

CONTINUITY OR CHANGE?: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROCUREMENT AND USE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT EQUIPMENT IN BANGLADESH BEFORE AND AFTER THE JULY 2024 UPRISING



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*Front cover. A line of SWAT officers in Dhaka, 2026
Credit: Juber Ahmed Sahel*

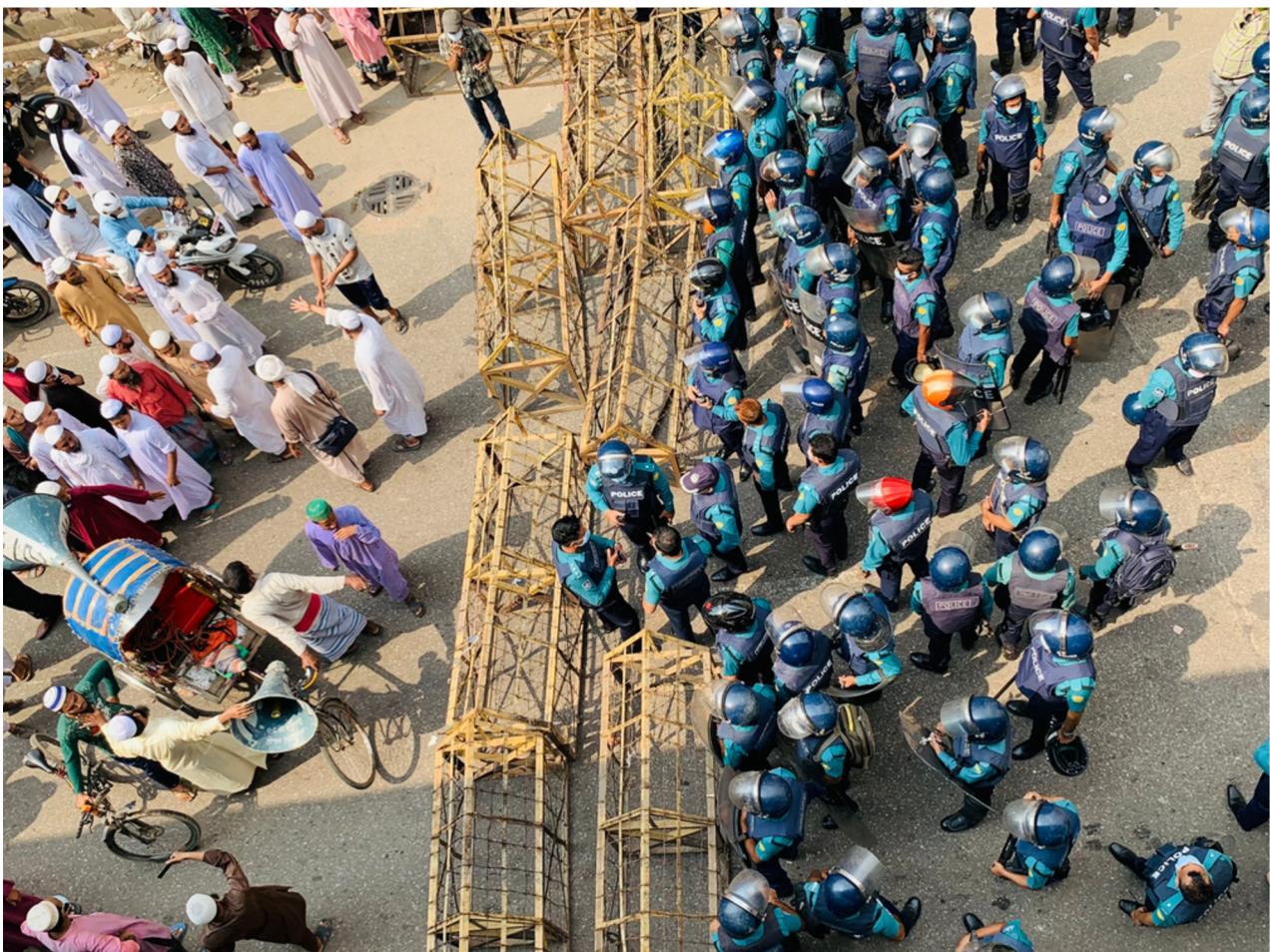
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1. INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh's 2024 uprising exposed the extent to which repressive policing practices, including torture and other ill-treatment, had become embedded in a wider system of political control. Under the Awami League government (2009-24), state security forces repeatedly suppressed critics and perceived opponents of the regime - including opposition politicians, students, journalists and human rights defenders - through arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, torture, extrajudicial killing and the use of excessive force at protests and other public assemblies. These abuses were not isolated acts of individual misconduct. They were enabled by a culture of impunity for law enforcement personnel, weak accountability and oversight mechanisms, and the systematic procurement and stockpiling of inherently abusive weapons and equipment which are inappropriate for use by law enforcement.

The July 2024 uprising, which began as a student-led protest against a quota system for public sector jobs, rapidly developed into a broader challenge to the regime's repressive rule. In response, the government deployed law enforcement and military forces. In an attempt to suppress dissent, these forces used tear gas, stun grenades, rubber bullets, lathis and live ammunition, causing widespread injuries, including permanent blindness, disability and psychological trauma, and killing as many as 1,400 people.[1]. Reports indicate that the majority of fatalities were caused by firearms, including the widespread and indiscriminate use of shotguns loaded with metal pellets, often targeted at the face.[2].



Aerial view of protestors and police officers facing off in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Credit: Shamsuddin Habib

The fall of the Awami League government on 5th August 2024 created a rare opportunity for reform of the security forces. The interim government promised accountability. They released thousands of prisoners, established a commission of inquiry into enforced disappearances, acceded to the UN Convention on Enforced Disappearances, and created reform commissions covering the police and judiciary.[3] Whilst these steps were an important indication of the government's commitment to institutional change, formal commitments do not, by themselves, guarantee substantive or lasting changes to policing practice. The same agencies, command structures, and institutional cultures that enabled serious human rights abuses before the uprising, continue to shape law enforcement practice even after the transfer of political power. A key question, therefore, is not whether the government's rhetoric has changed, but whether the material conditions of policing have changed in Bangladesh.

To answer this broad question would require a comprehensive assessment of changes to Bangladesh's law enforcement policy and practice over the last two years, including to legislation and use of force protocols, command structures and personnel, as well as accountability and oversight mechanisms. Such an analysis, is however, beyond the scope of this briefing. Instead, this briefing focuses on one specific aspect of reform, that may nevertheless help to indicate wider changes in policing practice, namely, whether there has been a meaningful shift in the procurement and use of weapons and equipment by Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies. Such changes matter because decisions about the procurement and deployment of certain policing technologies can directly affect the type of force used by police and the harms that can result.

To assess these changes, we first review the types of equipment used in the policing of protests and in places of detention under the Awami League regime and how that equipment was used to facilitate the human rights abuses. We then assess if there has been a significant shift in the types of weapons and equipment acquired and deployed by Bangladesh law enforcement since the fall of the regime. The briefing concludes with recommendations for the government, law enforcement agencies and civil society organisations (CSOs), as well as identifying areas where further investigations and research are required.

2.1 USE OF FORCE AGAINST PROTESTERS PRIOR TO JULY 2024

Before the July 2024 uprising, the policing of public assemblies in Bangladesh was characterised by excessive use of force against protestors, with police regularly deploying a wide range of lethal and less lethal weapons including batons and lathis, tear gas, kinetic impact projectiles (commonly referred to as rubber bullets), water cannon, and live ammunition against political opponents and those perceived to be a threat to the regime. During sit-ins at entry points to Dhaka in July 2023, for example, police cleared thousands of protestors by firing rubber bullets and tear gas and used baton charges against crowds blocking the main roads. Awami League supporters were also reported to have attacked protestors with sticks in the presence of police who took no action to arrest the perpetrators. In total around 600 opposition supporters were reported to have been injured.[4]

One of the most notable features of protest policing under the Awami League was the extensive and indiscriminate use of shotguns loaded with metal pellets. Human rights reporting suggests that imported metal pellet shotgun ammunition was first used by Bangladeshi law enforcement against protestors in response to student demonstrations in 2018.[5] By 2023, use of shotgun fired metal pellets to suppress protests was becoming widespread. During the suppression of an opposition rally demanding Sheikh Hasina's resignation in October 2023 for example, 65 Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) activists were reportedly seriously injured by pellets, while police also used tear gas, kinetic impact projectiles and stun grenades. Reports also described police firing from rooftops hitting unarmed civilians and bystanders in the head, face and eyes with metal pellets.[6]

The inherently inaccurate and indiscriminate nature of shotgun ammunition containing metal pellets – commonly referred to as birdshot or buckshot[7] – makes it inappropriate for use for crowd control. When fired, a single cartridge can discharge dozens and sometimes hundreds of small metal projectiles. At close range, these projectiles can remain tightly clustered, greatly increasing the risk of severe or fatal injury. Over larger distances, they spread widely and unpredictably, making it impossible to accurately target a single individual and increasing the risk of hitting bystanders. Pellets are strongly associated with eye injuries and penetrating wounds. When fired towards the upper body, face or head, metal pellets can penetrate skin, eyes, skulls and internal organs. As such, although presented as a “less lethal” by state forces, ammunition containing metal pellets is in fact lethal and has caused permanent blindness, long-term disability, and deaths, in Bangladesh and in other states where they are used.[8]

During the 2024 July uprising, use of metal pellets by police and other security forces escalated dramatically, with predictably devastating consequences. Reported injury patterns indicate that shotgun ammunition was repeatedly fired at close range, aimed above the waist or targeted at sensitive areas of the body, including the eyes, head, chest and abdomen, creating a high risk of serious life-altering injury or death.[9] In Dhaka, the National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital recorded more than 700 pellet-related eye injuries during the protests, 504 of which required emergency surgical operations.[10] In Sylhet, Osmani Medical College Hospital documented 64 pellet injuries, more than half of which involved serious ocular trauma.[11] Taken together, these patterns suggest both intentional targeting of vulnerable parts of the body and indiscriminate use of force that exposed protesters and bystanders to a high risk of serious injury, blinding or death.

The OHCHR fact-finding report published in 2025 indicates that shotguns loaded with metal pellets were used most frequently by Bangladesh Police.[12] This is supported by Omega’s analysis of Bangladeshi trade data, which shows that between October 2022 and July 2024 Bangladesh law enforcement agencies purchased more than four million metal pellet shotgun cartridges and more than 25,000 shotguns.[13] The scale and timing of this procurement, ahead of the 2024 election, suggests that the use of metal pellet ammunition was not a response to sudden disorder, but formed part of an intentional policing strategy to suppress dissent by inflicting serious injury and death.

In addition to the use of shotgun-fired metal pellets, the July 2024 uprising also saw the extensive use of other lethal firearms and ammunition. An analysis of police case records by Lawyers for Energy, Environment and Development identified at least 4,634 instances of the use of lethal ammunition across 100 police cases filed during the uprising.[14] The firearms documented in those records included 7.62mm semi-automatic rifles, sub-machine guns, assault rifles, and 9mm revolvers and pistols. Police records reportedly provided to the UN fact-finding mission also acknowledged that 7.62mm rifles, sub-machine guns and pistols were deployed in response to protests in Dhaka and several other districts.[15]

The impact of the deployment of this lethal ammunition was devastating. OHCHR’s investigation indicated that more than 1,400 people may have been killed during the protests, with lethal ammunition causing the majority of fatalities.[16] A quantitative analysis of 253 protest-related deaths reported in Bangladeshi national newspapers published in January 2026 found that “lethal bullets” were the recorded as the cause of death in 199 cases (78.66%) of those reviewed.[17]

Reports of the extensive use of firearms during the uprising is consistent with evidence of the procurement of large quantities of firearms and live ammunition prior the July 2024. Between 2021 and 2023, Bangladesh Police reportedly purchased approximately 24.9 million rounds of lethal ammunition and imported 18,000 7.62mm semi-automatic rifles. During the same period, police also procured 14,600 Glock pistols, and 8,000 other 9mm pistols.[18] As with the procurement of shotgun ammunition, the timing and scale of this procurement suggests the purposeful attempt to equip the Bangladesh Police with a level of firepower capable of inflicting heavy casualties.

The use of lethal ammunition including metal pellets to police protest not only contradicts international human rights and policing standards, but also Bangladesh’s own legal framework governing the use of

force. International human rights law requires that any use of force by law enforcement be lawful, necessary, proportionate, precautionary, non-discriminatory and accountable[19]. The UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms require law enforcement officials to use lethal firearms only when 'strictly unavoidable in order to protect life[20]. The UN guidance on less-lethal weapons, meanwhile, specifically, states that "metal pellets, such as those fired from shotguns, should never be used".[21]

Bangladesh's domestic framework, though outdated and in need of revision, also imposes limits on the use of force. The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, the Police Act, 1861, and the Police Regulations, Bengal, 1943, provide the legal framework for dispersing unlawful assemblies[22]. According to these provisions, firearms should be used only as a last resort, after warning, where absolutely necessary. Furthermore, any use of force must be proportionate and injury and casualties kept to a minimum[23]. The widespread and indiscriminate use of lethal ammunition by Bangladesh Police against protesters, including firing directly into crowds, at close range and above the waist, or at the head, in circumstance where force was not justified, is clearly inconsistent with these existing standards.

Case Study: The death of Abu Sayed

On 16 July 2024, Abu Sayed, a student at Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur, was shot and killed during a protest outside the university[24]. On the basis of witness accounts, video footage and digital forensic analysis, OHCHR's fact-finding report concluded that Abu Sayed had raised his hands and did not pose a threat to officers positioned approximately 14–15 metres away. According to eyewitnesses interviewed by OHCHR, two police officers shot him multiple times with shotguns ammunition, aimed directly at his torso[25].

Forensic and medical analysis indicates that the ammunition used was metal pellets rather than rubber projectiles, as claimed by the authorities. OHCHR's forensic physician found shotgun wounds with at least 40 metal pellets on the right side of Sayed's chest and 50 on the left, including around the heart, lungs and abdomen. They concluded that the injuries were consistent with at least two shots from shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets[26]. Analysis by Forensic Architecture suggested that the ammunition used may have been a 'RIO' branded cartridge with distinctive markings and a green cartridge case[27]. The Rio brand is manufactured by the Spanish company Maxam. This tentative identification is supported by Omega's trade data analysis which shows three shipments of "Cartridges for Shotguns" worth over \$335,000 from Maxam to Bangladesh Police on 5th March 2022[28]. This is further corroborated by Spanish government export-control data from 2022, which shows exports to Bangladesh of "cartuchos" (cartridges) under the category of "other material" for hunting and sport-shooting weapons, valued at €298,987[29]. The related end-user table records the end-user of these cartridges as police. The same annex also recorded four authorised licences for "other material (anti-riot)" to Bangladesh, valued at €254,106[30].



OHCHR described Sayed's killing as emblematic of a broader pattern in which Bangladesh Police systematically fired short-barrelled shotguns loaded with lethal metal pellets at protesters throughout the uprising[31].

2.2 TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT IN DETENTION FACILITIES AND PRISONS

The use of weapons and equipment by law enforcement agencies under the Awami League government was not confined to public order policing. Numerous reports indicate that there was widespread torture of political opponents in prisons and other places of detention. This torture used both specialised weapons and equipment including handcuffs, electric shock weapons, hoods, soundproofed rooms, and surveillance systems as well as 'improvised' equipment such as pulleys, hooks, rotating chairs and electric foot heaters.[32]

By the time of the July 2024 uprising, several organisations had documented their concerns about widespread and systematic enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment. In 2023, the CSO Odhikar recorded 24 alleged extrajudicial killings, including eight people reportedly tortured to death, 52 enforced disappearances and 128 deaths in jail[33]. This pattern continued into 2024, when between January and July, 20 people were reportedly subjected to enforced disappearance by law enforcement agencies, including nine allegedly disappeared by the Detective Branch, five by police, three by plainclothes law enforcement personnel, two by RAB, and one jointly by RAB and the Detective Branch[34]. Victims later described being held in secret detention facilities and tortured to obtain confessions[35]. Thus, torture under the Awami League was used to both to punish detainees and extract information and confessions which could later be (mis)used to convict the detainees in criminal cases.

Following the fall of the Awami League government, the interim government established the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances mandated to investigate disappearances committed between 6th January 2009 and 5th August 2024[36]. The Commission's final report, published in January 2026, provides a detailed account of the custodial architecture of the Awami League, including the agencies involved, the detention sites and the torture techniques used, and the equipment that enabled those abuses[37].

The Commission's report emphasises that enforced disappearance under the Awami League were not a series of isolated abuses, but a "deliberately designed system... calculated to avoid detection and attribution of responsibility"[38]. Documented disappearances followed a distinctive pattern involving surveillance, abduction, blindfolding and restraint, movement between agencies or facilities, periods of unacknowledged detention, torture and interrogation, and then one of several outcomes: release without charge, production before a court in a fabricated or coerced case, continued disappearance, or extrajudicial execution. The detention architecture involved numerous state agencies including the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) and other police or intelligence units. The report also suggests that enforced disappearances were politically targeted and tended to increase in frequency around elections or periods of political tensions. Notably, the report also concludes that the system relied on inter-agency cooperation, suggesting that torture had become systematic and routine rather than the result of misconduct by a small number of isolated actors[39].

Torture documented in the facilities identified in the report was widespread and methodical. Victims described a wide range of torture methods including prolonged blindfolding, solitary confinement, sleep deprivation, restricted food, denial of privacy, handcuffing, shackling, stress positions, beatings, suspension from ceilings, insertion of pins under fingernails, waterboarding, electric shocks, sexualised abuse, and threats against family members. The pattern differed between agencies. In some facilities, torture appears to have been integrated into ordinary office environments, with detainees reporting that officers continued routine work nearby while abuse was taking place. In RAB sites, the infrastructure was reported to have been more specialised, including sound-proofed rooms and specialised equipment designed to inflict pain or psychological harm[40].

Case study: Foot heaters, interrogation equipment and the need for long-term monitoring

In October 2004, a Bangladesh import/export agent posted a request on a tender website seeking “Intelligence/Security Equipment for Police.” The listed items included digitally controlled interrogation foot heaters, interrogation hangers, interrogation chairs, interrogation face lights, lethal electric shock batons, voice recorders, and hidden audio/video monitoring equipment[41]. A second tender-related posting by the same company described it as a government-approved indenting house in Bangladesh acting as an agent of overseas companies[42]. The following December, national media reporting appeared to corroborate the tender, reporting that the home ministry had floated a tender to purchase similar interrogation equipment[43]. Despite investigations at the time, it was not possible to determine definitively whether the tender was genuine or whether the equipment had been procured or used.

Recent findings detailed in the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into enforced disappearances, however, suggest that the historical tenders may indeed have been genuine. In the report, victim testimony describes a “particularly painful instrument” used for thermal torture[44]. The device was described as requiring a detainee to sit in a chair, chained by the legs, while the legs were submerged in water up to just below the knee and heated gradually to an excruciating temperature. The same investigation also documented a rotating torture chair discovered in one torture centre.

The thermal torture device and rotating chair cannot be definitively linked to the “foot heaters” and “interrogation chairs” referred to in the 2004 tender. However, the overlap is too significant to ignore. It suggests that the earlier tender may have reflected a genuine procurement request and that interrogation equipment may have entered Bangladesh long before its use could be confirmed through victim testimony and site inspections. The case demonstrates why long-term monitoring of procurement, trade data, tender notices and human rights reporting is necessary.



Left: The rotating chair torture device found at NSI; **Right:** Illustration of rotating interrogation chairs illustration based on witness and survivor accounts (Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances , 2026) [45].

The types of weapons and equipment identified in the report included ordinary law enforcement items such as handcuffs, batons and CCTV, but also specialised or improvised torture equipment, including; portable electric shock weapons, hoods or “jom tupi”, pulleys and hooks used to suspend prisoners from the ceiling or walls, rotating chairs, whips, and thermal torture equipment. Electric shock weapons were reportedly used widely, including in vehicles during abductions. Rotating devices were also repeatedly described in victim testimony, including rotating chairs that caused vomiting, urination, defecation and loss of consciousness.

The Commission’s report highlights the need for close scrutiny of the weapons and equipment procured and used in places of detention. While almost anything can be used to commit torture, it is often facilitated by specialised policing equipment. The procurement of devices specifically designed to inflict pain, significantly increases the likelihood that torture and other ill-treatment may occur. Any assessment of reforms post-uprising must therefore consider not only changes to police procedures, command structures or accountability mechanisms, but also the material conditions that enable abuse. This includes establishing what happened to the equipment and facilities identified in the commissions investigations, whether any items have been removed, replaced or destroyed, what equipment remains in use, and whether safeguards now exist to prevent the acquisition of inherently abusive equipment or other goods likely to be used for torture or ill-treatment.

3. USE & PROCUREMENT OF POLICE WEAPONS SINCE JULY 2024

On 5 August 2024, after weeks of student-led protests and escalating state violence, Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled Bangladesh. Three days later, an interim government headed by Muhammad Yunus took office, creating a rare opportunity to break with the abusive policing practices of the Awami League era. The interim government publicly committed to accountability and reform, with Yunus describing the goal as “fundamental reforms” rather than “flimsy” or “eye-wash” reforms[46]

This section assesses whether developments since July 2024 do indeed indicate meaningful change or continuity in the procurement and use of law enforcement weapons and equipment. It first examines reported changes in policing practice, including the equipment used in public order operations, before analysing procurement under the interim government, including the types and quantities of weapons acquired and their sources.



Credit: Rayhan9d, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>>, via Wikimedia Commons

3.1 TRENDS IN THE USE OF WEAPONS TO POLICE PROTESTS SINCE JULY 2024

Human rights monitoring since the fall of the Awami League suggests a partial change in the equipment used by Bangladesh police to disperse protests. The most significant apparent shift is a significant reduction in reported use of live ammunition including shotguns loaded with metal pellets. This is important, given the scale of deaths, eye injuries and permanent disability associated with such ammunition during the July 2024 uprising. However, recent monitoring also indicates that police have continue to rely on forceful dispersal methods, and in particular the use of stun grenades, tear gas, baton charges and water cannon.

A six-month review of police interventions between October 2025 and March 2026 published by SAPRAN, recorded approximately 295 injuries, and one death (attributed to a stun grenade) across 34 incidents of police dispersal of protests. The review was based on qualitative analysis of national media reporting and identified ‘sound grenades’ (stun grenades) as the most frequently reported tool, followed by tear gas, batons and water cannon. Rubber bullets were reported in only one incident. Importantly, despite their widespread use during the final months of the Awami League regime, lethal ammunition including shotgun cartridges containing metal pellets were not reported to have been used in any of the documented incidents[47].

These findings may indicate an intentional shift away from the use of shotgun ammunition containing metal pellets that caused mass injury during the uprising. If it was sustained, any reduction in the use of metal pellet ammunition would be a positive development. However, this evidence should be interpreted cautiously. The absence of reported use of metal pellet ammunition in a six-month period does not establish that such ammunition will not be deployed again in future, since it is very likely to still be held in police armouries. Nor does it establish that operational rules, training or accountability mechanisms have changed. It shows only that, in the documented incidents reviewed, other forms of force were more visible. The apparent replacement of metal pellet ammunition with stun grenades also raises its own concerns. Stun grenades are classed as less lethal weapons and are designed to produce disorientation through a loud sound or flash. However, in practice, they can still cause serious injury such as blast injuries, burns, hearing damage, blunt trauma and even death. They are, particularly dangerous when fired or thrown directly at people or into dense crowds, or used from elevated positions where the weapon may strike a person in the head with force[48]. Their frequent use across a range of protests and demonstrations suggests that they have become a routine dispersal tool rather than an exceptional measure.

Recent reporting also suggests that use of excessive force remains a feature of the policing of protests in Bangladesh. In October 2025, for example, police used stun grenades and water cannon against a teachers’ led demonstration, injuring 50 [49]. In November, stun grenades were reported in all four incidents documented in the report, including at a teachers’ protest where more than 110 people were injured and one person was killed[50]. In February 2026, “sound grenades” were again reported as the most frequently used dispersal tool, appearing in at least four of the five incidents documented by SAPRAN. These included a protest in Shahbagh, Dhaka, over demands for a UN investigation into the Sharif Osman Hadi case, where sound grenades and tear gas grenades were reportedly used and at least 10 people were injured[51].

The evidence points to partial change rather than a clear break with earlier police practices. While live ammunition including metal pellet shotgun ammunition was not reported in the incidents reviewed by SAPRAN, the continued use of stun grenades, tear gas, baton charges and water cannon show that coercive dispersal remains central to protest policing in Bangladesh.

Case study: The death of Rakib Hasan

Although the findings published by SAPRAN indicate an increased use of stun grenade, their use by Bangladesh law enforcement agencies is not completely new, and the dangers associated with stun grenades were already evident during the July 2024 uprising. On 19 July 2024, for example, twelve-year-old Rakib Hasan was fatally injured in Mohammadpur, Dhaka, after a RAB helicopter was filmed firing stun grenades into the area. Video analysis, witness accounts and geolocation placed the helicopter over Mohammadpur at the relevant time, and RAB later acknowledged using stun grenades and tear gas from helicopters there, while denying responsibility for deaths[52].

Medical and forensic material reportedly indicated catastrophic head trauma. Hospital records referred to a “head injury (grenade blast)”, and notes from a physician involved in the autopsy described the brain as completely lacerated and the skull fractured. Independent experts consulted during the investigation considered the injuries consistent with a heavy object, such as a stun grenade, striking the skull from above[53].

However, media monitoring of protests alone cannot determine conclusively whether the apparent reduction in the use of metal pellet ammunition by Bangladesh police reflects a deeper policy shift or simply a temporary pause in deployment. To assess this, these findings must be complemented by an analysis of recent procurement patterns, which can help indicate not only what weapons and equipment have been deployed, but also what remains available for use in future.

3.2 TRENDS IN POLICE PROCUREMENT SINCE JULY 2024

Assessing procurement alongside reported use is essential in assessing any potential change in policing practices in Bangladesh since the fall of the Awami League government. While human rights monitoring can help to identify the specific weapons and equipment deployed at particular protests, the absence of reported use of a particular weapon after August 2024 does not provide any evidence that the weapon has been withdrawn, stockpiles destroyed, or its use discouraged or prohibited by changes to use of force protocols. It may instead simply reflect the scale and nature of the protests monitored or tactical decisions not to deploy that weapon in those specific incidents. Procurement data, however, can provide insights not only into what might be used, but also into what types of weapons agencies are seeking to retain, replenish, or acquire for future operations. Patterns of procurement can therefore offer a different perspective on changes to institutional cultures and can help to assess whether official attitudes toward the policing of protest and treatment of prisoners has really changed.



Graffiti in Rajshahi after July revolution. Credit: Rocky Masum, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

Methodology

For this analysis two main sources of procurement data have been used: tender and contracts data issued by government bodies, and commercially available import and export trade data.

Tender records are public procurement documents issued by government bodies when seeking to purchase goods or services. They may identify the procuring agency, describe the items to be purchased, and provide information on quantities and estimated or contracted value. In Bangladesh, a substantial volume of procurement information is available through the national e-Government Procurement portal[54]. However, its usefulness is limited because police tenders, particularly those relating to weapons and security equipment, are not always identifiable in, or submitted through, that system. The primary source of tender information for this briefing, therefore, is the Bangladesh Police procurement and tender notice page[55]. This source is more directly relevant to identifying police procurement of arms and ammunition and includes notices issued by Police Headquarters and a range of other police agencies, including district police offices, metropolitan police, and specialist units.

It is important to note, however, that this source does not represent a complete record of all police or security procurement in Bangladesh. It covers only those notices published through that channel, does not include procurement by all relevant agencies, and often provides uneven levels of detail. Access to archived tender data also appears to have been recently disabled[56], meaning that older tender records have therefore needed to be reconstructed from previously captured versions of the site and data already collected by researchers. As a result, the dataset should not be treated as comprehensive. It does, however, provide an illustrative sample, covering the period of interest and is varied enough to offer some insights into police procurement patterns before and after the July 2024 uprising.

The second source of procurement information used is trade data – specifically Bangladesh import records and export records from other countries where Bangladesh was recorded as the country of destination. These records provide information on the cross-border movement of goods, including product descriptions, exporters and countries of origin, and declared quantities and values. Trade data can be particularly useful therefore, for identifying foreign suppliers, supply routes, and categories of equipment entering Bangladesh. Shipment records often also include information on the importer or consignee, allowing researchers to distinguish between consignments that are intended for police or military use from those likely to be for civilian use/domestic market. For this analysis, shipments were included where the importer or consignee could be identified as Bangladesh Police, a specialist security or intelligence agency with a domestic law enforcement or internal security function, or an administrative or procurement office acting on behalf of one of those bodies. Shipments to conventional military forces, general defence procurement bodies, private companies or individuals were excluded from the analysis.

All trade data, however, must be treated cautiously. Product descriptions may be vague, generic, abbreviated, or mistranslated. HS codes used to classify goods may be too broad to identify relevant shipments and in some cases, may be inaccurate or inconsistently used. Quantities and values can also be difficult to interpret where records relate to mixed consignments, spare parts, or samples. For these reasons, trade records alone should not be treated as definitive evidence that a particular item was acquired by a specific agency. Rather, they are useful indicators of procurement trends and supply flows, which remain subject to corroboration against other evidence, including tender records, company information, media and human rights reports and other open-source evidence.

While these two datasets may overlap, each is likely to include records that the other does not. For example, a trade record may relate to a procurement route not captured in public tender notices, while a tender may have been fulfilled by a domestic supplier and therefore not appear in import data. Where the datasets do overlap, discrepancies in recorded details mean that they cannot reliably be reconciled and combined into a single dataset. A single tender may generate one or more import shipments, but supplier names, consignees, item descriptions, quantities, dates, and values often do not align closely enough to establish a conclusive link between a shipment and a tender. For this reason, the two datasets were analysed separately.

For both tender and trade data, we analysed records from October 2022 to July 2024 to establish procurement patterns before the fall of the Awami League. Then analysed all available records from August 2024 to June 2026 to assess procurement under the interim government. The aim is not to provide a comprehensive record of Bangladesh's police and security procurement in the period covered, but to identify whether the post-uprising period shows any evidence of a change in the types of weapons and equipment being purchased. The key findings from this analysis are presented below.

Shotgun ammunition containing metal pellets

Analysis of tender and commercial trade data relating to the procurement of weapons and equipment by law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh appears to indicate a significant decrease in the procurement of shotgun ammunition containing metal pellets following the July 2024 uprising.

Between April 2021 and April 2023, Bangladesh Police published several tenders for shotgun ammunition ("12 Bore Shotgun Cartridge (Lead ball)") totalling almost 6 million cartridges. Tenders published between August 2024 and June 2026, however, include no requests for this type of ammunition. Analysis of import data shows a similar trend. In the 22-month period between October 2022 and July 2024, approximately 4 million shotgun cartridges containing metal pellets were imported by law enforcement or internal security and intelligence agencies in Bangladesh. In the equivalent 22-month period after the uprising, imports of this type of ammunition fell to approximately 392,000 cartridges, less than 10 per cent of the pre-uprising figure^[57].

Notably, of the post-uprising imports of metal-pellet shotgun ammunition analysed, none were attributed to Bangladesh Police. All identified procurement of this type of ammunition was instead attributed to Bangladesh Ansar and VDP (a paramilitary force), and to a lesser extent the Special Security Force (protection officers). This marks a significant change from the pre-uprising period, when Bangladesh Police was listed as recipient for the majority of recorded procurement of this type of ammunition, including approximately 3.5 million cartridges between October 2022 and July 2024. These findings suggest a possible shift in Bangladesh Police procurement practice post-uprising, which would appear to corroborate reporting by human rights monitors that police have stopped using metal pellet ammunition to police protests.

However, questions regarding existing stockpiles and their potential future use remain. Metal pellet ammunition was used extensively and with devastating consequences during the uprising, but this ammunition was procured in such large quantities during the final years of the Awami League government that significant inventories are highly likely to remain in police and possibly military armouries. Further investigation is required into the precise level of remaining inventory, which agencies hold them, the purposes for which they are being retained, and whether any formal restrictions have been placed on their future use. Given the indiscriminate effects of this ammunition and the risk of serious injury and death associated with its use, Omega considers that all remaining stockpiles held by law enforcement agencies responsible for public order policing should be immediately withdrawn from use and destroyed. A formal policy should be promulgated by the government of Bangladesh to prohibit the use of metal pellet ammunition against assemblies or protests.



Shotgun ammunition with metal pellets

Other lethal firearms and ammunition

The apparent reduction in procurement of metal-pellet shotgun ammunition appears to have been accompanied by an increase in the procurement of other types of lethal ammunition. In the 22-month period between October 2022 and July 2024, law enforcement and security agencies procured approximately 1.5 million rounds of lethal ammunition, excluding 12 gauge shotgun cartridges. Analysis of import and export data for the equivalent period post-uprising, shows a sharp increase, with recorded procurement rising to between approximately 2 million and 3.2 million rounds[58].

The calibre of ammunition is not always specified in the trade data. However, where this information is available, the majority of lethal ammunition procured since the uprising appears to be 9mm. In January 2025, the Police Headquarters' Arms and Ammunition Entitlement Committee reportedly recommended that 7.62mm rifles be replaced with 9mm pistols in order to “reduce casualties”[59].

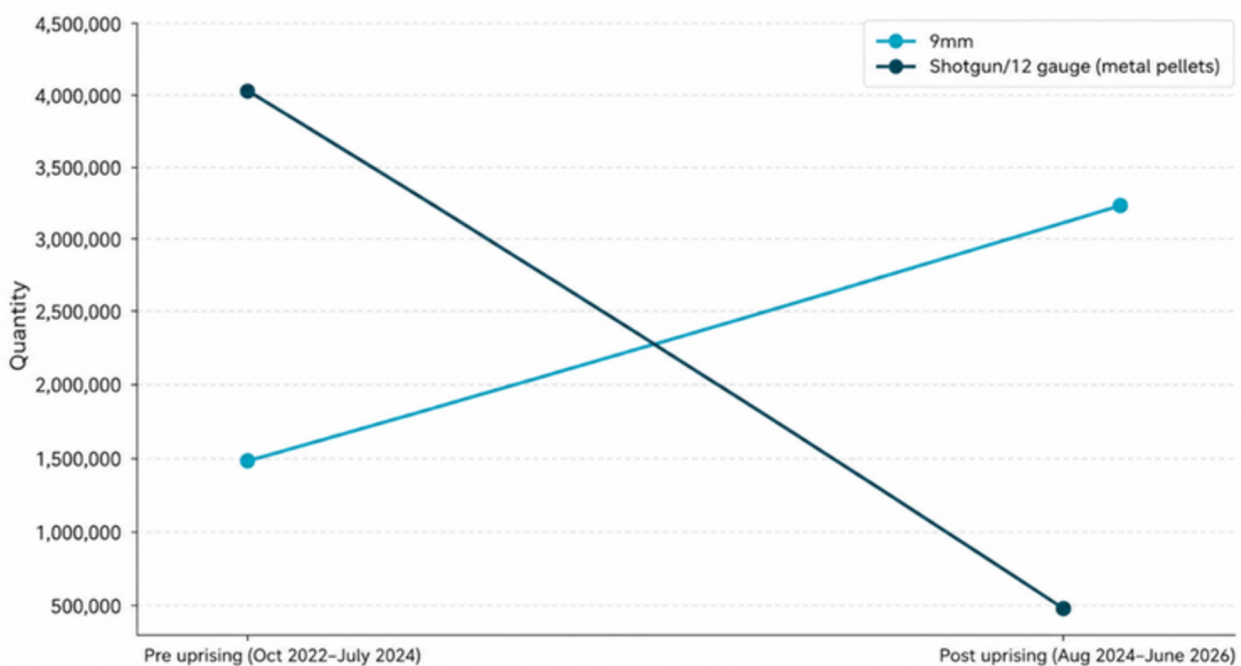


Figure 1: Trends in lethal ammunition procurement by Bangladesh law enforcement pre and post July 2024 uprising

One possible explanation for the increased procurement of 9mm ammunition is therefore that Bangladesh Police is moving some armed policing capacity away from rifles and towards pistols. Available import data provides some support for this hypothesis, showing continued procurement of 9mm pistols for law enforcement agencies after the uprising, with approximately 5,000 pistols procured, compared with approximately 8,000 during the equivalent pre-uprising period. This is broadly consistent with wider procurement trends for firearms and less-lethal launchers, which appear to have remained relatively stable before and after the uprising.

However, the procurement of live ammunition by law enforcement agencies in such large quantities remains a serious concern. Live ammunition used during the uprising, was associated with the majority of recorded deaths and caused 1000s of serious injuries. While firearms may be used by law enforcement in exceptional circumstances to protect life, they should be only be deployed when strictly necessary and by officers or units trained and authorised for that purpose.

It is therefore essential to establish why such large quantities of live ammunition continue to be procured, which agencies hold them, how they are stored and controlled, and under what circumstances they may be used. These questions require urgent scrutiny, particularly given the recent history of lethal force being used against protesters in Bangladesh.

Less lethal weapons

Across other categories of law enforcement weapons and equipment, including less-lethal weapons, trade data suggests a broad reduction in overall procurement levels following the uprising. This trend is most notable in relation to the import of tear gas. In the 22-month period before the uprising, trade data suggests the import of just over 1 million launched tear gas cartridges and grenades and approximately 20,000 hand-thrown tear gas grenades were acquired by law enforcement and security agencies. In the equivalent period under the interim government, imports of tear gas appear to have fallen substantially, with between approximately 120,000 and 220,000 launched tear gas projectiles identified in the import data[60].

Recorded procurement of kinetic impact projectiles also declined. In the pre-uprising period, just over 4 million kinetic impact projectiles were imported by various police agencies, compared with just under 500,000 in the equivalent post-uprising period. The trade data also reveals the acquisition of three Korean water cannon vehicles in the 22 months before the uprising, but no further imports after August 2024[61].

The main exception to this broader downward trend is stun grenades. Analysis of trade data suggests that these have continued to be procured at similar levels under the interim government as under the Awami League government. Approximately 60,000 stun grenades were recorded as being imported between August 2024 and June 2026, compared with approximately 64,000 in the equivalent pre-uprising period[62].

The continued procurement of stun grenades for law enforcement is consistent with SAPRAN's reporting on protest policing under the interim government, which identified the extensive use of stun grenades during recent protests. As noted above, while stun grenades are preferable to live ammunition and metal-pellet shotgun ammunition, their explosive and indiscriminate effects make them inappropriate for the policing of public assemblies.

Table 1: Summary of procurement by Bangladesh police pre and post July 2024 uprising

Equipment type	Oct 2022– July 2024	Aug 2024– June 2026
Chemical irritants (launched/hand thrown grenades)	1,089,100	121,335
Firearms/Launchers	37,130	30,997
Kinetic impact projectiles	3,975,000	485,000
Live ammunition	5,532,610	3,622,500
Rubber bursting grenades	0	15,000
Stun grenades	64,300	60,000
Water cannon	3	0

Items of concern

In addition to identifying broader changes in procurement patterns, the analysis of trade and tender data conducted for this briefing has also highlighted the acquisition of several items that Omega considers to be of particular concern.

Rubber bursting grenades

Rubber bursting grenades are hand thrown or weapon launched explosive devices which expel dozens to hundreds of rubber or plastic projectiles in all directions once detonated. Some models also contain tear gas. Rubber bursting grenades are inherently indiscriminate because they are designed to disperse projectiles over a wide area and cannot be targeted against a specific individual. When used in public assemblies, they pose a high risk of injury to bystanders, either from blunt-force trauma or penetrating injuries caused by the projectiles or burns or blast injuries from the explosion.

During the pre-uprising period, no procurement of this type of equipment was identified. Since the uprising, however, trade data indicates that Bangladesh Police imported 15,000 rubber bursting grenades from Turkey in February 2025. This finding is supported by tender evidence, with several Bangladesh Police tenders published after the uprising including requests for “multi impact tear gas grenades”[63]. Given their explosive and indiscriminate nature, Omega considers rubber bursting grenades inappropriate for the policing of public assemblies.

Government of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Inspector General
Bangladesh Police
Police Headquarters, Dhaka.

Invitation for International Tender

Memo No-44.01.0000.058.07.014.24/ 1102. Date: 05 /10/2024.

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from the Manufacturers/suppliers in their official pad for supply of following items as required by Bangladesh Police in FY 2024-2025.

1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Home Affairs.
2. Agency	Bangladesh Police.
3. Procuring Entity Name	AIG (Arms & Ammunition), Bangladesh Police.
4. Invitation for	To Purchase (i) Sound Grenade, ii) Multi Impact Tear Gas Grenade, iii) Random Movement Tear Gas Grenade for Bangladesh Police
5. Invitation Ref. No.	44.01.0000.058.07.014.24/04(2024-2025)
6. Date	09/10/2024

INFORMATION FOR TENDERER

15. Eligibility of Tenderer

1) Up to date Export license 2) Written confirmation authorizing the signatory of the tender in accordance with the Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association of the Principal 3) Provide the legal and financial capacity of the tenderer with affidavit 4) Original full Brochure of products of the Principal 5) Other requirements are described in the standard tender document (PG 5A).

Sl. No.	Description of Good	Quantity	Price of tender document (Non-refundable)	Tender security in (USD)	Completion time (Date of Opening of L/C)
1.	Sound Grenade	30,000 Pcs	5,000/-	15,400.00 USD	120 days
2.	Multi Impact Tear Gas Grenade	20,000 Pcs	5,000/-	20,000.00 USD	120 days
3.	Random Movement Tear Gas Grenade	25,000 Pcs	5,000/-	23,000.00 USD	120 days

Police tenders indicate several requests for “Multi impact” grenades

Multiple-projectile kinetic impact ammunition

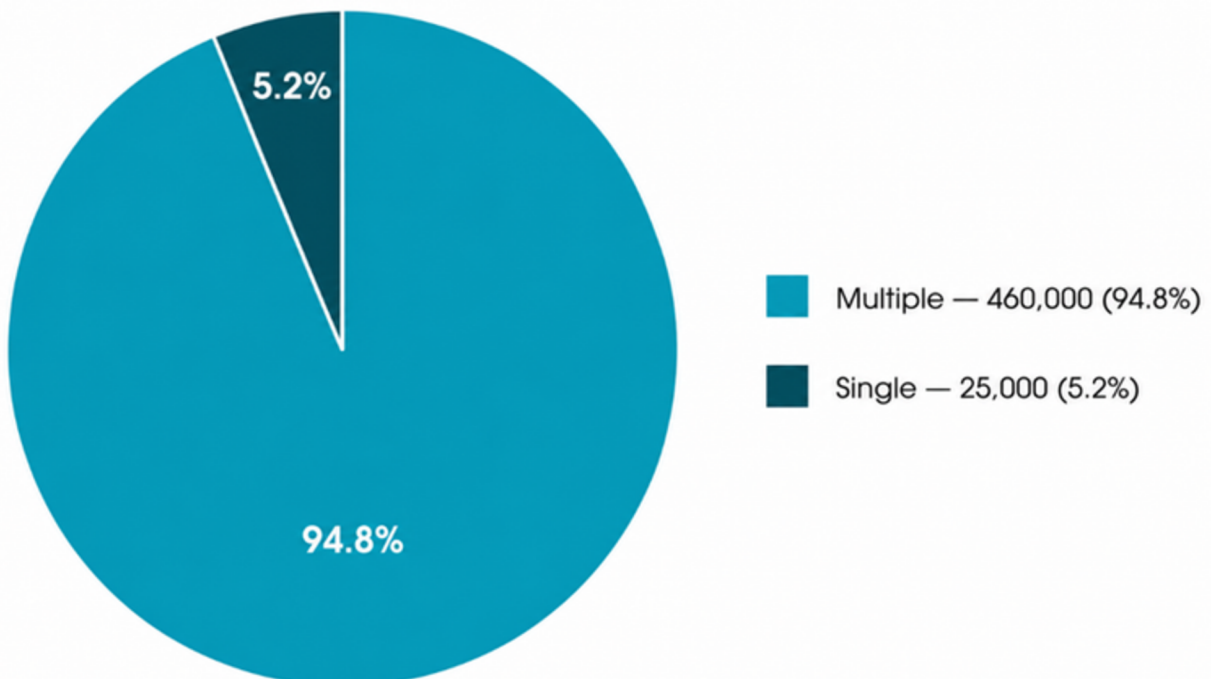
Ammunition containing multiple non-metallic kinetic impact projectiles is a type of ammunition that expels two or more rubber, plastic, or other non-metallic projectiles at the same time. They are available in a range of common calibers including 12 gauge and 37/38mm and may be fired from shotguns or grenade launchers. Because the projectiles spread after firing, they cannot be aimed accurately at a specific individual or reliably targeted at lower-risk areas of the body. As such, they are inherently indiscriminate and their use poses serious risks of injury to both the targeted individual and bystanders. If the projectiles strike the head, eyes, neck, chest, or abdomen, they can cause severe injury and death. In recent years, their use has been strongly associated with high rates of severe ocular injury including permanent blindness. Given their inaccuracy and indiscriminate effects, Omega considers that multiple-projectile kinetic impact munitions are inappropriate for protest policing

Although the trade data suggests an overall reduction in the number of kinetic impact projectiles procured by the interim government compared with the previous regime, closer analysis shows that of the approximately 500,000 less lethal shotgun cartridges acquired by law enforcement agencies since July 2024, around 95% appear to contain multiple projectiles.[64]. Although these munitions are preferable to shotgun cartridges containing metal pellets, they carry many of the same risks, and should not be used by law enforcement.



Wounds from rubber bullets fired at workers in Gazipur. Credit: Sheikh Sabiha Alam (Prothom Alo)

Figure 2: Bangladesh law enforcement procurement of kinetic impact projectile ammunition post July 2024 uprising



Stun batons

One of the most concerning discoveries in the recent tender data is evidence of the apparent procurement of direct contact electric shock weapons by Bangladesh Police. A tender published on the government's e-procure website on 29th January 2026 appears to request the supply of "Stun Baton (Electric)" by the Equipment Section of Police Headquarters in Dhaka[65]. An e-contract document available on the same site shows that the supply contract was awarded to the Bangladeshi company Lithi Enterprises on the 12th April 2026[66].

Stun batons are direct-contact electric shock weapons that deliver an electric shock when pressed against a person. Due to their design and purpose, direct-contact electric shock weapons are inherently abusive equipment that facilitate torture, including through application of multiple or continuous electric shocks, as well as electric shocks to vulnerable areas of the body such as the head, neck, and genitals. As such, these weapons carry an unacceptable risk of arbitrary force, fulfil no legitimate law enforcement purpose and should therefore never be used by law enforcement. Given that victim testimony and investigations on enforced disappearances under the Awami League revealed the extensive use of electric shocks as a method of torture in detention centres, the apparent procurement of stun batons is especially concerning and suggest that some lessons have not been learned.



All of these tenders require urgent scrutiny. The government of Bangladesh should establish why these items were procured, who authorised their procurement, and which agencies or units received them. Given the risks associated with rubber bursting grenades, multiple-projectile kinetic impact munitions, and stun batons, Omega considers that existing operational stockpiles should be immediately withdrawn from use and destroyed.

Items of concern procured under the previous regime

Although this briefing has focused primarily on items procured under the interim government, it is also important to examine equipment acquired before the uprising, as such equipment may remain in police inventories unless it has been withdrawn, transferred, or destroyed.

Two categories of equipment procured under the Awami League regime are of particular concern: machine guns and fixed or mountable multi-barrel less lethal launchers.

Reporting by The Daily Star, based on an analysis of earlier import and procurement records, identified the acquisition by Bangladesh Police of 9mm MSG-9P submachine guns from Turkey and 15 crew-served 12.7×99mm NATO machine guns, also referred to as Browning machine guns. These weapons are capable of rapid or sustained lethal fire. Such machine guns have been seen mounted on police vehicles during patrols and the policing of crowds – an inappropriate weapon for such tasks. Their availability to a civilian police force for ordinary policing operations raises serious concerns, , and urgent questions regarding whether they remain in Bangladesh Police inventories[67].

Tender data also indicates the procurement of 100 "38mm Multi Barrel Tear Gas Launcher (Vehicle Mounted 15 Barrel)" and 10 similar devices with 36 barrels in November 2022[68]. These systems are designed to fire multiple less-lethal munitions, such as chemical irritant or kinetic impact projectiles, individually, simultaneously, or in rapid succession. They may be stand-alone or vehicle-mounted, and some models can be operated remotely. Omega considers fixed or mountable multi-barrel launchers inappropriate for public order policing. Their capacity to fire multiple projectiles at once, means that they are inherently inaccurate and indiscriminate and increases the risk serious injuries.

The government of Bangladesh should establish where these weapons are still held, whether they have been deployed, and what rules or restrictions govern their use. Equipment that is inherently inappropriate for law enforcement, or that presents an unacceptable risk of arbitrary, excessive, or indiscriminate force, should be withdrawn from use and destroyed.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Government of Bangladesh:

- Prohibit the use of shotgun ammunition containing metal pellets in the policing of public assemblies and ensure that all remaining stockpiles are identified, withdrawn from use and destroyed.
- Suspend the procurement and use of inherently abusive or indiscriminate law enforcement equipment identified in this briefing, including direct-contact electric shock weapons, rubber bursting grenades, multiple-projectile kinetic impact munitions, and fixed or mountable multi-barrel launchers, machine guns and sub-machine guns.
- Conduct a comprehensive audit of weapons, ammunition and equipment held by Bangladesh Police and other security agencies, including equipment acquired before the July 2024 uprising that may remain available for future deployment.
- Introduce mandatory human rights due diligence for all law enforcement procurement processes, including an assessment of whether equipment proposed can be used in compliance with international human rights and policing standards.
- Strengthen law enforcement procurement transparency by publishing all relevant tender notices, contract awards, item descriptions, quantities, supplier names, contract values, procuring agencies and end-users in a searchable public archive. As a first step archived Bangladesh Police tender records should be restored immediately.
- Review and revise use of force laws, regulations and operational protocols to ensure that they comply with international human rights standards, including clear restrictions on the use of firearms, less lethal weapons and crowd-control equipment.
- Facilitate prompt and independent investigations into deaths and serious injuries during the July-August 2024 uprising.
- Establish a victim-centred programme of reparation, rehabilitation and long-term medical support for those killed, injured or permanently disabled by law enforcement weapons.

To Bangladesh Police and other law enforcement agencies:

- Maintain auditable records for the issuing, use and return of all firearms, ammunition, launchers, stun grenades, tear gas, kinetic impact projectiles and other policing equipment.
- Prioritise facilitation, communication, negotiation and de-escalation in the policing of assemblies, rather than coercive dispersal tactics.
- Prohibit the aerial deployment of chemical irritants, stun grenades or other less lethal weapons from helicopters or other elevated platforms.

- Ensure that any use of force resulting in death or serious injury is immediately reported to an independent oversight body.
- Cooperate fully with accountability bodies, courts, prosecutors, the National Human Rights Commission and the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, including by disclosing procurement records and inventories.

To civil society organisations and human rights monitors:

- Continue monitoring the policing of assemblies, with particular attention to the specific weapons, ammunition, equipment and tactics used by law enforcement agencies.
- Track law enforcement procurement through tender notices, e-Government and Bangladesh Police procurement records, company information, media reports and other open-source evidence.
- Share your findings with domestic accountability bodies, UN mechanisms, foreign export-control authorities and international human rights organisations where this may help prevent future transfers of abusive or inappropriate law enforcement equipment.

Areas for further investigation and research:

- Investigate whether inherently abusive weapons and ammunition identified in this briefing remain available for law enforcement use, including shotgun ammunition containing metal pellets, machine guns and submachine guns, fixed or vehicle-mounted multi-barrel launchers, stun batons, rubber bursting grenades, and ammunition containing multiple kinetic impact projectiles. This should establish current stockpiles, recipient agencies, operational justifications, and the policies governing storage, deployment and use.
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of changes to other areas of Bangladesh's law enforcement policy and practice since August 2024, including legislation, use of force protocols, command structures, personnel changes, and accountability and oversight mechanisms. Assess these changes against international standards on the use of force, torture prevention, and the policing of public assemblies.

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