

FINAL REPORT

ELECTORAL VIOLENCE MONITORING REPORT: BANGLADESH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUM 2026

PREPARED BY ODHIKAR | JUNE 2026



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AL – Bangladesh Awami League

BEC – Bangladesh Election Commission

BNP – Bangladesh Nationalist Party

CSO – Civil Society Organisation

Jamaat – Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami

NCP – National Citizens Party

RPO – Representation of the People Order

EIAC – Electoral Inquiry and Adjudication Committees

OHCHR – Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

IG – Interim Government

EPD – European Partnership for Democracy

EU – European Union

Executive Summary

Background

The parliamentary elections and referendum on 12 February 2026 took place during a pivotal period in Bangladesh's democratic transition. As the first national elections following the political change of 2024, the elections presented an important opportunity to restore public confidence in democratic institutions and to demonstrate a commitment to peaceful, inclusive and credible electoral processes.

Against the backdrop of Bangladesh's history of election-related violence, and heightened political tensions during the transition period, systematic monitoring of election-related violence was of particular importance. Violence and intimidation can discourage participation, undermine confidence in the electoral process, and restrict the ability of candidates, voters, observers, journalists, and election officials to exercise their roles freely. By documenting incidents, identifying patterns and assessing institutional responses, electoral violence monitoring provides evidence not only for understanding the security environment surrounding the elections, but also for informing practical recommendations aimed at preventing violence and strengthening future electoral processes.

Odhikar, founded in 1994, is an independent Bangladesh-based human rights organisation working on documentation, monitoring and advocacy of civil and political rights issues. Between 1 January and 30 April 2026, it deployed 50 long-term electoral violence monitors across 50 constituencies in 22 districts. On election day, the effort was reinforced by 50 short-term observers who monitored voting in 480 polling stations. These monitors documented incidents using standardised incident reporting forms, complemented by weekly monitoring reports that captured short-term developments and emerging hotspots, and by mobile observation teams that recorded real-time accounts of election-day incidents.

Odhikar's monitoring of electoral violence before, during and after the 12 February 2026 elections, was supported with technical assistance from the EPD through the "Supporting the Restoration of Democracy: Monitoring and Reporting Electoral Violence in Bangladesh" project, with financial support from the EU.

Main findings

Odhikar's monitoring found that the 2026 parliamentary elections and referendum were conducted in **an electoral environment that was generally peaceful but marked by localized incidents of violence and intimidation** throughout the electoral cycle. Pre-election monitoring revealed a concentration of violence in high-risk districts such as Chattogram and Cox's Bazar, characterized by physical clashes, intimidation, and hate speech, highlighting the heightened vulnerability of the campaign period. Election day procedures inside polling stations were generally orderly and transparent. However, incidents occurring outside polling centres contributed to insecurity and fear of violence in several areas monitored.

Post-election monitoring showed fewer but more severe incidents, including fatalities and identity-based attacks, concentrated in specific constituencies, and driven largely by disputes over results. Institutional responses to incidents were uneven across all phases of the electoral process. Individuals reportedly affiliated with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamaat) were identified in a significant proportion of documented incidents, while several post-election confrontations appeared linked to local political and factional disputes.

Across the process, Odhikar identified the following trends and patterns:

- A significant proportion of documented incidents occurred in **rural constituencies**, although incidents were also reported in urban centres. Incidents were most frequent in Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Bhola, Mymensingh, and Dhaka.
- **Threats, intimidation, and harassment were among the most frequently documented categories of incidents** across all phases of the electoral process. Physical assaults, property damage, election process disruptions, and incidents resulting in injuries or fatalities were also witnessed, particularly during the post-election period. The post-election phase saw a higher proportion of severe outcomes, including fatalities and serious injuries.
- **Electoral violence occurred across diverse locations and was not confined to campaign venues or polling stations.** Incidents were documented in public spaces, private residences, party offices, markets, schools, places of worship, government facilities, and surrounding polling centers, demonstrating that election-related tensions affected both political and everyday community spaces.
- **Most documented incidents were associated with key stages of the electoral process.** They were linked primarily to campaign activities, voter mobilisation, polling day activities, and disputes following the announcement of election results, illustrating that risks of electoral violence extended across the entire electoral cycle
- **Individuals reportedly affiliated with major political parties and political alliances were linked to incidents documented throughout the monitoring period.** Reported political affiliation was based on information available to observers at the time of documentation and should not be interpreted as a legal determination of responsibility. Both main competitors, BNP and Jamaat as well as their alliance partners were linked to numerous incidents across several phases of the monitoring period.
- **Institutional responses to electoral violence were varied and inconsistent.** Authorities responded to many incidents through investigations and by crowd dispersal, detentions, or criminal proceedings. However, a substantial proportion of documented incidents received no observable response, indicating inconsistencies in enforcement and highlighting the need for more systematic prevention, response, and follow-up mechanisms.
- **Women and religious and national minorities communities were among the groups affected by documented electoral violence incidents.** Whilst Odhikar's monitoring suggests they were not disproportionately targeted, the findings underline the importance of ensuring that all individuals and groups are able to participate in elections safely and without intimidation.
- **Election observers and journalists were generally able to carry out their work without significant interference** from election-related violence. Nevertheless, the isolated incidents documented during the monitoring period demonstrate the importance of maintaining safeguards for independent election observation and media reporting.

Key trends and patterns

Trends identified across pre-election, election day, and post-election monitoring

Geographic hotspots

Most documented incidents occurred in rural constituencies, though urban centres were also affected. Incidents were most frequent in:

Chattogram

Cox's Bazar

Bhola

Mymensingh

Dhaka

Nature of violence

Threats, intimidation and harassment were the most common incidents across all phases. Physical assaults, property damage and fatalities rose sharply after election day.

Where it happened

Not confined to campaign venues or polling stations — incidents also occurred in homes, markets, schools, places of worship and government facilities.

When it happened

Risk extended across the full electoral cycle — campaign activities, voter mobilisation, polling day, and disputes following the announcement of results.

Actors involved

Individuals reportedly affiliated with BNP, Jamaat and their alliance partners were linked to incidents across several monitoring phases.

Authority response

Responses varied — investigations, dispersal, detentions and prosecutions in some cases, but no observable response in a substantial share of incidents.

Vulnerable groups

Women and religious and national minorities were among those affected, though monitoring did not find them disproportionately targeted.

Observers and journalists

Generally able to carry out their work without significant interference from election-related violence, though isolated incidents documented during the monitoring period highlight the continued need for safeguards around independent election observation and media reporting.

ELECTORAL VIOLENCE AT A GLANCE

Parliamentary Elections and Referendum 2026, Bangladesh

Monitoring Period: 18 January – 30 April 2026

50 Constituencies in 22 Districts



Key recommendations

Drawing on the evidence gathered throughout the monitoring period, Odhikar identified a set of recommendations to address the shortcomings and with the hope that they may reduce the risk of electoral violence in future elections. While all the recommendations are provided in the final section of this report, here are the **key priority recommendations**:

1. **Immediate Priorities** (*measures that can be implemented through administrative action, operational planning, or institutional practice, before local government elections and without legislative amendment*)
 - a. Bangladesh Election Commission: **Scale up preventive measures in high-risk constituencies** in the pre-election, election day and post-election period. These measures may include enhanced security coordination, locally organised inter-party dialogues, community peace initiatives, and regular monitoring of emerging tensions to address local tensions in a timely fashion.
 - b. Law enforcement agencies: **Ensure timely, consistent, and impartial responses to electoral violence.** This can be done by establishing clear operational procedures to ensure consistent and timely responses to incidents of electoral violence. Training of law enforcement personnel on election-specific security needs improvement, and there needs to be in place a human rights approach to electoral security and incident response.
 - c. Political parties: **Strengthen internal accountability and promote peaceful political competition.** This may be done by enforcing internal disciplinary mechanisms against members or supporters of political parties/candidates involved in violence or

- intimidation, publicly condemning electoral violence, and taking proactive measures to ensure the safe participation of women, minorities, and other vulnerable groups.
- d. Civil Society Organisations: **Expand violence prevention and early warning initiatives.** This could be done by facilitating community dialogue, supporting local peace initiatives, monitoring emerging risks throughout the electoral cycle, and working closely with the Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC) and relevant authorities to promote peaceful elections.
2. **Medium and Long-Term Priorities** (*measures requiring legislative amendment, regulatory reform, or longer-term institutional development*)
- a. Government and Parliament: **Extend the application of the Electoral Code of Conduct to the post-election period.** An amendment of Article 91B of the Representation of the People Order (RPO), 1972 may be suggested so that election-related violence occurring after polling day can also be addressed through the electoral framework. This acknowledges that serious incidents continued after the announcement of results and are related to the election process.
 - b. Government and BEC: **Strengthen the enforceability of the Code of Conduct.** Responsibility for the enforcement of sanctions imposed on political parties under Section 27 of the Code of Conduct needs to be clarified, and provisions that are vague or open to inconsistent interpretation need to be reviewed, to improve legal certainty and consistent enforcement.

Political Background

The parliamentary elections of 12 February 2026 were held following a period of significant political transition in Bangladesh. The elections followed the July 2024 uprising, which led to the fall of the Bangladesh Awami League (AL) government (January 2009 – 05 August 2024) and the establishment of an Interim Government (IG) (08 August 2024 – 12 February 2026) tasked with overseeing political, constitutional and electoral reforms ahead of new elections. The transition took place against the backdrop of widespread unrest and violence, including the excessive use of force by state security agencies, and significant loss of life and injuries. Although the security situation became comparatively more stable during the transition period, politically motivated violence, reprisals against perceived supporters of the former ruling party, attacks on minority communities, and other localized security incidents continued to be reported, underscoring the importance of monitoring the security environment ahead of the elections. The 2026 elections thus represented an important milestone in Bangladesh's political transition and an opportunity to demonstrate that political change could be achieved through peaceful and democratic means.

Electoral violence has been a recurring feature of competitive politics in Bangladesh since the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1991, with variations only to scale and character. Severe violence accompanied the elections in 2001 and 2014, which were marked by deadly clashes, attacks on political opponents and election officials as well as post-election reprisals. The 2018 and 2024 elections were characterized by reduced competitions, while electoral violence was less characterized by large-scale deadly clashes and more by threats, intimidation and harassment and arbitrary arrests. Civil Society Organisations (CSO), including Odhikar, have repeatedly documented attacks on women candidates and voters as well as on minority communities.

The months preceding the February 2026 parliamentary elections were marked by sporadic violence and security concerns highlighting the fragility of the transition. Odhikar documented 15 fatalities and 670 injuries between 11 December 2025 and 31 January 2026. Out of these, 29 internal conflicts erupted inside the BNP, resulting in 5 deaths and 254 injuries, also demonstrating the risks born by party activists.

The main political parties contesting the February 2026 elections included the BNP and its alliance partners, Jamaat and its allies, including the new National Citizens Party (NCP), established on the basis of the student movement that led the 2024 uprising. A range of smaller parties, such as Islami Andolon Bangladesh, and independent candidates also took part. The Awami League was barred from participating following the IG's suspension of the party's activities due to allegations of killings, crimes against humanity and other grave offences during the July 2024 uprising. The elections were administered by the Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC) whose members were appointed by the IG in November 2024.

The 2026 elections therefore unfolded in a transitional political environment shaped both by the immediate context of the post-2024 transition and by longer-term patterns of electoral violence and local-level competition documented across previous elections. Alongside the parliamentary polls, a national referendum on constitutional reforms was held, reflecting both the promise of institutional change and the heightened risks of political contestation. These conditions shaped the operating context in which Odhikar conducted its monitoring activities.

Methodology

For the purposes of this monitoring exercise, electoral violence is defined as:

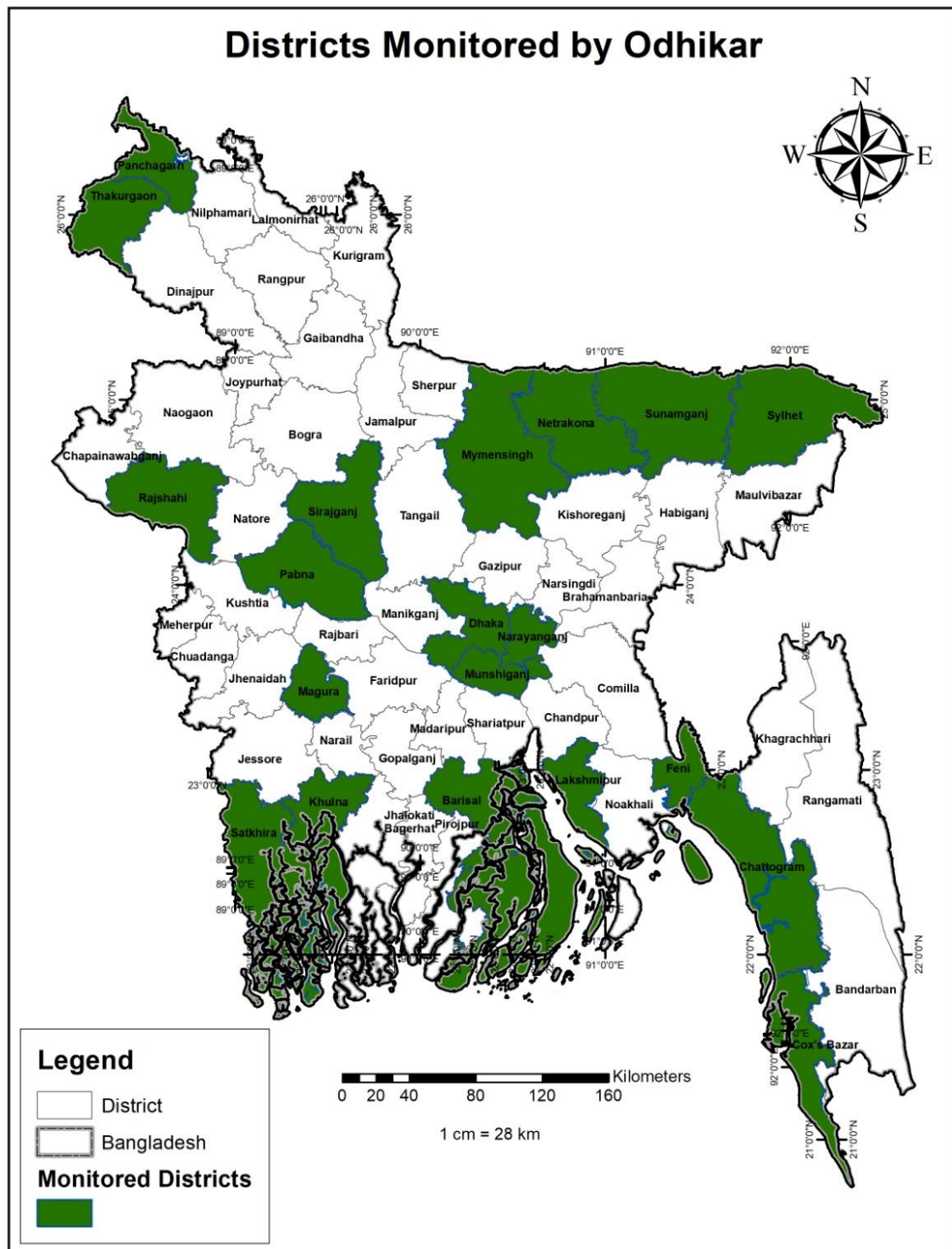
...any act or threat of physical, psychological, or coercive harm carried out by individuals, groups, or institutions during the electoral cycle, where the act is connected to electoral processes, electoral actors, candidates, party affiliation, campaign activities, voter mobilisation, polling, counting, results, or post-election political contestation.

Odhikar trained and deployed 50 long-term electoral violence monitors across 50 constituencies in 22 districts from 1 January until 30 April 2026. These constituencies were identified as higher-risk areas based on previous patterns of political tension, reported electoral violence, and their geographic distribution. Each monitor was assigned to a constituency where they were not a registered voter, ensuring neutrality and impartiality. Monitors covered the entire constituency and travelled as necessary to document incidents across different locations. They followed the pre-election, election day, and post-election situation in their areas and documented incidents along the following categories: physical violence, threats and intimidation, property damage, disruption of the electoral process, gender and identity-based violence and fatal incidents.

In addition, 50 short-term election observers were deployed to monitor the election day processes on 12 February 2026. These observers together with the 50 electoral violence monitors operated in mobile teams. Polling stations were chosen using a combination of targeted and purposive sampling to ensure the representation of polling stations with past incidents of violence or irregularities, urban and rural contexts, and the presence of minority and marginalised communities.

On election day, Odhikar observed 480 polling stations. The observation exercise was conducted by mobile teams and did not provide continuous coverage of all electoral activities, polling stations, or constituencies. Observers visited multiple locations within their assigned areas and documented incidents through direct observation, interviews, and verification of reported information. As a result, some incidents may not have been observed or reported, particularly in remote areas or locations with limited access.

Monitoring scope	
Category	Count
 Long-term Monitors	50
 Short-term Observers	50
 Districts	22
 Constituencies	50
 Polling Stations Observed	480
 Monitoring Period	18 Jan – 30 Apr 2026



Documentation followed a standardised reporting framework that classified incidents according to type, severity and electoral linkage. Each case was triangulated through at least two independent sources, with primary verification conducted in the field by observers and secondary checks against media and CSO alerts by Odhikar’s central team. This two-tier verification process aimed to strengthen the reliability and consistency of documented findings and reduce reliance on unverified information or rumours.

Ethical safeguards were an integral part of the monitoring process. All monitoring adhered to principles of confidentiality, informed consent, impartiality, and do-no-harm in order to minimise risks to observers, victims, witnesses, and affected communities. Personally identifiable information and sensitive details were handled with caution, and information was not publicly disclosed where doing so could increase risks of reprisals or harm. These safeguards reinforced Odhikar's longstanding commitment to responsible human rights documentation, ensuring that evidence was credible while victims and witnesses remained protected.

The following considerations should be taken into account when interpreting the findings presented in this report:

- a. *Geographic and access limitations.* The monitoring covered 50 constituencies in 22 districts identified as higher-risk and does not provide a nationally representative sample. Within the monitored areas, coverage was uneven in remote or hard-to-reach locations, including parts of the coastal districts of Cox's Bazar, Barishal and Bhola.
- b. *Monitor coverage within constituencies.* Each constituency was assigned one long-term monitor, meaning that incidents in remote areas could not always be observed directly. On election day, Odhikar observed 480 polling stations and election day findings reflect this sample.
- c. *Reporting constraints.* Underreporting is likely in areas where communities reported concerns about reprisals or where access was restricted. Fear of reprisal among victims and witnesses also constrained the level of detail that could be documented in some cases, including the identification of those involved.
- d. *Verification.* In some cases, particularly those reported from areas with limited access, independent verification of specific allegations was not possible. Such cases are reflected in the narrative description of the incident but are not included in the aggregate incident counts.

Taken together, the findings presented in this report should be read as a documented account of incidents observed within the monitoring sample, taking into account the limitations listed.

Legislative Framework related to Electoral Violence

Bangladesh's approach to the organisation of peaceful electoral processes is anchored in two principal legislative instruments: the RPO, 1972 and the Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates, 2008. While both instruments regulate elections more broadly, they also form the core legal tools for curbing intimidation, coercion, and disorder during the electoral cycle. The Cyber Security Ordinance of 2025 complements the legal framework on election security in the online environment.

The Representation of the People Order

The RPO provides the principal statutory basis for the Election Commission's authority over the conduct of elections. First promulgated in 1972, the RPO has been amended multiple times, most recently in 2018 and 2023 as well as twice in 2025 under the IG.

For the prevention of electoral violence, three categories of provision are particularly relevant. First, the Commission and Returning Officers are vested with broad supervisory powers over polling and counting (Articles 3–5 and 7), which provide the legal foundation for procedural responses to incidents during the electoral cycle. Second, candidate disqualification on the basis of criminal conviction

(Article 12) creates a legal mechanism for excluding individuals with serious criminal records from electoral office, with potential relevance to candidates implicated in violent conduct. Third, the Commission's authority to issue the Code of Conduct (Article 91B) and to cancel candidature for serious violations (Article 91E) provides the principal statutory link between Code of Conduct breaches, including violent conduct, and a tangible electoral consequence.

The RPO also establishes the institutional architecture through which electoral violence can be prevented, investigated, and sanctioned. In addition to vesting authority in the Election Commission, the framework relies on a combination of administrative, law enforcement, and judicial mechanisms. During the 2026 electoral cycle, this included the deployment of Executive Magistrates across the country and the establishment of EIAC in all 300 parliamentary constituencies. Executive Magistrates, operating in coordination with law enforcement agencies and, where applicable, through mobile courts, were responsible for maintaining public order, preventing electoral offences, and responding rapidly to incidents of intimidation, violence, unlawful assemblies, and other violations of electoral regulations. Their role was primarily preventive and enforcement-oriented, aimed at deterring misconduct and restoring order when incidents occurred. In parallel, the EIACs, constituted under Articles 91A and 91AA of the RPO, provided a mechanism for investigating allegations of electoral misconduct, intimidation, coercion, violence, and other irregularities affecting the integrity of the electoral process. The committees were empowered to receive complaints from candidates, political parties, voters, observers, and other stakeholders, as well as to initiate inquiries on their own motion, submit findings to the Election Commission, and exercise adjudicatory powers in relation to certain electoral offences. Together, these mechanisms created a two-tier enforcement structure in which Executive Magistrates focused on prevention and immediate response, while EIACs provided investigation, accountability, and adjudication functions.

The Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates

The Code of Conduct issued in 2008 under Article 91B of the RPO is the principal instrument operationalising behavioural standards for candidates and political parties during the electoral process. Similar to the RPO, the Code of Conduct has been amended on several occasions, amongst others to address emerging issues such as digital campaigning, intimidation, and new forms of electoral misconduct.

Provisions in the Code of Conduct that bear directly on the prevention of electoral violence can be grouped into three categories:

1. **Participation in the formal electoral process:** Section 6 prohibits obstruction or intimidation during public meetings and processions, and Section 10 prohibits obstruction in the filing or withdrawal of nomination papers. These provisions address the most direct forms of interference with candidates, party workers, and supporters during campaigning and candidate registration.
2. **Conduct of campaigning:** Section 15 prohibits incitement, slander, disorderly conduct, property damage, and the use of arms or explosives. Section 16, in its more recent form, extends regulation to social media and prohibits hate speech, fabricated content, and AI-generated misinformation. The inclusion of online conduct reflects a broadening of the regulated space to reflect contemporary campaign practice.

3. **Consequences of breach:** Sections 27–28 classify violations as punishable offences, with penalties including fines, imprisonment, or cancellation of candidature under Article 91E of the RPO. This category provides the statutory link between Code violations and electoral consequence.

The language of Sections 15 and 16 remains vague and open to discretionary enforcement. Terms such as “personal slander,” “offensive remarks,” and “hate speech” are not defined, creating risks of selective application and potential misuse against legitimate political speech. Interpretive guidelines could support a more consistent implementation by promoting common understanding of key provisions and thereby safeguard freedom of expression and consistent sanctioning of genuinely harmful rhetoric. Clearer definitions and interpretive standards are needed to distinguish between protected criticism and prohibited incitement, ensuring fair application across offline and online campaigning.

Although Section 27 of the Code of Conduct provides that political parties are liable to fines for violations, it does not specify who within the party is responsible for payment or enforcement. This diffusion of responsibility weakens deterrence, as fines may be imposed but not effectively collected or enforced. Without designated office-holders accountable for compliance, sanctions risk becoming symbolic rather than practical. Clarifying accountability within party structures would strengthen enforceability and ensure that penalties serve as a genuine deterrent against misconduct.

While Article 91B of the RPO empowers the Election Commission to adopt and enforce the Code of Conduct, its scope is limited to violations occurring during the pre-poll period. This leaves post-election violence outside the scope of the Codes of Conduct, treating it as general law-and-order crime rather than electoral misconduct. The absence of explicit provisions addressing post-poll violence weakens accountability and undermines deterrence.

The Code of Conduct provides limited guidance on how electoral violence should be investigated and contains no specific measures to protect groups that may face greater risks, such as women candidates and voters, journalists and election observers. Ultimately, its effectiveness depends on consistent and timely responses to violations of the BEC and law enforcement agencies.

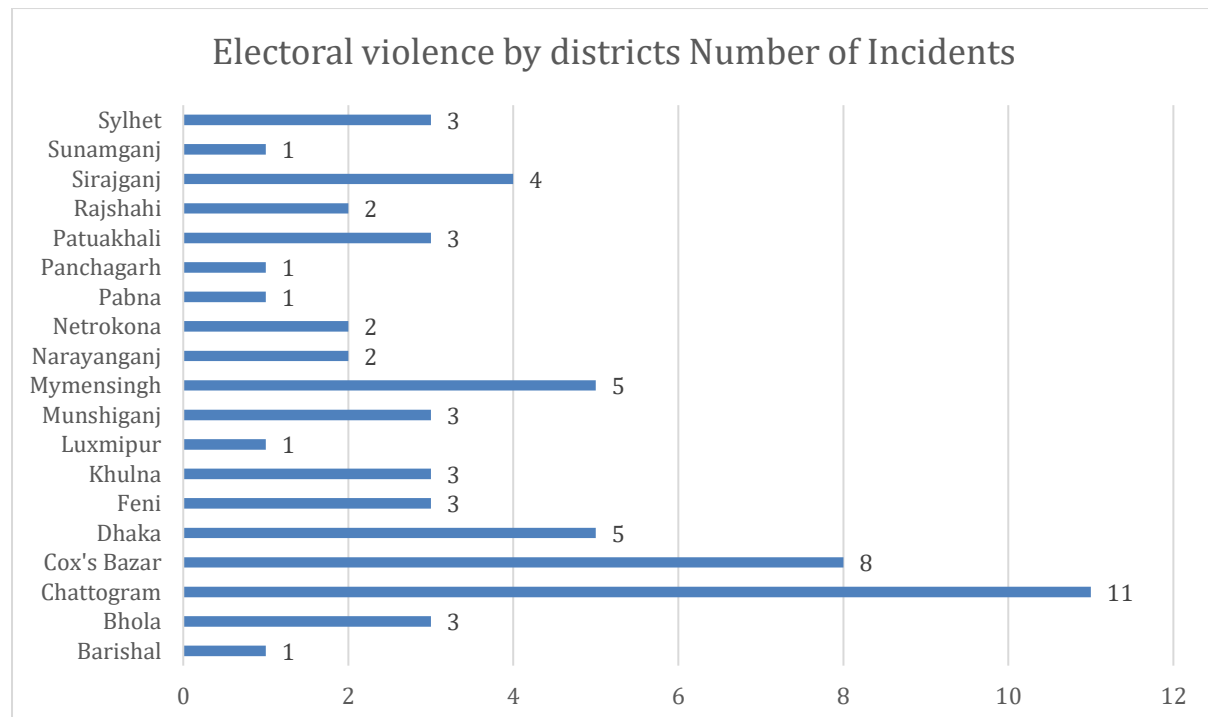
Cyber Security Ordinance

Following the repeal of the Cyber Security Act, 2023, the IG adopted the Cyber Security Ordinance, 2025, which complements the legal framework on electoral security in the online environment. The Ordinance criminalises online blackmail, threats and intimidation, sexual harassment, non-consensual dissemination of intimate material and the publication of content intended to incite religious or ethnic hatred or violence. Promulgated in May 2025, the Ordinance was amended twice prior to the elections following considerable criticism primarily linked to digital rights and freedom of expression. An assessment of the implementation of the Ordinance could provide for a broad consultation on the alignment of the current framework with international principles linked to the protection of citizens' right to participate in elections free from violence and intimidation whilst at the same time safeguarding freedom of expression online.

Findings from Pre-Election Monitoring

Geographical and spatial distribution

Odhikar's monitors documented 62 incidents of electoral violence in the pre-election period. Chattogram and Cox's Bazar emerged as the primary hotspots with 11 and 8 incidents each, reflecting entrenched rivalries and contested constituencies.



Electoral violence was also notable in Mymensingh, Dhaka (5 each), Sirajganj (4), Bhola, Feni, Khulna, Sunamganj, and Sylhet (3 each). Some incidents were also observed in Netrokona, Patuakhali, and Rajshahi as well as in Barishal, Luxmipur, Munshiganj, Narayanganj, Pabna, and Panchagarh.

The findings indicate the incidents of violence were concentrated rather than evenly distributed across all constituencies covered by the monitoring exercise and suggest that targeted preventive measures in constituencies with recurring patterns of electoral violence is required.

Electoral violence occurred in a variety of locations and extended beyond formal political arenas. Half of all incidents (33 cases, or 53%) occurred in streets or public spaces, making them the most common sites of violence. Political party offices and facilities as well as private homes accounted for seven incidents each. Violence also reached formal and symbolic institutions, including BEC offices (two incidents), government properties (six incidents), and religious sites (two incidents). Other locations, including miscellaneous community spaces, accounted for 5 incidents. The fact that electoral violence incidents occurred in a range of public and private settings and beyond formal campaign and political venues underscores the need for enhanced focus on such locations during security planning and deployment.

Where electoral violence occurred

62 incidents across 7 location types



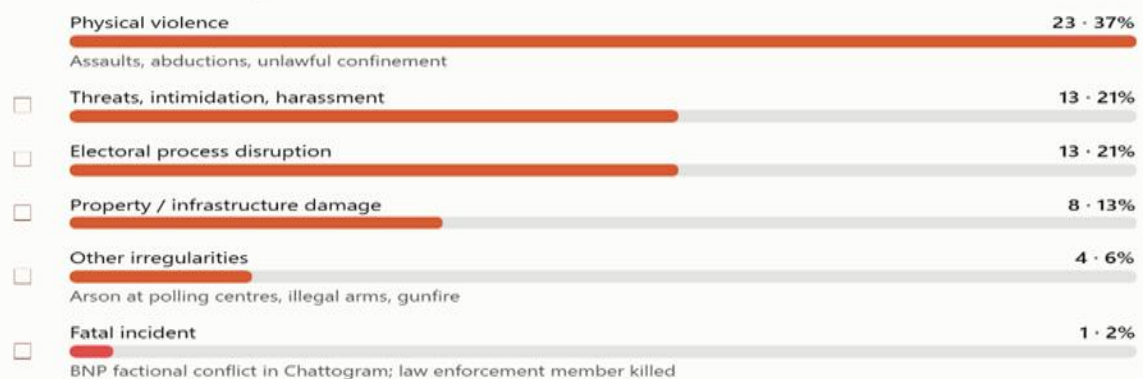
Streets and public spaces account for over half of all recorded incidents, well beyond formal campaign and political venues.

Types of violence

Physical violence such as assaults, abductions, or unlawful confinement were the most common types of incidents, accounting for 23 incidents (37%). Threats, intimidation, and harassment represented 13 incidents (21%), while electoral process disruption accounted for 13 incidents (21%). Property or infrastructure damage was recorded in 8 incidents (13%). One fatal incident was documented, linked to factional conflict within BNP in Chattogram, which left a member of a law enforcement agency dead. In addition, four incidents were classified as “others,” which fell outside direct clashes or intimidation but highlighted irregularities and insecurity. These included arson attacks on schools designated as polling centres, recovery of illegal arms, and gunfire at a candidate supporter’s residence.

Types of electoral violence

62 incidents across 6 categories

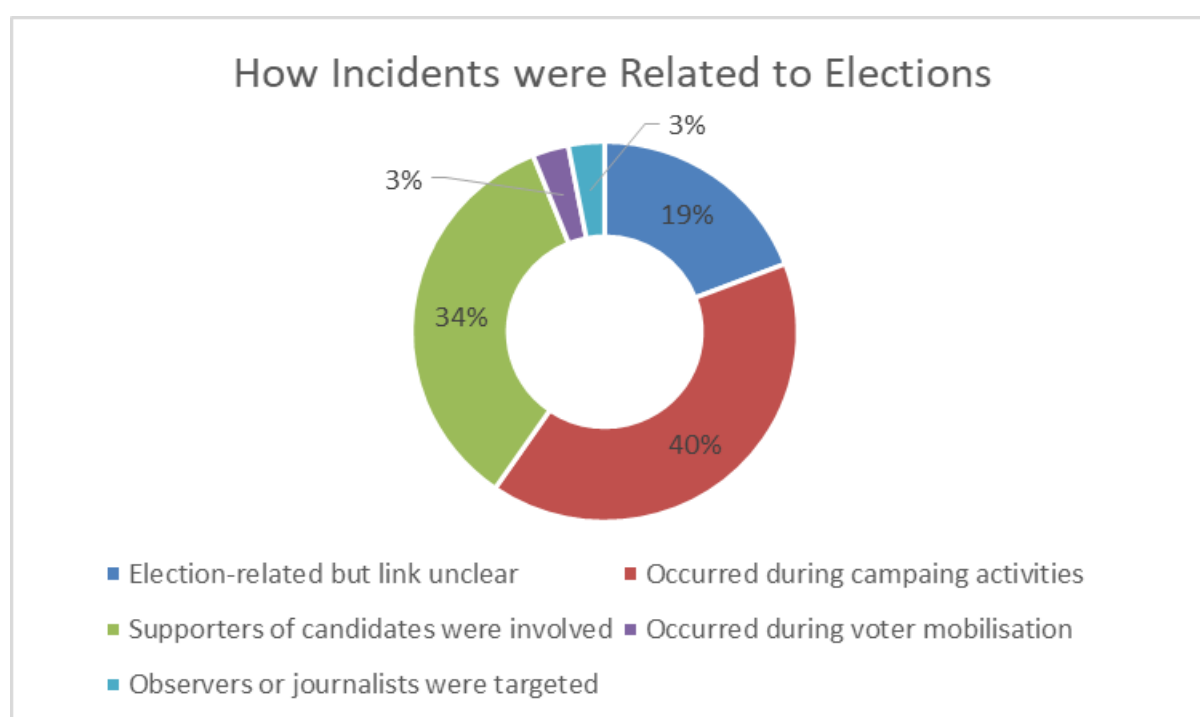


Physical violence was the leading category, followed by intimidation and process disruption in equal measure.

Of the 147 weekly reports from Odhikar’s long-term monitors, 20 (14%) recorded hate speech or incitement linked to the election, and 16 reports (11%) described candidates encouraging supporters to commit violence. These were recorded in Chattogram, Thakurgaon, Barishal, Mymensingh, Patuakhali, Munshiganj, Khulna, and Feni.

In addition, 24 weekly reports (16%) documented incitement by faith or traditional leaders. Sirajganj and Cox's Bazar each recorded four cases, while Dhaka and Bhola reported three incidents each. Munshiganj documented two, and single cases were noted in Panchagarh, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Feni, Chattogram, Thakurgaon, Narayanganj, and Barishal. Several contained calls to violence, out of which three targeted religious groups.

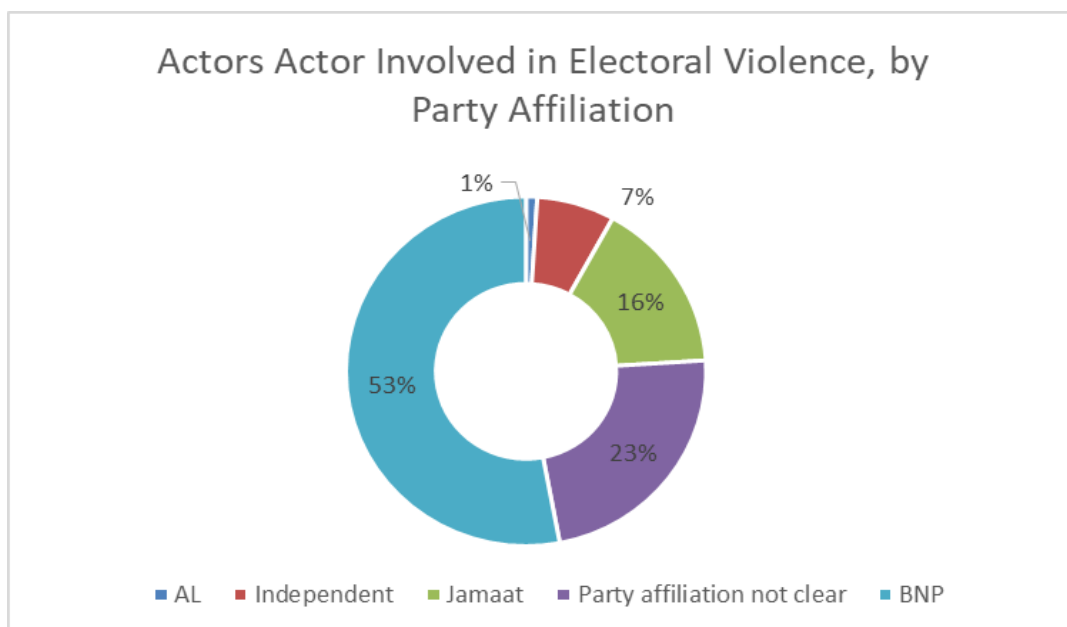
Monitoring data also show that campaign speeches and rallies were the most frequent channels of incitement to violence (14 cases), followed by social media posts (five cases), community meetings (four cases), and printed campaign materials (one case). This illustrates how rhetoric and leadership influence contributed to the climate of hostility and amplified risks both in public gatherings and digital spaces.



The majority of documented incidents were directly linked to campaign activities and political competition. Campaign activities, including rallies, processions and canvassing, accounted for 25 of the 62 documented incidents (40%). This typically involved confrontations between groups of supporters during public mobilisation events. Another 21 incidents (31%) were linked to candidates or political parties, primarily involving disputes between supporters or attacks affecting party workers. Two incidents disrupted voter mobilisation efforts, demonstrating that initiatives to encourage electoral participation were also vulnerable. In addition, two incidents targeted election observers or journalists, raising concerns about the safety of independent monitoring. In 12 cases (19%) the incidents were clearly election-related but the specific trigger could not be established.

Actors involved

According to Odhikar monitoring, many documented incidents involved individuals reportedly affiliated with political parties or political groups. Reported affiliation is based on information available to observers during documentation and should not be interpreted as a determination of responsibility.



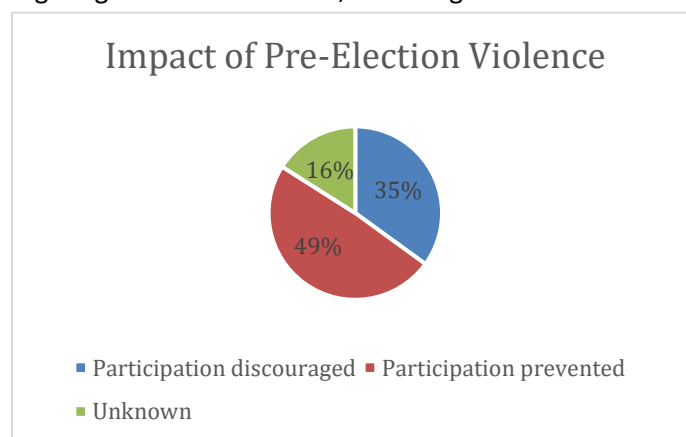
Across the pre-election period, individuals reportedly affiliated with BNP and Jamaat were identified in the largest share of documented incidents (37 and 11, respectively). The dominance of organised political groups in violent incidents points to systemic weaknesses in party discipline and accountability. Independents were involved in six incidents and Awami League in one incident. In some 16 cases party affiliation could not be established signaling that violence extended beyond formal party structures.

Notably, four incidents occurred between supporters of BNP and its alliance and Jamaat-e-Islami and its alliance and four other incidents involved supporters of BNP and its alliance and supporters of independent candidates. In all cases involving independents, the candidates were BNP rebels contesting despite not being nominated by the party, which suggests that factional disputes within BNP itself contributed to pre-election violence.

Impact of violence

The documented human toll of electoral violence included one fatality, 13 serious injuries requiring hospitalisation, and 15 minor injuries, alongside seven cases of property damage. Beyond physical harm, 16 incidents involved intimidation without injury, 16 reports of psychological distress, and 11 disruptions of electoral processes. Direct targeting was also recorded, including at women activists (three incidents), a journalist and an election observer.

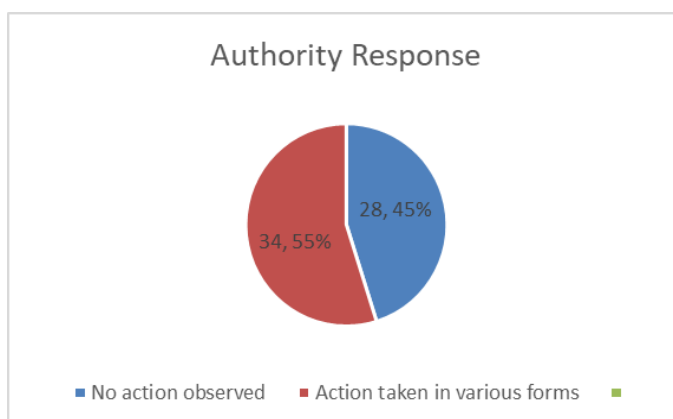
Electoral violence narrowed the space for engagement in the pre-election period. Out of 62 documented incidents, nearly two-thirds reportedly affected political or electoral participation. Specifically, 21 incidents (49%) prevented participation outright, 15 incidents (35%) discouraged participation, and seven incidents (16%) had unclear or unreported impacts.



Authority response and prevention efforts

Authorities responded to electoral violence in more than half of the incidents of violence documented by Odhikar. These interventions included investigations in 18 cases (29%), crowd dispersal in eight (13%), detentions in four (6%), and use of force in three cases (5%). Police visits were recorded in one case.

Institutional mechanisms were active and visible in many constituencies, though responses were uneven with some incidents receiving intervention while others of similar nature showed no observable action. At the same time, for a total of 28 incidents (45%) no observable response was put in place thus limiting the overall impact of authority action. Promoting consistent enforcement ought to be a priority in moving forward. Furthermore, public access to information on responses to violence could contribute to transparency and build trust between citizens and the actors responsible for ensuring their safety.



Weekly reports of Odhikar's long-term election violence monitors, documented 61 preventive initiatives during the pre-election period, broken down as follows:

- 37 increased security and law enforcement deployments (61%)
- 14 public warnings issued (23%)
- Four community peace initiatives (7%)
- Four public calls for calm/non-violence (7%)
- Two joint statements/declarations by rival candidates or parties (3%)

Preventive initiatives were seen across 26 out of 50 constituencies (52%), showing uneven distribution of efforts. Khulna-2 constituency recorded the highest concentration, with five reports of increased security deployments, while the Rajshahi constituencies (Rajshahi-1, -2, and -3) implemented a diverse mix including community dialogues and joint party statements. Khulna-3 documented two public warnings, and Sirajganj-2 together with Sunamganj-5 registered multiple public calls for calm and peace. Netrokona-5 and Patuakhali-3 also hosted community dialogues, while constituencies such as Bhola-4 and Narayanganj-8 recorded a smaller number of initiatives.

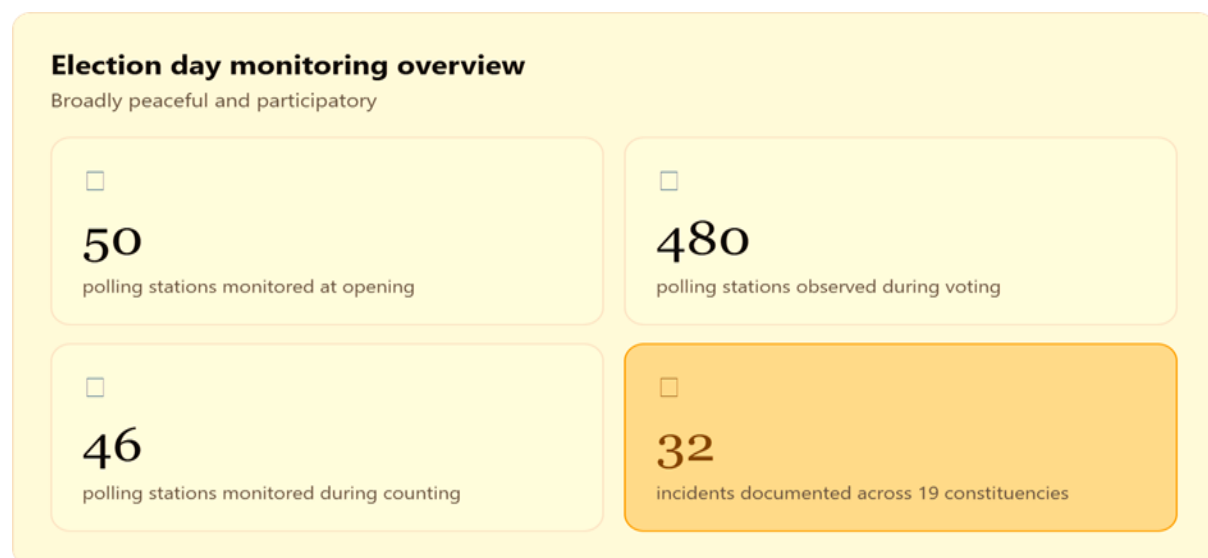
Multiple institutions were often engaged in the same preventive efforts. Police dominated with involvement in 38 initiatives, underscoring the enforcement-oriented nature of responses. The BEC participated in 15 initiatives, while civil society groups led six community peace efforts, reflecting grassroots attempts to foster dialogue and calm. These measures reflected attempts to contain risks and promote non-violence, underscoring that authorities and communities were not passive in the face of electoral tensions.

Weekly reports documented an apparent decrease of tension in 17 instances, facilitated by peace initiatives. Reports also noted that situations stabilised but remained tense in another 24 cases. The

impact of preventive initiatives suggests that the scaling up of such engagements could play a key role in reducing electoral violence and political tensions.

Findings from Election Day Observation and Monitoring

Election day was broadly peaceful and participatory. Odhikar observers monitored the opening of 50 polling stations, observed voting procedures in 480 polling stations, and monitored the counting process in 46 polling stations. A total of 32 election day incidents were documented across 19 constituencies. Despite these incidents, observers found that polling stations generally opened on time, voting proceeded in an orderly manner, and counting was conducted transparently. While isolated cases of violence, intimidation, procedural irregularities, and observer access restrictions were reported, these incidents did not substantially disrupt the overall conduct of polling and counting. The findings suggest that electoral and security institutions were generally effective in maintaining a peaceful and credible voting environment, although localized vulnerabilities remained.



Election Day Observation

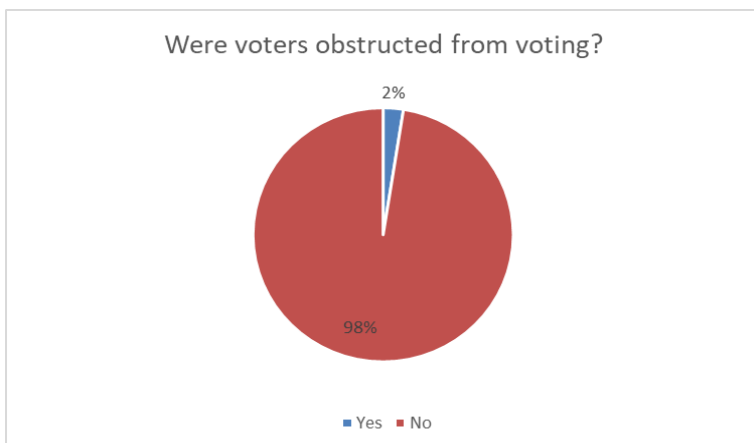
Polling station opening and preparedness

All 50 polling stations observed during the opening process were ready for voting by 7:30 AM, with ballot boxes shown as empty and sealed before voting commenced. Observers reported that ballot secrecy was maintained in all polling booths observed. This consistent practice reflects a commendable commitment to protecting voter privacy and aligns with international standards under Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) Article 21(3) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Article 25(b). No intimidation, voter obstruction, or unauthorised armed presence were observed during the opening process. Observers were permitted entry by 7:00 AM, ensuring uninterrupted monitoring from the start.

Voting and observer access

Voting inside polling stations was largely peaceful, with neither voters nor polling staff reporting fear or intimidation during the process. Physical violence was not observed in 99% of polling stations visited. In 468 (98%) out of the 480 stations observed, voters were able to cast their ballots without obstruction; however, in 12 cases (2%) obstruction was reported. These incidents of obstruction were recorded in the districts of

Sunamganj, Mymensingh, Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Narayanganj, Dhaka, Bhola and Khulna. Mymensingh recorded the highest number of obstruction cases (four cases), followed by Chattogram (two incidents). Each of the other districts recorded one incident of voter obstruction.

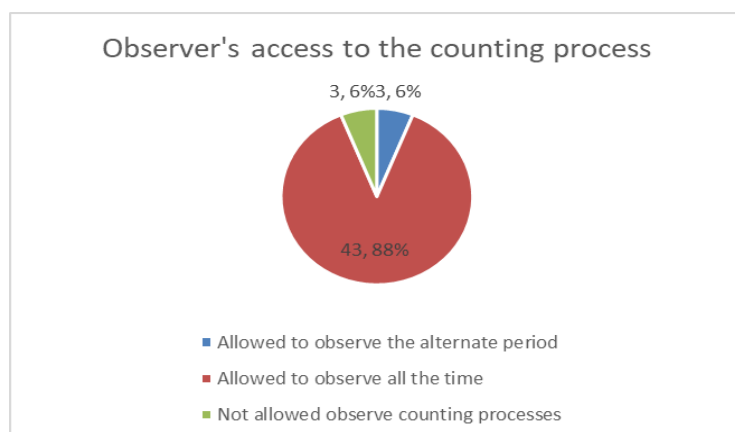


Queues were orderly in 97% of stations, allowing voters to wait and move forward without hindrance. Uniformed security personnel were present in all polling stations observed, contributing to a secure voting environment. No incidents of ballot paper seizure, damage, or destruction were observed. In 99% of cases, voting proceeded without interruption, though four isolated cases (1%) of temporary interruption of voting due to violence were reported.

Voters in queues at closing time were generally allowed to cast their ballots, with 94% of documented cases complying with the procedures. Odhikar observers were granted access to 99% of polling stations visited. Isolated obstructions occurred in Barishal-4, Sirajganj-4, and Bhola-1, where polling officials restricted access. Despite these exceptions, the overall environment inside polling stations remained orderly, with procedures largely consistent with international standards.

Counting processes and transparency

Ballot counting procedures were generally transparent and credible across observed polling stations. Candidate agents were generally present during counting, contributing to transparency and confidence in the tabulation process. Of the 46 polling stations observed at the counting phase, observers were granted full access in 43 cases and partial access in 3, ensuring broad oversight of counting activities. However,



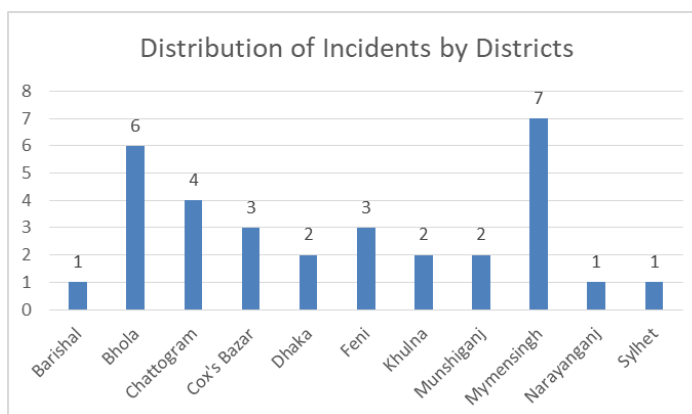
observers were denied access by the election officials to the ballot counting process in three polling stations despite their being accredited by the BEC. In all 46 polling stations observed during counting,

valid and invalid ballots were assessed according to consistent standards. No incidents of intimidation, interference, or harassment were reported during counting, underscoring the orderly and professional conduct of this stage of the electoral process.

Election Day Incidents

Geographical and spatial distribution

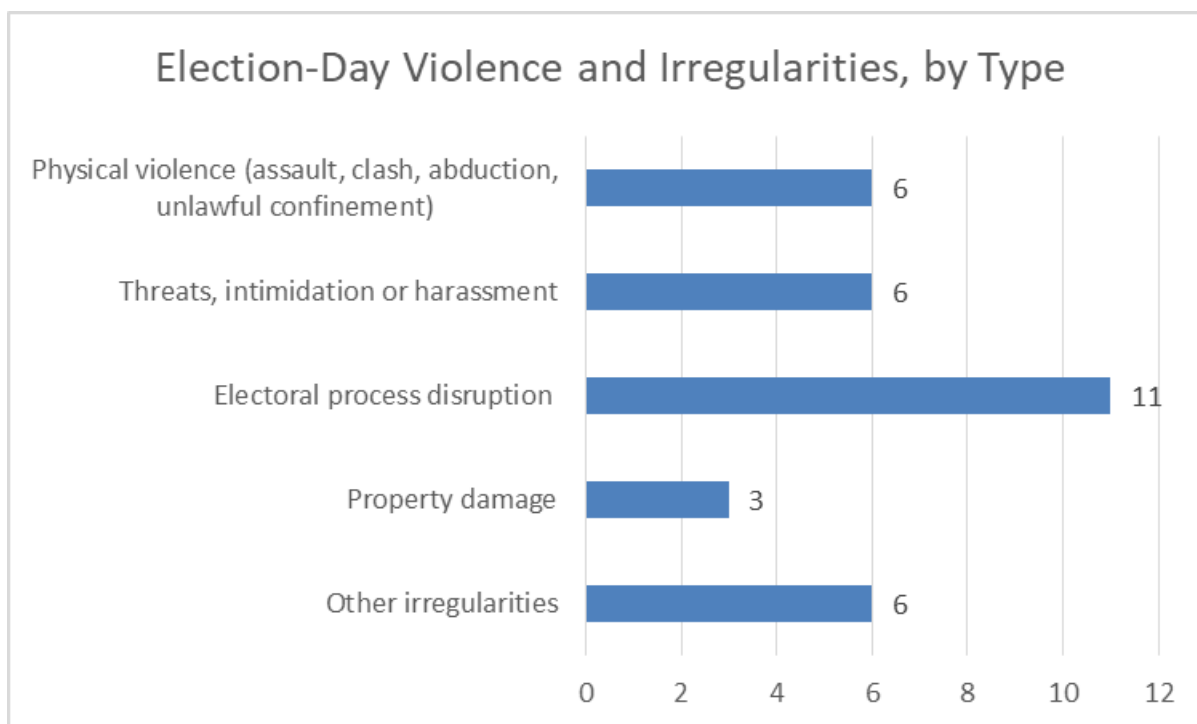
On the Election Day, 32 incidents were documented across 19 out of 50 constituencies monitored, with the highest number of incidents reported in Mymensingh and Bhola (7 and 6, respectively). Additional incidents were documented in Chattogram (4); Cox's Bazar) and Feni (3); Dhaka, Munshiganj and Khulna (2); and in Narayanganj, Barishal and Sylhet (1 each). The distribution of incidents shows a slight predominance in rural constituencies, with 17 cases compared to 15 cases in urban areas. This near balance indicates that electoral violence is not confined to rural Union Parishads but is also a significant feature of urban constituencies.



Documented incidents occurred across a range of settings. Thirteen cases were recorded inside polling stations. Of these, eight incidents were mainly linked to procedural irregularities, such as candidates and agents entering polling centers with supporters causing disorder and obstruction or denial of observer access. Five incidents were recorded as electoral violence, including explosions and ballot snatching that halted voting in Bhola, attempted forceful takeover of a polling centre in Dhaka, clashes between party agents in Khulna that temporarily blocked voter access and intimidation of polling agents in Khulna and Munshiganj. Six incidents were observed outside polling centres, that is, in streets or public venues, as well as one in a private home.

Types of incidents

Documented incidents on election day reflected diverse forms of violence, ranging from intimidation and property damage to direct disruption of electoral procedures. Categorising these incidents helps illustrate not only their frequency but also the different ways violence shaped the electoral environment.



Physical violence (assault, clash, abduction, unlawful confinement):

Six incidents of physical violence were recorded, accounting for 19% of all cases. In a polling centre in Feni-2, clashes targeted individual voters and agents, in which one voter was assaulted by opposition supporters and required medical attention, while in another centre a candidate's chief agent was attacked, his vehicle damaged, and he sustained injuries. In Bhola-4, two separate centres saw confrontations between rival groups, leading to chase and counter-chase and direct clashes inside a women's booth; both incidents spread panic until joint forces intervened with baton charges to restore order. In a Cox's Bazar-2 centre, a dispute between party supporters escalated into a physical assault on a candidate's family member, creating tension before security forces dispersed those involved.

Threats, intimidation, or harassment:

Six cases (19%) of threats, intimidation or harassment were recorded in the monitored constituencies. In Chattogram-4, a presiding officer faced obstruction from a party agent, which required intervention by the executive magistrate. In Munshiganj-3, crude explosive devices detonated near a polling centre, spreading panic though no casualties occurred. At Chattogram-6, women voters reported being pressured to cast ballots for a specific symbol, leading to a temporary suspension of voting until security forces restored order. In Feni-2, a candidate and his supporters were targeted, resulting in heightened tension until the military and police intervened. In Mymensingh-3, a young voter left without casting his ballot after receiving a public threat, while in Munshiganj-2, an agent was warned to remain silent inside the booth.

Electoral process disruption:

Eleven cases (34% of incidents) were documented where voting and counting were disrupted or obstructed. In a centre in Cox's Bazar-3 constituency, a local political leader attempted to influence voters, prompting intervention by security forces. In another centre in the constituency Sylhet-2, a

voter reported that a ballot had already been cast in his name. In two centres in Bhola-4 constituency, one case involved an attempt to influence or discourage women voters, prompting joint forces to disperse crowds, while in another centre in Bhola-1 constituency, a crude explosive attack and ballot snatching halted polling for over an hour. In a centre in Dhaka-4, party supporters attempted to seize control of a polling centre before being restrained by the army.

In the Mymensingh-8 constituency, four centres recorded disruptions linked to candidate presence and supporter activity. At Raybazar Girls' High School, a candidate entered with supporters, chanting slogans and creating disorder that delayed voting. At Char Nikhla High School, party activists openly urged voters to support a specific symbol, while agents inside received items from outside. At Maheshpur Government Primary School, agents attempted to influence voters at the entrance, prompting repeated calls from security to clear the area. At Sohagi Union High School, party supporters gathered at the gate wearing campaign T-shirts and ID cards, openly urging voters to support a specific symbol and crowding the entrance, which disrupted the flow of voters.

In a centre in Narayangan-4 constituency, tensions escalated into scuffles that temporarily disrupted voting. In another centre in Khulna-3, a candidate's agent was obstructed and threatened, causing delays in voter access.

Property damage:

Three incidents of property or infrastructure damage, which accounted for 9% of cases, were recorded on the polling day. In Barishal-4, tensions at Char Samaiya Secondary School polling centre escalated into clashes between agents and security forces, leading to stone-throwing and vandalism of school facilities before law enforcement regained control. Later that night in Mehendiganj bazar, a fire broke out in a pharmacy and spread rapidly, destroying around a dozen shops; while some locals described it as accidental, the timing shortly after polling raised suspicions and prompted further inquiry. In Cox's Bazar-3, a candidate supporter's home was partially vandalised during a post-election victory procession, accompanied by threats.

Other irregularities:

Six incidents (19%) were documented in which actions by election officials or security personnel affected observer access or electoral procedures. At one centre in Dhaka-14, observers were delayed at entry until the presiding officer permitted access. In another in Mymensingh-4, ballot papers were moved by the presiding officer, with mismatches noted in the counts of counterfoils. In another centre in Mymensingh-4, a police inspector was observed inside the presiding officer's room behind a closed door, and his conduct with observers and journalists was reported as inappropriate. In three centres in Chattogram-6, Chattogram-7 and Khulna-3, observers were allowed during voting but denied access to the counting process although they reminded the polling officials of the observers' legal right to observe the counting process.

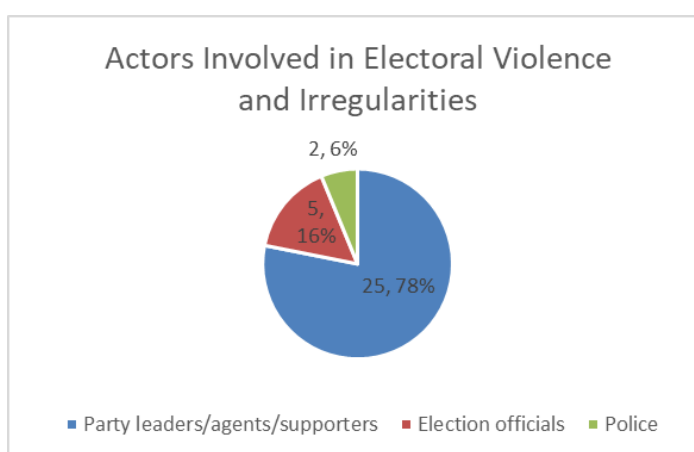
Most documented incidents (20) were directly linked to polling or counting, highlighting vulnerabilities at the core stages of the electoral process. A further five incidents were linked to candidates or political parties, four affected voter mobilisation efforts, while isolated incidents were associated with vandalism of a party supporter's private home, attacks on observers or media, or other election-related triggers that could not be clearly established.

Among these, 12 incidents involved obstruction of voting across eight districts. These included blocking entries to polling centres, expelling voters from queues, and coercion in casting ballots. In Mymensingh, which recorded the highest number of obstruction incidents, voters were pressured to vote — or refrain from voting — for particular candidates.

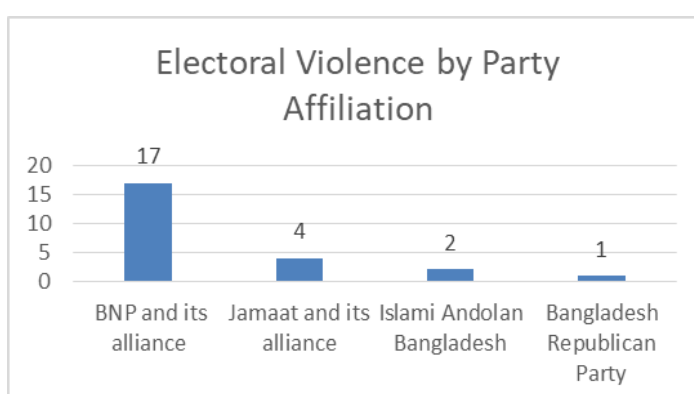
Although no violence was documented inside polling centres during the counting process, tensions persisted. In two cases, candidate agents disputed the validity of ballots lacking properly stamped seals. Presiding officers upheld electoral law by rejecting these ballots, while agents insisted, they should be counted. These disputes highlight the importance of clear rules and consistent enforcement to maintain confidence in results.

Actors involved

Most documented incidents were attributed to party leaders, agents, and supporters (25 cases, 78%), underscoring the central role of partisan actors in shaping election-day disruptions. A smaller but notable share involved election officials (5 cases, 16%), raising concerns about procedural integrity, while police involvement (two cases, 6%) highlighted isolated instances where security actors were implicated. These findings suggest that violence was primarily driven by party competition, although irregularities within official and enforcement structures also occurred.



Reported incidents indicate that individuals linked to BNP and its alliance were associated with the largest number of documented incidents (17 cases). Smaller numbers were associated with Jamaat and its alliance (four cases), Islami Andolan Bangladesh (two cases), and the Bangladesh Republican Party (one case). This distribution indicates that electoral violence was concentrated among major political rivals, though it was not limited to them. Reported

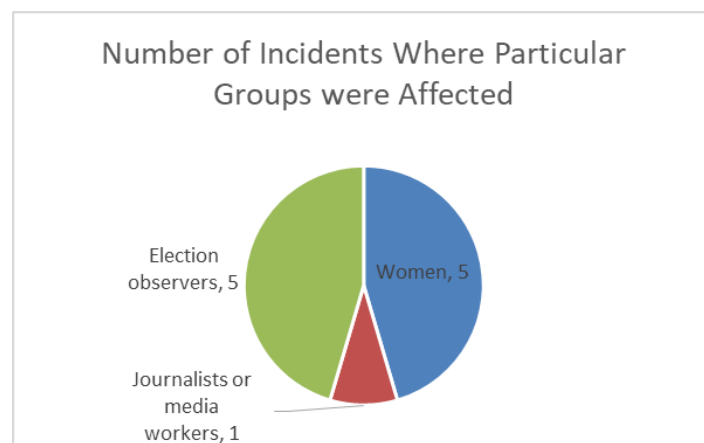
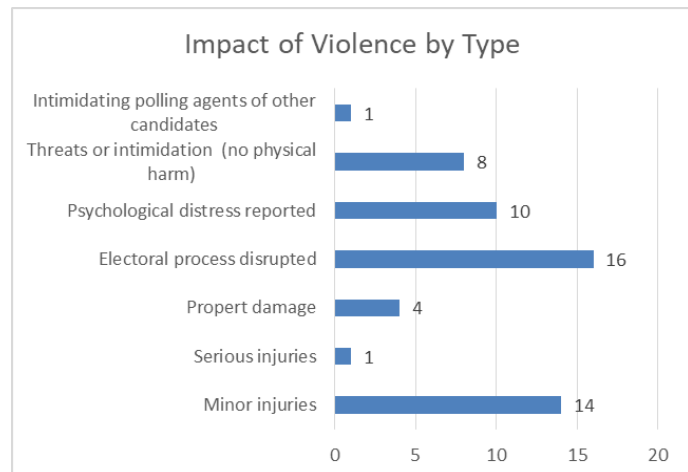


affiliation is based on available documentation and should not be interpreted as a definitive determination of responsibility.

Impact of incidents

Violence during election day had a multidimensional impact, obstructing participation, harming individuals, and disrupting electoral activities. Nearly two-thirds of documented incidents directly affected political or electoral participation — with 12 incidents preventing participation outright, seven incidents discouraging participation, and six incidents with unclear impact.

The incidents resulted in both physical and psychological impacts on affected individuals: eight cases of intimidation, 14 minor injuries, and one serious injury were recorded alongside four incidents of property damage and 10 reports of psychological distress. Electoral procedures were also disrupted in 16 incidents, and polling agents were intimidated in one case, undermining confidence in the process.



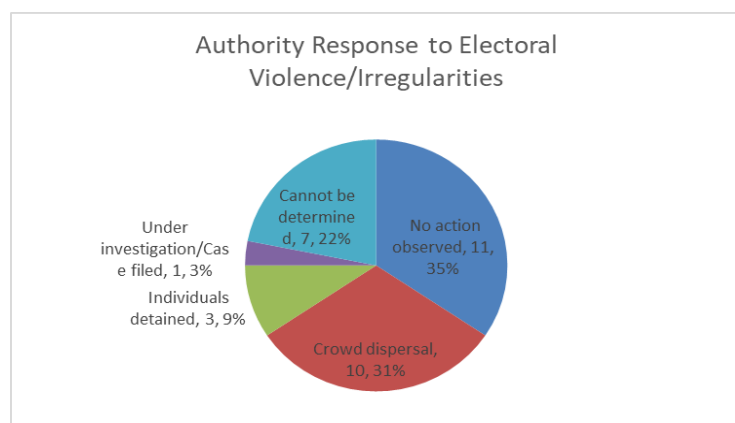
In addition, women were affected in five incidents, election observers in five incidents and a journalist in one incident.

Taken together, these findings show that violence narrowed the space for participation, inflicted physical and psychological harm, and disrupted electoral activities. While observers generally reported orderly procedures inside polling stations, incidents inside and outside, though mostly of low-scale,

highlighted vulnerabilities that undermined both inclusiveness and electoral integrity.

Authority response

Authorities took some form of action in 44% of documented incidents, including crowd dispersal, detentions, and case filings. These interventions demonstrate that institutional actors were active in managing tensions during election day. At the same time, no action was observed in 34% of incidents, and in 22% of cases the response could not be determined, pointing to room for more consistent

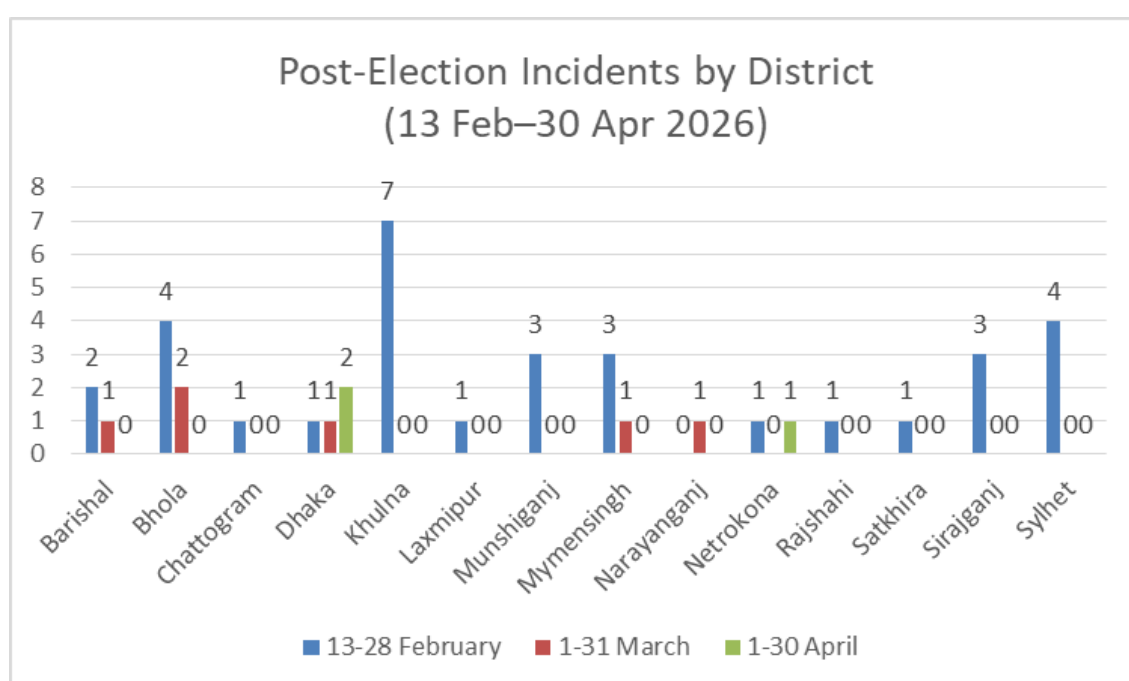


and transparent enforcement measures. This warrants a more systematic response, alongside improved documentation of actions taken, including investigations and follow-up, to strengthen accountability and build public confidence in electoral safeguards.

Findings from Post-Election Monitoring

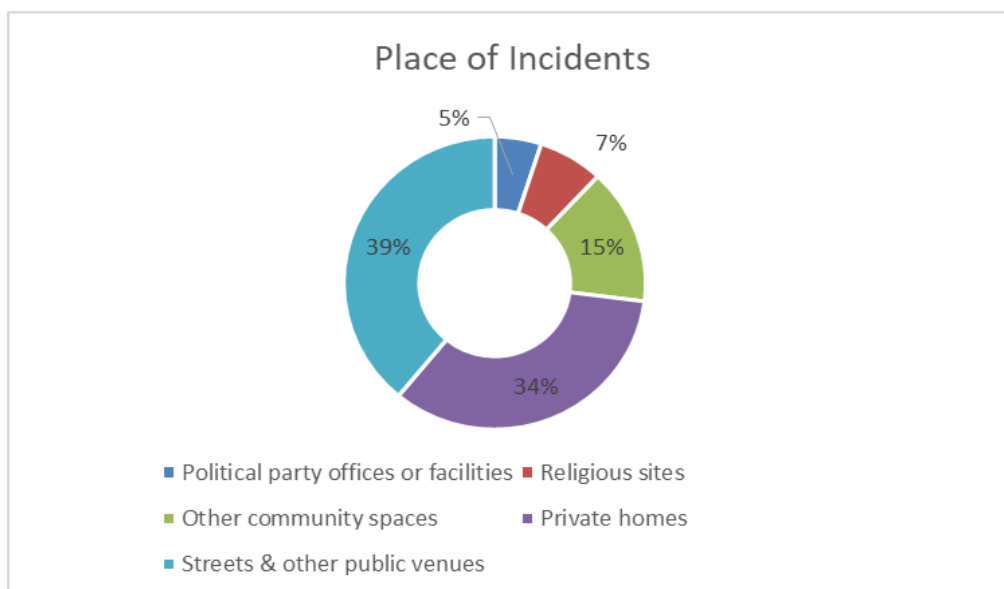
Geographical and spatial distribution

Between 13 February and 30 April, 41 incidents were documented across fourteen monitored districts. Khulna and Bhola with seven and six incidents each constituted the primary hotspots for post-election violence, followed by Dhaka, Mymensingh and Sylhet with four cases. Three incidents were observed in Barishal, Munshiganj, and Sirajganj; two in Chattogram, Narayanganj, and Netrokona; and single cases were documented in Rajshahi, Satkhira, and Laxmipur.



Within these districts, incidents were concentrated in 20 particular constituencies. Khulna-3 and Bhola-4 equally recorded the highest number of five incidents, followed by Barishal-5, Dhaka-5, Munshiganj-3 and Sirajganj-4, each recording three incidents. Mymensingh-3, Mymensingh-4, Netrokona-5, Sylhet-1 and Sylhet-4 each recorded two incidents. Single incidents were recorded in the constituencies of Bhola-1, Chattogram-7, Dhaka-14, Narayanganj-4, Khulna-2, Khulna-5, Laxmipur-2, Rajshahi-2 and Satkhira-3.

Based on Odhikar monitoring, post-election violence was thus geographically dispersed across both urban centres (Dhaka, Narayanganj, Chattogram) and rural districts (Khulna, Bhola, Sylhet). The concentration of incidents in specific constituencies means that violence was sometimes driven less by broad district-wide dynamics and more by localised contestation. The numerous isolated incidents demonstrates that even where electoral violence was not widespread, it remained a recurring feature of the process.



Incidents were documented across a variety of settings, including homes, streets, religious institutions, party offices, and other community spaces. Streets and other public venues were the most frequently affected setting, accounting for 16 incidents (39%), disrupting everyday life and community activity. Private homes were affected in 14 incidents (34%), illustrating that violence also reached residential spaces and directly impacted individuals and families. Three incidents (7%) occurred at religious sites, affecting important community institutions, while two incidents (5%) targeted political party offices or facilities. A further six incidents (15%) took place in other community spaces.

Types of violence

Although the overall number of incidents declined compared to the pre-election phase, the severity of violence increased, underlining the heightened risks faced by both political actors and ordinary citizens during the post-election period.

February: Between 13 and 28 February, 32 incidents were recorded across 13 districts: Barishal, Bhola, Chattogram, Laxmipur, Dhaka, Munshiganj, Khulna, Satkhira, Mymensingh, Netrokona, Rajshahi, Sirajgang and Sylhet. Within these districts, incidents were recorded across 17 electoral constituencies: Barishal-5, Bhola-4, Chattogram-7, Laxmipur-2, Dhaka-5, Khulna-2, Khulna-3, Khulna-5, Satkhira-3, Munshiganj-3, Mymensingh-3, Mymensingh-4, Netrokona-5, Rajshahi-2, Sirajganj-4, Sylhet-1 and Sylhet-4.

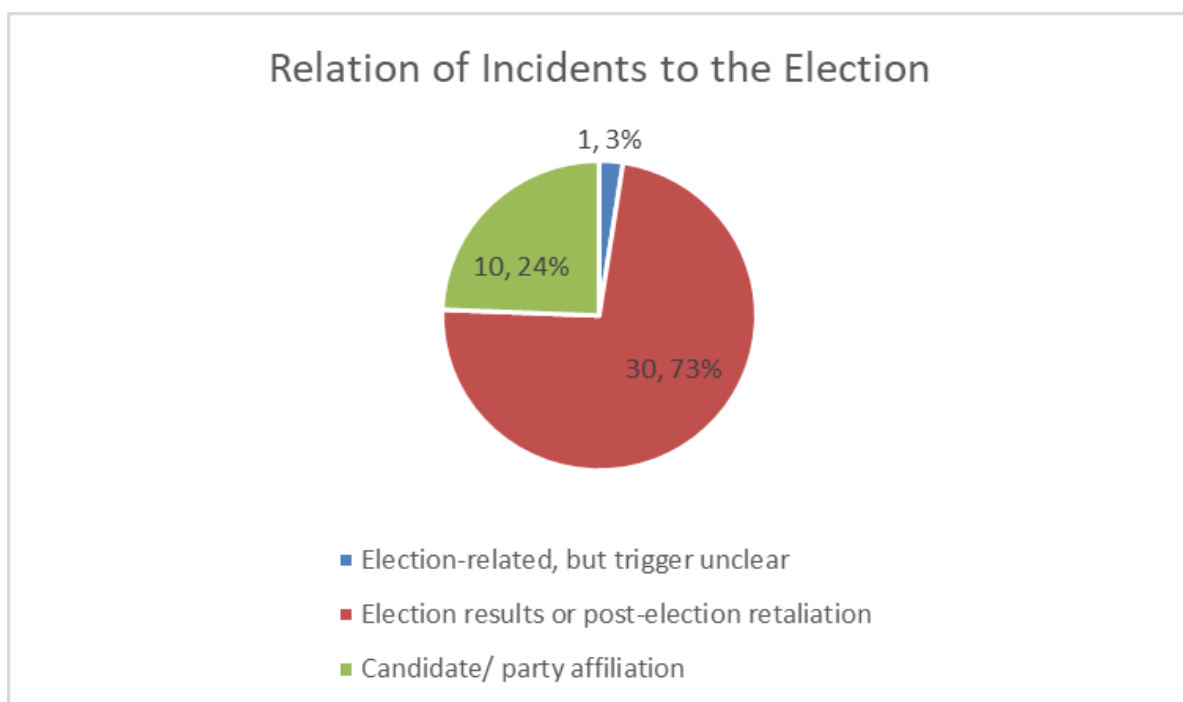
Combined categories of fatal, physical, and intimidation-related violence accounted for 29 incidents (71%), making them the dominant forms of post-election violence. These included assaults, clashes, threats, harassment, leading to five fatalities, 23 injuries and 12 persons having to be hospitalised. One identity-based incident was documented in Sylhet, where a Hindu temple was set on fire at night, destroying religious images and materials. A further seven incidents (17%) involved damage to property or infrastructure, while four incidents (10%) fell outside the main categories.

March: Six incidents were documented across five districts - Barishal, Bhola, Dhaka, Mymensingh and Narayanganj - with Bhola recording two incidents. Within these districts, electoral violence was documented across the electoral constituencies of Barishal-5, Bhola-1, Bhola-4, Dhaka-14, Mymensingh-4 and Narayanganj-4.

All documented incidents allegedly involved supporters of BNP or its alliance. Four incidents were linked to inter-party disputes and two to intra-party confrontations, including the assault of an independent candidate's supporters in Narayanganj-4 and the attack on a former Chhatra Dal (the student wing of BNP) leader in Dhaka-14 for backing a BNP-rebel candidate. These incidents resulted in five injuries, two requiring hospitalisation, and included property damage and reported psychological distress.

April: Violence declined further with three incidents recorded in two districts: Dhaka and Netrokona. Within these districts, incidents were recorded in the electoral constituencies Dhaka-5 and Netrokona-5. Dhaka-5 recorded two incidents. The cases concerned vandalism of a school office in Dhaka, extortion in a market area, and a major attack in Netrokona where around one hundred BNP supporters surrounded a mosque and vandalised the vehicle of a newly elected Member of Parliament from the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami party. While authorities responded decisively in Netrokona, dispersing the crowd and filing charges against 123 individuals, no observable response was documented in the Dhaka cases.

Most documented incidents were linked to election results, with smaller shares connected to party affiliation or unclear triggers.

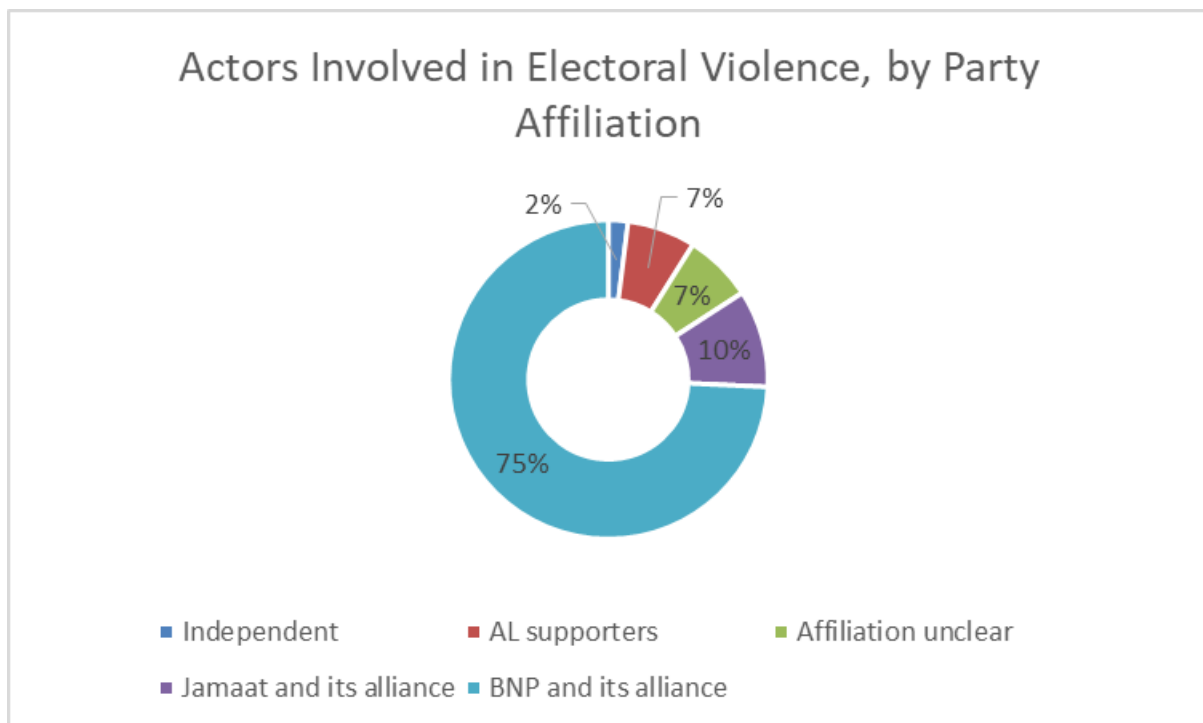


In Munshiganj-3 constituency, an independent BNP-rebel candidate's supporter was assaulted at his home after results were announced and later died in hospital. Four other fatalities during this period were similarly linked to election disputes or retaliation. In Khulna-3 constituency, a Jamaat supporter was beaten during a mediation and his family was also attacked when they intervened. In Satkhira-3 constituency, BNP supporters stormed the office of a BNP-rebel candidate and injured at least eight of his supporters, including women. In Sylhet-1 constituency, a temple was set on fire, destroying religious images and materials, reflecting how tensions spilled into identity-based violence. Elsewhere, clashes between BNP and Jamaat supporters in Netrokona-5 constituency and attacks on rival activists in Khulna highlighted efforts to consolidate influence after the polls.

Together, these incidents show that post-election violence was not only about contesting results but also about factional dominance, voter intimidation, and identity-based targeting. All fatalities and injuries occurred between 13 and 28 February, within the 15-day post-election period.

Actors involved

Available documentation indicated that many post-election incidents involved individuals reportedly affiliated with political parties. Most documented incidents involved individuals affiliated with the BNP or its alliance, accounting for 32 incidents (75%). Individuals affiliated with the Jamaat and its alliance were involved in four incidents (10%), while the AL supporters were involved in three (7%). One incident involved an independent candidate's supporters. In three incidents (7%) the political affiliation of those involved could not be established.



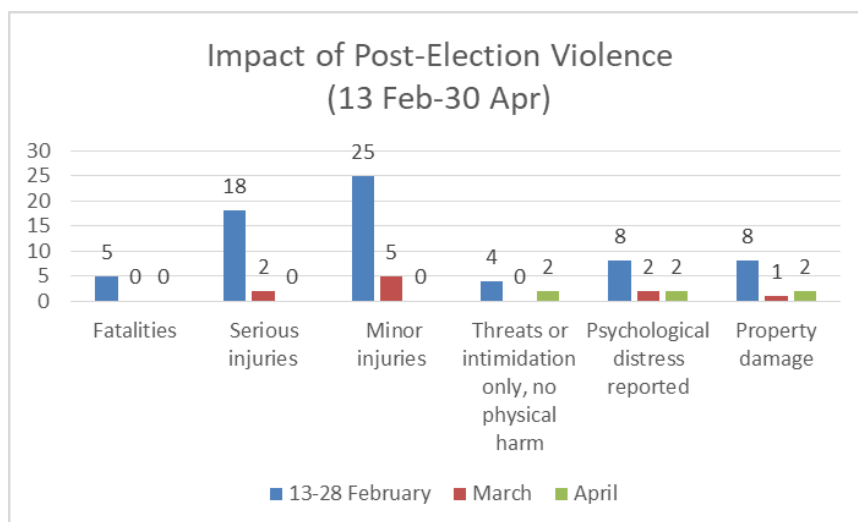
Out of the five fatal incidents, BNP supporters were allegedly involved in three whereas the political affiliation of the actors could not be determined in the other two cases.

Findings should be interpreted with caution and understood as reported affiliation based on available documentation. However, it is worthwhile noting that a large majority of the cases involved individuals reportedly affiliated with the election-winning block, i.e. BNP and its allies.

Impact of violence

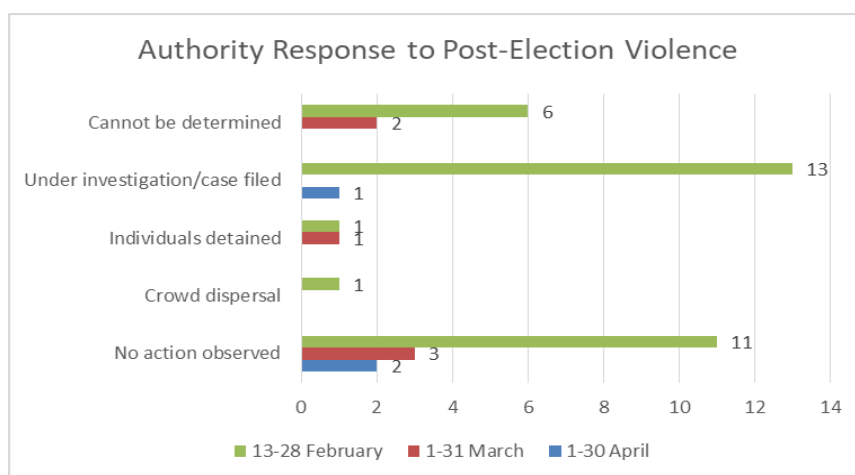
Post-election incidents of violence caused both human and material impact. Physical harm documented by Odhikar included five fatalities, 14 serious injuries requiring hospitalisation and 28 minor injuries. In addition, 6 incidents involved threats or intimidation without physical harm, while psychological distress was reported in 12 incidents. Property damage was another 11 cases documented

property damage and included an arson assault on a Hindu temple which highlights how electoral violence can extend beyond political competition to affect community identities and symbolic sites.



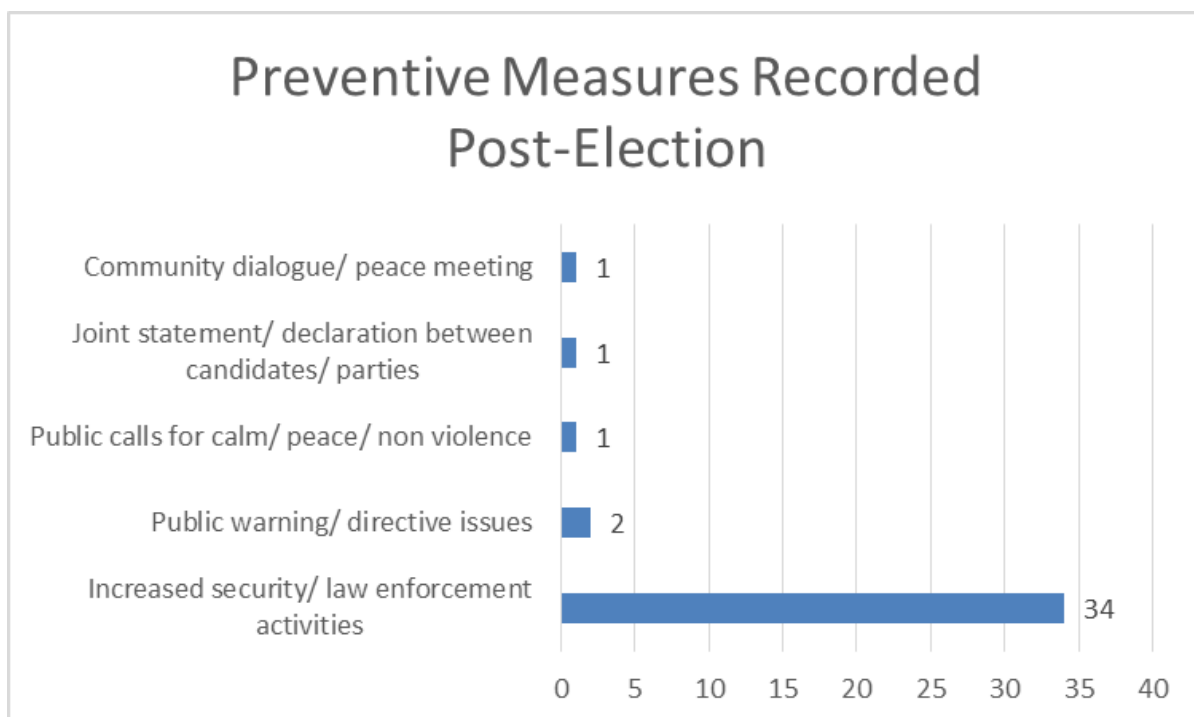
Authority response and prevention efforts

Institutional responses to post-election incidents varied. Actions, including detentions, crowd dispersals, and other interventions were recorded in 17 cases (41%) and indicated that an active response was provided for in a good number of cases. However, no response was observed in 16 cases (39%), suggesting that there is scope for more consistent enforcement. In eight cases, Odhikar monitors were not able to determine whether an action had been taken or not.



In the post-election period, 39 preventive actions were recorded and their effects observed, offering insight into how different actors sought to contain tensions after polling day. These measures ranged from community dialogues and public appeals for calm to security deployments and administrative interventions.

Observation shows that preventive efforts were overwhelmingly security-driven, with law enforcement accounting for 34 of 39 measures. Local administrations were involved in seven prevention initiatives whereas CSOs, religious leaders, media, and political parties contributed only marginally, typically one or two actions each.



A more comprehensive approach involving multiple actors working hand-in-hand to prevent post-election violence could be explored as an avenue for reducing such violence in future elections. Such initiatives should also actively engage political parties given their influence on the security environment and their responsibility to encourage supporters to engage peacefully and contribute to a calm post-election atmosphere.

Conclusion

The monitoring of Bangladesh's 13th Parliamentary Elections in February 2026, presented in this report, indicates that election-related tensions and incidents of violence continued beyond isolated events and remained present across different electoral processes. While polling day procedures inside stations were largely orderly and transparent, the assurance of ballot secrecy across all observed polling centres stands out as a significant strength of the electoral process. It demonstrates Bangladesh's adherence to international obligations and reinforces confidence in the integrity of the vote. Violence before and after voting revealed entrenched rivalries, factional disputes, and weak safeguards that undermined citizen confidence in democratic participation.

Documented incidents of violence were concentrated in both rural constituencies and urban centres such as Dhaka, Narayanganj, and Chattogram, with additional hotspots, including in Cox's Bazar, Bhola, and Mymensingh, recurring across different phases of the process. Violence extended beyond campaign venues into streets, homes, party offices, religious sites, markets, schools, and government facilities. Threats, intimidation, harassment, physical assaults, property damage, and disruptions of electoral processes were among the most frequently observed categories, with the post-election period marked by a higher proportion of severe outcomes, including fatalities and serious injuries. These patterns underscore that election-related tensions permeated everyday community settings and multiple phases of the electoral cycle, narrowing the space for safe and inclusive participation.

The variation in institutional responses observed across documented incidents further highlights the importance of timely, impartial, and consistent enforcement of electoral and criminal law. While authorities intervened effectively in some cases, the absence of observable response in others may contribute to public perceptions of unequal accountability and limited protection during periods of political tension. Monitoring data show that intervention rates declined over time—51% in the pre-election period, 44% on polling day, and only 41% in the post-election phase. This downward trend underscores the need for stronger and more consistent security preparations, particularly during polling and in the tense aftermath of results. Geographic variations in response further reinforced uneven protection, leaving many communities vulnerable to intimidation and violence.

The findings also reinforce the importance of safeguarding the participation and security of election observers, journalists, women, and vulnerable groups during electoral processes. Monitoring data indicate that these groups were among those affected by incidents of electoral violence, even if not disproportionately targeted. Their inclusion highlights the importance of continued vigilance to ensure safe and inclusive participation. Strengthening coordination between electoral institutions, law enforcement agencies, political actors, CSOs, and local communities will remain important in reducing election-related tensions and supporting peaceful electoral environments.

Taken together, these findings underscore the need for sustained efforts to improve violence prevention, institutional preparedness, accountability mechanisms, and confidence-building measures during the future electoral process in Bangladesh. The recurrence of incidents across all phases, their spread into everyday settings, and the declining rate of institutional intervention highlight systemic weaknesses that must be addressed. Building stronger safeguards, ensuring consistent enforcement, and protecting vulnerable groups will be essential to restoring public trust and supporting peaceful, inclusive democratic participation.

Recommendations

The persistence of electoral violence across all phases of the 2026 elections underscores the need for reforms. The following recommendations are directed at key stakeholders to reduce the risk of electoral violence and promote peaceful, inclusive and credible elections.

To the Bangladesh Election Commission:

1. Scale up preventive measures in high-risk constituencies in the pre-election, election day and post-election period, such as e.g. locally organised inter-party dialogues and community peace initiatives to address local tensions in a timely fashion.
2. Strengthen engagement between the Bangladesh Election Commission-led security coordination and CSO and the media to promote timely exchange of information on emerging tensions and early response at national and constituency levels.
3. Ensure adequate training of all election officials, returning officers and polling personnel on election procedures and incident response protocols as well as on the rights of independent election observers and journalists to monitor the process.
4. Establish a coordinated system to track and publish information on election-related incidents, institutional responses, investigations and prosecutions as well as regularly publish information to enhance transparency and build trust.

To law enforcement agencies:

5. Ensure adequate election security deployment to constituencies with historical track record of incidents of violence and hotspots identified based on pre-election dynamics.
6. Explicitly include public spaces and communities as a central part of the electoral security planning whilst continuing also to focus on campaign venues and polling stations, with particular attention to ensuring the safe participation of women and minority groups.
7. Establish clear procedures to ensure consistent and timely response to electoral violence. Improve the training of law enforcement personnel on such procedures and on human rights approach to electoral security, impartial and equal treatment, election-specific procedures and incident response.
8. Ensure solid documentation of incidents of electoral violence and law enforcement response operations.
9. Establish special measures or procedures to protect journalists and election observers from physical attacks as well as threats and harassment (including online) in order to enable them to carry out their work freely and safely.
10. Consider conducting a post-election review of electoral violence response operations in the pre-election, election day and post-election period with a view to identify lessons learned that can feed into security planning. The review should include a multi-stakeholder consultation process.

To political parties and candidates:

11. Reaffirm commitments to the Code of Conduct through the organisation of public endorsement events at the start of the campaign period. Such events could be organised at national and constituency levels and involve explicit commitment to peaceful campaigning and the resolution of disputes through legal channels.
12. Establish national and local level dispute resolution mechanisms within political party structures to address factional disputes and intra-party tensions.
13. Adopt measures to improve participation and safety of women, minorities and other vulnerable groups during campaign activities and public political events. Such measures include public condemnation of gender-based violence, structured dialogue with minority communities, internal disciplinary mechanisms for members or supporters who violate the Code of Conduct, and transparent response to allegations involving their own members and supporters.

To the Government and policy makers:

14. Article 91B of the Representation of the People Order (RPO) to extend the scope of the Code of Conduct to the post-election period.
15. Revise the Code of Conduct with a view to define legally terms such as “personal slander,” “offensive remarks,” and “hate speech” to promote consistent enforcement whilst at the same time protect freedom of expression.
16. Clarify the responsibility for the enforcement of fines imposed on political parties under Section 27 of the Code of Conduct, to strengthen accountability and ensure sanctions are effective and enforceable.
17. Assess the application of the Cyber Security Ordinance during the elections to identify any gaps in protecting electoral contestants and other electoral stakeholders from online threats

and harassment. Such an assessment should be undertaken in close collaboration with key electoral actors, such as the BEC, political parties, CSO and the media.

To civil society:

18. Continue to advance and refine election observation methodologies, ensuring observation before, during and after election day.
19. Refine methodologies to document electoral violence and its impact on overall participation as well as on inclusion of women and minority groups in electoral processes and violent attacks affecting journalists and election observers.
20. Explore possibilities to increase its engagement in prevention of electoral violence, in close collaboration with the Bangladesh Election Commission.

To international partners:

21. Continue collaboration with civil society in rebuilding its capacity to contribute to the democratic transition, including through election observation, civic and voter education, advocacy and dialogue.
22. Bring attention to the findings and recommendations of both international and citizen election observation efforts in their engagement with the Government, the Parliament, other institutions and the political parties, with a view to promote change towards more peaceful and inclusive elections.

Annex 1: Recommendations & relevant democratic principles

Recommendations	Relevant democratic principle
<i>To the Bangladesh Election Commission</i>	
(1) Scale up preventive measures in high-risk constituencies in the pre-election, election day and post-election period, such as e.g. locally organised inter-party dialogues and community peace initiatives to address local tensions in a timely fashion.	Participation in elections free from violence and intimidation
(2) Strengthen engagement between the Bangladesh Election Commission-led security coordination and civil society and the media to promote timely exchange of information on emerging tensions and early response at national and constituency levels.	Participation in elections free from violence and intimidation
(3) Ensure adequate training of all election officials, returning officers and polling personnel on election procedures and incident response protocols as well as on the rights of independent election observers and journalists to monitor the process.	Credible elections; independent and impartial election observation; and freedom of expression; access to information
(4) Establish a coordinated system to track and publish information on election-related incidents, institutional responses, investigations and prosecutions as well as regularly publish information to enhance transparency and build trust.	Transparency and accountability; access to information; rule of law
<i>To law enforcement agencies</i>	
(5) Ensure adequate election security deployment to constituencies with historical track record of incidents of violence and hotspots identified based on pre-election dynamics.	Participation in elections free from violence and intimidation
(6) Explicitly include public spaces and communities as a central part of the electoral security planning whilst continuing also to focus on campaign venues and polling stations, with particular attention to ensuring the safe participation of women and minority groups.	Participation in elections free from violence and intimidation
(7) Establish clear procedures to ensure consistent and timely response to electoral violence. Improve the training of law enforcement personnel on such	Impartial and human rights-compliant law enforcement; equality and non-discrimination

procedures and on human rights approach to electoral security, impartial and equal treatment, election-specific procedures and incident response.	
(8) Ensure solid documentation of incidents of electoral violence and law enforcement response operations.	Transparency and accountability; access to information
(9) Establish special measures or procedures to protect journalists and election observers from physical attacks as well as threats and harassment (including online) in order to enable them to carry out their work freely and safely.	Independent and impartial election observation; and freedom of expression; access to information
(10) Consider conducting a post-election review of electoral violence response operations in the pre-election, election day and post-election period with a view to identify lessons learned that can feed into security planning. The review should include a multi-stakeholder consultation process.	Participation in elections free from violence and intimidation
<i>To political parties and candidates</i>	
(11) Reaffirm commitments to the Code of Conduct through the organisation of public endorsement events at the start of the campaign period. Such events could be organised at national and constituency levels and involve explicit commitment to peaceful campaigning and the resolution of disputes through legal channels.	Peaceful political participation
(12) Establish national and local level dispute resolution mechanisms within political party structures to address factional disputes and intra-party tensions.	Peaceful political participation
(13) Adopt measures to improve participation and safety of women, minorities and other vulnerable groups during campaign activities and public political events. Such measures include public condemnation of gender based violence, structured dialogue with minority communities, internal disciplinary mechanisms for members or supporters who violate the Code of Conduct, and transparent response to allegations involving their own members and supporters.	Equality and non-discrimination
<i>To the Government and policy makers</i>	
(14) Article 91B of the Representation of the People Order (RPO) to extend the scope of the Code of Conduct to the post-election period.	Participation in elections free from violence and intimidation

(15) Revise the Code of Conduct with a view to define legally the terms such as “personal slander,” “offensive remarks,” and “hate speech” to promote consistent enforcement whilst at the same time protect freedom of expression.	Rule of law
(16) Clarify responsibility for the enforcement of fines imposed on political parties under Section 27 of the Code of Conduct to strengthen accountability and ensure sanctions are effective and enforceable.	Rule of law
(17) Assess the application of the Cyber Security Ordinance during the elections to identify any gaps in protecting electoral contestants and other electoral stakeholders from line threats and harassment. Such an assessment should be undertaken in close collaboration with key electoral actors, such as the BEC, political parties, the civil society and the media.	Participation in elections free from violence and intimidation; freedom of expression
<i>To civil society</i>	
(18) Continue to advance and refine election observation methodologies, ensuring observation before, during and after election day.	Independent and impartial election observation
(19) Refine methodologies to document electoral violence and its impact on overall participation as well as on inclusion of women and minority groups in electoral processes and violent attacks affecting journalists and election observers.	Independent and impartial election observation; equality and non-discrimination
(20) Explore possibilities to increase its engagement in prevention of electoral violence, in close collaboration with the Bangladesh Election Commission.	Participation in elections free from violence and intimidation; inclusive civic participation
<i>To international partners</i>	
(21) Continue collaboration with civil society in rebuilding its capacity to contribute to the democratic transition, including through election observation, civic and voter education, advocacy and dialogue.	Inclusive civic participation
(22) Bring attention to the findings and recommendations of both international and citizen election observation efforts in their engagement with the Government, the Parliament, other institutions and the political parties, with a view to promote change towards more peaceful and inclusive elections.	Accountability

Annex 2: List of constituencies monitored

Sl. No.	Name of District	Constituency	Geographic Zone
1	Barishal	Barishal- 4: Hizla Upazila, Mehendiganj Upazila	South-West
		Barishal- 5: Barishal City Corporation area	
2	Bhola	Bhola-1: Bhola Sadar Upazila	
		Bhola-4: Char Fasson Upazila, Manpura Upazila	
3	Patuakhali	Patuakhali-3: Dashmina Upazila and Galachipa Upazila	
4	Chattogram	Chattogram-6: Raozan Upazila	South-East
		Chattogram-7: Rangunia Upazila — Entire area. The whole of Rangunia Upazila is included in this constituency. One union parishad of Boalkhali Upazila: Sreepur Kharandwip Union of Boalkhali Upazila.	
		Chattogram-8: Parts of Chattogram City Corporation (Wards 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) and Boalkhali Upazila (entire, except Sreepur Kharandwip Union Parishad	
		Chattogram-4: Sitakunda Upazila and Part of Chattogram City Corporation (specifically Ward Nos. 9 North Pahartali and 10 North Kattali)	
5	Cox's Bazar	Cox's Bazar-2: Kutubdia Upazila and Maheshkhali Upazila	South-East
		Cox's Bazar-3: Cox's Bazar Sadar Upazila, Ramu Upazila and Eidgaon Upazila.	
6	Feni	Feni-2: Feni Sadar Upazila	South-East
		Feni-3: Daganbhuiyan Upazila, Sonagazi Upazila	

7	Laxmipur	Laxipur-2: Raipur Upazila and Parts of Lakshmipur Sadar Upazila, specifically these union parishads: Basikpur, Char Ruhita, Dakshin, Hamchadi, Dalal Bazar, Parbati Nagar, Shak Char, Tum Char, and Uttar Hamchad	South-East
		Laxmipur-3: Lakshmipur Sadar Upazila	
8	Dhaka	Dhaka-4: Shyampur and parts of Kadamtali	Central
		Dhaka-5: Demra, Dhalpur, Kadamtali and Jurain	
		Dhaka-10: Dhanmondi, Lalmatia, and parts of Lalbagh	
		Dhaka-14: Mirpur, Kallyanpur and parts of Savar	
9	Munshiganj	Munshiganj-1: Sirajdikhan Upazila and Sreenagar Upazila	Central
		Munshiganj-2: Louhajang Upazila and Tongibari Upazila	
		Munshiganj-3: Munshiganj Sadar Upazila and Gazaria Upazila	
10	Narayanganj	Narayanganj- 4: Fatulla Upazila and Sidhirganj Upazila	Central
		Narayanganj-5: Bandar Upazila, Narayanganj Thana, Portion of Narayanganj Sadar Upazila, which includes Narayanganj Municipality, Alirtek Union Parishad, and Gognagar Union Parishad.	
11	Khulna	Khulna-2: Khulna Sadar Thana and Sonadanga	South-West
		Khulna-3: Wards 1–15 of Khulna City Corporation, Two Union Parishads of Dighalia Upazila: Aronghata and Jogipole	
		Khulna-5: Dumuria Upazila and Phultala Upazila	

12	Magura	Magura-2: Mohammadpur Upazila, Shalikhah Upazila Four union parishads of Magura Sadar Upazila: Birail Palita, Gopalgram, Kuchiamora, and Satrujitpur	South-West
13	Satkhira	Satkhira-1: Kalaroa Upazila and Tala Upazila Satkhira-3: Assasuni Upazila and Kaliganj Upazila	South-West
14	Mymensingh	Mymensingh-3: Gauripur Upazila Mymensingh-4: Mymensingh Sadar Upazila and Mymensingh City Corporation Mymensingh-6: Fulbaria Upazila Mymensingh-8: Ishwarganj Upazila	North-East
15	Netrokona	Netrokona-2: Netrokona Sadar Upazila and Barhatta Upazila Netrokona-5: Purbadhala Upazila	North-East
16	Rajshahi	Rajshahi-1: Godagari Upazila and Tanore Upazila Rajshahi-2: Rajshahi City Corporation area Rajshahi-3: Mohanpur Upazila and Paba Upazila	North-West
17	Pabna	Pabna-1: Santhia Upazila Pabna- 5: Pabna Sadar Upazila	North-West
18	Sirajganj	Sirajganj-2: Kamarkhanda Upazila, Six Union Parishads of Sirajganj Sadar Upazila: Bahuli, Kalia Haripur, Kaoakola, Khoksabari, Saidabad, and Shialkul Sirajganj-4: Ullapara Upazila	North-West
19	Panchagarh	Panchagarh-2: Debiganj Upazila and Boda Upazila	North-West
20	Thakurgaon	Thakurgaon-1: Thakurgaon Sadar Upazila	

		Thakurgaon-2: Baliadangi Upazila and Haripur Upazila and Two Union Parishads of Ranisankail Upazila: Dharmaghar and Kashipur	North-West
21	Sylhet	Sylhet- 1: Sylhet City Corporation area and Sylhet Sadar Upazila	North-East
		Sylhet- 4: Gowainghat Upazila, Jaintiapur Upazila and Companiganj Upazila	
22	Sunamganj	Sunamganj-2: Derai Upazila and Sullah Upazila	North-East
		Sunamganj-5: Chhatak Upazila and Dowarabazar Upazila	