blast ব্লাস্ট বাংলাদেশ লিগ্যাল এইড এন্ড সার্ভিসেস ট্রাস্ট (ব্লাস্ট)
BANGLADESH LEGAL AID and SERVICES TRUST (BLAST)

# Request for Expression of Interest (EOI)

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Trust Services (BLAST) hereby invites **experienced firm/organization** to show their expression of interest for the position as lead consultant to conduct **Comprehensive Study on the Protection, Rehabilitation and Reparation and Accountability Mechanisms Available Through National Human Rights Systems in Bangladesh** under "Supporting CSO advocacy for a Robust Human Rights System in Bangladesh" Project. **Reputed consultancy firm/organization** with relevant qualifications and experience are encouraged to apply.

Interested applicants requested to submit following documents:

a) **Letter of Expression**
b) **Valid trade license**
c) **E-TIN certificate**
d) **Tax Return Certificate and Acknowledge**
e) **BIN registration Certificate**
f) **Documents of relevant experience.**
g) **Written references with detailed particulars**
h) **Company Profile**

| | |
|---|---|
| Evaluation | Submitted applications will be shortlisted based on above mentioned criteria. Detailed Request for proposal will sent to shortlisted candidates. |
| Assignment brief | Lead and conduct a comprehensive study on the overall human rights system in Bangladesh, outlining the mechanisms for protection, prosecution and reparations for victims, the NHRC's structural gaps and mandate limitations in statute and practice in responding to human rights violations and the role of CSOs in ensuring state accountability.<br><br>Detail see the detailed **Terms of Reference** (TOR) Annexure 1. |
| Address and Last Date of Submission | **On or before 11:59 pm (BD Standard time), 06 June 2026** at **purchase@blast.org.bd.** |
| **Rights** | Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) management reserves the right to accept or reject part/ whole of any or all the application without assigning any reason whatsoever. |

## Annexure 1

### Terms of Reference

**Consultant for Leading a Comprehensive Study on the Protection, Rehabilitation and Reparation and Accountability Mechanisms Available Through National Human Rights Systems in Bangladesh**

---

### 1. INTRODUCTION OF THE ORGANISATION

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) is the largest specialised national non-governmental legal services organisation in Bangladesh. It provides access to a comprehensive range of legal services, including information, advice, referral, mediation, and litigation across both informal and formal justice systems. BLAST also engages in research, advocacy, strategic litigation, and capacity-building initiatives. Operating with a workforce of over 300 professionals, including lawyers, researchers, and paralegals, BLAST has a presence in 23 district offices and numerous community legal clinics in Dhaka's informal settlements. It leverages a robust pro bono network of 2600+ lawyers to serve marginalised populations

### 2. BRIEF PROJECT BACKGROUND

BLAST, a national legal service and human rights organization, is implementing the project titled "Supporting CSO Advocacy for a Robust Human Rights System in Bangladesh" (SCSO) funded by the Danish Institute of Human Rights (DIHR). The project is grounded in the recognition that an impartial, free, proactive and responsible National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) constitutes a foundational pillar of democratic governance, public accountability, and the realization of the protection and promotion of human rights of people. In Bangladesh, vulnerable, marginalised and at-risk communities and individuals often fall victim to human rights violations, perpetrated by the organs of the state and non-state actors. Protection of human and fundamental rights of people is the duty of the state, where civil society organisations (CSOs) exist to ensure state accountability and to promote rights-based governance. Statutory obligations of the country ensure that an independent and impartial NHRC be constituted to act as a protector of human rights of the people, playing a crucial role in building state accountability and ensuring adequate rehabilitation and reparation for victims. The SCSO Project seeks to develop robust civil society engagement with the NHRC Bangladesh in order to make it more accessible to victims, particularly from marginalised and vulnerable communities, and to support the NHRC in ensuring full alignment and compliance with globally accepted standards such as the Paris Principles.

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSIGNMENT

#### 3.1. Rationale of the Study:

For more than two decades, the United Nations has promoted the establishment and strengthening of robust National Human Rights Systems (NHRS) as a means to ensure the effective implementation of international human rights obligations at the national level. A key

institution in any NHRS is a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI). On that note, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Bangladesh was established in 2009 through the enactment of the National Human Rights Commission Act, 2009, with the objective of protecting and promoting the human rights of the people and ensuring accountability of the relevant government authorities.

However, since its establishment, it has been observed that due to certain limitations within the Act and the narrow interpretation of various provisions of the law, the NHRC has faced multiple challenges in exercising its powers and jurisdiction and has failed to play the expected role in protecting human rights. As a result, demands to amend the law have repeatedly been raised by civil society organisations (CSOs), human rights activists, development partners, and even the NHRC itself.

In addition, following the 2024 July uprisings, the Interim Government in Bangladesh took significant steps to strengthen the independence and mandate of their NHRC by promulgating the National Human Rights Commission Ordinance 2025. The ordinance sought to introduce the National Preventive Mechanism Mandate (NPM) within the NHRC in line with Bangladesh's recent commitments after signing the OPCAT in 2025. It also sought to provide a mandate for the NHRC to investigate enforced disappearances. Besides these new mandates, the Ordinance would have worked towards strengthening coordination and interaction with the UN human rights monitoring mechanisms. However, the new elected government repealed the Ordinance in April 2026, shortly after assuming power. As a result, the NHRC has effectively reverted to its previous structure under the NHRC Act 2009, creating uncertainty regarding the future of its independence and institutional effectiveness.

The promotion and protection of human rights constitute core obligations of the State under both international and national law. A National Human Rights System (NHRS) encompasses the set of frameworks, institutions, and processes through which human rights are realized in practice, involving state institutions, civil society, and private sector actors. An effective NHRS requires coherent and well-functioning laws, institutions, policies, and mechanisms that operate in accordance with human rights norms and principles.

Within the NHRS, state actors are obliged to respect, protect and fulfil human rights within their respective mandates and spheres of competence. Similarly, civil society organizations (CSOs) work for advancing human rights by monitoring state performance, advocating for legal and policy reforms, and raising public awareness. CSOs voice the views of rights-holders incl. persons that are marginalized and vulnerable. Academia has a role in researching and studying human rights and related areas, whether specific rights or societal developments that affect enjoyment of human rights. NHRIs, which are independent public actors, are mandated to act as a bridge between the public (represented by e.g. civil society and grass root organisations) and the state in the promotion and protection of human rights.

**3.2. Overall Objective:**

Lead and conduct a comprehensive study on the overall human rights system in Bangladesh, outlining the mechanisms for protection, prosecution and reparations for victims, the NHRC's

structural gaps and mandate limitations in statute and practice in responding to human rights violations and the role of CSOs in ensuring state accountability.

### 3.3. Specific Objectives:

**The specific objectives of the study are divided into three components as described below:**

**Component A: Available Mechanisms of Human Rights Redress and Remedy**

- Identify Constitutional provisions and existing legal frameworks safeguarding human and fundamental rights of individuals
- Comprehensively map and analyse the roles, mandates, structure of state and non-state actors of the Human Rights System in Bangladesh and look into their actions and interactions
- Identify the role of independent institutions/organisations such as the NHRC and CSOs in upholding human rights and ensuring state accountability
- Identify available mechanisms for victims to claim remedy or redress for human rights violations (justice system/NHRC mechanism/international mechanisms) and analyse the gaps and limitations for each
- Identify challenges and opportunities in the various identified actors' human rights work (within their respective mandate).

**When identifying the role of the state actors, the following needs to be considered:**

- Map state actors (if any) that are mandated to or are involved in the promotion and protection of human rights in Bangladesh
- Analyse their mandates, responsibilities, roles and current human rights initiatives
- Explore how these actors ensure that human rights principles and standards are integrated into laws, policies, programmes and institutional practices
- Examine the interactions among state actors, between state actors and non-state actors, and with international and regional mechanisms
- Identify challenges met by these actors in their actual work and current opportunities.

**Component B: Analysis of the State Institutions**

**The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC),** quasi-judicial oversight mechanisms

- Analyse the mandate and power of the NHRC and identify the statutory and procedural gaps or limitations of the NHRC and its mandate of protecting human rights
- Analyse practical realities faced by the NHRC in responding to human rights violations.
- Engage with victims of human rights to assess their experience of navigating the NHRC complaints mechanism
- Analyse the extent to which the NHRC aligns with the best practices outlined in the Paris Principles

- Develop key actionable points for the NHRC and for the government to ensure full compliance with Paris Principles.

**Human Rights Focal Points of the Government and State**

- Identify the **Human Rights Focal Points/Interministerial Delegation** for Human Rights, including National Mechanisms for Reporting, Implementation and Follow up (NMIRFs relevant inter-ministerial programmes, national plans and strategies).
- **The Parliament**, particularly Parliamentary Committees dealing with human rights, constitutional, and legislative issues.
- **Local and territorial entities** and administrations, where relevant.

**Component C: Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Academia capacity and responsibilities**

- Analyse the role of CSOs and Academia (that carry out human rights courses, programmes, studies and research in upholding human rights and protecting at-risk communities and supporting victims of human rights violations
- Assess the level of engagement of selected CSOs and Academia with the NHRC and its complaint mechanisms
- Develop practical guidance for grassroots CSOs and Academia to engage with the NHRC's complaints and reporting mechanism
- Analyse initiatives of CSOs and Academia relating to human rights
- Explore how these actors apply human rights principles and standards (if at all) in their initiatives
- Examine the inter-actions between state and CSOs and Academia
- Identify processes, coordination mechanisms, and participation in international and regional human rights systems (if any)
- Identify existing challenges and opportunities.

## 4. SCOPE OF WORK

The consultants will develop a comprehensive three-part research study within eight weeks ensuring that all objectives highlighted above are addressed. The findings from the study will be disseminated among relevant stakeholders such as the NHRC, DIHR, relevant ministries and civil society organizations through a series of dissemination and validation workshops.

The Lead Consultant will be responsible for:

- Conducting a **desk review** of relevant constitutional provisions, statutory frameworks, and jurisprudence relating to human rights protection in Bangladesh
- Undertaking a **comparative legal analysis** of the mandate, powers, and functional scope of the NHRC in relation to other national human rights institutions

- Assessing the **alignment of the NHRC with the Paris Principles**, including its independence, mandate, accountability, and effectiveness
- Designing and overseeing **qualitative data collection**, including key informant interviews with human rights defenders, civil society organizations, and grassroots community-based groups to assess awareness, accessibility, and effectiveness of human rights protection mechanisms, including the NHRC
- Guiding and supervising **in-depth interviews with victims/survivors of human rights violations** to capture lived experiences related to access to remedies and redress mechanisms
- Include **two case studies** from the findings related to human rights violations
- Leading the **analysis and synthesis of findings**, integrating both legal and field-based evidence
- Facilitating **validation workshops** with stakeholders including but not limited to human rights platforms, CSOs, NHRC representatives, government agencies, state institutions and DIHR to ensure accuracy, inclusivity, and relevance of findings
- Preparing a **comprehensive research report**, along with policy-oriented summaries and recommendations.

**Team Structure and Support**

To ensure effective implementation, the Lead Consultant will be supported by:

- A **Research Officer**, engaged by BLAST, who will assist with legal research and analysis under the guidance and supervision of the Lead Consultant
- One or more **Research Assistants**, engaged by BLAST, who will support field-level data collection, including conducting interviews and gathering qualitative data, in accordance with the methodology and tools developed by the Lead Consultant.

The Lead Consultant will provide overall methodological direction, quality assurance, and oversight of all research components.

**Supervision, Technical Guidance, and Ownership of Deliverables**

The Team will work under the supervision of BLAST and will use guidance proposed by BLAST to analyse national human rights systems and relevant actors, when and if necessary. BLAST and the DIHR will provide feedback throughout the process. All deliverables produced as part of this study shall be considered property of and may be published by BLAST and the DIHR.

**4.1. Language Requirement:**

- The study shall be developed in English.
- Bangla translation of the full study report.
- Key materials, summaries, and presentation aids must be translated into Bangla to ensure accessibility for local CSOs.

- Language must be clear and practice-oriented.

## 5. FACILITIES TO BE PROVIDED

BLAST will extend the following support to facilitate the successful completion of the assignment:

- Provision of **relevant project documents**, background materials, and contextual information
- Access to **legal research resources and databases**, where available
- Engagement of a **Research Officer and Research Assistants** to support legal analysis and field data collection, respectively
- **Coordination support** for stakeholder engagement, including scheduling and facilitating interviews and consultations
- **Introduction and liaison support** with key stakeholders, including the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) and other relevant institutions
- **Logistical and organizational support** for validation and dissemination workshops, as required

## 6. LIST OF DELIVERABLES

| Deliverable | Description | Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| Inception Report | Workplan, methodology | Week 1-2 |
| Data collection | KIIs, IDIs and desk review | Week 3-5 |
| Draft Research report | Research report to include agreed upon contents | Week 6-7 |
| Final report | Revised report, including Bengali summaries of selected excerpts and summaries | Week 8 |

- **Inception Report**: Proposed methodology, including a list of actors, associations and institutions to be analysed, a draft research plan and timeline and a proposed outline for BLAST and DIHR's review. The **methodology** must include the criteria used to identify CSOs relevant to the study, as for instance CSOs that work on tracking and monitoring Bangladesh's human rights commitments, or those that contribute to implement these commitments at the local or national level. Additional criteria will be agreed upon during the inception phase.

- **Draft study:** a draft study with the preliminary findings will be submitted mid-way through the study. BLAST and the Danish Institute for Human Rights will review the draft report and provide input.
- **Validation workshops**: During the review period, the consultant is requested to hold one (or more) validation workshops with BLAST (and possibly the DIHR) to discuss the institute's feedback and how it could be effectively integrated into the final version of the study. A final validation workshop will be held with BLAST, CSOs, NHRC representatives, state institutions, government agencies, and DIHR to ensure accuracy, inclusivity, and relevance of findings.
- **Final version:** a final version incorporating feedback and providing opportunities and recommendations for human rights work with state and non-state actors in Bangladesh shall be submitted to BLAST at the latest 8 weeks after signature of contract.

**6.1. Period of Performance:**

**Total duration: 8 weeks from the date of contract signing.**

**7. QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS**

**7.1. Educational Qualifications**

- Advanced degree (Master's or PhD preferred) in Law, Human Rights, Criminology, Sociology, Political Science, Development Studies, or a related discipline
- Specialization in human rights systems, constitutional law, governance, or transitional justice will be considered an asset.

**7.2. Professional Experience**

- Minimum 7–10 years of experience in academic research, policy research, or applied research in the field of human rights, rule of law, or governance
- Demonstrated track record of leading or contributing to large-scale research studies, particularly those involving legal analysis and mixed-methods research
- Experience conducting research on national human rights institutions (NHRIs), accountability mechanisms, access to justice, or victim reparations frameworks
- Proven experience in designing and implementing qualitative research methodologies, including key informant interviews (KIIs), in-depth interviews (IDIs), and stakeholder consultations
- Experience engaging with government institutions, national human rights bodies, civil society organizations, and/or international organizations is highly desirable.

### 7.3. Technical Competencies

- Strong analytical and writing skills, with the ability to synthesize complex legal and empirical findings into clear, policy-oriented outputs
- In-depth understanding of Bangladesh's legal and institutional framework related to human rights protection and accountability
- Familiarity with international human rights standards, including the Paris Principles and relevant UN mechanisms
- Expertise in comparative legal analysis and institutional assessment
- Demonstrated capacity to lead research teams, ensure methodological rigor, and maintain quality assurance across research outputs
- Ability to translate research findings into practical recommendations for policymakers, national institutions, and civil society actors
- Sensitivity to ethical considerations in human rights research, including working with vulnerable populations and applying trauma-informed approaches.