

# NSU and IUB rally for women's safety and accountability

Students, teachers, and faculty members of North South University (NSU) and Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) rallied outside their respective campuses at 11:30am on March 9 in unison and chanted slogans.

The protestors started from their campuses and marched through the streets of the Bashundhara Residential Area with posters and banners saying, "We want justice!" and "The liability is only yours. You are the rapist" while chanting in solidarity, "Inform the entire Bengal! Bury the rapist!"

Dr Razia Sultana Khan, advisor to the Department of English and Modern Languages at IUB, said during the rally, "We cannot keep quiet. Silence means we are allowing it to happen. We are allowing the destruction of the most vulnerable of people. We are supposed to be their fathers and mothers, and what are we doing? We are raping our children. What has happened to humanity?"

Dr Khan added, "We have to get up. We have to unite in solidarity. This is not just a woman's cause. This is a degeneration of our whole nation. We have lost all our morals. What is this society, if we cannot protect our most vulnerable, our children?"

Sharmee Hossain, a senior lecturer in the Department of English and Modern Languages at NSU, led the protest. When asked about her motivations for organising the protest, she said, "All women are paranoid, from children to elderly, as well as women from all professional backgrounds. This is not normal. It's not just outside. A woman is not safe anywhere, whether online or even in their own homes. It seems to me as if a war has been declared against women. The interim government must remember that the country would have seen no change without the women during the July Uprising."

Hossain further adds, "The government must ensure the safety of the female citizens of its country. This isn't the Bangladesh the general people stood for a few months ago. We must allow our girls to stand tall with their heads held high. This is our country, and we are not leaving this place. We demand justice and safety. If the government cannot ensure that, they should resign. We will not stop until our demands are met."

Reflecting on her teacher's sentiments, Nafsin Mehanaz Azireen, a current student of NSU and one of the frontliners during the July Uprising, states, "Bangladesh has seen a rise in rape cases, more so after the people's revolt of 2024. When I learned about the rally to be held outside our campus today, I called upon my fellow university mates and friends from IUB. We took to the streets together, with our teachers from NSU and IUB."

Tahsim Uzzaman, a current student at IUB and also a frontliner during the July Uprising, notes, "The way rape cases have increased in our country, and how they have not even spared children is what enrages me. Among my female friends, if I were to pick out four, three out of them share the common story of being harassed by a relative but not being able to speak up about it. The way such cases are kept hidden under the facade of shame is what our protest is about."

According to the students and teachers of NSU and IUB, the protests will continue until justice is served and the safety of all women on the streets and in their homes is ensured. From this rally, they demand justice for the organised violent attacks of the past five months.