

Bangladesh Immigration Detention Data Profile



Quick Facts	
Immigration detainees (2019)	Not Available
Detained minors (2017)	Not Available
International migrants (2019)	2,185,613
New asylum applications (2019)	5

NOTES ON USING THIS PROFILE

- Sources for the data provided in this report are available online at: <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/asia-pacific/bangladesh>
- "Observation Dates" indicate the timeframe statistical data correspond to or other data were last validated. More than one statistical entry for a year indicates contrasting reports.

STATISTICS

Detention, expulsion, and incarceration statistics

		Observation Date			Observation Date
Total number of immigration detainees by year	Not Available	2019	Total number of detained minors	Not Available	2017
Criminal prison population	78,578	2016	Percentage of foreign prisoners	0.1	2012
	72,104	2013		0.1	2012
	69,850	2011			
	86,838	2008			
	74,766	2005			
	68,178	2002			
	55,905	1999			
	43,100	1996			
41,618	1993				
Prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population)	42	2016			
	46	2013			
	45	2011			
	59	2008			
	52	2005			
	49	2002			
	43	1999			
	35	1996			
36	1993				

Demographics and immigration-related statistics

		Observation Date			Observation Date
Population	164,700,000	2020	International migrants	2,185,613	2019
	160,996,000	2015		1,422,000	2015
International migrants as a percentage of the population	0.9	2015	Refugees	854,779	2019
				906,645	2018
				932,216	2017
				276,198	2016
				231,958	2015
				232,472	2014
Ratio of refugees per 1000 inhabitants	1.7	2016	Total number of new asylum applications	5	2019
	1.46	2014		0	2016
				4	2014

DOMESTIC LAW

LEGAL TRADITION

	Name	Observation Date
Legal tradition	Common law	2017
	Muslim law	2017

COVID-19 UPDATES

	Update Status	Observation Date
Latest Update	<p>A controversial refugee settlement set up by the Bangladesh government on the island of Bhasan Char has been under intense scrutiny since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic because of claims by government officials that refugees confined to the site are being kept there as a Covid-19 quarantine measure. This scrutiny has intensified after women refugees reported experiencing sexual abuse and harassment at the hands of police and military officials. "One or two security personnel were caught by the Rohingya men after they raped a young, unmarried girl," reported one woman. "The girl cried out badly and alerted the Rohingya men who lived in the same area. But we have no way to know if any police case was registered." Speaking to The Guardian, several women reported that while female officers provided protection, no female officers were on duty overnight. More than 300 Rohingya refugees remain confined in prison-like facilities on the remote island. Despite the government's claim that the refugees were placed there as a quarantine measure, the group has been confined since April--far exceeding the recommended 14-day quarantine time frame. Additionally, officials have announced plans to relocate some 103,200 refugees to the island where groups of up to five people are reported to share rooms of just 50 square feet (enough room for one person). According to Amnesty International, rooms are located in sheds, each of which contains 16 units but just two toilets. Refugees report that they are prevented from leaving the sheds in which they are housed. On 5 September, the government arranged a three-day visit to the island for 40 refugees--amongst whom were camp leaders--so that they could explore the new facility. In speaking to some of the group, Human Rights Watch heard numerous concerns including a lack of medical facilities, lack of livelihood opportunities, and worries regarding safety during the monsoon season. Responding to the GDP's Covid-19 survey in July 2020, just as criticism over Bhasan Char grew increasingly heated, an IOM official in Bangladesh reported that the country had not instituted any particular policies in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, although he said that "for those who become irregular their status (would be) regularized with extensions of 3 months." The IOM official added that the country did not have immigration detention and that questions concerning Covid-19 measures taken in facilities were thus not applicable. The source explained that immigration "measures are generally pecuniary punishment (fine)." As the source did not mention the Bhasan Char situation or the plight of boat people being returned to Bangladesh, the GDP reached out to him for additional comment. He replied: "Your e-mail and survey shared by our team as per relevance to work of border management agencies and coordinated with our immigration and border management team and questions in surveys interpreted as regular and irregular migrants rather than refugees/Rohingya populations. When it comes to Bhasan Char and Refugees the answers will be different as there are different regime and practices by Govt of Bangladesh as well as different agencies are involved in this process. So the answers provided were covered only immigration detention."</p>	2020
	<p>On 9 July 2020, Human Rights Watch urged Bangladeshi authorities to immediately move more than 300 Rohingya refugees, including 33 children, from the silt island of Bhasan Char to the Cox's Bazar refugee camps to join their families. Despite inviting UNHCR and other UN agencies to Bhasan Char island, the Bangladesh government is yet to allow UN officials to provide protection services and aid to refugees detained on Bhasan Char, who had been stranded at sea for several weeks. As of 19 June, discussions on the parameters of the visit were ongoing. Bangladeshi authorities stated that the rescued refugees had to be temporarily quarantined on Bhasan Char to avoid spreading Covid-19 amongst the crowded camps. Yet, more than two months later, the refugees remain on the island despite calls from UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to return them to refugee camps in Cox's Bazar. Human Rights Watch Asia Director, Brad Adam, said that "Bangladesh authorities are using the pandemic as an excuse to detain refugees on a spit of land in the middle of a churning monsoon sea while their families anxiously pray for their return... The government is inexplicably delaying aid workers' access to support the refugees with immediate care, and refusing to reunite them with their families in the Cox's Bazar camps." Families in Cox's Bazar have told Human Rights Watch that their relatives on Bhasan Char are being held without freedom of movement, adequate access to food or medical care, and face severe shortages of safe drinking water. In addition, certain refugees have alleged that they were beaten and ill-treated by Bangladesh authorities on the island. Humanitarian experts have repeatedly raised concerns over the habitability and conditions on the island. After her visit to the island in January 2019, the UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, questioned whether the island was "truly habitable." Bangladesh authorities assured that no refugees would be involuntarily relocated to Bhasan Char, saying that the government would await a green signal from UN agencies and independent experts. The senior secretary of Bangladesh's Disaster Management Ministry told the Media on 30 October 2019 that "UN agencies will conduct a technical assessment regarding the safety issues in the island ... and we will not start the relocation without any clearance from the UN agencies." Nonetheless, the government has gone back on this promise by refusing to return the refugees to their families, preventing UN agencies from visiting the refugees to provide protection, medical and verification services, and also by refusing to allow UN agencies access to the island to conduct a transparent assessment of its habitability. At the same time, Myanmar has yet to take concrete steps to enable safe and voluntary returns. Human Rights Watch urged donors and concerned governments to insist that the Myanmar government and military ensure the security and basic rights of Rohingya, ensure unhindered access for international humanitarian agencies to provide resources and monitor rights, and provide full citizenship for the Rohingya, with all accompanying rights and protections.</p>	2020
	<p>More than 500 people - including children - have been stranded on two fishing trawlers in the Bay of Bengal, after Bangladesh refused to allow the refugees to come ashore. Last week, Bangladesh's Foreign Minister announced that the boats would not be allowed to dock, adding that in light of the Covid-19 pandemic the country could not take responsibility for any new refugees. Urging Bangladesh to open its ports, the UN Commissioner for Human Rights decried the situation as a "human tragedy of terrible proportions." Meanwhile, in a statement released on 25 April, Human Rights Watch said that "the pandemic cannot justify a blanket ban such as Bangladesh's refusal to allow any Rohingya now or in the future to disembark. Forcing them to remain on the boat also risks their right to health." On 8 April, Bangladesh announced the lockdown of Cox's Bazar, the country's southern district where more than 855,000 Rohingya refugees live in overcrowded refugee camps. (Population density inside the camps is more than 40 times the average density elsewhere in Bangladesh.) The chief of the district's administration stated that entry and exit from the region would be prohibited, and that stringent legal action would be taken against those violating the order. Police and soldiers reportedly set up roadblocks on main roads within the district, and conduct patrols inside and outside camps. With government bans on mobile phone and internet use in the camps still in place, many refugees continue to lack access to important public health messaging.</p>	2020
	<p>There are critical concerns about the risk of infection spreading uncontrollably in the overcrowded camps and other facilities used to house the some one million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Human rights groups issued a joint letter on 1 April commending the government "for working closely with the humanitarian community on COVID-19 preparedness and response in Cox's Bazar District, including efforts to establish isolation and treatment facilities." However the groups pleaded with authorities to stop building barbed wire fencing around camps and to restrict mobile internet connections because these "measures threaten the safety and well-being of the refugees as well as Bangladesh host communities and aid workers, in light of the growing COVID-19 pandemic." Separately, the Bangladeshi Inspector General of Prisons has advised that newly arrived prisoners are to be kept isolated for a period of 14 days prior to joining the general population. He also stated that prisoners already serving time are being checked one by one in every prison of the country. The Inspector also stated that, while plans to release prisoners convicted of minor offences, such as Iran, had been discussed, they are not currently being envisaged. It is thus far unclear if there are specific measures being taken to safeguard immigration-related detainees.</p>	2020

INTERNATIONAL LAW

Relevant international treaties and date of ratification

International treaties	Name	Ratification Year
	ICRMW, International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	2011
	OPCRPD, Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2008
	CRPD, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2007
	ICCPR, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	2000
	ICESCR, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	1998
	CAT, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	1998
	CRC, Convention on the Rights of the Child	1990
	CEDAW, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	1984
	ICERD, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	1979
	VCCR, Vienna Convention on Consular Relations	1978
Ratio of relevant international treaties ratified	10/19	

Relevant international treaties and date of ratification

International treaty reservations	Name	Reservation Year	Observation Date
	ICCPR Article 10	2000	2000
	CAT Article 14	1998	1998
	ICESCR Article 2	1998	1998
	ICESCR Article 3	1998	1998
	CRC Article 14	1990	1990
	CEDAW Article 2	1984	1984

Relevant international treaties and date of ratification			
Relevant recommendations issued by treaty bodies	Name	Recommendation Excerpt	Recommendation Year
	Committee on Migrant Workers	§34. The Committee recommends that the State party: (a) Take the steps necessary to ensure that in administrative and judicial proceedings, including detention and expulsion proceedings, migrant workers and members of their families, particularly those in an irregular situation, are guaranteed due process on an equal basis with nationals of the State party before the courts and tribunals; (b) Ensure that the minimum guarantees enshrined in the Convention are assured with regard to administrative and judicial procedures against migrant workers and members of their families.	2017
	Committee on Migrant Workers	36. The Committee recommends that the State party: (a) Make the proactive protection of migrant workers, including those in an irregular situation and those working in isolated conditions, a priority concern for its diplomatic missions in destination States; (b) Strengthen the welfare services and consular assistance provided to the State party's migrant workers in destination States, including psychological counselling, legal counselling and shelters for migrants in distress, and ensure that such services and assistance are gender-responsive; (c) Ensure that diplomatic missions are adequately staffed and that staff are properly trained on a human rights-based approach to dealing with all issues faced by migrant workers; (d) Ensure that diplomatic missions in States of employment have specific policies on the prevention of and responses to arbitrary detention and sexual and gender-based violence, including having female officers to deal with cases of sexual abuse, a free, hotline that operates around the clock, a roster of competent local lawyers able to help the State party's migrant workers with legal issues and to conduct frequent visits to migrant detention centres.	2017
	Committee on Migrant Workers	54. The Committee recommends that the State party: (a) Facilitate the repatriation of all migrant workers in need, including those who have escaped from abusive employers or have ended up in an irregular situation, in detention or elsewhere; (b) Enhance the gender-responsive services provided for the reintegration of returned migrant workers, including psychosocial services and livelihood opportunities, particularly providing response services for victims of sexual and gender-based violence and those who have experienced abuse during the migration process; (c) Conduct awareness-raising programmes to highlight the contribution of women migrant workers and combat the stigmatization of returning women migrant workers.	2017
Non treaty-based international human rights mechanisms			
Relevant recommendations of the UN Universal Periodic Review	Recommendation Issued	Year Issued	Observation Date
	No	2009	2017
	No	2013	2017

INSTITUTIONAL INDICATORS

More information about immigration detention in Bangladesh is available at the website of the Global Detention Project (www.globaldetentionproject.org)