



Resolution on Bangladesh

Weeks away from parliamentary elections in Bangladesh on 30th December 2018, thousands of opposition party leaders and activists from our sister party, the **Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)**, including **Mrs. Khaleda Zia** the BNP Chairperson and former Prime Minister, have been imprisoned with what is widely viewed as politically motivated cases in order to disqualify them from participating in elections.

In addition to imprisoning the opposition, the ruling party has also passed new legislation, the *Digital Security Act*, that can see anyone criticizing the government prosecuted and jailed. The government now wants social media to be monitored by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), a paramilitary agency known for its brutality and for its tendency to operate on the fringes of the law during the period leading to elections.

In light of these recent developments which constitute serious violation of the rule of law and human rights and serious hindrance to creating a congenial environment for opposition political parties to participate, the IDC-CDI:

- calls on the European Union to immediately address the matter with great urgency.
- calls on the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs to make a immediate statement on the election in Bangladesh calling for human rights violations and violence by the state against opposition political party activists to stop with immediate effect following the recent killing of a prospective opposition candidate and given that a high number of opposition activists continue to be arrested following the election schedule announcement.
- calls on the Bangladesh government to immediately suspend the Digital Security Act and create conditions for credible, transparent and inclusive elections
- calls on the EU High Representative to ask the government of Bangladesh and the National Election Commission to maintain independence during the election period and allow Begum Khaleda Zia to participate in these elections on 30th December so that the people of Bangladesh have access to the widest possible choice of candidates to exercise their democratic franchise.
- calls on the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs to send a full observation team to the elections as Bangladesh receives the second highest development assistance from the EU after Afghanistan (approximately 600 million Euros) which includes assistance for democratic governance.
- calls on the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs to provide necessary diplomatic assistance for a IDC-CDI delegation to visit former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in prison before the elections.
- calls on the government of Bangladesh to refrain from continuous politicisation of institutions conducting the elections, including the Election Commission, and to dissolve the current parliament.
- calls on the EU to place sanctions against those law enforcement officers and government ministers, ruling party politicians who call for or commit violence against opposition activists.
- calls on the EU High Representative to keep representatives of the EU mission in Bangladesh to be present in Bangladesh during elections.

The IDC-CDI is deeply concerned and disappointed that the Bangladesh government has not invited international observers with adequate time and calls on the EU to act and condemn this approach given the financial support the EU provides on democratic governance to the country and look at immediate possible sanctions against those who violate rights.

Finally, the IDC-CDI condemns the highly partisan organisation of the elections in Bangladesh and asks the EU High Representative to convey urgently to the government of Bangladesh to refrain from partisan intervention and ensure free and fair democratic elections.

Sal, Cape Verde 26th November 2018