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# **HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION IN THE FORTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION ERA: A STUDY ON THE ROLE OF NON-STATE ACTORS IN BANGLADESH**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The preservation of human rights in Bangladesh has become complex in the era of Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). The fast rise of technology has transformed social, economic and political systems. This article analyses the role of non-state actors (NSAs) including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), corporations, multinational firms, media institutions, technology platforms and violent non-state actors (VNSAs) in the preservation and non-preservation of human rights in Bangladesh in the context of the 4IR. However, it contends that technological innovation has also produced grave problems such as cyber harassment, digital surveillance, misinformation, labor displacement, privacy violations and online extremism, while creating new opportunities for transparency, digital advocacy, access to information and social mobilization. The study intends to explore the duties and responsibilities of NSAs in protecting human rights through national and international legal frameworks including the Constitution of Bangladesh. The research also examines the positive contributions of NGOs and corporations in legal aid, labour rights, women's empowerment, refugee assistance, environmental justice and digital rights advocacy, as well as the negative impact of VNSAs, weak corporate governance and restrictive regulatory practices. This study adopts doctrinal and analytical approach to identify the major structural and legal difficulties by reviewing books, journal articles, reports and policy documents. These include weak enforcement mechanisms, political interference, contributor dependency, lack of transparency and poor protection of digital rights. The research shows the need for combined actions by government, civil society, corporations and international organizations for successful human rights protection in Bangladesh in the era of 4IR. It calls for improvement of legal accountability, transparent governance, reform of restrictive laws, better protection of digital rights, promotion of corporate responsibility and inclusive technological

development to bring Bangladesh's human rights framework in line with international standards.

**Keywords:** Human Rights Protection, Non-State Actors, Digital Rights, Fourth Industrial Revolution, Cybersecurity.

## 1. Introduction

Protecting human rights protection in Bangladesh is a vital issue. Non-state actors have a great role from both positive and negative sides in promoting human rights. Non-state actors are bodies that have significant political influence but are not linked with any nation or state (NSAs). Non-state actors' groups, such as non-governmental organizations, companies, labor unions, and non-profit organizations.<sup>1</sup>

The Fourth Industrial Era (4IR) is a Technological advanced era driven by modern technologies, like artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, robotics, and digital systems that connect physical, electronic and biological world. This has created many opportunities at the same time introduced new challenges for every sector. Human rights protection is also affected by it. Communication, social structures, economic system throughout have been changed by the rapid advancement of technology. Bangladesh is stepping ahead with equal expansion of digital technology, internet access to information. This advancement has enabled non-state actors (NSAs) to organize more efficiently, communicate widely, and influence larger audiences, creating both opportunities and possible risks for society and human rights. Additionally, the 4IR has made human rights advocacy more accountable and transparent. Real-time monitoring of human rights abuses is made possible by digital tools, which also make it easier for NSAs to report instances, share information, and interact with international organizations<sup>2</sup>. This has been essential in drawing attention to problems like infringement of indigenous people's land rights and labor rights in the garment industry.

Some NSAs fall under the category of violent non-state actors (VNSAs), which are groups that use or threaten violence to achieve their goals. This group includes terrorist organizations,

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<sup>1</sup> ESCR, Non-State Actors (ESCR) <<https://www.escr-net.org/resources/non-state-actors> > accessed 18 March 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Alexa Koenig, 'Technology Can Monitor Human Rights Violations and Bring Perpetrators to Justice' *Human Rights Magazine* Vol 49 No 4 (American Bar Association, June 2024) <<https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/resources/human-rights/2024-june/technology-monitor-human-rights-violations-bring-perpetrators-justice/>> accessed 27 August 2025.

armed guerrilla warfare resistance movements, and paramilitary formations.<sup>3</sup>

Bangladesh has several NSAs which jointly influence the status of human rights in the country. These organizations work to encourage activism in various areas, including but not limited to education, healthcare, and fairness in society.<sup>4</sup> However, VNSAs can be a significant danger to human rights since they participate in actions that result in violence, misinformation, abetment, intimidation, and terror.<sup>5</sup> The paper examines how NSAs, such as NGOs, corporations, and also VNSAs influence human rights protection in Bangladesh, with particular attention to the opportunities and challenges presented by the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

## 2. Review of Relevant Literature

A critical and comprehensive summary of the research has been developed after carefully examining relevant literature. Books, journals, reports, and other national and international resources have all been thoroughly reviewed to ensure the study's accuracy, usefulness, and relevance.

Niaz Makhdum and others showed that the Fourth Industrial Revolution offers both possibilities and difficulties for Bangladesh. Using this era's technology can empower women and citizens, increase productivity, and promote sustainable ICT development. It might, however, worsen unemployment, social inequality, and the power of multinational firms. Fourth Industrial Development is anticipated to have an impact on political engagement, governance, and the educational system, requiring important changes and skill enhancement. To maximize the benefits of the fourth industrial revolution and to lower its repercussions, future research should concentrate on human resource training, policy planning, and equitable technology adoption.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Victor H. Mlambo, 'Unravelling Africa's Misgovernment: How State Failures Fuel the Emergence of Violent Non-State Actors: Selected Case Studies' (2023) 9 Cogent Social Sciences 1, doi:10.1080/23311886.2023.2228127.

<sup>4</sup> Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Program Cabinet Division and General Economics Division (GED) for the Government of Bangladesh, Non-State Actor Report on Social Protection, < <https://tinywebs.site/EzP6Fd> > accessed 18 March 2026

<sup>5</sup> David Brown, Donette Murray, Mate Reiman, Norma Rossi, and Martin A Smith, 'Violent Non-State Actors in Modern Conflict' (2021) ResearchGate <[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346966450\\_Violent\\_Non-State\\_Actors\\_in\\_Modern\\_Conflict](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346966450_Violent_Non-State_Actors_in_Modern_Conflict) > accessed 18 March 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Niaz Makhdum, Maruf Hasan Rumi and Nesur Uddin Nahid, *Fourth Industrial Revolution in Bangladesh: Prospects and Challenges* (Academia.edu, 2020) <[https://www.academia.edu/44210191/Fourth\\_Industrial\\_Revolution\\_in\\_Bangladesh\\_Prospect\\_and\\_Challenge](https://www.academia.edu/44210191/Fourth_Industrial_Revolution_in_Bangladesh_Prospect_and_Challenge) > accessed 27 August 2025.

According to Drona Bandyopadhyay, Bangladesh faces both opportunities and problems as result of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), which has ability to accelerate industrial growth and increase productivity. Policy interventions in skill development, technical education, and innovation and startup support are required to fully realize the benefits of 4IR. Sustainable industrialization necessitates environmental management, strong governance, and institutional effectiveness. Furthermore, population management is underlined as critical for mitigating the inevitable socioeconomic consequences of lower labor demand owing to automation.<sup>7</sup>

As per Md Asadul Islam and others there are several obstacles to the adoption of Industry 4.0 in developing nations, such as inadequate infrastructure or expertise, expensive installation costs, and the availability of inexpensive labor. Despite having growing economy, corruption, false beliefs about automation, and a lack of technical integration are still obstacles to Industry 4.0 adoption in Bangladesh. According to researchers, with a view to fully benefit from Industry 4.0, appropriate infrastructure development, focused government initiatives, and strategic technological adoption are necessary. Coordinated integration may boost productivity, lower manufacturing costs, and fortify the economy overall.<sup>8</sup>

As per UNDP Bangladesh (2020) showed the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), driven by technology like artificial intelligence, robots and automation, is changing Bangladesh's labour market. It is posing a threat to jobs in labour heavy industries like the RMG industry dominated by women.

Job displacement and underrepresentation of women in new digital sectors raise possible human rights issues, including gendered economic disparities. According to task-level analysis, skill transformation and the sharpening of intrinsic abilities could reduce labor market exclusion and increase equitable participation. Leveraging 4IR technologies provides potential to create high-paying jobs, boost productivity, and promote sustainable development goals, thereby linking economic growth with human rights aspirations. Policies focusing on gender-

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<sup>7</sup> Drona Bandyopadhyay, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution and Bangladesh: A Prospective Crossing Point* <<https://cribr.org/the-fourth-industrial-revolution-and-bangladesh-a-prospective-crossing-point/>> accessed 27 August 2025.

<sup>8</sup> Md Asadul Islam, Amer Hamzah Jantan, Haslinda Binti Hashim, Choo Wei Chong, Mirza Manirajah Abdullah, Md Adnan Rahman and Abu Bakar Abdul Hamid, 'Fourth Industrial Revolution in Developing Countries: A Case on Bangladesh' (2018) 21(1) *Journal of Management Information and Decision Sciences* <<https://www.abacademies.org/articles/fourth-industrial-revolution-in-developing-countries-a-case-on-bangladesh-7549.html>> accessed 27 August 2025.

sensitive education, innovation, and entrepreneurship are crucial to ensuring that the 4IR promotes inclusive development rather than increasing existing gaps.<sup>9</sup>

A report by Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh (2020) emphasizes how NSAs, such as civil society organizations, NGOs, and community groups, actively support Bangladesh's SDG implementation. By increasing awareness and standing out for vulnerable and marginalized groups, NSAs play a vital part in advancing human rights. They monitor government pledges, participate in policy discussions, and hold officials responsible for results that uphold rights. NSAs enable citizens to assert their social, economic, and political rights through grassroots initiatives. The research emphasizes how cooperation between NSAs, the government, and foreign partners improves inclusive growth and protects human rights.<sup>10</sup>

The 2020 report of Centre for Policy Dialogue shows that without the participation of NSAs, Bangladesh cannot achieve development in case of human rights and SDGs. Through raising awareness, launching advocacy campaigns, and implementing community-based solutions, NSAs including NGOs and other organizations have played a crucial role in tackling social injustices, gender-based violence, and breaches of children's rights. With a view to improve law enforcement, stop extremism, and support young people's safe, fair access to education and work, NSAs work with government organizations, academic institutions, and the corporate sector. The report's overall message emphasizes how crucial NSAs' involvement is to uphold the law, advancing human rights, and enabling young people especially girls and members of underrepresented ethnic groups to actively engage in sustainable development.<sup>11</sup>

Report by Bangladesh Planning Commission 2023 showed in Bangladesh, non-state actors (NSAs), such as NGOs and civil society organizations, are essential to upholding human rights and carrying out social protection initiatives for underprivileged groups. Groups like women, children, ethnic minorities, still experience socioeconomic risks and prejudice despite tremendous economic gain. By enhancing access to jobs, housing, healthcare, and education,

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<sup>9</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 'Future of Work and SDG Attainment in the Age of Fourth Industrial Revolution—Bangladesh Perspective' (28 July 2020) <<https://www.undp.org/bangladesh/stories/future-work-and-sdg-attainment-age-fourth-industrial-revolution-bangladesh-perspective>> accessed 27 August 2025.

<sup>10</sup> M Rahman (ed), *Four Years of SDGs in Bangladesh: Non-State Actors as Delivery Partners* (Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh 2020) <<https://bdplatform4sdgs.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Four-Years-of-SDGs-in-Bangladesh-Non-State-Actors-as-Delivery-Partners.pdf>> accessed 27 August 2025.

<sup>11</sup> Centre for Policy Dialogue, *VNR 2020 of Bangladesh: Positioning Non-State Actors* (Centre for Policy Dialogue, 2020) <<https://cpd.org.bd/vnr-2020-of-bangladesh-positioning-non-state-actors/>> accessed 27 August 2025.

NSAs help the attainment of basic human rights and supplement government activities. Equality of coverage and effective resource allocation are guaranteed by effective cooperation between NSAs, governmental entities, and other stakeholders. For address intersectional vulnerabilities, improve inclusivity, and guarantee that social protection programs make a tremendous contribution to protect human rights in Bangladesh, NSAs must strengthen their institutional capacity, governance procedures, and evidence-based policies.<sup>12</sup>

Research that has already been done on Bangladesh shows how the Fourth Industrial Revolution has affected social inclusion, economic growth, and human rights. It also underlines how crucial non-state actors are to advancing social protection and rights. But there are still various shortcomings. There is little empirical data or case-based analysis proving the efficacy of 4IR technologies, and majority of studies do not expressly look at how NSAs use them to safeguard human rights or reduce dangers. Additionally, little research has been done on regional differences, interactions with governmental policy, and the impact of multinational firms. With the aim of close these gaps, this study examines how NSAs in Bangladesh are handling 4IR-related issues, such as other issues, their approaches to protecting human rights, and the systems they utilize to guarantee fair and inclusive participation.

### **3. Fourth Industrial Era and Non-State Actors in Bangladesh**

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are one of the many non-state actors in Bangladesh. NGOs have played a key role in advancing human rights in Bangladesh by educating people about their rights, exposing violations of human rights and putting pressure on the government to protect them.<sup>13</sup>

The Fourth Industrial Revolution's digital revolution is significantly impacting Bangladesh's economy and society and transforming the role of non-state entities. Tens of millions of people utilize social media platforms today; as of early 2024, there were over 52 million active accounts.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) Programme, 'Non-State Actor Report on Social Protection: Mapping Social Protection Needs for Marginalized Communities in Bangladesh' (n. 4)

<sup>13</sup> Md Kamal Uddin, 'NGO's Approach to Human Rights and the Challenges in Bangladesh' (2022) 41 Development Policy Review.

<sup>14</sup>Simon Kemp, *Digital 2024: Bangladesh – Global Digital Insights* (DataReportal, 23 February 2024) <<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-bangladesh>> accessed 28 August 2025.

With innovations like d-KYC (Digital Know your Customer) and paperless onboarding, fintech mobile financial services like Nagad are leading the way in digital banking. AI-driven solutions are also being used in the finance industry to improve efficiency and risk management through fraud detection, AML (Anti-Money Laundering) surveillance, and customer service (through chatbots).<sup>15</sup>

NGOs have been significant in Bangladesh's development process, emphasizing human rights since its independence. While government agencies are responsible for safeguarding human rights, they sometimes fall short, and NGOs assist the government in guaranteeing justice for marginalized communities. Non-profit and Government organizations, known as NGOs, push the government to create and enforce laws protecting human rights.<sup>16</sup>

As of June 2018, about 2,625 NGOs were registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau of Bangladesh and all of them were working actively in the country.<sup>17</sup>

The Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) is one such organization. It's Board of Trustees is made up of prominent lawyers, jurists, and former Bangladesh Supreme Court judges.<sup>18</sup> Another organization, Gonoshasthaya Kendra, is a healthcare organization that focuses on providing medical services to underprivileged communities residing in remote regions. The Another non-governmental organization that supports ecological jurisprudence and environmental justice is the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA). Additionally, BRAC is one of the biggest NGOs in the world, providing services related to human rights, healthcare, and education. Finally, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) is a human rights and legal aid organization working for the benefit of the impoverished, women, children, labor etc.<sup>19</sup>

Additionally, businesses have a big influence on Bangladesh's growth and economy. They are part of the category of non-state actors. These businesses significantly impact the development

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<sup>15</sup> *What's Next for Digital Financial Services (DFS) in Bangladesh?* (Light Castle Analytics Wing, 2 February 2025) <<https://lightcastlepartners.com/insights/2025/02/digital-financial-services-in-bangladesh>> accessed 28 August 2025.

<sup>16</sup> Md Ashabur Rahman, 'Role of NGOs in Protecting and Ensuring Human Rights in Bangladesh' (2018) SSRN Electronic Journal [Preprint] <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3298261>> accessed 10 December 2025.

<sup>17</sup> Md Ashabur Rahman, 'Role of NGOs in Protecting and Ensuring Human Rights in Bangladesh' (2018) SSRN Electronic Journal [Preprint] <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3298261>.

<sup>18</sup> BLAST, 'Our purpose' (2023) BLAST <<https://blast.org.bd/our-purpose/>> accessed 18 March 2024.

<sup>19</sup> Shahadat Baser and Syed Abu Hasnath, 'The rise and fall of the NGOs in Bangladesh: What does the future hold?' (2022) *Global Perspectives on Non-Governmental Organizations* [Preprint] <<https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.107855>> accessed 17 March 2024.

of the nation.<sup>20</sup> Corporations can have beneficial and bad impacts on human rights. On the other hand, they can give benefits like economic growth, job creation, infrastructure development, and improved living standards. However, there are also certain firms that have been linked to human rights breaches. For instance, the business sector, especially the garment industry, has raised issues concerning workers' rights, health and safety, and working conditions.<sup>21</sup>

Some violent non-governmental entities in Bangladesh, including religious radicals, militant organizations and criminal groups, have a significant impact on the observation of human rights in the country. They pose a serious threat to human rights because of their capacity to inflict violence, coercion and other harms against persons or communities according to their identity, beliefs or associations. Such acts may result in violations of human rights, including the right to life and freedom of thought and freedom from discrimination.<sup>22</sup>

#### 4. Obligations of Non-State Actors under International Law

Bangladesh has guaranteed its citizens fundamental rights, including protection of life, freedom of speech, protection against discrimination, fair trial, freedom of movement, assembly, association, expression, profession, religion, and property ownership since gaining independence in 1971.<sup>23</sup> Bangladesh is a vital player in the international legal system and has proven great strength in defending human rights. The government has ratified several international accords and pacts, including the UN Charter, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).<sup>24</sup> The 'Non-State Actors' (NSAs) are very important to the human rights of the people of Bangladesh. Nevertheless, in line with longstanding rules of international human rights law, NSAs are

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<sup>20</sup> Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), 'Four Years of SDGs in Bangladesh: Non-state Actors as Delivery Partners' (2020) <<https://cpd.org.bd/publication/four-years-of-sdgs-in-bangladesh-non-state-actors-as-delivery-partners/>> accessed 18 March 2024.

<sup>21</sup> Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), 'Four Years of SDGs in Bangladesh: Non-state Actors as Delivery Partners' (2020) <<https://cpd.org.bd/publication/four-years-of-sdgs-in-bangladesh-non-state-actors-as-delivery-partners/>> accessed 18 March 2024.

<sup>22</sup> Sarder Ali Haider, (2023) *Kuki-Chin Communities: A historical analysis of interconnectivity, secessionist ties in Myanmar and Northeast India, and the implications for Chittagong Hill tracts, Bangladesh*, SSRN. [https://www.academia.edu/105426690/Kuki\\_Chin\\_Communities\\_A\\_Historical\\_Analysis\\_of\\_Interconnectivity\\_Secessionist\\_Ties\\_in\\_Myanmar\\_and\\_Northeast\\_India\\_and\\_the\\_Implications\\_for\\_Chittagong\\_Hill\\_Tracts\\_Bangladesh](https://www.academia.edu/105426690/Kuki_Chin_Communities_A_Historical_Analysis_of_Interconnectivity_Secessionist_Ties_in_Myanmar_and_Northeast_India_and_the_Implications_for_Chittagong_Hill_Tracts_Bangladesh) > accessed: 18 March 2024.

<sup>23</sup> The Constitution of Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh.

<sup>24</sup> Ali Ashraf and Jobaer Alam, 'Fifty Years of Human Rights Enforcement in Legal and Political Systems in Bangladesh: Past Controversies and Future Challenges - Human Rights Review' (*SpringerLink*, 28 February 2023) <<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12142-023-00679-3>> accessed 20 March 2024.

largely governed by local laws and are not directly bound by them. States are so bound by international law to fulfil human rights obligations, as embodied in the UDHR, ICCPR and ICESCR.<sup>25</sup> Some human rights obligations are applicable to non-state actors (NSAs) under international law, a fact which the international community has started to acknowledge. This may involve facing legal problems and becoming accountable through social and political means. More and more, non-state actors (NSAs) are being held responsible for the protection of human rights under international law.<sup>26</sup> Frameworks such as the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) provide indirect duties for enterprises and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), establishing the “Protect, Respect, Remedy” paradigm. National states are primarily responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights, but business also has a responsibility to respect human rights, which entails avoiding infringing on the rights of others and addressing adverse human rights implications of economic activity. Though the UNGPs do not specifically apply to NGOs, they are nonetheless obliged to behave in line with established human rights norms.<sup>27</sup> The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (Ruggie Principles) offer the clearest articulation of the obligations of non-state entities under international law, saying that enterprises have a responsibility to defend human rights and prevent injustices. International human rights law today covers a wide range of problems beyond labour rights, including privacy, freedom of expression, and data protection. The UN Human Rights Council has repeatedly reaffirmed that human rights are the same online and offline, and condemned unlawful digital surveillance and internet shutdowns as violations of international accords.<sup>28</sup>

The standards of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) regulating conduct in armed conflicts are directly applicable to violent non-state actors (VNSAs) or organized armed organizations. Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol II contain important prohibitions on such acts as violence to life and person, taking of hostages and outrages upon

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<sup>25</sup> Paul VI Sidlawinde Karenga, ‘States’ Obligations under International Human Rights Law’ (*SpringerLink*, 2 February 2022) <[https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-88120-7\\_8](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-88120-7_8)> accessed 20 March 2024.

<sup>26</sup> Ilias Bantekas and Lutz Oette, ‘Human Rights Obligations of Non-State Actors’ [2024] *International Human Rights Law and Practice* 851.

<sup>27</sup> United Nations, *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework* (OHCHR 2011) <[https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinessshr\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinessshr_en.pdf)> accessed 24 August 2025.

<sup>28</sup> UN Human Rights Council, ‘*The promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet*’, UN Doc A/HRC/RES/47/16 (13 July 2021) <<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3937534>> accessed 28 August 2025; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘*Internet shutdowns and human rights*’ (OHCHR, April 2023) <<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/press/Internet-shutdowns-and-human-rights.pdf>> accessed 28 August 2025.

personal dignity. Thus, even in non-international armed conflicts there is a minimum standard of humane treatment.<sup>29</sup> These developments highlight the growing expectation that all the non-state actors operating in Bangladesh must uphold human rights under international law.

## 5. Obligations of Non-State Actors under National Law

### *The Constitution of Bangladesh as the Grund norm*

This is the supreme law of the land, establishing the fundamental legal framework that governs the actions of both state and non-state entities. While its rules primarily govern state actions, the Fundamental Principles of official Policy (Part II) and Fundamental Rights (Part III) set national standards that represent the country's dedication to justice, equality, and human dignity. Articles 11 and 26-47A protect fundamental rights such as the right to life, liberty, equality, and freedom of association that non-state actors (NSAs) are obligated to uphold in all aspects of societal interaction.<sup>30</sup> In the age of digital surveillance and data collection, Article 43, which protects the privacy of correspondence and home, is extremely important because it emphasizes the need to balance legitimate state interests with the need to safeguard people's private communications against hacking, illegal access, and corporate or governmental interference. It offers a constitutional basis for safeguarding digital privacy rights and regulating cyber governance.<sup>31</sup>

Article 43 is still essential for protecting people's privacy in their communications and online activities in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is marked by widespread digitization, big data, and sophisticated surveillance technologies. This ensures that rapid technological advancements do not jeopardize fundamental rights.

### *The Penal Code, 1860*

This is the primary criminal law. Sections 299-311 (offenses against life), 339-348 (wrongful restraint and detention), 375-376 (rape), and 499-502 (defamation) apply to any person or institution, including NSAs, who commits these crimes.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, *IHL Database* <[https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.36\\_eng.pdf](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO_RHR_12.36_eng.pdf)> accessed 24 August 2025.

<sup>30</sup> The Constitution of Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh.

<sup>31</sup> The Constitution of Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh, Art 43.

<sup>32</sup> The Penal Code 1860.

### ***The Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009***

This law defines terrorism broadly and establishes the legal framework for prosecuting VNSAs. It gives law enforcement officials broad powers for investigating, arresting, and seizing property.<sup>33</sup> Its wide phrasing has sparked concerns about its potential misuse by political opponents and civil society.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006***

The major regulation governing employment in the country particularly for corporations is the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 as amended in 2013 and 2018. Export Processing Zones have been subject to restrictions until recently but forced labour is expressly prohibited under Section 4 and worker's rights to organize trade unions and engage in collective bargaining are protected, particularly under Sections 176-196. Sections 100-109 provide minimal norms of conditions of labour with respect to hours of work, overtime, and holidays.<sup>35</sup> With special attention in the wake of the Rana Plaza tragedy, Chapter XII discusses workplace health, safety, and welfare. With a view to improve compliance and worker protection, the 2013 amendments specifically reaffirmed building safety requirements and required the creation of workplace safety committees.<sup>36</sup>

### ***The Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act, 2016 (FDRA)***

This is the primary law governing NGOs that receive foreign money. It requires project registration and approval, and it gives the government extensive authority to terminate activity and freeze funds. Critics claim that it is used to suppress dissent and influence human rights organizations.<sup>37</sup> Although the FDRA doesn't officially address online activism or digital

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<sup>33</sup> The Anti-Terrorism Act 2009.

<sup>34</sup> -- 'Banning Party Activities: Govt Amends Anti-Terror Law' (*The Daily Star*, 12 May 2025) 5 <<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/banning-party-activities-govt-amends-anti-terror-law-3892371> > accessed 24 August 2025.

<sup>35</sup> Bangladesh Labour Act 2006.

<sup>36</sup> Alissa Ayres, 'A Guide to the Rana Plaza Tragedy, and its Implications, in Bangladesh' (*Council on Foreign Relations*, April 2014) <<https://www.cfr.org/blog/guide-rana-plaza-tragedy-and-its-implications-bangladesh>> accessed 19 March 2024.

<sup>37</sup> Md Nannu Mian, 'NGO Laws in Bangladesh: The Need to Harmonize' (2014) 2(3) *Global Journal of Politics and Law Research* 54 <[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271986955\\_NGO\\_LAWS\\_IN\\_BANGLADESH\\_THE\\_NEED\\_TO\\_HARMONIZE](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271986955_NGO_LAWS_IN_BANGLADESH_THE_NEED_TO_HARMONIZE) > accessed 24 August 2025.

fundraising, its expansive regulatory framework may have an indirect impact on these activities by placing restrictions on NGOs' ability to operate.<sup>38</sup>

### ***National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Act (2009)***

Monitoring and advancing human rights in Bangladesh is the responsibility of the NHRC. It works with NSAs to promote adherence to human rights norms, even if its core focus is on state compliance. The NHRC, for instance, has issued reports on how well states are adhering to international human rights treaties and conventions.<sup>39</sup>

### ***The Cyber Protection Laws***

Non-state players in Bangladesh, including companies, AI users, and organizations, are required by the Cyber Protection Act 2026 to safeguard digital infrastructure, stop illegal access, and stay away from cybercrimes as cyberterrorism, sextortion, and online harassment. Ten years in prison or fines of up to BDT 1 crore may be imposed for noncompliance. Although the Act improves digital resilience and accountability, its standards are still in the early stages of development, which leaves firms with some uncertainty over compliance protocols.<sup>40</sup> Bangladesh Telecommunication Act 2001 establishes Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission that can take preventive measures in emergency situations by taking immediate action in cyber space. Right to Information Act 2009 protects right to information subject to certain limitations. The Personal Data Protection Act, 2026 is another law to protect personal data and provide remedies to the victims.

## **6. Implications of Non-State Actors on Human Rights Protection of Bangladesh**

Numerous groups in Bangladesh are currently focused on advancing economic growth and safeguarding human rights. NGOs provide a distinct strategy for development, and several donor agencies prefer collaborating with them because they can access individuals and

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh, *Study Report on ICCPR* (National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh, 2015) <[https://nhrc.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/nhrc.portal.gov.bd/page/348ec5eb\\_22f8\\_4754\\_bb62\\_6a0d15ba1513/Study%20Report%20ICCPR.pdf](https://nhrc.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/nhrc.portal.gov.bd/page/348ec5eb_22f8_4754_bb62_6a0d15ba1513/Study%20Report%20ICCPR.pdf) > accessed 28 August 2025.

<sup>40</sup> Debashis Banerjee and Antara Dasgupta, 'Cyber Security Ordinance 2025: Implications for Businesses in Bangladesh' (Lexplosion, 1 August 2025) < <https://www.mondaq.com/new-technology/1659100/cyber-security-ordinance-2025-implications-for-businesses-in-bangladesh> > accessed 28 August 2025.

locations that the central government might have missed.<sup>41</sup> At every stage of the formal court system, they make legal aid accessible. They also support the growth of solid ecological jurisprudence and strive to advance environmental justice. By following the proper legal procedures, they want to guarantee environmental preservation. Support for women, men, and children living in poverty or experiencing prejudice or disadvantage is given top priority by NGOs that specialize in human development initiatives. They provide legal assistance, counsel, instruction, and representation on a range of topics. As a crucial component of their advocacy for legislative and policy changes to provide sufficient legal protection of human rights, some people engage in strategic or public interest litigation.<sup>42</sup>

These NGOs are seeking to empower individuals and communities suffering from poverty, illiteracy, disease and social injustice. Through social and economic activities their interventions bring about meaningful, positive change that allows men and women to fulfil their full potential. They work through legal empowerment to promote and protect human rights, particularly of the poor and marginalized. Their aim is to create a society which is free from all forms of discrimination and exploitation, where everyone has the potential to achieve their full potential.<sup>43</sup>

Many businesses have joined advocacy campaigns for human rights in partnership with NGOs. These companies have put in place Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs to encourage equitable wages, improved working conditions, and nondiscrimination in the workplace. These initiatives play a significant role in promoting human rights and ensuring that corporations contribute to the well-being of their employees and communities.<sup>44</sup>

Non-state actors have played a crucial part in managing the Rohingya refugee crisis. They have established a platform for the provision of healthcare and core necessities to refugees, which has had a significant impact on humanitarian and resettlement efforts for the Rohingya.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Md Kamal Uddin, (n.13) 40-41

<sup>42</sup> Md Ashabur Rahman (n.16) 6

<sup>43</sup> Md Ashabur Rahman, (n.16)7

<sup>44</sup> Mohammad Faruk Hossain and Adnan Kabir, 'Corporate Social Responsibility Legislation in Bangladesh' (September 2023)

<[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/375799979\\_Corporate\\_Social\\_Responsibility\\_Legislation\\_in\\_Bangladesh](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/375799979_Corporate_Social_Responsibility_Legislation_in_Bangladesh)> accessed 18 March 2024.

<sup>45</sup> AZ Hossain, 'Unfolding the Role of Non-State Actors in Rohingya Refugee Crisis at Bangladesh Odvijajúce Sa Úlohy Neštátnych Aktérov v Utečeneckej Kríze V Rohingoch V Bangladéši' (*Košice Security Revue (ISSN 1338-4880 (print version) ISSN 1338-6956 (online)*, 1 January 2020)

Some non-state actors have been accused of violating human rights on several occasions. The Rana Plaza factory collapse in 2013 revealed the terrible working conditions in the garment industry. Over 1,134 people died and 2,500 were injured. This tragedy highlighted the adverse human rights consequences.<sup>46</sup> Criticism has been directed towards NGOs in Bangladesh due to their tendency to prioritize donor demands over the needs of the local population.<sup>47</sup> Non-state actors have greatly advanced and protected human rights in Bangladesh, notwithstanding some unfavorable outcomes. To address the difficulties Bangladesh's garment industry faced following the horrific Rana Plaza event, a number of public-private partnerships were established. These collaborations involved the US and EU, as well as the Bangladeshi government, laborers, factory owners, associations, foreign purchasers, and international organizations.<sup>48</sup>

Violent Non-state actors, for example the Kuki Chin National Front, pose a significant threat to state protection and human rights in Bangladesh. These groups demand autonomy within the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), leading to security concerns for the region and the country. Their potential to form cross-border networks, engage in arms trafficking, and collaborate with separatist movements presents challenges for Bangladeshi authorities and impacts regional stability and peace.<sup>49</sup> There have been numerous cases of armed conflict between these violent non-state actors (VNSAs) and state security forces with innocent lives lost. Due to these frequent attacks and the limited administrative penalty taken against the criminals, the Kuki ethnic group and the CHT's citizens live in perpetual fear. This situation is revealing a significant violation of right to life and security of the local population which lives in fear and worry.<sup>50</sup> Another example is the attack on the Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka, Bangladesh,

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<[https://www.academia.edu/44711161/Unfolding\\_the\\_Role\\_of\\_Non\\_State\\_Actors\\_in\\_Rohingya\\_Refugee\\_Crisis\\_at\\_Bangladesh](https://www.academia.edu/44711161/Unfolding_the_Role_of_Non_State_Actors_in_Rohingya_Refugee_Crisis_at_Bangladesh)> accessed 19 March 2024.

<sup>46</sup> Sarah Young, 'What Was the Rana Plaza Disaster and Why Did It Happen?' (*The Independent*, 23 April 2020) <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/rana-plaza-factory-disaster-anniversary-what-happened-fashion-a9478126.html>> accessed 19 March 2024.

<sup>47</sup> Md Ashabur Rahman (n. 16) 9

<sup>48</sup> Alissa Ayres, 'A Guide to the Rana Plaza Tragedy, and Its Implications, in Bangladesh' (*Council on Foreign Relations*, April 2014) <<https://www.cfr.org/blog/guide-rana-plaza-tragedy-and-its-implications-bangladesh>> accessed 19 March 2024.

<sup>49</sup> Sarder Ali Haider, (2023) *Kuki-Chin Communities: A historical analysis of interconnectivity, secessionist ties in Myanmar and Northeast India, and the implications for Chittagong Hill tracts, Bangladesh, SSRN*. <[https://www.academia.edu/105426690/Kuki\\_Chin\\_Communities\\_A\\_Historical\\_Analysis\\_of\\_Interconnectivity\\_Secessionist\\_Ties\\_in\\_Myanmar\\_and\\_Northeast\\_India\\_and\\_the\\_Implications\\_for\\_Chittagong\\_Hill\\_Tracts\\_Bangladesh](https://www.academia.edu/105426690/Kuki_Chin_Communities_A_Historical_Analysis_of_Interconnectivity_Secessionist_Ties_in_Myanmar_and_Northeast_India_and_the_Implications_for_Chittagong_Hill_Tracts_Bangladesh)> Accessed: 18 March 2024.

<sup>50</sup> Shayan S Khan, 'Why Are the Kuki Chin Being Massacred in the Hills?' (<https://dhakacourier.com.bd/>, 12 May 2023) <<http://www.dhakacourier.com.bd/news/Reportage/Why-are-the-Kuki-Chin-being-massacred-in-the-Hills/6865>> accessed 20 March 2024.

on July 1, 2016, which provides a clear picture of the capacity of non-state actors to conduct violence and violate human rights. Then five militants stormed the bakery, seized hostages and began a shooting spree. The attack resulted in the deaths of 29 people, including 20 hostages. ISIL claimed credit for the incident, but the Bangladeshi authorities blamed Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen. The fundamental human rights of life and security are violated. The attack was not only a physical direct attack but also an attack on the general public, creating anxiety and insecurity, a violation of their right to live free of terror. It has a chilling impact on freedom of expression and association with people becoming more reluctant to share their ideas for fear of being targeted.<sup>51</sup> The tragedy demonstrated the threat to human rights by violent non-state actors and the necessity for strong prevention measures.

Non-state actors, specifically media organizations, non-governmental organizations, and ICT enterprises, are crucial to Bangladesh's human rights defense in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). Local financial platforms like bKash and tech giants like Facebook and Google have a big responsibility to protect digital rights and privacy. Bangladesh is working on a Data Protection Act and has enacted the Digital Security Act, but concerns about data surveillance and exploitation persist, especially because of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Act (BTRA).<sup>52</sup> These laws have drawn criticism for perhaps violating the right to privacy of residents. The adoption of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies by multinational firms operating in Bangladesh is on the rise.<sup>53</sup> Companies like Nestlé Bangladesh Limited, for example, have come under fire for their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, which center on environmental sustainability and community development.<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, there is ongoing discussion regarding these CSR initiatives' efficacy and openness.<sup>55</sup> Women's rights organizations and NGOs (non-governmental

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<sup>51</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Bangladesh: Charge or Release Holey Attack Hostages' (16 July 2016) <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/16/bangladesh-charge-or-release-holey-attack-hostages>> accessed 18 March 2024.

<sup>52</sup> -- 'Rights organizations demand transparent digital laws in Bangladesh' (*Dhaka Tribune*, 11 March 2025) 8 <<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/375997/bangladesh-digital-laws-must-be-transparent-and>> accessed 28 August 2025.

<sup>53</sup> 'Preventing Human Rights Violations | Ohchr' (*United Nations Human Rights Office of High Commissioner*) <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/prevention-and-early-warning/preventing-human-rights-violations>> accessed 20 March 2025.

<sup>54</sup> Md Zakir Hosen, 'Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of MNCs in Bangladesh: A Study on Nestlé Bangladesh Limited' (2018) *Global Disclosure of Economics and Business* 7(2) <<https://doi.org/10.18034/GDEB.V7I2.108>> accessed 28 August 2025.

<sup>55</sup> Madeliene Jalava, 'Human Rights Violations in the Garment Industry of Bangladesh' (*Theseus*) <[https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/96244/Human Rights Violations in the Garment Industry of Bangladesh.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/96244/Human%20Rights%20Violations%20in%20the%20Garment%20Industry%20of%20Bangladesh.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)> accessed 20 March 2025

organizations) are actively working to eliminate gender-based abuse and cyberbullying. They support specialized training, gender-sensitive cyber units and fast-track tribunals to adequately address cases of online violence.<sup>56</sup> The job economy in Bangladesh is facing challenges due to automation and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI). These technologies run the risk of replacing labor even though they can increase productivity. Although their efficacy is still being assessed, workforce re-training and reskilling initiatives are crucial.<sup>57</sup> Disinformation and hate speech are significant issues in Bangladesh's internet community. Media organizations and internet platforms have an obligation to counter false information that endangers democracy and human rights. Programs that promote media literacy and moral behavior online are crucial for addressing these problems.<sup>58</sup> In conclusion, even though non-state actors in Bangladesh plays a beneficial role in upholding human rights in the age of 4IR, issues such data privacy and the dissemination of false information still exist. Technology corporations, non-governmental groups, media outlets, and adherence to international frameworks must work together to address these.<sup>59</sup>

## 7. Key Challenges Faced to Protect Human Rights in the Fourth Industrial Era

The challenges that non-governmental organizations are facing from the government is hampering their growth and functioning in Bangladesh. The function of Human rights NGOs is hindered by lack of suitable financial support, infrastructure, unnecessary government interference and control, poor levels of cooperation and lack of knowledge and study.<sup>60</sup> NGOs are often faced with difficulties due to the lack of a consolidated and well-thought-out strategy that may guide them to the achievement of their objectives and the realization of their purpose.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibrahim Khalilullah, 'Cyber Violence Is Silencing Women in Bangladesh' (South Asia Monitor, 29 May 2025) < <https://www.southasiamonitor.org/spotlight/cyber-violence-silencing-women-bangladesh> > accessed 28 August 2025.

<sup>57</sup> Julian Jacobs, 'AI Labor Displacement and the Limits of Worker Retraining' (Brookings, 16 May 2025) <[https://www.brookings.edu/articles/ai-labor-displacement-and-the-limits-of-worker-retraining/?utm\\_source=>](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/ai-labor-displacement-and-the-limits-of-worker-retraining/?utm_source=>)> accessed 28 August 2025.

<sup>58</sup> Digital Information Security Agency (DISA), 'The Proliferation of Disinformation in Bangladesh' (29 May 2025) < [https://disa.org/the-proliferation-of-disinformation-in-bangladesh/?utm\\_source=>](https://disa.org/the-proliferation-of-disinformation-in-bangladesh/?utm_source=>) accessed 28 August 2025.

<sup>59</sup> Ninia Reza and Jeanue Jackques Plessis, 'The Garment Industry in Bangladesh, Corporate Social Responsibility of Multinational Corporations, and the Impact of COVID-19: Asian Journal of Law and Society' (*Cambridge Core*, 30 March 2022) <<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/asian-journal-of-law-and-society/article/garment-industry-in-bangladesh-corporate-social-responsibility-of-multinational-corporations-and-the-impact-of-covid19/FA597A48D0155C6B28AF4722A32233AF>> accessed 20 March 2025.

<sup>60</sup> Mst Raean Afroze and Mashroor Abdullah Abid, 'Human Rights Violations in Bangladesh and the Role of Law Enforcement Agencies: A Critical Analysis' (2022) 06 International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science 658.

This makes it hard to mobilize financial resources to properly support their operations and use them.<sup>61</sup>

Officials working for NGOs are frequently subjected to oppression and harassment by the government. Such actions can lead to a hostile work environment for the NGO staff and may discourage potential employees from considering working for NGOs in the future.<sup>62</sup> Odhikar's annual report on human rights reveals that some intelligence agencies have been keeping an eye on the organization and its human rights workers. This highlights the need for stronger protections to be put in place for individuals who work persistently to protect human rights in our community.<sup>63</sup>

The culture of impunity in Bangladesh poses obstacles for human rights NGOs (HR NGOs) in holding offenders accountable.<sup>64</sup> The government has implemented regulations that limit NGOs' ability to register, fund-raise and operate. Foreign funding of human rights is rigorously controlled by the 2016 Foreign Donations Regulation Act NGOs that are critical of the government, with others forced to suspend their activities because of lack of financing.<sup>65</sup>

Donations from abroad help to enhance democratic institutions in developing countries, and to promote human rights and good governance. Additionally, human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) depend on donors for funding their work, which could influence their ability to fight for the human rights movement. This dependence on donors can affect their effectiveness and reliability.<sup>66</sup> Thus, NGOs that promote human rights often become dependent on government funding for most of their financial support, which may make them less likely to speak out against human rights violations.<sup>67</sup> HR NGOs in Bangladesh need to be more neutral in the sphere of protection and promotion of human rights. Most of them are government-controlled or have affiliations with political parties, which impacts neutrality.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Md Kamal Uddin, (n.13) 41-42

<sup>62</sup> OMCT, "Bangladesh: Stop harassment of human rights defenders" (OMCT, 2024) <<https://www.omct.org/en/resources/statements/bangladesh-stop-harassment-of-human-rights-defenders>> accessed 18 March 2024'.

<sup>63</sup> Odhikar, 'Odhikar Human Rights Report 2013' (Odhikar, 2013) < <https://odhikar.org/human-rights-report-2013-odhikar-report-on-bangladesh/>> accessed 19 March 2025

<sup>64</sup> Md Kamal Uddin (n.13) 42.

<sup>65</sup> Md Kamal Uddin (n.13) 40.

<sup>66</sup> Ashabur Rahman (n.16) 10

<sup>67</sup> Ashabur Rahman, (n.16) 7

<sup>68</sup> Saber Ahmed Chowdhury, 'Protecting Human Rights: The Role of NGOs in Bangladesh' (March 28, 2012) <<https://ssrn.com/abstract=2030253>> accessed March 20,2025.

Laws and regulations are in place, yet corporations often find ways around them due to insufficient enforcement. The agencies that are supposed to monitor and supervise the corporations' operations are often inefficient in their responsibilities. There is a paucity of professionals to assist in building a good corporate governance culture. The individual investors are often the prominent players in the corporate structure, and this can lead to a large degree of control over ownership. There are few foreign and institutional investors, so there is frequently less monitoring and responsibility. Furthermore, corporations are generally opaque in their dealings and transparency policies often weak.<sup>69</sup>

VNSAs normally have political ambitions and utilize force to achieve their objectives. This strategy can lead to the violation of human rights, including the use of violence against innocent bystanders. These groups, sometimes outside the reach of the law, can act with impunity, leading to widespread and systemic human rights abuses. These aggressive non-state actors may exploit the situation and thereby contribute to human rights abuses, where state institutions are weak and there is no sufficient rule of law.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, factors related to an individual's social and economic status can also have an impact. Those who experience poverty, inequality, and have a lack of education may be more vulnerable to be recruited by violent non-state actors.<sup>71</sup>

Despite the Cyber Protection Act 2026 and Personal Data Protection Act 2026, human rights challenges persist in Bangladesh's digital landscape. While the law criminalizes online abuse, including gender-based violence and AI-driven crimes, vague provisions on "defamation" and "identity theft" risk being misused against activists.<sup>72</sup> There are still implementation issues since enforcement agencies need to guarantee independence and openness.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>69</sup> Aruna De Zoysa , Afzalur Rashid and Kathy Rudkin , 'Corporate Governance in Bangladesh: An Overview' (*Academia.edu*, 3 May 2021) <[https://www.academia.edu/47995486/Corporate\\_Governance\\_in\\_Bangladesh\\_An\\_Overview](https://www.academia.edu/47995486/Corporate_Governance_in_Bangladesh_An_Overview)> accessed 20 March 2025.

<sup>70</sup> 'World Report 2024: Rights Trends in Bangladesh' (*Human Rights Watch*, 11 January 2024) <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/bangladesh>> accessed 20 March 2024.

<sup>71</sup> Mst Raeen Afroze and Mashroor Abdullah Abid, 'Human Rights Violations in Bangladesh and the Role of Law Enforcement Agencies: A Critical Analysis' (2022) 06 *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* 658.

<sup>72</sup> Md Rokibul Islam, 'A Critical Analysis of Digital Rights Reform and Governance Transformation' (31 May 2025) *Lawyers Club Bangladesh* <<https://lawyersclubbangladesh.com/en/2025/05/31/a-critical-analysis-of-digital-rights-reform-and-governance-transformation/>> accessed 28 August 2025.

<sup>73</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Joint Statement on Emerging Digital Laws in Bangladesh' (25 February 2025) <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/02/25/joint-statement-emerging-digital-laws-bangladesh>> accessed 28 August 2025.

discrepancies with respect to international human rights norms underscore the necessity of continuous examination and modification to protect digital rights and freedom of speech.<sup>74</sup>

## 8. Conclusion with Findings and Recommendations

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for Human Rights have an essential role in safeguarding and advocating for human rights at the era of fourth industrial revolution, particularly in developing countries such as Bangladesh.

It is found that several multi-level measures are necessary to strengthen human rights and governance in human rights sector including Digital landscape of Bangladesh. At the state level, the government should enforce new cyber protection and data protection laws, amend the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act (FDRA) to curtail arbitrary powers, reinforce labor and environmental inspectorates, ensure impartial enforcement of anti-terror legislation, and ratify relevant international instruments, such as ILO Convention no. 87.

NGOs can have an impact on policy changes by engaging in advocacy. In addition, they can team up with international organizations to play role on the government to uphold human rights. NGOs often depend on foreign donations, which can be unpredictable. To address this issue, they could broaden their funding sources by pursuing local donations or carrying out income-generating activities. To avoid being influenced by political agendas, NGOs should maintain political neutrality and concentrate on upholding human rights, regardless of the political climate. NGOs can be instrumental in educating the public about human rights, which can help foster a culture that values and respects human rights. By collaborating with other civil society organizations, journalists, and the general public, NGOs can create a united front against human rights abuses. NGOs can actively participate in rendering legal services by addressing human rights violations, holding the government accountable, highlighting the gap between law deficiencies and government legal aid practices, and promoting social equality. It is important to note that the effectiveness of these strategies may vary depending on the specific contexts and circumstances in Bangladesh.

In case of corporations, encouraging MNCs (Multinational Companies) to adopt CSR

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<sup>74</sup> 'Cybersecurity law: 9 contentious sections shed' (*The Daily Star*, 3 May 2025) 4 <<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/cybersecurity-law-9-contentious-sections-shed-3888196> > accessed 28 August 2025.

(Corporate Social Responsibility) policies that uphold human rights is essential, but verifying that these policies aren't merely for show off and are indeed put into practice is crucial. International organizations and the home countries of MNCs can oversee the activities of these corporations and ensure they respect human rights. Multinational corporations should be open and honest about their supply chains. This can help ensure that they are held responsible for any breaches of human rights that occur within their operations. It is essential for employees to have a clear understanding of their rights and to feel confident in advocating for improved working conditions. A comprehensive approach is necessary when dealing with human rights violations by violent non-state actors. It is essential to strengthen state institutions and the rule of law. This involves guaranteeing civilian control of military and security forces, providing fair and due process in legal proceedings, and reinforcing judicial independence. Accountability should be established for non-state actors who commit human rights violations, which can be achieved through national and international legal mechanisms. It is essential to address the underlying causes of violence, such as poverty and inequality, and this can be done through socioeconomic development programs and initiatives aimed at promoting education. Promoting human rights education can raise awareness about human rights and the importance of respecting them. International cooperation can play a crucial role in addressing human rights violations by non-state actors, and this can be done through sharing best practices, offering technical assistance, and supporting national efforts to promote and protect human rights. A comprehensive strategy addressing the structural causes of inequality, injustice, and weak rule of law through inclusive development and peace-building activities is required to produce long-term and rights-respecting results.

Several steps are suggested to alleviate Bangladesh's ongoing human rights issues in the AI era in spite of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Act, 2001, Cyber Protection Act 2026 and Personal Data Protection Act, 2026. To avoid abuse against journalists, activists, and other civil society actors, vague clauses like those on 'defamation' and 'identity theft' should be clarified. To prevent the law from being applied arbitrarily, enforcement organizations must function independently and transparently, backed by well-defined accountability procedures. The law should be periodically examined and brought into compliance with international human rights norms, especially those pertaining to digital rights, privacy, and freedom of speech. Initiatives to increase the judiciary's, law enforcements, and civil society's capacity can improve knowledge of AI-driven crimes and gender-based online abuse. Lastly, public awareness

initiatives and easily available reporting systems are critical to enabling citizens to successfully defend their digital rights.

Because of political, social, and technological obstacles, protecting human rights in Bangladesh is still a challenging undertaking. Notwithstanding these challenges, businesses, NGOs, and other non-state actors keep up their efforts to promote rights, increase public awareness, and offer crucial safeguards. The emergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution brings with it hazards like algorithmic prejudice and cyber harassment as well as opportunities for openness. Coordinated actions by the government, civil society, and knowledgeable citizens can lessen the threats posed by violent actors and restrictive corporate policies. In the upcoming years, Bangladesh may improve human rights and bring them into line with international norms by implementing strong regulations, moral frameworks, and inclusive digital projects.