians in Gaza and called for more arrest warrants to be issued for Israeli leaders over suspected war crimes. She also accused the British foreign secretary David Lammy of being a "genocide denier," called on Europe to halt trade with Israel, and denounced the delay by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in issuing arrest warrants for Israeli leaders over Gaza atrocities.

Neither Israel nor the US are members of the ICC. Israeli officials and opposition politicians were unanimous in their condemnation of the issuing of the arrest warrants, President Herzog called the decision "outrageous", saying "the ICC has turned universal justice into a universal laughingstock". The White House issued a short statement saying it "fundamentally rejects" the decision but ignored addressing the substance of the warrants. Republican senator Lindsey Graham slammed the decision, saying the ICJ had "acted in the most absurd and irresponsible manner possible" and threatened to sanction the ICC.

### References:

Francesca Albanese: ICC should seek more arrest warrants for Israeli leaders. (n.d.). Middle East Eye. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/big-story/un-francesca-albanese-icc-more-arrest-warrants-israel-leaders>

Full list of 124 countries that must arrest Netanyahu for the ICC. (2024, November 21). Middle East Eye. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/full-list-124-countries-must-arrest-netanyahu-icc>

'Historic': ICC issues arrest warrants for Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant. (2024, November 21). Middle East Eye. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/icc-issues-arrest-warrants-israels-benjamin-netanyahu-and-yoav-gallant>

Netanyahu's ICC arrest warrant: What to expect next. (2024, November 21). Middle East Eye. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/icc-israel-netanyahu-gallant-arrest-warrant-what-expect-next>

White House seemingly rejects ICC warrants on process, not substance. (2024, November 21). Middle East Eye. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/biden-administration-fundamentally-rejects-icc-warrant-netanyahu>



## US Jury awards 42 million to Abu Ghraib victims of torture

A federal jury in Virginia awarded \$42 million to three Iraqi men who were subjected to torture while detained at Abu Ghraib prison during the early 2000s. The case centred on CACI Premier Technology, a defence contractor accused of conspiring to torture the men through brutal methods such as beatings, sexual humiliation, and threats of execution. The jury's decision marks a landmark moment in accountability for abuses committed during the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. The jury awarded plaintiffs Suhail Al Shimari, Salah Al-Ejaili and Asa'ad Al-Zubae \$3 million each in compensatory damages and \$11 million each in punitive damages. The three testified that they were subjected to beatings, sexual abuse, forced nudity and other cruel treatment at the prison. The trial and subsequent retrial were the first time a U.S. jury heard claims brought by Abu Ghraib survivors in the 20 years since photos of detainee mistreatment – accompanied by smiling U.S. soldiers inflicting the abuse – shocked the world during the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

Although none of the three plaintiffs were in any of the notorious photos shown in news reports around the world, they described treatment very similar to what was depicted. Evidence included reports from two retired Army generals, who documented the abuse and concluded that multiple CACI interrogators were complicit in the abuse. Those reports concluded that one of the interrogators, Steven Stefanowicz, lied to investigators about his conduct and that he likely instructed soldiers to mistreat detainees and used dogs to intimidate detainees during interrogations. This ruling followed nearly 15 years of legal challenges and represents the first successful lawsuit against a private military contractor for post-9/11 abuses. According to experts, the verdict sends a strong message about the liability of contractors engaged in misconduct overseas. While the verdict is seen as a step toward justice, it also highlights ongoing concerns about the lack of accountability for systemic torture practices during the 2003 Iraq War, where members of the US Army and the CIA were documented to have committed a series of human rights violations and war crimes against detainees in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

### References:

Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse. (2024, April 30). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved December 1, 2024, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu\\_Ghraib\\_torture\\_and\\_prisoner\\_abuse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu_Ghraib_torture_and_prisoner_abuse)

Jury awards Abu Ghraib detainees \$42 million, holds contractor responsible. (2024, November 12). AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/abu-ghraib-civil-trial-iraq-virginia-3a2841ec2892fb11b4e26a70e761208>

Image attribute: © The National Guard from Flickr under Creative Commons License.



## India-supported extremist Hindutva members kill Bangladeshi lawyer – the implications

On 26 November, Saiful Islam Alif, a lawyer at the Chattogram Court, was brutally murdered at the court premises. His killing came during the process of arrest and bail rejection of Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das, whereby followers of Das and members of the Hindu communalist organisation ISKON went on a rampage and hacked him to death with sharp weapons. Chinmoy Das, a former member of ISKCON, had been recently expelled from ISKON following accusations of child abuse and other disciplinary issues. However, Das had notoriously been active in issuing communal threats and inflammatory statements in various rallies following the August revolution. In lieu of this, a case of sedition was filed against Chinmoy and others, following which he was arrested by police from the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka on November 25. The clashes at Chattogram court erupted the next day as Chinmoy's followers and extremist ISKON supporters attempted to block his prison van following the rejection of his bail, leading to vandalism and a violent confrontation with law enforcement and lawyers. Saiful was attacked by an armed group and succumbed to multiple heinous injuries to his head and torso. In response, three cases were filed against 76 named individuals and 1,400 unidentified persons. Police have arrested 28 individuals so far, with preparations underway to file a murder case. Key suspects were identified using video footage, including a law student now expelled from BGC Trust University.

The incident saw expressions of concern over the targeting of minorities in Bangladesh by the foreign ministry of India, followed by a counter statement by the Bangladesh foreign ministry that emphasised the independence of the judiciary in Bangladesh. However, the downward spiral of diplomatic relations and a gross misrepresentation of events in Bangladesh in the Indian media reached catastrophic levels to the extent that on 2 December 2024, an attack took place at the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala, the capital of the Indian state of Tripura. The attackers were identified as members of Hindu Sangharsh Samity, a radical Hindu extremist group affiliated to the Vishva Hindu Parishad. Many commentators have pointed out that Indian concern about communal strife in Bangladesh fails to extend to incidents within India, such as wanton mosque demolitions in the name of 'discovery' of long-lost mythical Hindu temples beneath their foundations. The most recent among them are the

clashes in Uttar Pradesh, where a court-appointed official survey, probing whether the 16th-century Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal was built on a Hindu temple, resulted in clashes after hundreds of Muslims protested outside the mosque, leading to deaths of at least 4 people. Uttar Pradesh, a stronghold of the BJP, has been a site of several such demolitions and building temples, chief among them the Babri Masjid, on which Modi inaugurated a grand Ram Mandir at the beginning of this year.

#### References:

2024 attack on the Bangladesh assistant high commission in India. (2024, December 5). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved December 7, 2024, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024\\_attack\\_on\\_the\\_Bangladesh\\_Assistant\\_High\\_Commission\\_in\\_India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_attack_on_the_Bangladesh_Assistant_High_Commission_in_India)

Chinmoy Krishna das. (2024, December 6). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved December 7, 2024, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinmoy\\_Krishna\\_Das](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinmoy_Krishna_Das)

Murder of Saiful Islam Alif. (2024, December 6). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved December 7, 2024, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder\\_of\\_Saiful\\_Islam\\_Alif](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_of_Saiful_Islam_Alif)

Press, A. (2024, November 26). Mosque survey sparks deadly clashes in northern India. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/11/25/india/india-mosque-survey-clashes-intl-hnk/index.html>

Story of the 500-year-old Sambhal mosque: Competing histories, mythology, and legal fights. (2024, December 3). The Indian Express. <https://indianexpress.com/article/long-reads/story-500-year-old-sambhal-mosque-histories-mythology-legal-fights-9697297/>

Image attribute: @ Bharath Joshi from Flickr under Creative Commons License.

---

## Why does Germany keep arming and supporting Israel despite a genocide?

Germany is one of the last remaining vocal supporters of Israel alongside the US, given the Zionist entity's clear violations of international law through its active ongoing genocide in Gaza, which is being investigated by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Germany's support has not just been vocal, but also technical, as it continues to be among the top arms exporters to Israel as well. The reason behind this support, according to Tony Greenstein of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, harks back to the period after the Holocaust, when de-Nazification was quietly abandoned in favour of unconditional support for the newly founded state of Israel, as an atonement for the crimes committed during the Holocaust. This became part of the formula that Israel's security, for Germany, was a "reason for state," a position recently strengthened under Merkel and part of policy under Olaf Scholz.

Thus, Greenstein argues that the German state's embrace of Israel's current onslaught in Gaza isn't caused by guilt over the Holocaust so much as the need to normalise and relativise it. Supporting Israel's holocaust, as an act of necessary "self-defence" allows Germany to hold on to the fiction it created about its own holocausts - German authorities perfectly understand that Israel is committing genocide and that Israel has started this war with the intention of ethnically cleansing and exterminating the Palestinian people. Not only that, they have seen the footage from Gaza, and are aware of the indiscriminate bombing and the starvation; they have heard the evidence South Africa presented at the ICJ.

For the German establishment, therefore, the challenge is twofold, to continue unconditional support for Israel militarily and politically, while also staving off the unanimous local public resentment and international criticism of that role. One of the ways has been the recent report in the German press that the government made Israel sign a clause as a precondition for further arms deliveries, that German weapons would only be used in accordance with international law - according to some reports, even that "arms exports from Germany would not be used for genocide." This, however, signals that the German administration is aware of the genocide and that German weapons might have a role in perpetrating it. Yet, lawmakers of the German Bundestag recently passed the resolution "Never again is now: Protecting, preserving and strengthening Jewish life in Germany" this November, against opposition from academics and civil society, with only ten votes out of 733 against it – making the infamous IHRA definition conflating anti-Zionism with antisemitism the basis of further German pro-Zionist policies. This awareness of genocide, along with willful support for it, is clear from German support for Israel at the ICJ, as well as the indecisiveness and ambiguous attitude towards whether the German government would comply with the ICC arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant and arrest them if they set foot in Germany.

**References:**

Greenstein, T. (2024, November 8). Why is Germany supporting Israel's genocide in Gaza? Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/11/8/why-is-germany-supporting-israels-genocide-in-gaza>

How Germany bends international law to continue selling arms to Israel. (2024, November 19). Middle East Eye. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/germany-israel-bends-international-law-continue-selling-arms>

"Reason of state": The true story behind Merkel's promise to Israel. (2024, January 24). DER SPIEGEL | Online-Nachrichten. <https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/reason-of-state-the-true-story-behind-merkels-promise-to-israel-a-00563b9e-0c66-4717-9331-e0bbb4cc8f88>

This is not Holocaust guilt - it's entrenched German racist superiority. (2024, November 12). Middle East Eye. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/germany-not-holocaust-guilt-entrenched-racist-superiority>

Image attribute: @ Matthias Berg from Flickr under Creative Commons License.



## What happened at COP 29 and is it enough to combat climate emergency?

COP29, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, from November 11–22, 2024, was a highly contentious climate summit, marked by debates over fossil fuel reliance, climate finance, and global commitments to emission reduction. The conference focused heavily on climate finance, culminating in an agreement to establish a \$300 billion fund for developing nations to tackle climate challenges. The \$300 billion will go to developing countries that need the cash to wean themselves off the coal, oil and gas that causes the globe to overheat, adapt to future warming and pay for the damage caused by climate change's extreme weather. However, it is not near the full amount of \$1.3 trillion that developing countries were asking for, and many climate-vulnerable countries criticised the funding as insufficient, with African delegations and others expressing frustration at the slow progress on key issues. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres also indicated his disappointment in the final outcome in a media post, saying

that he "had hoped for a more ambitious outcome, on both finance and mitigation, to meet the great challenge we face."

One of the highlights of the 2024 conference was the heated discussions and the walkout staged by a section of negotiators from global south countries, specifically the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG). The walkout was motivated by a feeling that the money developed countries had agreed to contribute toward climate finance was insufficient. They accused rich countries of doing little to solve a crisis they had caused, leaving poor countries to bear the brunt. The Nigerian delegation slammed the deal as "an insult and a joke," while Chandni Raina from India described it as a stage-managed process. The conference ended amidst the uncertainties borne out of the Trump win of the US presidency – the president-elect had formally withdrawn earlier from the Paris Agreement, which was signed in 2016 and seeks to limit global warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The drama over COP29 financing for developing countries comes in a year that scientists say is destined to be the hottest on record. Climate woes are stacking up in the wake of such extreme heat, adding volume to the calls for more funding to cope. Widespread flooding has killed thousands across Africa this year, while deadly landslides have buried villages in Asia. Drought in South America has shrunk rivers - vital transport corridors - and livelihoods. Developed countries have not been spared. Torrential rain last month in Valencia, Spain, triggered floods in which more than 200 people died and the United States has so far registered 24 billion-dollar disasters, which is just four short of last year, with several months still remaining.

#### References:

Compromise deal reached at COP29 climate talks for \$300 billion a year to poor nations. (2024, November 23). CBS News. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cop-29-climate-talks-agree-on-300-billion-dollars-a-year-for-poor-countries/>

COP29 climate summit overruns as \$250 billion draft deal stalls. (2024, November 22). Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/cop29-host-urges-collaboration-deal-negotiations-enter-final-stage-2024-11-22/>

Roberto, M. (2024, November 28). "Insult and a joke": Why poor countries walked out of COP29 talks in Baku. Tuko.co.ke - Kenya news. <https://www.tuko.co.ke/business-economy/570584-explainer-leaders-poor-countries-walked-cop29-talks/>

Image attribute: @ International Transport Forum from Flickr under Creative Commons License.





## Pollution in South Asia reaches record levels

Both Lahore and Delhi experienced extremely hazardous levels of air pollution in November, significantly exceeding the World Health Organization's (WHO) "dangerous" benchmark. In Lahore, the air quality index reached over 700, while in Delhi, it surpassed 1,000. The smog has made it difficult to go outdoors, causing burning eyes, coughing, and difficulty breathing. One of the main contributors to the smog is the burning of crop stubble by farmers, a practice that continues despite being illegal in both India and Pakistan. While the Pakistani government claims to have offered alternatives to stubble burning, farmers' associations deny this, stating that burning is the cheapest option and they need assistance to find affordable alternatives.

Other factors contributing to the smog include industrial emissions, construction activities, and vehicle fumes, all of which become trapped by the cold winter air. The health impacts of this annual pollution emergency are severe, with Delhi residents estimated to lose up to 8.5 years of their lives due to pollution. The smog crisis has prompted various responses from authorities. In Lahore, primary schools have been closed for a week, and 50% of office workers are working from home as part of a "green lockdown" plan. Engine-powered rickshaws and vendors barbecuing without filters are also banned. In addition, vehicles are spraying water into the air to control smog levels, and construction work has been halted in some areas.

Maryam Nawaz, the chief minister of Punjab in Pakistan, has proposed a "smog diplomacy" initiative with India to address the pollution. She argues that smog transcends borders and requires collaborative action. However, India has not yet responded to the proposal. Many residents are expressing concern and frustration about the worsening pollution. Some describe the situation as an "ecological catastrophe" and point out that clean air has become a luxury accessible only to those who can afford air purifiers. Healthcare professionals are reporting a sharp increase in patients, particularly children and the elderly, experiencing breathing difficulties due to the pollution.

### References:

Schools close in Lahore as pollution hits record level. (2024, November 3). BBC Breaking News, World News, US News, Sports, Business, Innovation, Climate, Culture, Travel, Video & Audio. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5ymg64ynm7o>

'More toxic than ever': Lahore and Delhi choked by smog as 'pollution season' begins. (2024, November 1). the Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/nov/01/lahore-delhi-choked-smog-pollution-season-india-pakistan>

---

## Billionaire Adani charged with fraud in US as Adani Power comes under increasing scrutiny for unfair power agreement with Bangladesh

Gautam Adani, the billionaire chairman of India's Adani Group and one of the world's wealthiest individuals, has been indicted by U.S. prosecutors for his alleged role in a multibillion-dollar bribery and fraud scheme. Adani, along with seven other defendants, is accused of paying \$265 million in bribes to Indian government officials to secure contracts expected to yield \$2 billion in profits over two decades. The alleged scheme involved the development of India's largest solar power project. Prosecutors claimed that Adani and his nephew, Sagar Adani, conspired with others, including former Adani Green Energy CEO Vneet Jaain, to conceal their actions while raising over \$3 billion through loans and bonds. The 62-year-old Adani is worth US\$69.8 billion according to Forbes magazine, making him the world's 22nd-richest person. He has built an empire encompassing sectors such as energy, infrastructure, and mining since founding the Adani Group in 1988. Adani is close to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has been accused by political opponents of protecting Adani and his companies, including from Hindenburg's accusations. Modi has dismissed the opposition's claims as "lies and abuses."

Adani Group has also faced scrutiny for its controversial dealings with the former Hasina government in the form of a 25-year power deal that was heavily disadvantageous for Bangladesh. After the new interim Yunus government came to power, based on an appeal by a lawyer demanding the power deal's potential cancellation, the High Court ordered a committee of experts to examine the contract under which Adani supplies power from a \$2 billion coal-fired plant in eastern India. According to the state-run Bangladesh Power Development Board, at 14.02 taka a unit, Adani had charged the highest rate for Indian-generated power to Bangladesh in the 2022/23 fiscal year, compared

with an average price of 8.77 taka (\$0.0737); the retail price in Bangladesh is 8.95 taka per unit, which results in an annual power subsidy bill of 320 billion taka for the exchequer. This came as Adani Power stated that they were trying to recover more than 800 million USD in dues from Bangladesh, alongside mounting dues for continuing supply.

**References:**

Billionaire Gautam Adani of India's Adani group charged in US with bribery, fraud. (2024, November 21). AsiaOne. <https://www.asiaone.com/world/billionaire-gautam-adani-indias-adani-group-charged-us-bribery-fraud>

Exclusive: Bangladesh wants to renegotiate Adani power deal unless court cancels. (2024, December 1). reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/bangladesh-wants-renegotiate-adani-power-deal-unless-court-cancels-2024-12-01/>

Image attribute: @ Stop Adani from Flickr under Creative Commons License.



**Contributing Editors**

Mohammad Hossain  
Dr Nazmus Sakib  
Dr Faroque Amin



**THE FUTURE INSTITUTE**

[www.tfiuk.org](http://www.tfiuk.org)