



## DAVID SHOEBRIDGE

SENATOR FOR NEW SOUTH WALES

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Hon Penny Wong  
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade  
By email: [senator.wong@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.wong@aph.gov.au)

17 August 2022

Dear Minister,

### Re: Maginstky response to Rapid Action Battalion (RAB)

I write following a request made to my office by the Bangladeshi community in NSW regarding the issuing of sanctions targeting senior members of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) in Bangladesh.

In December 2021 [the US Treasury announced Magnitstky sanctions](#) against RAB and former RAB commanders and members on the grounds of undermining the rule of law, gross violations of human rights including disappearances, extrajudicial killings and torture. The US took the action under the provisions of the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act.

The actions by the RAB and its senior leadership clearly satisfy the requirements under the Magnitski provisions of the Commonwealth's *Autonomous Sanctions Regulations 2011* s6A(4). Those provisions provide for the declaration and designation of a person and or entity that has been responsible for, or has been complicit in, an act that constitutes a serious violation or serious abuse of a person's right to life or right not to be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

RAB was founded in 2004 and includes police, army, navy, air force and border guards. It has extremely wide remit and little oversight. There are credible reports from NGOs that RAB is directly implicated in more than 600 disappearances since 2009, almost 600 extrajudicial killings and torture of targets including political opponents, journalists and activists.

The US listing of RAB includes sanctions and visa controls on the following for their responsibility or complicity with serious human rights abuses:

- Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, Director General, RAB, April 15, 2020 to present
- Benazir Ahmed, former Director General, RAB, January 2015 to April 14, 2020
- Khan Mohammad Azad, Additional Director General (Operations), RAB, March 16, 2021 to present
- Tofayel Mustafa Sorwar, former Additional Director General (Operations), RAB, June 27, 2019 to March 16, 2021

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- Mohammad Jahangir Alam, former Additional Director General (Operations), RAB, September 17, 2018 to June 27, 2019
- Mohammad Anwar Latif Khan, former Additional Director General (Operations), RAB, April 28, 2016 to September 17, 2018
- Benazir Ahmed former Director General of RAB January 15, 2015 to April 2020 and current Inspector General of Bangladesh Police.

For many Bangladeshi families in Australia, the operations of RAB have resulted in the disappearance, death or torture of family members or members of their community. With ongoing political instability in Bangladesh there is very real concern that these senior RAB figures will seek residency in Australia, or alternatively use Australia as a place to hold their assets. This concern is only heightened by the fact that the very welcome US sanctions prevent them using the US for either of these purposes.

**Accordingly the community requests that you urgently use your powers to designate and declare these senior RAB current and former members.**

We are of course available to discuss this further at any time. Our offices can be contacted at [senator.shoebridge@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.shoebridge@aph.gov.au) and [senator.steele-john@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.steele-john@aph.gov.au)

Kind regards,

David Shoebridge, Senator for NSW  
Justice Spokesperson

Jordon Steele-John, Senator for WA  
Foreign Affairs Spokesperson

**DAVID SHOEBRIDGE**

SENATOR FOR NEW SOUTH WALES

Hon Penny Wong  
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade  
By email: [senator.wong@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.wong@aph.gov.au)

28 November 2022

Dear Minister,

**Re: Update - Magnitsky response to Rapid Action Battalion (RAB)**

On 17 August 2022 we wrote to you following a request made to our offices by the Bangladeshi community in NSW regarding the issuing of sanctions targeting senior members of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) in Bangladesh.

In that correspondence we highlighted that in December 2021 [the US Treasury announced Magnitsky sanctions](#) against RAB and former RAB commanders and members on the grounds of undermining the rule of law, gross violations of human rights including disappearances, extrajudicial killings and torture. The US took the action under the provisions of the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act.

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On 10 October 2022 you responded to our letter stating that “Australia regularly discusses human rights issues with Bangladesh” and that the Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh has “conveyed Australia’s concerns over allegations regarding the Rapid Action Battalion to the Bangladesh Government most recently in February 2022”.

We write to you again to provide an update on these individuals in Bangladesh. Far from accepting the international concerns and moderating its behaviour, in most cases the Bangladesh Government has instead rewarded the sanctioned individuals. Here are some instances which clearly show how the regime

encouraged human rights violations in Bangladesh by promoting the sanctioned law enforcers:

**Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun:** On September 22 the government appointed the Director General of RAB and the first on the list of US sanctions, Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, as the new Inspector General of Police. This is the highest position in the Bangladesh Police.[1]

**Benazir Ahmed:** In addition to the Treasury sanctions, the US Department of State also imposed visa restrictions on Benazir Ahmed, the former IGP and DG, RAB, due to “his involvement in gross violations of human rights, making him ineligible for entry into the United States.” [2] Since then the Bangladesh government nominated Benazir Ahmed as a member of the Bangladeshi delegation to the United Nations Chiefs of Police Summit (UNCOPS 2022) held from August 31 to September 1, 2022.[3]

The Bangladesh government took advantage of the international law's exemption to US travel restrictions as a result of the U.S. government's requirement to provide a visa to foreign nationals to visit the U.N. in New York. After the U.N. summit, Benazir Ahmed was even given a public facing reception organised by the ruling party supporters in New York[4].

**Mohammad Jahangir Alam:** Mohammad Jahangir Alam, a Brigadier General of the Bangladesh Army, was also one of the sanctioned RAB officials. After serving as an Additional Director General (Operations) of RAB, he was rewarded with a further promotion as the Commander of the President Guard Regiment (PGR). The PGR is an elite force responsible for providing security for the President of Bangladesh, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, and their immediate family members.[5]

As per our last correspondence to you on this matter, for many Bangladeshi families in Australia, the operations of RAB have resulted in the disappearance, death or torture of family members or members of their community. With ongoing political instability in Bangladesh there is very real concern that these senior RAB figures will seek residency in Australia, or alternatively use Australia as a place to hold their assets. This concern is only heightened by the fact that the very welcome US sanctions prevent them using the US for either of these purposes.

The Bangladeshi diaspora is deeply concerned with the ongoing human rights violations and democratic backsliding in Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi community living abroad understands the need for liberal democratic values, transparency, tolerance, and pluralism. Without respect for universal human rights, the rule of law and good governance cannot be ensured in Bangladesh.

We urge you to take appropriate measures, including imposing individual Magnitsky sanctions, working in the UN to ban the individuals responsible for human rights violations in participating in UN Peace Keeping Missions, and contributing to the process of creating an environment for a free and fair national election for Bangladesh in 2023.

[1]<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2022/10/17/igp-off-to-new-delhi-to-attend-interpol-general-assembly>

[2]<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0526?fbclid=IwAR2f271gIns5ixoWb6T9nBEaI4xy4uquuaXPLtoCt6Em7XhtbGgXXhhDiKE>

[3]<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/igp-benazir-ahmed-receives-us-visa-join-uncops-2022-summit-3103071>

[4] <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/oly95ae76f>

[5] <https://unb.com.bd/category/Bangladesh/work-to-retain-the-glory-of-pgr-president/23439>

**DAVID SHOEBRIDGE**

SENATOR FOR NEW SOUTH WALES

Accordingly the community requests that you urgently use your powers to designate and declare these senior RAB current and former members.

We are of course available to discuss this further at any time. Our offices can be contacted at [senator.shoebridge@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.shoebridge@aph.gov.au) and [senator.steele-john@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.steele-john@aph.gov.au)

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Shoebridge'.

David Shoebridge, Senator for NSW  
Justice Spokesperson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Steele-John'.

Jordon Steele-John, Senator for WA  
Foreign Affairs Spokesperson