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Human Rights Monitoring Report

January 1-31, 2013

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Odhikar believes that 'democracy' is a form of the State and not merely a process of electing a ruler. Democracy is the product of the peoples' struggle for inalienable rights, which become the fundamental premise to constitute the state and to define collective aspirations and responsibilities. Therefore, the individual freedoms and democratic aspirations of the citizens - and consequently, peoples' collective rights and responsibilities - must be the foundational principles of the state. The states failure to recognize this at the founding moment, is a continuing curse that people are forced to carry. The democratic legitimacy of the state is directly related to its commitment and capacity to ensure human rights such as rights to life and livelihood, rights to environment and health; and the dignity and integrity of individuals, including freedom of speech and association. These rights, as the foundational principles of the State, must remain inviolable; and accordingly, the Parliament, Judiciary and Executive cannot and should not have any power to abrogate them through any legislation, judicial verdict or executive order.

Odhikar, being an organisation of human rights defenders in Bangladesh, has been struggling to ensure these rights. Odhikar stands against all forms of human rights violations and accordingly participates and remains directly involved in the human rights movement in Bangladesh. Odhikar brings to the movement the strategic perspective that in its demand for civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, the human rights movement not only endeavours to protect the victims, but also, in countries like Bangladesh, is constitutive of a democratic state. The movement to establish the rights and dignity of every individual is part of the struggle to constitute Bangladesh as a democratic, political community.

As part of its mission, Odhikar monitors the human rights situation of Bangladesh to report violations and defend the victims. In line with this campaign, an account of the human rights situation of Bangladesh, in January 2013, is presented here.

Political violence continues

1. Criminalisation of Chhatra League¹ activists and intraparty clashes occurred soon after the present government assumed power on 6 January 2009 and as a result, many people have died. Most of the clashes occurred due to vested interest and for acquiring illegal gains by political influence. On the other hand, activists of the Islami Chhatra Shibir² took a destructive position in the name of political programmes including hartal across the country and attacked police while protesting the trials of Jamat-i-Islami leaders in the International Crimes Tribunal.
2. Between 2009 and 2012, 775 persons were killed in political violence and due to criminalization of politics. This trend continues at the beginning of the year 2013, in particular, clashes due to internal conflicts of Chhatra league activists and incidents of attacks on teachers students and opponents.
3. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in January 2013, 17 persons were killed and 1643 injured in political violence. 27 incidents of internal violence in the Awami League and 10 in the BNP³ were recorded during this period. In addition to this, two persons were killed and 288 were injured in internal conflicts of the Awami League while one person was killed and 159 were injured in BNP internal conflicts. Such incidents continue as a result of failure to bring the perpetrators of political violence to justice. Some instances are as follows:
4. On January 31, 2013, incidents of vandalisation and the burning of vehicles and clashes occurred in many districts, including Dhaka, during the hartal called by

¹ Student wing of Awami League

² Student wing of Jamat-i-Islami

³ BNP: Bangladesh Nationalist Party. The main Opposition party.

Jamat-i-Islami. Chhatra Shibir leader Abu Ruhani (20) and activists Abdullah (22) and Mizanur Rahman (28) were killed during the clash between the activists of Chhatra Shibir and Chhatra League and police in Bogra. An auto rickshaw driver, Mohammad Emon died in an accident when the picketers were chasing him in Feni. At least 20 Jamat-Shibir activists and seven policemen were injured during clash in Jessore. Police Constable Zahirul Huq (55) succumbed to his injuries.⁴

5. On January 28, 2013, activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir⁵ cause destruction on the roads with sticks in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Satkhira, Joypurhat, Faridpur, Bogra, Sunamganj, demanding the release of Jamat-Islami leaders, who were arrested for crimes against humanity. During this time, more than 200 vehicles were vandalized and set on fire. At least 30 policemen were injured.⁶
6. On January 20, 2013 several Chhatra League activists, including Barisal Shere Bangla Medical College Chhatra League unit leader and Vice-President of the Student Council, Abdullah Maruf; and Pro Vice-President, Abdul Baki entered the girl's hostel of the medical college in a state of intoxication. They called out the names of some female students and ordered them to leave the hostel.⁷
7. On January 19, 2013, a clash took place between two factions of Chhatra League at Mymensingh Agricultural University over, among other things, establishing 'supremacy' on campus; previous enmity; and tender bids. University unit Chhatra League President, Shamsuddin Al Azad and General Secretary, Rafiquzzaman Emon led the two groups during the clash. A 10-year old child named Rabbi was killed and at least 50 persons were injured during the clash.⁸
8. On January 10, 2013, Chhatra League activists, in masks, attacked and threw acid at the teachers of Begum Rokeya University at Rangpur, who were in a protest rally for the resignation of the Vice-Chancellor of the University. During this attack Dr. Tuhin Wadud, teacher of the Bangla Department; Dr. Motiur Rahman of Management Department were burnt with the corrosive substance and 20 persons were injured, including university teachers, Hafizur Rahman Selim; Sanowar Siraj; Golam Rabbani; and students, Rajib; Piyal; Tanzima; and Rubel.⁹
9. On January 4, 2013, clashes occurred across the country due to internal conflicts in the Chhatra League over the 65th anniversary of Bangladesh Chhatra

⁴ The daily Prothon Alo/ The Daily Star, 01/02/2013

⁵ Student wing of Jamat-i-Islami

⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 29/01/2013

⁷ The daily Jaijaidin, 22/01/2013

⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 20/01/2013

⁹ The daily Samakal, 11/01/2013

League. Some incidents are as follows - Bidyut Das, President of ward 8 No. Chhatra League unit of Tukerbazar Union under Sylhet district; Chhatra League activists Tanim Ahmed Munna and Sudeep Talukder were stabbed during the clash. The Convener of Chittagong South Chhatra League unit, Abdul Khaleq was attacked by his rivals, also belonging to Chhatra League. He was admitted to the hospital in critical condition. On January 8, 2013, Abdul Khaleq died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Five persons were injured in a clash between two factions of Chhatra League in Baufal Upazila under Patuakhali district.¹⁰

10. On January 4, 2013, Ananta Chandra Das, father of Biswajit Das, who was killed by Chhatra League activists during a blockade called by the Opposition on December 9, 2012, alleged in a press conference that a weak post mortem report had been prepared to protect the killers.
11. On January 2, 2013 students of Rajshahi College joined a procession of Chhatra League on the instruction of Chhatra League leaders. Chhatra League activists attacked the students entering residential halls, as they had returned without listening to speeches during the meeting that took place after the procession. Chhatra League activists broke the hands of Imdadul Huq, a Master's degree student of the Chemistry Department; and Mosaddek Hossain of the Philosophy Department.¹¹
12. It is an all too familiar trend in Bangladesh that the leaders and activists of the ruling party, after being voted into power by a democratic process, become involved in crime under political shelter. Murder, attacks, violence against women are some such crimes. In some cases, police were also seen standing silently or even assisting in such acts. The ruling party is also using the administration to save the criminals who are involved in political violence and cases filed against those criminals are withdrawn under 'political consideration'. This is also not a new trend. Furthermore, the government has failed to take measures to stop the violence committed by Jamat-Shibir activists in recent times.
13. Odhikar cautions the present government that people gave their mandate to it for development and establishing law and order. Therefore, the government has to take the responsibility for any misconduct, including violence, killings and criminalization committed by its party activists.

¹⁰ The daily Samakal, 05/01/2013

¹¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 03/01/2013

Use of pepper spray by police during hartals and hunger-strike

14. On January 16, 2013 the Democratic Left Alliance, Communist Party of Bangladesh and Socialist Party of Bangladesh called a half day hartal in protest of the increasing price of fuel. Police used pepper spray and blasted hot water through water cannons and baton charged the protestors during the hartal. Many people, including Democratic Left Alliance leader Saiful Huq; Moshrefa Mishu; Socialist Party of Bangladesh leader Khalequzzaman Bhuiyan; and Communist Party of Bangladesh leader Syed Zafar Ahmed were injured in Dhaka. Police also attacked the procession at Khagrachhari and arrested six persons including Socialist Party of Bangladesh leaders Rafiqul Islam, Nipu Bikash Tripura, Niloy Tripura, Monirul Islam and Kabir Hossain.¹²
15. On January 10, 2013 police stopped a peaceful hunger-strike by protesting non-MPO registered school teachers at the Central *Shaheed Minar*¹³ in Dhaka. The police obstructed their preparation for the programme in front of the National Press Club. During this time, police stopped the hunger-strike and scattered the protesting teachers by throwing pepper spray and tear gas shells. Over 100 teachers including Teachers Okkya Jote president, Professor Mohammad Ershad Ali were injured during this attack.¹⁴ On January 15 a madrassa teacher, Sekander Ali, who was injured by pepper spray, died after returning to his village.¹⁵ According to doctors, pepper spray is dangerous for people who have asthma and it may cause death. It was learnt that Sekander Ali was suffering from asthma. Later on January 15, when the protesting teachers gathered in front of NAM Bhaban¹⁶ to hold their predetermined programme, police again used pepper spray on them.¹⁷
16. On January 18, 2013 the Home Minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir stated that “It (pepper spray) is one of the elements used to stop illegal meetings or gatherings, which is recognized worldwide in international convention. Therefore, no one has the right to comment against this element.”¹⁸
17. Obstructions at peaceful programmes of non-government school teachers and left organisations are violations of constitutional and human rights of the citizens. Moreover, the experts and doctors opined that pepper spray, used by police, is harmful to human beings. This poisonous spray not only causes

¹² The daily Amader Shomoy, 17/01/2013

¹³ The Shaheed Minar ("Martyr Monument") is a national monument in Dhaka, Bangladesh, established to commemorate those killed during the Bengali Language Movement demonstrations of 1952.

¹⁴ The daily Jugantor, 11/01/2013

¹⁵ The daily Jugantor, 16/01/2013

¹⁶ Government residence for Members of Parliament

¹⁷ The daily Jugantor, 11/01/2013

¹⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 19/01/2013

temporary pain but also leads to permanent breathing problems, stroke, blindness and skin problems.¹⁹

18. Odhikar condemns the statement of the Home Minister in favour of pepper spray and expresses grave concern over using any harmful and/or poisonous spray.

Meetings stopped by imposing section 144 of the Cr.PC²⁰

19. In 2012 the administration stopped 105 meetings and political programmes by imposing Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The same trend is observed in 2013. According to Odhikar's statistics, in January 2013, a total of nine instances of the imposition of Section 144 of the Cr.PC by the local administration, were recorded across the country; mainly to stop political gatherings and rallies from occurring.
20. On January 24, 2013 the local BNP in Jhenaidah called a meeting at Chandipur Bishnupada High School ground demanding the release of their leader Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and restoration of the caretaker government system. The local Awami League of Ganna Union announced a meeting to demand the hanging of war criminals at the same place and time. As a result, the local administration imposed Section 144 of the Cr.PC.²¹
21. Odhikar believes that stopping peaceful public gatherings by imposing section 144 is an interference on democratic rights and contrary to the Constitution of Bangladesh. The Government must stop declaring counter programmes of the ruling political party in order to obstruct programmes of the Opposition and cause the imposition of section 144.

Human rights violations along the border by BSF

22. According to information of Odhikar, it is noticed that several incidents of human rights violations of Bangladeshi citizens were committed by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) in January 2013. During this period, BSF killed five Bangladeshi citizens. Among them, four Bangladeshi citizens were killed by gunshot and one was allegedly tortured to death by BSF. Furthermore, 16 Bangladeshis were injured and nine were abducted by the BSF during this period. In 2012, the BSF killed 38 Bangladeshis.

¹⁹ The daily Jugantor, 18/01/2013

²⁰ Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 provides power to the Magistrate to issue orders to stop any meeting or gathering. See http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/sections_detail.php?id=75§ions_id=20789

²¹ The daily Manabzamin, 25/01/2013

23. On January 1, 2013 two Bangladeshi men named Nur Islam (32) and Muktar Dai (23) were shot dead by the BSF near main pillar 361/5 at Bujruk border under Haripur Upazila in Thakurgaon district.²² The next day, on January 2, BSF shot and killed two more Bangladeshi citizens named Mohammad Masud (22) and Shahidul Islam (23) at Bibhishon border under Gomostapur Upazila in Chapainawabganj district. Moreover, on January 2, 2013, BSF entered Bangladesh territory and abducted two farmers, Habil Uddin (22) and Monju Mia who were working the land under Panchbibi Upazila in Joypurhat district.²³
24. On January 13, 2013 a Bangladeshi labourer named Abdullah was picked up and tortured by the BSF members of Deepchor Camp when he went near the no man's land in Bangladesh territory at Dantbhanga border under Roumari Upazila in Kurigram district. Later he was released after three hours through a flag meeting.²⁴
25. Regarding this incident, the Director General of BSF, B D Sharma said, smugglers had entered Indian Territory in two incidents. He claimed that the BSF members were attacked. On January 2, 2013, Bangladeshi Home Minister, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir told reporters "I talked about this matter with the Indian Home Minister and, in principle, unanimously decided that we should not open fire at the border if it is not necessary for self protection".²⁵
26. Odhikar rejects the statements of Bangladeshi Home Minister and BSF Director General about the killing of Bangladeshi citizens. Odhikar believes that such statement of the Home Minister leads to Indian favouritism and deviates from the interests of Bangladesh. Odhikar demands his resignation for making this statement. Moreover, Odhikar also believes that killings along the border will increase due to the 'understanding' between the Home Ministers of the two countries.
27. According to the Memorandum of Understanding and related treaties signed between the two countries, if citizens of both countries illegally cross the border, it would be considered trespass and as per law those persons should be handed over to the civilian authority. However, we have repeatedly noticed that India has been violating treaties, shooting at anyone seen near the border or anyone trying to cross the border; and illegally entering Bangladesh, which is a clear violation of international law and human rights.
28. Odhikar believes that the role of the Government of Bangladesh should be effective as an independent and sovereign state. Because any independent and sovereign county could never accept the killing and torture of its citizens by

²² Fact finding report of Odhikar, 2-4/01/2013

²³ The daily Prothom Alo, 03/01/2013

²⁴ The Daily Ittefaq, 15/01/2013

²⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 03/01/2013

another country. The Bangladesh government and Border Guard Bangladesh have constantly failed to protect Bangladeshi citizens at the border areas.

Extrajudicial killings continue

29. Extrajudicial killings continue in 2013. In January 2013, according to information gathered by Odhikar, nine persons were killed extra-judicially. These killings were allegedly committed by RAB, police and BGB.
30. On January 5, 2013 Rafiqul Islam, Member Secretary, of ward No. 56 unit BNP and Vice President of Dhaka Metropolitan Complex Business Association, was arrested from Anandanagar village under Shailkupa Upazila in Jhenaidah and allegedly killed extra judicially by RAB. The mother-in-law of the deceased, Lipi Khatun, informed Odhikar that at around 7.30 pm some people identifying themselves from the administration asked them to open the gate. Before opening the main gate, some people in RAB uniform entered the home with guns by jumping over the wall and took Rafiqul away in handcuffs. Later at around 10.00 pm the body of Rafiqul Islam was found, still with handcuffs, in an onion field at Adabaria village under Kumarkhali Upazila in Kushtia district.²⁶

Types of extrajudicial deaths

Crossfire/encounter/gun fight:

31. Among the nine persons extra judicially killed, five were killed in 'crossfire/ encounters/ gun fights'. Among the deceased, one was allegedly killed by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and four by the police.

Shot to death:

32. Among the deceased, one person was shot to death by RAB and one was shot to death by BGB during this period.

Beaten to death:

33. Among the deceased, two persons were beaten to death by police.

Identities of the deceased:

34. Of the nine deceased persons killed extra judicially, one was member of Purba Bangla Communist Party (M-L People's War), one was a member of Bangladesh

²⁶ Fact finding report of Odhikar

Nationalist Party (BNP), one was a farmer, one person's occupation could not be determined; and five were alleged criminals.

Death in jail

35. In January 2013, three persons reportedly died in jail due to 'illnesses'.

Allegations of disappearances after being picked by law enforcing officers

36. Many people are 'disappeared' after being picked up by members of the law enforcement agencies, as claimed by their families. The families of the disappeared alleged that it is the members of the law enforcement agencies who are making such arrests; and the whereabouts of the persons are unknown. According to information gathered by Odhikar, 24 persons were allegedly disappeared in 2012. Incident of enforced disappearance continues in 2013. In January 2013 two persons were allegedly disappeared by law enforcement agencies.
37. On January 25, 2013 JSD leader Mohammad Ali Mohabbat, resident of Kumarkhali upazila in Kushtia, was picked up allegedly by some men claiming to be from RAB, from Captain Abul Bashar Market near Khulna Cantonment. The wife of Mohammad Ali, Moina Khatun informed Odhikar that on January 17, 2013 RAB tried to pick her husband up from Banshgram Haat. Mohammad Ali was taken by men claiming to be RAB while he was on way to his sister Laily's house. She said that Laily's husband, Habib called her on her cell phone and told her. Habib also told her that one of the men identified himself as Captain Mehedi of RAB while taking her husband.²⁷
38. On January 17, 2013, Arifuzzaman Khan Sharif (35) was arrested by DB²⁸ police from the Dhaka District Court area and handed over to the police station on January 26, after 9 days of keeping him at unknown places. Mohammad Anisuzzaman Khan, elder brother of Arifuzzaman Khan Sharif said that he and his brother went to Dhaka from Kishorganj for medical treatment on January 17. At around 3.00 pm he went to the Dhaka District Court with Sharif to meet an acquaintance, Assistant Public Prosecutor of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge Court, Khandker Mohibul Hasan Apel. During this time, some men came out of a microbus and identified themselves as members of the law enforcement agency and took away his younger brother Arifuzzaman Khan Sharif. Later, men claiming to be DB police called his cell phone and demanded 10 hundred thousand taka. On January 18, 2013, he filed a General Diary (GD No, 732)

²⁷ Fact finding report of Odhikar, 28-29/01/2013

²⁸ Detective Branch of Police

with the Kotwali Police Station. On January 19, the DB police was informed of this but they denied the arrest of Sharif. On January 22 at 9:30 pm, Sharif was taken to his village home at Tarail in handcuffs by an 8-10 member teams led by Sub Inspector Rafiqul Islam and some other DB police, who demanded 10 hundred thousand Taka. They threatened that Sharif will be killed in crossfire if they were not paid. Later, signatures of his brother-in-law Golam Mostafa (45); and cousins Sadekul Islam (30) and Kamruzzaman Khan (40) were taken on a blank sheet of paper by DB police. On January 23, 2013, the wife of Sharif's brother, Reshma Akhter sent two hundred and 97 thousand Taka through SA Paribahan, Kishorganj branch and two hundred thousand Taka was sent by his aunt Popy Akhter from Brahmanbaria through SA Paribahan. On January 26, Arifuzzaman was handed over to Ashulia Police Station by DB police as an accused person in a mugging case.²⁹

39. Collecting money in such a manner is increasing the level of corruption in law enforcement agencies. It seems as though the law enforcers are becoming desperate extortionists and are violating the legal framework with impunity. This is a dangerous indication of the deterioration of law and order in Bangladesh.
40. Odhikar expresses grave concern regarding the incidents of 'enforced disappearance' and the escalation of crime within the law enforcement agencies. It demands that the Government rescue or recover the victims of enforced disappearances and take stern action against perpetrator.

Public lynching continues

41. In January 2013, 17 people were allegedly killed due to public lynching.
42. On January 21, 2013 a mentally disabled man was beaten to death by mob suspecting him of being a member of a dacoit gang at Konabari Industrial area in Gazipur. A mentally disabled woman was burnt to death the same day. On January 19, a mentally disabled girl named Morzina was killed by a mob who suspected her to be a child kidnapper at Kaliakoir, Gazipur.³⁰
43. Many people are killed by mobs in various places in the country. Odhikar believes that due to the weak criminal justice system, the tendency of taking the law into one's own hands is increasing, as people are losing their confidence and faith in the police and judiciary.

Situation of readymade garment factory workers

²⁹ Fact finding report of Odhikar, 31/01/2013

³⁰ The daily Kaler Kantha, 22/01/2013

44. In January 2013 incidents of deaths and injuries occurred in readymade garment factories. During this period, seven female workers died and more than 50 workers were injured in a garment factory due to fire. Moreover, at least 185 workers were injured in other incidents such as for the demand of due wages; and protest against rape of a female worker by the factory authority.
45. On January 26, 2013 seven women workers died and more than 50 workers were injured due to a fire at Smart Export Garment factory at Mohammadpur in Dhaka. It was learnt that workers died due to suffocation and were trampled on. Garment workers who witnessed the fire informed Odhikar that it started in the heap of garment wastage at the first floor of the building. The main gate was locked when the fire began. There was no fire extinguisher in the factory. It was learnt during fact finding that the Smart Export Garment Factory was making clothes for international markets without the approval from the Labour Ministry, BGMEA³¹ and Fire Service.³²
46. This incident comes on the heels of the November 24, 2012 fire, where at least 113 workers died and over 60 workers were injured in a 9-storied readymade garments factory, Tazreen Fashions Limited, belonging to Tuba Group in Ashulia, Savar. The exact number of deaths could not be determined as many workers are still missing after the incident and the authority is yet to publish the list. On January 4, 2013 the relatives of the missing workers organised a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity. They alleged that getting salaries of their relatives and the process of identifying bodies was a harrowing experience and they were being harassed and confused by the various authorities. Ruhul Hannan, husband of missing Ainoor Begum, said that his wife worked in this factory for 18 months, but he did not get his wife's due wages. It was reported in various media that cheques were distributed to the families of 43 deceased workers from the Prime Minister's Office as compensation. But a BGMEA report says that six hundred thousand Taka was given to the families of the 57 deceased workers. This proves that irregularities are going on over the compensation money.³³
47. Odhikar expresses concern over the fire at Smart Garment Factory after the tragedy of Tazreen Fashions Limited. Odhikar also condemns the harassment in the process of identifying the body of workers and the paying of due wages of the missing workers to their families. Odhikar demands that regular and thorough factory inspections take place; and that violating factories be properly fined for not taking due care and diligence over their employees.

³¹ BGMEA: Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association

³² Fact finding report of Odhikar, 27-28/01/2013

³³ The daily Prothom Alo, 05/01/2013

Freedom of the media

48. In January 2013, according to Odhikar's documented statistics, 20 journalists were injured, two were threatened, one was assaulted and nine were harassed in different ways. On September 17, 2012 the government stopped 'YouTube' to prevent viewing and public rioting over the film 'Innocence of Muslims'. YouTube is still banned in Bangladesh.
49. On January 5, 2013 Chhatra League activists beat and illegally detained Reuter's reporter Andrew Reaz; New Age reporter Sony Ramani; Bangla News photo journalist Harun ar Rashid Rubel; and Prothom Alo correspondent Hassan Raja when they were taking photos of cocktail blasts at the Dhaka University campus. Chhatra League activists held the journalists captive after beating them and deleted the photographs after snatching away their cameras.³⁴
50. Odhikar expresses grave concern over the incident of attacks on journalists and urges the government bring the attackers to justice. Odhikar also demands that the government withdraw the ban on YouTube.

Situation of religious minority communities

51. On September 29, 2012, 12 Buddhist monasteries and temples and 40 houses belonging to members of the Buddhist community were vandalised and torched by criminals with the help of local leaders of the ruling party in Ramu of Cox's Bazaar. 19 cases were filed accusing 15,182 persons in this regard. So far, 468 persons have been arrested by police. Local Buddhist monks alleged that "those people who led the attacks and processions are roaming around. However, innocent people are being arrested." The responsible police officers of Cox's Bazaar also admitted this to the daily Prothom Alo. They said, there is a restriction to arrest leaders and activists of the ruling party, that came from the 'top levels'.³⁵
52. Odhikar believes that the Government is taking little action against the criminals who were involved in the Ramu incident as they have connections with the ruling party. Such indifference will only encourage the criminals to trigger more communal violence. This incident proves again that the Government has failed to protect the life and livelihood of the religious minority communities. Odhikar demands the government immediately ensure security to all minority groups and bring the perpetrators to justice.

³⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 06/01/2013

³⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 17/01/2013

Violence against Women

53. In January 2013, a significant number of women were victims of rape, dowry related violence, acid violence, domestic violence and sexual harassment. Odhikar believes that such violence increases when the perpetrators are not punished.

Acid violence

54. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in January 2013, it was reported that five persons became victims of acid violence. Of these affected persons, three were women and two were men. Some incidents are as follows:

55. On January 15, 2013, a 4th year honours student of the Dhaka Eden Women University, Sharmin Akhter Akhi was taken to the Kazi³⁶ office at Chankharpur, Dhaka at gunpoint by some criminals, including Monir and Masum, when she was on her way to the university. The criminals stabbed Akhi when she refused their proposal. They also threw acid on her face and body when she was shouting. Akhi was admitted to the Burn Unit of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital in critical condition.³⁷

56. Incidents of acid throwing are occurring due to the lack of implementation of Acid Crimes Prevention Act 2002. There is an obligation that the trial should be completed within 90 days as per law. But it does not work at all. In 2012, 966 persons were accused in 298 cases of acid violence, but only 79 persons were arrested. There were 170 under trial cases and 157 cases were adjourned. 13 cases were settled. Three persons were punished in three cases and 19 persons acquitted in 10 cases.³⁸

Rape

57. In January 2013, a total number of 96 females were reportedly raped. Among them, 32 were women, 61 were children below the age of 17 and the age of three victims could not be determined. Of the women, two were killed after being raped, 14 were victims of gang rape and one woman committed suicide after being raped. Out of the 61 child victims, six children were killed after being raped and 14 were victims of gang rape.

58. On January 13, 2013 a school girl of class five was raped by a criminal named Roich Sheikh in Gopalpur village under Mulghor union in Rajbari district. It is to be mention that Roich Sheikh was arrested on June 15, 2012 on the allegation

³⁶ A Kazi is the Registrar of marriages and divorces

³⁷ The daily Manabzamin, 16/01/2013

³⁸ The daily Amader Shomoy, 18/01/2013

of attempted rape of the same child. Roich was released on bail in the first week of December 2012.³⁹

Sexual harassment/stalking

59. According to information gathered by Odhikar, a total of 42 girls and women were victims of sexual harassment in January 2013. Among them, two committed suicide, two were injured, 13 were victims of attempted rape, one was abducted and 24 were sexually harassed in various ways. During this period, one man was killed and 12 men were injured by stalkers when they protested against such acts of harassment.
60. On January 17, 2013 a 7-year old child was the victim of attempted rape by a youth named Monir Hossain in Barisal. Local people caught Monir and beat him.⁴⁰
61. On January 13, 2013 a girl student of the Government Mujib College at Companiganj in Noakhali was sexually harassed by Abdul Karim, a student of the same college.⁴¹

Dowry-related violence

62. In January 2013, 23 women were subjected to dowry related violence. Of these women, it has been alleged that 10 were killed because of dowry and 12 were ill-treated in various other ways. Moreover, one committed suicide over dowry demands during this period.
63. On January 10, 2013, Abul Hossain, resident of Kanchon Municipality under Rupganj Upazila in Narayanganj district set fire to his wife Ruma Akhter by pouring kerosene on her, for one hundred thousand Taka of dowry. Ruma Akhter died on January 18, under treatment at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.⁴²

Recommendations

1. The Government must take effective action to stop all forms of criminalisation in the name of politics including those perpetrated by its activities. The law enforcement agencies need to play a proactive role to stop political violence and to take legal measures against perpetrators and carry out their duty in an accountable and unbiased manner.

³⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 14/01/2013

⁴⁰ The daily Manabzamin, 18/01/2013

⁴¹ The daily Jugantor, 18/01/2013

⁴² The daily Jugantor, 19/01/2013

2. Political programmes should not be obstructed. The Government should refrain from exercising unconstitutional, undemocratic and repressive activities like attacking peaceful processions and rallies. The Government should also refrain from stopping political meetings of the Opposition by imposing Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.
3. The Government must bring all involved in the acts of extrajudicial killings before justice, through proper and independent investigation. The Government should rescue or recover the victims of enforced disappearances. Odhikar urges the Government to accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 20, 2006.
4. The Government must ensure accountability of law enforcement agencies and also take action to put an end to their impunity. Acts of extortion and wrongful confinement perpetrated by alleged law enforcement officers reduce them to the level of common criminals. It is no wonder that people are losing faith in the system.
5. Interference on the media must be stopped. Incidents of threats and attacks on journalists must be properly investigated and perpetrators of such acts must be brought to justice. The Government must withdraw the ban on YouTube.
6. The Government should protest strongly against human rights violations on Bangladeshi citizens by the BSF; and investigate all incidents and 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 safety and security of the Bangladeshi citizens residing at the border areas. The Home Minister, as a representative of the Bangladesh Government should resign for his statement against the interest of the Bangladeshi people.
7. The due wages of the deceased workers of the Tazreen Garment Factory should be given to their families after completing the process of identifying bodies of workers immediately. The owners of Tazreen and Smart Garment factories must be arrested and brought to justice.
8. The Government must ensure proper trial and punishment of the perpetrators of violence against women under the purview of the law to ensure that justice is served. The Government should also execute mass awareness programmes, broadly including the media in order to eliminate violence against women.

Statistics: January 2013*														
Type of Human Rights Violations		January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
Extra-judicial killings	Crossfire	5												5
	Shot to death	2												2
	Beaten to death	2												2
	Total	9												9
Torture (Alive)		1												1
Disappearances		2												2
Human rights violations by Indian BSF	Bangladeshis Killed	5												5
	Bangladeshis Injured	16												16
	Bangladeshis Abducted	9												9
Deaths in Jail		3												3
Attack on journalists	Killed	0												0
	Injured	20												20
	Threatened	2												2
	Attacked	0												0
	Assaulted	1												1
Political violence	Killed	17												17
	Injured	1643												1643
Acid violence		5												5
Dowry related violence (including women victims, their children and relatives)		23												23
Rape		96												96
Sexual harassment /Stalking of women		42												42
Section 144 of Cr.PC		9												9
Public Lynching		17												17
RMG	Killed	7												7
	Injured	235												235

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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.