

# A view from the Left on the situation in Bangladesh

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**Badrul Alam, a member of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist-Leninist), an observer section of the Fourth International, spoke to Solidarity [Great Britain] about the political crisis in that country and its implications for working-class politics.**

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The Awami League and the Bangladeshi Nationalist Party (BNP), the two main bourgeois parties in Bangladesh, are fighting each other for power. There are no real ideological differences between them. Both parties belong to the bourgeoisie.

The Awami League, the ruling party, wants to cling to power. The opposition parties called for it to dissolve parliament at the end of its five-year term and create a so-called “level playing field” with a caretaker government, but instead it called a new election. Most of the opposition parties boycotted it. The election was held on 5 January, but only 153 of 300 seats were contested.

The Awami League’s coalition includes some so-called “leftist” parties, like the Workers’ Party of Bangladesh, led by Rashed Khan Menon, who are providing cover for the bourgeois Awami League. The National Socialist Party of Bangladesh, led by Hassan Haq Inu, is also part of the government coalition. The Workers’ Party has some ministerial positions following the elections.

The coalition also includes the Jatiya Party, led by Hussain Mohammed Ershad, who was President of Bangladesh from 1983 until 1990 when he was ousted by a popular uprising. Now he is sharing power in the ruling coalition.

The main opposition party, the BNP, did not take part in the election. They called demonstrations, blockades, and other direct actions against the election. They were joined by Islamist militants like Jama’at-e-Islami.

Our party did not take part in the elections. We tried to convince people about the nature of the bourgeois political parties, and explain that power is their main target. They don’t take into account the problems of the people.

Our party is trying to mobilise people. We are trying to show how the bourgeois political parties are deceiving and even killing the people — whether in the name of “democracy” or in the name of Islam. Everywhere, ordinary people are the victim. Bourgeois politicians are looting the contrary. Their incomes and ministerial honoraria have increased enormously. Our aim is to mobilise the people against the bourgeois system.

The government is currently conducting trials for war crimes committed in the 1971 war of independence. One Islamist leader, Abdul Kader Mullah, has already been hanged.

They committed crimes in 1971, but have not been through the trial process. It's important that they should be brought to trial.

There have been mobilisations in support of the death penalty, involving many people taking to the streets wanting to see the war criminals punished. We intervened in those mobilisations to say that yes, the criminals should be brought to trial and punished, but we were against the death penalty.

The question of garment workers' rights, particularly safety at work, is still a big issue in the country, but because of the electoral crisis it has been somewhat overlooked recently. However, garment workers are still in the streets. The government recently increased the minimum wage, but the workers are still demanding living wages.

The daily cost of living is rising beyond a level at which garment workers can afford. The demands for factory safety continue, but there is still much to improve in the garment sector.

**Badrul Alam**

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**P.S.**

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<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2014/01/22/mobilising-workers-bangladesh>