

Child and Women Protection Laws in Bangladesh

Child and women protection laws in Bangladesh are primarily governed by the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 (amended in 2003 and 2020), which addresses violence, trafficking, and exploitation of women and children. Additional laws, such as the Penal Code 1860, the Children Act 2013, the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010, the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017, and the Dowry Prohibition Act 1980, provide a comprehensive framework to safeguard vulnerable groups. These laws aim to prevent abuse, ensure justice, and promote rehabilitation, with strict penalties to deter offenses. The Code of Criminal Procedure 1898 regulates trial processes, while the Constitution of Bangladesh, under Articles 27 and 28, prohibits discrimination and ensures equal protection. Below is an overview of key laws and their punishments for violations, presented in a clear, copyable format. For official texts, refer to bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd.

Key Child and Women Protection Laws and Punishments:

- **Rape of Women or Children (Section 9, Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000):** Sexual intercourse without consent or with minors under 16 carries life imprisonment with rigorous labor and a fine. Aggravated cases (e.g., gang rape, rape causing death) carry the death penalty. Under Section 375 of the Penal Code 1860, rape carries life imprisonment or 7-14 years' imprisonment with a fine.
- **Attempt to Rape (Section 9(4)):** Attempting rape carries 5-10 years' imprisonment with a fine; if the victim is a child, penalties align with rape provisions.
- **Sexual Harassment (Section 10):** Sexual harassment, including unwanted advances or obscene gestures, carries 3-7 years' imprisonment and a fine.
- **Trafficking of Women or Children (Section 5):** Trafficking for prostitution, slavery, or forced labor carries life imprisonment or 10-20 years' rigorous imprisonment, with a fine. Under Section 366 of the Penal Code 1860, kidnapping for trafficking carries up to 7 years' imprisonment and a fine.
- **Kidnapping or Abduction of Women/Children (Section 7):** Kidnapping for immoral purposes carries life imprisonment or 10-14 years' rigorous imprisonment, with a fine. Penal Code Section 361 (kidnapping from lawful guardianship) carries up to 7 years' imprisonment and a fine.
- **Causing Death for Dowry (Section 11(a)):** Murder due to dowry demands carries the death penalty with a fine. Under the Dowry Prohibition Act 1980, demanding or giving dowry carries up to 5 years' imprisonment, a fine up to 50,000 taka, or both.
- **Causing Injury for Dowry (Section 11(b)):** Causing grievous hurt for dowry carries life imprisonment or 7-14 years' imprisonment, with a fine; minor injuries carry 1-5 years' imprisonment and a fine.
- **Acid Throwing (Section 4, Acid Control Act 2002):** Throwing acid causing death carries the death penalty or life imprisonment with a fine up to 1 lakh taka. Causing injury carries 7-14 years' imprisonment and a fine up to 50,000 taka.
- **Child Marriage (Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017, Section 7):** Arranging or solemnizing marriage of girls under 18 or boys under 21 carries up to 2 years' imprisonment, a fine up to 1 lakh taka, or both. Guardians or parents facilitating child marriage face the same penalty.

- **Domestic Violence (Domestic Violence Act 2010, Section 4):** Physical, psychological, sexual, or economic abuse within the family carries up to 6 months' imprisonment for first offenses, 2 years for repeat offenses, with fines up to 50,000 taka. Protective orders may be issued.
- **Child Abuse or Neglect (Children Act 2013, Section 70):** Physical or psychological abuse of children carries up to 5 years' imprisonment, a fine up to 1 lakh taka, or both. Sexual exploitation of children carries 7-14 years' imprisonment.
- **Child Labor (Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Section 34):** Employing children under 14 in hazardous work carries up to 1 year's imprisonment, a fine up to 5,000 taka, or both. Hazardous work for children aged 14-18 carries similar penalties if safety standards are violated.
- **Prostitution Involving Children/Women (Section 6):** Forcing women or children into prostitution carries life imprisonment or 10-14 years' rigorous imprisonment, with a fine. Running a brothel involving minors carries 7 years to life imprisonment.
- **Pornography Involving Children (Section 8):** Producing or distributing child pornography carries 7-10 years' imprisonment and a fine up to 2 lakh taka. Under the Pornography Control Act 2012, similar offenses carry up to 7 years' imprisonment and a fine.
- **Stalking (Section 10A, Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000):** Stalking women or children carries 1-3 years' imprisonment and a fine up to 50,000 taka.
- **Corporal Punishment of Children (Children Act 2013, Section 71):** Physical punishment in schools or institutions is prohibited, carrying up to 2 years' imprisonment, a fine up to 50,000 taka, or both.
- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM):** Though not explicitly covered, FGM is prosecutable under Section 326 of the Penal Code (grievous hurt), carrying up to 7 years' imprisonment and a fine.

Implementation and Additional Notes:

Most offenses under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 are non-bailable, leading to prolonged detention under the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898. Special tribunals ensure speedy trials, but case backlogs and societal stigma often delay justice. The death penalty is mandatory for dowry-related deaths and optional for rape or trafficking causing death, though life imprisonment is often imposed. The Children Act 2013 emphasizes rehabilitation for juvenile offenders (under 18), with juvenile courts and diversion programs. Despite legal protections, enforcement is weak due to corruption, lack of awareness, and cultural acceptance of practices like child marriage (42% of girls married before 18, per UNICEF 2020). The National Helpline 109 and One-Stop Crisis Centres assist victims, but resources are limited. Human rights groups criticize excessive penalties and extrajudicial actions, particularly in dowry or acid attack cases. For updates, consult bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd or contact the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs.