



**Mayer
Daak**



A Joint Statement by the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), Mayer Daak and Odhikar on International Human Rights Day, 2021

UN Human Rights Council and OHCHR must adopt a new mandate on Bangladesh to collect evidence of gross human rights violations

Manila, Dhaka, 09 December, 2021: AFAD, Mayer Daak and Odhikar pay tribute to all victims of human rights violations and stand in solidarity with the victims' families in Bangladesh and across the world while commemorating [International Human Rights Day](#). This year's Human Rights Day theme relates to "Equality" and Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". International Human Rights Day 2021 is being observed with the theme of 'equality' at a time when the human rights situation in Bangladesh is in dire straits.

There is very little equality in dignity and rights in Bangladesh today. The current authoritarian government is violating civil and political rights. It has deprived people of their right to vote. It is depriving the people of their dignity, livelihood and right to life, by stifling the judicial processes. There have been cases of enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and torture in the custody of law enforcement agencies. The government uses law enforcement agencies and security forces to suppress dissidents and members are allegedly involved in serious human rights violations. The large number of cases of human rights violations that go unpunished, illustrates the general climate and culture of impunity in Bangladesh. Pressure on and harassment of the media, intimidation and attacks on journalists, monitoring of social media, etc. are undermining freedom of expression. The right to freedom of assembly has been severely curtailed and dissenting voices are being suppressed by enforcing various repressive laws, including the Special Powers Act 1974, Information and Communication Technology Act 2006, Anti-Terrorism Act 2009, Digital Security Act, 2018. Incidents of violence against women as well as persecution of citizens of ethnic and religious minorities, continue.

Access to justice for the victims of human rights abuses remain a far cry due to the ongoing trend of institutional complicity. All the State institutions, including law enforcement, the criminal justice system, the Anti-Corruption Commission, the National Human Rights Commission and the Election Commission have become dysfunctional and coercive.

Bangladesh has ratified eight major international Conventions/Treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Convention against Torture. It has also ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. However, the government has forgotten its obligations and has taken the human rights situation of Bangladesh to the brink of disaster. Aside from opposition political activists and ordinary citizens, human rights defenders have been subjected to human rights abuses by the state actors for their active role in defending rights.

On this day, AFAD, Mayer Daak and Odhikar call on the people of Bangladesh to unite against all forms of human rights violations and to come together to establish a democratic state on the

basis of equality, human dignity and social justice. We also express gratitude to those who serve them on the frontlines of the battle for human rights and dignity. We continue to call for greater humanitarian access and an end to violence against human rights defenders.

AFAD, Mayer Daak and Odhikar urge UN Human Rights Council and its Special Procedures to take effective measures to hold members of law enforcement and security forces, accountable; to stop grave human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, torture, extrajudicial killings and end impunity and prevent future violations. We also call on the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to take an initiative for adopting a new mandate on Bangladesh to collect evidence of gross human rights violations involving the complicity of the justice mechanism, so that appropriate measures can be taken to put an end to human rights abuses in Bangladesh.

The Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) is a federation of human rights organisations working directly on the issue of enforced disappearances in Asia. Envisioning a world without desaparecidos, AFAD was founded on June 4, 1998 in Manila, Philippines. www.afad-online.org

Mayer Daak is a platform of the families of victims of enforced disappearances in Bangladesh with the common goal of seeking the whereabouts of their loved ones and advocating for justice for the victims.

Odhikar is a human rights organisation based in Dhaka, Bangladesh established on 10 October 1994 by a group of human rights defenders, to monitor human rights violations and create wider awareness. It holds special consultative status with the UN ECOSOC. www.odhikar.org