



Role of a Section of the Bangladesh Armed Forces during the Caretaker Government of 2007-8: A Review

Executive Summary

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Preface

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has been making multi-dimensional efforts to strengthen a knowledge and information-based social movement against corruption so as to facilitate greater public awareness and discourse against corruption and promote good governance in Bangladesh. TIB's research, advocacy and public engagement against corruption is essentially based on research and analyses of challenges of transparency, accountability and good governance of key institutions of democracy and/or those that affect functioning of democratic accountability.

The present research report is aimed at assessing the nature, extent and dimensions of alleged abuse of power by a section of the members of the armed forces, factors behind corruption and implications thereof, during the caretaker government of 2007-8. We understand that this report will provide important indications of the possible nature and risks of abuse of power when the armed forces are involved in civilian activities.

The so-called 1/11 situation arose and the armed forces backed caretaker government emerged primarily because of political divide and conflicts associated therewith. The report shows that a number of positive contributions were made during the period. These include production of the national identity card and voter list with picture within only 11 months; reform in some service delivery institutions bringing vibrancy; step towards separation of judiciary from the executive; contribution towards conduct of a nationally and internationally credited election and transfer of power; reduction of congestion of ships and containers in the Chittagong port; drive to control unauthorized land grabbing; collection of overdue electricity and gas bills; etc. However, taking advantage of immunity a section of the members of the armed forces got involved in abuse of power and corruption; irregularities and corruption, which affected rule of law and human rights. On the other hand, the credibility of the armed forces and related intelligence agencies suffered.

It may be mentioned that accountability and transparency of the armed forces are quite often being researched worldwide. One example of such research is the Government Defence Anti-corruption Index 2013 released by Transparency International UK on January 29 that analyzed various aspects of the defence sector governance challenges in 82 countries of the world including Bangladesh <http://www.ti-bangladesh.org/files/GDACI-2013-Main%20Report.pdf>. On the other hand, some members of the armed forces were reportedly brought to justice during the caretaker government, though people have no access to such information.

Armed forces are an extremely important public institution run in public interest with public resources. Open, information-based and objective discourse on its work, successes and failures, promises and challenges is indispensable for public interest. A key objective of this research is to create the space for such debate.

The Bangladesh Armed Forces have achieved national and international credibility for its commendable work ranging from natural disasters to international peacekeeping. For the sake of further enhancing this credibility there is no alternative to dispassionate discourse on vital aspect of public interest in the defence sector, especially from the point of view of confronting abiding challenges and reaping the best of prospects.

Some of the key issue areas that have drawn prominent interest in the wake of the above-mentioned report by TI-UK include: the absence of national defence policy; increasing expansion of business interest of armed forces exposing it to possible deficits of transparency and accountability; inspite of a credible system of recruitment of personnel, prevalence of possible risks of partisan political influence in promotions, transfers and retirements at higher levels; and lack of information and disclosure in budgetary allocation for defence as well as defence purchase. No less important are deficits in specific strategies to promote integrity, transparency and accountability and to prevent corruption with regard to armed forces operations.

In this context, this research will be able to contribute to discourse on ways to further upgrade the professional excellence, integrity, transparency and accountability as much as it may create greater appreciation of the risks involved in engaging the armed forces in the civilian agenda. This appreciation is indispensable for achieving higher levels of democratic practice and democratic institutionalization.

We are grateful to all those who helped us in various ways, particularly by sharing with us information, opinion and experience.

Md Rezaul Karim, researcher of TIB has conducted this study. He was assisted in data collection by Dilruba Afroze and Sabrina Mahtab. In addition, he was helped by other colleagues of Research and Policy Division of TIB, especially, Md Waheed Alam, Zafar Sadeque Choudhury, Md Khorshed Alam, Rumana Sharmin, Rabiul Islam, Nazmul Huda Mina, Nihar Ranjan Ray. Senior Researchers Shazada M Akram and Dr. Sadid Ahmed Nuremawla edited the report. Directors of TIB - Md Rafiqul Hassan, Dr Rizwan ul-Alam, Ranjaneswar Halder and Uma Chowdhury enriched the report by thoughtful suggestions, advice and direction.

Distinguished members of the Board of Trustees of TIB including Chairperson Advocate Sultana Kamal provided extremely important guidance and supervision. In addition Prof. M. Kabir of Institute of Statistical Research and Training (ISRT), University of Dhaka extended technical advice and guidance to ensure highest possible credibility of research method. I am grateful to all of them.

We expect that the Government, the Armed Forces authority and all other relevant stakeholders will consider the findings and recommendations of the report with due importance. We would also welcome any constructive suggestions, critique and opinion you may have for further improvement of the quality of this report.

Iftekharuzzaman
Executive Director

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Executive Summary

Introduction

For establishing a 'non-Party caretaker government' acceptable to all sections of the people and the political parties of the country and for the resignation of the then Chief Election Commissioner of Bangladesh, a violent political situation developed in October 2007. The opposition alliances raised questions regarding the Chief of the Caretaker Government designate – the then most recently retired Chief Justice K.M. Hassan¹. In this situation, the President of the Republic Professor Iazuddin Ahmed took oath as the Chief Adviser as an additional responsibility and formed a Caretaker Government with the objective of holding the 9th Parliament election. But assumption of the role of the Chief Adviser of the President himself led to further controversy as it was not considered done in accordance with the process of selecting a Chief Adviser according to the 13th Amendment of the Constitution in case the most recently retired Chief Justice were not available². The then 'Grand Political Alliance' led by Bangladesh Awami League declared not to participate the election showing various reasons like the failure of the President as the Chief Adviser to ensure neutrality, controversial Election Commission, and fake voter list etc. The Caretaker Government led by the President however took a firm position to hold the scheduled election on January 22, 2007 and decided to deploy armed forces in election centers. In this situation, transfer of power through holding a free, fair, neutral and acceptable election participated by all political parties became uncertain. The United Nations, many development partners, donors and countries expressed their concern and stated that "election without the participation of all parties will not be acceptable." The UN went further to add that deployment of the Armed Forces to election centers may jeopardize Bangladesh's participation in UN Peace Keeping Force.

Political clashes took violent shape, streets of Dhaka witnessed bloodshed and public life were seriously disrupted. Under this political crisis, the President declared a state of Emergency in the country, a section of the senior officers of the Armed Forces played a key role behind this incident however (Ahmed, 2009; Nizam, 2010; Akter, 2009; Lenin and Zahir, 2009; The Economist, 6 November 2008). On 12 January 2007 Dr. Fakhrudin Ahmed, a former Governor of the Central Bank of the country, was appointed as the Chief Adviser and later drew most of the members of his advisory council from various walks of the civil society. His Caretaker Government, however, despite the popular expectation of holding a fair and free election within a short period, continued to rule over the country for a protracted period, about two years from January 2007 to January 2008, and implemented a series of agenda, with the active support from, or often under pressure of, a section of the armed forces³. Thus the CG of Dr. Ahmed later came to be known as 'one eleven government' or 'military backed caretaker government', which was actually formed with the initiatives of some of the senior officials of the armed forces. Some authors termed this transfer of power, from President Iazuddin to the CG of Dr. Fakhrudin, through the interference of the armed forces as a 'pre-planned coup' (Mazher, 2009), 'capture of power' by the armed forces (The Economist, 8 February 2007) yet others as the 'best possible solution for overcoming political crisis'.⁴

Despite the fact that the armed forces did not take over power directly, the caretaker government got supports directly and indirectly from them and was also controlled by them (Akter, 2009; Lenin and

¹ The opposition also claimed that the ruling four party alliance increased retirement age limit of the justices with the intention of making K.M. Hasan the latest retired CJ who would take over as the head of the Caretaker Government to be formed at the end of their rule in 2006 (it was also claimed that K.M. Hasan was once affiliated politically that make his required 'neutrality' questionable).

² 13th Amendment of the Constitution detailed the process of formation of CG responsible for implementing a fair parliament election in the country.

³ Although his appointment was reported to be based on a consensus of two major political alliances (The Daily Star, 13 January 2007) many of his government's actions for the next two years went against their interest apparently due to influence and control of a section of the armed forces

⁴ Press release, US Embassy, 12 2007, Dhaka.

Zahir, 2009; Vaun 2000)). The CG implemented many important public initiatives like implementation of National ID Card and Voter List under direct supervision of armed forces, reform in the management of Chittagong Port and control the Port by the armed forces, forming taskforce for making many government and local government institutions functional, improve law and order situation, recovery of land properties of the government that remained occupied illegally for many years etc. Besides, anti-corruption drive initiative was one of the prime commitments of this government.⁵

Social and political scientists have different observations on the rationale and role of armed forces to intervene into the political arena. Huntington (1962 and 1975) has termed military rule as the beginning of 'modernization' and 'development process'; Nordlinger (1970) however after his research on the association of socio-economic development and military rule in a large number of countries found either negative or zero ordered correlation. Moniruzzaman (1987) observed military rule as 'political underdevelopment', 'depoliticizing the people' and 'an instrument to deprive political leaders from gaining political skills'.

There are debates on the role of armed forces backed caretaker government that prevailed during 2007-8 in Bangladesh as well. As an aid to the civil administration, the armed forces personnel were engaged in anti-corruption drive and other civil tasks in the country. In order to administer anti-corruption drives along with serious crimes 'National Coordination Committee' (NCC) was formed on 8 March 2007, and the Principle Staff Officer (PSO) of the then armed forces was made its Chief Coordinator. One central committee, seven regional/city-based committees and task forces for all 64 districts were formed led by armed forces and comprising with the civil officers as well. The committees got power to investigate into corruption and serious crimes; submit charge-sheet; coordination of cases; provide assistance for cases; attach and seizure assets, necessary documents, information and evidence of the cases; and also enjoyed the power to arrest without warrant. Under the direct supervision of the armed forces, camps were established in different parts of the country.

However incidents on the illegal activities and violations of human rights committed by a section of the armed forces involved in the anti-corruption drive have been published in many literature (Amnesty International, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2007 and 2008; The South Asian, 2008; International Crisis Group, 2008; Ain O Salish Kendra, 2008; Odhikar, 2008 and 2009; Alamgir, 2009; Hossain, 2008; Islam, 2010; Khan, 2009; Hoq, 2008; Shaptahik Thikana, 2008; and Probashi Barta.Com, 2009). The then Chief of Armed forces Staff (2009:364) in a book written by him on 2007-2008 period has also admitted that different charges were raised against some of the military personnel deployed as aid to the civil power during this period.

⁵ The Chief Adviser of the armed forces backed government declared this commitment in his first ever speech to the nation on 21 January 2007.

1. Study Rationale

A great deal of investigation-based and critically written articles, documents, reports and books, etc. on one eleven and post-one eleven incidents in Bangladesh have been published in electronic and print media both at home and abroad. These literatures have focused on describing and commenting on rationales for interference of the military in the politics of Bangladesh in 2007, contribution of armed forces in different civil areas/sectors during the 2007-8 (Ahmed, 2009; Hossain, 2010) and state of the rule of law and human rights. There is however lacking of systematic study of the area, process and nature of the abuse of power, irregularities and corruption by a section of armed forces personnel deployed and engaged as an aid to civil administration during the caretaker government of 2007-8. Engaging armed forces into aid to civil administration, in the name of with the aim of eradicating corruption or political crisis in fact push this otherwise respected institution into the risk of involving in corruption, irregularities and abuse of power and thus derogating its image. It is therefore necessary to carry out an empirical study for the scope and risks of the abuse of power and corruption by a section of the armed forces personnel when they engage in civil affairs. The research-based observation and acquired knowledge are expected to be useful for promoting democracy and establishing rule of law and human rights in the country and particularly to take policy stands by relevant stakeholders regarding engagement of the armed forces to aid to civil administration.

2. Study Objectives

The broader objective of the study was to review the role of the armed forces engaged in aid to civil administration during 2007-2008.

The specific objectives of the study were to review:

1. To review the affirmative tasks undertaken by the caretaker government of 2007-8 under active support of the armed forces
2. To shed some light on the areas, nature and process of abuse of power, irregularities, and corruption by a section of them deployed to aid the civil administration during the caretaker government.
3. To review of the possible causes and consequences of abuse of power, irregularities, and corruption by a section of the armed forces during 2007-8
4. To generate recommendations

3. Scope of the study

The present study relates only to the activities of a section of the armed forces deployed to aid in civil administration during 2007-8, and does not relate to the entire armed forces in general. It was beyond the scope of the present study to collect information on other activities of the armed forces rather it sheds some light on the activities of a section of them as engaged in civil administration. The operational definition of the word 'corruption' in this report is 'abuse of power for private gain'. This definition covers five indicators/forms of abuse of power like 'earning money and assets through abuse of power', 'disregarding laws', 'violation of human rights', 'exerting illegal influence' and 'illegally controlling mass media'.

4. Methodology

This is fundamentally a qualitative study. It only helps shed some light on nature of abuse of power, irregularities, and corruption by a section of the armed forces engaged in civil administration in accordance with the reports made by the respondents. No generalization, quantitative measure or assessment is possible out of the findings of this study. This study is not an investigative report into the corruption committed any individual in particular. Using various information collection tools and techniques, information were collected from the respondents only on whether they were victim of any abuse of power, irregularities, or corruption and what was the type and nature of such abuse of power, irregularity, or corruption.

- **Data source and methods:** The report is based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data have been gathered from the civil people of different occupation, institution, organization and sectors and retired armed forces personnel relevant to the objectives and scope of this study. A list of all the institutions where task forces worked as an aid to civil administration was prepared. Next, based on their importance to public service delivery and contribution to establishing the rule of law, some of them were short listed for the purpose of the present study. Data were then collected through group discussion and individual interview with relevant individuals of those institutions particularly sections/sub-sections identified within the institution where task forces intervened. During these discussions, information was collected on the role of the armed forces. Institution, organization, sector and informant based checklists were used during gathering qualitative information. A total of more than two hundred individuals considered as key informant about the process of armed forces interventions and institutional reforms were interviewed that include former adviser to the one eleven caretaker government, former and present parliament members, former minister/state minister, retired army chief and high official, judges and lawyers, university teachers and officials, political and security analysts, owners of TV and newspapers, editors and journalists, local government representatives, businessmen, industrialists, contractors, officials and employees of various autonomous and local institutions, leaders and workers of various political parties, CBA representatives etc during this study. Based on the reference from the participants of group discussion and key informant interviews, a total of 20 case stories were done through which it tried to shed some more light on the nature, extent, causes and consequences of abuse of power and violation of human rights.

Secondary sources of data include the Constitution of the country, relevant laws, gazette notifications, relevant orders and ordinance, various news items, books, research articles, etc. published on activities of the one eleven caretaker government rule during 2007-8 and information available on websites etc.

- **Reliability and validity of data:** Keeping the scope of the study into consideration, data have been gathered on the same issues from different sources using qualitative methods and corroborated as well. In order to corroborate the institution and sector-based information gathered from different sources, eight group discussions were conducted. Based on expert opinion some data were also re-checked.
- **Data collection and reporting:** Data collection, analysis, report preparation, review and edit, incorporating expert opinion, etc. completed during July 2009 through December 2012.
- **Limitations and challenges**
 1. Access to information were not available in some institutions/situation
 2. Some informants refused to provide information on military interventions⁶

⁶ For example one respondent told: “there are risks of becoming victim of torture in future if I provide information on abuse of power and corruption and corruption committed by them”

5. Findings of the study

6.1 Review of the relevant legal framework

Under the Constitutional provision, some fundamental human rights such as freedom of assembly, freedom of association and freedom of expression are curtailed during the emergency. In addition, the Emergency Power Ordinance (12 January 2007) and Emergency Power Act (21 March 2007) provided sweeping powers like arresting without warrant, taking into custody, interrogation, confiscating assets and denying bail during investigation. Such unchecked power was against the spirit of the Constitution and international standards which created risks of abusing these powers by members of the armed forces.

6.2 Initiatives taken with military assistance

During the military-backed caretaker government in 2007-8, a massive anti-corruption drive involving the members of the armed forces was initiated in various governments, semi-government, autonomous and local government institutions. The military was also involved in the implementation of National ID card and voter list preparation with photograph, reducing congestion in the Chittagong port, recovering illegally occupied government land, realising the arrear utility bills like that of gas, electricity and telephone, and helping the government to conduct a credible national election for smooth transfer of power.

6.3 Irregularities and corruption of a section of armed forces

Although the military performed well in many of the civil affairs they were tasked with, nonetheless, this study found several incidences of abuse of power, irregularities and corruption by a section of the armed forces. The following section highlights the nature of abuse of power and indulgences in corruption:

6.3.1 Abuse of power to acquire money and wealth

- **Receiving unauthorized payment and forcibly collecting money:** According to the data as reported by the study respondents a section of the armed forces members involved in the anti-corruption drive used their position and power to forcibly collect money from people who amassed wealth illegally. Money was also collected for giving undue benefits such as not including name in the corrupt persons' list, arranging bail, influencing the judges to reduce sentences of corruption cases filed by ACC, and not charging in corruption cases.
- **Forced sale of land:** According to the study findings in some cases landowners were forced to sell their lands to people with military identity. Local elected officials were used as brokers in this type of transaction. Those refused to sell or intermediate were taken to nearby camps for torturing. Some people were falsely implicated for refusing to cooperate and landed in jail without any sentence. According to one public representative he was tortured and jailed for an year without any lawful process.

6.3.2 Incidences of illegal activities

- **Collect money by force and torture:** Without legal and constitutional provision⁷ a section of the armed forces collected Taka 1,132 crore from several businesspeople by application of force and deposited the sum in the national exchequer.⁸ The information providers however claimed that in some cases a part of the collected sum was appropriated. The respondents also informed that businesspeople were forced to sign bonds that they were depositing money willingly willfully.
- **Violation of rules in the Chittagong Port:** According to the information as collected during the study the official tender process was violated as desired by the local taskforce in appointing birth

⁷ Article 58, 81, 82, 83

⁸ *Kaler Kantha* (30 April 2011); *Bangladesh Protidin* (11 January 2012)

operator in Chittagong Port. The port authority also increased the rates of loading, discharging and delivery of containers without following due process.

- **Irregularities in the installation of automation system in Chittagong Port:** The port authority ordered installation of automation system in Chittagong Port without any tender process.

6.3.3 Violation of human rights

- **Torture on local government representatives:** According to the informants of this study there are several examples of arrests, torture and confinement of local elected representatives in city corporations, municipalities (*pourashava*) and union council (Union Parishad) for performing undue tasks as desired by the concerned armed forces officials. These included: solving land-related disputes, tasks relating to implementation of National ID card and voter list, procuring land from local people and facilities for personal use. Death by torture of elected representative was alleged to have taken place, according to informants of this study.
- **Torture and harassment of politicians:** During these periods, politicians were specially targeted and subjected to various forms of pressures for not demanding the release of top leaders of two mainstream political parties. These politicians were also lured to break away from their parties and form new ones to curtail the influence of the big political parties. Noncompliant political leaders faced cases filed in speedy tribunal court where the proceedings were also influenced to keep politicians at bay so that they couldn't participate in the election. One top political leader was barred returning from abroad, however, was allowed to return under public pressure.
- **Torture and harassment of traders:** The study found that several top-ranking traders faced various forms of harassment by military personnel. The typical abuse of power in such cases was confined without lawful process, physical torture, transfer of property under duress, forced sale of essential products at cheaper prices, shutting down of foodgrain godowns for preventing stock-piling and foreclosing bank accounts on corruption allegations. Some traders avoided these harassments in exchange of cash.
- **Denying legal support:** According to the family members, relatives, and support providers of those who faced court cases for violating the provisions of the emergency rule, they were prevented from seeking legal support. Threats were made over telephone for not seeking legal support and advocates were pressured not to deal with certain cases.
- **Torturing university teachers and students:** Few teachers of Dhaka and Rajshahi university who experienced physical torture in 2007 confided that they were not placed before the court, rather confined to unknown places after been arrested without warrant. It is noted that confinement in unknown places followed by physical torture is inconsistent with the spirit of human rights as enshrined in the constitution.⁹
- **Torture by the army persons under police custody:** Informants of this study said military personnel entered the police station and collected testimony under duress. Police were helpless in such situation.

6.3.4 Influence-peddling

- **Influencing lawyers:** According to the respondents during the anti-corruption drives, the lawyers were influenced not to proceed on behalf of plaintiff regarding corruption cases filed by the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC). Noncompliant lawyers faced intimidation and threats of arrest from the officials of the military intelligence
- **Speedy trial:** The entire process of the speedy trial, ranging from the investigation report to filing of cases, were influenced by the military personnel. Cases were filed without following the due process such as submission of notices to the defendants. According to Islam (2010: 165), the national coordination taskforce usually prepared the draft of charge-sheet and passed it on to ACC

⁹ Article 33(1), *The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh* (2000).

officers for signing to initiate the cases. The manner in which the political leaders were put to jail and their bails denied testifies that unchecked power was indiscriminately abused.¹⁰

- **Election of of Supreme Court and Dhaka Bars deferred:** According to the constitution of Dhaka Bar and Supreme Court, elections of these bars were to be held in February and March of 2007 respectively. But, these elections were not held in due time under pressure from a section of the armed forces. According to one informant, the election was postponed only because a certain panel was in a disadvantaged position.
- **Influence getting division in jail:** According to informants, division facilities in jail, which is provided under the Jail Code, largely dependent on the whims of the military intelligence officials. For example, university teachers detained during a student uprising were denied bail for two weeks.
- **Control and promote political activities:** Active politics¹¹ were prohibited during the emergency period, however, political activists known as 'reformist' were allowed to conduct political activities by the military intelligence. A political party formed during the emergency was allowed to undertake relief distribution through a motorcade. (Akther, 2009: 127). This is an example of political patronage by a section of the armed forces.
- **Influencing the trial process of university teachers:** A number of teachers arrested during the student uprising said that a section of military influenced their trial process. Regarding presidential pardon of teachers, one said: "Those were ridiculous cases. Presidential pardon was a design of military high ups to show they can punish or pardon anyone."¹²

6.3.5 Controlling mass media

The emergency power ordinance and emergency power act both created the scope of abuse of power during the military-backed caretaker government. The then adviser for information once invited editors in his office and said, "we can do whatever we want to do in the present context. So, you should not publish/broadcast anything that goes in favour of politicians and against military or government."¹³

Controlling methods

- Create pressure on media to deliver video/ recorded programme, news and documents on the activities of the government in a section of the armed forces
- Supplying confessional video and audio-taped statements of the politicians about their crooked activities and publish and broadcast those in the media
- Track and monitor movement of influential media personalities
- Create pressure on media owners to dismiss media workers for broadcasting live programme on the incidents of Dhaka University by defying previous instruction
- Force transfer of ownership of private television channels showing various plea/loopholes

Items forced to broadcast/publish in particular :

- Positive portrayal of activities of armed forces both at home and abroad
- Broadcast/publish news of confessional statement taken under duress and showing footages of destruction by students during uprising in Dhaka and Rajshahi University campuses

Items obstructed to broadcast/publish in particular:

- News, documents, picture, audio, video, talk-show, theatre, magazine programme, documentary, editorial, sub-editorial, article, commentary, political meeting/gathering and human chain deemed detrimental to the military and the caretaker government.
- Any news on abuse of power and irregularities of armed forces personnel

¹⁰ Iftekharuzzaman (2008), *Prothom Alo*, 6 January.

¹¹ Section 2, *Emergency Power Act*, 21 March 2007.

¹² Interview of an university teacher.

¹³ A senior officials of a private television (Interview held on 11 February 2010)

- Pictures and news on the incidents of Dhaka and Rajshahi University campus

6.3.6 Others

The Bangladesh military is credited both at home and abroad for implementing the national ID card and preparation of complete, genuine voters' list in a shortest possible time. However, from the information as provided by respondents of the present study, incidences of irregularities occurred by a section of the armed forces while implementing this project. According to some local elected officials they were forced to arrange facilities such as procuring furniture, supplying food, paying labourers at local level etc. One councillor said military officials at the camp told them the following: "This (implementation of project at field level) is your duty. You will have to manage/meet the expenditure of these works."¹⁴ In some case, expenses were met from personal fund of the elected officials. However the Chief of the project denied the occurrence of any such irregularity. He claimed that if anybody had ever supplied anything at local level, he or she did it not under force rather did it "completely voluntarily".

6.4 Impact of irregularities and corruption

- **Professionalism undermined:** Those armed forces personnel tasked to aid the civil administration missed their regular training which undermined their professional excellence. According to one retired military high official: "They were involved in civil affairs for a long time. Such engagements for indefinite period had some negative impact on them. While working with the task force and other civil preoccupations, many could not control themselves."
- **Trial process interrupted:** The natural flow of dispensing justice was interrupted by the presence of the military inside the court. According to informants, justice and rule of law of the country suffered a setback due to interference by them in the entire process of cases.
- **Denying people's access to information:** Intervention was made in the functioning of the media by a section of the armed forces. This resulted in denying the people's right to getting actual information in the country.

6. Recommendations

1. **Ensure an acceptable election:** In order to avoid recurrence of one-eleven type incidence in future, or intervention by the armed forces in any other form, the political parties should behave more responsibly, be more cautious and undertake effective countermeasures. For maintaining a stable democratic climate and also to prevent the possibility of any form of military intervention in the political process of the country, the politicians should avoid political confrontations at any cost and ensure an election credible and acceptable to all.
2. **Disclose information on punitive measures:** Information on punitive actions taken against army personnel involved in the anti-corruption drives during the military-backed caretaker government for allegation of irregularities and corruption should be disclosed to the public. If legal barrier exists for disclosure of such information, effective measures should be taken to overcome this obstacle.
3. **Limit scope and jurisdiction of DGFI:** The scope and areas of functions of all military intelligence agencies must be made specific and transparent in order for limiting its intervention in civic matters.
4. **Limit engagement of armed forces:** Deployment of armed forces in the civil affairs/tasks in aid of civil administration should be limited. At the same time, necessary and effective measures need to be taken for strengthening the institutional and operational capacities of the civilian security forces and to ensure their accountability and credibility too.
5. **Prohibition of indemnity:** Indemnity provided to civil security apparatus and military should be stopped through legal means.

¹⁴ An interview with a councillor (9 April 2010)

6. **Ensure uninterrupted flow of information:** The state must create an enabling environment for the mass-media so that they can work independently and courageously under any situation.
7. **Political will and responsible behaviour of political leadership:** There is no alternative to democracy to build a society based on accountable governance free from corruption. The abuse of power, irregularities, and corruption by a section of the armed forces during 2007-2008 as reported by the respondents in the present study clearly indicate that military intervention, direct or indirect, is no acceptable option. It also reaffirms that responsible behaviour, dialogue and democratic practice of the politicians are absolutely indispensable for averting military intervention and successfully managing political crisis within the political space and continuing the democratic process.

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