**Election Violence Education and Resolution (EVER)**

**Third Report on Electoral Violence**
**14 November to 30 November 2006**

**Prepared by Odhikar and IFES**
**Release Date: 12 December 2006**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Odhikar Election Violence Education and Resolution (EVER) project in Bangladesh, built on a network of monitors in 45 constituencies, aims to provide accurate and timely data on patterns of election violence to the public, political parties, election and security officials, and other stakeholders in Bangladesh to help them develop strategies to mitigate such incidents.[1] The Third Report on Electoral Violence, issued by the Odhikar EVER project, covers the period from 14 to 30 November 2006. A total of 58 incidents of election-related violence were captured and verified by EVER monitors during this period.

## Key Findings

- Incidents of violence in the third reporting period were spread out throughout the two week period, much like the last report; however, a spike occurred on November 14, which marked the end of the November 12-14 action by supporters of the fourteen party alliance led by the Awami League (AL) protesting the composition of the Election Commission (EC).

- The total number of incidents (58) remained roughly the same as last period (51) and roughly half that of the first reporting period (99). Of the 45 monitored constituencies, 24 recorded incidents this period.

- As in the previous two EVER reports, supporters/activists of the fourteen party alliance were the most active participants in the violence that took place. Supporters/activists of the four party alliance led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) were also active participants in many of the incidents of violence. Both alliances were among the perpetrators in over half the incidents reported.

- As in the first two reports, Dhaka and Chittagong divisions continue to have the highest number of incidents. This period Dhaka had the highest number of incidents reported, with more than twice as many incidents as last period, while Chittagong was home to the second highest number of incidents. Khulna had fewer incidents, and the lowest number of incidents were recorded in Barishal, Rajshahi and Sylhet.

- Violence decreased this period in the two constituencies with the highest number of incidents recorded during the first month of monitoring (Patuakhali – 1 and Cox's Bazaar – 1). The most incidents of violence during this period were recorded in Jessore – 3 (9 incidents) and Dhaka – 11 (8 incidents).

- In total, **2 people were reportedly killed** and more than **250 wounded** in the recorded incidents during this period. These numbers are nearly the same as in the last reporting period, but remain much lower than those documented at the end of October in the first reporting period.

- Analysis of monitors' reports from more peaceful versus more violent constituencies over this reporting period indicates that the proactive presence of security forces can reduce the potential for violence during processions and other mass gatherings, and that political leaders' denouncement of violence can have a large impact on supporters in their communities. Community pressure on political leaders to refrain from using violence is also a common feature of more peaceful areas.

## Conclusions

As in the second fortnightly report, violence occurred nearly every day during the last two weeks, though the number of incidents is still about half what was reported during the end of October. Odhikar believes that election-related violence increases fear and decreases participation of citizens in the election process specifically and democratic processes in general.

---

[1] Within the EVER framework, "election-related violence" refers to any violence (harm) or threat of violence (harm) that is aimed at disrupting any part of the electoral or political process during the election period. Election violence generally involves political parties, their supporters, journalists, agents of the government, election administrators and the general population, and includes threats, assault, murder, destruction of property, and physical or psychological harm. An "incident" of election violence refers to any act that 1) has a specific victim(s) and perpetrator(s) and occurs within a limited timeframe and location; 2) meets the definition of election-related violence; and 3) has been verified by monitors using at least two different sources of information. Please contact Odhikar with methodological details, questions, or feedback.

Analysis of trends reported in both more peaceful and more violent constituencies shows that actions by both political party leaders and security officials can have a positive impact on reducing violence. Findings also indicate that when political party leaders feel pressure to reduce violence, they respond. Therefore raising public awareness of the need to pressure party leaders could be very helpful. Given that the level of competition between and within parties is likely to rise as elections approach, it is all the more important to take more action now to encourage nonviolent campaigning and activism.

## Recommendations

- Findings indicate that rallies/strikes are the sites of most violence, and key steps should be taken to prevent violence:
  - Processions and rallies should be covered by a proactive police presence, with particular attention to adequate numbers of police to avoid clashes in Dhaka and Chittagong; and
  - Processions, rallies or other events by different parties should not be scheduled on the same day

- Particularly for Dhaka division, security officials should take note of the high numbers of people wounded per incident and consider special attention to reducing the potential for violence as well as its intensity, taking into account the types of weapons used and frequency of incidents.

- Political party leaders should denounce violence by their supporters and publicly commit to nonviolent campaigns and mass actions.

- Civil society, community, religious, and business leaders and organizations, as well as other high profile citizens, should make public statements denouncing the cycles of violence and promoting peaceful resolution of differences.

- Patterns of violence identified in this report should be addressed by local political, community, and law enforcement leaders. In particular, attention should be paid to addressing causes and patterns of violence in constituencies with continuing high levels of incidents such as Patuakhali – 1 and Cox's Bazaar – 1, and those identified in this period with the most incidents (were Jessore – 3 (9 incidents) and Dhaka – 11 (8 incidents).

- All stakeholders, and in particular, groups specializing in conflict resolution or mitigation during the elections should make use of data relevant to their communities and offer feedback to Monitors or through Odhikar headquarters about the EVER project, and are welcome to offer suggested recommendations.

## About the Odhikar EVER Project

Odhikar, a Bangladeshi human rights organization, is implementing the monitoring program for the EVER methodology in Bangladesh. The EVER program has been designed by IFES to capture accurate information about incidents of election-related violence in a methodologically reliable manner, so that stakeholders in the electoral process can use this information to design and implement effective electoral interventions in a country. This first-of-its-kind activity in Bangladesh is intended to focus attention on the very serious issue of election violence in the country, and provide data that can be used to reduce the level of violence related to elections in Bangladesh. Odhikar and its EVER monitoring are part of activities in connection with the Election Working Group (EWG), made of 35 civil society organizations undertaking various initiatives concerning issues such as accountability and reducing election violence. The EWG and the Odhikar EVER project are supported by the Asia Foundation. Odhikar is focusing its EVER monitoring activities on 45 electoral constituencies (spread throughout each of the 6 divisions) that have a history of election-related violence in Bangladesh. Each EVER monitor is responsible for identifying and gathering key information on incidents of election-related violence within each of these constituencies, as well as identifying tensions that exhibit the potential for violence. EVER utilizes a rigorous methodology that requires multiple sources to verify incidents of election-related violence. Thus, in any one constituency the incidents captured by the EVER monitors may not reflect all incidents rumored to have taken place in the constituency. However, the incidents reported by EVER monitors have a high degree of reliability that will allow election stakeholders to identify the patterns of election-related violence in the 45 constituencies.

# DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Timeline

There were a total of 58 incidents recorded during the November 14 to November 30 period, a slight increase from the 51 recorded in Report 2. A spike in the number of incidents during this period occurred on November 14, the 2$^{nd}$ day of a blockade begun by the fourteen party alliance to demand, among other things, the reconstitution of the Election Commission, an updating of the voters list and the resignation of the Chief Advisor to the Caretaker Government.

Another noticeable, though smaller, spike occurred around November 20-22, at the time of another blockade called by the fourteen party alliance. Not all incidents on these dates were related to the blockades, but in each Report thus far, more incidents have occurred during days involving mass actions. These were the 3$^{rd}$ and 4$^{th}$ phases of actions called by the fourteen party alliance regarding the above-mentioned demands.

A spike in the number of incidents occurred again during 20-22 November 2006, because of the 3$^{rd}$ round of blockade called by the fourteen party alliance as their demands were not fulfilled. Figure 1 highlights the timeline of incidents during this reporting period.

**Figure 1. Number of Incidents by Date**
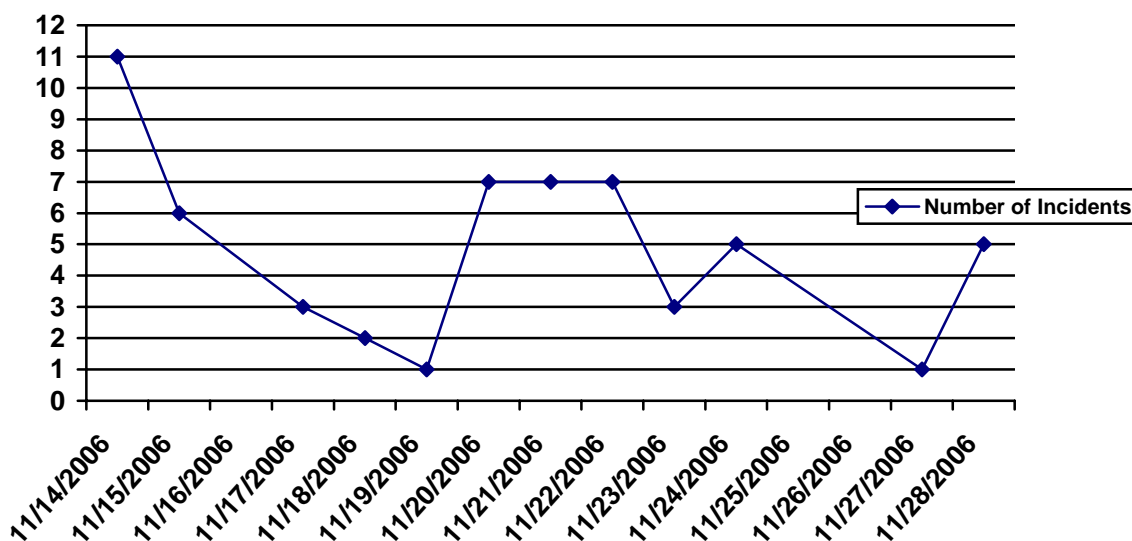


## Regional Distribution of Incidents in the 45 Constituencies

In the last reporting period, incidents were recorded in 29 of 45 constituencies in which EVER monitoring is taking place. For the current reporting period, the number of constituencies in which incidents were recorded has dropped to 24.

The regional distribution of incidents in this second reporting period is fairly similar to the pattern observed in the first reporting period. As in the second reporting period, a relatively small number of incidents took place in Rajshahi, Sylhet and Barisal divisions. The highest number of incidents took place in Dhaka, while a comparatively high number of incidents also took place in Chittagong and Khulna divisions. Dhaka and Chittagong divisions continue to have the highest number of incidents, but during this period, incidents in Dhaka increased from 10 in the last Report to 24 in this Report. The number of incidents decreased from 10 to 4 in Barisal while the number of incidents in other divisions remained about the same (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Divisional Breakdown of Incidents**
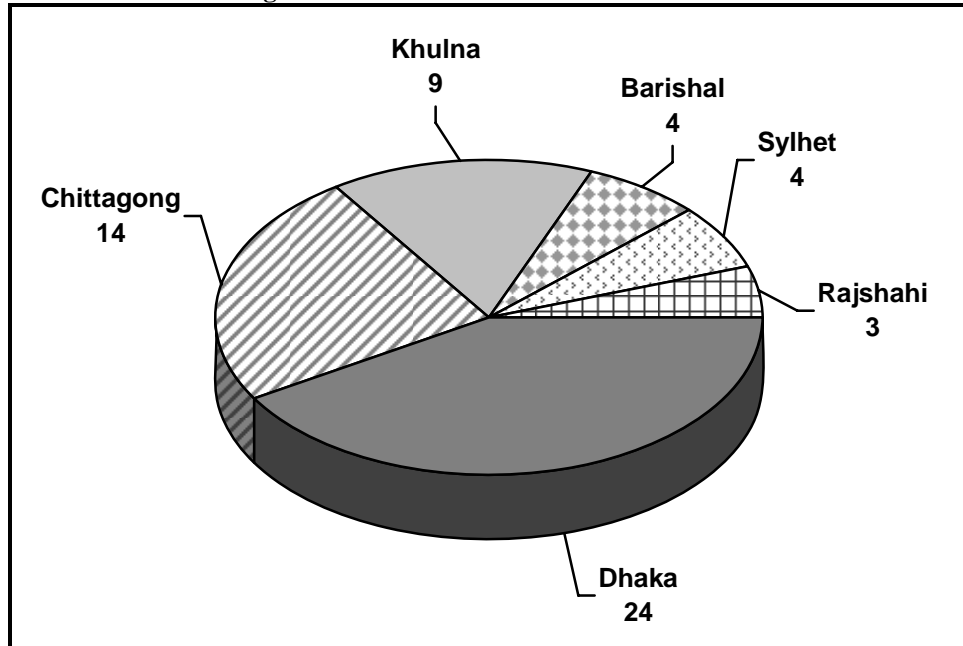


A total of 24 incidents were documented this period in Dhaka division, while 14 were recorded in Chittagong and 9 incidents took place in Barisal division. In the six weeks that EVER monitoring has been taking place, there have been 70 incidents in Dhaka, while there have been 52 incidents in Chittagong. Similarly in the past six weeks, there have been 34 incidents recorded in Khulna, 29 incidents recorded each in Barishal and Sylhet, and Rajshahi has recorded 12 incidents.

In the last reporting period, there were several constituencies which were highlighted as having a high number of recorded incidents (Figure 3 next page).  The two constituencies with the highest number of incidents in this reporting period were Jessore – 3 (9 incidents) and Dhaka – 11 (8 incidents). These constituencies had not been noted for high numbers of incidents in previous reports, and the reasons for the elevated number of incidents in these constituencies in this reporting cycle should be evaluated by organizations leading conflict mitigation efforts in those areas. In the previous 2 reports, Patuakhali – 1 and Cox's Bazaar – 1 had high numbers of incidents, but in this report had 3 and 2, respectively.  On the other hand, the six weeks of reporting have not yet led to any recorded incidents in three constituencies: Dinajpur – 3, Kustia – 3, and Tangail – 4.

**Figure 3. Incidents by Constituency**

| Constituency | Number of incidents | Number of people killed | Number of people wounded | Number of incidents with only property damage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jessore-3 | 9 | - | 11 | 2 |
| Dhaka-11 | 8 | - | 44 | 5 |
| Gazipur-2 | 4 | - | 23 | 2 |
| Feni-2 | 3 | - | 15 | - |
| Laxmipur-2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | - |
| Chittagong–8 | 3 | - | 25 | 1 |
| Paktuakhali-1 | 3 | - | 14 | - |
| Munshigonj-4 | 3 | - | 2 | 1 |
| Comilla-9 | 2 | - | 3 | - |
| Cox's Bazar-1 | 2 | - | 13 | - |
| Kishoregonj-6 | 2 | - | 1 | - |
| Munshigonj-1 | 2 | - | 6 | 1 |
| Tangail–1 | 2 | - | 8 | - |
| Sunamganj - 5 | 2 | - | 7 | - |
| Chapai Nawabganj-3 | 1 | - | 5 | - |
| Sirajgonj-5 | 1 | - | 1 | - |
| Pabna–4 | 1 | - | 2 | - |
| Barishal–1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Mymenshing –4 | 1 | - | 50 | - |
| Dhaka-4 | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| Dhaka-6 | 1 | - | 8 | - |
| Sylhet-1 | 1 | - | 10 | - |
| Sylhet –2 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Brahmanbaria–3 | 1 | - | 2 | - |

**Figure 4. Incidents by District**

| District | Number of incidents | Number of people killed | Number of people wounded | Number of incidents with only property damage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dhaka | 10 | - | 52 | 6 |
| Jessore | 9 | - | 11 | 2 |
| Munshigonj | 5 | - | 8 | 2 |
| Gazipur | 4 | - | 23 | 2 |
| Patuakhali | 3 | - | 14 | - |
| Feni | 3 | - | 15 | - |
| Laxmipur | 3 | 2 | 3 | - |
| Chittagong | 3 | - | 25 | 1 |
| Tangalil | 2 | - | 8 | - |
| Kishoregonj | 2 | - | 1 | - |
| Sunamganj | 2 | - | 7 | - |
| Sylhet | 2 | - | 10 | - |
| Comilla | 2 | - | 3 | - |
| Cox's Bazar | 2 | - | 13 | - |
| Chapai Nawabganj | 1 | - | 5 | - |
| Sirajgonj | 1 | - | 1 | - |
| Pabna | 1 | - | 2 | - |
| Barishal | 1 | - | - | - |
| Mymenshing | 1 | - | 50 | - |
| Brahmanbaria | 1 | - | 2 | - |

## Patterns of Violence

Overall, the pattern of violence in this reporting period continues to be characterized by back-and-forth clashes between supporters of the two major party alliances in the election. However, intra-party violence made up approximately 10% of all incidents, roughly the same percentage as in the first report. This is much lower than that documented in Report 2, in which intra-party violence was about 20% of all incidents. There were 5 incidents between BNP supporters, and one incident in which Alwami League factions clashed with each other.

Analysis of trends reported in more peaceful and more violent constituencies shows interesting differences in the actions of political party leaders and security forces. In the most volatile divisions, Dhaka and Chittagong, several monitors reported that in some cases the police were inactive or absent during provocative political programs organized by the rival political parties or intra-party factions. For example, in constituencies Gazipur – 2, Dhaka – 4 , and Cox's Bazar – 1 were reported to have witnessed incidents of violence due to absence of police or other security forces.

In constituencies which are more peaceful, monitors suggest that the main factors contributing to the low levels of incidents have been:

- The proactive role taken by police, as in escorting processions in Jhalkathi-1 and Pirojpur – 1.
- Nonviolent political strategies followed by political party leaders and supporters, observed in Jhalkathi – 1 and Pirojpur – 1. In these constituencies the political party leaders urged their supporters to be nonviolent during processions.
- Fear among political leaders that they will lose popularity if they resort to using violence.

These observations of more and less peaceful areas being monitored suggest that violence is lower when there is more evidence of negative consequences of using violence, whether it is reaction by security forces or reaction among the public.

## Perpetrators of Election-Related Violence

Similar to the second reporting period, a large majority of the violence recorded during this reporting period was perpetrated by supporters and leaders of political parties in the country.  In 53 of the 58 recorded incidents, one of the perpetrators was a supporter of a political party. In one case, the police were identified as perpetrators.

Supporters of the fourteen party alliance were involved as perpetrators in 64% of the cases, while supporters of the four party alliance were among the perpetrators in 55% of the cases. In cases where there were clashes between supporters of the political parties, supporters of both parties are recorded as perpetrators and as victims. For example, in 24% of the incidents, both the fourteen party alliance and four party alliance were identified as perpetrators. In one incident supporters of the four party alliance clashed with the supporters of an Independent candidate, and were also both identified as perpetrators. It was found that in 5% of the incidents, perpetrators were criminals or unidentified persons. Figure 5 illustrates a more detailed breakdown of party involvement in incidents since more than one perpetrator could be present in one incident.

**Figure 5. Breakdown of Political Party Perpetrators Involved in Incidents (% of incidents)**
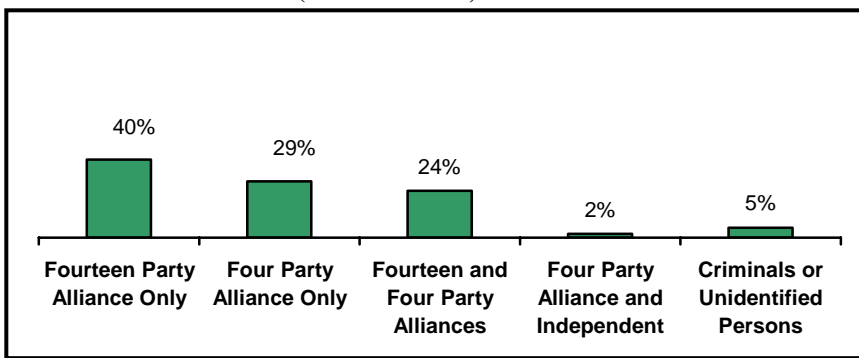


A number of intra-party confrontations occurred during this reporting period, generally driven by attempts to establish supremacy in the political party, rivalry over political wisdom (strategic decisions) and competition for nomination. For instance, one incident of violence took place in Jessore – 3 centered on a BNP supporter's joining to Awami League.

## Victims of Election-Related Violence

This reporting period sees the continuation of a pattern where the victims of the violence tend to be more varied than the perpetrators of this violence.  While the perpetrators of violence during this reporting period are almost exclusively political parties, victims comprise not only political party supporters and leaders but also voters, journalists, and private and public property. This reporting period has seen the most variety in types of victims in the six weeks of monitoring. Figure 6 reports on the percentage of incidents with specific types of victims.

**Figure 6. Victims of Election Violence involved in Incidents (% of incidents)**
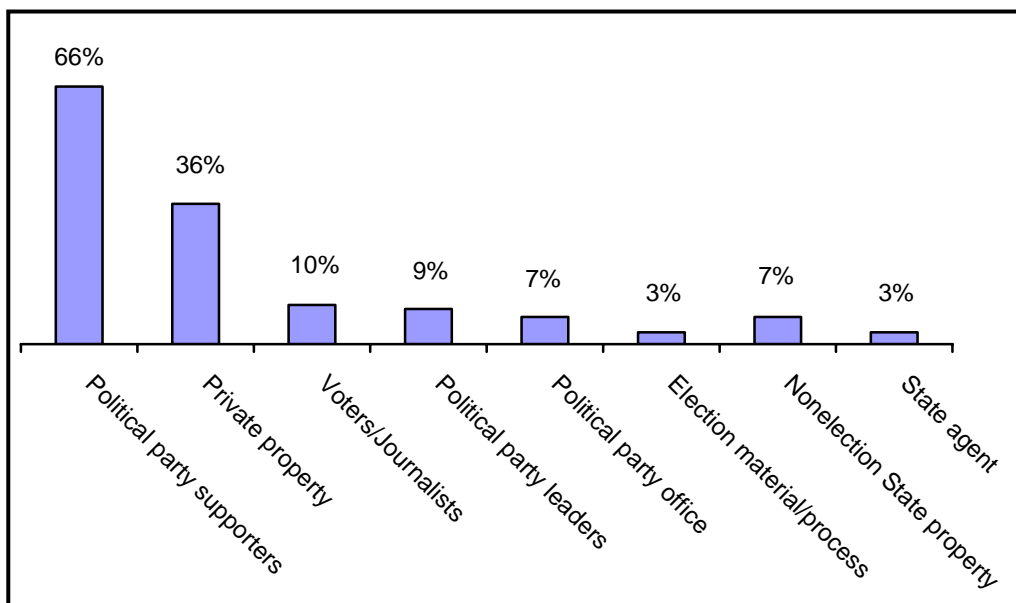
The percentage of incidents in which supporters of political parties were victims is relatively the same as in the first and second reporting periods. This is also the case for the percentage of incidents in which private property was victimized as well as ordinary voters. For the first time since the beginning of monitoring, election property (such as posters) and (non-election) state property were hit by violence. Police were victims during two clashes; in one the police were both victims and perpetrators.

**Figure 7. Breakdown of Political Party Victims Involved in Incidents (% of incidents)**
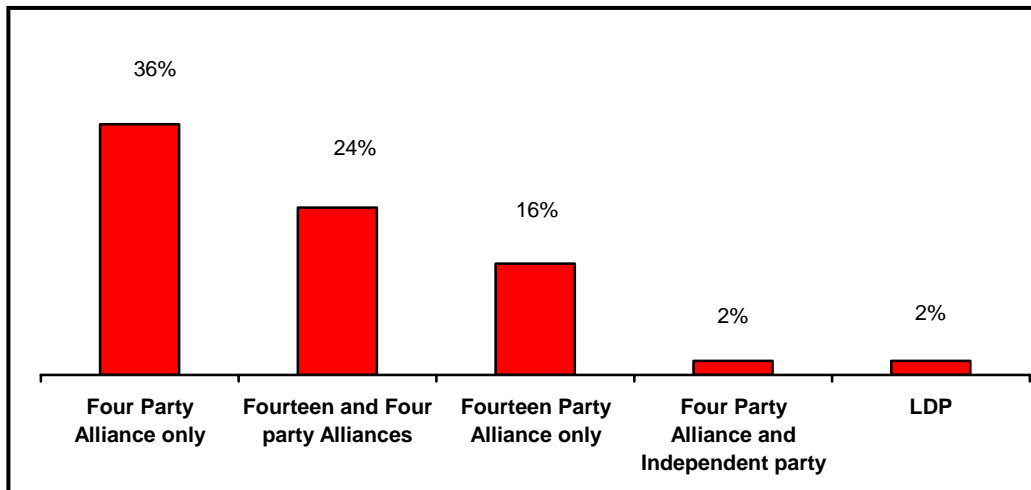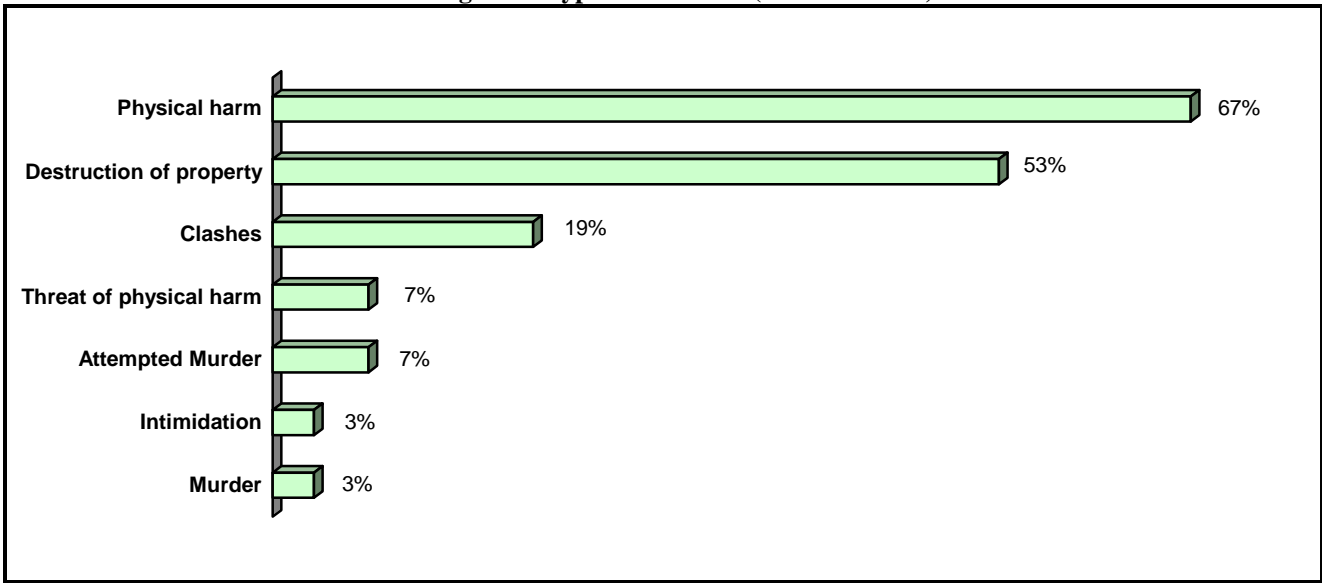


Political party supporters or leaders were among the victims in 43 incidents (74%).   Overall, those affiliated with the four party alliance were victims in 57% of incidents, while fourteen party alliance supporters or leaders were victims in 40% of incidents.  This trend has fluctuated a bit over the 6 weeks of monitoring. In this Report, the four party alliance was more often among the victims than the fourteen party alliance.  This is consistent with the trend in Report 1, but in Report 2, the fourteen party alliance was more likely to be victims than the four party alliance (in Report 2, there were more cases of intra-party clashes within the fourteen party alliance, and there were some cases of police perpetrating violence against the fourteen party alliance).  Since more than one victim can be present in one incident, Figure 7 shows a more detailed breakdown of party involvement in incidents.


**Type and Methods of Violence**

Continuing the trend of the first two EVER Reports, physical harm was the most frequently reported type of violence (found in 67% of incidents).  Most of the incidents characterized by physical harm involved clashes between party supporters, often in cycles of retaliatory attacks.  Figure 8 details the types of violence reported.

Destruction of property was also a common type of violence reported, and was found in more than half of all incidents (31, or 53%).  This is up from the previous report, in which 37% of incidents involved property damage. In most of these, the property damage occurred in incidents in which physical harm also occurred (17), and most often in clashes.  In 13 (22%) incidents, perpetrators only destroyed property.  These occurred mostly in Dhaka division during the time of blockades around Nov 14-15 and 20-21.  For the most part, such incidents were attacks on private property (8) or political party offices (3).  At least 6 incidents involved damage to vehicles.
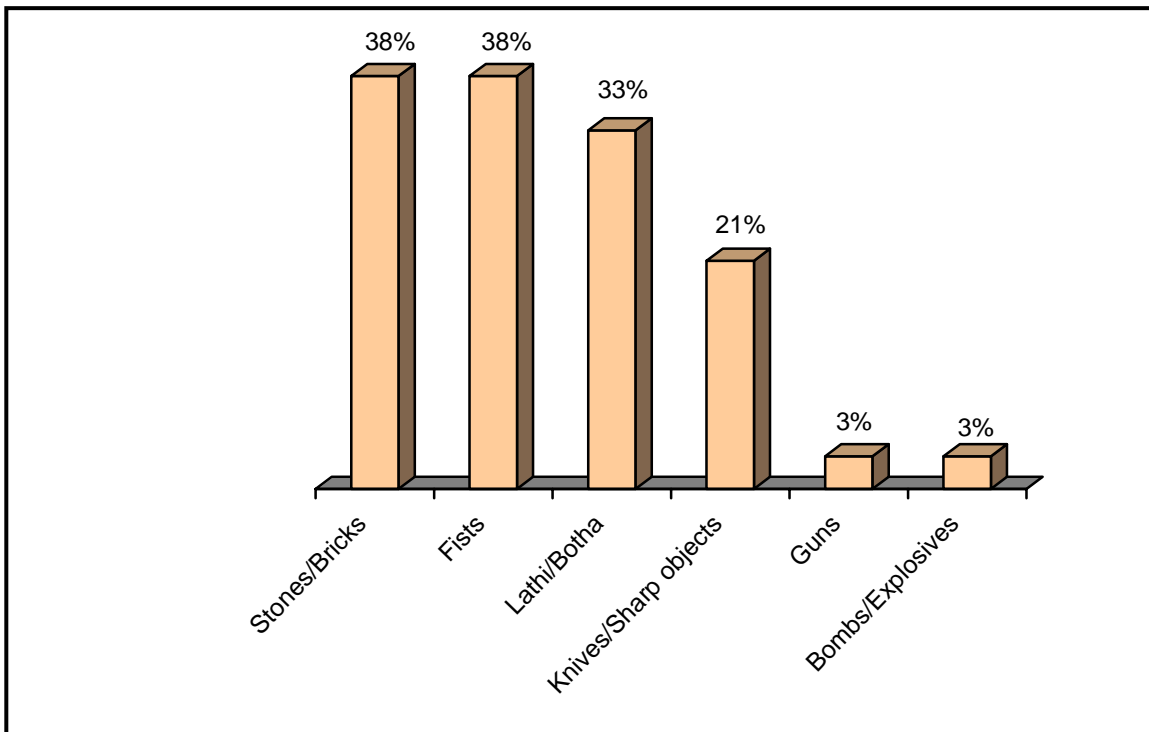
**Figure 8. Types of Violence (% of incidents)**

| Type | % |
|------|---|
| Physical harm | 67% |
| Destruction of property | 53% |
| Clashes | 19% |
| Threat of physical harm | 7% |
| Attempted Murder | 7% |
| Intimidation | 3% |
| Murder | 3% |

Two murders occurred during this reporting period. The percentage of murders fell from 6% of incidents last period to 3% this period; the actual number of such incidents dropped from 3 to 2. This continues the downward trend in both the actual and proportional instances of murder since the first report in which 15% of incidents involved murder. There were no reports of verbal harassment during this reporting period, but threats of physical harm occurred in 7% of incidents, while intimidation was reported in 3% of incidents.

During this reporting period, patterns in the methods of violence remained much the same as found in Report 2. Stones/thrown objects, lathi/botha, and fists were the most common means of violence used (Figure 9). However, a lower percentage of incidents involved stones compared with the last fortnight, dropping from 51% in Report 2 to 38% during this period. Other than this, the percentages generally remained consistent between Report 2 and this report; including a lower usage of guns (in 3% of incidents this period) than was described in Report 1 (15%).

**Figure 9. Methods of Violence (% of incidents)**

| Method | % |
|--------|---|
| Stones/Bricks | 38% |
| Fists | 38% |
| Lathi/Botha | 33% |
| Knives/Sharp objects | 21% |
| Guns | 3% |
| Bombs/Explosives | 3% |

## Impact of Violence

This reporting period saw a similar numbers of casualties compared with the 2nd Report. Two people were killed and about 250 were wounded in the incidents reported. Dhaka and Chittagong divisions continue to be the most volatile both in terms of the number of incidents occurring and the impact of the incidents. The two fatalities occurred in Chittagong, and within Dhaka and Chittagong, monitors reported the highest numbers of people wounded per incident and the highest number of people wounded overall (Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Total Number of People Wounded by Division**
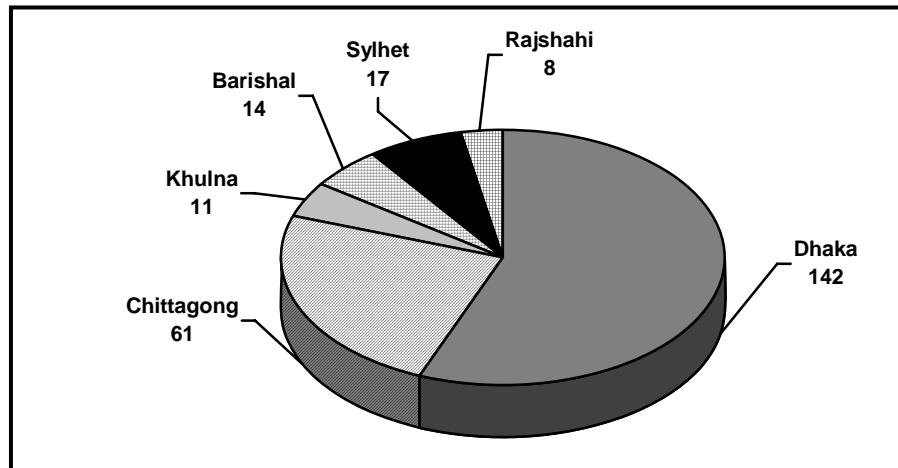


The two deaths in Chittagong occurred in two separate incidents, though they appear to be related. The first victim was a supporter of the four party alliance killed by supporters of the fourteen party alliance; and the next day, four party alliance supporters attacked and killed one supporter of the fourteen party alliance. The two men killed were the only casualties in those two incidents.

The 253 injuries reported this period occurred across 39 incidents (67% of the total). The average number of people wounded per incident was about 6. A few incidents in Dhaka and Chittagong divisions had very high numbers wounded per incident. One incident within Dhaka division wounded 50 people at once, while another wounded 22. Three other incidents wounded at least 20 people each (2 in Dhaka and 1 in Chittagong).

## Conclusions

As in the second fortnightly report, violence occurred nearly every day during the last two weeks, though the number of incidents is still about half what was reported during the end of October. Odhikar believes that election-related violence increases fear and decreases participation of citizens in the election process specifically and democratic processes in general.

Analysis of trends reported in both more peaceful and more violent constituencies shows that actions by both political party leaders and security officials can have a positive impact on reducing violence. Findings also indicate that when political party leaders feel pressure to reduce violence, they respond. Therefore raising public awareness of the need to pressure party leaders could be very helpful. Given that the level of competition between and within parties is likely to rise as elections approach, it is all the more important to take more action now to encourage nonviolent campaigning and activism.

## Recommendations

- Findings indicate that rallies/strikes are the sites of most violence, and key steps should be taken to prevent violence:
    - Processions and rallies should be covered by a proactive police presence, with particular attention to adequate numbers of police to avoid clashes in Dhaka and Chittagong; and
    - Processions, rallies or other events by different parties should not be scheduled on the same day

- Particularly for Dhaka division, security officials should take note of the high numbers of people wounded per incident and consider special attention to reducing the potential for violence as well as its intensity, taking into account the types of weapons used and frequency of incidents.

- Political party leaders should denounce violence by their supporters and publicly commit to nonviolent campaigns and mass actions.

- Civil society, community, religious, and business leaders and organizations, as well as other high profile citizens, should make public statements denouncing the cycles of violence and promoting peaceful resolution of differences.

- Patterns of violence identified in this report should be addressed by local political, community, and law enforcement leaders. In particular, attention should be paid to addressing causes and patterns of violence in constituencies with continuing high levels of incidents such as Patuakhali – 1 and Cox's Bazaar – 1, and those identified in this period with the most incidents (were Jessore – 3 (9 incidents) and Dhaka – 11 (8 incidents).

- All stakeholders, and in particular, groups specializing in conflict resolution or mitigation during the elections should make use of data relevant to their communities and offer feedback to Monitors or through Odhikar headquarters about the EVER project, and are welcome to offer suggested recommendations.


## About the Odhikar EVER Project

Odhikar, a Bangladeshi human rights organization, is implementing the monitoring program for the EVER methodology in Bangladesh. The EVER program has been designed by IFES to capture accurate information about incidents of election-related violence in a methodologically reliable manner, so that stakeholders in the electoral process can use this information to design and implement effective electoral interventions in a country. This first-of-its-kind activity in Bangladesh is intended to focus attention on the very serious issue of election violence in the country, and provide data that can be used to reduce the level of violence related to elections in Bangladesh. Odhikar and its EVER monitoring are part of activities in connection with the Election Working Group (EWG), made of 35 civil society organizations undertaking various initiatives concerning issues such as accountability and reducing election violence. The EWG and the Odhikar EVER project are supported by the Asia Foundation. Odhikar is focusing its EVER monitoring activities on 45 electoral constituencies (spread throughout each of the 6 divisions) that have a history of election-related violence in Bangladesh. Each EVER monitor is responsible for identifying and gathering key information on incidents of election-related violence within each of these constituencies, as well as identifying tensions that exhibit the potential for violence. EVER utilizes a rigorous methodology that requires multiple sources to verify incidents of election-related violence. Thus, in any one constituency the incidents captured by the EVER monitors may not reflect all incidents rumored to have taken place in the constituency. However, the incidents reported by EVER monitors have a high degree of reliability that will allow election stakeholders to identify the patterns of election-related violence in the 45 constituencies.