

Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus convicted in Bangladesh labour law case

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Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus gestures in front of the court after being sentenced to six months in prison. *(Reuters: Mohammad Ponir Hossain)*

A court in Bangladesh has sentenced Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus to six months in prison for labour law violations, prosecutors say, for what he says is a crime he did not commit.

Mr Yunus, 83, and his Grameen Bank won the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for their work to lift millions out of poverty by granting tiny loans of under \$100 to the rural poor of Bangladesh, pioneering a global movement now known as microcredit.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, however, accused him of "sucking blood from the poor". His supporters say the government is attempting to discredit him because he once considered setting up a political party to rival Ms Hasina's Awami League.

Key points:

- Muhammad Yunus won the Nobel peace prize in 2006
- He and three Grameen Telecom employees have been granted bail pending a possible appeal
- Yunus is facing more than 100 other charges over labour law

Mr Yunus, an economist, and three employees from Grameen Telecom, a company he founded, were convicted on Monday of failing to create a welfare fund for its employees.

violations and alleged corruption

"This verdict against me is contrary to all legal precedent and logic. I call for the Bangladeshi people to speak in one voice against injustice and in favour of democracy and human rights for each and every one of our citizens," he said in a statement after the verdict.



Yunus has received a six-month prison sentence. *(Reuters: Nicky Milne)*

Responding to petitions submitted by the accused, the court granted them bail pending a possible appeal.

"The court granted their bail, giving them one month to file an appeal against the verdict of the court," prosecutor Khurshid Alam Khan said.

Abdullah Al Mamun, a lawyer for Mr Yunus, said he would appeal against the verdict, describing the case as politically motivated and aimed at harassing his client.

Mr Yunus is facing more than 100 other charges over labour law violations and alleged corruption.

Human rights groups have accused the government of Ms Hasina of targeting political dissent.

Ms Hasina is seeking a fifth term — and her fourth consecutive one — in an election on January 7, which the main opposition party has boycotted.

Reuters