



“Mob Justice Post-2024 Regime Change in Bangladesh: A Critical Assessment of its Rise and Impact on Law Enforcement”

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Abstract

Mob justice, an informal and extrajudicial practice executed by a collective group outside legal boundaries, remains a critical issue in post-2024 Bangladesh. Following the student-led uprising that removed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on August 5, 2024, the nation observed a surge in collective violence marked by public distrust in state institutions and the formal justice system. This study conducts a qualitative assessment of mob justice within the transitional political climate, drawing upon peer-reviewed literature, legal frameworks, and sociological analyses to interpret the underlying causes, patterns, and consequences of this phenomenon. By situating mob justice within the conceptual lens of the “Numb State,” where formal laws exist but institutional enforcement collapses, the research explores how declining public confidence, human rights abuses, slow judicial processes, and institutional voids have eroded the rule of law. The study further investigates the cascading impacts on policing credibility, procedural justice, and citizens’ psychological orientation toward state authority. Findings reveal that the prevalence of mob justice signifies both democratic erosion and socio-legal fragility, underscoring the urgent need for structural reforms in law enforcement, community engagement, and judicial accessibility. The paper concludes with policy recommendations aimed at reinforcing public trust, eliminating institutional gaps, and ensuring equitable access to justice—preconditions for restoring the rule of law in Bangladesh’s new political reality.

Keywords: Mob Justice, Bangladesh, Criminal Justice System, Human Rights, Institutional Collapse.

Introduction

Mob Justice is extrajudicial punishment implement by a group people where will have no norms of ethics, social harmony and arises complicated question regarding human

psychology. In the perspective of Bangladesh, the reason of Mob Justice has discussion after changing a political era. So, a critical assessment is necessary for its prevalence on law enforcement and human rights. The country has previous

history of challenge for upholding rule of law and political instability that contribute to organize mob justice.

A student initiated mass uprising compel to beat Sheikh Hasina from the office of Prime Minister on August 5, 2024 that noted a potential turning point for Bangladesh. The people of the country hoped the transition is new beginning of removing political oppression, corruption, monism but resulted institutional fragility and political vacuum which raise collective, extrajudicial violence and displace formal mechanisms of the state (Ahmed, 2025).

A critical assessment undertakes by the study about mob justice of this post-2024 and asserted that it is not only sign of social unrest but also challenge to democratic and legal systems of Bangladesh (Zainuddin, 2025) (Ahmed, 2025). Critically, the cascading effect on law enforcement will be concentrated by the study. The aims of the study to achieve some objectives. **Firstly**, it will examine the mob justice incidents in Bangladesh following the post-2024 political transition with its nature and extent. **Secondly**, analyze the social and legal determinants driving the increase in vigilante justice, such as structural flaws in the judicial system, shortcomings in policing, and the decline of public confidence in official justice institutions. **Thirdly**, assess the effects of vigilantism on the effectiveness and credibility of policing institutions and the wider judicial framework in Bangladesh. **Fourthly**, realize the concept of 'Numb State' with delivery of justice and operational principle of law enforcement in Bangladesh where informal system of justice avoids formal ones. **Finally**, suggest measures to reinforce legal frameworks, improve availability of justice, and restore citizens' trust in official institutions in order to reduce occurrences of mob violence.

Methodology

This evaluative analysis draws on peer-reviewed studies addressing the criminal justice system in Bangladesh, the role of law enforcement agencies, and the socio-political context under the

post-2024 regime. The method involves conducting a qualitative review of existing publications to identify the causes, patterns, and effects of mob justice. Academic discourse surrounding institutional voids and legal structures has been assembled to embed the phenomenon within a wider theoretical context. The research emphasizes key aspects related to human rights and challenges within the criminal justice system, drawing insights from relevant publications concerning Bangladesh. The review further examines the interaction between the formal justice system and the informal mechanisms of dispute resolution in Bangladesh, establishing a link with the concept of the "Numb State". The methodology adopts a multidisciplinary framework, integrating insights from criminology, political science, sociology, and law to achieve a holistic analysis.

Review of Literature

It is often observed that the formal justice system faces a crisis in addressing legality and ensuring effective enforcement of justice, particularly in cases of mob justice. To prevent anomalies of any kind, strict punishment must be enforced; otherwise, criminal activities will increase in various forms and become uncontrollable (Garoupa, 1997). The criminal justice system in Bangladesh operates with significant delays, often delivers unequal remedies, and thereby contributes to frequent injustices (Knock, 2024). Therefore, corruption and discrimination emerge in social and economic spheres, hindering the proper delivery of justice (Islam, 2024).

The studies have emphasized that the law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh have repeatedly violated human rights through extrajudicial killings and secret detentions in facilities like the 'Mirror House,' raising concerns about public trust and undermining the rule of law (Afroze, 2022), (Uddin, 2022), (Hossain, 2017). These forms of oppression fuel resentment among the people, leading them to believe that they will never receive fair justice due to weak law enforcement, which ultimately drives them to

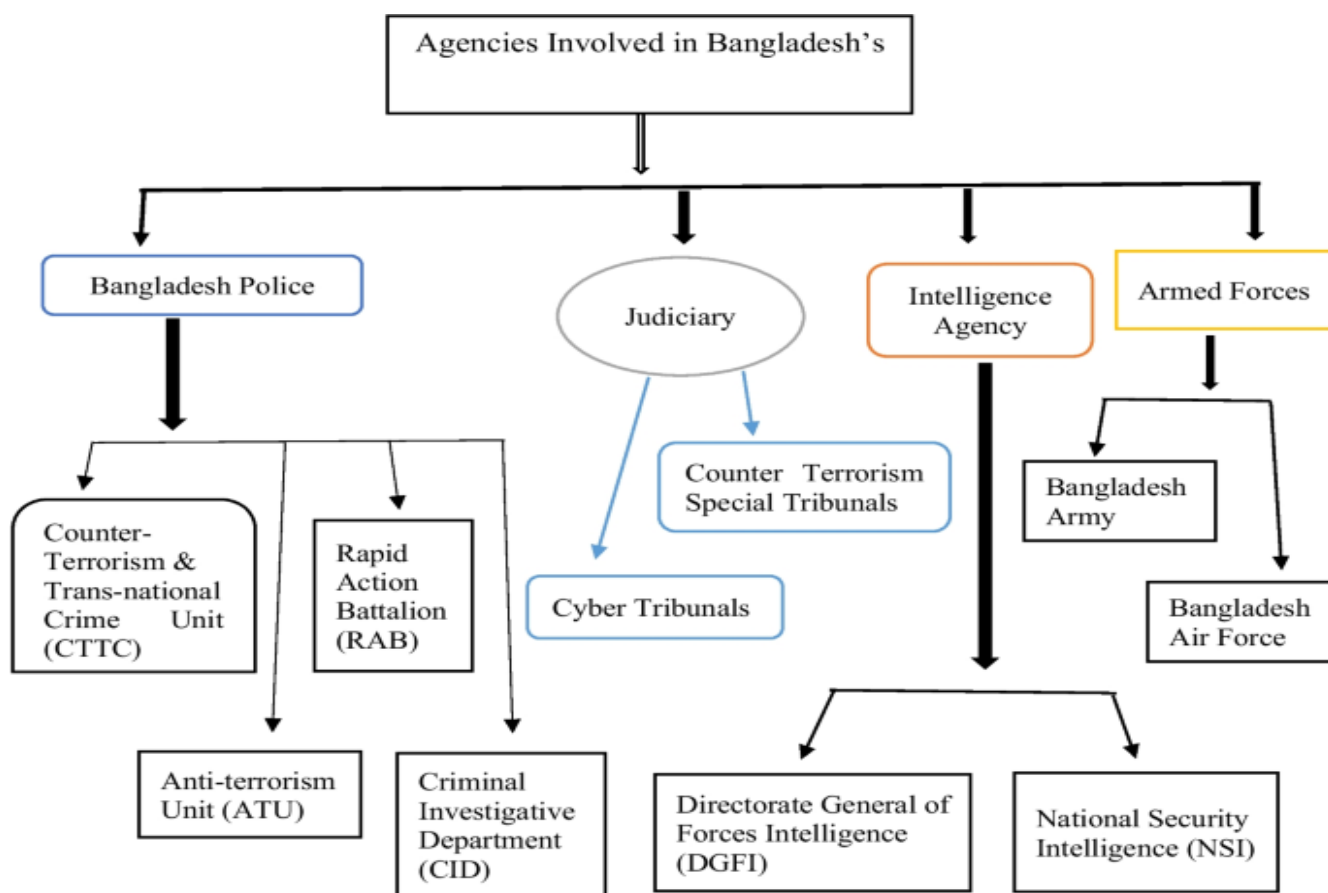
take the law into their own hands through acts of mob justice.

In the absence or weakness of formal institutional functions, informal arrangements inevitably emerge to fill the gap (Dieleman, 2022). In rural Bangladesh, differences arise between the application of state law and non-state law, where formal verdicts are often undermined by the influence of non-state mechanisms (Berger, 2020). This situation represents a de facto 'Num State,' in which the official institutions remain in place but their actual authority is regularly undermined or displaced by localized, often informal, centers of power.

The new regime of 2024 opened the door for reform, yet the outcome was chaotic mob justice instead (Ahmed, 2025). This scenario

demonstrates that shifts in political and authoritarian leadership can foster instability, erode state institutions, and diminish public trust. When the interaction between legal systems, criminal activity, and regime change becomes intricate, the regime’s stability is threatened (Savelsberg, 2014). The Bangladesh Police, Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), tasked with maintaining law and order, are currently facing a challenging and complex situation (Islam, 2024). However, it is common to question the structure in relation to people’s perceptions when human rights are violated.

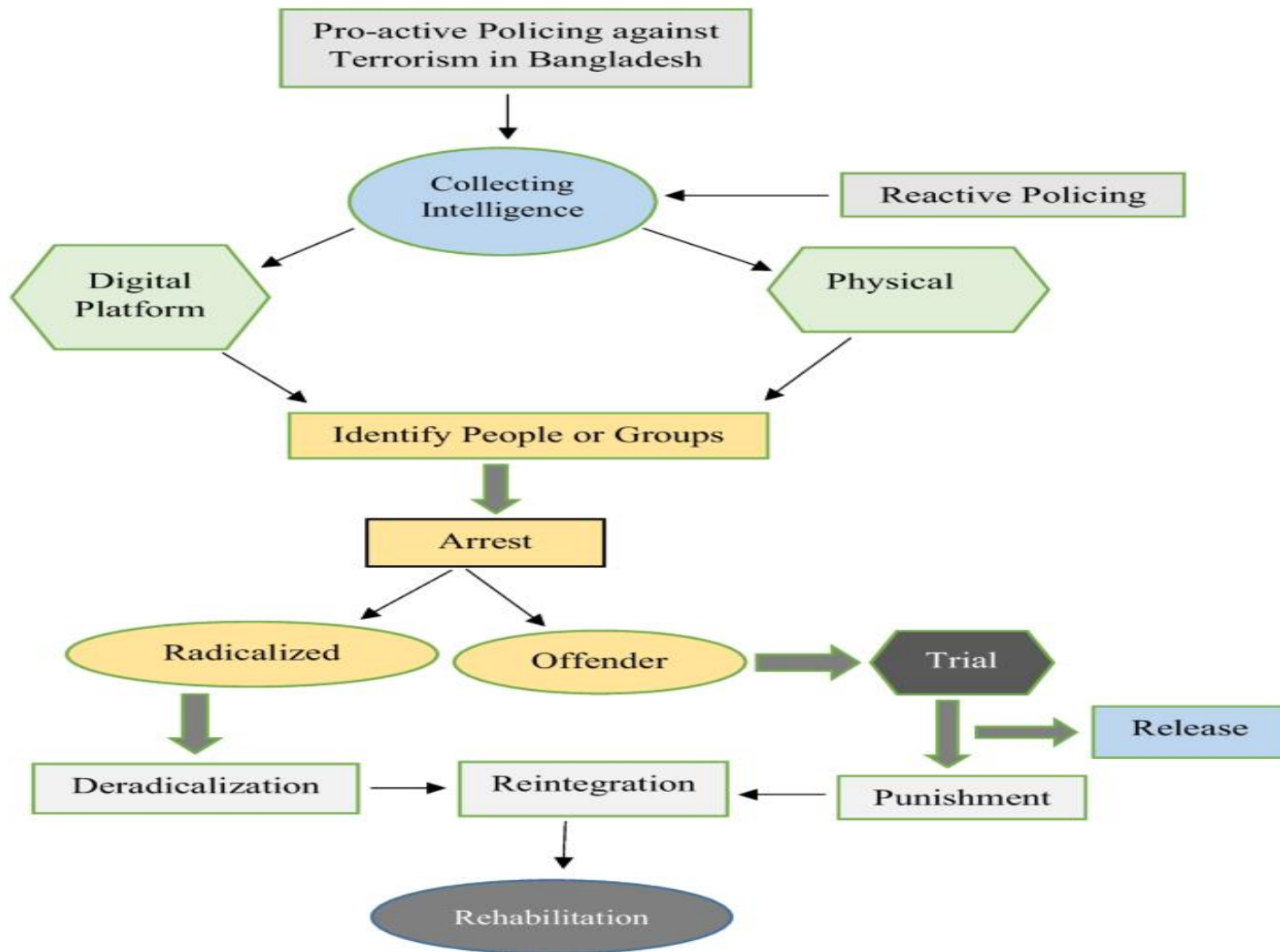
For example, figure 1 illustrates the organizational hierarchy of law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh involved in counterterrorism and national security operations (Islam, 2024).



Source: (Islam, 2024).

This structure illustrates the formal institutional framework, but the rise of mob justice undermines its effectiveness. The formal process of proactive policing against terrorism in Bangladesh, which involves intelligence

gathering, identification, arrest, categorization, trial, punishment, deradicalization, reintegration, and rehabilitation, is a comprehensive model (Islam, 2024).



Source: (Islam, 2024).

However, people tend to engage in mob justice when they lose faith in the formal judicial system and those deployed to control mob justice often suffer a psychological decline in confidence. The study examines the psychological well-being of police officers, a crucial factor influencing their performance and ethical behavior (Cartwright, 2020). It is natural that the high levels of stress experienced by law enforcement personnel can cause psychological trauma, which may negatively impact their professional behavior and lead to failure in their duties (Cartwright, 2020). The conceptual frameworks of "Intersectional Climate Justice" (Maia, 2024), (Parsons, 2024) and the "Dimensions of Human Injustice," (Adam, 2024) although centered mainly on climate and social justice, respectively, provide important insights by illustrating how various intersecting injustices amplify societal vulnerabilities and erode trust. This model proposes that tackling

intricate social issues such as mob justice demands a comprehensive strategy that takes into account multiple dimensions of inequality and injustice.

The incident of mob justice has sparked debates within policy and academic circles, with many discussions emphasizing that weakness of law enforcement, default of formal institutional functions, and an ineffective criminal justice system are the primary contributing factors.

Upon completion, the study will present insights into mob justice in the post-2024 regime, highlighting the underlying reasons for public disregard of the formal legal system and mistrust toward law enforcement agencies, and will offer to address these emerging challenges. The study also offers practical policy recommendations for concerned agencies and enhances the field of criminal justice.

Legal Regime

The legal regime of Bangladesh is founded on its Constitution, which explicitly upholds and guarantees the principles of rule of law, justice, human rights, equality, and freedom (Hasan, 2017). Specifically, Articles 31, 33(1) and 35(3) guarantee the right to protection of law, the right to legal assistance and the right to a prompt and public hearing in criminal cases (Hasan, 2017). Despite the constitutional assurances provided, the implementation of the rule of law within Bangladesh’s criminal justice system encounters numerous obstacles (Knock, 2024).

By bypassing due process, mob justice encourages unlawful punishment and contributes to the rise of extrajudicial killings and violent acts. Certain provisions of the Penal Code, 1860—such as Sections 141 (unlawful assembly), 146 (rioting), and 302 (murder) and 323 (causing hurt)—are applicable in punishing acts of mob justice. Conversely, Sections 127–130 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 authorize police officers to take necessary action in cases involving violence, mob justice, or unlawful assemblies. Alternatively, the Special Powers Act, 1974 grants the government authority to intervene when public order is at risk, and the Cyber Security Act, 2023 is designed to combat misinformation that can fuel mob violence. However, their enforcement remains weak due to corruption, inefficiency, and systemic flaws within law enforcement agencies (Rabbi, 2024).

The existing system, originally established during the British colonial period and modified numerous times since, continues to face challenges such as unequal access to justice and persistent delays in legal proceedings (Bari, 2019).

In rural contexts, the implementation of informal legal systems plays a crucial role in conflict resolution and frequently intersects with formal legal frameworks, a phenomenon conceptualized as the logic of non-enforcement (Berger, 2020). This describes a parallel setting where formal systems are established but justice is still beyond

reach. The parallel arrangement, akin to the ‘Numb State’ phenomenon, reflects a scenario where a formal legal system is in place but coexists with an alternative, substantive justice mechanism that remains largely unrecognized and unaddressed. The safeguarding of the population depends on the clarity of laws and the strength of enforcement institutions, a notion that invites criticism in Bangladesh (Solaiman, 2005).

Human rights violations by law enforcement agencies, such as extrajudicial killings, pose a significant challenge to the legal framework of Bangladesh (Afroze, 2022), (Hossain, 2017). Such actions erode public confidence in law enforcement and foster an environment where mob justice can easily take root. Morality plays a crucial role in the enforcement of law because the connection between law, justice, and morality is grounded in the philosophy of law, even though they may sometimes be separated during actual enforcement (Yani, 2025).

Internationally, mob justice is recognized as a breach of fundamental human rights protected under legal instruments like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). These international instruments affirm the right to life, the presumption of innocence, and the right to a fair and public trial by an impartial judiciary. By disregarding these rights, mob justice delivers instant punishment without adhering to due process, thereby undermining the rule of law.

To combat mob justice, Bangladesh’s formal legal framework and international mechanisms must be strengthened and implemented through strict enforcement of existing laws against unlawful assemblies and violence, establishment of special courts to handle mob justice cases, protection of victims and witnesses, and promotion of public awareness and education to safeguard human rights. The judiciary must be urged to pronounce clear opposition to extrajudicial measures and reinforce citizens’ reliance on the justice system (Rabbi, 2024).

Summary of key points:

Aspect	Legal Regime of Bangladesh	International Legal Regime
Constitutional Protections	Articles 31, 35 guarantee protection of law and fair trial	UDHR (Art. 3 and 10) & ICCPR (Art. 6 and 14) guarantee right to life and fair trial
Relevant Laws	Penal Code Sections 141, 146, 302 apply to mob violence	ICCPR (Art. 7) prohibits extrajudicial punishment
Common Issues	Weak law enforcement, corruption, political meddling	Universal condemnation of mob justice
Legal Remedies	Enforcement of penal laws, special courts, witness protection	State obligations to uphold human rights and due process
Human Rights Violations	Violation of right to life, liberty, and fair trial	Violation of rights to life, legal protections, and dignity
Recommendations	Strengthen judiciary and law enforcement, public awareness	International cooperation, human rights education

Analysis

After 2024, the increase in mob justice in Bangladesh can be interpreted from various perspectives, with the “Numb State” concept serving as a prime example, illustrating how the absence of effective institutional roles and the weak enforcement of formal laws contribute to public distrust. The interim government began its mission with hopes of benefiting the country, but they are operating within a system inherited from the past, which marked by distrust and inefficiency (Ahmed, 2025).

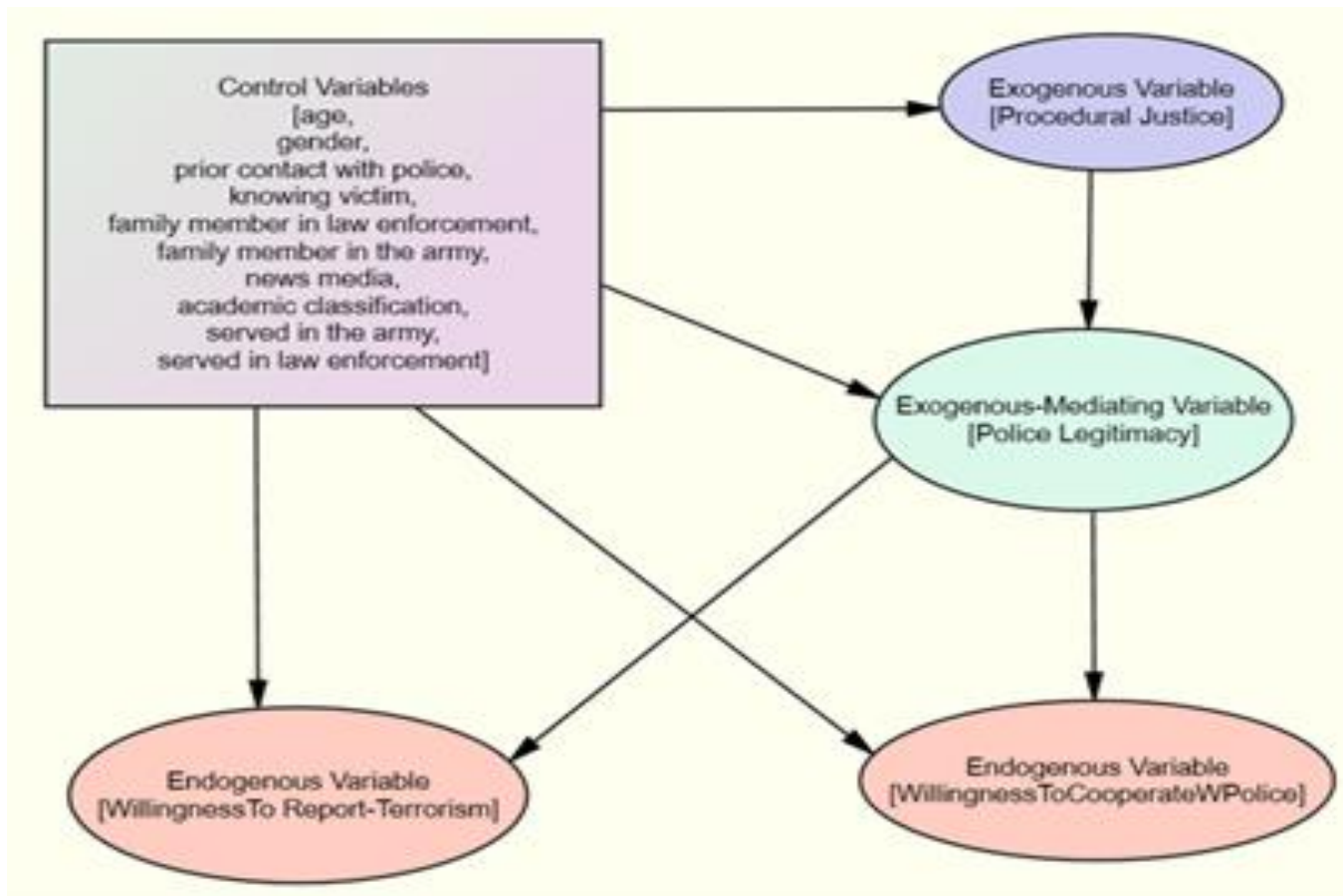
Repeated occurrences of mob justice reflect a widespread lack of confidence in the formal justice system’s ability to provide impartial and equitable outcomes (Knock, 2024), (Islam, 2024). The erosion of public trust is not a recent development; numerous studies have consistently highlighted systemic issues such as human rights abuses by law enforcement, pervasive corruption,

sluggish judicial proceedings, and the prevalence of extra-judicial killings (Afroze, 2022), (Uddin, 2022), (Hossain, 2017). People tend to avoid seeking assistance from formal institutions due to their perceived ineffectiveness, which fosters an environment where community-driven punishments are carried out despite being illegal, yet widely regarded as legitimate. It resembles the idea of a ‘Numb State,’ in which constitutional and statutory provisions exist on paper but their practical implementation and enforcement remain largely ineffective (Hasan, 2017), (Berger, 2020).

The formal legal system operates to combat crime through a series of processes including complaint filing, investigation or inquiry, trial, and the imposition of punishment (Islam, 2024). If there is any concern regarding procedural fairness, the integrity of the law enforcement agency may be

called into question, leading to a decline in public confidence in both the process and the institution (Akdogan, 2024). Figure 2 presents a conceptual framework demonstrating how procedural justice

impacts police legitimacy, ultimately shaping individuals' readiness to report terrorism and collaborate with law enforcement (Akdogan, 2024).



Source: (Akdogan, 2024).

This highlights that in recent times in Bangladesh, the police force has faced scrutiny over its past activities, and currently its inability to effectively carry out regular duties because they are philologically traumatic and that has contributed to rising corruption, injustice, and human rights violations, leading the public to lose trust in the formal justice system and resort instead to mob justice (Cartwright, 2020).

Regime changes often create a power vacuum, which can lead to social unrest and give rise to informal systems of justice (Savelsberg, 2024). The post-2024 regime period reveals that society seeks instant retribution rather than relying on formal justice systems (Ahmed, 2025). This reflects a defining feature of a "Num State," where informal and frequently coercive practices

overshadow formal institutions, particularly in times of political or social transition

Findings

The analytical evaluation highlights several significant insights into mob justice in post-2024 Bangladesh.

Increasing Incidence of Mob Justice: Since August 2024, instances of mob justice and revenge justice have surged noticeably (Ahmed, 2025). This incident reflects defiance toward the formal justice system, especially within the transitional political climate.

The "Numb State" and Institutional Void: The occurrence of mob justice is associated with institutional deficiencies, where the formal criminal justice system is perceived as unreliable, ineffective, and beyond the reach of ordinary

citizens (Dieleman, 2022), (knock, 2024), (Islam, 2024). It is linked to the idea of the “Numb State,” which suggests that although a formal constitutional and legal framework exists, the implementation of the rule of law and the State’s capacity to ensure justice are hindered by declining public trust and the influence of informal systems ((Hasan, 2017), (Berger, 2020).

Erosion of trust between the public and law enforcement agencies: Human rights abuses committed by law enforcement agencies, including acts like extra-judicial killings, are well-documented and have greatly eroded public confidence in these institutions (Afroze, 2022), Uddin, 2022), (Hossain, 2017). This lack of trust in law enforcement agencies often drives people to take part in mob justice, bypassing the formal legal system as they perceive it to be a quicker means of obtaining revenge.

Influence on the credibility of Law Enforcement Agency: Widespread mob justice undermines the credibility and weakening the authority of law enforcement institutions. When individuals resort to taking justice into their own hands, it signifies that the state has failed to maintain control over legal and judicial institutions, undermining the effectiveness of the policing system (Akdogan, 2024).

Interconnection between formal and informal justice process: The justice system in Bangladesh, encompassing both formal and informal processes, is highly complex, and the overlap between them often leads to inconsistent outcomes and a tendency toward non-enforcement (Berger, 2020). The essence of this complexity lies in the existence of a formal justice system that fails to function effectively, thereby allowing mob justice to take over its role.

Challenges for Interim-Government: The restoration of stability and the reinforcement of the rule of law remain major challenges for the post-2024 government. Consequently, widespread social instability and the absence of effective institutional governance may lead to a rise in

incidents of mob justice (Ahmed, 2025), (Savaelsberg (2014).

Recommendation

To address the issue of mob justice in Bangladesh and ensure the rule of law, it is essential to restore public confidence, reform state institutions, and promote active community engagement. Based on this perspective, the following suggestions are presented:

Reinforcement of the formal justice system is necessary: There is a pressing need for significant reforms in the judicial system to reduce case backlogs and ensure equal access to justice for all segments of society (Knock, 2024), (Islam, 2024). This encompasses specialized training sessions for judges and lawyers, focusing on complex topics and ensuring clear understanding of legal provisions.

Reform initiatives within law enforcement agencies: Eliminating human rights violations and extrajudicial killings requires comprehensive reforms of the police force and other enforcement agencies (Afroze, 2022), Uddin, 2022), (Hossain, 2017). It is important to organize an ethics training program for police and related agencies to promote moral standards, ethical conduct, and safeguard human rights. Psychological support is essential for enhancing the performance and professional conduct of police officers.

Improve the credibility of the police force and ensure equitable administration of justice: It is essential to place emphasis on law enforcement agencies and the principles of procedural justice. It ensures openness during decision-making and holds individuals accountable for any misconduct to promote fairness within the police force (Akdogan, 2024). Every citizen possesses an inherent sense of justice that is closely connected to the law; therefore, it is essential to guarantee equal access to justice for all (Hirtenlehner, 2023).

Promote Legal Aid and Awareness: To promote and uphold legal aid services for marginalized communities, ensuring that all citizens of the country, without discrimination, have equal

access to such support (Khan, 2019). It is essential to promote public awareness about the legal system and educate citizens about their lawful rights and responsibilities.

Enhance Institutional capacity: It is essential to identify and eliminate institutional voids that foster the emergence of informal justice processes (Deleman, 2022). It is therefore essential to understand how state and non-state legal systems interact at the local level and formulate a policy framework to harmonize human rights principles within informal systems, subsequently facilitating their integration into formal institutional structures or enhance the formal framework to dismantle the informal structure.

Strengthen community engagement and promote dialogue: Establish a comprehensive mechanism or platforms to enhance cooperative dialogue and collaboration among grassroots communities, law enforcement agencies, and judicial authorities. This can assist in recognizing the concerns of the communities and pave the way toward resolving their issues which will identify the reasons behind public mistrust and work to eliminate the tendency toward mob justice.

Enhancement of socio-economic development and equality: Social and economic disparities often foster the conditions that give rise to mob justice (Ashik, 2024). Eliminating inequality and promoting fair economic growth can help reduce unlawful violence.

Conclusion:

The political shift after 2024, intended as a transition of power, quickly descended into mob-driven justice, posing serious challenges for the nation's stability. This situation reflects the idea of "Num State" wherein formal institutional and legal frameworks are bypassed due to institutional gaps, inefficiency, and the public's lack of trust in the judiciary and law enforcement bodies. It is essential to strengthen public confidence in the formal criminal justice system to prevent the growth of vigilante or revenge-based justice. To address this complex issue, a well-structured approach is needed that involves adherence to

human rights principles by law enforcement agencies, implementation of institutional reforms, enhancing public trust in the police through procedural justice, and expanding access to legal aid. Only through this step can Bangladesh move toward a brighter future where citizens adhere to a formal legal framework, the rule of law prevails, and the benefits of justice and stability continue regardless of political transitions.

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