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Human Rights Monitoring Report

March 1 – 31, 2014

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Odhikar believes that 'democracy' is a form of the State and presupposes that freedom and human rights are its foundations. Democracy is not merely a process of electing a ruler. Democracy is the result of the peoples' struggle for inalienable rights, which become the fundamental premise to constitute the State defining 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 recognise this at the founding moment is a continuing curse that people are forced to carry. A State cannot be 'democratic' if the people do not realise and participate as 'citizens' in all sectors of the functioning of the state. The democratic legitimacy of the State is directly related to its commitment and capacity to ensure human rights, such as right to life and livelihood, right to environment and health; and the dignity and integrity of citizens. If all these are not ensured by the State, it cannot be called a 'democratic' state. These civil and political 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. The people's inviolable rights are the foundational principles of the State.

Odhikar, being an organisation of human rights defenders in Bangladesh, has been struggling to ensure these civil and political 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. In recent times, Odhikar's human rights defenders have been persecuted for their work and beliefs. However, this has only strengthened the organisation's resolve to fight for human rights, with no discrimination whatsoever.

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, Odhikar prepares and releases monthly situation reports. Odhikar has released this human rights monitoring report for March 2014, despite facing harassment and threats to its existence.

The Upazila Parishad Elections 2014

1. The first phase¹ of the Upazila Elections were held in a relatively peaceful manner; but the second phase² of elections were marked with violence, the snatching away of ballot papers and ballot boxes; fake votes; vandalism and 'capturing' polling centres. This trend continued till the elections ended. During the elections, there were several allegations of favouritism against the electoral administration and law enforcement agencies. Many contesting candidates alleged that these officials gave special electoral facility to the ruling party supported candidates. No action was taken despite this violation to the Code of Conduct; and harassment to opponents. Furthermore, there were allegations against the Returning and Assistant Returning Officers. However, most of the allegations were made against the law enforcement agencies. In most cases, allegations were made by losing candidates belonging

¹ The first phase of the Upazila Elections were held on 19 February 2014

² The second phase of the Upazila Elections were held on 27 February 2014

to the BNP and the Opposition. It has been alleged that the members of law enforcement agencies were involved in arrest and intimidation of non-Awami League candidates and other opponents.³ Moreover, members of law enforcing agencies who tried to perform their duty in a neutral manner, could not do so due to threats, intimidation and the influence of the ruling party activists. The Election Commission received several such allegations too, but the EC did not pay any heed to most of them.⁴ Due to the reluctance of the Election Commission, many altercations took place in several electoral areas and incidents of vandalising and taking away ballot papers and 'capturing' polling centres occurred between the second phase and the fifth phase (last phase) of the elections. In March, three elections were held in the third, fourth and the fifth phases. Elections in 81 Upazilas were held on March 15 in the third phase; in 91 Upazilas on March 23 in the fourth phase; and in 73 Upazilas on March 31 in the fifth phase.⁵

Situation of elections held in the third phase

2. On March 8, 2014 physical violence took place between the two factions of Awami League in Sreepur Upazila over the third phase of elections held on March 15, 2014. Reports show that 50 people were injured during the clash. Of them, nine had been shot. Upazila unit Chhatra League⁶ leader and college student Al-Amin, who was shot, succumbed to his injuries in Apollo Hospital on March 10. The Organising Secretary of Gazipur District unit Awami League and current Upazila Chairman, Iqbal Hossain alias Sobuj and Upazila Awami League member and Telighati Union Parishad Chairman, Abdul Jalil contested in the Sreepur Upazila Parishad Elections. On March 5, 2014 in the afternoon, Abdul Jalil was arrested by RAB from Bormi area. However, he was released in the evening due to the protests of his supporters. On March 8, supporters of the District Awami League backed Chairman candidate, Iqbal Hossain, formed a procession and took position in the Upazila Awami League office. At the same time, supporters of Upazila Awami League backed Chairman candidate Abdul Jalil, brought out another procession and tried to gather in front of the same Upazila Awami League office. During this time, an altercation took place between the two groups. At one stage, supporters of Iqbal Hossain left the place and supporters of Abdul Jalil took position in front of the Awami League office. Then supporters of Iqbal Hossain opened fire and exploded crude bombs in the presence of police. Supporters of Abdul

³ The daily Jugantor, 07/03/2014

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Election Commission Bangladesh, <http://www.ecs.gov.bd/Bangla/>

⁶ Student wing of Awami League

Jalil were forced to leave Sreepur Bazaar and the AL office. Later, Iqbal Hossain along with his activists and supporters conducted a meeting in front of the Awami League office. After the meeting when supporters of Iqbal were leaving, supporters of Jalil attacked them and set fire to a microbus and several motorcycles and also vandalized Sreepur Municipality building. The Election Commission had suspended elections in the Upazila after this incident, which was held again on March 31.⁷

3. The Election Commission imposed restrictions on the use of motorcycles in Lohagora Upazila, under Narail District from March 12 over the third phase of the Upazila Elections on March 15, 2014. However, supporters of Awami League blessed Chairman candidate and the Organising Secretary of Upazila unit Awami League, Syed Foyzul Amir Litu, brought out a rally with 150 motorcycles on March 13. The rally was obstructed by police, led by Sub Inspector Atiquzzaman and baton charged. Due to this police action Upazila Awami League President, Doulat Ahmed Khan threatened to see to the transfer of Officer-in-Charge of Lohagora Police Station, Alamgir Hossain, if the latter did not apologise. Later Alamgir Hossain openly apologised to the leaders of Awami League and assured the ruling party leaders that he would talk to the Superintendent of Police regarding the withdrawal of the responsible policemen who were involved in the incident.⁸
4. On March 12, 2014 law enforcement agencies conducted operations at the homes of supporters of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) candidates and Awami League 'rebel' candidates, in different villages in Babuganj, Muladi and Hizla Upazila under Barisal District. After this incident, these supporters and activists went into hiding.⁹
5. On March 23, 2014 a clash took place between supporters of BNP-blessed Chairman candidate M A Haresh and the BNP 'rebel'¹⁰ Chairman candidate Rafiqul Islam, over the tearing of posters at Roisuddin Fatehpur Bazaar in Tolapara village, under Madan Upazila in Netrokona District. During the clash Genu Mia, supporter of Rafiqul Islam was shot and died in hospital.¹¹
6. On March 19, 2014 Awami League supported Chairman candidate, Firoze Ahmed Swapon had threatened voters he would cut off fingers and beat them to death if they vote for 19-Party Alliance supported candidate, Shahidul Islam Mukul. He made such threats at an election meeting in Kolaroa Upazial under Satkhira District. He also told the polling agents of the 19-Party

⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 09/03/2014; and report send by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Gazipur

⁸ The Daily Star, 15/03/2014

⁹ Report send by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Barisal; the daily Bangladesh Protidin, 16/03/2014

¹⁰ Here 'rebel' candidates mean those candidates who owe allegiance to a particular political party, but were not given their party's official support at the Upazila Elections.

¹¹ The daily Bangladesh Protidin, 16/03/2014

Alliance supported candidate Shahidul Islam Mukul, “If my activists kill anyone who appears to be Mukul’s polling agent, I will not be held responsible.”¹²

Situation on election day

7. The third phase of the Upazila Elections were held on March 15, 2014 and marked with violence, clashes and the snatching of ballot papers; casting fake votes and capturing polling stations. Three persons were killed in election related violence.
8. On election day, activists and supporters of Awami League ‘captured’ polling centres; ousted the opponent’s polling agents and intimidated and obstructed voters at the polling stations in Bagerhat Sadar, Morelganj, Sharonkhola, Rampal and Mongla Upazilas. Awami League activists put check posts at various polling stations and obstructed opponent candidates and voters from entering the polling station. Activists of Awami League, led by local UP member and Awami League leaders Zahidur Rahman, Sabur Hossain and Motahar Rahman obstructed veiled women voters and female voters of the BNP-Jamaat parties at Karapara Union Parishad polling centre in Bagerhat Sadar Upazila. On getting this information, 10/12 Islami Chhatra Shibir¹³ leaders and activists, including Shibir leader and student of Bagerhat Government PC College, Mohammad Manzarul Islam, rushed to the spot and helped voters to enter the polling station. Awami League activists attacked Shibir activists with sharp weapons and sticks. During this time Mohammad Manzarul (24) was caught by Awami League activists and taken to the Megnitola area where he was stabbed to death in broad day light. Seven candidates also boycotted elections in Bagerhat Sadar, Morelganj, Sharonkhola and Rampal Upazilas in protest of various irregularities.¹⁴
9. On election day, Ripon Majhi, a polling agent of Awami League supported Vice-chairman candidate Zakir Hossain Bepari, was shot dead by police while snatching a ballot box from Bhumkhara Government Primary School polling centre under Noria Upazila in Shariatpur District.¹⁵
10. Mosharaf Hossain, Private Secretary of the Railway Minister Mujibul Huq, threatened to journalists of various national dailies and TV channels, who were covering the elections in Choddogram Upazila under Comilla District. Political activists of the Railway Minister ‘captured’ 73 polling stations out of

¹² The Daily Ittefaq, 21/03/2014

¹³ Student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami

¹⁴ Report send by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Khulna and the daily Bangladesh Protidin, 16/03/2014

¹⁵ The daily Bangladesh Protidin, 16/03/2014

103. Supporters of the Minister kicked out the 19-Party Alliance candidate Kamrul Huda, from a polling centre situated in the Minister's electoral area under Sreepur Union. Meanwhile, Mosharaf Hossain, Private Secretary of the Railway Minister Mujibul Huq also threatened to hand the journalists over to police in Ashwadia Government Primary School polling center. Fake votes were found in this polling centre and the voters who were in queue, were mostly under 18 years of age (ineligible voters). Furthermore, supporters of Awami League blessed candidate Abdus Sobhan Bhuiyan attacked journalists who came from Dhaka for reporting on the elections. Senior reporter of NTV, Shafiq Shahin; staff reporter of Channel 24, Maksud-un-Nabi; and district correspondent, Ashikun Nabi were wounded during an attack at Girls Pilot High School polling centre. Staff reporter of the daily JaiJaiDin, Kamruzzaman Bablu was attacked by local activists of the ruling party at Kunkot polling centre in Shubhopur Union under the same Upazila.¹⁶

11. Supporters of Awami League blessed candidate, Solaiman Biswas had captured 11 polling stations under Tungipara Upazila in Gopalganj District. Among the polling stations, ballot boxes from Gimadanga centre and 700 ballot papers from Modhukhali centre were snatched away by the ruling party activists. When this news spread, supporters of Awami League's rebel candidate, Gazi Golam Mostafa protested, causing an altercation between the two groups. During this, the vehicle of the Executive Magistrate also came under attack.¹⁷

Post-election violence

12. On March 16, 2014 after the elections, houses of BNP leader Zafar Munshi and Jubo Dal¹⁸ leader Ajmal Munshi, in Lohagoda under Narail District were vandalized and looted by criminals led by Kalia Upazila Parishad Chairman and Awami League leader, Khan Shamimur Rahman; and Lohagoda Kotakol Union Parishad Chairman and Awami League leader, Jahangir Alam.¹⁹ On March 16, leaders and activists of Awami League attacked and vandalized the houses of BNP supporters Bachchu Mia, Mizanur Rahman, Amanullah and Babul Mia in Kakoirtola village, under Nangolkot Upazila in Comilla District. Meanwhile, BNP activists attacked and vandalized Korshakrial Union unit Awami League office in Kishorganj Sadar Upazila the same day. At least 10 people were injured during these incidents.²⁰

¹⁶ The daily Manabzamin, 16/03/2014

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Youth wing of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

¹⁹ Report send by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Narail; the daily Prothom Alo, 17/03/2014

²⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 17/03/2014

Situation of the fourth phase of elections

13. On March 17, 2014 an altercation took place between one Hafiz Mia of Dhormondol village and some people, including Awami League activist Ramjan Ali of the same village over pasting of posters belonging to BNP supported Chairman candidate M A Hannan. A large group of men, led by former UP Chairman Baharuddin Chowdhury and Iqbal Chowdhury, attacked the house of Hafiz Mia with homemade weapons. The criminals beat many people including Hafiz and his mother Joyfur Begum and also vandalized houses and shops. Joyfur Begum was seriously injured by a spear thrown by criminals when she tried to save her son Hafiz Mia. Later she died in a hospital at Hobiganj.²¹
14. On March 17, 2014 five activists, including Nesaruddin Master, younger brother of the 19-Party Alliance supported Chairman candidate Major (Retd.) Abdul Ohab, were stabbed by Awami League supported Chairman candidate Shajahan Sikder's son Ronju Sikder and his activists in Dumki Upazila under Patuakhali District.²²

Situation on election day

15. On March 23, 2014 the fourth phase of elections was held with allegations of large-scale violence, rigging, casting of fake votes, snatching away ballot papers and 'capture' of polling centres. Clashes took place in many Upazilas during the elections. Five persons were also killed.
16. On election day, incidents of capturing polling centres, snatching away ballot papers, rigging, massive violence and shooting occurred in Gazaria Upazila under Munshiganj District. At around 11.00 am clashes took place between supporters of Awami League MP Mrinal Kanti Das-blessed Chairman candidate Refaetullah Khan Tota and supporters of Munshiganj District Awami League President Mohammad Mohiuddin-backed candidate Amirul Islam in Bororaipara Government Primary School polling center. During the clash, Baluakandi Union Parishad Chairman Shamsuddin Prodhan was stabbed by supporters of Tota. He died on the way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. At around 12.00 noon, a group of criminals attacked journalists and vandalized their vehicles on the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway in Chor Bausia Dakshinkandi area. Four journalists were injured.²³ At least 50 persons, including Lucky Akhter, wife of BNP rebel candidate Abdul Mannan Dewan Mona, were injured during a clash between inhabitants of Dori Bausia village

²¹ The daily Amader Shomoy, 19/03/2014

²² Ibid

²³ Report send by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Munshiganj

in Gazaria. On March 28, Lucky Akhter died in Dhaka Medical College Hospital while under treatment.²⁴

17. Supporters of Awami League backed Chairman candidate Mostafizur Rahman Bhuiyan, cast votes at night before the elections, in Purba Nalua Government Primary School and Baghmara Poura Government Primary School polling centres under Bruda Upazila in Comilla District. The Presiding Officer of Purba Nalua Government Primary School polling centre, Fakharuddin said, “some criminals forcefully entered the polling station twice between 2.00 am and 3.00 am and took 800 ballot papers from the cupboard and stamped on the symbol ‘Anarosh’ (Pineapple) of Awami League supported candidate Mostafizur Rahman Bhuiyan.” Meanwhile, the Presiding Officer, Baghmara Poura Government Primary School polling centre, Gopal Krishna Chokraborty said, “Awami League supported candidate Mostafizur Rahman Bhuiyan snatched away about 12 hundred ballot papers between 1.30 am and 2.00 am.” He did not know where these ballot papers were.²⁵
18. Ballot papers were stamped by Union unit Awami League General Secretary Quddus Fakir and activists of Chhatra League²⁶ and Jubo League²⁷ in the presence of Assistant Presiding Officer at Dhamura High School polling centre in Sholok Union under Ujirpur Upazila in Barisal District. They stamped 400 ballot papers. Members of law enforcement agencies arrived in the booth, after 300 ballots were put into the ballot box. Chhatra League and Jubo League activists left the remaining stamped ballot papers in front of the Assistant Presiding Officer. Later the Assistant Presiding Officer Selim Ahmed himself put these ballots into the ballot box.²⁸

Post-election violence

19. On March 24, 2014 Upazila unit Chhatra League Legal Affairs Secretary Mahbub Alam (25) was killed during violence that took place between supporters of the District Awami League President Mohammad Mohiuddin-backed Chairman candidate Amirul Islam and supporters of BNP rebel candidate Abdul Mannan Dewan Mona in Chorbausia Maddhamkandi village under Gazaria Upazila in Munshiganj.²⁹

²⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 29/03/2014

²⁵ The Daily Star, 24/03/2014

²⁶ Student wing of Awami League

²⁷ Youth wing of Awami League

²⁸ The daily Manabzamin, 24/03/2014

²⁹ Report send by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Munshiganj, 25/03/2014

Situations regarding elections in the fifth phase

20. On March 26, 2014 Gazipur District Awami League activists attacked a rally brought out by activists and supporters of the 19-Party Alliance-supported Chairman candidate, Fazlur Rahman; Vice-chairman candidate, Khairul Hasan; and female Vice-chairman candidate, Monira Begum, in Uttargaon village under Kaliganj Upazila. During this attack at least 10 persons, including Upazila BNP Organising Secretary Mohammad Farid Mridha; Municipal Councilor, Mohammed Ruhul Amin; and Municipal unit Awami League Organising Secretary, Mohammed Sukkur Mia were injured.³⁰

Situation on election day

21. The fifth and last phase of Upazila Elections were held on March 31, 2014 with large-scale violence and incidents of rigging, fake votes, snatching ballot papers and capturing polling stations; which were on a large scale, compared to such incidents during the other phases of the elections. One person was killed in violence. In most of the Upazilas, Awami League activists captured polling stations, stuffed ballot boxes in favour of the candidates bless by the ruling party. The 19-Party Alliance-backed candidates, Awami League rebel candidates, Jatiya Party supported, and independent candidates in 23 Upazilas boycotted elections due to massive irregularities.³¹
22. From the morning of election day, leaders and activists of the ruling party cast fake votes openly by stamping the ballot papers in different polling centers in Madarganj Upazila under Jamalpur District. This is also the election area of Mirza Azam who is a State Minister for Textile and Jute. Voters were not allowed to go to the polling centers and some of them were forced to leave the polling booth without casting their votes. A person carrying a badge of Awami League supported Chairman candidate Obaidur Rahman entered the female polling center of Nurunnahar Mirza Kashem Degree College and started casting fake votes openly by stamping the ballot papers. At that time a few female voters were waiting outside the polling center. BNP supported candidate Foyezul Islam boycotted the election at around 11.00 am on that day on grounds of 'capturing' polling centers by the ruling party activists.³²
23. On the same day, criminals forcibly entered the polling centres in Chhagalnaiya Upazila under Feni District and casted fake votes openly by stamping the ballot papers in favour of the ruling party. Furthermore,

³⁰ Naya Diganta 27 March 2014

³¹ The Daily Ittefaq and New Age, 01/04/2014

³² The daily Prothom alo (Online) 31/03/2014

supporters of the ruling party casted votes by stamping the ballot papers in some polling stations at night before the polling started.³³

24. In Satkhira, District Awami League-supported Chairman candidate Asaduzzaman Babu's activists and supporters forcibly entered Shealdanga Primary High School polling center in Sagordari Union and attacked voters who were standing in queue. They forced them to leave the polling station. During that incident BGB (Border Guard Bangladesh) officials were present near the polling center but did nothing.³⁴
25. Four to five men in masks entered the Kuripara Government Primary School polling centre and stamped ballot papers before the poll started in Ghatail Upazila under Tangail District. Candidates backed by the Opposition alleged that supporters of the ruling party stuffed ballot boxes in favour of their candidates in 35 polling centres before the poll started. Ten candidates from the Opposition boycotted elections due to these irregularities and their supporters blocked the Tangail-Mymensingh Highway at around 8:30 in the morning. Police opened fire and tear gas shells during this time. At least five people were shot and injured.³⁵
26. The criminalization and the trends of vote rigging, capturing of polling stations and snatching away ballot papers and boxes in elections started during the autocratic regime of Lt. Gen. Hussain Muhammad Ershad. Much of this illegality was abolished through the people's uprising in December 1990 with the downfall of Ershad. However, the culture of 'capturing votes' has come back in the Upazila Elections. Awami League announced the Upazila election schedule in five phases very soon after assumed power again through controversial elections on January 5, 2014; and during the elections incidents of snatching ballot papers and ballot boxes, rigging, fake votes and capturing polling stations resurfaced.
27. Odhikar believes that ensuring transparent, creditable, free and fair elections is the Constitutional responsibility of the Election Commission (EC). The Election Commission has to conduct elections in a free, fair and impartial manner, without being bias towards the ruling party. This is the mandatory duty of the EC. The Election Commission has failed to hold a free, fair and impartial election. Odhikar believes that it is very important to form a strong and effective Election Commission in Bangladesh; which would hold free and fair elections under a neutral caretaker government. The provision of elections under a caretaker government has been removed through the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which has caused a serious political crisis.

³³ The daily Inqilab 01/04/2014

³⁴ The daily Prothom Alo (Online) 31/03/2014

³⁵ The daily Manabzamin, 01/04/2014

The amount of violence and illegal activities perpetrated during the 10th Parliamentary Elections and Upazila Elections, establishes that Bangladesh still needs a neutral caretaker government to hold free, fair, inclusive and credible polls. The people of the country are still not able to freely practice this basic component of democracy without this caretaker system.

Political violence persists

28. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in March 2014, 22 persons were killed and 1350 injured in political violence. 29 incidents of internal violence in the Awami League and three in the BNP were also recorded during this period. In addition to this, three were killed in internal conflicts of the Awami League while one was killed in BNP's internal conflicts. 417 were injured in internal conflicts of the Awami League while 25 were injured in BNP's internal conflicts
29. The Awami League (AL) assumed power again through a controversial Parliamentary Election on January 5, 2014 and thus criminalization of politics by Chhatra League and Jubo League activists continues. Most of the criminal activities are linked to vested interest and mainly occur by using political influence. Furthermore, acts of violence are taking place between Awami League and BNP activists and supporters over various issues in relation to vested interest. Some examples of political violence in March are as follows:
30. On March 6, 2014 activists of Chhatra League and Jubo League vandalised Kabirhaat Police Station in Noakhali. Mayor of Kabirhaat Municipality and General Secretary of Upazila unit Awami League, Zahirul Huq went to the police station at midnight to release Bakhtiar Hossain and Monir Hossain, brothers of Kabirhaat Municipality unit Chhatra League President, Moslem Uddin. At that time an altercation occurred with the Officer-in-Charge of the police station. After that, Chhatra League and Jubo League activists attacked Kabirhaat Police Station. Windows of nine rooms and the glass doors at the main entrance were destroyed. In order to control the situation, police opened fire. Three policemen and four Chhatra League activists were injured in this incident.³⁶
31. On March 22, 2014 three Jubo League activists Dulal, Sharif and Azad were injured in a bomb blast while they were making crude bombs in Moddha Ahmmedpur village at Amirabagh under Sonagazi Upazila in Feni. All of them were admitted to Feni Sadar Hospital where Dulal succumbed to his injuries.³⁷

³⁶ Report send by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Noakhali, 07/03/2014

³⁷ The daily Jugantor (online), 22/03/2014

32. Odhikar expresses grave concern over the on-going political violence. Odhikar believes that it is very important to ensure a free, fair and impartial elections through participation of all political parties in a democratic process, which is equally significant for political stability. Odhikar demands that the government take legal action against its party activists who are involved in criminal activities, in order to stop criminalisation of politics.

Meetings and assemblies prohibited

33. The rights to freedom of assembly and holding of peaceful meetings, rallies and processions are democratic and political rights of every citizen which is enshrined in Article 37 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The government and ruling party put up barriers to holding meetings and also attack meetings and assemblies of the Opposition and groups that have alternative beliefs. Prohibition and attack on such meetings shrink the democratic space. Some incidents are given below:
34. On March 9, 2014 Gono Morcha and UBINIG jointly organised a human chain in protest of BT Brinjal³⁸ at Bharaimari Boro Bottola Mor in Chholimpur Union under Ishwardi Upazila in Pabna. A group of men led by Chholimpur Union unit Awami League President Abul Hashem Promanik, attacked UBINIG official Arfan Ali and forced the participants of the human chain to leave. Later, the protestors went to form a human chain in a BT Brinjal field in Mathalpara village, where 20-25 local men including UP member Wazed Ali, Astol Ali and Khokon Sardar, led by Abul Hashem Promanik attacked them again and stopped the human chain programme. Men also stopped journalists present there when they tried to take photos of the attack. The central leader of the Sommilito Nari Somaj, rights activist Farida Akhter, was assaulted by attackers and Nur Mohammad, Golam Mostafa Roni, Nur Alam, Arfan Ali, Alif, Sofura Begum, Hafizur Rahman, Mofiz Prang, Shukchan Mia, Anowara Begum, Modhu Prang and Romecha Begum were injured. It is to be mentioned that the government has initiated to cultivate the controversial genetically modified crop, BT Brinjal, in Bangladesh. Many voluntary organisations and civil society groups are protesting against this initiative. The human chain programme was organised as part of this movement.³⁹
35. On March 8, 2014 police stopped a rally organised by Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal⁴⁰ on the occasion of International Women's Day. At around 10.00 am

³⁸ BT Brinjal is a genetically modified variety of eggplant that is extremely hazardous to health if consumed.

³⁹ Report send by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Pabna, 11/03/2014 ; protest note of anti BT Brinjal Morcha, 10/03/2014

⁴⁰ Women wing of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

leaders and activists of the Mohila Dal prepared to bring out a rally from in front of the BNP central party office at Naya Paltan in Dhaka. A large number of police and plain-clothes members of law enforcement agencies were deployed around the BNP office. Riot cars and water cannons were also prepared. During this time, police dispersed the gathering when activists of Mohila Dal brought out a procession from Hotel Victoria lane. At the same time, police arrested some Mohila Dal activists from the opposite side of the BNP office, who were later set free. After that, Mohila Dal activists led by Mohila Dal President Nure Ara Safa and General Secretary Shirin Sultana tried to bring out rally, which was stopped by police.⁴¹

36. Odhikar believes that this kind of prohibition and attack on a rally is an interference in democratic rights and contrary to the Constitution.

Extrajudicial killings

37. According to information gathered by Odhikar, a reported total of 14 persons were extra judicially killed in March 2014. Types of deaths and identities of the deceased are stated below:

Types of extrajudicial Killings

Crossfire/encounter/gun fight:

38. Among the 14 persons extra judicially killed, seven were killed in 'crossfire/encounters/ gun fights'. Among the deceased, four were allegedly killed by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and three by the police.

Shot to death:

39. Among the deceased, five⁴² were shot and killed. Of them two were shot by police, two by RAB and one was shot and killed by the Army.

Tortured to death:

40. During this period, one person was allegedly tortured to death by police

Beaten to Death:

41. During this period, one person was allegedly beaten to death by Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB)

⁴¹ The daily Manabzamin, 09/03/2014

⁴² In March 2014 among the five, two were shot and killed by the Law Enforcement Agencies is also included in the statistical part of political violence.

Identities of the deceased

42. Of the 14 persons who were killed extra-judicially, one was an Awami League backed Chairman candidate in the Upazila polls, one was an activist of Jubo League, one was a Awami League backed Vice- Chairman candidate's polling agent, one was the wife of a rebel Chairman candidate of the BNP, one was a contractor and one was his assistant contractor, one was a journalist, one was a day labourer and six were alleged criminals.
43. Laws and the criminal justice delivery system are under threat due to the prevalence of extrajudicial killings. Families of the victims alleged that their relatives were being shot and killed by the members of law enforcement agencies in front of them. Despite the demand for bringing the perpetrators to justice, the government is denying that incidents of extrajudicial killing occur. As a result, a culture of impunity in law enforcing agencies is prevailing in terms of extrajudicial killings. Furthermore, the Ministers of the government have made statements in support of extrajudicial killing at various times.
44. On March 8, 2014 Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan stated at a BBC-Bangladesh dialogue held at the BIAM Auditorium in Dhaka that "those who are involved in criminal activities, set fire to vehicles in the name of protest, cut peoples tendons off, if they are killed in crossfire that should not be called extrajudicial killing".⁴³
45. On March 3, 2014 at around 11.00 am, contractor Mohammad Washim and his assistant Songram Chowdhury were killed in 'crossfire' by RAB at his own residence at 131 New Jurain under Kadamtoli Police Station in Dhaka. Families of the deceased men claimed that they were shot and killed in their presence by RAB. Sonia Begum, wife of Washim and Salma Chowdhury, wife of Songram alleged that some of their workers were also beaten after being arrested by RAB and were forced to make false statements that Washim and Songram had abducted them. They claimed that RAB killed the two men in exchange for money over a dispute with Babul, son of one Alam of Alambagh, regarding collecting toll from Postogola Bridge. Sonia Begum informed Odhikar that Mohammad Washim used to control Alambagh CNG stand apart from collecting toll from Postogola Bridge. She said, Washim woke up at around 11.00 am on March 3 and went to the bathroom. His business assistant Songram with some men were waiting for Washim at the office on the fifth floor of the seven-storied building. During this time they heard the sound of firing. A group of plain clothes armed men were coming to their apartment on the 6th floor and opening fire as they climbed up. At that time, Sonia closed the main door of the house. RAB members kicked the door.

⁴³ The Amader Shomoy, 09/03/2014

Fearing the door would break, Sonia opened it. Four to five armed men entered the house and vandalised the furniture and dragged Washim out of the house by breaking down the door of the bathroom. After taking Washim out of the house, he was shot on stairs. Sonia begged mercy for her husband's life to a RAB officer, who became angry and slapped her and pushed her into the house. Men from RAB showed her some weapons and said "these were recovered from your house". At one stage, RAB members locked the apartment door from outside. After some time two female RAB members in uniform came to their house and kept her and her mother locked in a room. At around 3.00 pm neighbours freed them by opening the locked door. She assumed that Washim died on spot when he was shot. Sonia Begum said that in June 2013, a team of RAB also threatened to kill Washim in crossfire, after abducting him. RAB then told Washim that Babul had paid them 30 hundred thousand taka to kill him in 'crossfire'. He managed to pay RAB 60 hundred thousand taka for his freedom. Wife of deceased Songram Chowdury, Salma Chowdhury informed Odhikar that on March 3, 2014 at around 9.00 am, Songram went to Washim's house. At around 11.00 am she heard the shouting of people and the sound of firing. She and her daughter Shanta came to their veranda. From there they saw Songram climb down a pipe outside Washim's apartment building. Plain clothed RAB members then shot him down. Later she heard more gun shots and a team of RAB, in uniform, had come to the spot. Her daughter Shanta went down and requested a RAB member to take her father to hospital, but RAB paid no heed and forced her to go home.⁴⁴

46. Odhikar believes that extrajudicial killings are making a mockery of the country's laws and criminal justice system. If any person is found guilty the Court will punish him/her in accordance of law. However it has been seen that a significant number of RAB and police officers are committing extrajudicial killings either by getting involved in criminal activities or being instructed by 'higher authority', which is a matter of grave concern. Odhikar urges the government immediately stop extrajudicial killings and bring all perpetrators to justice.

Death in jail

47. In March 2014, four persons reportedly died in jail due to 'illnesses'.

⁴⁴ Fact finding report of Odhikar, 04/03/2014

Victim arrested for speaking at Odhikar's meeting

48. On March 10, 2014 Odhikar organised a meeting on the ratification of the OPCAT and Mass Awareness Campaign for the Prevention of Torture in Narayanganj, where a victim of torture, named Mohammad Ezaz, shared how he was tortured by police. On March 16, Narayanganj District Detective Branch police arrested him for speaking at the meeting and sent him to Court on March 17. He was shown as arrested in a case under the Narcotics Control Act. It is to be mentioned that on March 6, Mohammad Ezaz, who is a businessman of Riverview Market, was returning home at night in front of the Narayanganj River-Police Camp. At that time, two other businessmen of Riverview Market, Rakib and Khokon told Ezaz that two men claiming to be members of police had taken their wallets. After identifying the two men as members of police, Ezaz asked them whether anything illegal had been found from the two businessmen. The plain clothed policemen replied that they did not find anything. Ezaz then introduced them as businessmen of the market and asked them to leave. Narayanganj River-Police Camp In-charge, Sub Inspector Nazrul came to the spot and wanted to know what was wrong. The plain clothed policemen told him that Ezaz had released the two businessmen. Hearing this, SI Nazrul asked Ezaz to come to the police camp to get more information about the two businessmen. After taking Ezaz to the camp, SI Nazrul blindfolded him and tortured him by tying his arms and legs. At that time two policemen took away Ezaz's shoes. Later he was produced before the Court on March 7, 2014 by showing him as an accused in a case in relation to a land dispute. The Court granted him bail. On March 8, Ezaz briefed the journalists at the Narayanganj Press Club as to what had occurred. Later on March 10, Ezaz gave his testimonial at the meeting organised by Odhikar, which was published in various local newspapers on March 11, 2014. This infuriated SI Nazrul. As a result, Ezaz was arrested on March 16 by SI Shafique of DB police from his shop at Riverview market. On March 25, he was released on bail.⁴⁵

49. Odhikar observes that a section of the members of law enforcement agencies are getting involved in different criminal activities. If it is protested, the members of law enforcing agencies make arrests and inflict torture and tag protestors in various fabricated cases. Despite these kinds of allegations, the government does not take any punitive action against members of law enforcement agencies. As a result, they are enjoying impunity. The government cannot avoid its responsibility for this inaction and criminalization of law enforcing agencies. Odhikar demands the government

⁴⁵ Report send by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Narayanganj, 18/03/2014

immediately bring members of law enforcement agencies involved in criminal activities to justice.

Freedom of the media

50. In March 2014, according to information gathered by Odhikar, one journalist was killed, seven journalists were injured and three were threatened.
51. Odhikar strongly condemns attacks on journalists and also demands that the criminals involved in attacking journalists should also be arrested and tried for their crime.

Criticism against TIB for releasing report on the Parliament

52. On March 19, 2014 Members of Parliament belonging to Awami League and Jatiya Party asked for a ruling from the Speaker of the Parliament by stating Transparency International, Bangladesh's report on 'Parliament Watch'. MPs of both the parties claimed that TIB's statement had disgraced the Parliament. They also demand that TIB's funding source should be investigated to see whether they are funding to 'militants' and for 'terrorist activities'.⁴⁶ It is to be noted that Transparency International, Bangladesh released a report 'Parliament Watch' on March 18, 2014. The report states that 222 hours and 36 minutes of the session had been lost due to lack of quorum in the ninth Parliament, which costs about 104 crore taka. Furthermore, boycotting of Parliament by the Opposition caused losses of four crore and 87 lac taka. In a press conference TIB's Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said that the objective of this report was to make the Parliament accountable to the people. Regarding the 10th Parliament, Iftekharuzzaman said, "This is a Parliament without the Opposition. Although literally there is an Opposition in the Parliament but in reality there is none". He believed a full fledged effective Parliament would be established through participation of all political parties in elections as per the structure of a parliamentary democracy.⁴⁷
53. Odhikar observes that when any institution or organisation expresses criticism of the government or Parliament, the government becomes extremely defensive. The government also tries to link those organisations to 'militants' by any means. Odhikar believes that every citizen of this country or any organisation has the right to criticize activities of the government.

⁴⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 20/03/2014

⁴⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 20/03/2014

Public lynching

54. In March 2014, 11 people were reportedly killed due to public lynching.
55. People are often being killed due to mob lynching. The lack of respect for law, distrust of the police and instability in the country has increased the fear and insecurity among people, who have resorted to taking the law into their own hands, fearing that they will not get justice any other way.
56. Odhikar believes that due to the weak criminal justice system, the tendency to resort public lynching is increasing, as people are losing their confidence and faith in the police and judicial system.

Violence against religious minority communities

57. Some vested interest groups are attacking citizens belonging to religious minority communities across the country over such issues as land and for extortion. Incidents of attacks on minority groups are being politicised and because of that, action cannot be taken against the perpetrators. Some incidents are as follows:
58. On November 2, 2013 three cases were filed in relation to attacks on citizens belonging to the Hindu community in Bonogram under Sathia Upazila in Pabna. Investigations into those cases are not progressing and most of the accused persons are out on bail. However, the main culprits could not be arrested. Some of the accused were allegedly seen to be roaming around in public. The local inhabitants allege that police do not arrest the criminals as all of them are locally engaged with the Awami League and BNP.⁴⁸
59. On March 4, 2014 Shukraghar Union unit Jubo League President Siddique Mia, with 50 hired criminals, attacked the house of Amulla Biswas, a Hindu by religion, over a land related dispute in Rajapur under Jhalkathi District. During the attack, criminals vandalized five idols, including goddesses of Kali and Monosha, and also set fire to a cow-shed. Four persons were injured. Police arrested two persons, including Siddique Mia in this regard.⁴⁹
60. Odhikar condemns the crime of attacks on the citizens belonging to religious minority communities. Odhikar strongly demands that criminals committing such crimes must be arrested and brought to justice, regardless of political affinity. Odhikar also urges the government to ensure the protection of the citizens belonging to all minority communities.

⁴⁸ The daily Amader Shomoy, 11/03/2014

⁴⁹ The daily Bangladesh Protidin, 05/03/2014

Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (Amended in 2009 and 2013) is yet to be repealed

61. The repressive Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (amended in 2009 and 2013)⁵⁰ is still functional. Odhikar continues to release monthly monitoring reports despite being persecuted under this Law. The latest amendment to the ICT Act was made on October 6, 2013. Section 57 of the ICT Act, states that publishing or transmitting in a website in electronic form, of any defamatory or false information is considered to be a cognizable and non-bailable offence. Moreover, punishment for committing this offence has been increased for a term of a minimum of seven years and maximum of 14 years imprisonment. This law has curtailed the freedom of expression and the government is using this Act against HRDs, journalists, bloggers and people who have alternative beliefs. Odhikar urges the government to repeal this repressive law.⁵¹

Human rights violations in border areas by BSF continues

62. According to information collected, in March 2014, two Bangladeshis were shot dead by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF), three Bangladeshis were shot and injured. During this time, 12 Bangladeshis were abducted allegedly by the BSF.
63. On March 23, 2014 a Bangladeshi citizen Ahad Ali (32) was shot dead by BSF at Munshipur border, under Damurhuda Upazila in Chudanga District. The BSF opened fire at approximately ten Bangladeshi cattle traders, including Ahad Ali, while they were returning from India with cows.⁵²
64. The BSF also illegally trespasses to Bangladesh territory and kill or pick up Bangladeshi citizens. After taking them, many were tortured and left at the border.
65. Odhikar believes that the role of the Bangladesh Government should be independent and sovereign in order to protect its citizens. No independent

⁵⁰ Section 57 of the ICT Act: (1) If any person deliberately publishes or transmits or causes to be published or transmitted in the website or in electronic form any material which is fake and obscene or its effect is such as to tend to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances, to read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it, or causes to deteriorate or creates possibility to deteriorate law and order, prejudice the image of the State or person or causes to hurt or may hurt religious belief or instigate against any person or organization, then this activity of his will be regarded as an offence.

(2) Whoever commits offence under sub-section (1) of this section he shall be punishable for a term of minimum of seven years' imprisonment and a maximum of 14 years or a fine of Taka one crore or both.

⁵¹ The ICT Act 2006 (Amended in 2009) is also the law under which the Secretary and Director of Odhikar have been charged.

⁵² The daily Manabzamin, 25/03/2014

and sovereign state can accept the indiscriminate killing, torture and abduction of its citizens by another state without reason. 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 noticed that India has been repeatedly 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.

66. Odhikar believes that Bangladesh Government should demand specific explanation to the Indian Government regarding killing, abduction and torturing of Bangladeshi citizens living along the border areas.

Situation of ready-made garment workers

67. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in March 2014, 65 workers were injured during unrest caused due to demands for overdue wages and various other reasons.
68. Workers of Softex-1 and Softex-2 garment factories at Hazi Kujrat Ali Super Market in Pallabi got weekly holiday on March 6 after work. After the holiday, on March 7 in the morning, workers came to the factory to join work, but they found the main gate locked. The security officers inside the gate told workers that the factory was temporary closed by order of the owners, as the building structure was found to be vulnerable. This made the workers annoyed and the security officers stopped workers while they were trying to enter the factory by breaking the locks. Later, annoyed workers chanted slogans in front of the factories. On March 8 at around 9.30 am, hundreds of workers of Softex Garment factory gathered in front of Kujrat Ali Super Market and brought out a procession against the closing down of the factory without any notice and for the demand for payment of three months due wages. Workers put barricades on main road of Pallabi and several vehicles on Pallabi-Gulistan Road were vandalised. Hearing of the unrest, workers of other garment factories joined them. At one stage, police baton-charged and fired blank shots and threw tear gas shells to disperse angry workers. At least 10 workers were injured in this incident.⁵³
69. Garment manufacturing factories are a very large source of revenue for Bangladesh and the factory workers are one of the main contributing factors to this success. The termination of workers without valid reasons, closing

⁵³ The daily Manabzamin, 09/03/2014

down of factories without prior notice, and the habit of not paying wages on time, violate their human rights.

Violence against women

70. During this reporting period, many women have been victims of rape, dowry related violence, acid attacks and sexual harassment by stalkers. Women are being victimized mainly due to negative social outlook, lack of implementation of laws and failure of the Judiciary, lack of victims and witnesses protection, corruption and criminalisation of the members of law enforcement agencies, economic instability and weak administration. Odhikar believes that since the perpetrators of violence against women escape punishment due to various reasons, potential violators are encouraged and incidents of violence are increased. It is important to effectively and adequately implement the law to stop such violence.

Dowry-related violence

71. In March 2014, Odhikar recorded that 14 women were subjected to dowry violence. Of these women, it has been alleged that four women were killed because of dowry and eight were abused in various ways over dowry demands. During this time, two women also committed suicide due to dowry. Some incidents are as follows:

72. On March 8, 2014 a housewife named Brishti Akhter committed suicide due to ill-treatment over dowry demands by her husband and in-laws in Jangir village under Rupganj Upazila in Narayanganj District. At the time of marriage, gold ornaments and two hundred thirty thousand taka had been given as per demands from Brishti's in-laws. After three months of marriage, Brishti's husband Hannan, mother-in-law Halima Begum and brother-in-law Mannan Mia inflicted degrading treatment on Brishti in order to bring more money for furniture. Brishti's father Bachchu Mia, who lives in Malaysia assured that he will give the money after his return to Bangladesh. Despite this assurance, the in-laws of Brishti continuously abuse her for dowry demands which led her to commit suicide.⁵⁴

73. On March 3, 2014 a pregnant housewife Safia Begum (27) was strangled to death over dowry demands in Maghan village under Mohanganj Upazila in Netrokona District. Soon after the marriage Safia Begum's husband Hanif had been abuses her for dowry. On March 3, Safia was forced to bring two hundred thousand taka from her father's house. Hanif beat Safia when she

⁵⁴ Report send by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Narayanganj, 09/03/2014

refused to bring money and strangled her to death at midnight. An unnatural death case was filed with Mohanganj Police Station in this regard.⁵⁵

Acid violence

74. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in March 2014, it was reported that four women, one girl and one boy became victims of acid violence. Incidents of acid throwing are occurring due to the lack of implementation of the Acid Crimes Prevention Act 2002 and the Acid Control Act 2002.
75. On March 12, 2014 at around 8.30 pm a criminal in a veil knocked on the door of the house of businessman Rustam Ali at BRTC Bus stand area near the police station under Pathorghata Upazila in Borguna District. When Rustam Ali's elder daughter Farzana opened the door, the criminal attacked her with acid in a syringe. Farzana tried to protect her eyes with her hands, but various parts of her body, including her face and hands were burnt. Farzana's mother and younger sister were also attacked when they ran hearing her scream.⁵⁶
76. On March 11, 2014 a housewife named Komola Begum (25) was found with severe acid burns in a field at Amlabo Hassan Nagar of Golaikandail Union under Rupganj Upazila in Narayanganj District. Police recovered the housewife in critical condition when the local people informed them. The eye-witnesses and police guessed that the victim might have been beaten and burnt with acid by her husband or others and left her for dead.⁵⁷

Rape

77. In March 2014, Odhikar recorded a total number of 33 females who were raped. Among them, 13 were women, 19 were children below the age of 16 and the age of one person could not be determined. Of the women, six were victims of gang rape. Out of the 19 children victims, three were killed after being raped; five were victim of gang rape. Furthermore, four girls were victims of attempted rape. Some incidents are given below:
78. On March 24, 2014 a housewife (22) was raped by criminals in Dhakkin Kaladi area of Matlab under Chandpur District. The victim filed a case with Matlab Police Station accusing five rapists Hussain Mohammad Kochi, Patti Babu, Lal Sharif, Tasif and Zamal Prodhania. After the case was filed, police of Matlab Police Station arrested Matlab Municipality (South) unit Chhatra League General Secretary, Hussain Mohammed Kochi. Activists and

⁵⁵ The Daily Ittefaq, 15/03/2014

⁵⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 15/03/2014

⁵⁷ The daily Jugantor, 12/03/2014

supporters of Chhatra League staged a violent demonstration and vandalized several CNG-run vehicles and shops in protest of the arrest of the Chhatra League leader.⁵⁸

79. On March 11, 2014 a 13-year child⁵⁹ was forcibly taken to a drug store by a woman named Nilufa, who was wife of one Kana Kashem. Later, a man from the same village named Babul Mia raped her. After hearing her scream locals rushed to the spot, and Babul fled. On March 15, an informal arbitration took place at Gandhabpur playing field in the presence of some influential villagers, Nurul Islam, Miyab Ali, Kalam, Sundor Ali, Monu Mia and the victim's family. On that discussion a sum of taka five thousand was fixed to be given to the victim's family for her treatment. As a punishment the perpetrator was ordered to seek mercy from the victim's father. The victim committed suicide on March 16, 2014.⁶⁰

Sexual harassment and stalking

80. According to information gathered by Odhikar, a total of 29 girls and women were victims of sexual harassment in March 2014. Among them, two were killed by the stalkers, four were injured, one was assaulted, two committed suicide and 20 were sexually harassed in various ways. Furthermore one man was killed and seven men and three women were injured during the protest time.

⁵⁸ Daily Star 26 March 2014 / Naya Diganta 26 March 2014

⁵⁹ Odhikar do not disclose the name of a rape victim.

⁶⁰ Manabzamin 17 March 2014

Statistics: January-March 2014*					
Type of Human Rights Violation		January	February	March	Total
Extrajudicial killings**	Crossfire	20	13	7	40
	Tortured to death	0	2	1	3
	Shot to death	18	1	5	24
	Beaten to death	1	0	1	2
	Total	39	16	14	69
Disappearances		1	5	0	6
Human rights violations by Indian BSF	Bangladeshis Killed	1	1	2	4
	Bangladeshis Injured	4	3	3	10
	Bangladeshis Abducted	13	8	12	33
Death in Jail		1	5	4	10
Attack on journalists	Killed	0	0	1	1
	Injured	2	9	7	18
	Threatened	1	1	3	5
	Assaulted	0	1	0	1
	Arrested	4	0	0	4
Political violence	Killed	53	10	22	85
	Injured	1472	1167	1350	3989
Dowry related violence (including women victims, their children and relatives)		12	15	14	41
Rape		37	48	33	118
Sexual harassment /Stalking of women		14	12	29	55
Acid Violence		1	3	6	10
Public lynching		16	6	11	33
RMG Workers	Killed	0	0	0	0
	Injured	60	135	65	260

*Odhikar's documentation

**From January-March 2014, 17 persons were Shot and killed by the law enforcement agencies which is also included in the statistical part of Political Violence.

Recommendations

1. The Election Commissioners have to perform their duty in a transparent, free and impartial manner without favouring the ruling party or else resign from the Commission. The ruling party leaders and activists have taken away the peoples' right to vote.
2. The Government should take legal action against criminal acts perpetrated by its party activists.

3. Meetings and assemblies should not be obstructed. The government should refrain from attacking peaceful programmes and carrying out repressive unconstitutional activities.
4. Incidents of extrajudicial killings and torture by law enforcement agencies must be investigated and the perpetrators be brought to justice under criminal law. The Government should ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.
5. The Government must ensure the accountability of all members of law enforcement agencies and should take effective measures to end impunity.
6. The Government must investigate incidents of attacks on journalists and take legal means to punish the perpetrators. Freedoms of speech and expression must be ensured.
7. The Government should take all measures to protect the rights of the citizens belonging to religious and ethnic minority communities and ensure their security. Perpetrators of attacks on all minority groups must be brought to justice.
8. The repressive Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (Amended in 2009 and 2013) should immediately be repealed. All repressive measure taken against Odhikar must be withdrawn.
9. The Government should protest strongly against human rights violations on Bangladeshi citizens by the BSF and take initiative to investigate and make the Indian Government accountable and compensate the families of the victims. The Government should also ensure the safety and security of the Bangladeshi citizens residing at the border areas.
10. Human rights violations of readymade garments factory workers must be stopped. RMG factories need to be brought under unified security programmes.
11. The Government must ensure the effective implementation of laws to stop violence against women and the offenders must be brought to justice, instead of being 'sheltered' for their heinous crimes. The Government should also execute mass awareness programmes in print and electronic media in order to eliminate violence against women.

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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, with assistance from trained local human rights defenders.
4. Odhikar is consistent in its human rights reporting and is committed to remain so.