

# Bangladesh's Press Freedom Dynamics: A Critical Analysis

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**Abstract:** Essential to democracy, press freedom guarantees openness, responsibility, and the free flow of ideas. Press freedom dynamics in Bangladesh are affected by a complex interaction of legal systems, political influences, media ownership patterns, and digital rules. With an eye on constitutional guarantees, laws like the Digital Security Act (DSA) and their successors, and the function of government and corporate interests in media management, this study critically analyzes the situation of press freedom in Bangladesh. It looks at the difficulties reporters have-censorship, harassment, self-censorship-as well as how digital channels affect free expression. This paper exposes the structural and operational limitations on media freedom by means of case studies, legal clauses, and national and international press freedom indexes analysis. The study also addresses policy suggestions meant to promote a more open and pluralistic media environment in Bangladesh.

## **Introduction**

Press conditions in Bangladesh have been unpredictable due to previous political circumstances, particularly military rule and the fight for democracy. Furthermore, religious politics, bigotry, and extremism repeatedly endanger the nation's sociopolitical standing. Particularly pivotal was the period between February and March 2013, when opinions on the International War Crimes Tribunal and its initial ruling in the Abdul Quader Mollah case grew starkly divided. For over two months, millions of people flocked to Shahbag Square and remained there day and night, screaming slogans calling for the death penalty for war criminals and justice for war heroes. Members of the mainstream media, social media, and people from all walks of life joined the movement. The media quickly turned into a battlefield where various stakeholders-both supporters and opponents of the International War Crimes Tribunal-fought their war against this movement. Of course, some individuals and the media played a more subdued role and spoke out against it.

Some media have played a contentious role; some were banned for fabricating news, and later, several bloggers and free thinkers were murdered. "Any media will face legal action if they publish materials, which slander Prophet (SM) or criticize any religion in obscene

language, quoting blogs or social networking sites like Facebook," the Bangladeshi Information Minister stated in this regard (Daily Star 2013a). However, according to the Daily Star (2013b), "Eight Islamist parties... threatened to call for a boycott of a section of a media for publishing and broadcasting pro-atheist and provocative news." Consequently, it's critical to reveal the intricate relationships between religion, press freedom, and freedom of expression, and demonstrate how these topics were covered in the media throughout that crucial, politically charged period in the nation's history.

### **Background in Theory**

Since expressing one's thoughts and feelings is a fundamental aspect of being human, freedom of expression is essential to self-fulfillment (Ash 2011). Furthermore, understanding variety and the various societal viewpoints requires the freedom of expression. To ensure that the best logical answers prevail, all pertinent information and arguments regarding a particular topic must be presented.

#### ***According to Cory:***

Freedom of expression is arguably the most essential guaranteed right in a democratic country. Indeed, the freedom to voice fresh ideas and opinions regarding the operation of public institutions is essential to a democracy. The idea of unrestricted, unfettered speech infuses anything that is truly democratic institutions and societies. It is impossible to overstate the concept's critical importance. (Cory 1989, cited in the Law Dictionary by Duhaime).

"The principle of freedom of expression is one that admits of no exceptions and that is applicable to all people worldwide by virtue of their human dignity," according to Sean MacBride (1980) (MacBride 1980:10). Human rights and freedom of speech are related to the concept of press freedom. "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and share information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers," according to Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948:5). Assuring individual rights to express their opinions through any media requires press freedom. "The freedom of the press means the right of a person to publish what he pleases in books or newspapers," according to Albert Venn Dicey (1885) (Dicey as quoted in Alam 1992:8). In its constitution, India recognized freedom of the press as a crucial component of freedom of speech and expression. "All citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression," according to Section 1 of Article 19 of the Indian Constitution ([1949] 2015), which essentially encompasses press freedom.

#### **Bangladeshi Republic ([1972] 2011):**

1. Conscience and thought freedom are safeguarded.
2. Subject to any reasonable limitations set forth by law in the interest of public order, state security, morality, decency, or public order, or in connection with contempt of court, defamation, or encouragement to crime.

- (a) The freedom of speech and expression guaranteed to all citizens and
- (b) The right to free speech is guaranteed.

*According to Scanlon (1972)*, the government can restrict free speech only in extreme situations. However, subject to some reasonable limitations, Bangladesh's constitution provides its inhabitants the right to free speech. Furthermore, these limitations frequently serve to safeguard religious beliefs and ideals.

### **Techniques**

The information in six major Bangladeshi newspapers about freedom of the press, freedom of expression, and religious politics served as the basis for this chapter. A content analysis based on 14 variables<sup>4</sup> was used to collect data, and newspapers from a range of political and ideological backgrounds were examined to obtain representative and comparative data. Four of the six examined papers are Bangla-language dailies, while two are English-language daily newspapers.

The most widely read liberal, progressive Bangla daily newspaper in Bangladesh is called Prothom Alo. Regarded as one of the nation's oldest publications, the Daily Ittefaq has been influential throughout history. Another well-known Bangladeshi daily newspaper is the Daily Janakhantho.

### **This publication tends to support the decision**

Awami League governance and liberal principles. In contrast, The Daily Star is the English newspaper with the largest circulation in Bangladesh. All of these journals are thought to be influenced by liberal and progressive-capitalist ideals.

In contrast, The New Age, an English-language daily, has a lesser circulation and is left-leaning and progressive in its ideology. The Daily Naya Diganta is owned and operated by Jamat-i-Islami Bangladesh, a political party that was adamantly opposed to the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. The country's rise in political religiosity and religious politics is attributed to this party.

The time period under examination runs from February 1, 2013, to March 31, 2013, when Bangladesh was dealing with a political conundrum and crisis involving Bengali nationalism's ideals as well as the spirit and culture of the liberation war. The Shahbug movement, spearheaded by bloggers and social media activists calling for the death penalty, emerged in reaction to war criminal Abdul Quader Mollah's life sentence. Following this, some media outlets were outlawed and some bloggers were slain. In this regard, examining the coverage of the print media during that time period may reveal how they address issues of freedom of expression and press.

Conclusions from 20 interviews with journalists, civil society activists, and academic experts support the content analysis and help validate the conclusions. To find out how they felt about freedom of expression and freedom of the press, 13 journalists, four academics, and three members of Bangladesh's civil society were interviewed. The semi-structured interviews focused on the recent press situation, barriers to freedom of expression, and the state of press freedom in Bangladesh.

### **The Overall Coverage**

During the two-month study period, a total of 546 articles about freedom of the press, freedom of expression, and religion politics appeared in the chosen six daily newspapers. Nine items were published in the chosen daily on average each day, demonstrating the seriousness of the issue during that politically charged research period and the media's commitment to freedom of expression in general.

Out of all the titles that were examined, The Daily Ittefaq, a well-known and extensively read Bangla newspaper-published the most pieces. A total of 105 articles about freedom of the press, freedom of expression, and religious politics were published here. The newspaper Naya Diganta, a conservative, right-leaning newspaper owned and operated by Mir Kashem Ali, who was ultimately found guilty of war crimes, published almost as many, 104, though. Following these, 91 pieces were published in The Daily Prothom Alo and The Daily Star (the most widely read English daily), and 90 items were found in The Daily JanaKantha (a publication that promotes liberal ideals). With 65 items overall over the study period, The New Age, another liberal English-language newspaper, had the fewest items.

It may seem interesting that a conservative newspaper like- The newspaper Naya Diganta published so many articles about freedom of the press, freedom of expression, and religious politics. Qualitative reading, however, shows that the majority of its pieces addressed the problems from a negative perspective.

**Table 1:** Coverage of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and religious politics

<b>Newspapers</b>	<b>Numberof items</b>
TheIttefaq	105
TheNayaDiganta	104
TheDailyStar	91
TheProthomAlo	91
TheJanakantho	90
TheNewAge	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>546</b>

**Comments:** Items include news, editorial, opinion pieces, features, post-editorials, and more.

### Factors influencing freedom of expression and the press

A thorough analysis of the articles published in the chosen daily was used to classify the factors influencing press freedom. The items were categorized based on sub-variables under investigation, including government/ruling political parties, opposition parties, religious parties, media owners, self-censorship, law enforcement agencies, threats from miscreants, etc., after an attempt was made to link them to various barriers to freedom of expression. The six newspapers' presentations of the obstacles to press and expression freedom in Bangladesh are displayed in the following table.

### Islamist political groups are the primary obstacle

Table 2 demonstrates that the vast majority of the items, or 66% of the total, mention religious groups as impediments to press and speech freedom in Bangladesh. In a story published in the Daily Star on February 23, 2013, activists from various Islamist parties declared an offensive against journalists, saying, "In a countrywide reign of terror, Jamaate-Islam attacked law enforcement and journalists, burned the national flag, and vandalized Shaheed Minars to counter the mass demand for capital punishment to 1971 war criminals" (Daily Star 2013c).

Using the name of their religion-Islam-religious groups attempt to inspire people. In the New Age, a news article titled "Islamists threaten non-stop strike" says "Thousands of Islamists staged protests nationwide, calling for the atheist bloggers in Shabugh to be punished for their disparaging comments about Islam and its Prophet Muhammad (SM)" (New Age 2013). It appears that journalists' and bloggers' freedom of expression is curtailed because Islamist groups attack them.

**Table 2: Barriersto freedom of expression and Press freedom as reflected in the Newspapers**

Barrierstopressfreedom	Percent
Religiousparties	66
Oppositionparties	9
Threatsbymiscreants	7
Others	6
Mediaandownersofmediainstitutions	5
Government/rulingpoliticalparties	5
Journalists'self-censorship	1
Lawsandpolicies	1
Policeandotherlawenforcementagencies	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

*Comments:* Thenumberofcoded items is 546

### **Media Owners and Journalists**

A unified media has played magnificent roles in a number of Bangladeshi historical developments. But recently, things have changed since the political ideology of some media owners has polarized and impacted the journalist community, which is sometimes reflected in the reporting and writings of the journalists. The journalism community is divided, even when it comes to fostering professionalism in the industry, guaranteeing decent pay, and providing job security. As a result, journalists' voices are less powerful in defending and defending press freedom and freedom of expression across the nation. Although the entire journalistic community ought to support press freedom, six of the stories in Table 2 point to journalists' self-censorship as a hindrance.

Freedom of expression and freedom of the press are also impacted by media proprietors. It is frequently alleged that the newsroom is advised not to publish specific news pieces by the owners or their representatives. News will never be published if it conflicts with the media outlet's business interests and policies. Similarly, when media owners are members of a political party, the media outlet in question tends to avoid broadcasting news that contradicts the political beliefs of its owners.

Five percent of the articles that contend that media institution owners are obstacles to press freedom reflect this. According to one respondent, media owners oppose press freedom and raising the standard of journalism. "I say," he says.

We requested that private television networks contribute funds to teach future journalists with cutting-edge tools and methods for unrestricted writing. Nevertheless, they have no interest in improving quality or altering the current state of affairs (Interviewee 1).

### **The dominant political parties and the government**

Governments and governing political parties are viewed as one of the main barriers to a free press in many developing countries. Although only 5% of the items specifically mention Bangladesh's government and ruling political party as an impediment to press freedom, this also holds true for that country.

To keep the press under control during the autocratic rule, the government would distribute press advisories. Although the situation has evolved over time, reports of the government occasionally siding against media freedom persist. The headline, for instance, reads, "Media cautioned: Information Minister warns some newspapers against religious instigation." The story that goes with it reads, "The government yesterday asked all the print and electronic media to refrain from running any motivated story that may exploit people's religious sentiments" (Daily Star 2013d). For fear of a potential incitement case against them, journalists are required to refrain from writing on any religiously related topic. An SMS reminding "the people to remain alert to circulation of fictitious publications dishonoring the Prophet (SM) as well as bids to make derogatory remarks about the (war crimes)

tribunal" reaffirmed the minister's warning. It was delivered to every cell phone with the title, "Be careful not to disparage Islam."

On the other hand, media outlets and journalists are also charged with violating press freedom. The Imam of the Holy Macca led a march against the death penalty for convicted war criminal Abdul Quader Mollah, according to a news report in the right-leaning daily *The Amar Desh*. However, the news was eventually shown to be untrue, suggesting that some media outlets may encourage government interference against them because of their careless, unethical reporting.

The owner and editor of the opposition-leaning newspaper *Amar Desh* attacked other media outlets for their opposition to his publication due to its news fabrication and dishonesty. The headline, "Mahmudur Slams Media," mirrored this. According to the narrative, Mahmudur Rahman, the acting editor of *Amar Desh*, attacked journalists and the media yesterday for opposing his position on the Shahbugh movement. Additionally, he charged that reporters had become activists because of the Shahbugh protest (Daily Star 2013e). He accused the majority of the media, including prominent journalists and editors, of lacking any sense of shame. Information Minister Hasanul Huq Inu was quoted as accusing national daily newspapers *Amar Desh*, *Naya Diganta*, and *Sangram* of disseminating propaganda against the youth movement known as Shahbugh in an article titled "Three Newspapers Abusing Press Freedom – says Information Minister" (Daily Star 2013f).

As a result, there are instances when a segment of the opposition press puts up obstacles to press freedom. Notably, opposition parties' obstruction of press freedom in the nation accounts for the second-largest percentage of the items (9%).

### **Corporate coercion**

Newspapers' economies generally rely heavily on advertising from both public and commercial sectors. As a result, the media typically takes a lenient stance toward unfavorable reports about its sponsors out of concern that they may otherwise lose such ads. According to one respondent, who has a significant position at a major television network, the government no longer directly exerts pressure on the media. "There are pressures from big corporate organizations and we are obliged to them for keeping the constant flow of advertisement," however, says another respondent (respondent 2).

Additionally, civil society members and journalists draw attention to the self-interest that drives journalists to self-censor. Although they did not clarify the basis of this self-interest, it may be inferred that they are biased in favor of certain parties due to partisanship or shared interests.



### **Death threats and murders**

Since Bangladesh gained its independence in 1971, a number of journalists have been slain, and they occasionally face threats to their lives. In addition, journalists are threatened by physical torture, threats over the phone, and kidnapping.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ 2012) reports that between 1992 and March 2012, 12 journalists were killed in Bangladesh. The majority of their murderers got away with it. At the time, three-quarters of those killed were reporting on crimes and/or corruption (CDAC 2012). According to a different source, only three of the 27 cases that have been filed in relation to journalist murders over the last 15 years have been resolved, with two cases ending in acquittal and one involving conviction.

There are differing views among journalists regarding the murder of other journalists. The majority of journalists consider these murders to be on par with the murder of any other person. Few of them claim that the journalists' journalism led to their deaths. Instead, business rivalry or other personal motivations led to their deaths. "A few of the journalists were killed for professional reasons," a newspaper editor states. Conflicting commercial interests were the main reason why journalists who worked in other side industries were slain (Interviewee 3).

Although it may have something to do with the nation's general state of law and order, this does not lessen the seriousness of the murders. Furthermore, because of judicial system defects, murder cases have not been held. Representatives of civil society are aware that Bangladesh's legal system cannot guarantee the safety of its people. According to a media law and ethics expert:

The issue of insecurity affects everyone. There is no need to say anything especially for journalists in a developing nation like Bangladesh. I'm not certain if I'll be able to get home safely. Journalists who work face a variety of risks. Who will provide them with security? How can we discuss journalist safety alone? (Interviewee 5).

To protect their profession, however, a newspaper editor requires journalists to have extra security. He says:

In Bangladesh, journalists are seriously threatened with death. The murders of Humayun Kabir Balu, Shamsur Rahman, Manik Saha, and most recently, a journalist couple named Sagor-Runi. There is a lot of politics in our legal system. Our press consequently suffers as a result of this circumstance. Therefore, I believe that the government should act appropriately to protect journalists' safety (Interviewee 6).

According to a number of other respondents, Bangladesh's political and historical context denigrates press freedom. However, compared to the 1980s military rule, the current state of affairs is significantly better. One states:



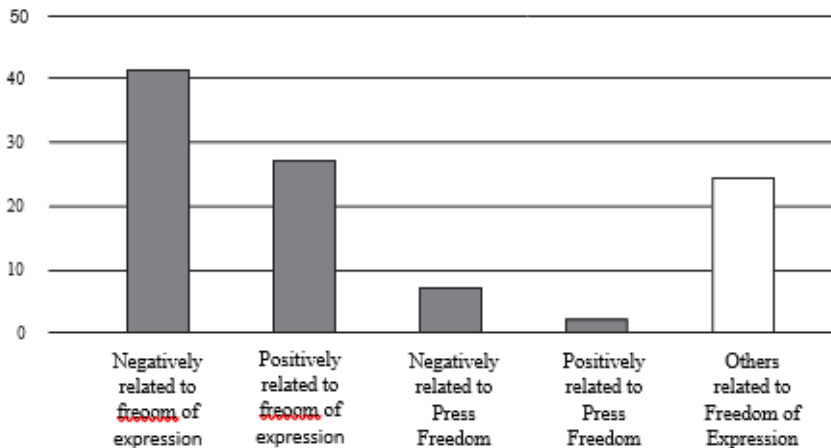
Since the 1980s, I have been active in the journalism field. I worked on a newspaper's news desk during the military regime. At night, we used to receive phone calls requesting that some news be discarded and modified. Press freedom is far better now than it has ever been, and those issues are not taken seriously (Interviewee 9).

**Good or bad? Disparities in the coverage of freedom of expression and freedom of the press**

546 items were published in the chosen daily newspapers during the study period, according to our analysis. They did not, however, all have the same connection to the problems. The relationship between the items was examined from two angles: those that had a positive relationship with freedom of the press and freedom of speech, and those that had a negative relationship with these two concepts.

The biggest percentage, 41%, was inversely correlated with freedom of expression, as Figure 1 illustrates. These tales draw attention to the drawbacks of free speech. An article headed "Blogger Rajib was targeted for his blog" subtly accuses him of endangering his life because of his right to free speech. "Online Jamaat-Shibir activists had labeled the deceased blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider as an atheist who should have been resisted," the paper explains (Daily Star 2013g). As a result, the fundamental human value of freedom of expression has been compromised. It implies that it is common for someone to be victimized or slain if they write openly.

**Figure 1.** Attitudes toward freedom of expression and freedom of the press, both positive and negative (percent)



**Comments:** There are 546 objects that have been coded.

The second-largest percentage of the elements (27 percent) had a positive correlation with freedom of expression. "OUTRAGED: People take to the streets to air anger over the

verdict -demand death penalty for Quader Mollah" (Daily Star 2013h) is one example of a story with that headline.

Overall, it is clear that during the study period, newspapers expressed both favorable and unfavorable opinions regarding freedom of expression. 147 of the articles had a good connection to freedom of expression, however the ones that focused on negative aspects were more prevalent.

Conversely, only 2% of the items had a favorable relationship with press freedom, whereas 7% had a negative relationship. In this regard, it appears that articles that emphasize and support the importance of press freedom are receiving more space in publications. However, given their small quantity in comparison to topics pertaining to freedom of expression, one may wonder if the media takes their freedom seriously.

On the other hand, journalists in Bangladesh believe that their freedom has increased throughout the years. One respondent remembers:

I have twenty-one years of experience as a journalist. I now make decisions for a television network. We have encountered various political circumstances. We can assess the period by contrasting it with the previous BNP-led government, the military government, and the January 2007 caretaker government. At the moment, I don't receive any calls from the relevant body to cancel news (Interviewee 8).

The majority of the 25% of the items that were studied that were labeled as "others" had to do with religious politics. The headline, "Fanatic Now Targets Journos," reflects the strong prevalence of negative features in these things. According to the article, "at least 15 journalists were attacked and injured by Jamat-e-Islami and Islamic Chhatra Shibir men. They also attacked members of the print and electronic media. Police were viewed as being inactive during the attack" (Daily Star 2013i).

Journalists and members of civil society highlight the recent event in which two television networks were shut down for causing widespread chaos during their live broadcast of the May 5, 2013, demonstration by Hefajot-e-Islam.

Given the conditions of the study period, journalists and representatives of civil society did not view the government's subsequent action against these media outlets and the banning of these channels as detrimental to press freedom:

Bangladesh recently witnessed a historic event involving politics, secularism, and the verdict of war criminals. For the Bangladeshi press, it was a litmus test. Sadly, though, they did not uphold neutrality. Some newspapers were employed as a party's propaganda tool. Ethnic violence is a result of it nationwide. The government must take action when the press violates its ethical standards (Interviewee 10).

A few of the tales also dealt with journalistic ethics. Intervention may be necessary if journalism is not conducted ethically. In order to maintain press freedom, one interviewee highlights the professionalism and duty of journalists. The interviewee claims that "a small number of dishonest journalists are causing journalists to lose their credibility and professionalism" (Interviewee 11).

**Press proprietors are held accountable for unethical journalism by another interviewee:**

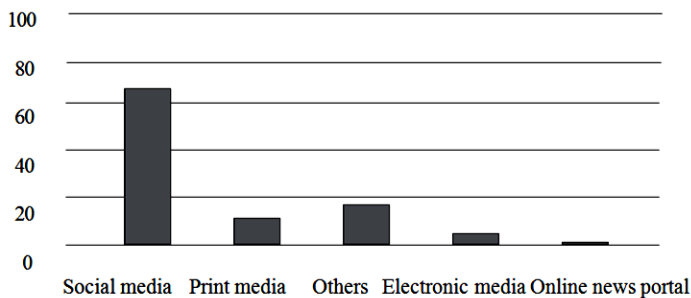
Have you ever witnessed a first-year medical student performing surgery? However, students in their first or second year of journalism are hired for professional positions. This admission without completing educational training may have an impact on press freedom, information availability, and journalism quality (Interviewee 1).

**Social media**

A media-centric analysis of Bangladesh's press freedom status is made possible by the ways in which stories regarding freedom of expression, press freedom, and religious politics relate to various media.

According to Figure 2, social media accounts for the greatest percentage of the items 66%. It should come as no surprise that social media has become a significant alternative forum for people to share their thoughts and learn about other people's perspectives on various topics. As a result, social media events also become the subject of press attention. Bangladesh started using the Internet earlier than many other developing nations, but since social media was introduced there, the growth rate has significantly accelerated. The Telecommunication Regulatory Commission of Bangladesh (BTRC 2017) reports that 67.2 million people were Internet users overall in 2017. According to the Daily Star (2015), 80% of users are on social networking sites, particularly Facebook. These numbers demonstrate that social media is serving as a catalyst for socio-political movements and that Bangladeshis are active in the virtual world.

**Figure 2.** The stories' media connection (percent)



**Comments:** There are 546 objects that have been coded.

The Daily Star published 91 pieces about freedom of the press, freedom of expression, and the politics of religion, and 57% of them were about social media, according to the content analysis. Additionally, the Daily Prothom Alo provided 91 pieces, with social media accounting for 71% of them. Social media accounted for 53% of the 90 items that were weighed in by the Daily Janakantha. The Daily New Age was in charge of 65 things, and social media accounted for 68% of that batch. With 105 items, the Daily Ittefaq was the most popular item. Of those 105, 74% had something to do with social media. The Daily Naya Diganta came in second with 104 pieces, 59% of which had something to do with social media.

Given the circumstances of the study period, it is not surprising that social media is widely covered and watched by conventional press. Social media is a democratic and freely available platform that is used by Islamists, radicals, and free thinkers to express and distribute their opinions and views about many subjects as well as to reflect on their principles. As a result, the major newspapers also covered social media events and their potential effects on national stability, religious peace, law and order, and other topics. They published columns, letters, and op-eds.

The spread of extremist ideas on social networking sites is only one example of how social media's negative sides have grown increasingly apparent in recent years. It is concerning when people spread false information or hoaxes, and even more dangerously, social media is being utilized to provide the foundation for antisocial behavior (Abir 2016).

Social media, however, also has the ability to unite people behind a variety of concerns. Social media activists were seen to have a significant impact on the Shahbag movement, indicating people's growing reliance on social media (Curtis 2015). Social media gives people a platform to voice their ideas and to incite unrest, its pertinence to freedom of the press and freedom of expression is a consideration in the coverage of all newspapers.

### **The story's voice**

The thoughts, remarks, and statements that were cited in the tales are referred to as the "voice in the story." Thus, among the numerous stakeholders in the sector, "voice" indicates who says what on what topics. It is crucial to analyze "voice" in order to determine who supports and opposes press freedom.

**Table 3. The story's voices**

	Percent
Islamic political voice	54
Government and ruling political party voice	14
Journalist voice	9
Political right voice	8

Other voice	6
Civil society voice	4
Foreign voice	3
Legal experts and think-tanks voice	1
Political left voice	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

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Comments: There are 546 objects that have been coded.

According to Table 3, the majority of the articles-54 percent-include quotes from Islamic political voices. This demonstrates that religious parties are involved in the topics being investigated and that they are concerned about the state of freedom of expression and the press in the nation. However, Islamists' voice does not contribute to the advancement of journalistic freedom because it has been noted that they reject free expression. Instead, it leads to additional interference and obstacles in the path of press freedom.

Fourteen percent of the stories include quotes from the government and ruling political parties. These voices might be seen as either supporters or opponents of freedom of expression and the press, depending on the situation. Because of the media's division-some adhere to the game's rules, while others do not-the situation was complicated. The voice of the government and governing political parties, acting as referees, becomes somewhat coercive in their pursuit of the greater good of the country and social harmony. Conversely, the political right is quoted in 9% of the items. They can be heard criticizing the government and other media outlets, as media outlets.Right-wing-leaning journalists were chastised for their unethical work. Only three items-a fairly small number-quoted the political left voice. By contrast, nine percent of the pieces featured quotes from journalists.

## **Conclusion**

The newspapers' content analysis reveals that during the research period, there was a great deal of coverage on the topics of freedom of the press, freedom of expression, and religious politics.However, because it depicts a complicated period when press freedom became a contentious issue among political parties and their supporters, its coverage cannot be broadly applied. According to both working journalists and civil society activists interviewed, press freedom in Bangladesh is much greater now than it was in the past, and they no longer receive press advice from the government. However, because they are afraid of being sued for religious incitement, they self-censor when it comes to religious matters. However, religious political groups are the most vocal opponents of press freedom and freedom of expression, despite the fact that there are numerous obstacles to press freedom in the nation.Since the study period was characterized by an ideological struggle between Islamist and liberal-secular forces, the politics of religion had a significant influence on how freedom of expression and the press were practiced and perceived.

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