

Interim Government Outlines UN Human Rights Mission in Dhaka

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On Saturday, 19 July 2025, the interim government of Bangladesh stated the role of the newly expanded Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) presence in Dhaka. The expanded mission, formalised through a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), is designed to bolster Bangladesh's efforts in promoting and protecting human rights while respecting its cultural and legal framework.

Abul Kalam Azad Majumder, Deputy Press Secretary to the Chief Adviser, outlined the mission's objectives in a detailed press release. The OHCHR will focus on providing training and technical assistance to government institutions and civil society organisations. This includes strengthening institutional capacity, offering legal support, and enhancing agencies to ensure Bangladesh meets its national and international human rights commitments. The initiative comes as part of the interim government's broader push for accountability, particularly in addressing alleged grave human rights violations that occurred during July and August 2024.

The statement was unequivocal in addressing concerns raised by some quarters about the ideological leanings of UN agencies. Bangladesh, a nation deeply rooted in its cultural and religious values, expects international partnerships to operate within the boundaries of its social and legal norms. The OHCHR mission, therefore, will primarily focus on addressing serious human rights violations and supporting accountability efforts, with an emphasis on collaboration with the interim government. It will not pursue any social agendas that conflict with the country's established framework.

Transparency and collaboration are at the heart of the mission. The United Nations has committed to working closely with local partners while fully respecting Bangladesh's cultural and religious context. The government has also made it clear that national sovereignty remains paramount, retaining the right to withdraw from the MoU if the partnership deviates from national interests.

Reflecting on past governance, the statement noted that the presence of such a mission during earlier regimes could have ensured proper investigation and prosecution of extrajudicial killings and other atrocities. "Today, our commitment to human rights must be rooted not in idealism, but in justice," Majumder emphasised, highlighting the government's focus on practical outcomes over abstract ideals.

This partnership is seen as a vital step toward strengthening institutions and safeguarding citizens' rights, guided by Bangladesh's national values and domestic laws. By working with the OHCHR, the interim government aims to deliver tangible reforms that prioritise justice and accountability, ensuring the nation moves forward on its terms.