

PROCEEDINGS

Dialogue on

Promoting a Multistakeholder Approach to Support Police Reform in Bangladesh to Advance Comprehensive People-Centered, and Human Rights-Based Reform Efforts

25 June 2025



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)

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Dialogue on Promoting a Multistakeholder Approach to Support Police Reform in Bangladesh to Advance Comprehensive, People-Centered, and Human Rights-Based Reform Efforts



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) jointly organised a Dialogue on “**Promoting a Multistakeholder Approach to Support Police Reform in Bangladesh to Advance Comprehensive, People-Centered, and Human Rights-Based Reform Efforts**” on Wednesday, 25 June 2025 at Hotel Sheraton, Banani, Dhaka. **Mr Baharul Alam, BPM**, Inspector General (IG), Bangladesh Police, graced the event as the Chief Guest. **Dr Suruchi Pant**, UNODC Deputy Regional Representative, South Asia, delivered welcome remarks at the event. **Mr Felipe Ramos**, UNODC Head of Office, Bangladesh, described the aims and objectives of the dialogue. **Major General Iftexhar Anis, BSP, awc, afwc, psc, PEng**, Director General, BISS, chaired the inaugural session.

The Inaugural Session was followed by three roundtables. The first roundtable was on “**Police professionalisation, independence and community engagement**”, which was moderated by Mr Shah Mohammad Naheean, National Programme Coordinator, UNODC Bangladesh. In this session, **Mr Rachid Habchi** and **Mr Rogier Donk**, experts from the Netherlands, Peer-to-Peer Diversity Network of the National Police of the Netherlands and **Mr Sofien Bacha**, Policy Analyst (Security and Rule of Law), UNDP Headquarter virtually

shared their valuable insights and experiences as International Expert. **Mr Motiar Rahman**, Former Deputy Inspector General (DIG), Bangladesh Police, talked as the National Expert.

The second roundtable titled “**Promoting a human rights-based approach to the use of force and firearms; Effective and evidence-based investigations and interviewing approaches**” was moderated by **Mr Muhammad Nurul Huda**, former IG, Bangladesh Police. **Mr SM Ruhul Amin**, Former Additional Inspector General (AIG), Bangladesh Police, talked as the national expert. The international expert who spoke virtually in this session were **Mr Knut D Asplund**, Project Manager, Norwegian Centre for Human Rights and **Mr Neil Corney**, Omega Research Foundation.

The third roundtable was on “**Strengthening accountability and oversight mechanisms and enhancing institutional integrity**”. **Mr Felipe Ramos**, Head of Office, UNODC Bangladesh was the moderator of this session. As international experts **Mr Sani El-Mustapha**, the Head of the Nigeria Police Complaints Response Unit (CRU) and **Mr Ian D Scott**, former Director of the Special Investigations Unit in Ontario, Canada spoke virtually. **Mr Muhammad Nurul Huda**, former IG, Bangladesh Police, spoke as national expert.

Ms Anna Giudice, Team Leader, Access to Justice, UNODC Headquarters, Vienna, delivered in all three roundtables as an expert from the UNODC. **Ms Anubha Sood**, UNODC Regional Representative, South Asia made the closing remarks virtually.

Each roundtable was followed by a vibrant and engaging question and answer session. The Dialogue was participated by representatives from a wide range of relevant organisations which included Bangladesh Police and its various departments, branches and units, Coast Guard, Bangladesh Border Guard, different ministries, attorney General’s Office and other Judiciary related institutes and organisations.

WELCOME REMARKS



Dr Suruchi Pant

Deputy Representative

UNODC Regional Office for South Asia

In her welcome remark **Dr Suruchi Pant** highlighted the collaboration between the Government of Bangladesh and the UNODC. She stressed that this collaboration not only involves areas such as drug control and prevention, criminal justice and crime prevention but also address issues like values, harm reduction, and sponsorship. She acknowledged continued support of the UNODC to the efforts related to women, drug issues, crime prevention, and the promotion of United Nations standards and norms in criminal justice and crime prevention. She said that the UNODC has been assisting countries in reviewing and developing

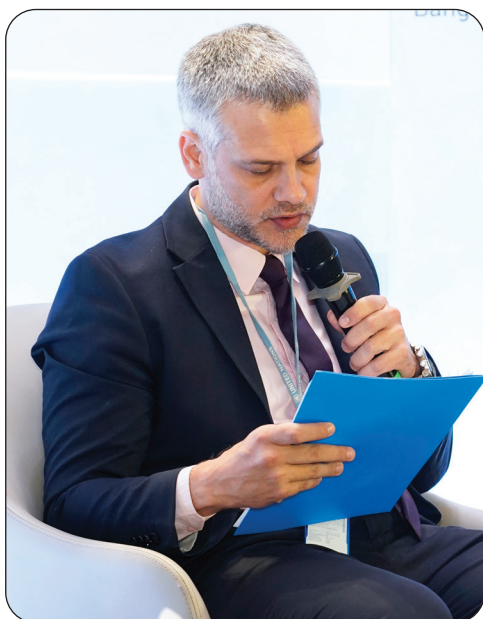
their national legislation, designing action plans, enhancing institutional frameworks, and strengthening capacities in alignment with these standards.

Dr Pant remarked that the UNODC is well positioned to facilitate exchanges at both policy and action level on matters concerning crime prevention and criminal justice, not only regionally but also globally. In this regard, she urged the senior officials present in the Dialogue to participate in the 50th General Justice Conference, which is scheduled to take place in 2026. She further mentioned that the UNODC has been providing relevant stakeholders a wealth of resources on international standards, evidence-based approaches, and best practices in the field of police reform. She explained that these contributions have reinforced the mission to support law enforcement institutions globally in upholding human rights and ensuring effective, fair, and inclusive responses to crime, thereby making communities safer.

The Deputy Representative affirmed that the UNODC remains a valued partner to the criminal justice system in Bangladesh and continues to offer capacity-building support to criminal justice practitioners across its mandate areas. She expressed her pleasure in sharing that, in line with the UNODC's Strategic Vision for 2021–2025, and more recently the Regional Programme for South Asia 2024–2028, their work on crime prevention and criminal justice focused on ensuring equal access to justice for all. She regarded this as a fundamental component of a fair, humane, effective, and efficient criminal justice system. She explained that this work encompasses the promotion of human rights, gender-sensitive policing, institutional professionalisation, and the provision of access to essential services, including those for victims and mechanisms for restorative justice.

She took the opportunity to reaffirm the UNODC's commitment to support Bangladesh in developing a modern, accountable, and innovative police force, one that would be trusted by the community and guided by the rule of law. Dr Pant also noted that they had gathered in the Dialogue to advance a shared vision of policing that is people-centred, accountable, and inclusive. She acknowledged that this vision cannot be realised by any single ministry, organisation, or agency alone. Rather, she emphasised, it is a collective effort, requiring the leadership of government officials who are prepared to shoulder the responsibility of advancing legislation; the dedication of law enforcement officers committed to professional excellence and integrity; the engagement of civil society actors who amplify the voices of those who are often unheard; and the steadfast support of development and multilateral partners who contribute global insights and assistance. Finally, she concluded by stating that Bangladesh is indeed making significant progress in this important dialogue, and that the Dialogue has provided yet another opportunity to build further upon this momentum.

OPENING REMARKS



Felipe Ramos

UNODC Head of Office, Bangladesh.

Mr Felipe Ramos stressed the urgency of advancing comprehensive, people-centred, and human rights-based police reform in Bangladesh. He mentioned that the dialogue provides a critical platform to foster collaboration among government agencies, law enforcement, civil society, the United Nations, and development partners. He further pointed out that effective reform must address challenges such as the use of force, accountability, transparency, and equitable access to justice, particularly for vulnerable and marginalised groups. Mr Ramos emphasised that policing must be gender-sensitive, community-oriented, and firmly grounded in the rule of law.

Referring to global experiences, he cited accountability mechanisms in Nigeria, community policing in the Netherlands, and sensitive interviewing techniques adopted across regions as valuable models that could inspire context-specific solutions for Bangladesh.

Mr Ramos outlined the threefold objectives of the dialogue: (i) to facilitate meaningful engagement among government agencies, law enforcement, civil society, UN entities, and development partners, (ii) to present global best practices and community-led models in policing, covering areas like use of force, investigations, and oversight mechanisms, and (iii) to contribute to a concrete and actionable outcome document supporting the ongoing transformation of the Bangladesh Police.

He concluded by stating that building a professional, rights-respecting police service is not merely a technical exercise but an impactful societal transformation requiring courage, consensus, and a shared commitment to upholding human dignity and rights.



SPEECH BY THE CHIEF GUEST



Baharul Alam, BPM

Inspector General, Bangladesh Police

Mr Baharul Alam emphasised that contemporary policing goes beyond maintaining law and order. It involves upholding justice, human rights, and dignity while serving people with compassion, integrity, and professionalism. He highlighted the shift from a power-centric approach to one of partnership and community engagement, aiming to build public trust and strengthen collaboration. He noted that Bangladesh Police has adopted the UN standards on the use of force, emphasising necessity, proportionality, legality, and accountability. Each stage of response, from presence to persuasion and, if required, measured force, is now designed to protect rather than provoke.

The Inspector General underlined the critical need for comprehensive legal and institutional reforms. He pointed out that the existing Police Act focuses heavily on maintaining order rather than safeguarding human rights, calling for its replacement with a rights-based framework aligned with democratic principles. Since 2006, the police continued to propose an independent police commission to oversee policy, performance, integrity, and fairness. He stressed that reforms must focus on developing ethically grounded, emotionally intelligent, and socially responsive officers, with human rights sensitisation embedded in training and daily practice.

Mr Alam candidly shared challenges, including political interference and informal requests from influential quarters, which undermine governance and morale within the police. He advocated for a transformative vision where police evolve from a 'force' to a 'service', suggesting recruitment reforms to strengthen investigative capacity and professionalism. While recognising efforts by the interim government to constitute a police reform commission, he noted that governance issues, particularly political interference, remain unresolved. Nevertheless, he expressed optimism that collective will and people's support can revive the long-awaited process of meaningful reform.



Mr Alam reaffirmed Bangladesh Police’s commitment to reform and improving service quality, emphasising that reform is a continuous process requiring vision, courage, collaboration, and persistence. He thanked BISS and UNODC for organising the dialogue and called for joint efforts across institutions and communities to build a police service that protects democracy, dignity, and justice for all.

SPEECH BY THE CHAIR



Major General Iftekhar Anis, BSP, awc, afwc, psc, PEng
Director General, BIIS

Major General Iftekhar Anis discussed the efforts of the interim Government of Bangladesh for police reform. He elaborated that the interim government has initiated a broad reform initiative to modernise public institutions. As part of this effort, the government initially formed six reform commissions—including the Police Reform and Judicial Reform Commissions—to identify gaps and recommend reforms aimed at aligning national practices with international standards and improving the criminal justice system.

He continued that the Police Reform Commission was formed on 03rd November 2024. The nine-member commission was composed of government, police, academics and civil society representative. The Reform Commission came up with 15 major reform proposals to be implemented in short, medium and long-term phases. Major reform proposals of the commission include legal reforms—amend and update the Police Act 1861, the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898 and Police Regulations 1943, human rights protection, end extra-judicial killing, anti-corruption measures, gender and child friendly policing, cyber and transnational crime units, respect to human rights, community engagement through community policing and extend welfare opportunities for the member of police forces like improving their salary, healthcare and training opportunities. He was optimistic that effective implementation of the proposed reforms would go a long way to ensure a human rights-based, people-centred and modern police force for Bangladesh.

He underscored the significance of police reform in Bangladesh. He argued that as Bangladesh continues its journey toward national development, economic growth, and social stability, the role of an accountable, transparent, and rights-respecting police force becomes more vital than ever. A police force that is truly people-centered and human rights-based not only ensures safety and order but also fosters trust, legitimacy, and social cohesion—cornerstones of a thriving democracy. However, achieving such a vision requires more than policy reforms; it necessitates a collaborative, inclusive approach that brings together all relevant stakeholders—government authorities, civil society, community members, human rights organisations, the media, and international partners. This multistakeholder engagement is essential to crafting comprehensive, sustainable reforms that are aligned with the people's needs and rights.

Major General Anis then focused on the principles of policing. He recalled the principles of modern policing proposed by former Home Secretary of England, Sir Robert Peel. According to Sir Robert Peel, the duty of police is to prevent crime and disorder and the power of the police to fulfill their duties is dependent on public approval. He maintained that public respect and approval also mean the willing co-operation of the public. Therefore, he suggested that the police should strive to maintain a relationship with the public. He further argued that police efficiency is testified by the absence of crime and disorder, not by the visible appearance of police. Referring them as timeless principles, Major General Anis advocated for following them in Bangladesh's police reform initiative.

In the concluding part of his remarks, the Director General of BIIS appreciated the role of the UNODC. He noted that through its Global Programme on People-centred Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Reform, the UNODC has been supporting Bangladesh in developing innovative, cost-effective, and rights-compliant solutions to respond to critical challenges in the delivery of justice. He concluded by thanking the Chief Guest Mr Baharul Alam, BPM, Inspector General, Bangladesh Police and other distinguished guests for being present in the Dialogue and thus providing an opportunity for exchanging insightful thoughts.



Roundtable 1: Police Professionalisation, Independence and Community Engagement

Speech of the Moderator



Shah Mohammad Naheean

*National Programme Coordinator
UNODC Bangladesh*

Mr Shah Mohammad Naheean stated that the session would focus on police professionalisation and modernisation, featuring a panel of national and international experts.

Regarding police professionalisation in Bangladesh, Mr Naheean outlined that the discussion would encompass three key areas: the police force's development itself, its operational modalities, and the accountability mechanisms that require attention. He informed that while examining the code of conduct for law enforcement officials and establishing certain standards, the national expert Mr Rahman would address how these frameworks could be implemented within the national context.

Mr Naheean observed that the scenario Bangladesh faces today reflects considerable progress when compared to the circumstances of the 1960s. In response to the presentation, he highlighted a significant capacity gap: if Bangladesh were to deploy one police officer for every 5,000 members of the population to ensure appropriate community engagement, the country would require 360,000 police personnel while the current total number of police personnel stands at 203,000. Mr Naheean suggested that this scenario could be addressed through comparison with the Netherlands' approach to police deployment and community policing.

Presentation by UNODC Expert



Anna Giudice

*Team Leader, Access to Justice
UNODC Headquarters, Vienna*

Ms Anna Giudice delivered a comprehensive presentation on the theme of police professionalisation, independence, and community engagement, framing her discussion around three core pillars: international standards, evidence-based approaches, and tailor-made, context-specific, nationally owned solutions. She began by defining the concept of ‘police’ through four dimensions—procedures, personnel, institutions, and legal regulations—to provide a holistic understanding of law enforcement structures. She emphasised that effective policing must operate within a broader ecosystem that includes communities, oversight

bodies, the criminal justice system, the parliament, civil society organisations, executive authorities, and the media.

Ms Giudice then referred to the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials (1979), drawing attention to specific articles that underline international norms. Article 1 stresses the police’s duty to serve the community and protect individuals from illegal acts. Article 2 mandates law enforcement officials to respect human dignity and uphold human rights. Article 5 prohibits any act of torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, regardless of external circumstances such as war or national emergency. Article 6 obligates law enforcement to protect the health of individuals in custody and to provide prompt medical care when needed. Through this framework, Ms Giudice underscored the need for a rights-based, accountable, and community-rooted policing model.

Ms Anna Giudice proceeded to elaborate on the essential elements of modern, democratic policing, emphasising a comprehensive and multidimensional approach. She identified a wide array of components necessary for building a professional and accountable police force. She particularly emphasised effective recruitment, retention, promotion, and development policies. She also stressed the adaptation of legal, policy, structural, and institutional frameworks, alongside strong leadership and management. Trust-building and legitimacy were highlighted as foundational pillars, supported by community-oriented policing approaches that respond to current needs and emerging challenges. Additional principles included operational independence, accountability, integrity, transparency, access to justice for all, and the provision of effective and efficient public service. Addressing historical abuses, establishing sound budgeting practices, and forming independent oversight bodies were also

deemed critical to her.

Focusing on operational independence, Ms Giudice stressed that police must maintain professionalism and insulation from political influence, act in accordance with law and policy, and be guided by public consent, as measured through public confidence. Furthermore, law enforcement agencies must accept responsibility and liability for their actions and ensure full transparency and openness to external scrutiny in all operations. These principles, she argued, are vital to achieving democratic and accountable policing systems.

In her discussion on legitimacy of police, Ms Anna Giudice emphasised that legitimacy is fundamentally rooted in the public's belief that the police are moral, just, and proper. She highlighted that police officers who operate under legitimate authority are seen by the public as being morally entitled to enforce the law, make decisions, and expect compliance with rules and directives. To maintain and strengthen this legitimacy, Ms Giudice underlined four basic legitimization expectations: effectiveness, lawfulness, distributive justice, and procedural justice.



Focusing on procedural justice, she cited a comparative review of 30 studies conducted in the United States, Australia, and England, which explored police interactions that employed procedurally just dialogue. The findings identified four key elements contributing to positive public perceptions: enabling citizen participation before authorities reach a decision (known as ‘voice’), perceived neutrality of the authority, treating citizens with dignity and respect throughout the interaction, and ensuring that authorities convey trustworthy motives. She then raised critical questions regarding the attributes of police officers, asking what competencies and personal qualities are truly valued in policing with integrity. She questioned

whether existing human resource processes are aligned with these expectations and whether current workplace practices effectively support and reinforce the desired values, skills, and behaviours essential for a just and accountable police force.

In concluding her presentation, Ms Giudice offered several important recommendations concerning the development and utilisation of handbooks and training tools relevant to modern policing practices. She emphasised that these tools should be comprehensive, context-specific, and grounded in international standards of human rights and professional conduct. Among the key resources she suggested for inclusion in training curricula were the Criminal Justice Assessment Toolkit, specifically its modules on policing, and the Education for Justice Modules, which promote rule-of-law education. She also highlighted the Handbook on Police Accountability, Oversight and Integrity as a crucial resource for fostering institutional transparency. Further, she referenced the UNODC/OHCHR Resource Book on the Use of Force and Firearms in Law Enforcement, which guides law enforcement officials on proportionate use of force. In contexts of public assembly, she recommended the Model Protocol for Law Enforcement Officials to Promote and Protect Human Rights in the Context of Peaceful Protests, along with a forthcoming handbook and guidance on the responsible use of technology. She also drew attention to the Joint Police Resource Toolkit, developed with the Convention Against Torture Initiative (CTI), and the UN Manual on Investigative Interviewing for Criminal Investigation, both of which aim to ensure ethical and effective police procedures. These tools, she asserted, are vital in professionalising law enforcement and aligning practices with global standards.



Presentation by National Expert



Motiar Rahman

*Former Deputy Inspector General (DIG)
Bangladesh Police*

Mr Motiar Rahman began his speech by noting that many important aspects were highlighted in the seminar, including professionalisation, operational independence, and community engagement. He observed that senior police officials have reservations about amending the Police Act and many are in favour of the 1861 Act. He concentrated on various legal aspects of police reform since laws govern police activities and services.

Mr Rahman underscored the lack of necessary regulations for police. He noted that Bangladesh has eight metropolitan police units. Among them, only the Dhaka municipal police force is governed by regulations established by ordinance, while the other units are in need of additional regulations. These units currently lack comprehensive guidelines. It appears that officers in these units, including the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and Armed Police Battalion (APBN), operate without a clear understanding of basic principles of justice. He expressed that law enforcement in Bangladesh is mainly reactive and lacks a well-defined strategy. He further commented that policing has always been a challenging task in Bangladesh and the absence of statutory protocols makes the task more difficult. Therefore, procedures like the use of force are not properly managed. Since the Police Act does not apply to all metropolitan police units, he called for urgent formulation of new rules or regulations to guide police activities across all units, including the elite forces, such as RAB and APBN. He also suggested conducting research on professionalism in the police force, especially regarding recruitment, training, and transfers, to prevent political interference that hampers the service to the people.



Mr Rahman then delved into the issue of career progression. He noted that so far this progression has been conducted selectively, without proper regard for merit and performance. He stressed on addressing this issue with a view to ensure professionalism in the police. He also talked about the transparency of police activities observing that transparency has become even more vital in this digital era. For example, if there is an opportunity to submit a General Diary (GD) online, then someone can track its progress or disposal via an online dashboard. Noting that police independence has been a matter of debate and discussion, he advocated for legal safeguards against political interference. He added that legislative measures should be enacted in such a way that none can interfere with police operations.

Finally, he highlighted the importance of community engagement. He regretted that this aspect is not included in the training curriculum of police academies and training institutes. He emphasised on community engagement for effectively reaching the public and stressed that such engagement should be inclusive and free of political interference. He then put forward several recommendations. He suggested undertaking research to identify emerging challenges and find potential solutions. Additionally, Bangladesh Police needs to emphasise capacity building to improve its efficiency in using modern technologies. He also stressed on gaining financial autonomy and enhancing logistical support. Another key highlighted by him was technological integration, especially the dashboard for public access. He also suggested establishing a dedicated training monitoring cell to conduct timely training needs assessments (TNA) and to identify new issues and challenges to include in the training curriculum. He expressed that an independent oversight mechanism should be established to monitor police activities by concerned authorities, including the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). Finally, he called for forming an independent oversight body that can shield the police officers from political interference.

Presentation by International Expert



Rachid Habchi and Rogier Donk

Experts from the Netherlands

Peer-to-Peer Diversity Network

National Police of the Netherlands

Mr Rachid Habchi and **Mr Rogier Donk** delivered a comprehensive presentation on the evolution and practices of the Dutch Police, emphasising their commitment to building strong connections with society. They began by outlining the historical development of community policing in the Netherlands. Initially, in the post-World War

II period of the 1950s and 1960s, the Dutch police primarily operated as a repressive force, focused on enforcing laws, maintaining control, and preserving public order. However, during the 1960s and 1970s, Dutch society experienced significant liberalisation and secularisation, accompanied by a surge in public protests. The police responded with force, leading to frequent riots and deepening mistrust between the police and the public. As the police was increasingly viewed as an adversary rather than a protector, their ability to adapt to the rapidly changing societal dynamics diminished.

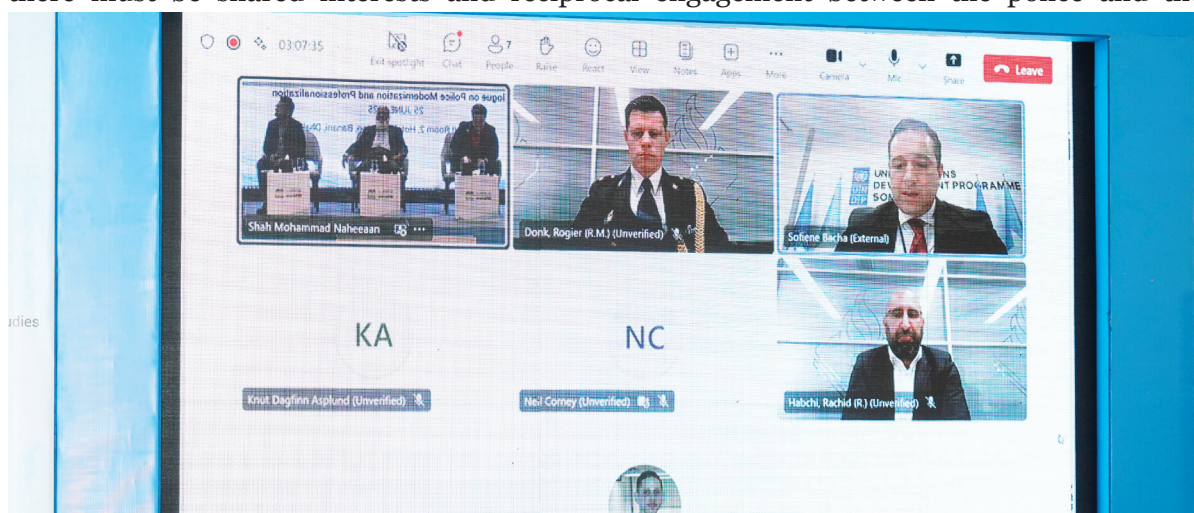
This tension intensified in the 1970s and 1980s with growing economic crises, housing shortages, and widespread squatter riots, particularly in urban areas like Amsterdam. The escalation of drug and property related crimes further challenged the police's capacity to maintain order. Simultaneously, the influx of new migrant communities through family reunification revealed the police's limitations in engaging with diverse cultural groups in a sensitive and inclusive manner. A pivotal moment came in 1976 with the publication of the national report titled "Police in Transition", which called for a paradigm shift toward community policing. Inspired by similar movements in the United States, such as "policing by consent", the Dutch police began transforming into a force that is adaptive, sensitive, and integrated within society. Mr Habchi and Mr Donk highlighted two key initiatives in this transformation: the Social Allies Method, which fosters trust through community networks, and the Peer-to-Peer Diversity Network, an internal initiative that leverages cultural, religious, and lifestyle expertise to promote inclusivity and mutual understanding within the force. These models represent the Dutch police's broader vision of aligning with societal change and ensuring community-oriented, culturally competent policing.

Mr Habchi and Mr Donk elaborated on three general policing strategies and their evolution, particularly highlighting their significance in the Dutch context. The first strategy, Traditional or Responsive Policing, follows a reactive model similar to the 9-1-1 style, where law enforcement primarily responds to criminal acts after they have occurred. The second approach is Problem-Oriented Policing, which is more proactive and relies on analysis to address underlying issues but typically has limited direct engagement with communities.

The third and most transformative strategy is Community-Oriented Policing, which adopts a co-active and collaborative approach. This strategy emphasises building real, sustained relationships between the police and the community members they serve. In the Netherlands, this third model gained particular relevance in preventing radicalisation and fostering trust among culturally diverse populations.

Furthermore, Mr Habchi and Mr Donk explained that starting in the 1990s, various police units began experimenting with community policing and civil participation initiatives. These early efforts gradually gained momentum and were eventually formalised into national police policy. A landmark development occurred in 2013, when community-oriented policing became enshrined in Dutch law. This legislation mandated the decentralisation of police services and introduced a requirement that each group of 5,000 citizens must be assigned a dedicated community police officer. This structural and legal embedding of community policing has since ensured that the approach remains resilient to shifts in political priorities and continues to play a central role in maintaining public trust, social cohesion, and local safety across the Netherlands.

In their detailed deliberation, Mr Rachid Habchi and Mr Rogier Donk emphasised the preconditions of civil participation as a foundational element for effective and inclusive policing. They explained that for civil participation to take root and yield meaningful results, there must be shared interests and reciprocal engagement between the police and the



community. Key prerequisites include initiating genuine dialogue and building mutual trust—terms that, while often invoked, require deep practical understanding and implementation.

They raised several critical questions to ground these concepts: How is such engagement implemented in practice? How does one identify influential and willing community figures? How can trust be organised practically? And how is the quality of this engagement evaluated? These questions underline the complexity of fostering sustainable civil participation. To address these challenges, Mr Habchi and Mr Donk introduced two pioneering initiatives: the Social Allies Methodology and the Peer-to-Peer Diversity Network (P2PDN), both of which aim to bridge gaps between the police and society. Before delving into the specifics of these methodologies, they gave an overview of the organisational structure of the Dutch police, which is nationally organised with approximately 70,000 officers across 10 units. They used the example of the Middle Netherlands unit, which contains five districts, each with multiple

teams. For instance, a district such as Utrecht may have around 1,000 officers while each team has about 200 officers, thereby establishing the operational scale on which such community-engagement strategies are implemented.

Following this structural context, Mr Habchi and Mr Donk elaborated on the Social Allies and Peer-to-Peer Diversity Network as two national programmes designed to reinforce trust between the police and society. The Social Allies Method is a structured community policing framework grounded in shared values and consistent dialogue. Its goal is to proactively build relationships in stable times, thereby strengthening resilience and trust in periods of social tension or unrest. While community police officers engage directly with individuals on an operational level, Social Allies convene in group settings five to six times per year at both tactical and strategic levels. These groups include police chiefs who serve as representatives or ‘social allies’ on behalf of the institution. During these sessions, police and community stakeholders discuss mutual concerns, public safety, and seek collaborative approaches with municipal authorities, reinforcing the legitimacy of the police through “policing by consent.” In parallel, the Peer-to-Peer Diversity Network (P2PDN) functions internally within the Dutch police, comprising over 1,000 officers with deep knowledge of diverse cultures, religions, and lifestyles. These officers bring what Mr Habchi and Mr Donk termed “golden skills,” offering insights into unwritten social norms and culturally sensitive conflict resolution strategies. By sharing these insights across units, officers help de-escalate complex situations and promote mutual understanding. Collectively, these two programmes illustrate the Dutch model of inclusive and participatory policing—one that combines strategic planning, cultural sensitivity, and operational cooperation to build a police force that reflects and serves the full spectrum of its society.

Mr Rachid Habchi and Mr Rogier Donk provided a detailed overview of the practical application of the Social Allies methodology, emphasising its structured and systematic nature. They explained that the foundation of the methodology is built upon clear definitions and classifications within the community. Alongside professional stakeholders, the framework identifies three key categories of individuals—role models, key figures, and allies. Each of these categories is defined by specific criteria that help in assessing their influence and engagement potential. The most critical among them is the ‘ally’, considered the most trustworthy individual. An ally is defined as someone who has a substantial influence over a specific group and remains a constructive, critical friend of the police during times of tension or unrest. This ability to stand by the police, even in moments of social strain, is essential for building durable trust and effective collaboration. The implementation of the Social Allies methodology follows a six-step process, each carried out meticulously to prevent jeopardising the often-delicate relationship between the police and the community. A central component of this process is the use of the DESTEP method for mapping communities, which includes analysis of Demographic, Economic, Social, Technological, Ecological, and Political/legal dimensions. This multi-layered assessment enables the police to gain a comprehensive understanding of the region, thereby identifying hidden community dynamics and ensuring strategic engagement that is informed and inclusive.

In their presentation, Mr Habchi and Mr Donk underscored that leadership in this process is taken by a commander operating at a tactical or strategic level. However, due to the likelihood of blind spots in perception and understanding, it is essential to involve operational community officers, municipal authorities, and eventually, other identified social allies in the identification process. Once the DESTEP analysis is complete, the next step involves evaluating

safety statistics, aligning with local priorities, and determining the feasibility of operational support and engagement. This ensures that the community policing strategy is not only inclusive but also contextually grounded and manageable. The DESTEP framework thus serves as a broad lens through which meaningful actors—whether they are role models, key figures, or potential social allies—are identified. In certain sectors, such as political or personal domains, existing tensions may initially hinder the identification of social allies, and in such cases, the process begins with establishing connections with recognised and respected role models. Over time, as mutual trust and collaboration deepen, these relationships can mature into sustained partnerships. This phased and deliberate approach ensures that implementation is carried out with a high degree



of cultural sensitivity, operational feasibility, and strategic foresight. Ultimately, the careful and respectful execution of the Social Allies methodology not only strengthens community trust but also reinforces the legitimacy and effectiveness of law enforcement by making them an integrated and empathetic component of the communities they serve.

In concluding their presentation, Mr Rachid Habchi and Mr Rogier Donk emphasised two mutually reinforcing approaches that have become foundational to the community policing model of the National Dutch Police. The first, the Social Allies methodology, is a structured and strategic approach to identify and engage trusted individuals within communities. It is built on the principle of cultivating resilient and sustainable partnerships grounded in mutual trust, enabling the police to work collaboratively with community stakeholders—even during periods of social tension or unrest. The second approach, the Peer-to-Peer Diversity Network, functions internally within the police organisation. This network, comprising over 1,000 officers with specialised knowledge in culture, religion, and lifestyle, fosters internal cultural sensitivity and awareness. It enables officers to respond more effectively and empathetically in both routine operations and high-stress or exceptional circumstances. These two initiatives—external engagement through Social Allies and internal inclusivity through the Diversity Network—are now established as the standard for community policing in the Netherlands. Together, they exemplify a holistic model that places emphasis on trust, reciprocity, and meaningful relationships as the cornerstone of effective, democratic policing.

Presentation by International Expert



Sofiène Bacha

*Policy Analyst, Security and Rule of Law
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Headquarters*

Mr Sofiène Bacha provided practical examples of police reform in addition to those shared by his international colleagues from the Netherlands, building upon the valuable insights previously presented by Ms Anna Giudice from UNODC Headquarters in Vienna and Mr Motiar Rahman, former DIG of Bangladesh Police. His presentation focused on how organisations can support transformative initiatives whilst sharing experiences from the field. He began with conceptual frameworks, moving to concrete examples and tools for improving policing service delivery, including the

UNDP-referred Excellence in Police Function model and the Model Police Station framework.

He grounded his deliberation in the concept of people-centred security, which originated from human security principles. He explained that human security broadened traditional security concepts by identifying seven key threats: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political insecurities. This framework, he noted, moves beyond the traditional “freedom from fear” approach of hard security to include “freedom from want”, thereby integrating security and development perspectives and offering a comprehensive framework for understanding local security perceptions.

However, Mr Bacha acknowledged that this approach has faced criticism for being overly idealistic, problematically vague, and inadequate for addressing security crises. He explained that the people-centred approach to security evolved as a response to these concerns. Whilst not an entirely new concept, he noted that it has gained prominence as a refined version of human security with reduced scope and stronger analysis of the state’s role. The people-centred security approach, he explained, aims to balance state involvement with community engagement, fostering a complementary relationship rather than prioritising people over the state. This approach combines top-down state initiatives with bottom-up community-driven solutions.

He proceeded to share examples of transformative policing initiatives, beginning with community policing programmes implemented in conflict and post-conflict settings including South Sudan, Tunisia, and Lebanon. In South Sudan, he described how Police Community Relations Committees had been established to foster dialogue and address gender-based violence amongst other community problems. In Tunisia, he explained that local security committees and modern police stations had been established in sixteen districts,

becoming completely embedded in national policies. These initiatives included accountability mechanisms and case management systems within the modern police stations. Regarding Lebanon, he outlined how UNDP had worked to transform municipal police services in over 200 vulnerable communities into more human rights-centred services, connecting communities and vulnerable groups with police to improve security and access to justice whilst enhancing service delivery.

Addressing gender-responsive policing as an element of police inclusivity, Mr Bacha highlighted several examples. In Pakistan, women-responsive desks have been established at police stations. In the Central African Republic, a specialised police unit was created to investigate sexual violence. He also described the capacity-building initiatives for police officers in the Democratic Republic of Congo aimed at addressing gender-based violence investigations, improving response strategies and enhancing traditional policing approaches to reduce victimisation.

Mr Bacha went on to highlight the importance of data in modern policing, referencing monitoring and evaluation frameworks and new approaches to crime prevention. He cited the example of El Salvador, where UNDP utilised regional programmes to reduce violence in Latin America through initiatives such as “Infosegura” and “CariSECURE”. Evidence-based information from the Seguro Plan helped align resources for violence prevention in vulnerable areas, with the National Council for Citizen Security collaborating with municipal police to implement security strategies effectively across fifty municipalities.

On digitalisation, he explained how the digitalisation of police services could improve service delivery and resource optimisation. He highlighted the Police Records Management Information System (PRMIS), a case management system implemented in several countries as a public good designed for broader implementation. PRMIS supports evidence-based decision-making by allowing officers to log and exchange critical information efficiently. He noted that UNDP had developed several digital tools that could be valuable for police modernisation efforts.

Mr Bacha then introduced UNDP’s Excellence in Police Function model, which he described as a framework for modernising police services. He explained that this model requires organisations to question the fundamental purpose of police, define high-performance indicators, develop strategies to achieve optimal service delivery, and establish current and future goals. The model, he explained, is conceptualised as a house structure with society’s comprehensive security as the ultimate goal represented by the roof. The foundation consists of three pillars: community policing, intelligence-led policing, and optimal management, which involves achieving maximum efficiency and impact with available resources.

He further explained that the framework incorporates quality assurance models, such as the European Foundation of Quality Management, which has been adopted worldwide by police forces including Abu Dhabi Police and Belgian Federal Police. This quality model ensures incorporation of all professionalisation elements, including leadership development, process improvement, and stakeholder engagement with prosecutors, judges, and other relevant actors. The model operates through a management cycle based on the Plan-Do-Check-Act methodology, evolving from activity-based operations through process, system, and change phases to achieve transformation. Mr Bacha emphasised that police services must

be capable of transformation to remain responsive to changing contexts, providing holistic responses as part of a broader ecosystem including other government departments, civil society, media, and community stakeholders.

He concluded by presenting the Model Police Station as a practical implementation tool used in various countries, including Bangladesh. This methodology focuses on improving managed service delivery using effective tools in police transition contexts whilst aligning with international standards. The approach typically begins with pilot implementations in selected areas before expanding to broader geographical coverage and eventually becoming integrated within national police procedures. The Model Police Station framework includes streamlined operational procedures, capacity-building programmes, community engagement measures, promotion of gender equality, post-conflict rehabilitation work, and organisational transformation. He emphasised that community policing encompasses not only relationship-building but also enhanced service delivery, which is crucial for building community trust. He further emphasised that enhancing service delivery in policing aims to improve effectiveness, community engagement, and inclusivity. He concluded by saying that by focusing on these key areas, police services can contribute to creating safer and more resilient communities, ultimately supporting broader security and development objectives.

OPEN DISCUSSION



Nurul Huda

*Former Inspector General
Bangladesh Police*

Mr Nurul Huda asked about the difference between a model police station and a traditional police station.

Responding online, Mr Sofiène Bacha explained that a model police station should not be perceived merely as a facility with advanced equipment or fancy vehicles. Instead, it represents a shift in approach and mindset. He emphasised that a model police station is citizen-centred, creating an environment where people feel safe and comfortable to express concerns or lodge complaints. It should also focus on proactive and preventive policing rather than only reacting to incidents after they occur.

Mr Bacha further highlighted that such stations must be inclusive and gender-responsive, ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities and providing a supportive environment for both citizens and police officers. He underlined that quality services depend on the quality of life and working conditions provided to the officers themselves. In conclusion, he reiterated that the concept of a model police station goes beyond infrastructure, it embodies a holistic, rights-based approach to policing that serves both the community and police personnel effectively.

Mohammad Iqbal

Member

Police Reform Commission

Mr Mohammad Iqbal asked whether rising right-wing extremism has affected the maintenance of order in the Netherlands and, if so, how it has been addressed.

Responding online, Mr Rachid Habchi from the Peer-to-Peer Diversity Network of the National Police of the Netherlands acknowledged that right-wing extremism has indeed impacted many communities, particularly religious and Muslim communities. He explained that the police, together with social allies, have worked to build trust-



based relationships that enable open dialogue about tensions and incidents arising from extremist rhetoric or actions. Mr Habchi emphasised that such engagement has been crucial in understanding the impact of right-wing narratives and in developing strategies to ease community tensions. He noted the importance of maintaining police neutrality despite diverse political opinions within society and even within the police force itself. Internally, discussions are encouraged, but externally, officers are expected to act impartially and respectfully towards all communities. He concluded by underscoring the need for appropriate language and constructive communication as essential tools for addressing such sensitive issues and maintaining public trust.



Md Mahbubul Karim

*Additional DIG
Bangladesh Police*

Md Mahbubul Karim referred to one of the speakers' statement that in the Netherlands there is one community officer for every 5,000 people. He inquired whether these community police officers are also engaged in duties such as investigation, protocol, protection, and public order management, or whether their role is exclusively focused on community policing.

Responding to his question, Mr Habchi explained that there is often a distinction between what is written in policy documents and what occurs in practice. According to policy, 70 per cent of a community officer's duties are intended to be focused

on community policing. However, due to capacity constraints in certain areas, this ratio often shifts. In some cases, approximately 50 per cent of an officer's time is dedicated to community policing, while the remaining 50 per cent is spent on general police work, including street patrols and neighbourhood investigations. This division is considered beneficial, as it keeps community officers integrated with the broader police force, allowing them to build long-term trust with the community without becoming isolated from other policing functions. The balance between community work and traditional duties is seen as practical and necessary for maintaining credibility and connection with both the public and fellow officers.



Shah Mohammad Naheean

*National Programme Coordinator
UNODC Bangladesh*

Mr Shah Mohammad Naheean pointed out that, given Bangladesh's population, a ratio of one community officer per 5,000 people would require approximately 360,000 officers, while the current total police force is only 203,000. He asked how such a gap might be addressed when comparing Bangladesh to the Netherlands.

In response, **Mr Sofiène Bacha** acknowledged that the numbers and context in Bangladesh would necessarily differ from those in the Netherlands. He emphasised the importance of adapting community policing to local realities. Rather than replicating a specific ratio, the speaker advised focusing on developing an approach that works within Bangladesh's institutional and resource constraints. He stressed that community policing should be understood as a philosophy to be embedded across the entire police force, not as a separate or parallel structure. Every police officer, regardless of designation, should adopt a community-oriented mindset, aimed at both identifying and resolving problems.

He further stated that transparency, accountability, and empowerment of citizens are key elements of this philosophy. The goal should be to build genuine partnerships with communities, treating the public not as passive recipients but as equal partners. The speaker warned against the creation of separate community policing units, citing examples where such approaches have failed. Instead, he recommended integrating community-oriented principles throughout all levels and roles within the police force.

Finally, he emphasised the importance of internal transparency and understanding within the police institution. Officers should be aware of how their own organisations function and how communities operate, so they can effectively embody and implement the philosophy of community policing in their daily work. This holistic and inclusive approach, according to him, is essential for sustainable community engagement.

Roundtable 2: Promoting a Human Rights-Based Approach to the Use of Force and Firearms—Effective and Evidence-Based Investigations and Interviewing Approaches

Presentation by UNODC Expert



Anna Giudice

Team Leader, Access to Justice
UNODC Headquarters, Vienna

Ms Anna Giudice delivered an insightful presentation focused on two interrelated themes: the international human rights standards governing the use of force and firearms by law enforcement, and the promotion of ethical, evidence-based approaches to investigative interviewing. She began by drawing attention to the foundational international instrument in this field—the 1990 Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, which continue to serve as the global normative standard. These principles provide detailed guidance on lawful, proportionate, and accountable use of force by police and security forces. She noted that while these guidelines initially emphasised firearms and so-called ‘non-lethal’ weapons, a growing body of evidence has demonstrated that many such tools—once considered harmless—can, in fact, cause serious injury or death. As a result, there has been a conceptual and linguistic shift toward the term “ ” to more accurately reflect their potential consequences.

To complement the 1990 principles, Ms Giudice pointed to further guidance developed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), especially in regulating the use of less-lethal weapons and equipment. However, for the purposes of her presentation and due to time limitations, she focused primarily on the Basic Principles themselves, noting that other technical elements—including specific weapons and tactical options—would be addressed by other experts during the session.

She elaborated on General Provision 1 of the 1990 principles, which mandates that governments must adopt and implement national laws and regulations on the use of force

and firearms that align with international standards. Ms Giudice expressed concern that in some jurisdictions—including the context under discussion—there remain discrepancies in the applicability of such laws across different branches of the police. She shared examples of collaborative work by the UNODC and the OHCHR with governments in Thailand and Ecuador, where recent reforms had led to the adoption of new laws and policies, as well as targeted training for law enforcement to align practice with international norms.

Turning to General Provision 2, she highlighted the importance of equipping law enforcement officials with a range of tools that permit graduated responses—allowing them to adapt their use of force to specific situations, rather than relying solely on firearms. This provision supports the principle of differentiated force, which enables officers to respond proportionately to the level of threat. Ms Giudice then highlighted General Provision 4, which codifies the obligation to exhaust all non-violent means before using force. If the use of force becomes unavoidable, officers must act with restraint and in proportion to the seriousness of the offense. In line with General Provision 5, when force is used lawfully, officers are required to minimise harm, respect and preserve life, provide prompt medical assistance to those injured, and notify their families as early as possible.



She argued that a critical component of accountability was addressed under General Provision 7, which requires that arbitrary or abusive use of force must be punished as a criminal offence under national law. Ms Giudice stated unequivocally that impunity for law enforcement abuses is not compatible with human rights norms and should be addressed through legal and institutional reforms. She also discussed Special Provision 9, which outlines the conditions under which firearms may be used. These are limited to situations

of self-defense or defense of others against imminent threats of death or serious injury, or to prevent a serious crime posing grave threat to life. Importantly, she cautioned that even if a person commits a criminal offense—such as theft—this does not in itself justify the use of firearms unless the threat to life is immediate and unavoidable. Symbolic or politically charged offenses, such as breaching government buildings, do not in themselves meet the threshold for lethal force unless they directly endanger lives.

Beyond the use of firearms, Ms Giudice underscored the growing relevance of police obligations during public assemblies. She reiterated that peaceful protests are a legitimate exercise of human rights and that excessive or unlawful use of force in this context may constitute torture or violations of the right to life. She identified six key principles underpinning modern international standards on use of force and firearms: legality, necessity, proportionality, non-discrimination, precaution, and accountability. To support implementation, she referenced a range of the UNODC tools and resources, including training modules and guidance documents developed in partnership with OHCHR and the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Peaceful Assembly and Association. These tools assist governments and police agencies in operationalising rights-based approaches.

In the second half of her presentation, Ms Giudice addressed the issue of interrogations and investigative practices, highlighting widespread concerns about the persistence of torture and ill-treatment during custodial interrogations. Such practices, she warned, not only violate fundamental human rights but also undermine the integrity of criminal justice systems by generating unreliable confessions and distorting the truth-seeking function of investigations.

As a constructive alternative, she advocated for rapport-based investigative interviewing, which has gained increasing empirical support as the most effective, ethical, and reliable method of questioning suspects, witnesses, and victims. This method aligns with both international human rights obligations and good policing practice. She emphasised that rapport-based interviewing enhances the quality of information gathered, strengthens fair trial guarantees, and contributes to more successful prosecutions.

Ms Giudice introduced several training and capacity-building initiatives led by UNODC and its partners, including the UN Manual on Investigative Interviewing for Criminal Investigations, which is aligned with the Mexico City Principles on Effective Interviewing. She also highlighted a self-paced e-learning course, available in multiple languages, that delivers interactive content on ethical interviewing techniques, human memory, communication, and decision-making. This course, she noted, is accessible free of charge and is suitable for integration into both basic police training and specialised curricula.

In closing, Ms Giudice reaffirmed the UNODC's commitment to working with national authorities, including those in Bangladesh, to strengthen criminal justice institutions in line with international standards. She stressed that ensuring accountable, lawful, and ethical policing practices is not only a matter of rights protection but also essential for building public trust, legitimacy, and sustainable peace.

Presentation by National Expert



S M Ruhul Amin

Former Additional Inspector General
Bangladesh Police

S M Ruhul Amin observed that the Police Reform Commission had given considerable emphasis on the issue of the use of force and firearms. Referring to incidents that occurred around July-August 2024, he remarked that the excessive use of force by law enforcement entities during that period might have influenced the perspectives of the experts involved in preparing the report. He acknowledged that the report aligned with international standards, particularly those set by the United Nations.

He noted that the report recommended a five-tiered framework for the use of force. This framework corresponded with Ms Anna's earlier remarks regarding a graduated regulatory approach to unlawful assemblies, starting from minimal interventions and escalating gradually. According to Mr Amin, this progression begins with hard presence and demonstration of force, followed by the use of gas sprays and other chemical irritants. He further stated that the report referenced key UN principles, including proportionality, legality, accountability, and necessity. He appreciated that these values were included and emphasised within the report, along with a focus on negotiation, evidence-based direction, and methods of crisis escalation and de-escalation. These elements, in his view, were commendable and could serve as strong standards for addressing unfortunate incidents.

However, Mr Amin emphasised that clear recommendations alone would not ensure results. He stressed that law enforcement agencies cannot function effectively based solely on international norms unless national laws and regulations are also updated. In this context, he suggested that the Bengal Police Regulations, particularly rules 153 to 155 and Sections 127 to 132, should be amended along with the Police Act. He argued that the recommendations would remain theoretical and ineffective without such reforms.

Turning to his second point, Mr Amin addressed the topics of investigation and intervention. He expressed concern that this critical area received little attention in the report. Although extra-judicial killings, police torture, unlawful arrests (particularly under Section 24), and corruption were discussed, the report offered minimal substantive recommendations on investigation procedures. It did refer to directives from the Appellate Division and included a chapter on capacity building within the police, but it failed to prioritise prudent or effective investigative practices aside from recommending the inclusion of a legal expert within a specific unit.

Mr Amin noted that the report did advocate for expanding and modernising The Criminal Investigation Department (CID)’s forensic laboratories, which could indirectly contribute to more evidence-based investigations. He explained that police investigators work with two types of evidence: physical and oral. While physical evidence, such as blood, semen, hair, or metals is generally concrete and unchangeable, oral evidence is often variable and unreliable. Drawing comparisons with investigative practices in the United States, China, and Japan, he pointed out that a large portion of investigations in those countries is completed before formal interrogation begins. In contrast, Bangladeshi investigations rely heavily on oral statements, resulting in a lack of objectivity, efficiency, and neutrality. He called for a shift in investigative mindset, supported by proper equipment and facilities; something the report had failed to address adequately.

Moving on to general observations, Mr Amin praised the work of the Police Reform Commission, particularly its effort to gather public opinion from 25,000 respondents. In response to the question in Bangla “*Kemon police dekhte chai?*” (Which police do we want to see?), 99 per cent of participants expressed the desire for a police force free from political influence. To address this issue, 60 per cent of respondents recommended the creation of an independent police commission—a suggestion that was also included in the Commission’s final recommendations. However, he pointed out that the concerned ministry, Ministry of Home Affairs, did not agree with this proposal, raising concerns about the feasibility of implementing such reforms.



Presentation by International Expert



Knut D Asplund

Project Manager

Norwegian Centre for Human Rights

Mr Knut D Asplund delivered a thought-provoking presentation on the topic of investigative interviewing—a rights-based, scientifically grounded method of police interviewing that offers a viable alternative to confession-driven interrogation. He began by noting a fundamental truth observed across jurisdictions: meaningful reform in policing practices often emerges only in the aftermath of crisis. This pattern is reflected in several high-profile miscarriages of justice, particularly in the United Kingdom, where the wrongful convictions of the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six in connection with the Northern Ireland conflict drew

public attention to the coercive interrogation practices that contributed to these failures. These scandals catalysed broad reform efforts, leading to the development of investigative interviewing techniques that have since gained global traction.

According to Mr Asplund, investigative interviewing is not merely a procedural adaptation, but a paradigm shift in how law enforcement engages with suspects, witnesses, and victims. At its core, this methodology is rooted in human rights standards and scientific research, particularly from the fields of cognitive psychology and memory science. The technique is both effective and non-coercive, prioritising the gathering of accurate and reliable information over the extraction of confessions. He referenced the work of Professor Juan E Mendez, former UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, who identified custodial interrogation as the most frequent setting for torture and coercion in criminal justice systems. It is precisely this context that investigative interviewing seeks to transform. The approach is described in depth in the UN Manual on Investigative Interviewing and the Mendez Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering, which together offer comprehensive guidance on replacing manipulative and abusive methods with transparent and ethical practices.

Mr Asplund elaborated on the methodological structure of investigative interviewing, explaining that it begins with thorough planning and preparation. Interviewers are expected to review all available case information in advance, establish working hypotheses, identify knowledge gaps, and determine the specific aims of the interview. This preparatory phase is essential for ensuring that the interview serves the broader investigative process. Once the interview begins, officers are trained to engage in rapport-building with the interviewee. This includes explaining the purpose of the interview, informing them of their legal rights, and providing a clear outline of how the session will proceed. Building trust and mutual

respect is not an ancillary step but rather a foundational element of effective information-gathering. A central feature of the interview is the opportunity given to the interviewee to provide a free and uninterrupted account of events. This narrative is elicited through open-ended questions and active listening, encouraging the subject to describe incidents in their own words. Interviewers are cautioned against introducing evidence prematurely or asking leading questions, as doing so can distort memory and influence responses. Subsequently, the interviewer may return to specific topics, introduce relevant evidence, and ask for clarification of inconsistencies. However, this phase is conducted in a manner that avoids confrontation or “gotcha” tactics. The goal is not to trap or provoke the interviewee, but to build a coherent and truthful account through respectful inquiry. The interview concludes with a summary of findings, clarification of any misunderstandings, and documentation of key information. Interviewers are also encouraged to evaluate the reliability and relevance of the information obtained, and to reflect critically on their own performance for continuous improvement.

Mr Asplund noted that despite the proven advantages of investigative interviewing, it remains underrepresented in global police training. He observed that many police academies dedicate substantial time to physical training and firearms proficiency, yet neglect instruction in communication or interviewing techniques. When such training does occur, it is often informally passed down through hierarchical mentorship, leading to the reproduction of outdated or coercive practices. In some cases, police officers have even reported beginning interviews without knowing the details of the case, revealing a profound lack of integration between investigation planning and interviewing strategy.

In contrast, investigative interviewing requires a professional and evidence-oriented mindset. It treats interviewing not as an art of intimidation, but as a structured, case-specific process grounded in planning, methodology, and ethical responsibility. Mr Asplund shared that in jurisdictions where this approach has been adopted, the results have been transformative. For example, in Brazil, over 14,000 police officers have received training in investigative interviewing since 2017. Despite facing one of the world’s highest homicide rates, many police academies in Brazil now incorporate this approach into their standard curriculum. A senior police director there remarked that the training fundamentally changed his understanding of his role—noting that he had previously focused on detecting lies through body language, but now realised that genuine listening produced more accurate and actionable insights.

Mr Asplund emphasised that the transition from confession-seeking to information-seeking represents a fundamental improvement in both the quality of investigations and the protection of human rights. Investigative interviewing does not merely help avoid torture—it strengthens the credibility and reliability of the criminal justice system as a whole. Reliable oral evidence becomes the cornerstone of fact-finding, and the interview becomes an integrated step within the larger investigation rather than an isolated or improvised encounter. He introduced a range of freely available training and capacity-building resources developed through the United Nations and the Convention Against Torture Initiative. These include the UN Manual on Investigative Interviewing, the Mendez Principles, and a suite of online e-learning modules covering subjects such as human memory, communication, decision-making, and case management. These self-paced, modular resources are accessible globally and adaptable for use in basic police training, specialised instruction, and professional development programmes. Mr Asplund encouraged participants, especially those involved

in curriculum development and law enforcement reform, to explore and integrate these tools into national frameworks.

In concluding his remarks, Mr Asplund stressed that investigative interviewing is not simply a better way to conduct interviews—it is a gateway to institutional transformation, justice, and public trust. By embracing this approach, police agencies can strengthen accountability, ensure compliance with international human rights obligations, and improve investigative outcomes. He expressed hope that Bangladesh and other countries would benefit from integrating this model into their national policing systems, adapted to local contexts and reinforced through training, practice, and sustained political commitment.



Presentation by International Expert



Neil Corney

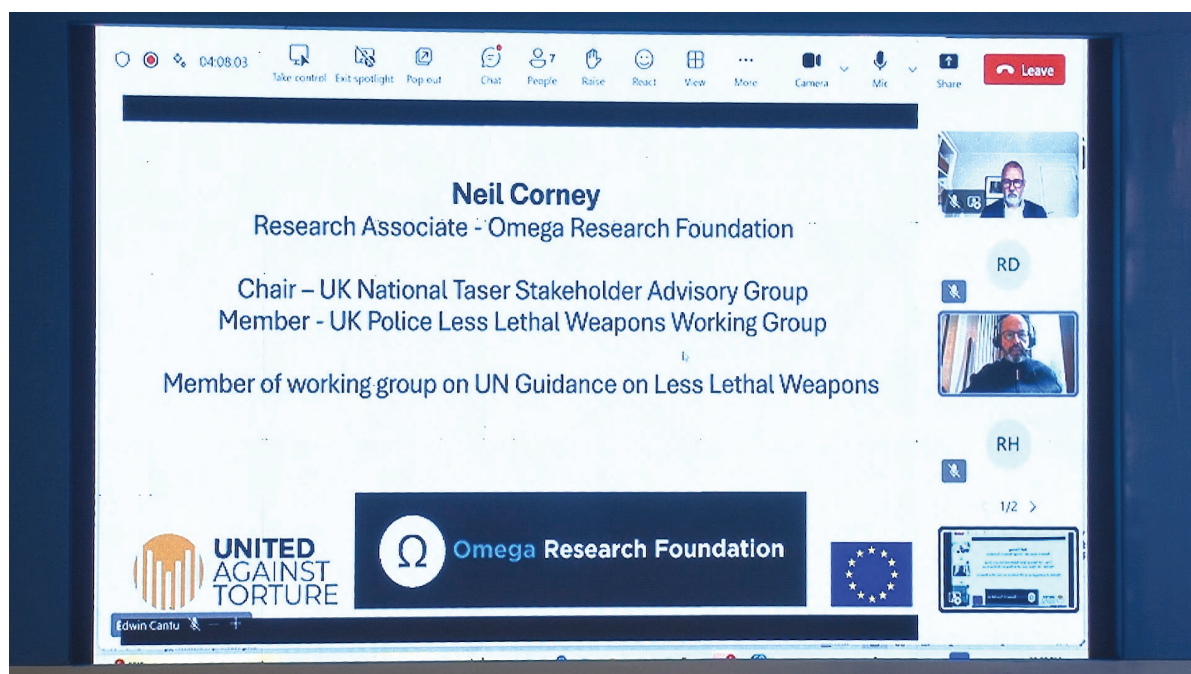
Omega Research Foundation

Mr Neil Corney said that he had been working on policing support for many years. Mentioning that he was the Chair of the UK's National Taser Stakeholder Advisory Group, he explained that the Taser is a conducted energy device used extensively by the police in the United Kingdom. He referenced his experience as a member of the UK Police's Less Lethal Weapons Working Group, which oversees the selection and testing of all less lethal tactical options for police in the UK. He added that he had also been part of the working group for the UN Guidance on Less Lethal Weapons and the Model Protocol that had already been mentioned.

Mr Corney highlighted some key aspects of police reform, drawing on experiences from the UK, Northern Ireland, and many other countries. He acknowledged the importance of building trust and confidence, both among police officers and the general public, as essential to securing the consent of the population for policing. When implemented properly, he explained, this process could lead to a reduction in the use of force by police officers and could enhance the legitimacy of policing as an institution.

He continued that when officers feel safe due to proper training, the use of protective equipment, and confidence in their skills, they are better positioned to deliver human rights-based policing. He asserted that good practice involves examining existing laws and policies, a point already raised by others, and emphasised the global relevance of this issue in police interactions. He stressed the importance of establishing a robust legal framework grounded in human rights. This, he said, could involve reforms to the basic law or secondary legislation. He argued that legal limitations on the use of force must be strictly defined through tightly drawn laws, as police officers' benefit from clarity in their duties. According to him, overly broad policies and guidance that permit wide latitude often led to negative outcomes. He insisted that procedures and guidance should reflect modern policing realities and be compliant with international policing standards.

Mr Corney noted that legislative changes that embed human rights-based approaches to policing are not only necessary but can also shield police institutions from political interference. He reminded the audience that the use of force by police is a highly public function, which could have immediate and long-lasting implications for how law enforcement agencies are perceived. He further cautioned that such use of force could result in injuries or even deaths when carried out unlawfully.



He referenced international standards, including the UN's Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms, and explained that more specific standards address the use of force, weapon deployment, and peaceful protest. He recommended the 2020 United Nations Guidance on the Use of Less Lethal Weapons as a key document for understanding police use of force, particularly regarding weapons and devices. He then mentioned the 2024 Model Protocol to Promote and Protect Human Rights in the Context of Peaceful Protests, which includes a practical checklist. He expressed hope that a handbook on implementation would be available by 2025.

At a practical level, Mr Corney explained that lawful use of force is based on core principles that had already been addressed in previous remarks, but he chose to focus specifically on the principle of precaution. He stated that this principle is often overlooked and refers to all measures taken before the use of force, especially concerning equipment. He elaborated that the principle of precaution includes actions such as the selection and testing of equipment to ensure that it is both safe and appropriate. He insisted that every officer using such equipment must be adequately trained, must meet a required standard, and must be retrained regularly to maintain competence. He stressed the importance of clear policies and guidance related to equipment use.

A key component of training, he added, is de-escalation and conflict resolution, though he observed that this aspect is frequently underemphasised in police training, including in the UK. He said that efforts were currently underway in the UK to enhance the level of de-escalation and negotiation training provided to police officers.

He also addressed the matter of appropriate police equipment, noting that from initial police-public contact, whether on the street or during house arrests, through to restraint and judicial processes such as custody hearings, there may be various uses of equipment, ranging from less lethal weapons to handcuffs. He asserted that certain types of equipment are widely

considered unsuitable for law enforcement and should be nationally prohibited. He referred to the UN guidance on weapons, which elaborates on this subject. As examples, he repeated previous points that the use of firearms to disperse an assembly is always unlawful, and that exploding munitions like stun grenades are inappropriate for crowd control, as they resemble military-grade grenades. He noted that there are very few of these devices that are actually safe for police use.

He highlighted the global context, in which there is currently an epidemic of eye injuries, and explained that the use of weapons which discharge multiple projectiles simultaneously are inherently inaccurate. As such, these weapons cannot comply with principles of necessity and proportionality, and should therefore not be used. He specifically pointed out that metal pellets, such as those used in shotguns, must never be used by law enforcement.

Turning to practical reforms, Mr Corney shared symbolic and practical recommendations. He mentioned that in Northern Ireland, the Royal Ulster Constabulary had been renamed the Police Service of Northern Ireland to signal a cultural and institutional shift. Multiple levels of oversight were introduced, including the establishment of an independent policing board. He noted that this board had a human rights adviser, Sir Keir Starmer, now the UK Prime Minister, who played a key role in those efforts. These reforms, he said, were steadily implemented over many years, covering issues of training, equipment, and protective gear.

He discussed the provision of full protective gear for officers dealing with large-scale public disorder, including fire-resistant equipment and fire extinguishers, to protect against threats such as fire bombs. He mentioned the concerted efforts to replace older plastic bullets with safer alternatives to minimise the risk of serious injury. He acknowledged that cultural change is ongoing and require continuity and commitment over many years, echoing earlier comments made by representatives from Argentina.

Mr Corney further emphasised the central role of accountability in this process, stating that officers must be held accountable both under the law and to the communities they serve. He insisted that officers should be aware that every use of force is scrutinised, and that any incident resulting in injury or death would warrant enhanced scrutiny. He highlighted the growing use of body-worn video cameras as a best practice in accountability, referencing their adoption in the UK, Brazil, and various other jurisdictions. He noted that the UK is currently moving towards a mandatory activation policy for these devices, which include a 30-second pre-recording function. In some places, such as São Paulo, Brazil, cameras are worn and active for the entire duration of a police officer's shift. However, he cautioned that there must be proper procedures for reviewing and analysing the footage if these technologies are to be effective.

Finally, Mr Corney acknowledged the substantial challenges surrounding the use of force and the selection of appropriate weapons. He shared his experience that police must remain open to challenge and scrutiny, stating that law enforcement alone does not have all the answers. He argued that input from external experts and a broad array of stakeholders is essential and must be processed transparently, with open communication and dialogue. In doing so, he believed, professional standards could be elevated, and both officer and public confidence could be increased.

OPEN DISCUSSION



Dr Md Nazmul Karim Khan

Commissioner

Gazipur Metropolitan Police (GMP)

Drawing upon his experience, **Dr Md Nazmul Karim Khan** emphasised the need to change the current approaches. He also drew attention to training curriculum and mentioned that several courses had been already incorporated though it needs to be revised frequently.

Referring to the July massacre, he remarked that it was essentially a political failure and emphasised that politics must be safeguarded from external influence and humiliation. He opined that if a study or survey is conducted regarding the Police Commission, almost all police members are likely to support its formation. Therefore, he suggested that

greater emphasis should be placed on their aspirations and expectations.

Mohammad Iqbal

Member

Police Reform Commission

Mr Mohammad Iqbal responded to some comments made by Mr Ruhul Amin. He drew Mr Amin's attention to pages 103 to 111 of the Police Reform Commission Report, where detailed recommendations had been provided, particularly concerning investigation procedures.

Being a former member of the Police Commission, he stated that specific recommendations had been made regarding how interviews should be conducted and how individuals in police custody should be processed by the responsible authorities for the purpose of eliciting information. He requested Mr Amin to review those sections once again.



In response, Mr Ruhul Amin acknowledged that the point raised was valid and mentioned that he had also read the same material. However, he clarified that it was actually part of the concern he had emphasised earlier that had not been adequately highlighted. He admitted

that, due to time constraints, he is unable to raise all the issues he had intended. Nevertheless, he pointed out that there are elements included, such as proposals on how to prevent certain issues and how to implement solutions. He noted, for instance, that the installation of a new classroom had been proposed so that activities inside could be visible from the outside. While such suggestions were present, he reiterated that his main emphasis is on the need for evidence-based modern investigation, something he felt had not been sufficiently reflected so far.



Dr Md Abdus Sobhan

*Additional DIG and Commandant
Police Special Training School, Rangamati*

Dr Md Abdus Sobhan, Additional DIG and Commandant, Police Special Training School, Rangamati, pointed out that there is a significant gap in resources, noting that there was a shortage of both necessary tools and forensic laboratories in Bangladesh. He questioned whether more forensic labs could be established, particularly to support officers involved in modern investigations. He emphasised that the existing facilities falls short of proper standards and lack in sufficient data access for officers. He further stressed the need for specialised training and the development of a dedicated curriculum for key investigators to strengthen the

modern investigative system. Highlighting the current low conviction rate, he concluded that this issue must be addressed with urgency.

Rafid Abrar Miah

Research Officer, BIIS

Mr Rafid Abrar Miah stated that the Department of Development Studies at the University of Dhaka, conducted a nationwide survey shortly after the mass revolution that occurred in August. He mentioned that nearly 6,000 individuals from across the country participated in the survey. According to the findings of the survey, approximately 90 per cent of respondents believed that being under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Home Affairs was causing significant harm to the image of the Bangladesh Police negatively affecting their reputation among the general public. He further reported that around 80 per cent of the respondents expressed support for the establishment of an



independent Police Commission, one that would fully separate the police from the control of the Ministry of Home Affairs. This was also seen as a way to reduce political influence over the police force. While the respondents of the survey did not consider this separation a complete solution, they believed it would make a meaningful contribution toward limiting political interference in policing. He concluded by saying that the platform provided valuable insights, which he described as a reflection of the concerns and consensus among the general public regarding this issue.

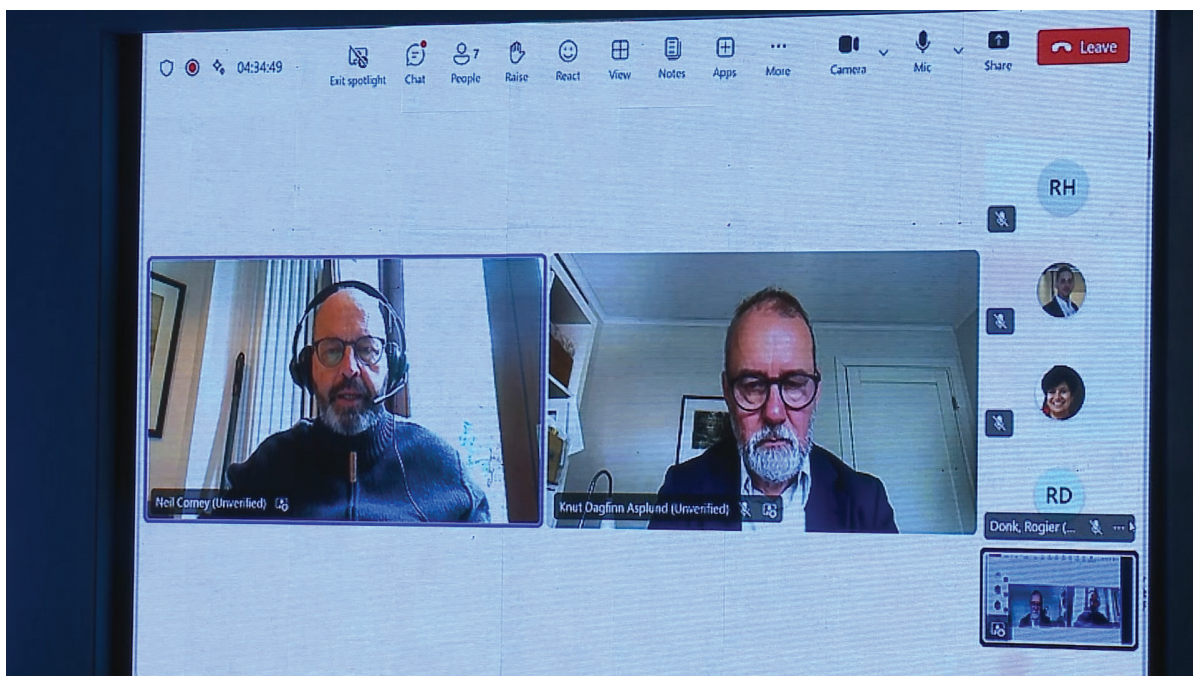
Nurul Huda

*Former Inspector General
Bangladesh Police*

The moderator **Mr Nurul Huda** remarked that, although it was not customary for someone in his role to pose questions, he could not resist the urge to ask Mr Neil Corney for his thoughts on a particular matter. He acknowledged the inherent difficulty in achieving a harmonious balance between civil liberties and enforcement efficiency. Referring to Mr Corney's experience, he inquired whether, in the context of the United Kingdom, there had been instances where enforcement efficiency had to be sacrificed in favour of protecting civil liberties.



Response by Neil Corney



Regarding the question of jurisdiction of Ministry, Mr Neil Corney said that it would not be entirely possible to operate completely outside the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Home Affairs. He noted that the current recommendations are aligned with those in the earlier draft of the Police Act of 2007, where it was also suggested that day-to-day operations and administrative matters could continue to be managed by the Ministry of Home Affairs without issue.

However, he emphasised that more critical matters, such as the handling of police complaints and the posting of key officers to important positions, should fall under the responsibility of the proposed Police Commission. While he expressed uncertainty about how this proposal would be implemented in practice, he stated his belief that both the police and the citizens should come together and collaborate to advance this initiative.

Responding to the question of the moderator, Mr Corney said that political interests still play a significant role in the UK and that the system is not entirely free from political influence. He explained that while the police had developed effective procedures and demonstrated responsibility when using force, the most persistent issues arise around public assemblies and protests. He observed that, due to political interference, civil liberties have been adversely affected in these contexts. Mr Corney pointed out that the criminalisation of protest is becoming an increasingly serious problem in the UK. He suggested that, based on this experience, there are lessons to be learned from the UK. He echoed sentiments expressed by earlier speakers, emphasising the importance of decoupling the police from political interference through the establishment of independent institutions and necessary frameworks.

Speech by the Moderator



Nurul Huda

*Former Inspector General
Bangladesh Police*

Mr Nurul Huda observed that the subject matter of the session is highly relevant to contemporary circumstances. He emphasised that the discussion promoted a human rights-based approach to the use of force and violence, whilst also advancing effective and evidence-based investigative processes. In the context of Bangladesh, particularly against the backdrop of events during the preceding years, especially those occurring in July and August 2024, Mr Huda highlighted the critical importance of adopting a human life-centred approach to the use of force and firearms. He noted that questions surrounding excessive use of force and proportionality

were particularly pertinent to the Bangladeshi scenario.

The moderator expressed concern regarding recent announcements about firearms usage, which he believed had created considerable confusion. He pointed out that there had been declarations stating that police would not carry lethal weapons, yet the definition of “lethal weapon” remained unclear. In Bangladesh, he noted, this had been interpreted to mean any firearm that could result in loss of life, a matter that required clarification. Mr Huda further acknowledged the significance of effective and evidence-based investigations, remarking that whilst such investigations had always been the established practice, their importance was heightened during this transitional period when citizens were reclaiming their rights after the colonial era, when they had been regarded as subjects rather than citizens.

The moderator expressed his gratitude to Ms Anna Giudice for her detailed presentation on the specifics of force and firearms usage. He also thanked both Mr Ashpland and Neil Corney for sharing their perspectives, particularly regarding the Norwegian approach to human rights and firearms usage. Mr Huda also acknowledged the common misconception that British police do not carry firearms, noting that whilst this remained the general perception, the reality is different. He emphasised that British police forces had developed elaborate processes, checks, and balances governing firearms usage, which offer valuable lessons for other jurisdictions.

Addressing concerns about police accountability, the moderator suggested that at present, the primary mechanism for public expression of concerns would be through future elections. However, he clarified that police forces could not operate entirely outside the purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs, as this would contravene established governmental

procedures. He stressed the importance of law-bound operations and the question of legitimacy.

Mr Huda identified the incidents that occurred in Bangladesh during July and August 2024, characterised by excessive use of force, as stemming from a legitimacy crisis and legitimacy deficit. He argued that once political legitimacy was firmly established, public order problems should diminish significantly.

Concluding the session, the moderator posed a question to Mr Neil Corney, acknowledging the inherent difficulty in balancing civil liberties with enforcement efficiency. He enquired whether, in Corney's UK experience, enforcement efficiency had ever needed to be sacrificed in favour of protecting civil liberties. Finally, he ended on an optimistic note, expressing hope that in the not-too-distant future, it would be possible to achieve the desirable degree of separation between political authority and law enforcement operations.



Roundtable 3: Strengthening Accountability and Oversight Mechanisms and Enhancing Institutional Integrity

Presentation by UNODC Expert



Anna Giudice

Team Leader, Access to Justice
UNODC Headquarters, Vienna

Ms Anna Giudice, addressed the importance of oversight mechanisms and police accountability in the broader context of access to justice. Acknowledging the time constraints of the session and the considerable discussions that had already taken place throughout the event, Ms Giudice nonetheless took the opportunity to reiterate several key messages central to ensuring justice and upholding human rights within law enforcement systems. She began by referencing the ongoing conversation on community engagement and oversight mechanisms, which had featured prominently across the day's various panels. Noting the presence of distinguished international experts, including one who had travelled from Canada and had been significantly involved in recent developments in Nigeria, Ms Giudice emphasised that the presence of such experts enriches the dialogue with practical insights drawn from diverse global contexts.

Underscoring the critical role of oversight, Ms Giudice asserted that robust accountability mechanisms are essential to maintaining professional integrity, upholding human rights, and combating corruption. In numerous countries, she noted, corruption and infiltration by organised crime remain persistent risks within police institutions. These challenges severely erode public trust and impede effective law enforcement. Consequently, to ensure public confidence in policing, law enforcement agencies must be perceived as legitimate, transparent, and responsive to the communities they serve. A comprehensive accountability framework, she argued, must include a strong complaints mechanism. Such mechanisms must be capable of initiating investigations against police officers where

appropriate, recommending secondary administrative actions, or referring cases for criminal prosecution. Importantly, for police accountability to be meaningful, personnel must receive adequate guidance, relevant training, and be supported with proper working conditions. Ms Giudice highlighted that poor remuneration and substandard working environments are often contributing factors to unethical behaviour among law enforcement officers. Regular and effective supervision, alongside systematic reviews of both individual and unit-level actions, is therefore critical.

Ms Giudice further elaborated that institutional accountability must be treated as an ongoing learning process. Agencies must reflect on both successes and failures to improve practices over time. She referenced international experiences where crises served as pivotal moments for institutional reform. For instance, in Kenya, post-election violence became a catalyst for establishing an independent police oversight authority. Similarly, in South Africa, a Commission of Inquiry led to significant recommendations for justice sector reform. While such incidents are regrettable, they often provide the momentum necessary to initiate long-overdue changes.

Addressing the investigation of disproportionate or unlawful use of force by the police, Ms Giudice observed that such inquiries may be undertaken by internal or external bodies. However, she stressed the critical importance of external oversight. Citing a former United Nations Special Rapporteur, she reiterated that without independent scrutiny, internal police investigations risk becoming exercises in self-protection rather than accountability. Thus, while internal investigations must be effective, they are insufficient on their own. A range of oversight models exists globally, incorporating both internal mechanisms and independent, external bodies.



Among the key players in effective oversight, Ms Giudice identified the judiciary, which holds a central role in reviewing police conduct through judicial proceedings. In several jurisdictions, parliamentary oversight committees also monitor police practices, as exemplified by the case of Northern Ireland. Parliaments, as representatives of the legislative branch, are particularly well placed to exert checks and balances on executive institutions, including the police. Moreover, she recognised the value of independent police complaints bodies, which offer mechanisms for public redress outside the executive chain of command. Beyond institutional oversight, Ms Giudice pointed to the vital role of civil society and the media in monitoring police actions. Public transparency and the free flow of information enable communities to hold law enforcement agencies accountable. In some cases, international monitors and human rights bodies intervene, particularly when domestic accountability frameworks have failed. These international mechanisms often serve as avenues of last resort to uphold justice and human rights.

Turning to police integrity more broadly, Ms Giudice outlined several factors that are foundational to a culture of integrity within police institutions. Chief among them is the development and enforcement of a code of conduct. However, such codes must not be externally imposed; they should be developed internally, with active participation from police personnel. Other critical components include transparent recruitment and vetting processes, particularly in the aftermath of mass abuses; consistent and fair performance evaluations; adequate working conditions; and respect for the rights and dignity of police officers themselves.

Ms Giudice also underscored the importance of whistleblower protections. Enabling officers to report misconduct without fear of reprisal is a crucial, albeit difficult, aspect of internal accountability. Whistleblowing mechanisms must be supported by appropriate legal protections to ensure their effectiveness. In terms of complaints mechanisms, Ms Giudice recommended that police oversight bodies be empowered to receive complaints directly from the public. This requires ensuring that complaints procedures are accessible, especially in contexts where physical access to offices is limited. Multiple reporting methods such as hotlines and community outreach systems can help to overcome these barriers. These bodies must also maintain thorough documentation of all complaints, possess the investigative authority and resources to carry out inquiries, and have the power to recommend both disciplinary and structural reforms.

She then noted the importance of mechanisms for follow-up and implementation of oversight recommendations. Without effective follow-through, recommendations remain symbolic. Therefore, accountability must move beyond the individual level to address systemic issues, and reporting on the implementation of corrective actions must be integrated into oversight processes. Ms Giudice concluded her remarks by reinforcing the message that accountability is a multi-dimensional effort involving not only internal reform, but also public engagement, institutional integrity, and sustained political commitment.

Presentation by National Expert



Nurul Huda

*Former Inspector General
Bangladesh Police*

Mr Muhammad Nurul Huda underscored the critical importance of strengthening accountability and oversight mechanisms within the law enforcement system. He began by stating that while such mechanisms already exist, they are often underutilised and ineffectively applied. Judicial oversight, for instance, is embedded in legal procedures, particularly through the First Information Report (FIR), which is submitted to a magistrate. In principle, this allows the judiciary to exercise supervisory authority from the earliest stage of criminal proceedings. However, in practice, this oversight is seldom exercised.

He referred to his own experience in the police service, recalling that magistrates have the capacity to issue strictures or formal observations when investigative irregularities are detected. In several instances during his tenure as a district police officer, such judicial remarks led to internal disciplinary actions against responsible officers. Mr Huda argued that these oversight functions should be reactivated and consistently enforced before turning to external accountability mechanisms.

He also noted that many existing regulations, though colonial in origin, still reflect principles of human rights and restraint. Citing the regulation on the use of handcuffs, he remarked on the deliberate and humane language used even a century ago, which advised against unnecessary restraint and recognised the inherent dignity of individuals. In his view, these regulations remain highly relevant and need only to be implemented properly.

A key point of concern raised by Mr Huda was the limited authority of the National Human Rights Commission. While established in law, he described it as largely toothless, with insufficient power to impose penalties or ensure compliance. He recommended that legislation be enacted to empower the Commission with the ability to determine violations and hold perpetrators accountable, including within the executive branch. This, he suggested, would reflect a genuine commitment of the state to upholding human rights and accountability.

Mr Huda also advocated for the formation of an independent police complaints body. Although he had not personally witnessed such bodies in operation, he referenced international examples, particularly from the United Kingdom and Japan, as models worth examining. He recommended that such a body be composed of respected, neutral individuals, and be guided by clearly defined legal standards, functional autonomy, and investigative authority.

However, he stressed that no structural or procedural reform would succeed without political will. Drawing from his own professional experiences, he cited multiple instances of political interference in policing. He recalled a particularly striking episode since 1990 when a senior political leader demanded the daily arrest of thousands of people, an example he used to illustrate the extent to which political pressure can compromise the independence and integrity of the police.

Mr Huda further argued that meaningful reform must begin with the revision of the Police Act, particularly the implementation of the 2007 draft proposal. He insisted that administrative circulars or internal reforms would remain superficial unless grounded in updated legislation. Moreover, he called for the removal of police investigative powers from executive control, describing this as a necessary, albeit radical, step towards genuine accountability. While acknowledging that such reform has not yet occurred in the subcontinent, he maintained that it is both possible and essential. Finally, Mr Huda reflected on the moral character of political leadership. He expressed hope that individuals of integrity, both men and women, would rise to positions of influence and prioritise institutional reform and justice. Finally, he conveyed a deep belief that only through principled leadership could the police be transformed into a truly accountable public institution.

Presentation by International Expert



Ian D Scott

Former Director

Special Investigations Unit in Ontario, Canada

Mr Ian D Scott started his presentation by highlighting a significant movement in Toronto aimed at reforming police oversight, emphasising the importance of independent investigations to maintain public confidence in law enforcement. He noted that the session was a productive one where discussions focused on police use of force and the need for robust oversight mechanisms. Drawing from his contribution to the Convention Against Torture Initiative and a co-authored book for the Open Society Foundations, which analysed 11 global models of police oversight, he explained that effective oversight requires criminal

investigations of police misconduct to be independent of government influence and conducted transparently to ensure public accountability.

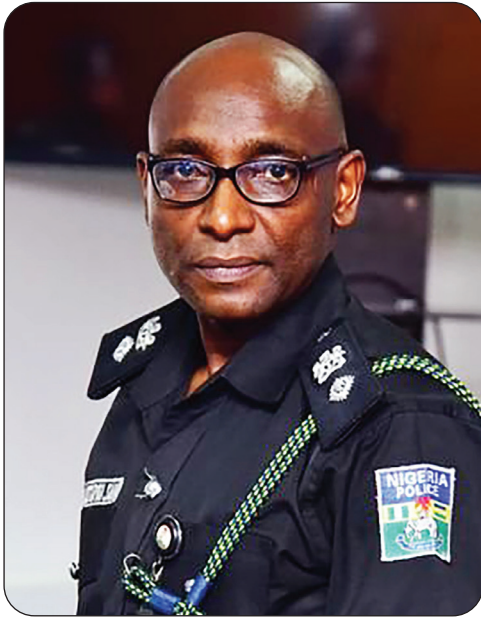
Mr Scott cited Ontario's Special Investigations Unit (SIU) as a key example, explaining that Ontario, as a province in Canada's federal system, holds most policing and prosecutorial powers at the provincial level. The SIU, established in 1990 under the Police Services Act and later reinforced by the 2019 Special Investigations Unit Act, was described as a civilian-led agency. It is independent of the police, tasked with investigating serious incidents such as those involving death, injury, or sexual assault. He clarified that the SIU is led by a director appointed for five years and focuses solely on significant misconduct cases, not general complaints, and operates independently while reporting to the Attorney General. Mr Scott emphasised that the SIU's standalone legislation, a response to community demands for accountability, makes it more resistant to political interference, a point reinforced by a conversation with a Brazilian prosecutor who noted the protective value of dedicated legislation. He, then, underscored that such independence ensures police are subject to the rule of law, fostering community trust.

Mr Scott further outlined the operational framework and challenges of Ontario's Special Investigations Unit (SIU), emphasising its role in fostering public confidence through independent police oversight. He explained that a key legislative section governing the SIU's interactions with police officers has sparked significant litigation, particularly concerning the approximately 3,000 officers involved since the SIU's inception. The legislation distinguishes between subject officers who are under investigation for causing serious injury, death, or sexual assault, and witness officers who are not suspected of criminal conduct but must provide notes and interviews to aid investigations. Highlighting this distinction, he referred that this legislative change, prompted by case law, ensures witness officers' cooperation which is critical as their accounts often provide essential context for understanding incidents.

He also described how investigations, supported by evidence like video footage, are reviewed by the SIU director. Based on their five years of experience, only about 4 per cent of cases, roughly 57 charges, resulted in criminal charges, with most cases involving other issues like internal disciplinary matters or civil lawsuits. Mr Scott emphasised the SIU's efforts to support victims' families through dedicated witness support personnel, acknowledging the emotional toll of police-related incidents, particularly deaths, where families often struggle to understand the lack of charges despite thorough investigations. He added that the SIU notifies police chiefs directly to ensure transparency and avoid media surprises, given the high public attention these cases attract. In conclusion, Mr Scott noted that independent, civilian-led oversight agencies are vital for ensuring thorough investigations that withstand public scrutiny, uphold the rule of law, and protect both citizens and police, thereby fostering community trust in law enforcement.



Presentation by International Expert



Sani El-Mustapha

Head of the Nigerian Police Force's Complaints Response Unit

Mr Sani El-Mustapha delivered a reflection on the institutional evolution, operational challenges, and progressive reforms being undertaken to enhance police accountability and public trust in Nigeria. He communicated key developments in Nigeria's efforts to modernise its complaints response system and make policing more transparent and citizen-oriented. He began by expressing gratitude for the opportunity to join the dialogue and share Nigeria's ongoing journey in strengthening police oversight and accountability. He first provided a contextual overview of Nigeria, highlighting it as a vast and diverse nation, with a population exceeding 200 million people spread across 36 states and over 300 distinct ethnic groups. The complexity of such a socio-political landscape presents unique challenges for the Nigerian Police Force, particularly in ensuring consistent standards of justice and equitable service delivery nationwide.

He recalled that following extensive advocacy and legislative deliberation in the National Assembly, the Nigerian government took proactive steps to establish mechanisms to improve police oversight and public responsiveness. One such mechanism was the creation of the Police Complaints Response Unit (CRU), which plays a central role in the contemporary policing framework in Nigeria. The CRU was designed to serve as an institutional platform for citizens to lodge complaints regarding police misconduct, human rights violations, or any inappropriate actions by police officers. It functions independently within the police structure and reports regularly to senior police leadership. Mr El-Mustapha explained that the unit currently operates with three dedicated squads tasked with receiving, processing, and investigating complaints. The unit accepts complaints through various channels, which include phone calls, emails, social media platforms, and walk-in reports, among other means. These options make the process of complaint submission more accessible to the general public.

Importantly, he noted that the CRU integrates technology to ensure transparency and accountability. Every complaint submitted is issued a tracking number that allows complainants to monitor the progress of their case. This innovation, he stressed, represents a fundamental shift in how the Nigerian Police approaches citizen engagement and complaint redress. The system not only documents complaints but also ensures that cases are followed up systematically, with resolutions communicated back to the public. Mr El-Mustapha

acknowledged that historically, there had been a significant trust deficit between citizens and the police. In many cases, individuals feared retribution for reporting misconduct or simply believed that nothing would come of their complaints. The CRU, he emphasised, was created to dismantle this culture of impunity and demonstrate the force's commitment to change.

To support its work, the CRU collaborates closely with various oversight and accountability bodies. Among the most prominent is the Police Service Commission (PSC), an independent body mandated to exercise disciplinary control and oversee police appointments, promotions, and general conduct. Civil society organisations and academic institutions also play a pivotal role in evaluating police behaviour and submitting independent reviews and recommendations. Their engagement, Mr El-Mustapha noted, adds valuable credibility and public confidence to the oversight process.

He elaborated further on the CRU's internal operational mechanisms. Once a complaint is received, a team of investigators is assigned to carry out a preliminary assessment to verify the substance of the allegation. This includes interviewing the complainant, gathering evidence, and engaging directly with the police officer or officers in question. Upon completion of the investigation, findings are reviewed by a panel of senior police officers who determine appropriate administrative or disciplinary measures. Mr El-Mustapha was pleased to report that the Nigerian Police Force, under the current Inspector General of Police and with the support of the new administration, has begun to institutionalise the CRU's practices across the country. There is now a directive in place for each state police command to establish its own CRU office. This decentralisation ensures that more citizens have access to fair complaint mechanisms regardless of their geographic location.

To enhance standardisation, the CRU is developing and rolling out a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of complaint officers, timelines for case resolution, procedural steps for investigations, and guidelines for inter-agency coordination. This SOP is aligned with both international best practices and national policing standards, enabling officers to follow a consistent and professional approach in all cases.

Training has also been prioritised. Mr El-Mustapha elaborated that one of the core challenges in Nigerian policing is a general lack of awareness among officers about evolving human rights norms and ethical procedures. Many officers, he explained, simply do not know what is expected of them under newer legal frameworks. As a result, comprehensive training programmes have been initiated to educate officers on these reforms, enhance their investigative, improve their interpersonal skills, and reinforce their duty to serve citizens with fairness and respect. Notably, these efforts appear to be yielding results. Mr El-Mustapha highlighted a significant increase in public engagement with the CRU. In the previous year (2024) alone, the CRU processed over 5,000 complaints from citizens across Nigeria. In the first quarter of the current year, the unit has already received and addressed an even higher volume of cases, indicating a growing public willingness to use the system and confidence in its outcomes.



He was candid in acknowledging that challenges remain. One of the most persistent issues is the communication gap between officers and the communities they serve. Officers often lack the tools, time, or training to effectively communicate with citizens, which in turn hampers trust-building efforts. He stressed that improved officer-citizen communication must become a cornerstone of any meaningful reform agenda.

In concluding his remarks, Mr El-Mustapha reiterated that the Nigerian Police Force is on a path of transformation. While much work remains to be done, the institutionalisation of complaint mechanisms, the adoption of new technologies, the growing role of civil oversight, and the increasing openness of the force to public scrutiny all signal a promising future. He reaffirmed that accountability, transparency, and professional ethics will continue to guide Nigeria's policing reforms and the evolution of its Complaint Response Unit.

OPEN DISCUSSION



Taptun Nasreen

Deputy Inspector General (Finance)
Bangladesh Police

Drawing on her personal experience, **Ms Taptun Nasreen** stressed that accountability must be seen as a continuous process, rather than one that activates only after misconduct occurs. She argued that professional integrity should be cultivated from the beginning through training and day-to-day work culture and should remain embedded throughout an officer's service life.

She questioned whether internal mechanisms alone are sufficient to ensure accountability or whether civilian oversight systems are necessary to complement them. Furthermore, she shared insights from her exposure to the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity during her postgraduate studies, noting that the body had substantial resources and operated with a comprehensive complaint-handling system. While major complaints were rare, the Commission's existence served as a preventative tool demonstrating the public's expectation of transparency and the deterrence of misconduct within the Australian Federal Police.

Turning to Bangladesh, she acknowledged that various external oversight structures exist, including the Parliament, judiciary, media, and public awareness platforms. However, she raised the concern of whether internal police mechanisms are being adequately supported or undermined by an overly strong sense of professional brotherhood, which may hinder impartial investigations.

From her 27 years of experience in law enforcement, she highlighted three main challenges to effective oversight. The first challenge is political interference. Officers frequently receive external pressures which may compromise the impartiality of investigations. The second challenge is lack of professionalism. She emphasised the need for a strong, values-driven culture among officers to resist external influence. The third challenge is corruption. Unless corruption is addressed systemically, internal accountability efforts are likely to falter.

She concluded by questioning the effectiveness and structure of civilian oversight bodies in the Bangladeshi context, suggesting the need for clear checks and balances between internal police bodies and any proposed external commissions.

Response by Ian D Scott



Ian D Scott

Former Director

Special Investigations Unit in Ontario, Canada

Mr Ian D Scott responded to the comments with reflections from his own experience. He acknowledged the value of internal investigations but emphasised a persistent public scepticism toward them, particularly in serious cases involving use of force or police misconduct. He noted that even when internal investigations are properly conducted, public perception often leans towards mistrust, interpreting outcomes as biased or protective of officers.

He explained that, under Canadian legislation, the director of the SIU must not be a serving or former police officer, a measure intended to guarantee the unit's independence and public confidence. Furthermore, he stressed that external oversight bodies tend to be born out of crises, and their legitimacy depends largely on their perceived impartiality. From his perspective, independent investigations are critical for upholding the rule of law, particularly in situations where state authority comes into direct contact with individual rights

Speech by the Moderator



Felipe Ramos

Head of Office, UNODC Bangladesh

Mr Felipe Ramos acknowledged the Chief Guest Mr Baharul Alam, Inspector General of Bangladesh Police, who described reform as an ongoing process rather than a single event. He underscored the complexity of security within human society, affirming Mr Alam's view that police reform is a multifaceted endeavour. Recognising the multidimensional scopes of reform, he noted that while the session had only begun to explore the topic, it had covered significant areas. He outlined the session's objectives, which included strengthening accountability and oversight mechanisms, enhancing institutional integrity, and evaluating various internal and external oversight models to improve compliance, efficiency, and effectiveness. Additionally, Mr Ramos emphasised the importance of institutional reforms to support integrity through diverse mechanisms. He concluded the roundtable session by expressing appreciation for all participants' contributions.

CLOSING REMARKS



Anubha Sood

UNODC Regional Representative, South Asia

Ms Anubha Sood expressed sincere appreciation to all attendees for their engaging and productive dialogue. She extended special thanks to Mr Alam, Inspector General of Bangladesh Police, as well as to the distinguished experts from Argentina, Canada, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Sri Lanka, and the United Kingdom. Ms Sood appreciated their valuable expertise and contributions during exchanges with senior officials and experts from Bangladesh.

She expressed hope that the discussions initiated during the session would mark the beginning of enhanced international cooperation and support for the professionalisation and modernisation of the police force in Bangladesh. While recognising the unique context of each country, the speaker emphasised that the UNODC's mandate and experience lie in bringing together policymakers and practitioners from diverse national backgrounds to facilitate such exchanges. The UNODC additionally offers advisory services and technical assistance to promote human rights-based policing aligned with international standards, and she was pleased with how the session had progressed.

She noted that the UNODC builds on over three decades of experience in assisting Member States across transitional, post-conflict, developed, and developing contexts, while also serving as the secretariat to key intergovernmental bodies where international standards on crime prevention and criminal justice are adopted. Ms Sood welcomed the participation of women law enforcement officials and commended the Bangladesh Police for its collaboration



with the UNODC in the fields of crime prevention and criminal justice. She highlighted the partnership between the UNODC and Bangladesh Police, particularly in community policing and efforts to prevent public nuisance.

Ms Sood informed the attendees of the UNODC Strategy (2021–2025) and the Regional Programme for South Asia (2024–2028), which aim to strengthen crime prevention, promote criminal justice reform, and ensure equal access to justice for all. She concluded by reaffirming her confidence in the establishment of a fair, humane, effective, and efficient criminal justice system, incorporating human rights, gender equality, and the continued professionalisation and modernisation of the police force.

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