



01 November 2010

## Human Rights Monitoring Report

01- 31 October 2010

<p><b>Ferocity of Political Violence;</b></p> <p><b>Protest against Taking of Land for an 'Army Housing Scheme' for the armed forces;</b></p> <p><b>Torture and Killing Persists at Borders Despite Assurances to the Contrary given by the Director General of BSF;</b></p> <p><b>Leader Struggling for Self-determination Arrested and Handed Over to the Indian Authority;</b></p> <p><b>Extra-judicial Killings Continue even after Statements Made by the Director General of RAB;</b></p> <p><b>Attack on Members of the Ahmadiyya Community;</b></p> <p><b>Update on the BRD Trial;</b></p> <p><b>Status of Freedom of Media;</b></p> <p><b>Incidents of Violence against Women</b></p>
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Odhikar defends civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of the people and as part of its mission, observes reports and analyses the human rights situation of Bangladesh. In line with this campaign, an account of the human rights situation of Bangladesh covering the period of October 01 - October 31, 2010 is given below.

### Ferocity of political violence

1. Political violence continues with aggravated intensity. The occurrence of a number of sensitive incidents this month has brought new volatility to the political situation. The murder of upazila<sup>1</sup> chairman of Boraigraam under Natore district Sanullah Noor Babu; 6 dead and approximately 200 injured as high-speed train runs over a gathering of general public on the rail tracks to listen to a speech being delivered by the leader of the opposition party in Sirajganj; open display of weapons by a group of masked assailants targeting a meeting of the Jubo Dal<sup>2</sup> in Comilla; and vandalizing shops and damage of idols of a Hindu goddess by a faction of the Jagannath Hall unit of Chhatra League in Dhaka University are

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<sup>1</sup> Upazila is the sub-district and the second tier of the local government institution.

<sup>2</sup> Youth wing of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party.

significant symptoms of social and political instability. The situation is rendered more volatile as the leaders at the top of the hierarchy of the two major political parties, BNP and Awami League; engage in verbal battles over levying blame and responsibility for the incidents upon each other.

2. On October 8, 2010, there was a scheduled rally of the BNP in Bonpara, Natore. Former General Secretary of the Awami League-backed Chhatra League<sup>3</sup> and former Information and Research Secretary of the District Awami League Professor Zakir Hussein led a group of miscreants, including Awami League-backed Chhatra League General Secretary of Boraigraam Upazila Shafiqul Islam, Jubo League<sup>4</sup> leaders Rakib, Jamil and Babu attacked the political procession. Sanauallah Noor Babu (40), Boraigraam Upazila Chairman and the President of the Boraigraam Municipality BNP, was beaten to death in public. In this attack, another 35 people were injured including Jamal Uddin Ali, Joint Secretary of the Boraigraam Upazila BNP.<sup>5</sup> Later a video footage of this incident was released and aired on the television channels.
3. In spite of these attacks by Jubo League and Chhatra League of the Awami League, on October 12, 2010, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina commented on the death of Sanauallah Noor Babu that "The BNP's internal-conflicts are responsible for the killing of the chairman of Baraigram Upazila in Natore. They have murdered their own man and are now filing cases."<sup>6</sup> Such statement invalidates the necessity to investigate the brutal murder and hinders the independent functioning of the administration and the judicial process. If the government is already certain that the killing is an outcome of internal conflict of BNP, it indicates that the government is not interested in investigating a murder that has been publicly staged.
4. On October 13, 2010, Awami League parliament member of Boraigram-Gurudashpur constituency, Abdul Quddus, in a meeting at Bonpara, made a statement reassuring the individuals charged with the murder of Sanauallah Noor Babu that "There is nothing to be scared of. Awami League is currently governing the state. Nothing will happen to those who have been accused of being involved in this murder case."<sup>7</sup>
5. On October 19, 2010, Mahua Noor, wife of the deceased Sanauallah Noor Babu, said at a press conference at the national press club that "My husband's murderers are not content with having just killed him. Now they are threatening me to withdraw the case that has

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<sup>3</sup> Student wing of Awami League

<sup>4</sup> Youth wing of Awami League

<sup>5</sup> The Daily Jugantor, 09/10/2010

<sup>6</sup> The Daily Amader Shomoy, 13/10/2010

<sup>7</sup> The Daily Star, 14/10/2010

been filed against them.”<sup>8</sup> Though a case has been filed against 27 people allegedly been involved in this incident, police arrested only one person.<sup>9</sup>

6. On October 31, 2010, a faction of the Jagannath Hall unit of Awami League-backed Chhatra League led by Utpal Saha, damaged two idols of the Ramna Kali Temple in Suhrawardy Udyan. The incident took place after Bipul Roy, who runs a shop in the place under the patronisation of a faction of the Chhatra League, had filed a complaint with the Shahbagh Police Station accusing some Chhatra League activists for extorting money from the shopkeepers. The rivals had vandalized the shops near the temple and damaged two idols kept outside the temple. Police arrested three residents of Jagannath Hall<sup>10</sup> on charges of vandalism at the temple premises.<sup>11</sup>
7. Six people died and about 200 injured in Sirajganj, as a high-speed train ran over members of the public who gathered over a railway track in order to listen to a speech delivered by the Opposition leader Begum Khaleda Zia. The incident took place on October 11, 2010, 20 yards away from the designated place of meeting at Mulbari rail-crossing area on the eastern adjoining road to the Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge. After the incident, an angry mob torched the train. A clash broke out between the police and the public at that time.<sup>12</sup> Police have filed six cases against 5000 anonymous people including 38 BNP leaders. 77 people have been arrested so far by police. Meanwhile, authorities informed that it was against the provisions of the railway laws to hold a meeting at the designated place (on the railway tracks).<sup>13</sup>
8. On October 10, 2010, a clash took place between the followers of Comilla District BNP General Secretary Amin-ur-Rashid Yasin and the supporters of the district BNP Organising Secretary Manirul Haque Sakkur, regarding a conference of the Jubo Dal<sup>14</sup> at Comilla. A few Jubo Dal activists, wearing black masks as disguise, brought out fire arms and began to shoot. 30 people, including four policemen were injured. The police have arrested 15 individuals suspected to be involved in this incident.<sup>15</sup>
9. According to information gathered by Odhikar, a total of 24 persons have been killed and 770 injured in political violence in October 2010. There were also 35 incidents of internal violence in the Awami League and 11 within the BNP. In addition to this, 259 people were

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<sup>8</sup> The Daily Manabzamin, 20/10/2010

<sup>9</sup> The Daily Star, 11/10/2010

<sup>10</sup> A residential hall for male Dhaka University students

<sup>11</sup> New Age, 01/11/2010

<sup>12</sup> The Daily Kaler Kantho, 12/10/2010

<sup>13</sup> The Daily Jugantor, 14/10/2010 and Prothom Alo, 23/10/2010

<sup>14</sup> Youth wing of BNP

<sup>15</sup> The Daily Prothom Alo, 10/10/2010

injured in Awami League internal conflict and 154 persons were injured in BNP initiated violence.

### Protest against taking of land for an 'Army Housing Scheme' for the armed forces

10. On October 23, 2010, local people took to the streets in protest of the taking of land for the implementation of a 'Army Housing Scheme' in Rupganj under Naraynganj district. The army opened fire on the agitated protestors, which further aggravated them and led them to vandalise one army jeep, two cars, and set fire to a tin-shed barrack belonging to the Army. 14 people received gunshot injuries. Four army camps had to be evacuated and the soldiers were transported to Dhaka in helicopters. On October 24, 2010, a civilian Mostofa Jamal Hayder (25), who had been shot in the incident, died while under treatment at the hospital. The locals claimed that civilians Masud, Saiful Islam and Shamser have been missing since the incident.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, Shanto, a student of class four at the local Yusufganj Government Primary School told the daily Shamokal that Masud, Saiful Islam and Shamser had been shot dead by RAB and Shanto himself saw the bodies in a RAB vehicle. He alleged that he had been instructed by RAB to clean up the blood on the road using river water.<sup>17</sup> The police have filed a case against 4000 anonymous villagers with Rupganj Police Station. On October 29, 2010, Aminur Rahman, Warrant Officer of the 34 Unit Regiment of East Bengal of the Dhaka cantonment filed another case with Rupganj Police Station, accusing 50/60 anonymous villagers.<sup>18</sup>
11. It is to be mentioned that, in December 2009, a 'Army Housing Scheme' was created encompassing 24 Mouja<sup>19</sup> of land at Kayetpara and Rupganj union in order to house the armed forces. In the beginning of 2010, after the purchase of a small area of land, a sign board saying '-7,000 acres of land - Property of the Armed Forces. Civilians restricted from entry' was placed on the property. At that time, many landowners, who had not sold their property, were barred from entering their land. Two weeks ago, land registration was stopped. Only land sold under the Army Housing Scheme was being registered. Locals were unwilling to leave behind their houses and sell their lands to the army at a rate that fell below the market price. For a number of days the farmers had been protesting against this forced selling of land. Ensuing from these protests were threats from the RAB and army who went from house to house, delivering them. On October 23, 2010, thousands of locals took to the streets in protest against such conduct.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Human rights defenders of Odhikar at Narayanganj and the Daily Ittefaq, 24-25/10/2010

<sup>17</sup> The Daily Shamokal, 29/10/2010

<sup>18</sup> The Daily Star, 30/10/2010

<sup>19</sup> A prevalent land measurement

<sup>20</sup> The Daily Ittefaq, 24-25/10/2010

12. Odhikar believes that this is a project that has no implication for strengthening the defense capacity of Bangladesh and will only benefit the upper echelon of army officers. The forceful manner by which the land of the local people was purchased is also of serious concern for Odhikar, as well as the treatment meted out to the protesters. Setting army camps in the locality and using the army as an institution to create terror and forcing the local communities to sell their land to the army has seriously aggravated the relation between the masses and the army. How could such a project get approval from the decision-makers? The land in question has been identified as wetland and a flood plain and the matter is also of serious concerns to environmentalists and ecologists. Those who engaged the Bangladesh Army with this commercial housing plan out of the project of the RAJUK<sup>21</sup> and government will have to take responsibility for the violence.
13. Odhikar condemns all forms of forceful encroachment of land. Odhikar demands that the families of the deceased be compensated, the injured be given proper medical treatment and that cases be filed against the murderers, by the government. Further, Odhikar is concerned that the case filed against 4000 people, may lead to mass-arrests and harassment by the law enforcers.

**Torture and killing persists at borders despite assurances to the contrary given by the Director General of BSF**

14. Raman Srivastav, Director General of the BSF<sup>22</sup>, on September 27, 2010, at the conclusion of 5-day talks between the BDR and BSF, promised to put a stop to the killing of Bangladeshi citizens at the border. However, torture and killing at borders remain persistent. On October 11, 2010, the body of a Bangladeshi citizen was recovered by the BDR near the 922/5 S pillar on the Lalmonirhaat - Aditmari border. Subedar Samad, commander of Mogolhaat company, informed Odhikar that the victim had been tortured to death and his body dumped there by the BSF.<sup>23</sup> On October 16, 2010, a farmer named Jasimuddin (37) was shot and killed by the BSF while he was farming on his land near the Betgora pillar number 186 at Shonnashipara village in Rongchati union of Kolmakanda Upazila under Netrokona district.<sup>24</sup>
15. Odhikar observes with concern that the talks between the Director Generals of the BDR and BSF persistently bring promises to stop the violation of human rights at the borders, and that these promises are broken and killings continued with equal persistence.
16. Odhikar believes that the government should take efficient steps to bring such violations to a stop and that there should be immediate protest against any such incidents.

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<sup>21</sup> Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Capital Development Authority)

<sup>22</sup> The Border Security Force in India.

<sup>23</sup> The Daily Naya Diganto, 12/10/2010

<sup>24</sup> The Daily Naya Diganto, 17/10/2010

17. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in the month of October 2010, the Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) have allegedly killed 06 Bangladeshi citizens - of which 04 were gunned down and 02 tortured to death . 01 Bangladeshi was gunned down by Indian civilians as well. Furthermore, 03 Bangladeshi citizens have sustained bullet injuries by the BSF and one was shot and injured by Indian civilians. During this period 10 Bangladeshis were reported abducted by BSF.

#### **Leader struggling for 'Self-determination' arrested and handed over to the Indian authority**

18. On October 14, 2010, Rajkuman Meghen, a 'top leader' of the United National Liberation Front (UNLF), an organisation that struggling for 'self-determination' in Manipur, India, was arrested in Dhaka and handed over to the Indian law enforcement agency. BBC, through the Indian media, informed that he had been arrested by the police at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport during the beginning of October 2010.<sup>25</sup>
19. Rajkuman Meghen took shelter in Bangladesh for personal safety. Article 25(1) (C) of the Bangladesh Constitution states, 'The State shall base its international relations on the principles of respect for national sovereignty and equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, peaceful settlement of international disputes, and respect for international law and the principles enunciated in the United Nations Charter, and on the basis of those principles shall -(c) support oppressed peoples throughout the world waging a just struggle against imperialism, colonialism or racialism'.
20. Odhikar expresses concern regarding the stance taken by the Bangladesh government in preventing the suppressed people of foreign countries from obtaining freedom.

#### **Extra-judicial killings continue even after statements made by the Director General of RAB**

21. Director General of the RAB, Mokhlesur Rahman has said "RAB does not ever acknowledge the occurrence of extra-judicial killings. RAB has no affiliations or connections with such incidents. RAB will continue to operate in observance of human rights."<sup>26</sup> However, extra-judicial killings continue even after the Director General of RAB made the statement at a press conference on September 5, 2010.
22. According to Odhikar's statistics, 11 people have been killed extra-judicially by law enforcement agencies. Among these 09 have been killed by the RAB, 01 by the police and 01 jointly by the RAB-Police.

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<sup>25</sup> The Daily Amar Desh, 15/10/2010

<sup>26</sup> The Daily Kaler Kantho, 06/10/2010

### Cause of death:

#### *Cross-fire/Encounter/Gunfight*

23. Of these 11 extra-judicial killings, 11 people have allegedly been killed in 'crossfire'. Of them, 09 were killed by the RAB, 01 by police and 01 by RAB-police.

#### *Identity of the Deceased*

24. Out of the 11 killed, 03 were members of the Purbo Bangla Community Party (Red Flag), 01 was from Gono Bahini, 01 was an unidentified youth, 04 were alleged criminals and 02 were pirates.

### Death in Jail Custody

25. In the month of October 2010, 04 people have allegedly died while in Jail custody.

### Attack on members of the Ahmadiyya community

26. On October 18, 2010, a group of miscreants in Ghatail Upazila under Tangail district attacked members of the Ahmadiyya community. Six people of the Ahmadiyya community, including women, were injured in this attack. A group of criminals have been attacking on the Ahmadiyya community at Chantara village since June 2010. In these incidents, the assailants have vandalized a mosque of the Ahmadiyya community, houses of many of the members of the group and have also injured a large number of them. Furthermore, they have abducted a girl of the Ahmadiyya community and have attempted to rape her<sup>27</sup>.

27. The spokesperson of the Ahmadiyya community, Ahmed Tabsir Chowdhury, has made a written complaint to human rights organisations, informing them that the community has on several occasions contacted the higher governmental authorities regarding these incidents. Even after their repeated assurances that these attacks would stop, there has been no improvement in the situation.

28. Moreover, the assailants have been released on bail from the cases filed against them and, on October 18, 2010 made another attack. It has been alleged that the group of miscreants are affiliated with the ruling political party Awami League, and therefore no action has been taken against them.

29. Odhikar condemns the attacks and abuse against minority communities by those under the shelter of political power and demands respect for the fundamental rights of religious minorities and physical protection and security to their person and property.

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<sup>27</sup> The girl was approximately 9 or 10 years old.

### Update on the BDR trial

30. The month of October 2010 saw the continuation of the trial of those accused with involvement in the BDR mutiny case of Naogaon 46 and 43 Rifle Battalion; Bandorbon Bolipara 10 Rifle Battalion; Brahmonbaria Sorai 1 Rifle Battalion; Sylhet 21 Rifle Battalion; Satkhira 41 Rifle Battalion; Rajshahi 37 Rifle Battalion; Khagrachori 29 and 11 Rifle Battalion; Khulna 23 Rifle Battalion; and the Headquarters of the BDR at Pilkhana, .
31. Odhikar's local human rights defenders are monitoring the trials taking place at different locations.

### Status of freedom of media

32. During the month of October, 11 journalists were injured, 02 threatened, 05 were assaulted, one was abducted and later rescued. During this time a private television channel Desh TV and print media Bhorer Kagoj were bombed by unidentified persons.

### Incidents of violence against women

#### *A Teacher and a mother of a female student killed by assailants*

33. A group of criminals killed chemistry teacher, Mizanur Rahman Mizan, of Lokmanpur College in Bagatipara Upazila under Natore district as he had been protesting against the continuous stalking of one of his female students in college. On October 12, 2010, local criminals Asif and Rajon stopped him while he was on his motorcycle and hit him with iron rods. On October 25, 2010, Mizanur Rahman Mizan died while under treatment at the hospital. The police arrested Asif and Rajon in relation to this incident.<sup>28</sup>
34. On October 26, 2010, Chapa Rani Bhoumik (48), mother of female student at Garakhola under Modhukhali Upazila in Faridpur district was killed by local criminal Debashish Saha Roni and his associates who ran over her on a motorcycle. She had protested against the stalking of her two daughters Hira and Mukta. She was admitted to the local hospital where she later died.<sup>29</sup> Police arrested Debashish Saha Roni in this connection.
35. In October 2010, 04 persons were killed due to stalking. Among those four one 17 year old girl was burnt as she refused a love proposal from her stalker. One teacher and one mother and one husband were killed as they protested against stalking. During this time 19 persons were also injured in various incidents related to speaking out against stalking.

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<sup>28</sup> The Daily Amar Desh, 26/10/2010

<sup>29</sup> The Daily Kaler Kantho, 28/10/2010



### *Dowry- related Violence*

36. On October 9, 2010, Abdul Jabbar of Nohata village under Gauripur Upazila in Mymensingh, chained up his wife Rehana Khatun (30) to a pillar in their house. On October 14, 2010, a police force led by Sub Inspector Shahidullah of Gauripur Police Station rescued Rehana Khatun.<sup>30</sup>
37. During the month of October, 31 women and one man have been the victims of dowry-related violence. Out of them 16 women have been killed for dowry, and 15 have been abused and assaulted in various ways. One father was stabbed by his son in law as he tried to protect his daughter from her dowry greedy husband.

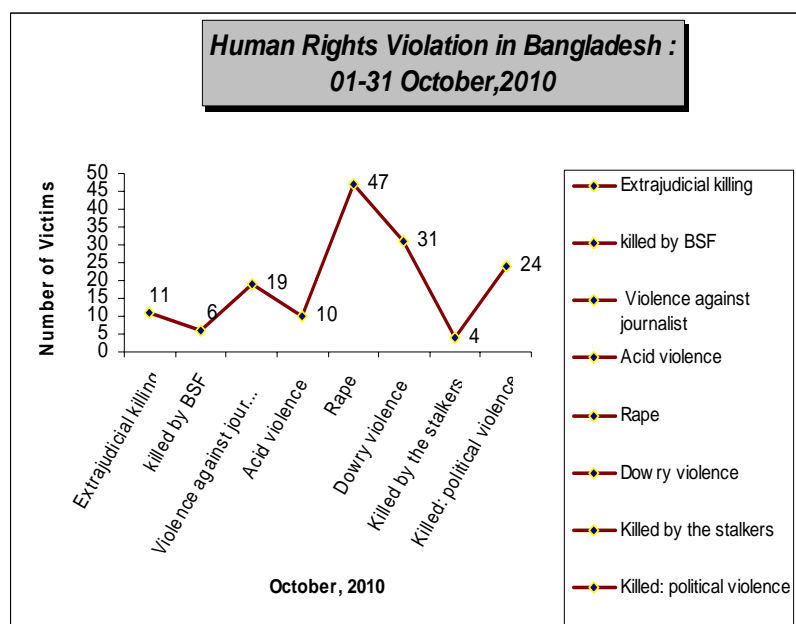
### *Rape*

38. On October 18, 2010 a mentally challenged teenager from Bhuiyanbagh area in Narayanganj city, was raped by 3-4 men while on her way to her father's grocery shop. The men, including one named Rassel, raped her and videotaped the incident. After this, the criminals demanded BDT 20,000 from the victim's family.
39. In the month of October 2010, 47 women and female children have been rape victims. Among them 16 were women and 31 were children. Also, among them 06 women were killed after having been raped and 10 women were the victims of gang rape. 01 child was killed after having been raped and 10 were gang raped. It is very alarming that so many children have been raped.

### *Acid-Violence*

40. During the month of October, 10 people have been the victims of acid-violence. Among them 08 were women, 01 was a man, 01 was a girl child.

<i>Statistics of Human Rights violations</i>	
01-31 October, 2010	
Human Rights Violation	Victim Persons
<i>Extrajudicial killing</i>	11
<i>killed by BSF</i>	6
<i>Violence against journalist</i>	19
<i>Acid violence</i>	10
<i>Rape</i>	47
<i>Dowry violence against women</i>	31
<i>Killed by the stalkers</i>	4
<i>Killed: political violence</i>	24



<sup>30</sup> The Daily Ittefaq, 17/10/2010

## Recommendations

1. The government needs to act immediately and responsibly to stop political- violence as this form of violence. Proper and lawful measures need to be taken against those responsible for, and involved in political-violence. The judiciary needs to be kept independent and free from party influence.
2. The incidents of usurpation of land by the army in Rugganj and the running over of civilians by a train in Sirajganj, need to be investigated independently and proper action needs to be taken against those who are responsible. The case filed against thousands of anonymous individuals needs to be withdrawn.
3. The issue of human rights violations at the borders needs to be raised at talks between Bangladesh and India. Trespassing illegally in to the land of a sovereign country, purposefully shooting its citizens without any provocation on their part are serious breaches of International and Human Rights laws. The Bangladesh government needs to take efficient and urgent steps to stop the trespassing and killing of civilians by the BSF at the border. It also needs to adopt measures to ensure the safety of the citizens who reside near the border. Also, proper investigations need to be carried out into the shooting and killings conducted by the BSF, those responsible must be given requisite and exemplary punishment, and the families of the victims of violence at the border need to be compensated by the Indian government.
4. Communities struggling to attain self-determination need to be treated with compassion and political sensitivity as well as in line with the international norms and covenants.
5. An independent commission, to investigate into extra-judicial killings, needs to be set up and those responsible for such crimes need to be brought to justice.
6. Transparency and accountability must be ensured in the trials of those accused of the BDR mutiny.
7. The government needs to protect the rights of religious minorities and needs to ensure safety of their life and property.
8. The government needs to take proper steps to bring a stop to violence against women. The perpetrators must be brought under the ambit of law, properly judged and punished. The government also needs to play a responsible role in assisting the victims to take requisite legal actions.
9. Human rights, Women's rights, Laws for the Prevention of Violence against Women and Children need to be incorporated into the curriculum of primary and higher-secondary education. The substantial reasons behind why men go astray and resort to committing violent acts against women and children need to be identified.

10. The Government must immediately stop patronising its student and youth activists who have committed grave offences. Such patronisation can only encourage extremely serious future repercussions.

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**Notes:**

1. Odhikar seeks to uphold the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the people.
2. Odhikar documents and records violations of human rights and receives information from its network of human rights defenders and monitors media reports in twelve national daily newspapers.
3. Odhikar conducts detailed fact-finding investigations into some of the most significant violations.
4. Odhikar is consistent in its human rights reporting and is committed to remain so.