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Európsky parlament Evropski parlament Euroopan parlamentti Europaparlamentet

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission

Federica Mogherini

Brussels, 12 February 2019

Dear Ms Mogherini,

We would like to express our concern over the recent developments in Bangladesh. As you know, there were parliamentary elections on 30 December 2018, regarding which you issued a rather euphemistic statement on 1 January 2019.

We believe that the European Union needs to do more and call for new, independent elections under international supervision, to guarantee that they are free, democratic and without violence. At least 17 people were killed and many more wounded during the ballot-cast. Most of the opposition was jailed, is in exile, or disappeared in the months leading-up to the elections. Moreover, international experts have found irregularities in most constituencies<sup>1</sup>, with opposition voters having been barred from polling centres, as well as possible fake votes and ballot stuffing.

Finally, Bangladesh is a country where corruption is endemic and we have received reports that the EU development aid (which can be up to 690 million euros for the 2014-2020 period) or part of it might be embezzled.

We therefore urge you to:

- call on new elections under international supervision, including by the European Union and the United Nations, if relevant national authorities and international independent observers conclude that there were systematic irregularities;
- call for the release of Khaleda Zia, the main opposition leader;
- demand very specific accountability on how the EU aid money is allocated and spent;
- call to stop repression of workers, especially in the garment sector, in Bangladesh.

Best regards,

Brando Benifei (S&D)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bangladesh-politics/transparency-international-finds-irregularities-in-bangladesh-vote-idUSKCN1P91B4>



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