



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



### **Fourth Report on Electoral Violence 1 December to 15 December 2006**

**Prepared by Odhikar and IFES  
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## Introduction

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.<sup>1</sup> The Fourth Report on Electoral Violence, issued by the Odhikar EVER project, covers the period from 1 to 15 December 2006. A total of 34 incidents of election-related violence were recorded and verified by EVER monitors during this period.

## 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 34 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.

## Key Findings of the Incidents

- Incidents of violence in the fourth reporting period were spread out throughout the two week period, much like the last report; however, a spike occurred on December 3, and most of the violence was recorded between December 1 and 4.
- The total number of incidents dropped to 34 from the 58 recorded in the last reporting period. The number of incidents has been declining since the first reporting period when 99 incidents were recorded. Of the 45 monitored constituencies, 20 recorded incidents this period.
- Unlike the previous three EVER reports, the two major political alliances perpetrated the same number of incidents. Supporters/leaders of the fourteen party alliance led by the Awami League (AL) and the four party alliance led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) were each involved in a little over one third of the incidents reported.
- In total, **3 people were reportedly killed** and **215 wounded** in the recorded incidents during this period. These numbers are similar to the reports 2 and 3, but remain much lower than those documented at the end of October in the first reporting period.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

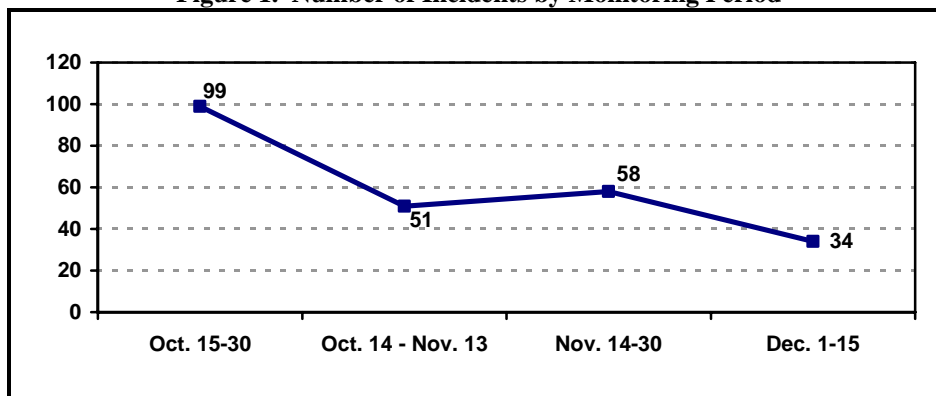
- Analysis of monitors’ reports from more peaceful versus more violent constituencies over this reporting period indicates that the proactive presence of security forces can reduce the potential for violence during processions and other mass gatherings, and that political leaders’ denouncement of violence 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.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Timeline**

This monitoring period (December 1 to December 15) saw the lowest number of incidents recorded in any two-week period since the EVER monitoring began in late mid-October 2006. During this early December monitoring period, a total of 34 incidents were recorded by the EVER monitors. This marks a significant decrease from the number of incidents recorded in the earlier periods (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Number of Incidents by Monitoring Period**



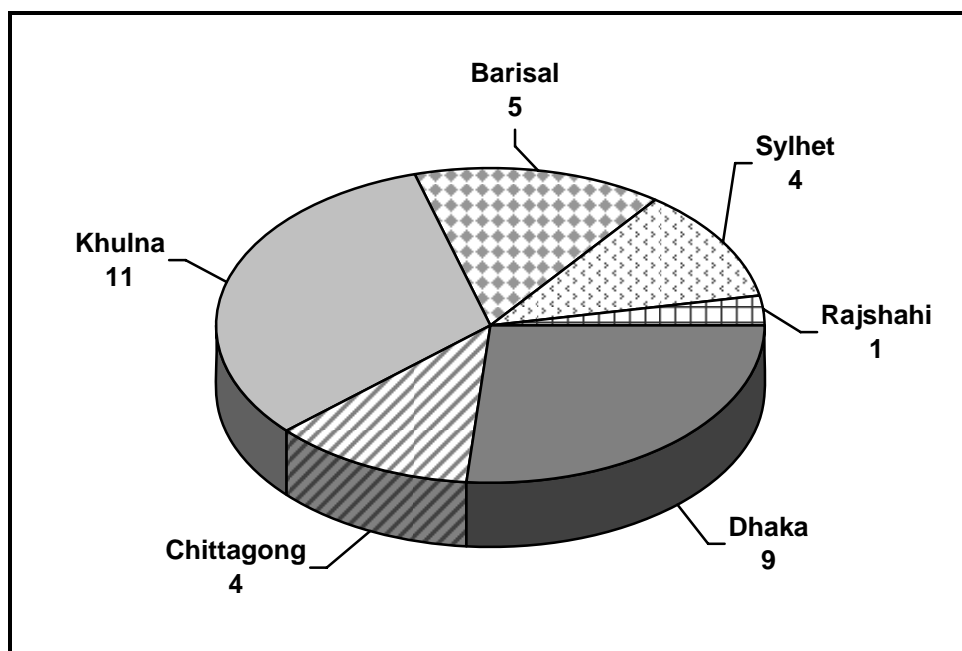
There were a total of 34 incidents recorded during this monitoring period. Although the incidents during this period occurred throughout the reporting period, the majority of incidents (18 out of 34) occurred during the first four days of the monitoring period from December 1 to 4. The remaining 16 incidents took place on the ten days stretching from December 5 to 15. The high number of incidents at the beginning of this monitoring period coincides with a spike in the number of incidents at the end of the last reporting period. The highest number of incidents amounting to roughly one-fourth of all incidents during this period occurred on December 3 when 9 incidents were recorded.

### **Regional Distribution of Incidents in the 45 Constituencies**

Given the relatively low number of recorded incidents in this reporting period compared to the last period, it is not surprising that the number of constituencies in which incidents were recorded is the lowest in any reporting period. Incidents were recorded in 20 constituencies, a drop from 24 in the previous reporting period. It is encouraging to note that the number of constituencies in which incidents have been recorded has been consistently dropping from the 39 observed in the first reporting period, to 28 in the second period, 24 in the third, and to 20 in this reporting period.

The regional distribution of incidents in this second reporting period is fairly similar to the pattern observed in the first three reporting periods, with one exception. The one notable change in this period from previous reporting periods is that the highest number of incidents took place in Khulna division (11 incidents). In previous reporting periods the highest number of incidents had been recorded in Dhaka division (24 incidents), which accounts for 9 incidents in this reporting period. There were 5 incidents recorded in Barisal, and 4 incidents each in Chittagong and Sylhet. There was only one incident recorded in Rajshahi, consistent with the relatively low number of incidents in this division in previous reports. Figure 2 reports on the number of incidents in each division in this reporting period.

**Figure 2. Divisional Breakdown of Incidents**



In the eight weeks that EVER monitoring has been taking place, there have been 79 incidents in Dhaka, while there have been 56 incidents in Chittagong, 45 incidents in Khulna, 34 incidents in Barisal, 28 in Sylhet, and only 13 incidents in Rajshahi.

This reporting period sees a continuation of a pattern of high number of incidents in two particular constituencies: Jessore-3 and Dhaka-11. In the third reporting period, these two constituencies had accounted for the highest number of incidents with 9 taking place in Jessore-3 and 8 in Dhaka-11. In the December 1 to 15 reporting period, Jessore-3 has the most incidents of any constituency with 7 incidents being recorded there, while there are 3 incidents recorded in Dhaka-11. On a positive note, two constituencies that had been characterized by a high number of incidents in the first two reporting periods, Patuakhali-1 and Cox's Bazaar-1, experienced only one incident each during this reporting period. After eight weeks of reporting, there have still not been any incidents recorded in three constituencies: Dinajpur-3, Kustia-3, and Tangail-4. It was found during interviewing that people of these constituencies, specially the supporters are cautious about the violence. Besides, Police took part an active role in preventing election-related violence. This is obviously a good indication which shows coexistence between the political parties.

**Figure 3: Incidents by Constituency**

Constituency	Number of incidents	Number of people killed	Number of people wounded	Number of incidents with property damage
Jessore-3	7	-	5	3
Dhaka-11	3	-	4	3
Sylhet-2	3	1	51	1
Jhenaidah-2	2	2	-	2
Barisal-3	2	-	8	-

Munshigonj-4	2	-	18	-
Brahmanbaria-3	2	-	40	1
Pabna-4	1	-	-	-
Jhenaidah-1	1	-	2	1
Satkhira-2	1	-	5	-
Patuakhali-1	1	-	4	-
Barisal-1	1	-	15	1
Jhalkathi-1	1	-	-	-
Dhaka-8	1	-	5	1
Gazipur-2	1	-	-	1
Narayanganj-5	1	-	20	-
Shariatpur-1	1	-	22	-
Sylhet-1	1	-	5	-
Comilla-9	1	-	10	1
Cox's Bazar-1	1	-	1	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>15</b>

### **Patterns of Violence**

As with the pattern of violence in all of the reporting periods for the EVER monitoring, 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. Intra-party violence also continues to be a significant factor as slightly more than a quarter of incidents in this reporting period were characterized by violence between factions of a party. Three of these intra-party incidents were among AL supporters, while 6 were among BNP supporters.

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.

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, Kustia – 3 and Tangail-4.
- Nonviolent political strategies followed by political party leaders and supporters, observed in Jhalkathi – 1, Pirojpur – 1 and Dinajpur-3. 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.

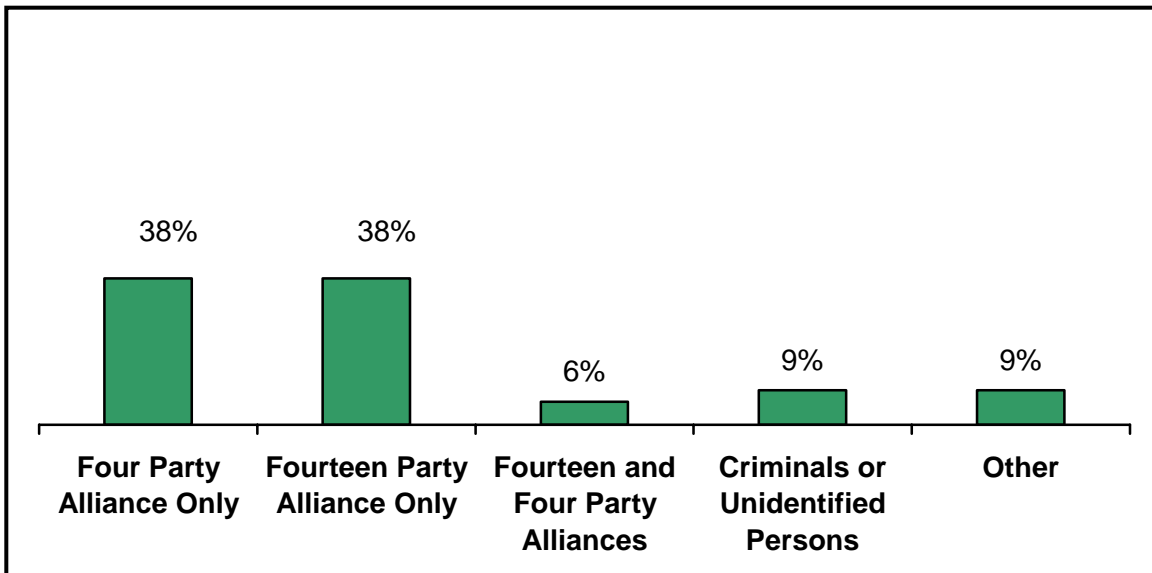
These observations of more and less peaceful areas being monitored suggest that violence is lower when there is more evidence of negative consequences of using violence, whether it is reaction by security forces or reaction among the public.

### **Perpetrators of Election-Related Violence**

A large majority of the violence recorded during this reporting period was perpetrated by supporters and leaders of political parties in the country. In 29 of the 34 recorded incidents, one of the perpetrators was a supporter of a political party, while in three cases a criminal element was the perpetrator of the incident. In one case, the police were identified as perpetrators.

Supporters of both the fourteen party and four party alliances were each involved as perpetrators in 44% of the incidents (38% plus 6% in Figure 3 below). One key difference between political party involvements in the violence in this reporting period as compared to previous reporting periods is that fact that only two of the clashes in this period were characterized by clashes between the supporters of the two alliances. In previous reporting periods, these types of clashes where both sets of supporters were identified as perpetrators accounted for more than 20% of the cases in the reporting period. In this reporting period, only 6% of the incidents fit this pattern. Perhaps the greater presence of the police in preventing these types of clashes has played a role in the reduction of these types of violence. Figure 4 illustrates a detailed breakdown of party involvement in incidents since more than one perpetrator could be present in one incident.

**Figure 4. 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 example, on 6 December 2006 an intra party clash took place at the residence of District BNP President during a defrayal meeting in Munshiganj-4 left 10 people injured.

**Victims of Election-Related Violence**

As in previous reporting periods, the victims of the violence in this reporting period tend to be more varied than the perpetrators of this violence. While the violence is perpetrated for the most part by political party supporters, victims comprise not only political party supporters and leaders but also voters, journalists, and private and public property.

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**Figure 5. Election involved (% of incidents)**

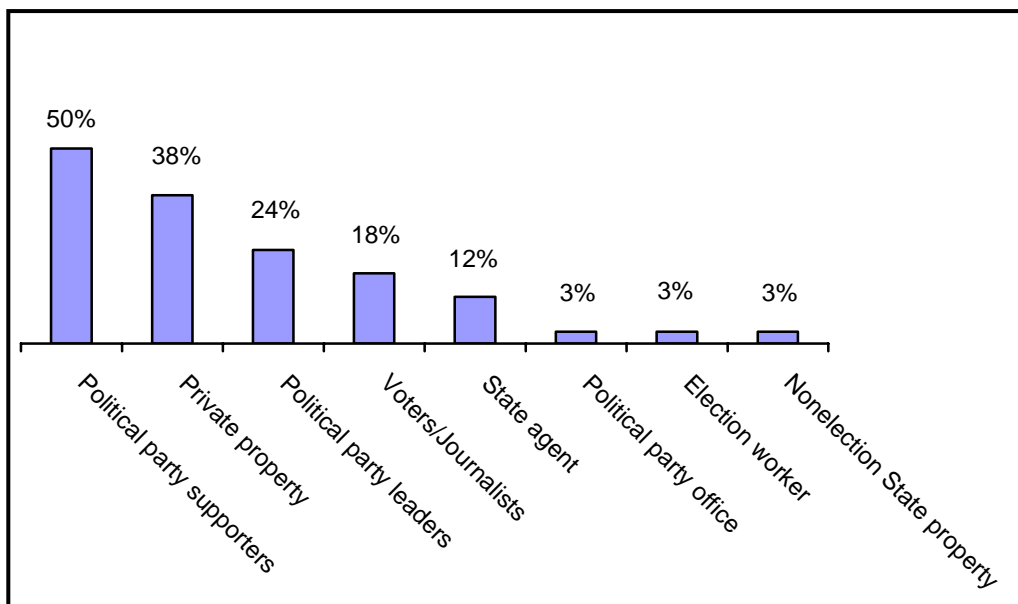


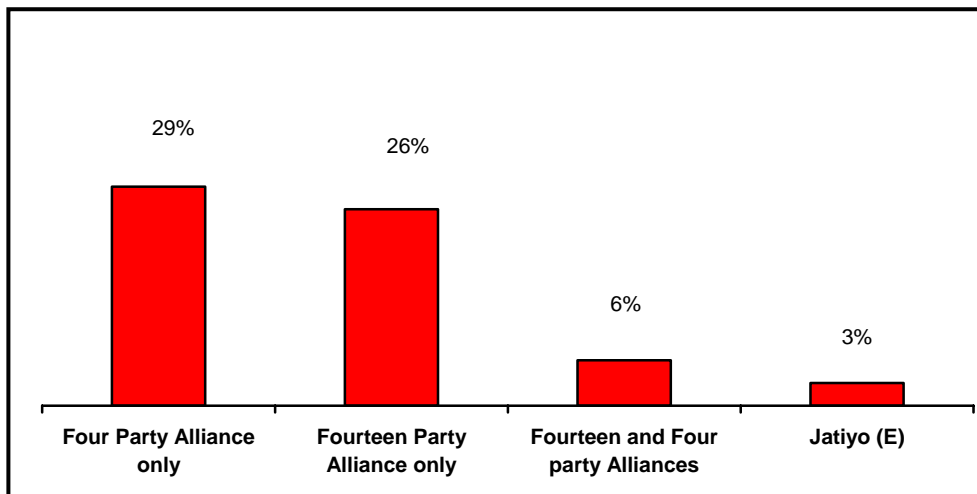
Figure 5 on the percentage of with specific victims.

**Victims of Violence in Incidents**

There has been a slight decline in the percentage of incidents in which supporters of political parties were victims (50%) but there has been an increase in the number of incidents in which political party leaders have been the victims (24%). The percentage of incidents in which property, whether private or belonging to a political party or the state, has stayed at a fairly consistent level from the third reporting period. There has been a slight increase in the percentage of incidents in which voters or journalists were victims, and this period marks the first time that an election worker has been recorded as a victim of violence. As the elections draw nearer, one would expect the percentage of incidents with election workers of the election process as victims to increase.

Figure 6 provides a breakdown of the parties to which political party supporters or leaders who were victims of violence belonged.

**Figure 6. Breakdown of Political Party Victims Involved in Incidents (% of incidents)**

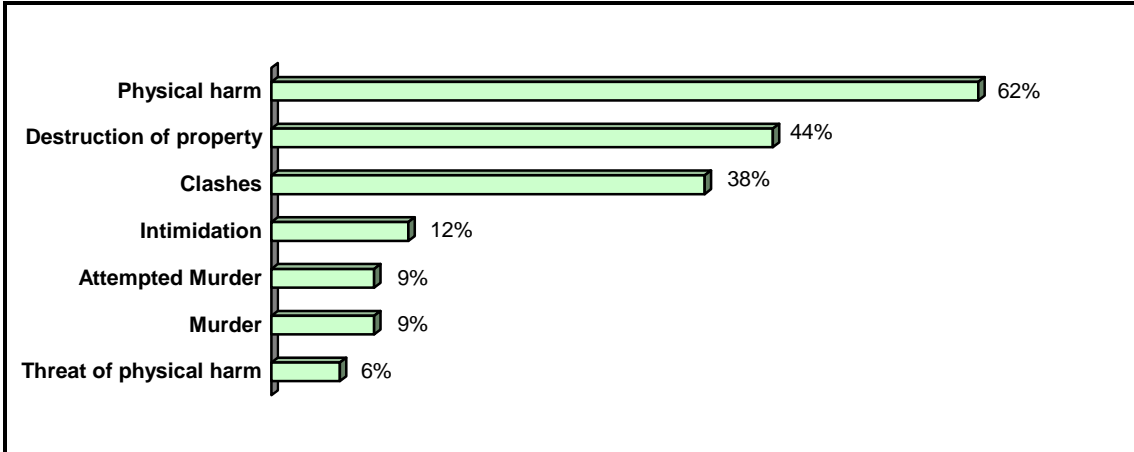


Political party supporters or leaders were among the victims in 23 of the 34 incidents. Overall, those affiliated with the fourteen party alliance were victims in 35% of incidents, while four party alliance supporters or leaders were also victims in 32% of incidents. In six of the incidents noted above involving the four party alliance, the victims were another faction of the BNP; factions of the AL were victims in three of the cases in which the fourteen party alliance supporters were involved as victims.

**Type and Methods of Violence**

The types of violence reported during the EVER monitoring continue to be dominated by physical harm being inflicted upon the victims of violence, as well as by destruction of property during the incidents of violence. Figure 7 details the types of violence reported during the December 1 to 15 reporting period.

**Figure 7. Types of Violence (% of incidents)**

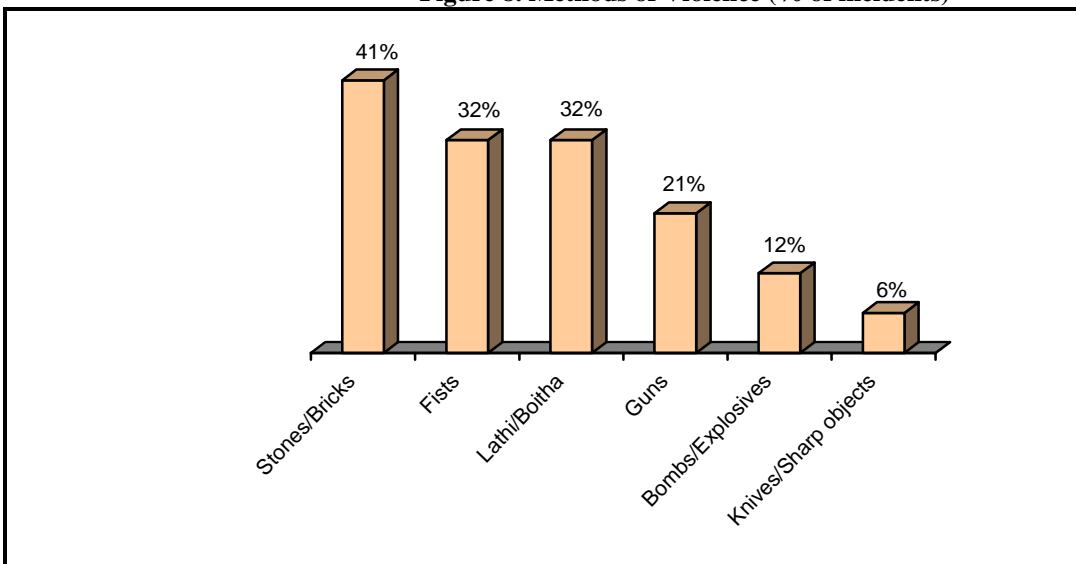


In 62% of the incidents, physical harm was the type of violence utilized by the perpetrators while in 6% of cases, the victims were subject to the threat of physical harm. Destruction of property was reported in 44% of incidents, down slightly from 53% of incidents in the third reporting period. In nine of the fifteen cases of property damage, the damage was accompanied by intimidation or physical harm and clashes. In six incidents, the property damage was the only type of violence. Thirty-eight percent of the cases were characterized by clashes, with most of these intra-party clashes.

Three people were reported killed in the incidents during this reporting period. Two of the murders took place in separate incidents in Khulna while one took place in an incident in Sylhet.

During this reporting period, patterns in the methods of violence are fairly similar to those observed in the second and third reporting period with some key exceptions. Stones/thrown objects, lathi/boitha, and fists were the most common means of violence used (Figure 8). There was a greater use of firearms in this reporting period than in the previous period. Guns or other firearms were used in 21% of cases, a large increase from 3% during the third reporting period. The use of bombs and other explosives also rose to 12% in this period.

**Figure 8. Methods of Violence (% of incidents)**



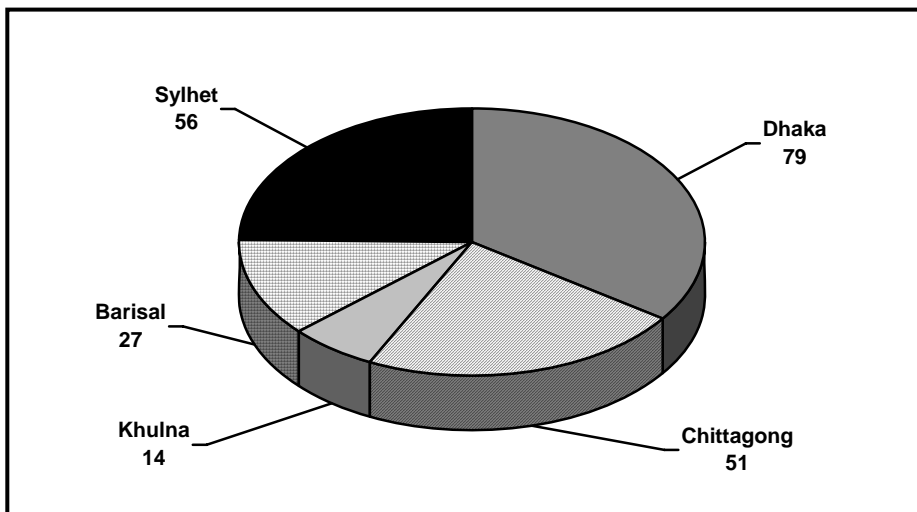
**Impact of Violence**

This reporting period saw a similar numbers of casualties compared with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> reporting periods. Three people were killed and more than 215 were wounded in the incidents reported during this period. The number of people wounded during the recorded incidents is fairly evenly spread around the country. This is a slight departure



from previous reporting period where Dhaka and Chittagong divisions were home to a disproportionate number of wounded. Figure 9 provides the number wounded in each division during this reporting period.

**Figure 8: Total Number of People Wounded by Division**



The most notable aspect of the data from this reporting period is that no one was reported wounded in Rajshahi. Of course, with only one recorded incident in this division, that may not be all that surprising. However, there are only 14 reported wounded in Khulna despite the fact that this division was home to the highest number of incidents during this reporting period (11). The number wounded in Sylhet (56) is significantly higher than in previous reporting periods.

### **Conclusions**

As in the third fortnightly report, violence occurred frequently 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.
- Vandalism of vehicles seems to be occurring more often. Creative security measures to address this particular pattern should be sought.
- 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.
- 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.

## **Odhikar**

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