



8 August 2024

## Pastoral Solidarity Message to Churches in Bangladesh

To:

The Member Churches of the CCA in Bangladesh and the National Council of Churches in Bangladesh

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is with great distress that we have been following the alarming trend of growing violence, civil unrest, and political turmoil in Bangladesh. The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) expresses profound concern about the ongoing crisis in your country. We express deep sorrow over the violence and destruction currently ravaging Bangladesh and convey this message on behalf of the Asian churches and the Asian ecumenical movement to all member churches and the National Council of Churches in Bangladesh (NCCB) that the people and communities of Bangladesh are in our thoughts and prayers. The CCA stands in solidarity with its member churches and the NCCB during this difficult time, and prays for the people of Bangladesh.

It is truly unfortunate that the student protests against the prevailing job reservation policy of the government morphed into a wider people's movement targeting the government and resulted in large-scale civilian casualties, including the loss of more than 400 lives since the onset of violent protests. Innocent civilians have become victims of the appalling conditions and widespread suffering due to a fresh wave of violence across different parts of the country as mobs have taken to the streets, engaging in acts of vandalism. The CCA expresses heartfelt sympathy with all those who mourn the loss of their dear ones since the onset of violent protests in July, which have also resulted in thousands being injured and extensive damage to infrastructure in many areas.

Despite the notable advancements made by the government in recent years in various socio-economic parameters, the current crisis is an indication of the level of public resentment against the erosion of civil liberties and human rights. Bangladesh, the second largest economy in South Asia, has recently been plunged into slow economic growth, inflation, and unemployment. The protests against the currently deposed Prime Minister amidst violence and street protests mark a dramatic shift in the locus of power equilibrium, which will have wider repercussions in society at large. We are deeply concerned about continued reports of organised crime spreading nationwide, including violence directed at members of minority religious groups as well as police and law enforcement officials.

We stand with you as you provide comfort and support to your communities during this challenging and distressing period. Peace and harmony are essential for the development and progress of any nation. We pray for the restoration of democracy, peace, and safety in the country, so that it may resume its path of reform and development, ensuring that the rights and freedoms of its citizens are safeguarded. We also fervently pray that the leaders who have taken control of the nation are granted wisdom and compassion to steer Bangladesh towards peace with justice, stability, and prosperity. We urge all parties to de-escalate the violence and restore a state of calm. May the people of Bangladesh find solace and peace in the midst of ongoing adversities.

At this time of crisis and helplessness, let us be reminded of the prophetic message, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)

Yours along the journey,

Dr Mathews George Chunnakara  
General Secretary, CCA