

BANGLADESH

Annual Human Rights Report 2016



Cover designed by Odhikar with photos collected from various sources:

Left side (from top to bottom):

1. The families of the disappeared at a human chain in front of the National Press Club on the occasion of the International Week of the Disappeared. Photo: Odhikar, 24 May 2016
2. Photo: The daily Jugantor, 1 April 2016, <http://ejugantor.com/2016/04/01/index.php> (page 18)
3. Protest rally organised at Dhaka University campus protesting the Indian High Commissioner's visit to the University campus. Photo collected from a facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/SaveSundarbans.SaveBangladesh/videos/713990385405924/>
4. Police on 28 July fired teargas on protesters, who were heading towards the Prime Minister's Office, demanding cancellation of a proposed power plant project near the Sundarbans. Photo: The Daily Star, 29 July 2016, <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/cops-attack-rampal-march-1261123>

Right side (from top to bottom):

1. Activists of the Democratic Left Front try to break through a police barrier near the National Press Club while protesting the price hike of natural gas. <http://epaper.thedailystar.net/index.php?opt=view&page=3&date=2016-12-30>
2. Ballot boxes and torn up ballots at Narayanpasha Primary School polling station in Kanakdia of Patuakhali. Photo: Star/Banglar Chokh. <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/5-killed-violence-1198312>
3. On 28 July the National Committee to Protect, Oil, Gas, Natural Resources, Power and Ports marched in a protest rally towards the Prime Minister's office. Photo: collected from facebook.
4. Police use a water cannon on protesting students and online activists in a rally against the building of a coal-based power plant in Rampal. Photo: The daily Prothom Alo, 1 October 2016, www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/991402/

Foreword

Odhikar has been diligently working to protect and promote the civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of the people since its inception in 1994. Odhikar consistently monitors the human rights situation of Bangladesh and releases a status report every month, based on Odhikar's own fact finding, information collection and reports sent by associated local human rights defenders across the country and information and statistics published in different mass media. The annual report of 2016 is the outcome of a compilation and analysis of the monthly human rights situation monitoring reports published every month in 2016.

Odhikar, being an organisation of human rights defenders in Bangladesh, has always been consistent in creating mass awareness of human rights by several means, including reporting violations perpetrated by the State and advocacy and campaign to ensure internationally recognised civil and political rights of citizens. We unconditionally stand by the victims of oppression and maintain no prejudice with regard to their political leanings or ideological orientation. Odhikar firmly believes that all victims of human rights violations are in dire need of protection and deserve justice.

Odhikar is facing severe repression and harassment by the government since 2013. The Organisation has released this annual human rights report of 2016, despite the persecution and continuous harassment and threats to its existence. Odhikar is deeply grateful to all the human rights defenders and partners at home and abroad who are supporting us to continue our work and show their solidarity with Odhikar, which strengthens our mission in difficult times.

To see the detailed monthly human rights reports of Odhikar, please visit www.odhikar.org and facebook: Odhikar.humanrights

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Synopsis

After analyzing the contents of the 2016 annual report, it can be observed that there is a dearth of ethical and legal foundations of the government and its legitimacy is controversial, as a result of the contrived and fraudulent elections. In order to remain in power, the government has decided to use repressive ways and means, violating human rights and with disregard to rule of law. Although the influential States and development partners have verbally criticized this situation, in practice, they seemingly did not take any principle position for the sake of their business and trade interests with Bangladesh. Bangladesh ratified several international Treaties and Conventions, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Furthermore, Bangladesh also ratified or acceded to other key UN Conventions, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention against Corruption. In spite of all this, the human rights situation of Bangladesh is worsening. Despite facing massive criticism on its record of human rights violations, Bangladesh has thrice been elected a member of the UN Human Rights Council¹. The unrest, which has emerged due to the persistence of human rights abuses on Bangladeshi people, can ultimately become a threat to regional security and stability.

¹ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/CurrentMembers.aspx>

Statistics on human rights violations : January-December 2016

Statistics: January-December 2016*														
Type of Human Rights Violation		January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
Extrajudicial killings	Crossfire	6	10	11	7	3	25	13	17	8	19	18	14	151
	Shot to death	2	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	3	13
	Torture to death	2	2	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	11
	Beaten to death	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
	Total	10	12	11	11	5	26	15	19	10	19	21	19	178
Shot on legs by law enforcement agencies		2	0	2	3	0	0	6	2	0	1	0	0	16
Enforced Disappearances**		7	1	9	11	14	14	5	7	4	7	8	3	90
Death in Jail		8	3	4	5	9	5	5	2	5	3	5	9	63
Human rights violations by Indian BSF	Bangladeshis Killed	3	1	1	2	4	4	4	3	5	0	1	1	29
	Bangladeshis Injured	4	4	0	2	3	4	1	7	4	5	1	1	36
	Bangladeshis Abducted	0	5	0	2	0	10	0	0	1	1	0	3	22
	Total	7	10	1	6	7	18	5	10	10	6	2	5	87
Attack on journalists	Injured	9	2	5	6	6	7	4	7	1	1	3	2	53
	Assaulted	9	1	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	1	0	16
Political Violence including local government election violence	Killed	6	5	50	33	53	28	14	2	7	3	8	6	215
	Injured	429	566	2263	1381	1608	1001	462	262	213	132	327	409	9053
Dowry related violence against married women		22	19	15	16	12	20	20	21	13	17	15	16	206
Rape		59	57	60	77	71	52	72	47	73	79	53	57	757
Sexual harassment (Stalking) against females		27	23	20	26	16	20	18	14	26	34	35	12	271
Acid Throwing		4	4	3	4	4	1	2	4	7	4	3	0	40
Public lynching		2	11	5	6	3	7	2	2	2	3	4	6	53
Arrest under Information and Communication Technology Act***		1	4	0	1	1	1	4	15	2	4	1	1	35

*Odhikar's documentation

** Odhikar only documents allegation of enforced disappearance where the family members or witnesses claim that the victim was taken away by people in law enforcement uniform or by those who said they were from law enforcement agencies.

***The cases of arrests under the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act that are documented are those where the presentations/statements in question are considered critical against government officials and government party leaders, as these are mainly reported in the media.

Main Report

Democracy and human rights

1. The Awami League led Grand Alliance assumed power through the 9th Parliamentary Elections conducted by the military-backed Caretaker Government in 2008. After assuming power, the ruling party started politicizing different government, constitutional and autonomous institutions, which expanded after the 2014 elections, when it came to a power for second term. The political situation had become extremely violent from 2013 over the forthcoming 10th Parliamentary elections and at the time of the trials for crimes against humanity perpetrated in 1971. Since then, human rights violations in the country increased at a rapid rate. The dreadful impact of the controversial and farcical 10th Parliamentary Elections² which were held on January 5, 2014, continued in 2016. The people's right to vote was taken away through this fraudulent election and disorder and criminalisation in the electoral system in Bangladesh has become commonplace. The democratic electoral environment has collapsed. The whole election process became farcical through widespread vote rigging, including 'capturing' of polling stations, casting fake votes and by other illegal and irregular activities perpetrated by the ruling party activists during the Upazila Parishad³ elections in 2014 and City Corporation⁴ and Municipality⁵ elections in 2015. The Union Parishad⁶ polls were conducted in six phases from March to June 2016. During that time, the political situation of the country was extremely violent.⁷ The elections were held under political banners⁸ for the first time in Bangladesh, which resulted in the death of 143 persons and many casualties, due to violent confrontations between political opponents. Most of the

²The Caretaker Government system was incorporated in the Constitution through the 13th amendment to the Constitution, as a result of people's movement led by the then Opposition Awami League and its alliance between 1994 and 1996. However, in 2011 the caretaker government system were removed unilaterally by the Awami League government through the 15th amendment to the Constitution, without any referendum and ignoring the protests from various sectors; and a provision was made that elections were now to be held under the incumbent government. As a result, the farcical 10th Parliamentary elections were held on January 5, 2014 despite the boycotting of this election by a large majority of political parties. The election was not only farcical (for example, 153 MP's were declared elected uncontested even before the polling commenced), it was a hotbed for election-related crimes such as ballot-box stuffing, capturing of polling stations, intimidation of voters and violence.

³ For details, please see Odhikar's Annual Human Rights Report of 2014, <http://odhikar.org/annual-human-rights-report-2014-odhikar-report-on-bangladesh/>

⁴ For details, please see Odhikar's Annual Human Rights Report of 2015, <http://odhikar.org/annual-human-rights-report-2015-odhikar-report-on-bangladesh/>

⁵For details, please see <http://odhikar.org/odhikar.org/পৌরসভা-নির্বাচন-২০১৫-অধি/>

⁶ Union Parishad is the lowest tier of the local government institutions in Bangladesh.

⁷ The elections related reports are mentioned in details in the monthly (March, April, May and June) human rights monitoring reports of Odhikar. Please visit www.odhikar.org

⁸ Until February 2014, candidates for UP elections were held on a non-political basis. Due to elections being held under political banners, candidates are not always those chosen by the public and violence has increased.

incidents occurred due to internal conflict among the Awami League candidates. On 31 October, the elections held in 399 Union Parishads, including the 22 corridors⁹ were marked with various irregularities¹⁰. In line with the previous polls, such elections were held with high levels of violence, capturing of polling centres and casting fake votes by supporters of the ruling party. Elections held in 21 municipalities¹¹ between 15 February and 25 May and by-elections¹² in two Parliamentary constituencies were also marred due to similar illegalities and irregularities. Meanwhile, in order to set up the ruling party men as Zila Parishad¹³ chairmen, the government passed a law to elect candidates for Zila Parishads through indirect¹⁴ vote, depriving people from their right to vote, which is contradictory to Article 11¹⁵ and 59(1)¹⁶ of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Leaders of the ruling (Awami League) party were elected chairmen unopposed, even before indirect voting was held on 28 December in 21 Zila Parishads out of 61; and elections took place among the ruling party candidates only in the remaining Zila Parishads. Ensuring transparent, credible, free and fair elections is the Constitutional responsibility of the Election Commission (EC). However, the present Commission¹⁷ has totally failed to deliver and to prevent illegitimate activities of the government and even made public claims of fair and peaceful elections, by supporting government statements¹⁸. The tenure of this Commission will be over in February 2017. Most of the elections held after 2014 were violent. Among the violence-free polls, was the Narayanganj City Corporation election held on 22 December. The last election under the present Election Commission was the 28 December Zila Parishad elections, which marred with violence too. There was no direct participation of the people in this election and only the leaders and activists of the ruling political party participated. The Election Commission did not allow Odhikar to observe the local government polls held at different periods. However, Odhikar collected election related information through its local network of human rights

⁹ Corridors were abolished and handed over to Bangladesh under signing 'instrument' and exchange of letters between India and Bangladesh through implementation of Border Treaty and Protocol. These corridors have now been incorporated as union parishads.

¹⁰ For details, please see Odhikar's human rights report of October 2016. <http://odhikar.org/human-rights-monitoring-report-october-2016/>

¹¹ For details, please see the monthly (February, March, April and May) human rights monitoring reports of Odhikar. www.odhikar.org

¹² For details, please see Odhikar's human rights monitoring reports of July 2016. <http://odhikar.org/human-rights-monitoring-report-july-2016/>

¹³ Zila Parishad: District Council, which is the upper most tier of the local government.

¹⁴ Where only elected representatives of the local government bodies are entitled to vote.

¹⁵ Article 11: The Republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed, and in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured.

¹⁶ Article 59(1): Local government in every administrative unit of the Republic shall be entrusted to bodies, composed of persons elected in accordance with law.

¹⁷ This is headed by Kazi Rakib Uddin Ahmed, the Chief Election Commissioner

¹⁸ www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1011587

defenders, which was also done during the Narayanganj City Corporation election. Elections are one of the significant factors for democratization. Due to lack of a fair environment and a level playing field for elections in Bangladesh, a one-party rule has been established; and the state security forces and the ruling party activists are involved in human rights violations with ever-increasing impunity.



Vandalized ballot boxes and torn up ballots after 15 to 20 people stormed the Narayanpasha Primary School polling station in Kanakdia Union, Patuakhali and took away the ballot boxes. Photo: The Daily Star, 23 March 2016



Body of Shubha (10) who was killed in electoral violence during voting in Hazratpur Union under Keraniganj. Photo: The daily Naya Diganta, 1 April 2016



Violent altercation between supporters of two chairman candidates over casting of fake votes in Raipasha-Korapur Union, Barisal. Ballot papers floating on the pond (inset). Photo: The daily Jugantor, 23 March 2016



A police officer was seen inside a polling booth during the UP election. He was holding a ballot book and stamping ballots: Photo: The daily Manabzamin, 1 April 2016

Acts of criminalisation by ruling party men

2. Violent elections fraught with irregularities proves that leaders and activists of the ruling party have become desperate to hold on to power. The increase in violations to rights, shows the government is not interested in being accountable to the people and is using the administration for vested interest. As a result, criminalisation and acts of violence by the ruling party activists were persistent during the whole of 2016. Across the country, criminal activities of the leaders

and activists of the ruling party affiliated organisations, Chhatra League¹⁹ and Jubo League²⁰ reportedly increased during this period. They attacked leaders and activists of opposition political parties, women and children and ordinary citizens, members of minority communities and dissenters and engaged in many internal conflicts and violence. Most of the criminal activities and violence were linked to vested interest. In many cases they were seen attacking opponents with lethal weapons which was publicised in the print and electronic media²¹. Several incidents of extortion, clashes over tender bids, land grabbing, violence in educational institutions and violence against women occurred during this period.

● On 3 October, Khadiza Begum, a second year female student of Sylhet Government Girls College, was stabbed and critically injured by Badrul Alam, Assistant Secretary of Shahjalal Science and Technology University unit Chhatra League. The incident had been recorded on the cell phone of a witness and Badrul was brought to justice due to massive protests from various sectors across the country soon after the attack²². ● On 12 June, Jony Sheikh, supporter of Munshiganj town unit Chhatra League General Secretary Sajjad Hossain, was shot dead by Awami League leader Wahiduzzaman Babul and Chhatra League leaders Nibir and Apu in Panchghoriakandi village in Munshiganj. ● A pedestrian, Kalu Bepary (30) and a rickshaw van puller, Manik Sarkar were also shot and injured. Police arrested Wahiduzzaman Babul, Nibir and Apu with three pistols, four cartridges and 23 bullets²³. Later Nibir was released on bail. On 25 December, police recovered several guns including bullets and phensidyl²⁴ from Nibir's room after raiding the Government Haraganga College Hostel in Munshiganj.²⁵



Weapons recovered from the student hostel of Munshiganj Government Horoganga College,
Photo: The daily Jugantor, 26 December 2016

¹⁹ Student wing of the Awami League

²⁰ Youth wing of the Awami League

²¹ No arrests or charges yet in illegal use of arms, en.prothom-alo 29 October 2016, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/126965/No-arrests-or-charges-yet-in-illegal-use-of-arms>

²² Report sent by local human rights defender associated with Odhikar from Sylhet and the daily Prothom Alo, 05/10/2016 www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/994393/

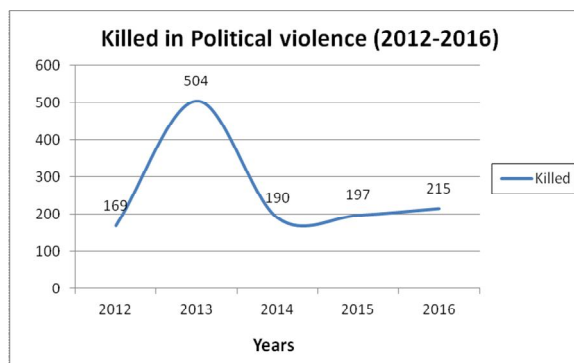
²³ The daily Manabzamin, 13/06/2016

²⁴ Phensidyl is an Indian cough syrup, which is banned in Bangladesh due to its addictive properties.

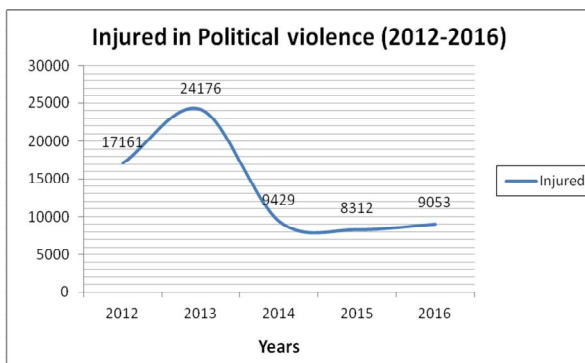
²⁵ The daily Jugantor, 26/12/2016

Political violence	Year(s)					Total
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
Persons killed in political violence	169	504	190	197	215	1275

Source: Odhikar's documentation



Graph- 1: Killed in Political violence (2012-2016)



Graph- 2: Injured in Political violence (2012-2016)

The above tables show that the rate of political violence that occurred in 2013, ahead of the elections in 2014, was extremely high. 504 people were killed during that period. However, the number of deaths during political violence decreased in 2014, but such figures increased again in 2015 and 2016.

Political Violence: Statistics of intra-party clash						
Year	Killed in intra-party clash		Injured in intra-party clash		Total number of incidents of intra-party clash	
	Awami League	BNP	Awami League	BNP	Awami League	BNP
2016	73	3	3586	232	335	15
2015	40	2	3884	157	364	11
2014	43	2	4247	397	374	39
2013	28	6	2980	1592	263	140
2012	37	6	4330	1619	382	146
Total	221	19	19027	3997	1718	351

Source: Odhikar's documentation

Repression by state security forces

- Due to acts of repression and impunity, several incidents of enforced disappearance, extrajudicial killing and torture in custody by the law enforcement agencies; and illegal and arbitrary arrest and deaths in jail took place in 2016. Moreover, inhuman or degrading treatment perpetrated by law

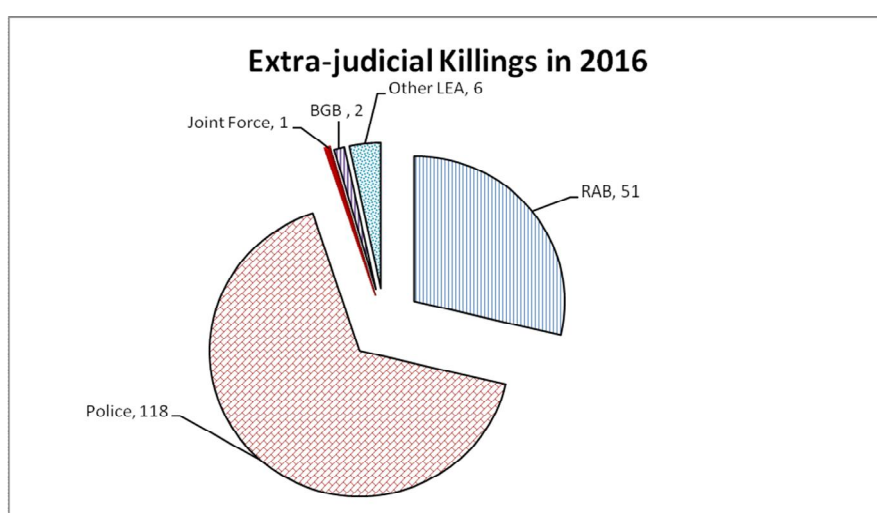
enforcement agencies and an overall lack of accountability, were also observed during this period.

Statistics on forms of repression by security forces from 2012 - 2016

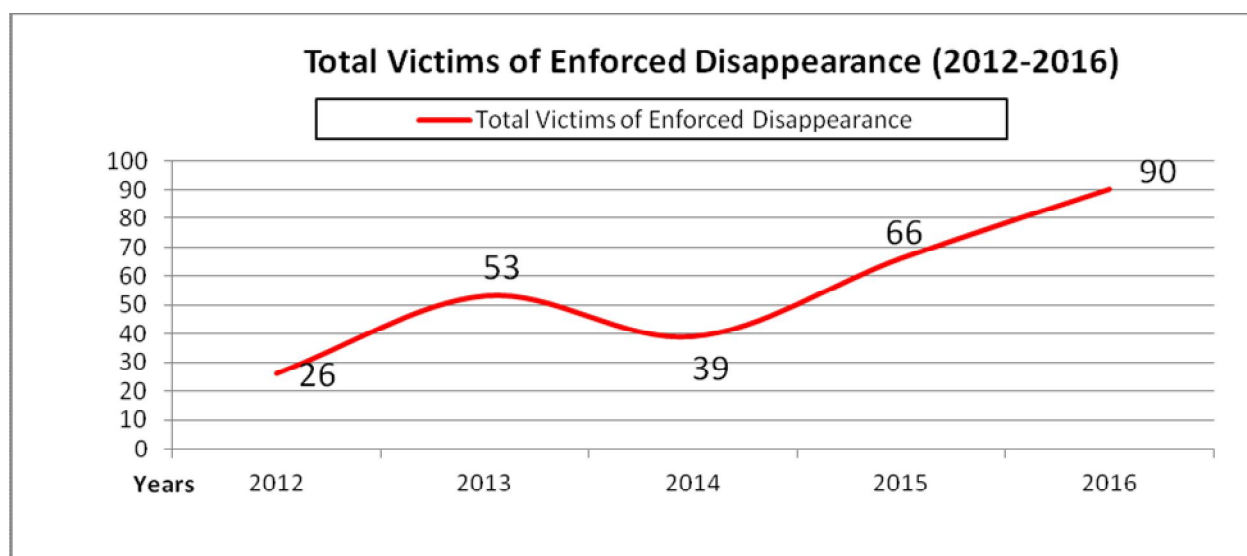
Type of Violence	Year(s)					Total
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
Extrajudicial killings	70	329	172	185	178	934
Enforced disappearances	26	53	39	66	90	274*
Death in jail	63	59	54	51	63	290

* From 2012 to 2016 total 274 persons were allegedly disappeared. Among them, 35 were found dead, 159 were freed or shown as arrested and whereabouts of 80 persons remain unknown.

Source: Odhikar's documentation



Graph- 3: Extra-judicial killings in 2016

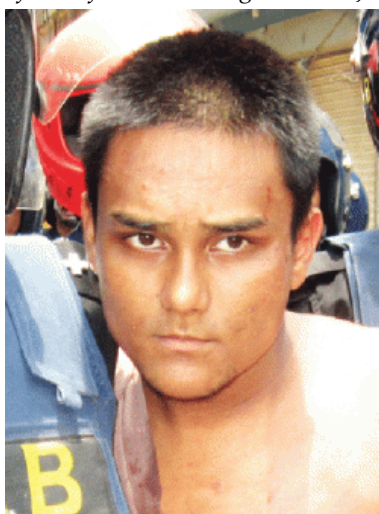


Graph- 4: Total Victims of Enforced Disappearance (2012-2016)

Extrajudicial killings

4. Although the highest court of the country issued rules against extrajudicial executions, many incidents of extrajudicial killing took place in 2016, which violate Article 32²⁶ of the Bangladesh Constitution and Article 6²⁷ of the ICCPR. Law enforcement agencies termed such incidents as deaths in 'gunfight' or 'crossfire; and in most cases they enjoy impunity, despite allegations from victim-families to the contrary. Among the people who were allegedly killed extra-judicially were persons alleged by police to be involved or accused in important criminal cases, who were later killed in 'gunfight' or 'crossfire' without due process of law. As a result there is no proof as to the allegations and justice fails.

● The Joint Commissioner of Detective Branch (DB) of Police, Abdul Baten claimed, at a press conference, that on 19 June, a person accused of the murder of blogger Abhijeet, Shariful Islam Sharif, was killed in a 'gunfight' with Detective Branch of Police at the Moradiar Banshpotti area under Khilgaon Police Station in Dhaka.²⁸ ● On 4 August, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) claimed that two men were killed in 'gunfight' at the Dangrir Bandh area on the Mymensingh-Kishoreganj highway under Nandail Upazila in Mymensingh. Among the two killed, one was a wounded Shafiul Islam, who was arrested during the attack²⁹ in front of Sholakia Eidgah³⁰ on 7 July³¹.



Shafiul Islam Sharif, Photo: The daily Prothom Alo, 5 August 2016

²⁶ Article 32: No person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty save in accordance with law.

²⁷ Article 6: Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.

²⁸ The daily Manabzamin, 20/06/2016, <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=19406&cat=2/>

²⁹ On July 7, 2016 during Eid-ul-Fitr, 10-12 policemen were on duty at a check post at the Mufti Mohammad Ali Jame Masjid intersection in Sabujbagh area, near the largest Eidgah Maidan of the country in Sholakia under Kishoreganj District. At around 8:45 am, a youth tried to pass through the check post with the people who came for Eid prayers. One of the on duty policemen stopped him, and the young man attacked the police and exploded crude bombs. Later, an exchange of fire occurred between the police and some other young men. Two police Constables, Zahirul Islam Topu and Ansarul Huq, were killed during this incident. During the gunfight with police, one 'extremist' named Abir Rahman and a local inhabitant, Jharna Rani Bhowmik were killed. Police and RAB arrested four men, including Shafiul Islam who had been shot and injured.

³⁰ An Eidgah Maidan is an open space or field where the congregational Eid prayers are held.

³¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 05/08/2016, www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/936508/

Enforced disappearances

5. Enforced disappearance³², which is considered a crime against humanity, has re-emerged³³ in Bangladesh in 2009 and subsequently such crime visibly increased. Many people have disappeared after being picked up by men claiming to be members of law enforcement agencies as alleged by the families of the disappeared. In some cases, law enforcement agencies deny the arrest; but days later, the arrested persons are produced before the public by the police or law enforcement; or handed over to a police station and appear in Court, or the bodies of the disappeared persons are found. Such incidents are violations of Article 9³⁴ and 16³⁵ of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 31³⁶, 32³⁷ and 33³⁸ of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The government is using law enforcement agencies to suppress political opponents and the members of such security forces are enjoying impunity. As a result, they are getting involved in the acts of various human rights violations, including enforced disappearances.
6. The families of the disappeared organised a press conference on 4 December, at the National Press Club in Dhaka, demanding the return of their relatives. Meanwhile, journalists drew the issue of enforced disappearance to the attention of the Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan on the same day. Flatly denying the incidents of disappearance, he (the Minister) said, "There is nothing called enforced disappearance in Bangladesh. Those found to be disappeared are voluntarily missing or went into hiding. They later return after a few days".³⁹ Meanwhile, proof of enforced disappearance was found after an investigation was carried out by his Ministry⁴⁰. However, none of the

³² The definition of enforced disappearance is given in the article 2 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. It is stated that, "For the purposes of this Convention, "enforced disappearance" is considered to be the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law."

³³ Many incidents of enforced disappearance took place during the Liberation War in 1971, which continued after the war. Many notable intellectuals were abducted and their whereabouts remained unknown till their bodies were found. Thereafter such incidents occurred under various regimes. Among the disappeared persons, after the liberation war, were prominent film maker Zahir Raihan and an ethnic minority community leader Kalpana Chakma, who was disappeared in 1996.

³⁴ Article 9: Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law.

³⁵ Article 16: Everyone shall have the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

³⁶ Article 31: To enjoy the protection of the law, and to be treated in accordance with law, and only in accordance with law, is the inalienable right of every citizen, wherever he may be, and of every other person for the time being within Bangladesh, and in particular no action detrimental to the life, liberty, body, reputation or property of any person shall be taken except in accordance with law.

³⁷ Article 32: No person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty save in accordance with law.

³⁸ Article 33 (1): No person who is arrested shall be detained in custody without being informed, as soon as may be of the grounds for such arrest, nor shall he be denied the right to consult and be defended by a legal practitioner of his choice. (Continued.....)

³⁹ The daily Jugantor, 05/12/2016, www.jugantor.com/news/2016/12/05/82553/

⁴⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 12/08/2012, <http://archive.prothom-alo.com/detail/date/2012-08-12/news/281302>

accused members of the law enforcement agencies were held accountable for this particular disappearance. The UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances has recently expressed its concern on incidents of enforced disappearance in various countries around the world, including Bangladesh.⁴¹

● On 29 February, the body of a Madrassa teacher, Abu Huraira (55) of Kuthi Durgapur under Jhenaidha District, was recovered from the Ambottola area in Jessore-Chougacha Road. His brother Abdul Malek said that on 24 January, Abu Huraira was picked up by men claiming to be members of the Detective Branch (DB) of Police, from his workplace at Kuthi Durgapur Madrassa. After that, his family was unable to find him⁴². ● On 14 April, citizens belonging to an ethnic minority 'Garó' community, Provhat Marak (60) and Bivas Sangma (25) from Gozni Village of Garo Pahar under Jhinaigati Upazila in Sherpur; and Rajesh Marak (22) from Bhaluka, Mymensingh, were picked up by men claiming to be from a law enforcement agency. Their whereabouts still remained unknown⁴³.



Provhat Marak, Bivas Sangma, Rajes Marak, Photo: The daily Prothom Alo, 22 April 2016

Torture and inhuman treatment

Torture

7. In 2016 allegations of acts of harassment, extortion, torture and killings, perpetrated by the police, were found to be a common phenomenon. Given that torture has become a stable part of the police process, due to its long standing practice in the sub-continent, it is considered that though the actual number of such allegations are several times more than the documented

⁴¹ On September 15, 2016 the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances stated in its annual report, submitted to the UN Human Rights Council, that incidents of enforced disappearance are increasing in many countries around the world and this is leading to a 'very frightening trend'. The report revealed that cases of enforced disappearance are rising due to 'fallacious and pernicious belief that such process is a useful tool to defend national security and combat terrorism'. It was also mentioned in the report that during the reporting period from May 2015 to May 2016, the Working Group transmitted 766 new cases of enforced disappearance to 37 States. The Working Group transmitted 483 of the above-mentioned cases under the urgent action procedure to 20 States, which is three times higher than the number of cases mentioned in its previous year's annual report. During the four-year reporting period from May 2011 to May 2015, the Working Group transmitted 384 new cases of enforced disappearance to 33 countries, including Bangladesh. The Working Group received a reply from the Bangladesh government on only one case out of 31 cases that it transmitted during the reporting period, according to the report. In the single case, the government informed the Working Group that the person, who was an alleged victim of enforced disappearance, was 'at liberty'.

⁴² The daily Prothom Alo, 01/03/2016, <http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/784882/>

⁴³ The daily Prothom Alo, 22/04/2016, www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/837235/

cases. All reports are not published in the media due to stern restrictions on the freedoms of expression and the press; and the victims' fear of further torture or harassment. A Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act 2013 was passed in Parliament on 24 October 2013 after a prolonged campaign. Despite this, there is no change in the actual situation. On 10 November, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court issued a 19-point guideline⁴⁴ to judicial and law-enforcement officials regarding arrests without warrant and the procedure of remand. Two examples are as follows:

● On 9 January, at around 11.00 pm, the Officer of the Communications and Publications Department of Bangladesh Bank, Golam Rabbi was detained by the Sub Inspector of Mohammadpur Police Station, Masud Sikdar and some other policemen, while he was returning home to Kalyanapur from his relative's house at Mohammadpur. The police asked for money and threatened to kill him in 'crossfire' if he did not pay. As Rabbi could not give the money, he was taken to the police station and was allegedly tortured there.⁴⁵



Golam Rabbi, employee of Bangladesh Bank. Photo: Prothom Alo, 29 July 2016

● On 15 November, Abu Salem Mohammad Noman, Magistrate of Chittagong Metropolitan Court ordered an investigation, after receiving allegations of the torture of Mohammad Musa. Musa informed the Court that SI Mazharul Haque, ASI Nur Nabi and ASI Partha Roy of Potenga Police Station had tortured him by giving him electric shocks⁴⁶. ● On 18 December, a fish farmer named Sohel Rana of Paharipatol Village under Melandaha Upazila in Jamalpur District was arrested by Melandaha police over a drugs case. Sohel Rana died in police custody a few hours after he was arrested. The victim's family alleged that he was tortured to death by police and they saw marks of injuries on the neck of Sohel's body⁴⁷.

⁴⁴ Shamim Reza Rubel, a student of Independent University of Bangladesh was arrested under section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr.PC) on July 23, 1998 and he died at the Detective Branch of Police office the day after his arrest. Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) challenged sections 54 and 167 of the Cr.PC and filed a writ petition to the High Court Division of the Supreme Court regarding this incident. In 2003, the High Court Division declared that parts of sections 54 and 167 of the Cr.PC were contrary to some Articles of the Constitution. The High Court Division ordered the amendment of the existing rules of arresting someone and interrogating him in custody under section 54 of Cr.PC, within six months. The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court dismissed the prosecution's appeal against the judgment and afterwards on November 10, 2016 the Court gave a 19-point instruction guideline.

⁴⁵ The daily Jugantor, 29/01/2016, <http://www.jugantor.com/last-page/2016/01/29/7320/>

⁴⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 15/11/2016; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1021403/

⁴⁷ DEATH IN POLICE CUSTODY: Police form probe body, family to file case against police/The daily New Age, 21/12/2016, <http://www.newagebd.net/article/5270/police-form-probe-body-family-to-file-case-against-police>

Shooting in the legs by law enforcement agencies

8. In order to halt leaders and activists of the opposition political parties and hamper their politics, the law enforcement agencies initiated the crime of 'knee-capping' or shooting in the legs of detainees/accused persons in 2013 which continued in 2016. Some victims have already become disabled due to this in the last few years. Victims are not only members of the political opposition. They could be 'suspects' or even journalists.

● On 31 March, a human rights defender associated with Odhikar and NTV⁴⁸ correspondent, Mohammad Afzal Hossain, was shot in the leg by police Constable Zulhas while he was observing the irregularities of the Union Parishad elections at the Rajapur Government Primary School polling centre in Bhola⁴⁹. ● On 2 April, a construction worker named Israfil Gazi (40) was allegedly shot in his right leg by police, in Dikdena Village under Monirampur Upazila in Jessore District. Later the police showed Israfil as arrested and admitted him to Jessore Sadar Hospital.⁵⁰ ● On 4 August, two Islami Chhatra Shibir leaders Ishrafil Hossain and Ruhul Amin were allegedly shot in 'police custody' in Chougachha Upazila under Jessore District. Ishrafil Hossain was shot in the left leg and Ruhul Amin was shot below the right knee⁵¹.



Human rights defender associated with Odhikar and NTV correspondent Afzal Hossain was shot in the leg while gathering information on the Union Parishad elections in Rajapur in Bhola. Photo: Odhikar



Two leaders of Islami Chhatra Shibir, Ishrafil Hossain and Ruhul Amin, who were shot in the legs by police, Photo: The daily Naya Diganta, 21 August 2016

⁴⁸ NTV is a private television channel

⁴⁹ For details, please see Odhikar's monthly report of March 2016. <http://odhikar.org/human-rights-monitoring-report-march-2016/>

⁵⁰ The daily Manabzamin, 04/04/2016, www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=8336&cat=9/ Information collected by Odhikar

⁵¹ Information gathered by Odhikar

Public lynching

9. Several people are getting killed by mobs in acts of public lynching every year due to lack of respect for law, distrust of the police and instability in the country. In 2016, 53 persons were reportedly killed due to public lynching. Due to a weak criminal justice system, people are losing their confidence and faith in the judicial system, and the tendency to resort to public lynching is increasing.

Interference on freedoms of assembly and expression and hindrance to the media

Barrier to freedom of assembly

10. The government barred and attacked meetings, assemblies and rallies organised by various political parties and progressive organisations in 2016, which are violations to the freedom and peaceful assembly and association of the citizens guaranteed in Article 37⁵² of the Bangladesh Constitution and Article 21⁵³ and 22⁵⁴ of the ICCPR. In many cases, leaders and activists of the ruling party, including Chhatra League and Jubo League attacked rallies and assemblies of the opposition parties along with members of the law enforcement agencies⁵⁵.

● On 18 October, a rally of the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports marched from the National Press Club at Dhaka to the Indian High Commission at Gulshan, Dhaka in order to hand over an open letter of protest to the Indian Prime Minister Norendra Modi, demanding cessation of the construction of a coal-based power plant by an Indian company and the Bangladesh government in Rampal, very near the world's largest mangrove forest the Sundarbans⁵⁶. When the rally reached the Malibagh rail crossing, police threw teargas shells and used a water canon to disperse the protesters. At that time many leaders and activists were injured.⁵⁷ ● On 8 November, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) applied to the Dhaka Metropolitan Police for permission to organise an assembly in Suhrawardy Udyan to observe National Revolution and Solidarity Day. After failing to get permission the first time, on 13 November, BNP re-applied for permission to organise a meeting in front of their party office at Naya Paltan in Dhaka instead. But the government did not allow that either⁵⁸.

⁵² Article 37: Every citizen shall have the right to assemble and to participate in public meetings and processions peacefully and without arms, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of public order or public health.

⁵³ Article 21: The right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

⁵⁴ Article 22: Everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

⁵⁵ For details, please see Odhikar's monthly human rights reports, www.odhikar.org

⁵⁶ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1573>

⁵⁷ The daily Jugantor, 19/10/2016, <http://www.jugantor.com/news/2016/10/19/69292/>

⁵⁸ Information gathered by Odhikar



Police attacked the rally organised by the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports, at Malibagh rail-crossing. Photo: The Daily Star, 19 October 2016



Police are throwing teargas shells at a procession of the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports. Photo: collected from Facebook account of the Revolutionary Workers Party

Hindrance to freedom of expression and the media

11. Government interference over the media has increased. The government controls most of the media; particularly the electronic media, which are mostly owned or controlled by supporters or members of the ruling party. Journalists face many risks such as threats, physical attacks, arrests, persecution and detention and abuse in remand, which are violations to Article 39⁵⁹ of the Bangladesh Constitution and Article 19⁶⁰ of the ICCPR. Risks in journalism are not new in Bangladesh. Journalists must maintained self censorship while publishing reports, due to suppression and repressive

⁵⁹ Article 39: (1) Freedom of thought and conscience is guaranteed. (2) Subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence— (a) the right of every citizen to freedom of speech and expression; and (b) freedom of the press, are guaranteed.

⁶⁰ Article 19: 1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference. 2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

laws that curtail freedom of expression. Even senior and well-known journalists are not spared.

● From 11 to 22 February, 79 cases were filed against the Daily Star editor Mahfuz Anam for allegations of sedition⁶¹ and defamation in different districts of the country, by the leaders and activists of the ruling party, Awami League and its wings⁶². ● On 16 April, members of the Detective Branch of Police, posing as journalists of Boishakhi TV, arrested senior journalist Shafik Rehman without warrant, from his house at the Eskaton Garden, Dhaka⁶³. The 82 year old journalist was taken into 10-day remand in two intervals⁶⁴. On 6 September, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court granted his bail. ● The Acting Editor of daily Amar Desh, Mahmudur Rahman was finally released from Kashimpur Central Jail- 2 in Gazipur on 23 November 2016 after three years and seven months of imprisonment.⁶⁵ It is to be mentioned that police arrested Mahmudur Rahman from the office of the daily Amar Desh newspaper on 11 April 2013⁶⁶.

Enactment and imposition of repressive laws

12. The current government has politicised various national institutions in the last eight years. The government was engaged in numerous incidents of human rights abuse in 2016 by using significant institutions, including the Election Commission, the Anti Corruption Commission, the National Human Rights Commission and the Information Commission, that are subservient to it; and at the same time, through enacting and imposing various repressive and abusive laws. The government, in 2016, has already drafted several repressive laws and if these laws are passed, they will severely violate the human rights of the citizens. The Information Ministry drafted a proposed Bill for a 'National Broadcasting Act'⁶⁷, incorporating the provisions of

⁶¹ It was stated in the allegations that Mahfuz Anam published false and distorted news in his newspaper (Daily Star) to make Awami League 'leaderless', following the directions of an organisation for empowering an anti-democratic force, during the military-backed 'caretaker' government that came to power on January 1, 2007.

⁶² The Daily Star, 23/02/2016

⁶³ The daily Jugantor, 17/04/2016

⁶⁴ Shafik Rehman was shown as arrested under a case filed with Paltan Police Station in 2015 regarding a plan to abduct and kill the Prime Minister's son Sajeeb Wajed Joy, who is also her IT advisor. At first he was taken into five-day remand. After completion of the five day remand, on April 22, the court allowed the police a further five-day remand. On April 20, his wife Taleya Rehman organised a press conference and demanded the release of Shafik Rehman, stating that the allegations brought against him was false and fabricated.

⁶⁵ <http://www.rtnn.net/bangla/newsdetail/detail/1/3/162123#.WDZpn7IOxdh>

⁶⁶ On August 19, 2010 the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court sentenced him to six months for Contempt of Court for publishing a report on how the government influences the courts on April 21, 2010. After arresting Mahmudur Rahman again from the office of the daily Amar Desh under allegations of sedition on April 11, 2013 a team of Metropolitan Detective Branch of Police raided the press of the daily Amar Desh in Tejgaon Industrial Area and took away a computer and some important and confidential documents and closed the press. On 13 August 2015, Mahmudur Rahman was sentenced to three years imprisonment and one hundred thousand taka fine by a temporary Court situated at Alia Madrassa field in Old Dhaka as he did not respond to a notice given by the ACC regarding his property. The Court also gave the verdict of another month of jail if he fails to pay the fine. 81 cases have been filed against him across the country, mainly for defamation and sedition. Despite being granted bail in all the cases, he was kept detained in prison by continuously showing him as arrested under new issues. On April 16, senior journalist Shafique Rehman was shown as arrested under a case filed with Paltan Police Station in 2015 regarding an alleged plan to abduct and kill the Prime Minister's son Sajeeb Wajed Joy. Mahmudur Rahman was shown as arrested under this case as well.

⁶⁷ According to the draft, violations of any rules or provisions of this law will result in a sentence of up to three months imprisonment and at least five hundred thousand taka fine or both. If violations of this Act continue the accused person will be fined up to one hundred thousand taka per day. It is also mention in the draft law that if someone broadcasts,

imprisonment and monetary fine. The Government had drafted a Bill for another repressive law, called 'Distortion of the History of Bangladesh Liberation War Crimes Act'⁶⁸ and the Press Council finalised the draft of a Bill for a Press Council (amendment) Act, 2016 incorporating provisions for stopping the publication of any newspaper or media for a maximum of three days or five hundred thousand taka fine, if the media and news agencies contravene any decision or Order of the Press Council.⁶⁹ On 5 October, the National Parliament passed the Foreign Donation (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act 2016⁷⁰, which is extremely repressive and contrary to international law. As a result of this Act, an environment has been created which will strictly regulate organisations, which work on civil and political rights and are vocal against corruption and the undemocratic actions of the government. On 24 November, the Cabinet approved the draft 'Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2016'. In this law, the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 has been restructured and translated into Bangla and 18 years remains the minimum age of marriage for girls. However, the law allows the marriage of minor girls (with no minimum age specified) in 'special circumstances' and for 'best interest' with the consent of the Court and parents.⁷¹ On 7 November, the Prime Minister gave a statement in favour of the law, in the Parliament.⁷² It is feared that child marriage would be legitimized in the pretext of 'special

violating this law, he will be fined upto 100 million taka. Such fine can be recovered by an administrative order. The Act also states that if anyone is harmed by an administrative order, he/she will not be able to seek legal recourse.

⁶⁸ According to the draft, misinterpretation or disrespect to any documents relating to the liberation war disseminated or published during the Liberation War and any publication during that period, will be considered a crime. In the draft law, the period of the liberation war was set from March 1 to December 16, 1971. The second sub-clause of the proposed law says the denial of 'incidents' that occurred between March 1 and March 25, 1971, will be considered as a crime. However, there was no explanation or discussion with regard to what were those incidents. Moreover, the liberation war started from the midnight of March 25, 1971, but the draft law states it was from March 1. There was no such explanation of this as well. This means that the police and complainants will have the freedom to decide what would be an 'incident' and what would be a 'distortion'. According to section 6(1) of the proposed Act, "if anybody was instigated or abetted in or engaged in conspiracy with someone or took any initiative or attempt, that person will be punished as per the law. Anyone will be able to file a case under this Act. Violations of any section of this law will result in a sentence of up to five years imprisonment and ten million taka fine. Furthermore, cases filed under this Act will be investigated and prosecuted in a short and specified period of time.

⁶⁹ The daily Jugantor, 03/05/2016

⁷⁰ According to this newly passed law, the government officials will be able to inspect, monitor and evaluate the activities of the voluntary organisations (and NGOs). The persons belonging to the NGOs who individually or collectively receive foreign fund for implementing projects, will come under constant surveillance under this law. According to section 3 of this law, "Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, an individual who is undertaking or operating any voluntary activity by receiving foreign donation or contribution, approval from the NGO Affairs Bureau must be taken". As per section 10(1), the Bureau under this Act shall have the authority to inspect, monitor and evaluate the voluntary activities of an individual and the NGO and the progress of the NGOs it has approved. Under section 10(2), to serve the purpose of subsection (1), the Bureau shall have the authority to create a monitoring committee and if necessary, appoint a third-party evaluator. It is mentioned in section 14 that if any NGO or individual makes 'inimical' and 'derogatory' remarks on the Constitution and constitutional bodies or conducts any anti state activity or involves in terrorism and financing, patronizing or assisting terrorist activities, it shall be considered an offense under this Act. For committing any offense under section 14, the Bureau may cancel or suspend the registration given to the said NGO or organisation or close down the voluntary activities undertaken or operated by the said NGO in the prescribed manner; and it may take action against the concerned NGO or person for punishment, as per existing laws of the country.

⁷¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 25/11/2016; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1027783

⁷² Child Marriage: Nothing to worry about new law: PM/ The Daily Star November 25, 2016/ <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/child-marriage-nothing-worry-about-new-law-pm-1326775>

circumstances' and for 'best interest' through this provision in the law, if enacted.

13. The Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (amended 2009, 2013) (the ICT Act) and the Special Powers Act 1974 are being imposed against people who are critical of the decisions and activities of those in high positions of the government and their families. The law enforcement agencies are also arresting 'accused persons' under sedition charges for criticising the above, mainly on facebook.

● On 3 July, police arrested Foysal Arif Zunayed Chowdhury, a Joint General Secretary of 29 Ward unit Chhatra Dal⁷³, under the Information and Communication Technology Act (ICT Act) for criticising the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her father, (former President) Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on Facebook, from Mahiganj area in Rangpur Metropolitan City⁷⁴. ● On 1 September, Siddiqur Rahman Khan, Editor of an online portal, 'Shikhsha.com', was arrested under the ICT Act for publishing an allegedly indecent report, based on false information, against the former Director General of the Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Department, Professor Fahima Khatun⁷⁵. It is to be mentioned that Professor Fahima Khatun is the wife of the ruling party MP of Brahmanbaria-3, Obaidul Muktedir Chowdhury⁷⁶. ● Police arrested a betel-leaf seller named Babul Ahmed, resident of Biyanibazar in Sylhet, for sedition⁷⁷ after getting approval from the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Home Ministry stated that the act of Babul Ahmed is considered to be a crime under section 124-A of the Penal Code, 1860⁷⁸. ● On 18 October, police arrested two local Chhatra Dal activists, Mohammad Shamim Hassan and Mohammad Nur Hossain Talukdar over allegations of posting objectionable comments on Facebook against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, at Shoronkhola in Bagerhat District. A case was filed with Shoronkhola Police Station under Sections 16(2)⁷⁹ and 25D⁸⁰ of the Special Powers Act, 1974 accusing seven persons, including the President of Shoronkhola Upazila unit Chhatra Dal, Bellal Hossain Milon⁸¹. ● On 23 December, the Detective Branch of Police arrested Nazmul Huda, Savar correspondent of ETV and the daily Bangladesh Protidin, over allegations of provoking anarchy in the garment factory sector at Ashulia in Savar, Dhaka. A case was filed with Ashulia Police Station against him under the Special Powers Act, 1974 and section 57⁸² of the ICT Act for publishing false report by opening a fake facebook account⁸³.

⁷³ Student wing of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

⁷⁴ The daily Naya Diganta, 05/07/2016

⁷⁵ The daily Manabzamin, 03/09/2016; www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=30065&cat=3/

⁷⁶ Information gathered by Odhikar.

⁷⁷ On January 6, 2016 Babul Ahmed wrote a letter to the Attorney General for Bangladesh, Mahbubey Alam. He appealed for an acquittal of all accused persons, who are on death-row for committing crimes against humanity during the 1971 liberation war, including the President of Jamaat-e-Islami Motiur Rahman Nizami; instead of executing their death penalties.

⁷⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 02/03/2016. Section 124-A: Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the Government established by law shall be punished with imprisonment for life or any shorter term, to which fine may be added, or with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added, or with fine.

⁷⁹ Section 16(2) of the Special Powers Act was omitted through an amendment in 1991, despite this police filed a case under this section.

⁸⁰ Section 25D: Whoever attempts or conspires or makes preparation to commit or abets any offence punishable under this Act shall be punishable with the punishment provided for the offence.

⁸¹ The daily Manabzamin, 19/10/2016, <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=36406&cat=9/>

⁸² Section 57: (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

Surveillance on the social media

14. In 2016, the social media was monitored constantly by the government's intelligent agencies. In order to monitor the social media, the government brought a surveillance software social media network monitoring system (SMNMS) for the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) from a US based company named 'Snaprends', spending 100 million taka⁸⁴. Using this software, RAB will be able to collect information from all kinds of blogs, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google plus, YouTube and Wordpress. The government can take legal action against persons based on the posts in the social media, which they will deem 'harmful' to society, state and the government⁸⁵.

Rise of 'extremism'

15. Odhikar has repeatedly cautioned various sectors, including the government, that a situation might be created where a section of society might be pushed towards extremism due to the instability created in society as a result of various extreme human rights violations, including torture, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, interference on the rights to freedom of expression and media and hindrance to rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. Despite this, the government continued its suppression. Acts of extremism have emerged in Bangladesh in recent times and exceeded all such incidents that occurred in the past. Bloggers have been killed since 2013. In 2016, many people, including a teacher and editor of a LGBTI rights magazine, citizens belonging to minority communities, a Buddhist monk and a Hindu priest were killed. In July, 22 persons, both Bangladeshi and foreign, were killed by extremists at a Spanish restaurant 'Holey Artisan Bakery' in Gulshan, Dhaka; and there were casualties during Eid-ul-Fitr near the largest Eidgah Maidan⁸⁶ of the country in Sholakia under Kishoreganj District.⁸⁷ To weed out 'extremists', law enforcement agencies carried out operations in Gulshan and Kalyanpur in Dhaka in July; in Paikpara, Narayanganj in August; in Rupnagar and Azimpur of Dhaka in September; Gazipur and Tangail in October, and in Ashkona, Dhaka in December, which resulted in 34 persons, including women and children, being killed.

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 10 million or both.

⁸³ The daily Jugantor, 25/12/2016

⁸⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 09/05/2016

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ An Eidgah Maidan is an open space or field where the congregational Eid prayers are held.

⁸⁷ For details, please see Odhikar's monthly report of July.

Mass arrests and prison conditions

16. The government conducted special drives to resist 'extremists' across the country. Mass arrests were carried out arbitrarily in June and more than 15 thousand people were detained in various prisons without trial. Many ordinary people, including pedestrians, day-labourers and children, became victims of mass arrest during that time. Prison situations have become deplorable as a result of cramming inmates in prison cells in excess of their actual capacity in the 68 jails across the country, due to this mass arrest drive.⁸⁸

One of the victims of the mass arrest was Mohammad Ali (12), a student of class V, who was missing since 8 June. His mother Nurjahan Begum said that on 10 June, she came to know that her son was showed as arrested under a drug case in Tejgaon Industrial Area Police Station⁸⁹.



Victims of mass arrest being produced before the Dhaka Cheif Metropolitan Magistrate Court. Photo: The daily Manabzamin, 13 June 2016

Deaths in jail

17. 63 persons reportedly died in jail allegedly due lack of treatment facilities and negligence by the prison authorities. Prisoners sometimes became ill due to the effects of torture in police remand, which caused their death later when they were sent to jail custody.

Mass resistance

18. Protests against various anti-people activities of the government continued in 2016. In spite of the government repressing the political activities of the opposition parties through violations and suppression; and then claiming there was now 'political stability', peoples' protests and social movement did occur. With no active political opposition, mass resistance was created by

⁸⁸ The daily Naya Diganta, 15/06/2016

⁸⁹ The daily Manabzamin, 13/06/2016

brave people at the local level. Cases were filed by police against many 'unknown' people over these incidents of mass protest, which is tantamount to human rights violations.

● On 4 April, locals organised a meeting in Gondamara protesting the building of a coal based power plant in Gondamara area under Banshkahli Upazila in Chittagong District. In the meanwhile, Union unit Awami League leader Shamsul Alam called another meeting at the same place, in favour of the coal based power plant. However, the local administration imposed Section 144⁹⁰ of the Code of Criminal Procedure and police and criminals shot at local people when they tried to assemble there, violating section 144. As a result more than one hundred people were shot. Among them, Mortuza Ali (52) of Gondamara Village; and his brother Ankur Ali, Zaker Ahmed (35); and Zahir Uddin were shot dead.⁹¹



An injured man being carried to hospital after a fierce clash between villagers and law enforcers over setting up a coal-fired power plant at Bashkhal in Chittagong. Photo: New Age, 5 April 2016

● On 5 October, at least 50 persons were injured during a police attack when Bhabodaho Paniniskason Shongram Committee⁹² brought out a procession over their six-point demand, which included emergency water drainage in the Bhabodaho area; extension and reformation of canals; and to ensure food security and rehabilitation of the people in Bhabodaho under Abhoynagar Upazila in Jessore District⁹³.

Violence against religious and ethnic minority communities

19. Many incidents of attacks on citizens belonging to religious and ethnic minority communities and acts of vandalisation and arson on their houses, business institutions and places of worship and effigies took place in 2016. Leaders and activists of the ruling Awami League were alleged to be involved

⁹⁰Section 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.

⁹¹The daily Jugantor, 05/04/2016

⁹²A committee to organise a movement for effective water drainage.

⁹³ Report sent by local human rights defender associated with Odhikar from Jessore; the daily Prothom Alo, 06/10/2016, www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/995241/

in such incidents⁹⁴. At a press conference on 22 April, the Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikko Parishad⁹⁵ alleged that the human rights situation of citizens belonging to minority communities was deplorable⁹⁶.

● An incident of vandalizing, looting and attacking more than hundred houses and 15 temples occurred on 30 October over an allegation of the uploading of an edited photo in which a photo of a Shiva⁹⁷ idol was set on a photo of the Holy Kaaba⁹⁸, from a facebook account of Roshuraj Das (30), a resident of Koibartapara of Harinber Village in Haripur Union Parishad, under Nasirnagar Upazila in Brahmanbaria District.⁹⁹ Hazi Suruj Ali, President of Chaportala Union unit Awami League; Farooq Mia, President of Haripur Union unit Awami League; and Awami League leader and Chairman of Nasirnagar Union, Abul Hashem were expelled from Awami League due to their alleged involvement in provoking this incident.¹⁰⁰ On 27 December, Awami League leader and former Chairman of Nasirnagar Union, Abdul Ahad was arrested for being involved in this incident.¹⁰¹



Temples and houses of the Hindu community were vandalised at Nasirnagar. Photo: The Daily Star, 31 October 2016

● On 6 November, three men were killed¹⁰² and at least 30 people injured¹⁰³ in a violent altercation between the Santal ethnic minority group and police, workers of Rangpur Sugar Mill and the activists of Jubo League and Chhatra League, when a group of employees of Rangpur Sugar Mill in Gobindaganj under Gaibandha District went to cut the sugarcane they had planted, but the Santal families who built new settlements on that land, stopped them. Meanwhile, Al Jazeera TV published a report with video on 11 December, showing some policemen setting fire to houses of Santal community built in the sugarcane field.¹⁰⁴ On 14 December, a Bench of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court comprising of Justice Obaidul Hassan and Justice Krishna Debnath ordered the Chief Judicial Magistrate of Gaibandha to investigate on the matter based a collective appeal of writ petitioners regarding setting fire to houses belonging to Santal community. A judicial proe body, headed by the

⁹⁴ The attacks are blamed on the opposition parties and 'religious' groups although eyewitness accounts may state otherwise. See Odhikar's fact finding report on the attacks at Ramu and Cox's Bazaar, dated 29/09/2012 at www.odhikar.org

⁹⁵ The Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Unity Council

⁹⁶ The daily Manabzamin, 23/03/2016

⁹⁷ Shiva is one of the principal deities of Hinduism.

⁹⁸ The Kaaba is a building at the center of Islam's most sacred mosque, Al-Masjid al-Haram, in Mecca, al-Hejaz, Saudi Arabia. It is the most sacred site in Islam.

⁹⁹ www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1011401/ and www.jugantor.com/news/2016/10/31/72534/

¹⁰⁰ The daily Jugantor, 05/11/2016

¹⁰¹ The daily Naya Diganta, 28/12/2016

¹⁰² The daily Prothom Alo, 11/11/2016; <http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1018579/> and Fact finding report of Odhikar

¹⁰³ 'Santal man killed, 1,500 families flee homes', The daily New Age, 07/11/2016; <http://www.newagebd.net/article/2253/>

¹⁰⁴ <http://video.aljazeera.com/channels/eng/videos/exclusive%3A-bangladesh-santal-tribe-fighting-government-authorities-in-a-land-dispute/5243578292001.jsessionid=02BD65B0D509D4D90790A61A364655A6>

district's Chief Judicial Magistrate Md Shahidullah, was formed following an order of the High Court to investigate the forced eviction, killing and arson attacks on the Santal community at Sahebganj in Gobindaganj of Gaibandha. The High Court Division asked the judicial probe body to submit a report within 15 days investigating who were involved and whether any police were involved into this incident.



People belonging to Santal community in Govindaganj are living inhuman condition after eviction from their ancestral land by sugar mill authority and police. Photo: The daily Jugantor, 23 November 2016

Workers' rights

20. There were several incidents of human rights violations of workers in 2016 and impunity of related government and factory owners alike, was largely observed. Such violations included deprivation of rights to security, proper and due wages, health, maternity leave and exercising the right to form trade unions. Workers have also been terminated without any notice. Furthermore, at least 44 workers died due to factory fires in various factories due to the negligence of the owners.

● On 10 September, 41 persons died and 35 persons were injured in fire in an aluminum foil packaging factory belonging to Tampaco Foils Limited, in Tongi, Gazipur¹⁰⁵. ● On 22 November, 26 women and children workers were burnt and a girl named Akhi (14) later died when a fire broke out in a gas lighter manufacturing factory named Colour Match BD at the Jirabo area of Ashuliya in Savar under Dhaka District¹⁰⁶. Soon after the accident, it was reported that such incident occurred due to a boiler explosion. After getting the fire under control, the boiler room was inspected by the Inspector

¹⁰⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 19/09/2016; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/979579 and the daily Prothom Alo, 25/09/2016; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/985570/

¹⁰⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 23/11/2016; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1026295/

Engineer Sharafat Ali of the Ministry of Industry. He claimed that the two boilers were intact. He believes that such accident might have occurred due to a leakage in a gas line.¹⁰⁷



Tampaco Foils Limited, after the explosion; Photo: The Daily Star, 11 September 2016



Colour match factory caught fire in Jirabo area of Ashulia, Savar, Photo: The daily Prothom Alo, 28 November 2016

21. In Bangladesh, children are being forced into hazardous work, in contravention to labour laws and international Conventions.

¹⁰⁷ The daily Naya Diganta, 12/09/2016; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/152888>

22. Garment manufacturing factories are a very large source of revenue for Bangladesh and the garment factory workers are one of the main contributing factors to this success. However, many factories were closed without notice. This and the sudden termination of workers and not paying wages or bonuses on time, are some of the main reasons for workers' unrest.

● On 12 December, workers were protesting for raising minimum wage to Tk 16,000 from Tk 5,300 at Windy Apparels Ltd at the Jamnagar Baron area of Ashulia under Dhaka District. Unrest erupted through the entire industrial area and the workers stopped their work. The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) declared the closing of 85 factories till 21 December and at least 1600 labouers were sacked. 10 separate cases were filed against 1500 people, mentioning 150 names as accused in the FIR.¹⁰⁸ After filing the cases, 22 people were arrested, most of them labour leaders.¹⁰⁹ On 22 December police stopped a press conference organied by an alliance of 12 garment workers' organisations demanding that closed factories be re-opened and labour leader Moshrefa Mishu was picked up and taken to the Office of the Detective Branch of Police and later released after interrogation.¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, the General Secretary of the Garment Workers Trade Union Centre, Ruhul Amin, alleged that many workers went into hiding to avoid police harassment and arrest as police and ruling Awami League activists were raiding houses of workers every night¹¹¹.



Garments workers demonsrating in front of BGMEA building. Photo: New Age, 27 December 2016

Situation of Workers: Readymade garment industries

Readymade Garment Industry	Year(s)					Total
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
Number of workers killed	115	1145	1	0	4	1265
Number of workers injured	2773	5566	745	250	361	9695

Source: Odhikar's documentation

¹⁰⁸ The daily New Age, 27/12/2016, <http://www.newagebd.net/article/5661/1600-workers-sacked-1500-sued>

¹⁰⁹ The daily Manabzamin, 24/12/2016

¹¹⁰ The daily Manabzamin, 23/12/2016

¹¹¹ The daily New Age, 27/12/2016, <http://www.newagebd.net/article/5661/1600-workers-sacked-1500-sued>

Violence against women

23. In 2016, a significant number of women were the victims of domestic violence, dowry related violence, rape, acid attacks and sexual harassment. Incidents child marriage also continued during this period. Victims are not getting justice due to a culture of impunity which encourages perpetration. Lack of implementation of laws; failure of the Judiciary; lack of victim and witness protection laws and processes; corruption and criminalisation of the members of law enforcement agencies; economic instability; and weak administration contribute to continue violence and to the lack of justice.

Statistics on violence against women (2012 – 2016)

Kinds of violence	Year(s)					Total
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
Rape	805	814	666	789	757	3831
Dowry related violence	822	436	237	202	206	1903
Acid violence	105	53	66	47	40	311
Sexual harassment	410	285	272	191	271	1429

Source: Odhikar's documentation

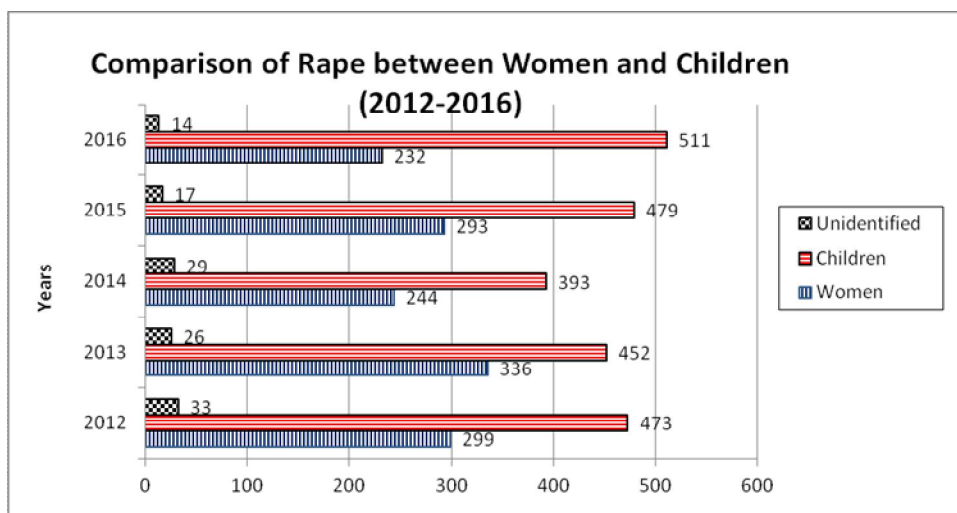
24. It was found that the incidents of rape including gang rape are continuing and shockingly, the rape of girls below 18 years has increased compared to adult women.

Rape (2012 – 2016)				
Year	Total No. of Victims	Total No. of Women	Total No. of Girl Children	Unknown (Ages could not be ascertained)
2016	757	232	511	14
2015	789	293	479	17
2014	666	244	393	29
2013	814	336	452	26
2012	805	299	473	33
Total	3831	1404	2308	119

Source: Odhikar's documentation

Year	Gang Rape			
	Women	Girl Child	Unknown (Ages could not be ascertained)	Total
2016	107	99	6	212
2015	141	131	5	277
2014	118	92	17	227
2013	127	94	15	236
2012	101	84	12	197
Total	594	500	55	1149

Source: Odhikar's documentation



Graph- 5: Comparison of Rape between Women and Children (2012-2016)

● On 20 March, the body of a second year student of Comilla Victoria Government University College and theater activist, Shohagi Jahan Tonu (19) was found in a bush in the Comilla Cantonment. A post-mortem report, submitted in April, stated that the actual reason for the death of Tonu could not be verified. Evidence of wounds at the back of her head were left out of the post-mortem report and scratch marks on her throat were written as insect bites. Due to the massive controversy and protests created by this post-mortem report, the Court ordered a second autopsy by forming a medical board. The investigating officer of the case, Special Superintendent of Police of CID, Mohammad Shah Abid ensured that evidence of rape was found after the DNA test.¹¹² However, the second post-mortem report was submitted with questions regarding the actual reason for the death and rape of Tonu¹¹³. It has now become doubtful as to whether the post-mortems of other incidents of rape and killing were properly and fairly done without any external influence, as discrepancies were found between the post-mortem and DNA tests in the Tonu murder case. In such cases, there have been allegations against doctors, of altering the autopsy reports due to threats, bribes or pressure from the higher authority. ● On 16 October, the General Secretary of Katbhanga Union unit Juba League and UP member, Mohammad Kamal, along with some others, attacked share-cropper Shahanur Bishwas and grievously hurt him when he protested the stalking of his daughter, at Nalbhanga Village under Kaliganj Police Station in Jenaidah District. Shahanur's legs had to be amputated at the Orthopedic Hospital in Dhaka to save his life¹¹⁴.

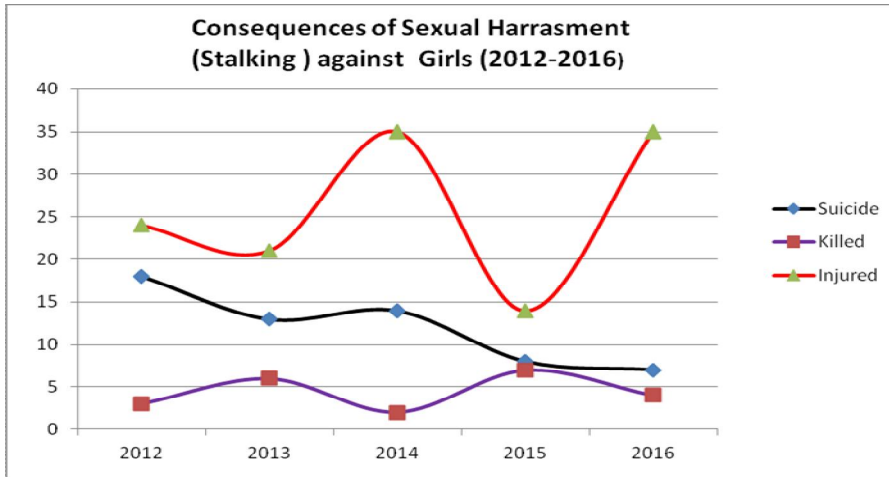


Shahanur Bishwas, victim of attack by his daughter's stalker. Photo: Jugantor, 22 November 2016

¹¹² The daily Prothom Alo, 17/05/2016

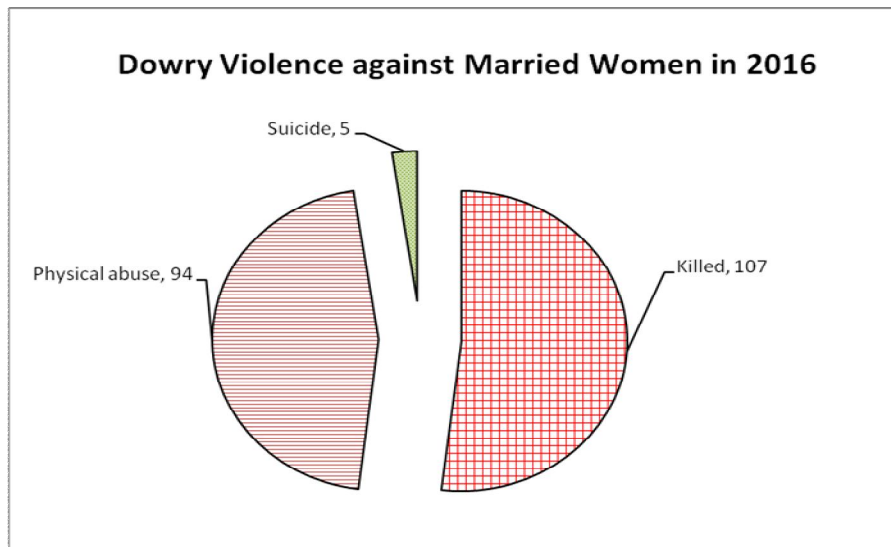
¹¹³ The daily Prothom Alo, 13/06/2016

¹¹⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 17/11/2016; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1027103/

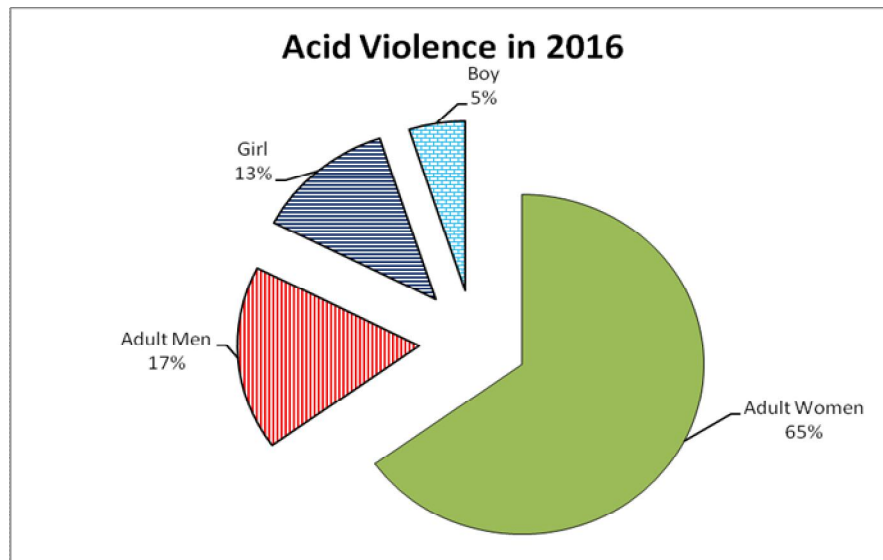


Graph- 8: Consequences of Sexual Harrasment (Stalking) against Girls (2012-2016)

25. Furthermore, many married women are getting killed every month due to dowry demands, despite a Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980 and a Suppression of Repression against Women and Children Act, 2000 (amended 2003). In spite of having strict laws against acid/corrosive substance throwing acid is still easy accessible to the criminals; and as a result, women, children and even men are still becoming victims of acid violence.



Graph-6: Dowry Violence against Married Women in 2016



Graph- 7: Acid Violence in 2016

Aggressive policy of India towards Bangladesh

26. The aggressive policy of the Indian government on Bangladesh was extremely evident in 2016. India is taking transit facility through Bangladesh at almost no cost and is also taking advantage of other business and trade facilities. Moreover, the Indian government decided to put up a fence within 150 yards along no-man's land, which will be nearer to the zero line. By building in the Farakka Barrage and the Gajaldoba Barrage, India is depriving Bangladesh from getting adequate water during the dry season and creating floods over Bangladesh by opening all the sluice gates during the Monsoon (rainy) season, violating international law. Furthermore, the initiatives to build the Rampal Power Plant with an Indian company near the Sundarbans and a decision to implement an inter-river connection project, will lead Bangladesh to terrible human and environmental disasters. A cultural aggression continues due to the opportunity to broadcast Indian Satellite TV channels in Bangladesh freely without any hindrance. However, Bangladeshi TV channels are barred from broadcasting in India. Meanwhile, incidents of killing, torture and other human rights abuses on Bangladeshi citizens continued in 2016, indiscriminately along the border areas, by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF). For these, no compensation was given to any victim nor was any effective action taken by either country to stop the atrocities. During this period, Bangladeshi citizens, including Abdul Barek (35), Abdul Gani, Monser Ali (50) of Kurigram; Joynal Abedin (30) of Naogaon; Shihab Uddin (16) of Chuadanga; Sujon (22) of Panchagarh; Roni Khalashi (25) of Rajshahi; Benzir Ahmed (22), Selim Uddin (24), Shahjahan Ali Bhutto (35), Jobdul Huq Bhadu (35) of Chapainababganj; Ayub Ali (35), Nuruzzaman (26) of Dinajpur; Mohubar Rahman (38) of Lalmonirhat; Mamun (25) of Kushtia; and

Mohammad Azihar Rahman (34), Moslem Uddin (32) of Satkhira, were either shot or tortured to death by BSF.

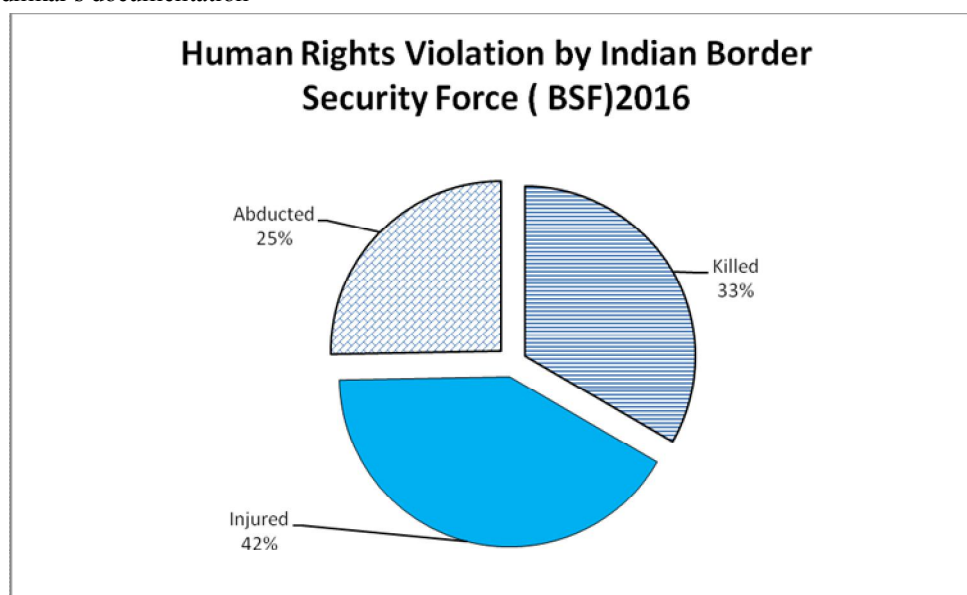


Mohubar Rahman of Lalmonirhat district, was shot to death by BSF. Photo: Odhikar, 9 September 2016

Statistics of violations at the border by Indian BSF

Human rights violations by Indian BSF	Year(s)					Total
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
Killed by BSF	38	29	35	44	29	175
Injured by BSF	100	79	68	60	36	343
Abducted by BSF	74	127	99	27	22	349

Source: Odhikar's documentation



Graph- 9: Human Rights Violation by Indian Border Security Force (BSF)2016

Genocide against Rohingyas in Myanmar

27. The religious and ethnic minority Rohingya community of Myanmar has for years been suppressed by the Myanmar government. The Myanmar Army renewed attacks on the Muslim minority people of the Rakhine State on the pretext of 'arms recovery' in connection with an attack by unknown persons on a police outpost at the Myanmar border, on October 9, 2016. As a result, hundreds of Rohingya people were killed. Violations like torture, rape, looting and children being thrown into fire occurred there¹¹⁵. Many Rohingya families tried to enter neighboring Bangladesh by water (the Naf River) to save their lives as a result of the ethnic cleansing by the Myanmar government. However, the Bangladesh government is now barring their entry. In order to protect human rights of the Rohingya community, who are now victims of genocide, such incidents must be addressed by the international community, including the Bangladesh government.



Rohingyas waiting on boats to enter Bangladesh through Naf River. Photo: Prothom Alo, 23 November 2016



Six year-old Noor Sahara, a young Rohingya girl, whose mother is missing and who crossed over the border with her neighbour Roshida poses for a photograph near a refugee camp in Teknaf on Wednesday.- AFP photo

¹¹⁵ The daily Naya Diganta, 23/11/2016; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/172905>

Hindrance to human rights activities

28. The organisations that work on human rights, in particular the civil and political rights were hindered by the government in 2016. Severe harassment on Odhikar commenced in 2013 by different organs of the government and continued in 2016¹¹⁶. Furthermore, the government has barred the release of all project related funds of Odhikar and withheld renewal of its registration, in order to stop its human rights activities. Human rights defenders who are associated with Odhikar are being constantly watched by intelligence agencies and their human rights activities hindered. Moreover, a human rights defender in Bhola, who is associated with Odhikar, was shot in the leg by police when he was observing the local government polls.

¹¹⁶ The present government is harassing Odhikar for being vocal against human rights violations and for campaigning to stop this. The government, after assuming power in 2009, started the harassment on Odhikar for its reports on the human rights situation of the country. On August 10, 2013 at night, Odhikar's Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan was picked up by persons claiming to be from the Detective Branch (DB) of Police, for publishing a fact finding report on extrajudicial killings during a rally organised by the religious group Hefazate Islam on May 5-6, 2013. Adilur and Odhikar's Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan, were later charged under section 57(1) of the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (Amended 2009). They were detained in prison and later, Adilur and Elan were released on bail after spending 62 and 25 days in prison respectively. Odhikar regularly faces harassment by different organs of the government. Adilur Rahman Khan, staff members of Odhikar and the office are under surveillance by intelligence agencies. Human rights defenders who are associated with Odhikar are being watched and sometimes harassed and human rights activities hindered. Furthermore, the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB) has barred the release of all project related funds of Odhikar, for two and half years, withheld renewal of its registration in order to stop its human rights activities. The Organisation is still operating due to the volunteer services of grassroots level human rights defenders associated with Odhikar and their commitment to human rights activism.

Recommendations

1. In order to restore democracy and the voting rights of the people, an accountable government must be established through free fair and inclusive elections, under neutral interim government; and initiatives must be taken to fix dysfunctional institutions through an elected government.
2. Incidents of extrajudicial killings and torture by law enforcement agencies must be investigated and the perpetrators must be brought to effective justice. The law enforcement agencies must follow international guidelines “Basic Principles on the use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials” and the “UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials”. The Government must ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture; and effectively implement the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013.
3. The Government has to investigate and explain all incidents of enforced disappearance and post-disappearance killings, allegedly perpetrated by law enforcement agencies. All victims of enforced disappearance should be returned to their families. The Government must bring the members of the security and law enforcement agencies who are involved, to justice before the law. Odhikar urges the government to sign and ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, adopted by the UN General Assembly.
4. The Government should refrain from carrying out repressive, unconstitutional activities. Mass arrests and human rights violations in custody and jail should cease immediately. Filing of cases against ‘unknown’ persons leading to willful arrests, must also be stopped.
5. Repressive and violative interference to freedom of expression and on the media must be stopped. The Government must withdraw cases filed against all human rights defenders and journalists; and it should also bring the perpetrators to justice through proper investigation. The ban on the publication of the daily Amar Desh and the broadcasting of Diganta TV, Islamic TV and Channel One should be removed.
6. All repressive and abusive laws, including the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (amendment 2009 and 2013) and the Special Powers Act, 1974 must be repealed. Monitoring of the social media and internet, leading to arrests and harassment and human rights violations, should be stopped. Repressive sections of the newly passed Foreign Donation (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act 2016, which are tantamount to violations of freedom of expression and association, must be repealed.
7. Attacks and repression on all minority community citizens must stop. The Government should take all measures to protect the rights of the citizens belonging to religious, ethnic and linguistic minority communities and ensure

- their security. The government should bring the perpetrators of Nasirnagar and Gobindaganj attacks to justice through proper investigation.
8. The Ready-made garment factories need to be brought under synchronized security programmes and the factories should be made with adequate infrastructural and other facilities. Violations of human rights of workers/labourers and harassment to them by the Industrial Police must be stopped.
 9. The Government must ensure the effective implementation of laws to stop violence against women and children and the offenders must be effectively punished under prevalent laws. The Government should also execute mass awareness programmes in the print and electronic media, in order to eliminate violence against women and put perpetrators to justice.
 10. The Government should protest strongly against human rights violations on Bangladeshi citizens by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and take initiatives to investigate and make the Indian Government accountable and compensate the families of the victims. The Government must also ensure the safety and security of the Bangladeshi citizens residing at the border areas. The Indian Government should refrain from shifting fences near the zero line along the border thus violating international law.
 11. Construction of the destructive coal-based power plant in Rampal, initiated jointly by India and Bangladesh must be stopped. The Bangladesh Government should take measures to stop the inter-river connecting project as it is as detrimental to the people and territory of Bangladesh, as is the Rampal power plant. India must also not open or close the sluice gates of Farakka and Gajaldoba barrages unilaterally for the sake of its own benefit.
 12. The international community must take effective action against the human rights violations on the Rohingya community who are victims of ethnic cleansing; and the Bangladesh government and international community should support and provide shelter and security to the Rohingya refugees.
 13. The case filed against Odhikar's Secretary and its Director under the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (Amended in 2009) must be withdrawn. All repressive measures and harassment against human rights defenders associated with Odhikar should cease. The government must release the funds of Odhikar to enable it to continue its human rights activities.

-End of Report-