

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Bangladesh: Killings by security forces must be fully investigated**

The Bangladeshi government's announcement that it will accept the demands of the Phulbari protesters falls short of a decisive commitment to punish abuse of power and killings by security forces, said Amnesty International today.

At least five people were killed and more than 100 injured when police and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) fired live ammunition into the crowd in Phulbari on 26 August. People have been protesting against the establishment of an open-pit coalmine in the area by the British firm Asia Energy Corporation. They feared the plan would lead to their forcible eviction and loss of their livelihood.

"The government has promised a probe, but the country's past record demonstrates that there is no guarantee that those responsible for the killings will be brought to justice," said Abbas Faiz, Amnesty International's South Asia researcher.

At least 17 people were killed between January and April this year when police fired live ammunition at demonstrators protesting against electricity shortages in the northern town of Kansat. There has been no independent investigation of those killings and no one has been brought to justice.

"Any investigation should be conducted by an independent, impartial and competent body authorised to summon the Bangladesh Rifles for interrogation. Its findings must be made public, and those found to have abused their power or used disproportionate force should be brought to justice without delay."

#### **Background Information**

Further scuffles in Phulbari between the security forces and thousands of demonstrators erupted when the security forces blocked their march towards the Corporation's building. Some of the demonstrators reportedly carried sticks, and bows and arrows. One policeman has died during the protests. The authorities alleged his death was from a heart attack after he received a head injury.

Today, the government announced that it will accept the demands of the demonstrators by cancelling the contract of the Asia Energy Corporation, compensating the victims or their families, promising to consult people on future mining projects, probing the killings, and withdrawing cases against demonstrators.

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