

The Rt Hon. David Lammy MP  
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office  
King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH  
United Kingdom

Dear Secretary of State,

### **Urgent action to support a transparent, accountable, inclusive and democratic future for Bangladesh**

Last week the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh promised the head of Bangladesh's interim government that the UK will support Bangladesh *"as it works to restore peace and order, ensure accountability and promote national reconciliation."*

As a country going through a major transition, significant corruption by officials under the previous government of Bangladesh is being unearthed. Assets misappropriated by any Bangladeshi individual or entity belong to the people of Bangladesh. Any such assets in the UK and other countries must be swiftly identified, frozen and recovered to help Bangladesh build a more transparent, accountable, democratic and inclusive future. The reported level of corruption allegations involving former ministers, public representatives, bankers, senior public officials including armed forces and police is already overwhelming.

The UK government must urgently make good on its promise to the interim government, and support Bangladesh in the following ways:

1. The UK government should surge resources and staff to the National Crime Agency's International Corruption Unit to investigate whether any assets looted by any Bangladeshi individual or company are recoverable property in the UK, and act swiftly to impose property and account freezing orders as the first step to facilitate their repatriation to Bangladesh and hold the perpetrators to account.
2. The UK government should offer urgent expertise, including from forensic accountants, lawyers and law enforcement, to support reforms and capacity building of Bangladesh's relevant institutions like the Anti-Corruption Commission, Financial Intelligence Unit, Criminal Investigation Department, National Board of Revenue and Attorney General's Office so that they can identify stolen assets, build a robust evidence base for freezing these assets, and facilitate swift law enforcement action to recover those assets.
3. The UK government should work on an urgent basis with the Governments of the US, Canada, Australia, EU, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and UAE (particularly Dubai), and with the Bangladesh and British High Commissions, the interim government, and in-country experts including civil society within Bangladesh, to identify key targets for imposing financial sanctions and visa bans.

Additionally, in the run up to the election, you promised to make the UK a leader on tackling professional enablers. We urge you to prioritise imposing sanctions against those who have enabled any misappropriation of assets from Bangladesh, whether it be lawyers or other professionals in the UK, businessmen in Bangladesh, or corporate service providers in the UAE and other destination countries of assets laundered out of Bangladesh.

As a long-standing partner of Bangladesh, which has promised as part of its six strategic goals to *“support Bangladesh institutions to become more open, democratic, and inclusive, with greater transparency and accountability,”* the UK must not let its promises be empty words at this crucial moment in Bangladesh’s history. It must show its genuine partnership by playing a proactive and leadership role in helping the people of Bangladesh recover the assets that rightly belong to them and that are so desperately needed to rebuild its future.

Yours sincerely,

**Iftekhar Zaman**, Transparency International Bangladesh

**Susan Hawley**, Spotlight on Corruption

**Duncan Hames**, Transparency International UK

**Lucy Claridge**, International Lawyers Project

**Peter Munro**, UK Anti-Corruption Coalition