



November 01, 2011

Human Rights Monitoring Report

October 01 - 31, 2011

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Odhikar defends the 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. Odhikar documents and records violations of human rights and receives information from its network of local human rights defenders and by monitoring media reports in twelve national daily newspapers. Odhikar conducts detailed fact-finding missions into incidents of serious human rights violations.

In line with this campaign, an account of the human rights situation of Bangladesh covering the month of October 2011 is presented below:

Political violence continues

1. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in October 2011, 11 persons were killed and 919 injured in political violence. 39 incidents of internal violence in the Awami League and 10 in the BNP were also recorded during this period. In addition to this, 01 person was killed and 431 people were injured in Awami League internal conflicts while 01 person was killed and 105 were injured in BNP internal conflicts.
2. On October 9, 2011, one man named Rafiqul Islam was killed and 35 injured due to a clash between supporters of the Vice-President of Hosendi Union unit Awami League, Abdul Matin Montu and Information and Research Secretary of Upazila Jubo League¹, Arif Hossain, in Charbalaki under Gazaria Upazila in Munshiganj district. The clash took place while both groups were returning to their areas after attending the Gazaria Court for a case filed during UP elections. During the clash, 30 houses of both the groups were vandalised and looted.²
3. On October 8, 2011, one man named Aktar Hossain (33) was killed and 10 others were injured due to clash between supporters of Sreenagar unit Jubo Dal³ President, Mohammad Sayem and local Jubo Dal organiser, Ishbal Mahmud Akash in Dayahata village under Sreenagar Upazila of Munshiganj district.⁴

Narayanganj City Corporation election

4. The Narayanganj City Corporation election was held on October 30, 2011. Odhikar observed the election in 20 polling centres out of 163, by deploying two teams, each consisting of five members. Odhikar observed the electoral environment of the polling centres and the surrounding areas. Numerous incidents of small irregularities were observed in the polling centres that Odhikar monitored.
5. Female voters at Tatkhana Government Primary School-1 polling centre in ward no. 7 had to wait for more than 1 and half hours in queue, due to a huge presence of voters. Female voters of three villages had come together in the centre and they noticed that there were no serial numbers for voters. As a result, they had to join another queue which caused delays. Similarly, voters were observed changing queues three/four times. Supporters of Shamim Osman were also seen shouting outside the polling centre.

¹ Youth wing of Awami League

² The daily Prothom Alo, 14/10/2011

³ Youth wing of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

⁴ The Daily Ittefaq, 09/10/2011

6. The Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) was not ready at booth no. 10 of the Jhalkuri Paschim Government Primary School centre even by 7.45 am. At 8.05 am the Presiding Officer, Mostakar Ahmed saw that the plug pin of EVM control unit was broken. Voting started at 8.35 am after setting up another EVM. No polling agent of the Mayoral candidate, Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy with the symbol Dowat-Kolom (Inkpot) was seen at this centre. Persons with physical disabilities and elderly voters faced difficulty, as the polling centre was set up in the first floor. There was no privacy for voters who were voting through EVM. Cycle rickshaws and rickshaw vans were seen to have been arranged by almost all candidates for transporting voters to and from the polling centres. Campaigning for all candidates was seen outside the centre.
7. Voters at the Bibi Moriam Girls High School-1 polling centre in ward no. 11 had to search out polling booths, due to mismanagement. Elderly voters were seen waiting for a long time in queue. Law enforcement agencies assigned for this polling centre blocked the supporters of Mayor Candidate, Shamin Osman, when they tried to forcibly enter the polling centre. Later Shamin Osman threatened the police force for stopping his supporters.
8. Supporters of Mayor candidate with symbol 'Dewal Ghori' (Wall Clock) led by General Secretary of city unit Awami League, Khokon Saha and his brother Liton Saha, were seen to be influencing the voters to vote for their candidate at Narayaganj Club polling centre in ward no. 14. They also assaulted Rafiur Rabbi a supporter of Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy. There was no special arrangement for disable and elderly voters at this centre.
9. Voters at the Gono Biddya Niketon High School-1 polling centre in ward no. 15 had to look for the polling booths, due to mismanagement. Local Jubo Dal⁵ leader Mohammad Jahangir Alam, who is the elder brother of Councilor candidate, Humayun Kabir, was seen influencing the voters to vote for symbol 'Singha' (Lion). The supporters of 'Dewal Ghori' were also found to be influencing the voters.
10. Voters were seen casting their votes with the help of the election officials at Morgan Girls High School-2 polling centre in ward no. 16, as the voters were facing problems with the EVM system. Assistant Presiding Officer, Smriti Roy, informed Odhikar that the election officials had to mark the voters' finger with ball point pen instead of indelible ink as there was no supply of indelible ink.
11. Some minor discrepancies were observed in Beparipara Government Primary School polling centre in ward no. 20. There were no voting facilities for elderly voters, persons with physical disabilities and expectant mothers in this centre. A supporter of Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy, Mohammad Dipu, was assaulted by supporters of Shamim Osman, including Kazemuddin,

⁵ Youth wing of BNP

- Mohammad Sagor, Mohammad Robin and former UP member Shafique Dhali and others, while he was providing voters with serial numbers outside the Farajikanda Government Primary School polling centre at 9.30 am. Dipu was beaten by them and severely injured. Later, police arrived and rescued him.
12. On Election Day, campaigning with banners, placards, festoons and posters were observed in every polling centre in favour of almost all candidates.
 13. It is to be mentioned here that the Election Commission asked the government to deploy the Army during the Narayanganj City Corporation election, which the government did not do. Subsequently the Chief Election Commissioner raised the allegation against the government for violating the Constitution. Odhikar believes that no election will be credible under a weak Election Commission.

Obstruction of public meetings by imposing section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure

14. According to Odhikar's statistics during the month of October, a total of 10 instances of imposition of Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure were recorded across the country, mainly to stop political gatherings from occurring.
In many cases the ruling party Awami League and its front organisations, Chhatra League⁶ and Jubo League⁷ called meetings at the same place, at the same time as the Opposition organisations, which resulted in the imposition of Section 144 by the local administration, despite the fact that the Opposition organisations had permission to organise such meetings.
15. On October 14, 2011, the local administration stopped a meeting organised by the Liberal Democratic Party by imposing Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure at Alikamora Eidgah Moidan under Chandina Upazila in Comilla when local Awami League called a counter meeting at the same place. The Presidium member of the Liberal Democratic Party, Redwan Ahmed said that they took permission from the Eidgah Committee 15 days before and they were taking preparations to organise such meeting.⁸
16. Odhikar condemns such incidents which violates the right to freedom of assembly. Every citizen of the State has the Constitutional right to assemble and to participate in public meetings and processions through peaceful means. Article 37 of the Constitution guarantees the rights of the citizens to organise meetings and peaceful processions. Odhikar is concerned that violation of such fundamental rights by the state and denial of peaceful expression of grievances may eventually create discontent and precipitate violence.

⁶ Student wing of Awami League

⁷ Student wing of BNP

⁸ The daily Manabzamin, 15/10/2011

Extrajudicial killings

17. In October, 2011, according to information gathered by Odhikar, 05 persons were killed extra-judicially by law enforcement agencies.
18. On October 5, 2011, a leader of the Revolutionary Communist Party, Mukul, was killed in so-called 'gunfight' between police and RAB in Harinakundu under Jhenaidah district.⁹
19. On October 22, 2011, Ziaur Rahman (36) and Abdus Salam (33) were shot dead by RAB in Swastipur village in Kushtia. A press release of RAB says that both the deceased were members of a mugging syndicate. They died in 'crossfire' between RAB while they were escaping after robbing a CNG-auto rickshaw.¹⁰ However, the families of the deceased alleged that their influential opponents had spent a huge amount of money to pay RAB for killing them, due to business rivalry.¹¹
20. On February 3, 2011, the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told a press conference that "I had taken a stand against extrajudicial killings. The incidents of extrajudicial killing have been taking place for a long time which cannot be stopped over night."¹²
21. Odhikar is gravely concerned by the Prime Minister's statement- 'extrajudicial killings cannot be stopped overnight'. Given the increasingly deteriorating situation of law and order, such comment will only encourage the persons who are involved in extrajudicial killings.

Types of death

Crossfire/encounter/gun fight:

22. Among the 05 extrajudicial killings, 05 persons were killed in 'crossfire/encounters/gun fights'. Among the deceased 04 were allegedly killed by RAB and 01 jointly by RAB-Police.

Identities of the deceased:

23. Of the 05 deceased, 01 was Regional leader of Biplobi Communist Party; 01 was member of Panna Bahini; 01 was farmer and 02 were unidentified youths.

Death in jail

24. In October 2011, 05 persons reportedly died in jail.

⁹ Fact-finding report of Odhikar, 15 - 17 October 2011

¹⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 24/10/2011

¹¹ Report from Odhikar's human rights defender, 25/10/2011

¹² The daily Prothom Alo, 04/02/2011

Public lynching

25. In October 2011, 08 people were allegedly killed due to public lynching. Odhikar believes that the tendency of taking the law into one's own hands is increasing, as people are losing their confidence in the police.

Petro Bangla remain silent on agreement between Conoco Philips

26. On October 2, 2011 four citizens of the country, political analyst and poet Farhad Mazhar; Professor of BRAC University, Dr. Manjur Karim; New Age Editor, Nurul Kabir; and Odhikar Secretary Advocate Adilur Rahman Khan submitted a letter to the Chairman of Petro Bangla, according to Section 8 of the Information Act 2009, in order to get a certified copy of the agreement signed between it and multi national company Conoco Philips. In the letter, they mentioned that a PSC agreement was signed between Petro Bangla and Conoco Philips on June 16, 2011 for exploring two gas blocks in the sea. Public and national interests are related to this agreement. Despite submitting a request letter as citizens of the country, they have not received any information in relation to this matter from the Petro Bangla even after 29 days of submission.

Disappearance of persons after arrest by men claiming to be members of law enforcement agencies

27. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in October 2011, 02 persons allegedly disappeared after being picked up by men who identified themselves as members of law enforcing agencies.
28. On October 19, 2011, Nur Mohammad Haji (75), President of 41 Ward Awami League, disappeared from his house at Savar. His family alleged that he was picked up at midnight by some men in civilian clothes. His whereabouts still remain unknown.¹³
29. Odhikar expresses concern over such incidents of arrests followed by enforced disappearances and demands that the Government should arrange for the search and rescue of the disappeared and also take action against those involved in perpetrating this crime.

BSF violations

30. In October 2011, along the India-Bangladesh border, the BSF allegedly killed 01 and injured 02 Bangladeshis. During this time, 06 Bangladeshis were allegedly abducted by the BSF.
31. On October 14, 2011, 5/6 armed members of the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) obstructed Bangladeshi businessmen from unloading coal and also verbally abused them after illegally entering into Bangladesh territory at the coal dumping point in Tamabil of Sylhet. At that time, some workers

¹³ The daily Prothom Alo, 22/10/2011

stationed at Tamabil Port informed the matter to the members of the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB). Though the BGB members observed the whole incident they did not come forward to stop the Indian intruders. Later, BSF had to leave the place after the protests of businessmen, workers and local inhabitants.¹⁴

32. On October 24, 2011 a team of 20/25 BSF members entered Bangladesh through the Sreeram Border under Patgram Upazila in Lalmoniorhat district and ransacked three houses and took away 4 cows. The BSF also threatened and verbally abused Bangladeshi citizens.¹⁵
33. On October 8, 2011, two Bangladeshis named Swapon and Waj Ghosh were tortured by the BSF at Chormajhdoria border under Poba Upazila in Rajshahi district. Both were left at the border in critical condition. Swapon died on the spot and later local people rescued Waj Ghosh and admitted him to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.¹⁶
34. Odhikar condemns the inactions of the BGB, which only encourages the BSF to enter Bangladesh and threaten our sovereignty. Odhikar also expresses its gratitude towards the brave Bangladeshi people living along the border for resisting against Indian aggression.

Taka 5000 demanded as minimum wages for workers

35. On October 22, 2011, Sromik Kormochari Oikko Porishad (SKOP), at a meeting demanded a minimum wage of Taka 5000.00 for workers, reopening factories that had shut down and ensuring the right to have trade unions.¹⁷
36. Odhikar believes that the livelihood of the lower and middle income people has become difficult due to constant price hikes and economic inflation. Odhikar extends its solidarity with the demands of SKOP.

Bangladeshi migrant workers beheaded in Saudi Arabia

37. On October 7, 2011, eight Bangladeshi migrant workers were beheaded in Saudi Arabia for their involvement in a robbery and the subsequent murder of an Egyptian security guard in 2007 in Riyadh. Those beheaded are Shumon Mia of Kamarpur village under Pakundia Upazila in Kishoreganj; Masud and Sumon, of Purvashubha village under Kalihati Upazila in Tangail; Mamun of Abdullahpara village under Sadar Upazila in Tangail; Shafiqul Islam of Bhatkurar Chala village under Shafipur Upazila in Tangail; Farooque of Poiakandi village under Daudkandi Upazila in Comilla; Abul Hossain of Faridpur; and Motiar Rahman of Krishnanagar village under Sadar Upazila in Faridpur.¹⁸

¹⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 15/10/2011

¹⁵ The daily Amar Desh and the Daily Star, 26/10/2011

¹⁶ The daily Amar Desh, 13/10/2011

¹⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 23/10/2011

¹⁸ The daily Naya Diganta, 09/10/2011

38. As per Saudi law, anyone sentenced to death for killing another can only be pardoned by the victim's family. The families of the eight Bangladeshis have dismissed the government claim that it had done everything to save their lives. They alleged that the Bangladeshi authorities concerned neither appointed a defense lawyer nor took adequate measures for clemency.¹⁹
39. Odhikar expresses its grave concern over the allegations of the Bangladesh Government's failure to take effective steps to protect its workers. Such claim only highlights the lack of care of Bangladeshi citizens abroad.

Freedom of the media

40. According to information gathered by Odhikar, a total of 10 journalists were injured, 04 received threats and 03 journalists were assaulted during October 2011.
41. On October 12, 2011, a group led by the General Secretary of Feni district unit BNP, Fazlur Rahman Bakul, attacked Rafiqul Islam, General Secretary of Feni Press Club and the district correspondent of the daily Amar Desh. Rafiqul was admitted to Feni Sadar Hospital in a critical condition. It is to be mentioned that he was attacked due to his reporting against Fazlur Rahman Bakul at various times.²⁰
42. Odhikar expresses concern over the incidents of attacks and threats to journalists for conducting their professional duties and also demands that the perpetrators be brought to justice.

Rights of religious minority communities

43. A number of incidents, including vandalising images of goddesses and attacks on the biggest Hindu religious festival, Durga Puja, took place at various places across the country.
44. On October 1, 2011, a group vandalised 7 religious images near the Hindu temple at Amadi Bazar under Koira Upazila in Khulna.²¹
45. On October 4, 2011, images of Kali Mandir were vandalised by some unidentified criminals at night in Mollapara village and Saheberhat Bazar in Ratnapur union under Agoiljhora Upazila in Barisal.²²
46. On October 6, 2011, unidentified criminals vandalised images of Durga Mandir at night in Badarganj under Rangpur district.²³
47. Odhikar expresses its concern over the failure of the State in order to protect the rights of the religious minority groups.

¹⁹ The Daily Star, 29/10/2011

²⁰ The daily Amar Desh, 14/10/2011

²¹ The daily Jugantor, 03/10/2011

²² The daily Jugantor, 06/10/2011

²³ The daily New Age, 12/10/2011

Violence against women

48. During October 2011, a significant number of women were the victims of rape, dowry related violence, acid violence, domestic violence and sexual harassment.

Rape:

49. During the month of October 2011, a total of 47 females were reportedly raped. Among them, 12 were women and 35 were children. Of the women, 03 were killed after being raped and 04 were victims of gang rape. Out of the 35 child victims, 03 children were killed after being raped and 11 were victims of gang rape and 01 child was committed suicide.²⁴

50. On October 16, 2011, a body of a 10-year school girl named Sharmin was recovered from Pirganj in Rangpur district. She had been missing from October 15, 2011. Police said after a primary investigation that the girl was killed after being raped.²⁵

51. On October 15, 2011 a college student came to Satkhira for a visit. While returning home in the evening she met with a known constable of Debhata Police Station, Salauddin. Salauddin raped her in the Shapla Hotel located at Satkhira town, after agreeing to escort her home. Police constable Salauddin was arrested in this regard.²⁶

Sexual harassment and stalking:

52. According to information gathered by Odhikar, a total of 75 girls and women were victims of sexual harassment during the month of October 2011. Among them, 03 committed suicide, 02 were killed, 09 injured, 02 were abducted, 03 assaulted and 02 suffered an attempt to rape. In protest against such acts of sexual harassment against women, 01 man was killed and 30 men were injured and 03 women were injured by the stalkers.²⁷

53. On October 12, 2011, a teacher of Purbo Sujankathi Government Primary School, Sharmin Jahan (24), who was 5 months pregnant, was stabbed to death by a local Jubo League leader, Abul Hossain, when she was returning home from her school. Sharmin had been sexually harassed by Abul Hossain for a long time.²⁸

Dowry-related violence:

54. During October 2011, a total of 40 women were subjected to dowry related violence. Of these women, it has been alleged that 26 women were killed

²⁴ Odhikar documentation

²⁵ The daily Kaler Kantha, 17/10/2011

²⁶ The daily Manabzamin, 18/10/2011

²⁷ Odhikar documentation

²⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 13/10/2011

because of dowry, 11 were ill-treated in various other ways for dowry demands and 03 women committed suicide.²⁹

Acid violence:

55. According to information gathered by Odhikar during the period of October 2011, it was reported that 07 persons became victims of acid violence. Of these affected persons, 03 were women and 01 was a man, 02 were boys and 01 was a girl.³⁰

Human rights defender harassed

56. On October 23, 2011, human rights defender of Odhikar, Shampa Goswami was harassed and threatened by a group of criminals at Laboni Mor of Satkhira district town, for lending support to an elderly female survivor of gang rape. That day, Shampa and her younger brother's friend, were sitting at Laboni Bakery, waiting for another human rights defender, Sukumar Das Bachchu, when they were approached and harassed by a group of men. Shampa left the shop and tried to call the police. The criminals surrounded her and forcibly took her to the roof of a nearby building with her brother's friend. Her cell phone was also taken away by the men. They forced them to sit together and began taking photographs of them with a cell phone, while continuing to threaten them. They tried to blackmail Shampa, saying that they would send the photographs to the newspapers unless she paid them money. She managed to escape with the help of a local journalist who came up on the roof on hearing the chaos. A case was filed with Satkhira Sadar Police Station in this regard under sections 143/342/379/506 of the Penal Code, being case no. 72, dated 25/10/2011. Police arrested one of the accused, Samir, but could not arrest the accused number one, Shushanto Kaur.

57. Odhikar came to know that Shushanto Kaur is still threatening Shampa. It is to be mentioned that Shampa Goswami has been working as human rights defender of Odhikar in Satkhira. She used to carry out fact-finding on human rights abuses, in particular, on cases of violence against women.

58. Amnesty International has issued an urgent action appeal and requested the authorities to take urgent steps to ensure the security of female rights activist Shampa Goswami who is facing harassment and threats from a group of men in Satkhira. AI also requested the authorities to provide full protection to Shampa Goswami from any further harassment.³¹

²⁹ Odhikar documentation

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Urgent Action, Amnesty International, 26/10/2011, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA13/010/2011/en/fd71f2c9-bbc5-4d0c-bfad-68e78b3eb7df/asa130102011en.pdf>

Statistics: January 01 - October 31, 2011*												
Type of Human Rights Violation		January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	Total
Extra-judicial killings	Crossfire	7	15	5	3	2	5	1	6	5	5	54
	Tortured to death	0	1	3	2	4	0	0	2	3	0	15
	Beaten to death	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Shot	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Total	7	17	8	5	7	5	1	8	8	5	71
Human rights violations by Indian BSF	Bangladeshis Killed	4	1	0	5	4	3	3	1	0	1	22
	Bangladeshis Injured	3	6	21	12	1	6	1	1	0	2	53
	Bangladeshis Abducted	2	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	6	6	18
Deaths in Jail		4	10	12	7	15	13	9	8	6	5	89
Attack on journalists	Injured	8	8	4	9	6	36	13	14	6	10	114
	Threatened	4	6	10	0	14	0	3	2	1	4	44
	Assaulted	4	1	5	3	1	5	3	3	13	3	41
Political violence	Killed	14	10	6	8	14	13	7	10	13	11	106
	Injured	664	1015	848	1229	630	1127	1247	902	1220	919	9801
Disappearances		0	1	0	1	7	1	1	4	3	2	20
Acid violence		6	7	17	7	14	4	6	14	13	7	95
Dowry related violence		24	37	46	30	48	34	60	53	48	42	422
Rape		34	53	62	66	59	53	88	61	102	47	625
Sexual harassment /Stalking of women		59	94	76	58	53	36	71	45	77	78	647
Public lynching		8	18	12	18	11	8	20	10	15	8	128

Recommendations

1. The Government must take effective action to stop all forms of political violence. The law enforcement agencies need to be proactive to stop such violence and carry out their duty in an accountable and unbiased manner.
2. The Government should refrain from the culture of imposing section 144 of the Cr.P.C. to stop political programmes and also abstain from repression on opponent political activists.

3. Extra-judicial killings, torture and enforced disappearances must come to an end. The Government must bring all involved in such acts before justice through proper and independent investigation.
4. The Government should rescue or recover the victims of disappearances and also give proper explanation regarding the persons who were arrested by people claiming to be law enforcement agencies. Odhikar urges the government accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances.
5. The Bangladesh Government should ask for an explanation and put pressure on the Indian government regarding BSF's intrusion into Bangladesh territory. The government should investigate the incidents of all killings and torture of Bangladeshi citizens by the BSF and strongly demand from the Indian Government adequate compensation for the families of the victims and trial and punishment for the perpetrators. The Government should also ensure the security of the Bangladeshi citizens residing at the border areas.
6. Perpetrators, who attack journalists, under political shelter must be arrested and brought to justice.
7. The Government should ensure the rights of the religious minority communities, including the security of their life, property and religious infrastructures.
8. Perpetrators who assaulted and threatened human rights defender, Shampa Goswami should be brought to justice. The Government should also ensure the security of Shampa Goswami.
9. The Government must take appropriate measures to stop violence against women and the offenders must be brought under the purview of the law to ensure that justice is served. The relevant authorities need to be proactive in providing adequate legal support to the victims. Public awareness regarding the rights of women, prevention of violence against women and children as well as related laws must be incorporated into the primary, secondary and higher secondary school books.
10. Human rights defenders work to highlight abuse and violence on citizens, in the hope that the Government will rectify matters and improve the law and order situation. The Government should recognize the contribution of HRDs and afford them protection, instead of encouraging their harassment by state and non-state actors.

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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.