



Date: 1 November 2021  
COP26, Glasgow

**British Bangladeshi community calls upon Sheikh Hasina-Wazed, Honourable Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh & All Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to take actions to tackle climate change and its effects on Bangladesh**

Dear Sheikh Hasina-Wazed, Honourable Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh & All Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,

On the occasion of the 26<sup>th</sup> United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on 31 October to 12 November 2021. We, the undersigned are demanding action to tackle climate change and its effects on Bangladesh.

In his landmark speech on 7 March 1971, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman called upon Bengali people around the world to unite and fight for the freedom of Bangladesh. The community in the UK responded to that call to action. In 2021, as we mark the 50th anniversary of independence, the British Bangladeshi community calls upon the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina Wazed, to unite the global Bangladeshi community and countries all around the world to work together to protect Bangladesh from the catastrophic impacts of climate change. We recognise the sacrifices made to create Bangladesh. The challenge for this generation is to protect our ancestral lands for its centenary and beyond.

Extreme weather conditions such as flooding, storm surges, cyclones, droughts, sea levels rising, and saltwater intrusion are all directly linked to climate change and forcing families deeper into poverty and displacement. In the process, children's access to education and health services are severely disrupted, threatening the lives and futures of more than 19 million children in Bangladesh.

Around 12 million of the children most affected live in and around the powerful river systems which flow through Bangladesh and regularly burst their banks. Another 4.5 million children live in coastal areas which are regularly struck by powerful cyclones, while a further 3 million children live further inland, where farming communities suffer increasing periods of drought.

With over 165 million people, Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, and one of the most vulnerable to climate change and natural hazards. Bangladesh has made remarkable economic progress since independence, taking 25% of its population out of poverty in the last 20 years. However, frequent natural disasters and vulnerability to climate change are key challenges facing Bangladesh as it transitions to become an upper-middle-income country.

**The Bangladeshi community** in the UK is one of the largest Bengali diasporas in the world and contributes significant skills and financial resources both to Bangladesh and to the UK. This year is significant for the British Bangladeshi community as it celebrates fifty years of friendship between the UK and Bangladesh and the UK hosts COP26.

**We, the undersigned demand action.** Climate change is happening here and now, with very real impacts for millions of people who have done the least to contribute to it. Bangladesh's low elevation, high population density and millions who are heavily reliant on farming, mean it is exceptionally vulnerable to climate change. Climate change poses a clear danger to the environmental integrity of Bangladesh and the security, economic and social well-being of those who live there. In the last 20 years, Bangladesh has been one of the ten most affected countries and the impact is intense, damaging, and on the increase. Children, women, and the poor are the most affected with an estimated 4.1 million new displacements in 2019, placing Bangladesh among the top countries globally with the most disaster-related internal displacement.

Bangladesh has implemented climate change strategies and national adaptation plans such as Delta Plan 2100 alongside two Climate Change Trust Funds, and has shown global leadership for climate action as Chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, the international forum of countries most vulnerable to climate change. Community-wide training and improved forecasting have significantly cut death tolls from cyclones. This year, it adopted a rights-based National Strategy on 'Internal Displacement Management', particularly to address climate and disaster induced displacement, and is considered a champion in natural disaster preparedness. However, it must do more to address the unplanned use of natural resources, unregulated industrialisation and urbanisation, and to combat both social disparity and gendered inequality, and it cannot do it alone.

The Parties to the Conference have a duty to act now, and safeguard the environment for the future of humankind, and all living creatures on this earth. Now is the time to act.

***WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, DEMAND:***

1. All countries must rapidly and fully implement the global climate change agreement established in Paris in December 2015, raise their emission reduction

pledges, and keep the global temperature level below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

2. Greater support must be available for adaptation and assistance to countries most susceptible to climate change, including Bangladesh. Countries need to work together and share innovation, technology transfer, expertise, and localised capacity building. In recognition of Bangladesh's National Strategy on Displacement, countries should adopt similar models and approaches towards tackling local climate change challenges.
3. Governments must ensure that the development of legal protections and actions recognise that people are having to leave their homes due to climate-related factors. A new international, binding agreement giving humanitarian protection and assistance to those who move in the context of climate change including humanitarian and work visas will ensure that such people will have alternative livelihood options if staying at home is not an option due to environmental impacts.
4. The international community should acknowledge the innovative funding mechanisms created by countries such as Bangladesh and collectively provide resources towards supporting the needs of countries that are most vulnerable to climate change and least able to adapt to its effects.
5. Bangladesh has to take immediate steps to protect its natural resources and its biodiversity. Urbanisation has to be sustainable and regulated, wetlands must be protected, and the damaging effects of salinisation have to be halted. Steps need to be taken to minimise water pollution.
6. Bangladesh adapts to the effects of climate change that are afflicting it right now, in the form of infrastructure development and livelihood adaptations. Modifying and strengthening housing, raising schools and roads, ensuring multipurpose use of infrastructures, constructing seawalls and planting mangroves or other vegetation along coastlines, are practical examples of actions, in addition to mitigating the effects of riverbank erosion.
7. Building resilience in Bangladesh to disasters and climate change has to be community-led, women-led and refugee-centred to empower those most affected by crises and ensure that they benefit equally from all development interventions of the country. Migration, both within Bangladesh and internationally, has always been a coping mechanism and must be recognised as an adaptation strategy. Cities throughout Bangladesh need to be better equipped to plan for those who have moved in the context of climate change, including access to health, education and social protection.

Adapting to this crisis requires consultation and understanding of how complex and vulnerable the landscape is in Bangladesh. Policymakers need to consider local social

dynamics when providing early warnings, food, and other social services. As Bangladesh seeks ways to adapt to climate change, it could set a great example of inclusive planning for other nations to follow.

**We are in a climate emergency; the crisis is here, and we cannot afford any more delays.**

The survival of Bangladesh over the next 50 years depends on bold leadership and action right now on zero emissions, biodiversity, and a human rights protection framework to protect those affected by climate change.

**We want climate justice now.** COP26 is the most important conference for future generations now, and as we mark Bangladesh's 50<sup>th</sup> year of existence this is the opportunity to give Bangladesh another 50 years and much more.

## **SIGNATORIES**

*The founding members of Freedom50, a collective of individuals and organisations who have come together to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Bangladeshi independence and promote the heritage, culture and future of the British Bangladeshi community:*

1. *Cllr Abdal Ullah, Co-founder British Bangladeshi Power & Inspiration and BBPI Foundation*
2. *Mr Aftab Rahman, Director Legacy WM*
3. *Ms Ayesha Qureshi MBE JP, Co-founder British Bangladeshi Power & Inspiration and BBPI Foundation*
4. *Ms Halima Begum, CEO Runnymede Trust*
5. *Ms Jebi Rahman, Head of Transparency and Pathways, Climate Group*
6. *Ms Jelina Berlow-Rahman, Human Rights Lawyer, Partner Berlow Rahman Solicitors*
7. *Councilman Munsur Ali, Filmmaker and Councilman City of London Corporation*
8. *Mr Muzahid Khan, Deputy Lord Lieutenant Greater Manchester*
9. *Ms Poppy Jaman OBE, CEO, City Mental Health Alliance & Founder Re-Balance*
10. *Ms Rahima Begum, Co-founder Restless Beings*
11. *Ms Rooqia Malik*
12. *Mr Shale Ahmed, Director Aspire and Succeed*
13. *Mr Tauhid Pasha*

*Supported by members of the British Bangladeshi community:*

1. *Mr Ahmed Us-Samad JP, Chairman Channel S*
2. *Mr Andy Miah, Chair of Science Communication and Future Media, Uni of Salford*
3. *Mr A.S.M. Masum, Runner Media*
4. *Mr Atique Islam Choudhury, Chairman Chrystella Micheal Projects International*
5. *Mr Bajloor Rashid MBE – UKBCCI*
6. *Mr Bilal Shahid, Musician*
7. *Mr Dabirul Islam Choudhury OBE, Centenarian and fundraiser*

8. *Mr Del Hossain, RIBA*
9. *Ms Diba Choudhury, BoNY (London)*
10. *Ms Farhana Safa, Surgeon and Designer*
11. *Mr Foysol Choudhury, Member of Scottish Parliament*
12. *Mr Ifty Islam, CEO Pathfinder*
13. *Mr Iqbal Wahhab OBE, Restaurateur*
14. *Mr Jewel Choudhury, J4S Security*
15. *Ms Junna Begum, Heritage Projects Manager*
16. *Ms Kaniz Ali, Celebrity Make-up Artist and Humanitarian aid worker*
17. *Ms Konnie Huq, TV personality and Author*
18. *Dr Kowsar Hoque, Surgeon and Restaurateur & Ms Rukshana Hoque, Entrepreneur*
19. *Mr Mabzur Ahmed, Restless Beings and Root25*
20. *Baroness Manzila Uddin, House of Lords*
21. *Ms Mary Rahman, PR consultant*
22. *Mr Mehdi Hassan, MH Design*
23. *Ms Mima Zaman, Influencer*
24. *Mr Mitu Chowdhury, Secretary General BCA*
25. *Mr Mohammed Abdul Munim, President BCA*
26. *Mr Mohammed Ali MBE*
27. *Mr Mohammed Jubair, General Secretary London Bangla Press Club*
28. *Dr Mya-Rose Craig D.Sc. h.c. (AKA birdgirl) Naturalist, Conservationist, Environmentalist, Founder & President Black2Nature*
29. *Ms Nadia Ali, DJ and Broadcaster*
30. *Ms Naema Jannath, Director Student Association of British Bangladeshis (SABB)*
31. *Mr Nobab Uddin, former president London Bangla Press Club*
32. *Mr Nohshad Shah, Managing Director Goldman Sachs*
33. *Ms Nusaiba Mohammad Timol, Founder & Director of WAW Creative Arts*
34. *Mr Oli Khan MBE, President London region UKBCCI*
35. *Mr Rahemur Rahman, Fashion Designer and Climate Activist*
36. *Mr Ramzan Miah, Actor and Model*
37. *Ms Reshmin Chowdhury, Broadcaster*
38. *Mr Rooful Ali, Emerald Network*
39. *Ms Sadia Khanom, Geneticist and Managing Director Voltique*
40. *Ms Sakira Khatun Suzia, Police Constable, Metropolitan Police Service, Winner of two Commissioner's Awards*
41. *Ms Salema Gulbahar*
42. *Prof Shafi Ahmed, Surgeon*
43. *Mr Shelim Hussain MBE, CEO Euro Foods Group Limited*
44. *Mr Syed Ahmed, Savortex*
45. *Mr Syed Nahas Pasha, Vice President of Commonwealth Journalist Association*
46. *Mr Tarik Hussain, Travel writer*
47. *Ms Urmee Mazher, Broadcaster*
48. *Dr Zaki Rezwana Anwar, Broadcaster*
49. *Mr Zakir Khan, Director Canary Wharf Group*
50. *Ms Zeenat Islam, Barrister*