

# **With Opposition Boycott and 40% Turnout, Sheikh Hasina Wins Bangladesh Election**

Monday 8 January 2024, by [The Wire \(IN\)](#) (Date first published: 8 January 2024).

**Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's party won the most seats in the country's general election, which was boycotted by the main opposition party and their allies.**

Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina appeared on track to gain an overwhelming majority in Bangladesh's parliamentary election that was boycotted by opposition parties, according to local media reports on Sunday.

TV stations with networks of journalists across the country reported that Hasina's governing party, the Awami League, won 216 out of 229 seats, meaning Hasina wins a fourth consecutive term in office.

The general elections were boycotted by the main opposition party, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and their allies.

Independent candidates took 52 seats, while the Jatiya Party, the third largest in the country, took 11 seats. The results for the rest of the constituencies were still trickling in late on Sunday night.

The Election Commission has been slow to announce the results of the elections. The polls closed in the afternoon, with a significantly low turnout.

## **What to know about the vote**

Voting in the country of about 170 million people began at 8 a.m. local time (0200 GMT/UTC) and lasted until 5 p.m.

Turnout was about 40% when polls closed, chief election commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal said. The last election in 2018 saw almost twice as many voters turn up.

Nearly 2,000 candidates are competing for 300 directly elected parliamentary seats. There are 436 independent candidates, the most since 2001.

Presiding officer Prashun Goswami told AFP news agency that a couple hours after voting began, only 111 people had cast ballots out of the nearly 4,200 registered at one polling station in Dhaka's west.

With concerns about [violence](#), the voter turnout is expected to be low. Troops and other security forces have been deployed across the country to guard polling booths.

## **Bangladesh faces turbulence as opposition questions credibility of elections**

The period leading up to the elections has been marred by protests in the country affected by economic slowdown, human rights violations and a crackdown on opposition.

On Saturday, seven opposition members were arrested after a train was set on fire in Dhaka in suspected arson.

The opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and some of its smaller allies have boycotted the elections, questioning their credibility.

The party has called for a two-day nationwide strike from Saturday, and urged Hasina's resignation, along with the setting up of a neutral authority to conduct elections.

"The BNP is a terrorist organisation. I am trying my best to ensure that democracy should continue in this country," Hasina told reporters after casting her vote on Sunday at City College in Dhaka, accompanied by her daughter and other members of her family.

The opposition says Hasina's Awami League has propped up "dummy" candidates as independent contesters to make the elections look fair. The main opposition leader Khaleda Zia is effectively under house arrest, under corruption charges that she claims are false.

### **Hasina denies opposition accusations, says rivals fueled violent demos**

Politics in the nation has been polarized by the rivalry between the two powerful women.

Zia's son, Tarique Rahman, is the acting chairman of the BNP. However, he is in exile in London.

Hasina [has denied all these claims](#), and accused the opposition of fueling anti-government protests that have killed at least 14 since October last year.

Bangladesh has seen sharp spikes in food prices and several blackouts since 2022.

The country's garment sector, which accounts for 85% of its annual exports, has seen a stagnation in wages. Some garment factories were set on fire last year, and many others shut down.

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