



April 1, 2017

Human Rights Monitoring Report

March 1 - 31, 2017

<p>Extrajudicial killings</p> <p>Torture and inhuman treatment</p> <p>Enforced disappearances</p> <p>Public lynching</p> <p>Political violence</p> <p>Local government elections held with irregularities</p> <p>Hindrance to freedom of assembly</p> <p>Hindrance to freedom of expression and the media</p> <p>Situation of workers' rights</p> <p>Issues of extremism and human rights</p> <p>Bangladesh-India relations</p> <p>Violence against Women</p> <p>Activities of Odhikar hindered</p>
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Odhikar believes that democracy is not merely a process of electing a ruler; it is the result of the peoples' struggle for inalienable rights, which become the fundamental premise to constitute the State. 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 democratic legitimacy of the State is directly related to its willingness, commitment and capacity to ensure human rights, dignity and integrity of citizens. If the state does not ensure full participation in the decision making process at all levels - from the lowest level of administration to the highest level - it cannot be called a 'democratic' state. Citizens realise their rights and responsibilities through participation and decision making processes. The awareness about the rights of others and collective benefits and responsibilities, can be ensured and implemented through this process as well. The Parliament, Judiciary and Executive cannot and should not, have any power to abrogate fundamental civil and political rights

through any means, as such rights are inviolable and are the foundational principles of the State.

Odhikar, being an organisation of human rights defenders in Bangladesh, has been struggling to ensure internationally recognised civil and political rights of citizens. Odhikar stands against all forms of human rights violations; and participates and remains directly involved in the human rights movement in Bangladesh.

Odhikar does not believe that the human rights movement merely endeavours to protect the 'individual' from violations perpetrated by the state; rather, it believes that the movement to establish the rights and dignity of every individual is part of the struggle to constitute Bangladesh as a democratic state. As part of its mission, Odhikar monitors the human rights situation in order to promote and protect civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of Bangladeshi citizens and to report on violations and defend the victims. In line with this campaign, Odhikar prepares and releases human rights status reports every month. The Organisation has released this human rights monitoring report of March 2017, despite facing persecution and continuous harassment and threats to its existence since August 10, 2013.

Statistics: January-March 2017*						
Type of Human Rights Violation		January	February	March	Total	
Extrajudicial killings	Crossfire	15	17	19	51	
	Shot to death	1	0	0	1	
	Torture to death	0	0	1	1	
	Total	16	17	20	53	
Enforced Disappearances**		6	1	21	28	
Human rights violations by Indian BSF	Bangladeshis Killed	2	2	0	4	
	Bangladeshis Injured	3	9	3	15	
	Bangladeshis Abducted	5	1	1	7	
	Total	10	12	4	26	
Attack on journalists	Killed	0	1	0	1	
	Injured	2	3	0	5	
	Assaulted	1	1	0	2	
	Threatened	0	4	3	7	
	Total	3	9	3	15	
Political violence	Killed	5	7	5	17	
	Injured	217	325	403	945	
	Total	222	332	408	962	
Dowry related violence against women		17	14	20	51	
Rape		43	50	62	155	
Sexual harassment /Stalking of women		14	22	35	71	
Acid violence		3	7	4	14	
Public lynching		1	3	8	12	
Situation of workers	RMG workers	Killed	0	0	0	0
		Injured	0	20	21	41
		Termination	1034	1733	43	2810
	Workers in other sectors	Killed	3	2	11	16
		Injured	7	8	16	31
Arrest under Information and Communication Technology Act***		0	5	1	6	

*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 and religious sentiments as these are mainly reported in the media.

Extrajudicial killings continue

1. According to documentation gathered by Odhikar, 20 people were reported as being extra judicially killed in March 2017. The law and justice delivery system of the country is increasingly under threat and human rights are seriously violated due to the persistence of extrajudicial killings.

Type of death

'Crossfire/encounters/gunfights'

2. 19 persons were reported killed by 'crossfire/encounters/gunfights'. Among them 18 were allegedly killed by police and one by RAB.

'Tortured to death'

3. One person was allegedly tortured to death by police.

The identity of the deceased:

4. Of the 20 persons who were killed extra-judicially, one was member of Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (Huji), one was member of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and 17 were alleged criminals. The identity of one old man was not reported.

Torture and inhuman treatment by law enforcement agencies

5. Allegations of acts of torture, harassment, extortion and attacks perpetrated by the police have been reported. Members of law enforcement agencies are enjoying impunity due to the government practice of using such agencies against its political opponents, critics and dissenters to suppress them. As a result, they have come to believe that they are above the law and some have added acts of extortion and intimidation to the list. After a prolonged campaign, on October 24, 2013 the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013 was passed in the Parliament. However, there is no change in the actual situation. A case is as follows:
6. On March 23, 2017 at around 5:00 pm, Sub-Inspector Azadur Rahman arrested an accused person (case no. 59, dated 22/03/2017)¹ named Nurul Amin (54) from South Kashimpur Village under Panchgachhia Union in Feni District and allegedly put him in the lock-up. On the same day he was admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital when he became sick. He died there at 3:20 am. Nurul Amin's relative Shahidul Islam said that Nurul

¹ Nurul Amin had a dispute with Mobarak of the same area over 15 thousand taka. An altercation took place between them centering around dispute. Mobarak filed a case against Nurul Amin in court in this regard. Feni Model Police Station was investigating the matter as per instruction by the court.

Amin was tortured in police custody and as a result he died. Later police staged a 'drama' of him becoming ill and hired an ambulance to take him to Chittagong Medical College Hospital. On March 24, police took signatures on a paper from the deceased Nurul Amin's differently abled son Nurul Absar Manik, which says that Nurul Amin died of natural causes.²

Enforced disappearances

7. In March 2017, as per reports, incidents of enforced disappearance occurred three times more compared to such incidents in January and February. People have disappeared after being picked up by men claiming to be members of law enforcement agencies. The families of the disappeared and witnesses claim that members of law enforcement agencies arrest and take away the victims and then they are no longer found. In some cases, law enforcement agencies deny the arrest; but days later, the arrested persons are produced before the public by the police or other security forces; or handed over to a police station and produce in Court, or the bodies of the disappeared persons are later recovered.
8. On March 28, 2017 the United Nations Human Rights Committee was critical of the Bangladesh government during its concluding observations on the ICCPR³ review on Bangladesh. The Committee expressed concern at the reported high rate of enforced disappearances, extra-judicial killings and the excessive use of force by State security forces. The Committee is concerned by the lack of investigations and accountability of perpetrators, leaving families of victims without information and redress. It is further concerned that domestic law does not effectively criminalise enforced disappearances, and that the State party does not accept the fact that enforced disappearances occur.⁴
9. According to information gathered by Odhikar, from January 1, 2017 to March 31, 2017, 21 persons were allegedly disappeared. Of them, two were found dead, one surfaced alive, eight were shown as arrested and the whereabouts of 10 persons remain unknown.⁵ Some incidents are as follows:
10. The head of the counter terrorism unit of the police, Manirul Islam claimed that 'Nobbo JMB'⁶ leader Maulana Mohammad Abul Kashem (60) was arrested on March 2, 2017 from Senpara, Dhaka. On March 3, 2017 Maulana

² The daily Manabzamin, 25/03/2017, www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=58751&cat=9/

³ Bangladesh acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 2000.

⁴ http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPR%2fC%2fBGD%2fCO%2f1&Lang=en

⁵ 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.

⁶ Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh – a banned outfit according to the Ministry of Home Affairs. The 'Nobbo JMB' is a faction of this.

Mohammad Abul Kashem was produced before the court, where he said that he had been detained in the Office of the Detective Branch (DB) of Police from May 2016 to March 3, 2017, before the Holey Artisan attack in Gulshan in July 2016. While speaking in the court, Abul Kashem pointed to a man named Advocate Ziaul Huq, who was present in the court, saying that he met that lawyer while in the DB office. Meanwhile, Advocate Ziaul Huq said that his wife was engaged with the Jamaat-e-Islami. Due to this, Ziaul Huq along with his wife were picked up in January 2017 and were detained in the DB office where he met Abul Kashem in a cell.⁷



JMB leader Maulana Mohammad Abul Kashem arrested from the capital. Photo: Prothom Alo, 4 March 2017

11. On March 30, 2017 the body of Nurul Alam Nuru, a Joint Secretary of the Central Committee of Chhatra Dal, was recovered from the bank of Karnophuli River beside the Khelarghat Bazar at Bagowan Union under Raujan Upazila in Chittagong. Both his hands and legs were tied and he was blindfolded with a piece of black cloth. He was shot in the head and there were several marks of injuries on his body. His family alleged that Nuru was picked up by some men claiming to be police, from his residence at Chandonpura in Chittagong. Nuru's nephew Rashedul Islam said that on March 29, 2017 at around 11:00 pm, some men knocked on the door. When he opened the door, about 8-10 police personnel of Noapara Police Outpost entered the house and handcuffed Nuru and put him in a white microbus.⁸

⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 04/03/2017, www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1096954/

⁸ The daily Manabzamin, 31/03/2017; www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=59615&cat=2/



Blindfolded and hands tied body of Chhatra Dal leader Nurul Alam Nuru found beside the Karnophuli river bank. Photo: Naya Diganta, 31 March 2017

Public lynching continues

12. In March 2017, eight persons were reportedly killed due to public lynching.
13. Due to a weak criminal justice system, lack of respect for law, distrust of the police and instability in the country, the tendency to resort to public lynching is increasing. People are losing their confidence and faith in the police and judicial system. As a result, incidents of killings by mob violence continue.

Political violence continues

14. In March 2017, according to information gathered by Odhikar, five persons were killed and 403 persons injured in political violence. Furthermore, 36 incidents of internal violence in the Awami League were recorded during this period. In addition to this, five persons were killed and 359 were injured in internal conflicts with the Awami League.
15. Leaders and activists of the ruling party have become desperate to hold on to power through farcical and controversial elections, using the administration for their politically vested interest, without being accountable to the people. Criminal activities perpetrated by leaders and activists belonging to the Chhatra League⁹ and Jubo League¹⁰ across the country have increased alarmingly. They are attacking leaders and activists of the opposition political parties and even the ordinary people are not spared. The Chhatra League and Jubo League are involved in various criminal activities by 'capturing' and over-running residential halls of different universities and colleges and making hostage of the ordinary students and administration across the country. They are involved in incidents of internal conflict which were linked to vested interest; and mainly occurred using political influence. During

⁹ Student wing of Awami League

¹⁰ Youth wing of Awami League

violent political altercations, these groups were seen in internal clashes in public, carrying and using lethal weapons.

16. Most of the colleges and universities of the country, including Dhaka University are under the control of the ruling party Awami League affiliated Chhatra League. In this regard, residential hall unit Chhatra League Presidents and General Secretaries have become unofficial 'administrators'. Chhatra League runs a virtual parallel administration at various Universities and the Chhatra League leaders are controlling everything at the residential halls, including inducting students into the residential halls; allocation of hall seats (dorms and rooms) to first year students, arbitrary expulsion from the halls and forcefully quelling any protests that rise against such authority, ignoring the real hall administration.¹¹ A huge amount of money is being exchanged in this regard and the hands of the college and university administration are tied. Two such incidents are as follows:
17. Among the students' residential halls of Dhaka University, inducting students into the halls, allocating hall seats to students and awarding penalties without undue influence, were being conducted only at the Bijoy Ekattor Hall by the university authority. In order to take over that hall from the University administration, between the night of March 13 and 14, 2017, Chhatra League leaders and activists attacked the Hall. Bypassing the University administration, Chhatra League leaders inducted students into the hall rooms of their choice and threatened to oust the ordinary students from the hall. When the residential hall teachers protested this, they were chased away by Chhatra League activists who also vandalized the office room of Professor AZM Shafiul Alam in his presence. Chhatra League leaders and activists also attacked and injured the University representative of UNB¹² and a student of this hall, Imran Hossain while he was collecting information on the attack.¹³



Bijoy Ekattor Hall of the Dhaka University. Photo: Prothom Alo, 15 March 2017

¹¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 15/03/2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1108492/

¹² United News of Bangladesh

¹³ The daily Prothom Alo, 15/03/2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1108492/

18. On March 11, 2017 a faction of Terokhada Upazila Jubo League led by Khulna District unit Awami League Organising Secretary Kamruzzaman Jamal, were on the way to Tungipara in Gopalganj to pay tribute to the former President of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. When their motorcade reached Sachiadah Bazar area under Terokhada Upazila, leaders and activists of another faction of Jubo League led by local parliamentarian and General Secretary of Khulna District unit Awami League, SM Mostafa Rashidi Suja, put up a barricade on the road. They also opened fire on the motorcade, which resulted in a violent altercation and exchange of fire between the two groups. At least 10 persons from both groups were injured.¹⁴

Local government elections held with irregularities

19. Elections in 14 Upazila Parishads (including a by-election) and in four Municipalities were held on March 6, 2017; and Comilla City Corporation Elections were held on March 30 under the new Election Commission. As per reports, most of these elections were marred with various irregularities.

Upazila and Municipality elections

20. On March 6, 2017 elections in 14 Upazilas (including a by-election) and in four Municipalities were marked with various irregularities. In most of the polling centres, the absent of voters was highly noticeable. Moreover, allegations of casting fake votes, 'capturing' polling centres, stuffing ballot boxes and forcefully ousting polling agents of rival candidates were reported. No voter queues were seen on a visit to 10 polling stations from 9:00 am to noon during Gouranadi Upazila election in Barisal. Leaders and activists belong to the ruling party had entered and overwhelmed those polling stations. Some ruling party activists were seen stamping on the ballots bearing the symbol 'boat' in favour of Awami League nominated candidate in Komolapur, Chondrahar and Kataksthal Government Primary School polling centres. In the afternoon, ruling party activists led by Aslam Sikdar entered the Chondrahar Government Primary School polling centre with around 14 motorbikes. When Partho Haldar, a local correspondent of the daily Kolomer Kontho, took photos of the incident, Aslam Sikdar forcibly took his camera and deleted all the pictures he took.¹⁵ Voter presence was almost absent in the by-election of Morolganj Upazila Parishad under Bagerhaat District. Allegations of casting fake votes were also found. Polling agents of BNP and Jatiya Party were not present in any polling station. BNP nominated candidate K M Badiuzzaman Badi and Jatiya Party nominated candidate

¹⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 12/03/2017; www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=57036&cat=10/

¹⁵ The daily Jugantor, 07/03/2017; www.jugantor.com/first-page/2017/03/07/106793 and Naya Diganta, 07/03/2017; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/201547>

Mohammad Akhtaruzzaman boycotted the elections, protesting the capturing of polling centres and casting fake votes against the ruling party.¹⁶ Supporters of the Awami League nominated candidate 'captured' 29 of the 30 polling centres, during the by-election of Chairman candidacy of Rangabali Upazila under Patuakhali District.¹⁷

Comilla City Corporation elections

21. On March 30, 2017 Comilla City Corporation elections were held with sporadic irregularities including 'capturing' polling centres, casting fake votes, rigging and stuffing ballot boxes and ousting the polling agents of the contesting candidates. During the polls, the electoral officials expressed their helplessness and the local administration was also seen inactive and silent. Many polling centres were found without voters in the afternoon, although it was reported that 70 – 80 percent of the votes had been cast in those polling centres.¹⁸ At 2:00 pm, about 10-15 supporters of the Awami League nominated candidate, wearing the badge of electoral symbol 'boat', were guarding Ishak Government Primary School polling centre of ward number 10, after locking the collapsible gate. When some journalists and voters tried to enter the polling centre, members of the law enforcement agencies stopped them. At that time, 20-25 supporters of Awami League nominated candidate, in each polling booth, snatched the ballot papers from polling officers and stamped the symbol 'boat' on the papers after forcibly ousting polling agents of other candidates. Journalists were also barred from taking pictures of these incidents.¹⁹ A crude bomb exploded in Comilla Government City College polling centre under Ward number 21, though the voting started in a peaceful manner in the morning. Supporters of the Awami League nominated candidate forcibly ousted the polling agents of the rival candidates and openly stuffed ballot boxes after taking away ballot papers. As a result, voting at the booths reserved for male voters under this polling centre, was suspended.²⁰

¹⁶ The daily Jugantor, 07/03/2017; www.jugantor.com/first-page/2017/03/07/106793/

¹⁷ The Naya Diganta, 07/03/2017; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/201547> Amribaria Government Primary School polling centre was the one left alone.

¹⁸ The daily Jugantor, 31/03/2017; www.jugantor.com/first-page/2017/03/31/113512/

¹⁹ The daily Manabzamin, 31/03/2017; www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=59589&cat=3/

²⁰ The daily Naya Diganta, 31/03/2017; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/208224>



Attack on BNP Councilor candidate by rivals near the City College polling centre. Photo: Jugantor, 31 March 2017



BNP Councilor candidate was injured during an attack in Comilla Government High School polling centre. Photo: Jugantor, 31 March 2017



Supporters of Awami League openly stamping on ballot papers in Chouara Islamia Fazil Madrassa polling centre during Comilla City Corporation Elections. Photo: Prothom Alo, 31 March 2017

22. Criminal acts had been observed during various elections under the present government, including during the Parliamentary elections through which it came to power a second time. This indicates that the electoral system has totally collapsed and people are deprived from their right to vote. Since the controversial and farcical 10th Parliamentary elections held on January 5, 2014, all local government polls were marred with widespread and widely reported irregularities, violence and vote rigging. In the past, polls were generally conducted in festive manner and people used to willingly participate in the elections held under an interim caretaker system; and where at the local level, the elections were not partisan. However, with the increasing violence, repeal of the caretaker system and local elections now held under political symbols, people do not have any scope to vote freely under the existing political atmosphere. For this reason, voters presence were markedly absent during the recent elections. Ensuring transparent, creditable, free and fair elections is the Constitutional responsibility of the Election Commission (EC). However, the previous Election Commissions totally failed to deliver. After the tenure

of controversial Election Commission headed by Rakib Uddin Ahmed in February 2017, people and political parties hoped that a fair and strong new Election Commission would be formed. Although the President of Bangladesh appointed a new Election Commission through a search committee in February 2017, the elections held under this new Commission have repeated the failures of its predecessor.

Hindrance to freedom of assembly

23. The government is barring meetings and assemblies and rallies of the opposition political parties and activist groups by using law enforcement agencies; and the ruling party leaders and activists are also attacking assemblies of the opposition parties the same way. The government and the ruling party leaders and activists are suppressing opposition and alternative or dissenting voices by severely curtailing the right to freedom of expression and assembly, preventing peaceful meetings and rallies. Some instances are as follows:
24. On March 9, 2017 Narayanganj Metropolitan City unit Jatiyotabadi Jubo Dal²¹ brought out a protest rally as part of the Central Committee programme. Police stopped the rally when it reached in front of the District BNP office at DIT road from Gymkhana area. At one stage, police also baton charged the procession. As a result, the procession dispersed and 10 persons were injured.²²



Police barred a rally organised by Narayanganj unit Jubo Dal which demanded the removal of politically motivated cases against its leaders, including BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia. Photo: Jugantor, 10 March 2017

²¹ Youth wing of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

²² The daily Jugantor, 10/03/2017; www.jugantor.com/last-page/2017/03/10/107600/

25. On March 3, 2017 supporters of BNP nominated candidate Jahangir Akon organised a meeting at Moudubibazar with regard to Rangabali Upazila elections in Patuakhali. Supporters of the ruling party (Awami League) nominated candidate Mohammad Delwar Hossain attacked the BNP candidate and his supporters when they reached the meeting place. Awami League activists also vandalized the megaphone and tables and chairs. At least 10 BNP leaders and activists were injured.²³
26. On March 15, 2017, in order to surround the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, the Democratic Left Alliance; Communist Party of Bangladesh; and Socialist Party of Bangladesh brought out a procession in protest of the price hike of gas. Police barred the procession when it marched towards the Ministry from the National Press Club. When protestors stepped forward, breaking the police barricade, the police baton charged and threw tear gas shells at them and dispersed the protestors. At least 50 persons were injured in this incident. Moreover, many ordinary bystanders were also harassed.²⁴



Activists of left-leaning parties at loggerheads with police in front of the National Press Club during a march to the Energy Ministry, protesting gas price hike. Photo: Daily Star 16 March 2017



Police beating up a protester. Photo: Daily Star, 16 March 2017



Police spraying water to disperse demonstrators. Photo: Daily Star, 16 March 2017



A protester lying on the street after he was beaten by police. Photo: Daily Star, 16 March 2017

²³ The daily Manabzamin, 04/03/2017; www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=55967&cat=9/

²⁴ The daily Naya Diganta, 16/03/2017; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/203915>

Hindrance to freedom of expression and the media

27. Interference on the media and freedom of expression, by the government and the ruling party men continues. The present government is severely suppressing the people who criticise the government and those who have alternative beliefs. If any media, journalist or any citizen criticises the government or comments against the government on social media, particularly on Facebook, the government takes reprisals against them, which is tantamount to violations of freedom of thought and conscience.

Freedom of the media

28. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in March 2017, a total of three journalists were threatened and one was sued while they were performing their professional duties.

29. The present government is controlling most of the media, particularly the electronic media. The only state owned TV channel, Bangladesh Television (BTV) broadcasts mainly government programmes and ruling party-related news. The government has already given approval to some new private television channels under political consideration, whose owners are closely connected with the government. Meanwhile the government closed down pro-opposition electronic media, such as Channel 1, Diganta TV, Islamic TV and the publication of the print media, the daily Amar Desh. Accurate and impartial reporting and proper journalism are hindered as the government puts pressure on the media. As a result, in most cases, journalists are forced to practice self-censorship. Despite that, journalists are being attacked by criminals backed by the ruling party while gathering information or in relation to publishing reports.

Repressive Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (amended 2009 and 2013) remains in force

30. According to information gathered by Odhikar, from January to March 2017, six persons were arrested under the Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (amended 2009 and 2013).

31. The use of the Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (amended 2009 and 2013) continues to hinder freedom of expression. Section 57²⁵ of the ICT Act 2013, states that publishing or transmitting in a website in

²⁵ Section 57 of the ICT Act states: (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 10 million or both.

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 amended from a maximum of 10 years imprisonment, with no minimum; to 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 it against human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers and activists of the opposition political parties and even the ordinary people who have alternative opinions. One example is as follows:

32. On March 19, 2017 police arrested Mohammad Bellal Hossain (35), an Imam of a mosque in Borhanuddin of Bhola for posting anti-government remarks on his Facebook. Bellal Hossain, a resident of Indra Narayanpur Village under Tojumuddin Upazila in Bhola, was picked up by police from Tobogi area, for making derogatory comments on the photos of two lawmakers for Bhola. The Officer-in-Charge of Borhauddin Police Station Asim Sikder said that Bellal had been sharing anti-government posts on facebook for a while. A case was filed against him under section 57 of the ICT Act.²⁶

Workers' rights

33. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in March 2017, 11 different workers including construction workers were killed. Of them one died when a crane collapsed, two by building collapsed, two by hillock collapsed, one when a compressor machine exploded, one by boiler explosion, one by collapsing sacks, one by buried in the ground, one by grider weighing fell and one fell from a nine storey building. 16 others workers were injured in various workplace incidents and 40 workers were terminated. Apart from this, 21 ready-made garments workers were injured by police during workers unrest and 43 workers were terminated by the factory authority.

Repression on factory workers

34. Workers of a garment factory of East-West Group located at Boardbazar Signboard area under Gazipur City Corporation, on March 9, 2017 joined work and demanded their overdue wages. The factory authority assured the workers their dues would be paid on March 15. However, workers did not agree with this and the factory owner declared he would shut down the factory. As a result, workers became angry and threw bricks at the factory and blocked the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway. An altercation took place between police and workers when police came to stop them. At one stage, police baton charged and threw tear gas shells to disperse the workers. At least seven workers were injured in this incident.²⁷

²⁶ The daily Dhaka Tribune, 20/03/2017; <http://www.dhakatribune.com/epaper/2017/03/20/monday-march-20-2017/>

²⁷ The daily Manabzamin, 10/03/2017 www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=56706&cat=9/

35. The owners of B R Spinning Mills Ltd. located at Jampur Morishtech of Madanpur-Joydebpur (bypass) under Sonargaon Upazila in Narayanganj District had not paid wages to its workers for the last five months. Workers informed that the mill authority locked the mill after declaring a four-day vacation, without paying wages to the workers that were overdue for five months. Workers had been passing difficult times in order to maintain their daily life and house rents failing to get their wages on time. The men of the mill owner misbehaved with workers when they asked for their wages. Following this situation on March 12, 2017 workers started a protest rally after blocking the roads. At around 2:00 pm, police arrived and, after discussing with the mill authority, police assured the workers they would be paid their due wages. Getting this assurance, workers lifted the blockade. Finishing Section worker Khadiza and Ring Section worker Saiful said that the mill authority declared a four-day vacation when they put pressure for their wages. On March 12, they found the main gate of the factory locked after returning from vacation. They cited that workers had been forced to beg on the street as the mill had been closed down without any notice.²⁸
36. On March 23, 2017 an altercation took place between police and workers of a garment factory named Lyric Industries at Rampura, Dhaka. Police baton charged workers and threw tear gas shells and rubber bullets at them when over a hundred workers initiated protests after blocking the road beside Rampura Bridge, for the non-payment of their three months worth of wages. At least 10 workers were injured during the attack. The workers alleged that on March 20, 2017 at night, the factory authority shifted several pieces of equipment after closing the factory. In the morning of March 21, they found the factory locked. The workers did not know why the factory was closed. Even their dues were not paid.²⁹
37. 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. However, many factories were closed without notice. Arrests and harassment to the workers and the sudden termination of workers and not paying wages on time are some of the main reasons for workers' unrest.

Issues of extremism and human rights

38. Bangladesh is experiencing very difficult times. The State is taking away the civil and political rights of the citizens. Hindrance to freedom of expression and the repeated violation of the right to freedom expression of alternative or dissenting voices, have created space for confrontation. Operations carried

²⁸ Information sent by local human rights defender associated with Odhikar from Narayanganj.

²⁹ The daily Naya Diganta, 24/03/2017; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/206296>

out in the name of 'countering extremism' have caused the deaths of women and children.³⁰ Furthermore, there are reports of people becoming victims of enforced disappearance as well. Meanwhile, 'extremists' are allegedly involved in suicide attacks. Some recent incidents of 'extremist attacks' are as follows:

39. On March 16, 2017 a 'suicide' bomb exploded while a SWAT team of police conducted an operation against extremists in Sitakunda of Chittagong. Four alleged 'extremists' including a woman and a child were killed. Furthermore, four police personnel were also wounded during operation.³¹
40. According to reports, on March 17, a youth entered the temporary barracks of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) Headquarters by climbing up its wall at Ashkona in Dhaka. When the man was questioned by RAB he allegedly exploded the suicide vest he was wearing. He died on the spot. Two RAB members named Constable Arif and Lance Corporal Mizan were injured.³²
41. The family of Mohammad Hanif Mridha, a businessman of Rayerbazar in Dhaka, alleged that a few men claiming to be members of the DB Police picked him up on February 27, 2017 with his friend Sohel Hossain, from the Kanchpur area of Narayanganj. On March 17, 2017 an unidentified man was killed during an alleged suicide attack (claimed by RAB) at the Forces Barrack of RAB Headquarters in Ashkona, Dhaka. The identity of the deceased remains unknown. RAB filed a case in this regard and the commander of RAB-1, Lt. Col. Sarwar Bin Kashem, said that Mohammad Hanif Mridha was arrested on suspicion, regarding that suicide attack. Hanif was admitted to Kurmitola General Hospital when he became ill, where he later died. Hanif's wife Kulsum Begum said that her husband Hanif and his friend Sohel went to Barisal on February 24, 2017. They returned by launch on February 27, 2017 and got down near the Kanchpur Bridge in Narayanganj. Driver Jewel went there with a car to bring them home. While Hanif and Sohel were about to get into the car, a few men claiming to be members of DB Police picked them up and driver Jewel was beaten up, the car was taken away and he was dropped off at Purbanchal in Dhaka. On March 4, 2017 Hanif's elder brother Mohammad Halim filed a General Diary with Siddhirganj Police Station, mentioning that Hanif and Sohel were missing. Halim said that on March 15, 2017 at around 9:30 am, two vehicles came to their house. A few men came out of the car with Hanif and entered the house. The men told Hanif's wife that her husband had abetted an illegal act. They forced her to bring Hanif's two cheque books of BRAC Bank and Dutch-Bangla Bank and took his signature on a cheque of six hundred and seventy thousand taka. They then

³⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 01/04/2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1130046/

³¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 17/03/2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1110904/

³² The daily Jugantor, 18/03/2017; www.jugantor.com/first-page/2017/03/18/109925/

took Hanif away along with signed cheques. Later, on March 17, the family learned of the death of Hanif through the TV news.³³

42. On March 18, 2017 at around 4:45 am, a man riding a motorbike without a license plate was shot dead by RAB members when he was crossing RAB-3 check post, violating traffic signals, at Khilgaon area in Dhaka. RAB claimed that the man was carrying two bombs.³⁴



A youth shot dead by RAB at a RAB check post at Khilgaon, Dhaka. Photo: New Age 19 March 2017

43. In the evening of March 24, 2017 a youth was killed when a bomb he was carrying with him exploded on the main road in front of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at Dhaka.³⁵



*A youth died in a suicide bomb blast in front of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at Dhaka.
Photo: Jugantor, 25 March 2017*

44. On March 25, 2017 at around 6:45 pm, a bomb blast occurred near the place of a press briefing by the Army regarding the army led 'Operation Twilight' at an alleged extremists den in a house called Atia Mahal, in South Surma of

³³ The daily Prothom Alo, 21/03/2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1115032/

³⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 19/03/2017; www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=57955&cat=2/

³⁵ The daily Manabzamin, 25/03/2017; www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=58803&cat=2/

Sylhet Metropolitan City. Six persons, including two police officers were killed and more than 30 persons including journalists, police and RAB members were injured in this explosion.³⁶ Among the deceased were Monirul Islam, Inspector (Investigation) of Jalalabad Police Station; Court Inspector Chowdhury Mohammad Abu Kaisar Dipu; local Chhatra League leader Jannatul Fahim; a private university student Ohidul Islam Apu; Shahidul Islam, a resident of Dariapara; and Abdul Qader. Soon after that incident at around 7:55 pm, another bomb blast occurred at Purba Pathantola mosque area, which is near the place where the press briefing occurred. Several people, including six police personnel were injured in that blast.³⁷ Meanwhile, on March 30, 2017 at mid night the intelligence unit chief of the RAB, Lt. Col. Abul Kalam Azad, succumbed to his injuries in Combined Military Hospital at Dhaka.³⁸ It is to be mentioned that there are two buildings called 'Atia Mahal' and 'Atia Mahal-2' of the same owner at the Shibbari area. The five-storied building 'Atia Mahal' has 29 flats and the police cordoned off the building at around 2:30 am on March 23, 2017, based on information that suspected extremists were staying on the ground floor. On March 24, a team of SWAT and another team from the Army reached Sylhet from Dhaka. In the morning of March 25, a Para commando team of the Army started 'Operation Twilight' and at around 11:00 am, 78 persons, who had been living in the building, were rescued. During that operation, incidents of bomb blast took place twice in the evening on March 25, which resulted in many casualties. After a day-long operation on March 26, a press briefing was organised by the Army in the evening on March 27 where it was stated that four bodies were lying on the ground floor of the building. Among them, three were men and one was a woman. Suicide vests were found on two bodies.³⁹



One man injured in a bomb blast near Atia Mahal is taking to hospital. Photo: Prothom Alo, 25 March 2017



Some men wounded in the bomb blast lie on the street. Photo: Prothom Alo, 25 March 2017

³⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 25/03/2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1119604

³⁷ The Bangla Tribune, 26/03/2017; www.banglatribune.com/country/news/192271

³⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 31/03/2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1129051/

³⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 27/03/2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1121931

45. On March 28, 2017 at around 1:30 am, a team of SWAT and a team from the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit of Police cordoned off a two-storied house, containing an 'extremist's den' for 34 hours, at Borohat Abushah Dakhilil Madrassa Road at Nasirnagar in Moulvabazar, under 'Operation Hit Back'. Later police recovered the shattered bodies of seven persons from the house. Police said that in the afternoon on March 29, the 'extremists' may have killed themselves by blowing up suicide vests.⁴⁰ Among the seven bodies recovered after the 'Operation Hit Back', four were children. Of them, one was an infant, one was a two-year old, one was a seven-year old and another was a 10-year old. Furthermore, of the two women, one was aged about 20-25 and another woman was 35 years of age. The deceased man was also 35 years old.⁴¹
46. Odhikar believes that society must mobilise and unite around the principles of inclusion; and that is possible only by restoring the rights of the disenfranchised people and allowing the institutions to function independently for restoring rule of law. An enabling environment must be created that can effectively deal with socially alienated individuals at the community level with appropriate social and cultural institutions that can harness anger and frustration and convert these emotions in a positive manner, without resorting to violent means. In the past, Odhikar has constantly warned that a regime that denies human rights of its citizens, gagging freedom of speech, expression and association; and does not cease torture, extra-judicial killings and enforced disappearances and other crimes, will inevitably trigger a counter-reaction.

Relations between Bangladesh-India

47. The Indian government continues to impose aggressive policies on Bangladesh. India is taking transit facility through Bangladesh at almost no cost (the shipment fee for carrying goods is Tk 192.22 per ton) under an amended Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT)⁴² signed between India and Bangladesh on June 6, 2015; and is also taking advantage of other business and trade facilities. India is depriving Bangladesh from getting adequate water during the dry season and creating floods over Bangladesh by opening all the sluice gates of the Farakka Barrage and the Gajaldoba Barrage, during the monsoon (rainy) season⁴³, violating international law and human rights. Furthermore, the initiatives to build the Rampal Power Plant with an Indian company near the Sundarbans and a

⁴⁰ The Daily Star and Prothom Alo, 31/03/2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1129056/

⁴¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 01/04/2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1130046/

⁴² The Daily Star, 14/06/2016, <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/transit-gets-operational-1239373>

⁴³ <http://www.bbc.com/bengali/news-37244367>

decision to implement an inter-river connection project, will lead Bangladesh to terrible human disaster and environmental catastrophe.⁴⁴ Moreover, the Indian government decided to put up a fence along no-man's land, which will be within 150 yards from the zero line along the border.⁴⁵ Meanwhile the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) is killing Bangladeshi citizens indiscriminately along the border areas, which is a clear violation of international law and human rights.

Human rights violations of Bangladeshi citizens by Indian BSF in border areas

48. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in March 2017, three were injured when the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) hurled sound grenades. Furthermore, one Bangladeshi was also abducted by BSF personnel. An example is as follows:
49. On March 25, 2017 members of Indian BSF attacked unarmed villagers by unlawfully entering Bangladesh territory through Kironganj border under Shibganj Upazila in Chapainababganj District. 12 Bangladeshis including Abu Sayed, Masum, Makbul Hossain, Motaleb, Nazrul, Salma, Sobhan, Shamim, Kulsum Begum, Dolyara, Durul Huda and Rubel were injured. Villagers said that such incident initiated over catching fish in a pond at the zero line at Zaminpur border. At around 11:00 am, BSF members barred some Bangladeshi citizens while they were catching fish in that pond. At that time an altercation occurred between both sides. At around 1:00 pm, about 35 BSF armed personnel of Churi Antorpur Outpost of India entered into 100 yards of Bangladesh territory through sub-pillar 4 and 5 of the main pillar 179 and attacked Bangladeshis at Zaminpur Pashchimpara. BSF threw bricks at houses of Bangladeshi citizens and also threw some sound grenades to create panic. Injured Durul Huda was referred to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital as his condition was critical.⁴⁶

Violence against women

50. Incidents of violence against women continue. The illegal acts of demanding and taking dowry is extremely visible in Bangladesh and its consequences and related violence are widespread. Such practice continues due to lack of implementation of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980. At the same time child marriage continues. The special provision of the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017 will encourage more child marriage in Bangladesh. Furthermore,

⁴⁴ UNESCO calls for shelving Rampal project", the daily Prothom Alo, 24/09/2016, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/environment/news/122299/Unesco-calls-for-shelving-Rampal-project>

⁴⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 05/10/2016; www.prothom-alo.com/international/article/994375/

⁴⁶ The daily Kaler Kantho, 26/03/2017; <http://www.kalerkantho.com/print-edition/news/2017/03/26/478894>

incidents of rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment and acid violence continue. Women are becoming victims of such violence due to non-implementation of laws, a prevailing culture of impunity and lack of awareness in society.

Dowry-related violence

51. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in March 2017, a total of 20 women were subjected to dowry violence. Of these women, it has been alleged that six were killed and 14 were physically abused over dowry demands. One example is as follows:
52. On March 5, 2017 a housewife named Khadiza Akhter Brishty was allegedly strangled to death by her husband Rafiqul Islam Matbor over dowry demands in Dhanuka Village of Ward number 7 under Shariatpur Municipality. According to her family, Khadiza Akhter Brishty had married Rafiqul Islam Matbor eight months ago. Rafiqul's family demanded two hundred thousand taka dowry. After the marriage, altercations between husband and wife occurred almost every day over dowry demands. On March 5, an altercation took place between Brishty and her in-laws where Brishty was killed. Brishty's father Hashem Bepary alleged that Brishty's husband, mother-in-law and father-in-law strangled her to death with a scarf. Police arrested Brishty's husband Rafiqul Islam.⁴⁷

Stalking

53. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in March 2017, a total of 35 girls and women were victims of stalking and violence. Of them, one committed suicide, five were injured, nine were assaulted and 20 were victims of stalking. One man was killed, three men and two women were injured by the stalkers for protesting such incidents. Two incidents are as follows:
54. On March 14, 2017 a man named Ahsan Ullah entered Purba Dengapara Government Primary School in Bhurshi Union under Patia Upazila in Chittagong and beat school teacher Misfa Sultana (25) with a crowbar and broke her arms. Misfa's family alleged that Ahsan Ullah had been stalking her for a week.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ The daily Manabzamin, 06/03/2017; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=56195&cat=9>

⁴⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 15/03/2017; <http://epaper.prothom-alo.com/view/dhaka/2017-03-15/5>



School teacher Misfa Sultana was beaten by a stalker. Photo: Prothom Alo, 15 March 2017

55. On March 13, 2017 two sisters and students of Jagannath University were going to a medical diagnostic centre at Rai Saheb Bazar intersection by rickshaw from Sutrapur, Dhaka. When the rickshaw reached in front of the Metropolitan Session Judges Court, about 10 men stopped them. The men sprayed colour on them and physically assaulted them. When the girls protested, they were dragged down from the rickshaw. While being sexually harassed, two students of Jagannath University rescued the girls and took them to the Superintendent of Police of Dhaka District. Police arrested three youths named Akash, Sifat and Mamun in this incident. It is to be mentioned that women were sexually harassed in public in the name of playing 'Holi' (spraying colours as part of a Hindu celebration) at that area in old Dhaka. Many women were harassed by perverted men.⁴⁹

Rape

56. In March 2017, Odhikar recorded a total number of 62 females who were raped. Among them, 14 were women, 47 were girls and the age of one victim could not be ascertained. Of the women, three were victims of gang rape and one was killed after being raped. Out of the 47 girls, six were victims of gang rape and one committed suicide. However, eight women and girls were victims of attempted rape. Two examples are as follows:
57. On March 12, 2017 Kamal Molla, a member of Baluchor Union Parishad (UP) of Ward no. 4 under Sirajdikhan Upazila in Munshiganj District asked a woman named Nargis Begum to come at his home for a VGF⁵⁰ card. The

⁴⁹ The daily Manabzamin, 17/03/2017; www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=57675&cat=2/ This is reminiscent of the sexual harassment of women that took place on April 14, 2015 in Dhaka University campus where crowds were celebrating Bangla New Year.

⁵⁰ Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) is a scheme to eradicate sufferings of miserable people through this assistance.

woman with her daughter, who is a student of class VI, went to that UP member's house at Kandi Bazar where he locked Nargis Begum in a room. Later the UP member Kamal Molla took her daughter to another room and allegedly raped the girl after feeding her some food that was drugged. The girl was admitted to Munshiganj General Hospital for treatment. Though Kamal Molla escaped, police arrested his associate Panna Akhter (28).⁵¹

58. On March 12, 2017 a school girl was picked up by Jubo League leader Khoka Sikder and his three associates Elahi Kotwal, Moukat Sikder and Lalon Sikder from in front of her house in Kalkini under Madaripur District. They took the girl about half a kilometer away where Khoka Sikder allegedly raped her. The next morning at around 5:00 am, they left the girl in a house of a man named Jalil. The father of victim alleged that after the incident, the rapists surrounded his house for two day and also followed family members on motorbike so that they could not go to the police station. After getting an opportunity, on March 15, the family took her to hospital and filed a case with Kalkini Police Station against four rapists. Police have not arrested anyone yet.⁵²

Acid violence

59. In March 2017, according to Odhikar documentation, a total of four persons became victims of acid violence. Of them, three were women and one was man. An example is as follows:
60. On March 4, 2017 five criminals broke into a house and entered the room of a woman named Maleka Banu. They dragged her from her bed and allegedly poured acid on her. She was later admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital. Among the criminals were a step brother of Maleka, Haidar Ali and his two sons, Dulal Hossain and Mithu; brother-in-law Gaziur Rahman; and cousin Ruhul Amin. This incident took place at Purba Ramkhana Talukderpara Village in Ramkhana Union under Nageshwari Upazila in Kurigram District. It occurred over a land dispute.⁵³

Hindrance to human rights activities of Odhikar

61. The present government continues to harass 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

⁵¹ Information sent by local human rights defender associated with Odhikar from Munshiganj.

⁵² The daily Prothom Alo, 19/03/2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1112749/

⁵³ Information sent by local human rights defender associated with Odhikar from Kurigram.

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.

62. Human rights defenders who are working fearlessly to gather information and carry out their profession impartially are harassed and victimised. For instance, in March 2016, a journalist and human rights defender associated with Odhikar, Mohammad Afzal Hossain, was shot and severely wounded by police while he was observing the irregularities of a local government election in Bhola⁵⁴ and in February 2017, another human rights defender associated with Odhikar, journalist Abdul Hakim Shimul, was shot dead by Shahjadpur Municipality Mayor and Awami League leader Halimul Huq Miru.⁵⁵
63. Furthermore, the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB) has, for the last three years, barred the release of all project related funds of Odhikar and 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 its members and staff and their commitment to human rights activism.

⁵⁴ For details, please see Odhikar's monthly report of March 2016. <http://odhikar.org/human-rights-monitoring-report-march-2016/>

⁵⁵ For details, please see Odhikar's monthly report of February 2017. <http://odhikar.org/human-rights-monitoring-report-february-2017/>

Recommendations

1. Political violence must stop. In order to stop criminalisation the government must take legal action against the ruling party activists and supporters. The persons who are responsible for violence during local government polls must be brought to justice. An initiative needs to be taken immediately for the restoration of democracy by establishing an accountable government through free, fair and inclusive national elections under a neutral interim government or even under the supervision of the United Nations; and the dysfunctional institutions must be made thoroughly independent.
2. The Government must bring to effective justice, the members of the law enforcement agencies, involved in incidents of extrajudicial killings and torture. The Government must accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture; and effectively implement the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013, and the High Court and Appellate Division directives contained in the matter of BLAST and Others Vs. Bangladesh and Others. The Government should follow the recommendations made by the UN Human Rights Committee in its 119th session to end torture. 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”.
3. The Government has to investigate and explain all incidents of enforced disappearance and post-disappearance killings, allegedly perpetrated by law enforcement agencies. The Government must take effective measures to recover the victims of enforced disappearance and return them to their families. The Government must bring the members of the security and law enforcement agencies who are involved, before the law. The Government should follow the recommendations made by the UN Human Rights Committee in its 119th session to criminalise enforced disappearance in the national laws. Odhikar urges the government accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2006.
4. The Government must refrain from repressive, undemocratic and unconstitutional activities. Rights to freedoms of assembly and association of the opposition political parties, people who have alternative beliefs and dissenters must be ensured.
5. Freedoms of speech, expression and the media must be ensured and protected. The Government must bring the perpetrators of attacks on human rights defenders and journalists to justice through proper and impartial investigation. The ban on the publication of the daily Amar Desh and on the broadcasting of Diganta TV, Islamic TV and Channel One must be removed. All repressive laws, including the Information and Communication

Technology Act, 2006 (amendment 2009, 2013) and the Special Powers Act, 1974 must be repealed. The government also must refrain from distorting information and hiding actual facts through providing broadcasting licenses only to the ruling party men and supporters.

6. The Government must stop harassing and violating the rights of political opponents and people holding dissenting or alternative opinions. Operations against 'extremists' must be made transparent and law enforcement agencies must explain the deaths of the women and young children during such operations.
7. The ready-made garment factories and other factories need to be brought under synchronized security programmes and adequate wages to be given to workers; and all factories should be made with adequate infrastructural and other facilities. Trade union rights should be guaranteed at all the ready-made garment factories and workers rights should be protected as per ILO Convention. The cases lodged against the trade union activists should be withdrawn.
8. 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 victim-families. The Government must also ensure the safety and security of the Bangladeshi citizens residing along the border areas.
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.
10. 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 be ceased. The government must release the funds of Odhikar to enable it to continue its human rights activities.

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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.
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.