

August 2, 2024

Re: Statement Regarding the Student Protests in Bangladesh

The UTMSU strongly condemns the unjust, unlawful, and excessively repressive acts against students throughout Bangladesh. We are deeply alarmed by the escalating violence and police brutality, which has led to the deaths of over 200 people and has left thousands more injured in the span of a few days. The violent response to the protestors has also resulted in the unjustified arrests of about 10,000 people, many of whom are students and youth.

The student protests against the Bangladesh High Court's decision to reinstate the quota system, which was previously abolished in 2018, began with peaceful demonstrations on July 15. The quota system reserved 30% of government jobs for descendants of the freedom fighters in the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War.

As an organisation that represents students and fights for student rights, the UTMSU stands in solidarity with the Bangladeshi Student Movement as they exercise their freedom to peacefully protest, and condemns the violation of human rights and democratic principles by the police. The restriction of communication from within the country is deeply concerning, as it not only limits the spread of information, but also because it restricts access to necessary resources and help. We stand in solidarity with the students of Bangladesh, who have continued to fight for their rights despite excessive force and abuse, as well as those affected by this violence..

Our hearts go out to the Bangladeshi diaspora and the students on our campus, in particular, who have been unable to connect with their friends and families due to the internet shutdown. We understand that this may have an immense impact on the mental health and wellbeing of students across UofT, especially those who are directly affected by the repression. We encourage those who need support to reach out to the resources in the description.