

Odhikar commemorates the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances

Dhaka, 30 August 2018 – The UN declared 30 August as the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, to remember those disappeared and to demand that they be returned to their families. The day was established by the UN General Assembly resolution 65/209 of December 21, 2010.¹ Today, in commemoration of this international day, Odhikar expresses solidarity to all the families of the disappeared around the world, including Bangladesh. Local human rights defenders, who are associated with Odhikar across the country marked this day by organising rallies, human chains and meetings in 21 districts, along with victims' families, and demanded the return of the disappeared persons and to put an end to this crime against humanity.

According to information gathered by Odhikar, at least 435 individuals were subjected to enforced disappearance allegedly by various law enforcement agencies from January 2009 to July 2018. Among them, 55 were found dead, 244 were released after being left blindfolded at a particular location or shown as arrested or produced before a court after several days or months following their disappearance. The fate or whereabouts of 136 persons still remained unknown.

Odhikar is deeply concerned over the ongoing situation of enforced disappearances in Bangladesh. The incumbent government of Bangladesh has repeatedly refused to respond to the appeals from the victim-families of the disappeared, to locate the whereabouts of victims. There is no remedy for the families of the disappeared under the present legal framework of the country as the criminal law of the country does not recognize 'disappearance' as crime. Filing habeas corpus writs do not bring any fruitful results either as the government stalls or ignores the court orders to investigate. A new trend of short-term enforced disappearance has emerged in Bangladesh as a means of creating a general state of anguish, insecurity and fear. This violates the right to personal liberty as well as freedom of expression and opinion, and freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

To end this heinous crime, Odhikar calls on the government of Bangladesh to fully cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms and also accept the pending visit request from the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and provide it with unhindered access. It also calls on the government to take necessary measures to effectively hold perpetrators of enforced disappearances accountable through impartial investigation into allegations of such crimes; and ensure access to justice to all victims of enforced disappearances.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adilur Rahman Khan".

Adilur Rahman Khan
Secretary

¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ewelinaochab/2018/08/29/the-international-day-of-the-victims-of-enforced-disappearances/#446d2991b42e>