



March 8, 2012

Violence against women still exists though 100 years have passed after the declaration of International Women's Day

March 8 is International Women's Day. Though 100 years have passed after its declaration, violence against women has not decreased.

Domestic violence, violence related to dowry, rape, acid throwing, illegal Fatwa and sexual abuse are prominent forms of violence in Bangladesh. Poor women are subjected to violence relatively more because of their social discrimination.

The root of violence against women in Bangladesh is mainly patriarchy. However women's rights are not preserved due to the weaknesses in the police and Judicial systems. Unfortunately, police still consider domestic violence as a social issue; and corruption and greed ensure that the testimonies and complaints of victims are stalled.

Furthermore, intervention from local influential peoples, often in the form of financial and political gain, give protection to the perpetrators. As a result, new criminals are created, more and more women become the victim of violence and there is still no justice for them.

Though giving and receiving dowry is an offence in Bangladesh, the tradition of dowry is still existent. To get the money the husband and in-laws abuse the wife mentally and physically, sometimes causing her death. Many women have even committed suicide as well, not being able to bear the ill-treatment. According to data of 'Odhikar', from 1 January 2001 to 29 February 2012, 2338 woman have already been killed, 1025 women physically abused and 172 women committed suicide because of dowry violence.

Due to the social stigma against rape victims, many such incidences go unreported. The brave victims, who have sought justice, have had to face humiliation or harassment by police, local administration and society. Victims of rape are often mentally abused by the lower Courts, when asked to recall the incident. As there is no law to protect the victims and witnesses, it has been alleged that the criminals out on bail, often threaten the victim and witness. From 1 January 2001 to 29 February 2012, 8478 women have been raped, according to Odhikar.

Thousands of women who work in the garment industry are playing a vital role in our economy, on a minimum wage of 3000 taka. Though they have created pressure on the authority to increase the minimum wage to 5000 taka, they have not been successful. The women workers have little or no job security, shelter or child day care and school for their children.

Recommendations from Odhikar to stop the acts of violence against the women:

1. Mass campaigns should be done in the newspapers and electronic media to create awareness among the people to stop violence against women.
2. Police must create charges against the alleged and take necessary steps to preserve the evidence of such violence and should work independently. Those, who fail to do this must be made accountable and investigated.
3. By strengthening the judicial system, it should be ascertained that the victim and witness gets proper assistance.
4. Means to get legal aid should be strengthen for the victims of violence against women.
5. Strong monitoring system should be built so that acid cannot be traded without license, thus decreasing the threat of acid violence.
6. Shelter, health and day care facilities for children of factory workers should be ensured and their minimum wage should be 5000 taka.

7. The adverse effect of violence against women and ways of preventing the violence should be included in the curriculum of schools and colleges and a relationship based on respect between men and women should be advocated to the students.

Today on 8th March Odhikar organised rallies and submitted memorandums to the Deputy Commissioners, Metropolitan Police Commissioners and Mayors through its local human rights defenders at six divisional towns of Bangladesh to stop violence against women.



Sylhet City



Barisal City



Rajshahi City



Chittagong City



Khulna City



Rangpur City