



THREE-MONTH HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING REPORT ON BANGLADESH

Reporting Period: April – June 2022

Prepared by Odhikar

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Foreword

Odhikar, since its inception in 1994 as a human rights organisation, has always sought to raise public awareness of human rights violations committed by the state and to campaign, protest against and restrain the state from violating internationally recognized civil and political rights. Odhikar unconditionally stands beside the victims of human rights violations and works to establish justice for them.

Since 2013, Odhikar has been facing extreme state repression on its freedom of expression and harassment while conducting its human rights activities. Despite the state's ongoing obstructions, Odhikar continues to raising issues of human rights violations and has prepared this Human Rights Report for the month of April-June 2022, based on the reports sent by the human rights defenders associated with it and the data published in various media.

To see the previous human rights reports of Odhikar, please visit www.odhikar.org;
Facebook: [Odhikar.HumanRights](https://www.facebook.com/Odhikar.HumanRights); Twitter: @odhikar_bd

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Statistics: Human Rights violations

Statistics: January - June 2022*								
Type of Human Rights Violation		January	February	March	April	May	June	Total
Extrajudicial killings	Crossfire	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
	Tortured to death	2	1	2	2	0	0	7
	Shot to death	4	0	0	1	0	0	5
	Total	6	1	2	5	0	0	14
Enforced Disappearances		0	0	3	5	0	0	8
Death in Jail		3	14	9	6	6	7	45
Death Penalty	Sentenced to death	19	30	42	18	36	35	180
	Execution of death sentence	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Human rights violations by Indian BSF	Bangladeshis Killed	1	1	2	0	0	0	4
	Bangladeshis Injured	6	2	2	1	1	0	12
	Total	7	3	4	1	1	0	16
Attack on journalists	Killed	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
	Injured	17	25	4	11	18	1	76
	Assaulted	7	1	1	2	3	1	15
	Attacked	0	0	0	2	2	1	5
	Arrested	1	2	0	0	0	2	5
	Threatened	0	1	5	1	4	2	13
	Total	25	29	10	17	27	8	116
Public lynching		5	3	5	0	5	4	22
Arrest under the Digital Security Act, 2018	Allegations of posts criticizing the Prime Minister, high-ranking officials of the government, their family members, anti government in social media	7	4	6	4	6	9	36
	Allegations of making derogatory remarks against religion	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
	Total	7	4	6	4	6	13	40

* Odhikar documentation

Introduction

Odhikar has published this three-month human rights report (April-June 2022) at a time when it is facing a new level of government repression. During this reporting period, the NGO Affairs Bureau refused to renew Odhikar's registration, there is continued intelligence surveillance on the organization and propaganda is being spread against Odhikar through the pro-government media. Despite all these adversities, Odhikar continues its human rights activities. This report by Odhikar highlights abuses of civil and political rights, including the systematic violations of freedom of speech and expression, destruction of the democratic system, a dysfunctional justice delivery process (through the politicization of the judiciary) and deprivation of the right to life. Ever since this government came to power through farcical elections¹, it has used repressive policies in violation of both the constitution and UN conventions. During this reporting period, citizens have been subjected to enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and torture. There have also been a number of other human rights violations, including the deprivation of freedoms of expression, assembly and association.

¹The 10th Parliamentary elections were held on 5 January 2014, despite the boycotting of this election by a large majority of political parties and with reports and allegations of various kinds of election fraud and violence. The election was farcical and out of 300 constituencies, 153 MP's were declared elected uncontested, even before the polling commenced. On 30 December 2018 the next farcical election was held. During this election, there were reports of widespread irregularities, including stuffing ballot boxes in favour of the ruling Awami League nominated candidates the night before the polls, casting fake votes, forcing voters to vote for the ruling party candidate, occupying polling centres and detaining and ousting the polling agents of the opposition party nominated candidates.

The Human Rights Movement and State Repression on Odhikar

1. Since its inception in 1994, Odhikar has been working with grassroots human rights defenders, victims and their families to establish human rights, end impunity and demand justice. The present government is violating various kinds of human rights, including the perpetration of enforced disappearance, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, torture in custody and hindrance to freedom of expression. The violations have been reinforced through the grabbing of power by farcical elections. Due to Odhikar's vocal and uncompromising role against human rights abuses, the Organisation has been subjected to various forms of oppression by the government.
2. Prior to the 2014 and 2018 national elections, the government created various forms of harassment for Odhikar, including the refusal to allow the Organisation to monitor the 2018 elections. The persecution of Odhikar commenced in the year before the controversial 10th parliamentary elections in 2014. Odhikar's Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan and Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan were sent to jail custody, being accused of violating the Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (amended in 2009) by publishing a fact-finding report on extrajudicial killings in 2013, and they are currently under trial at the Dhaka Cyber Tribunal.² All bank accounts of Odhikar were (and still are) closed under the instruction of the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB). The pro-government print and electronic media also commenced a hate campaign against Odhikar and its Secretary.
3. Before the (farcical) 11th parliamentary elections in 2018, the government, through its subservient Election Commission, revoked Odhikar's registration as an election observer and spread propaganda with false and fabricated news against the Organisation through several pro-government media outlets. The government has used law enforcement agencies, NGO Affairs Bureau, Anti-Corruption Commission, Election Commission and pro-government media to attempt to silence Odhikar.

²On 14 February 2021, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court dismissed the application for dismissal of the case filed against the Secretary and Director of Odhikar and directed that the case be referred to the Cyber Tribunal for hearing. Subsequently, a review application was filed with the Appellate Division seeking reconsideration of the application for dismissal of the case. The first hearing of the case was held on 12 September 2021 at the Dhaka Cyber Tribunal. On this day, when Odhikar's Secretary and Director appeared before the Tribunal, their lawyer informed the Tribunal of the application for review (Review Petition No. 8/2021, dated 04/04/2011) pending in the Appellate Division and appealed to the Tribunal to take necessary steps after the review hearing. But the Tribunal did not grant the prayer and fixed 5 October 2021 as the date for taking evidence and examining witnesses for the Prosecution (PW) in case No. 1/2013. The Tribunal then proceeded to take evidence and examined witnesses for the Prosecution on 9 November and 24 November 2021. On 15 December the PW was not present, so the next date for examination was set for 20 January 2022. On 20 February, the next date, the PW to be examined was absent as well, and the same thing occurred on the next given date, on 28 March. On 8 May a PW was examined but on the next given date, 9 June 2022, it was learnt at the Tribunal, that the PW who was to be examined that day, had passed away several months ago. The Tribunal fixed 13 July 2022 as the next date.

4. The state oppression on Odhikar has intensified ahead of the 12th parliamentary elections, to be held in 2023. The NGOAB, under the Prime Minister's Office, refused to renew the registration of Odhikar on 5 June 2022, after keeping its application for renewal pending for eight years. On 28 June 2022, Odhikar filed an appeal with the Prime Minister's Office against the government's decision. Several government-backed media outlets are currently spreading false and baseless news against Odhikar, as they did in late 2013, in 2014 and 2018.
5. Since the United States of America imposed sanctions on RAB and seven of its former and current top officials in Bangladesh on 10 December 2021, the government has stepped up intelligence surveillance on Odhikar, and human rights defenders associated with Odhikar have been subjected to various forms of intimidation and harassment.
6. Protesting against the government's repressive attitude towards Odhikar, two Working Groups and six Special Rapporteurs of the UN Human Rights Council³ sent a joint urgent appeal to the Bangladesh government on 21 February 2022, which explicitly expressed concern about the government's repression and retaliatory behaviour against the Organisation.⁴ This urgent appeal states that human rights have become a matter of threat to the government and Odhikar has been subjected to the government's intimidation and reprisals for its sustained cooperation with the UN, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights. The UN Secretary-General's reports of 2019, 2020 and 2021 stated that Odhikar had been labeled as "anti-state and anti-government" due to its activities, and following its engagement in the Universal Periodic Review of the human rights situation in Bangladesh in 2009 and its cooperation with the UN Committee Against Torture in 2019.
7. In response to this Joint Urgent Appeal, the government claimed that Odhikar is widely known for its 'disproportionate bias' and 'prejudice' against Bangladesh, in particular the ruling party Awami League, which is evident in its various reports. It also said that one of the top members of 'Odhikar' was earlier appointed by the BNP-Jamaat government as the Deputy Attorney General, which should disqualify it as an objective and neutral organisation for reasons of its inherent biasness and motivation. Citing the Joint Urgent Appeal, the government responded that in the context of the government's

³Mandates of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Reporter on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

⁴ UN BGD 2/2022

retaliation against Odhikar, that if Odhikar had been intimidated or retaliated whatsoever, they should have sought judicial intervention rather than trying to raise allegations supported by inadequate information. In addition, the government said, the Joint Urgent Appeal might ponder to have retrospective analysis on what prompted its drawing of the conclusion that Odhikar's cooperation with the UN human rights mechanisms has been considered as anti-state and anti-government activities.

8. The government's interpretation of the Joint Urgent Appeal has come to Odhikar's notice. The claim that the government made about Odhikar as an organisation known for its disproportionate biasness is false and baseless. Since its inception in 1994 (and through various changes of government), Odhikar has stood beside the victims of human rights violations, regardless of any political ideology, and is working to establish justice for victims. It is to be noted that lawyers appointed to the Attorney General's Office act as attorneys for the State, not for any government. Odhikar's Secretary was appointed as a Deputy Attorney General for Bangladesh from October 2001 to May 2007 and for this reason he resigned from Odhikar's Executive Committee at that time. The position of Attorney General is a constitutional post under Article 64 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Unfortunately, the present government has turned this position into a political post as part of the politicization of state and constitutional institutions.
9. In response to the government's statement about Odhikar giving false information, the Organisation states that Odhikar collects information after careful verification and selection through its nationwide network of human rights defenders, which is acceptable not only in Bangladesh, but also in various international organisations, including the United Nations. Odhikar's past experience shows how unrealistic the government's statement to the UN Joint Urgent Appeal is where it stated that judicial intervention should be sought immediately to seek redress. Odhikar carried out a fact-finding mission on the casualties that occurred by the members of the law enforcement and security forces centering around the Hefazat-e-Islam rally in Dhaka on 5 and 6 May 2013. The government asked for a list of the deceased from Odhikar. However, Odhikar told the government that it was not possible to provide the list of the deceased due to security issue of the victims' families, as there were allegations made of extrajudicial killings against various government forces. Furthermore, Odhikar also demanded that the government form an impartial commission of inquiry headed by a retired judge of the Supreme Court and then Odhikar will hand over the list of victims to that commission. Instead of forming a commission of inquiry, the government picked up Odhikar's Secretary, Adilur Rahman Khan, from his

residence at 10:40 pm on 10 August 2013 and filed a case under the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006.

Obstacles and Attacks on Rallies and Repression of Opposition Leaders and Activists

10. An atmosphere of unaccountability and impunity prevails in the country as the ruling Awami League assumed power by depriving the people from their right to vote. The Awami League-backed Chhatra League⁵ has been established as a violent branch of the political party under the shelter of the government and is used to suppress the opposition. Apart from the ruling party leaders and activists, members of law enforcement agencies are also being used to suppress the opposition. As a result, the government's crackdown on leaders and activists of other opposition political parties, including the Awami League's arch rival, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), has become widespread.⁶

Hindrance to and attacks on freedom of assembly

11. In April-June 2022, ruling party miscreants used local weapons and firearms⁷ to attack opposition rallies, processions⁸, Iftar gatherings⁹, food distribution programmes¹⁰ and the houses¹¹ of opposition leaders and activists. Many opposition leaders and activists were injured in these incidents. In many cases, the police and Awami League-backed Chhatra League jointly carried out these attacks.¹² Police also attacked garment workers as they protested in the streets demanding payment of wages. Chhatra League miscreants attacked opposition leaders and activists and lawyers, leaving them seriously injured and vandalized their vehicles, even entering the Supreme Court premises.¹³ In addition to obstructing and attacking rallies and processions, police also arrested opposition leaders and activists when they were preparing for the rally.¹⁴

⁵ Student wing of Awami League

⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 1 June 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/ছাত্রদলকে-পিটিয়ে-আলীগের-প্রশংসা-পেল-ছাত্রলীগ>

⁷ The daily Jugantor, 28 May 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/555645/>

⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 26 May 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/পটুয়াখালীতে-ছাত্রলীগ-যুবলীগের-হামলায়-বিএনপির-কর্মসূচি-পণ্ড>

⁹ The daily Naya Diganta, 13 April 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/khulna/656956/>

¹⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 1 June 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/নোয়াখালীতে-জিয়ার-মৃত্যুবার্ষিকীতে-খাবার-বিতরণে-যুবলীগ-ছাত্রলীগের-বাধা-সাংবাদিক-লাঞ্ছিত>

¹¹ The daily Jugantor, 5 June 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/558700/>

¹² The daily Prothom Alo, 26 May 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/খুলনায়-সংঘর্ষের-পর-বিএনপি-কার্যালয়ে-ছাত্রলীগের-হামলা-পুলিশের-লাঠিপেটা>

¹³ The daily Manabzamin, 26 May 2022; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=4652>

¹⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 18 April 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/পঞ্চগড়ে-মিছিল-করতে-এসে-ছাত্রদলের-পাঁচ-নেতা-কমী-আটক>



Chhatra League leaders and activists vandalize the stage and chairs in front of the BNP office in Khulna after an altercation. Photo: Prothom Alo, 26 May 2022

12. Leaders and activists of the Bangladesh Chhatra League attacked the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal¹⁵ leaders and activists in the TSC area in Dhaka University on 22 May 2022, over a statement made by Saif Mahmud, General Secretary of the central unit of the Chhatra Dal, about Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Chhatra Dal organised a press conference at TSC on 24 May to protest the attack and explain Saif Mahmud's statement. In the morning of that day, while the leaders and activists of Chhatra Dal were going to the conference, the leaders and activists of Chhatra League attacked them in front of the central Shaheed Minar. Later on 26 May, when Chhatra Dal leaders and activists wanted to enter Dhaka University campus, Chhatra League leaders and activists attacked them again and beat Chhatra Dal leaders and activists by entering at the Supreme Court premises.¹⁶



Chhatra League activists attack Chhatra Dal activists while the latter were on their way to a press conference on 24 May at Dhaka University campus. Photo: Prothom Alo, 1 June 2022

¹⁵ Student wing of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

¹⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 29 May 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/হামলার-নেতৃত্বে-বাইরের-নেতারা>



Chhatra League activists attack Chhatra Dal activists while the latter were on their way to a press conference on 24 May at Dhaka University campus. Photo: Prothom Alo, 1 June 2022

13. On 30 May 2022, Chhatra League leaders and activists attacked BNP¹⁷ programmes in Pirojpur and Gournadi of Barisal District that had been organised on the occasion of the death anniversary of BNP founder and former president of Bangladesh Ziaur Rahman.¹⁸



Injured BNP activists (from left) Monir Hossain, Jamal Sharif and Mahatab Sardar. Photo: Prothom Alo, 31 May 2022

14. On 1 June 2022, Chhatra League leaders and activists attacked a procession organised by the Gono Odhikar Parishad (People's Rights Council) for their chanting of anti-government slogans, at Kanaighat in Sylhet. The police then took 17 leaders and activists of Gono Odhikar Parishad to the police station and later released them on bond.¹⁹
15. Eight people were injured when Chhatra League leaders and activists attacked a procession brought out by left-leaning student organisations on

¹⁷ Bangladesh Nationalist Party

¹⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 31 May 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/ছাত্রলীগের-হামলায়-বিনপির-৬-নেতাকর্মী-আহত>

¹⁹ The daily Jugantor, 3 June 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/557920/>

their way to Dhaka University from Shahbagh in Dhaka on 6 June. The students were protesting against a horrific explosion at a container depot at Sitakunda in Chittagong.²⁰

16. On 6 June 2022, workers of several garment factories, including Zuki, Loadstar, Saras, Vision, Polka and MBM in Mirpur, Dhaka, blocked roads in protest, demanding a salary increase. At that time, police baton charged and threw tear gas shells at the workers, injuring some. The workers said that although the factory authorities had promised to increase their salaries this year, it had not been done. Workers have been fired on various pretexts for demanding a pay rise.²¹

Attacks on opposition leaders-activists, lawsuits, arrest and torture

17. The government has filed lawsuits against opposition leaders and activists, wrongfully confined them, arrested and tortured them.²² During this period, a Chhatra Dal leader was picked up by police, who initially denied his arrest. Later, a case of sabotage was filed against him along with four others and they were shown as arrested. Another Chhatra Dal leader was picked up and left on street the next day after he was detained in an unknown place. The university authorities, the Supreme Court administration and the police have taken no legal action against persons in connection with the attacks and vandalism perpetrated by the Chhatra League and Juba League²³ on Dhaka University campus and in different parts of the country. Many BNP and Chhatra Dal leaders and activists were injured in these attacks.²⁴ On the night of 24 May, the Dhaka University authority filed a case with Shahbagh Police Station accusing 300/400 'unidentified persons'. Police arrested two Chhatra Dal activists in the case.²⁵ Apart from University authorities, Zahidul Islam, President of Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah Hall²⁶ unit Chhatra League, filed a separate case on 27 May, with Shahbagh Police station against 17 persons, including Chhatra Dal central unit General secretary Saif Mahmud, and 50-60 'unidentified persons' over the clash in the Supreme Court area.²⁷ As it was not possible to file a case at the police station, Chhatra Dal leader Mansura Alam, who was injured in an attack by Chhatra League leaders and activists at Dhaka University campus on 24 May, filed a case against 32 Chhatra

²⁰ The daily Naya Diganta, 6 June 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/dhaka/668543/>

²¹ The daily Naya Diganta, 6 June 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/dhaka/668459/>

²² The daily Manabzamin, 28 May 2022; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=4966>

²³ Youth wing of Awami League

²⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 28 May 2022;

²⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 26 May 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/নাতিসোঁটা-নিষে-ছাত্রলীগের-অবস্থান-প্রশাসনের-মামলা>

²⁶ Dormitory for Dhaka University students

²⁷ The daily Manabzamin, 28 May 2022; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=4966>

League leaders and activists at the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court on 29 May.²⁸

18. The government had filed a number of 'absentee cases'²⁹ in the run-up to the controversial 2018 elections in order to crack down on opposition leaders and activists. Most of these cases are alleged to be false and fabricated.³⁰ When opposition leaders and activists gathered to hold a private meeting, they were arrested for allegedly plotting sabotage.³¹ Furthermore, the repressive Special Powers Act, 1974 had also been imposed against opposition leaders and activists.³² One of the features of such cases is that the police indict a large number of anonymous persons, so that anyone can be arrested later and implicated. Many of the accused in these cases have been indicted by the police even though they were in exile at the time of the incident, under treatment at the hospital or had died. From April-June 2022, police filed cases 'in absentia' to suppress the movements and later arrested ordinary people³³ and political leaders and activists³⁴ under these cases.
19. Motijheel police arrested BNP leader Ishraq Hossain on 5 April 2022, in a case filed in 2021 for torching vehicles while he was distributing leaflets protesting rising prices of the daily commodities.³⁵
20. Chandpur District and Sessions Judge sent Chandpur District unit BNP President Sheikh Farid Ahmed to jail on 10 April 2022, by denying his bail plea in a case filed on allegations of sabotage in 2018.³⁶
21. Students of Dhaka College clashed with shop owners and employees in the New Market area of Dhaka for several days starting from 18 April 2022. Two men, Nahid Hossain and Mohammad Mursalin, were killed in the clash. According to newspaper sources, the Detective Branch of Police confirmed that Awami League-backed Chhatra League leaders and activists of Dhaka College were involved in the killings.³⁷ However, police filed a case against BNP leaders and activists. Tipu, former president of Dhaka College unit

²⁸ The daily Naya Diganta, 30 May 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/666642/>

²⁹ DW, <https://www.dw.com/bn/গায়েবি-মিথ্যা-ও-অজ্ঞাত-পরিচয়-মামলা-যা-জানা-জরুরি/a-48128671>

³⁰ BBC Bangla, 16 October 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/bengali/news-45867078>

³¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 4 April 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/নাশকতার-পরিকল্পনার-অভিযোগে-জামায়াত-শিবিরের-১৫-নেতা-কমী-গ্রেপ্তার>

³² The daily Prothom Alo, 12 April 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/কুমিল্লায়-বিশেষ-ক্ষমতা-আইনের-মামলায়-বিএনপির-১৫-নেতা-করাগারে>

³³ The daily Naya Diganta, 6 April 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/city/655772/>

³⁴ The daily Naya Diganta, 8 April 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/politics/655841/>

³⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 5 April 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/বিএনপি-নেতা-ইশরাফ-গ্রেপ্তার>

³⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 10 April 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/নাশকতার-মামলায়-চাঁদপুর-জেলা-বিএনপির-সভাপতি-করাগারে>

³⁷ The daily Jugantor, 25 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/545024/>

Chhatra Dal, the 4th accused in the case, has been living in Japan for the last seven years and Mintu, the 23rd accused, had died two years ago.³⁸



Photos taken while students of Dhaka College clashed with New Market shop owners. From Left: Dhaka College Chhatra League activist Kaiuum. A shopkeeper being beaten by miscreants wearing helmets during a clash. Courier worker Nahid being hacked by a miscreant in a helmet. A person seen wielding a weapon. (Photo, Prothom Alo, 24 April 2022 and Jugantor 25 April 2022)

22. Chhatra League and Jubo League attacked a BNP rally in Khulna. However, police, on 26 May 2022, filed a case against 800 unidentified people, including 92 BNP leaders and activists instead, for attacking a BNP rally.³⁹
23. On 19 May 2022, Ashraful Islam Jasim, a member of the Convener Committee of Gulshan Thana unit Chhatra Dal, was picked up by police from Kakrail intersection on his way home from the BNP's central office in Naya Paltan. After much searching, Jasim was found blindfolded with his hands tied, in the DOHS area in Dhaka on 21 May.⁴⁰
24. On 20 May 2022, some plain clothed members of a law enforcement agency tried to pick up Kazi Raonkul Islam Shrabon, President of the Central unit Chhatra Dal, in a car from Dhanmondi area of Dhaka. After failing to arrest Shrabon, police beat up and arrested Azizur Rahman Aziz, Joint Secretary of Mymensingh Metropolitan unit Chhatra Dal and Abdur Rahman, former Social Work Affairs Secretary of Cox's Bazar District unit Chhatra Dal.⁴¹
25. On 7 June 2022, Chhatra League leaders and activists attacked Jonaid Saki, Chief Coordinator of Gono Sanghati Andolan, and Rashed Khan, Joint Convener of Gono Adhikar Parishad, when they went to visit the injured victims of a horrific blast at Sitakunda container depot in Chittagong. At least 20 leaders and activists including Jonaid Saki and Rashed Khan, were injured in the incident.⁴²

³⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 26 April 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/capital/বিএনপির-১৪-নেতাকর্মীকে-ছয়-সপ্তাহের-মধ্যে-আত্মসমর্পণের-নির্দেশ>

³⁹ The Daily Star, 27 May 2022, <https://bangla.thedailystar.net/সংবাদ/বাংলাদেশ/রাজনীতি/খুলনায়-বিএনপির-৮০০-নেতাকর্মীর-বিরুদ্ধে-পুলিশের-মামলা-গ্রেপ্তার-৩৭-৩৫২৬৮৬>

⁴⁰ The daily Jugantor, 21 May 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/politics/bnp/553410/>

⁴¹ The daily Jugantor, 21 May 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/politics/bnp/553410/>

⁴² The daily Prothom Alo, 8 June 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/চট্টগ্রামে-জোনায়েদ-সাকির-ওপর-হামলা>



The Chief Coordinator of Gana Sanghati Andolon, Junaid Saki was attacked by miscreants when he visited the injured victims of the Sitakunda container depot fire. Jugantor, 08 June 2022

26. Saiful Islam Saif, a former Assistant General Secretary of Chittagong Metropolitan unit Chhatra Dal, who was disabled⁴³ by police firing in 2021, was arrested along with four others by police on 28 June 2022 while returning from a Chittagong court after appearing in a case. When Saif's family members contacted the police station that night, the police denied arresting Saif. On 29 June, police of Panchlaish Police Station admitted the arrest of five people, including Saif. The police claimed that Saif had met with some of his associates to carry out sabotage with sharp weapons and upon receiving information, police raided the place and arrested them. In this regard, Saif's brother Sujon said that since the police had crippled his brother, he could not walk well even with a crutch. He even had to be carried into a car in order to take him to a doctor and that roaming around with people with the intention of sabotage was completely unbelievable.⁴⁴

⁴³In the night of 16 June 2021, police of Bayezid Police Station in Chittagong picked up Saiful Islam Saif, former Deputy General Secretary of Chittagong Metropolitan unit Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), from his home. Police then took Saif to Arefin Nagar area in the city and shot him in his left leg, injuring him seriously. Saif was sent to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (NITOR) in Dhaka where doctors had no choice but to amputate his left leg. Police then detained him in a case from NITOR and sent him to jail through the court. After being detained for nine months in jail, Saif was released on bail. New Age, 17 June 2021; <http://www.newagebd.net/article/141037/former-ctg-jcd-leader-shot-in-leg-after-being-picked-up-by-police>

⁴⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 29 June 2022; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=9650>



Saiful Islam Saif, the former Assistant General Secretary of Chittagong City Chhatra Dal, disabled after being shot by police. Photo, Manabzamin, 29 June 2022

Criminal Activities and Violence Committed by the Ruling Party

27. Acts of corruption, malpractice and violence committed by the leaders and workers of the ruling Awami League and its affiliated organisations have reached its peak. Despite being in government service, government officials are actively involved in Awami League politics and have taken up party positions.⁴⁵ Various allegations of violence and criminal activities, including, illegal acquisition of wealth⁴⁶, money laundering⁴⁷, killings of citizens in public⁴⁸, attacks on leaders of the Opposition⁴⁹, grabbing Khas⁵⁰ and government land⁵¹ and land of others⁵², occupying hospital⁵³, rape⁵⁴, persecution of slum dwellers⁵⁵, beating of a teacher⁵⁶, attack on army

⁴⁵ The daily Manabzamin, 22 May 2022; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=3916>

⁴⁶ The daily Jugantor, 17 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/542026/>

⁴⁷ The daily Jugantor, 3 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/537290/>

⁴⁸ The daily Jugantor, 11 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/540158/>

⁴⁹ The daily Jugantor, 17 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/bangla-face/542168>

⁵⁰ The daily Jugantor, 2 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/bangla-face/537066/>

⁵¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 11 May 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/capital/সরকারি-দলের-নেতাদের-দখলে-সরকারি-জমি-2>

⁵² The daily Naya Diganta, 14 April 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/dhaka/657241/>

⁵³ The daily Prothom Alo, 3 June 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/558302/>

⁵⁴ The daily Naya Diganta, 3 April 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/rajshahi/654729/>

⁵⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 14 June 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/capital/উত্তর-সুলতান-ভিডিও>

⁵⁶ The daily Jugantor, 1 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/536586/>

vehicles⁵⁷, attack on traders⁵⁸, embezzlement of rice under Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programmes⁵⁹, depriving poor people of shelter⁶⁰, lease fraud⁶¹, drug dealing⁶², extortion⁶³, mugging⁶⁴, embezzlement of mosque land⁶⁵ have been made against leaders and activists of Awami League and its affiliated organisations in the last three months.

28. During this reporting period, various allegations have also been found against the Chhatra League leaders and activists, including beating of university students⁶⁶, torture of college students⁶⁷, forcefully evicting students from dormitories⁶⁸, seat trading and occupation of educational institutions⁶⁹.
29. There were allegations against Shawkat Hachanur Rahman Rimon, an Awami League MP from Barguna-2 constituency, of land grabbing, assaults, and the picking up of a man from the court premises and beating him for ignoring an arbitration by the ruling party MP and going to court instead.⁷⁰
30. On 9 April 2022, a man named Morshed Ali was hacked to death by Awami League and Juba League leaders and activists in public, over a business rivalry in Cox's Bazar Sadar Upazila. Relatives of the deceased claimed that Morshed was killed in a premeditated manner. There were allegations that the killers had an agreement with the police before he was killed.⁷¹
31. On 19 May 2022, Anwarul Azim, a local Awami League MP, came to Kaliganj Government Mahtab Uddin College in Jhenaidah, beaten Sajjad Hossain, an Assistant Professor in the Mathematics Department after labeling him a Shibir⁷² activist, and also threatened other teachers.⁷³

Conflicts within the ruling party over area domination and vested interest

32. In the last three months, leaders and activists of the ruling Awami League had been involved in clashes among themselves over establishing supremacy in

⁵⁷ The daily Naya Diganta, 1 April 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/dhaka/654365/>

⁵⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 24 April 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/চার-অসুধারী-শনাক্ততারা-ছাত্রলীগের>

⁵⁹ The daily Jugantor, 21 May 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/553053/>

⁶⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 24 May 2022

⁶¹ The daily Jugantor, 7 May 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/bangla-face/548253/>

⁶² The daily Naya Diganta, 12 May 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/dhaka/662722>

⁶³ The daily Naya Diganta, 12 April 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/chattagram/656900/>

⁶⁴ The daily Jugantor, 1 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/536667/>

⁶⁵ The daily Jugantor, 16 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/541906/>

⁶⁶ The daily Manabzamin, 3 April 2022; <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=322375&cat=1>

⁶⁷ The daily Manabzamin, 28 April 2022; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=953>

⁶⁸ Dhaka Tribune, 12 April 2022, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/nation/2022/04/12/ru-chhatra-league-leader-kicks-student-out-of-hall>

⁶⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 14 June 2022 <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/রাবির-হলে-ছাত্রলীগের-সিটবাগিচা-ও-দখলের-প্রতিবাদে-মানববন্ধন>

⁷⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 8 May 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/সাংসদ-হাচানুরের-কাজকর্মে-লজিত-এলাকার-মানুষ>

⁷¹ The daily Jugantor, 11 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/540158/>

⁷² Student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami.

⁷³ The daily Jugantor, 20 May 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/552814/>

the area and in conflicts of interest. During this period, they were seen using local weapons and firearms in public.⁷⁴ A number of people were killed in these incidents.

33. On 2 May 2022, four people named Kashem Ali (50), Laltu Mandal (30), Rahim Malitha (50), and Matiar Mandal (40) were killed in a clash between two factions of Awami League over establishing supremacy in Kushtia.⁷⁵
34. On 5 May 2022, a man named Sirajul Islam (27) was killed in a clash between two rival factions of Awami League in Saltha Upazila under Faridpur District over domination and conflicts of interest.⁷⁶

State Repression

35. State repression of citizens continues unabated. Criminals are being acquitted due to lack of an effective justice system. Victims are being deprived of justice. As a result, citizens are being subjected to various human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and torture.

Extrajudicial killings

36. Extrajudicial killings continue in the country. Incidents of 'crossfire', 'gunfight' and 'shootout' were temporarily suspended from January to March 2022 after the United States imposed sanctions on RAB and seven of its former and current senior officials on 10 December 2021, for serious human rights violations. However, extrajudicial killings in the form of death due to torture continued. In the three months from April-June 2022, incidents of 'crossfire' and 'gunfights' were again reported.
37. **From April to June 2022, a total of 05 persons were allegedly killed extrajudicially, as reported. Of the 05 persons killed, 03 persons were killed by police and 02 by RAB. Of them, 02 were killed in "crossfire/encounters/gunfight" by RAB, 02 were tortured to death by police and 01 person was shot dead by police.**
38. On 16 April 2022, Mohammad Raju, the main accused in the murder of Mohiuddin Sarkar Naeem, a journalist from Burichang in Cumilla, was killed in a 'gunfight' with RAB in Golabari area of Cumilla Sadar Upazila.⁷⁷
39. On 20 April 2022, Kaisar Ali Mandal, a resident of Joypurhat District, was killed in a 'gunfight' with RAB in Alammara area of Charigram Union in Shingair under Manikganj District.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 19 April 2022; <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=324558>

⁷⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 2 May 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/>

⁷⁶ The daily Manabzamin, 5 May 2022; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=1538>

⁷⁷ The daily Manabzamin, 17 April 2022; <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=324247>

⁷⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 21 April 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/কাইছার-মইরা-গ্যাঙ্গে-আর-পুলিশকে-হয়রানি-হতে-হবে-না>

Enforced disappearances

40. From April to June 2022, a total of 05 persons were allegedly disappeared⁷⁹ after being picked up by men claiming to be members of law enforcement agencies. All 05 surfaced alive. The government has used enforced disappearance as a tool to suppress political movements and stifle dissenting voices, creating a climate of fear in the country. Most of those who were disappeared have been identified as opposition leaders-activists and dissidents. Acts of enforced disappearance continued during this reporting period.
41. The UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) in a report released on 23 May 2022, after its 126th session, said that the information about 66 out of 76 cases of enforced disappearance that took place in Bangladesh, provided by the Bangladesh government, was insufficient. The Working Group believes that since the government of Bangladesh has had to face condemnation over the cases of enforced disappearance, the concerned authorities should have made the report with more effort. However, such behaviour regarding disappearances seems to have become a regular habit of the government. There are allegations that hundreds of people went missing over the past decade but the government has continuously denied all these incidents.⁸⁰



Family members of the disappeared gather to demand both their return and justice, during the International Week of the Disappeared, 23-30 May 2022. Photo: The Daily Star, 30 May 2022

⁷⁹Odhikar only documents allegations 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.

⁸⁰ The Daily Star, 30 May 2022; <https://bangla.thedailystar.net/অভিমত/সম্পাদকীয়/গুম-সংক্রান্ত-সরকারি-প্রতিবেদনে-গুরুত্বপূর্ণ-তথ্য-আড়াল-করা-হচ্ছে-353701>

42. The Bangladesh government did not respond when members of the Working Group wanted to visit Bangladesh to investigate the allegations of enforced disappearances. The government has informed the WGEID that eight of the 76 persons have returned. People who return after being picked up by members of law enforcement agencies have also been victims of enforced disappearance, as defined in Article 2 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.⁸¹ Although they have been illegally detained in secret places for a long time, the government, through its response, tried to convince the WGEID that they were not disappeared. Most of the disappeared victims who returned did not open their mouth due to fear of reprisals.⁸²
43. From 23 to 30 May 2022, the Human Rights Defenders Network of Odhikar and Maayer Daak, a platform of the families of the disappeared, jointly observed International Week of the Disappeared.⁸³ On 23 May, the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Maayer Daak and Odhikar issued a [joint statement](#) in solidarity with the families of the victims of enforced disappearances on the occasion of the week. On 28 May, Maayer Daak and Human Rights Defenders Network of Odhikar jointly organised rallies, human chain and discussion meetings in different parts of the country with the families of the disappeared. At that time family members of the disappeared demanded the return of their loved ones.
44. On 23 March 2022, Selim Molla (51) from Fatulla, Narayanganj was allegedly picked up in a black microbus by men introducing themselves as Detective Branch of Police (DB). But DB police denied that they had detained him. On 25 March, Roma Haq, the wife of Selim Molla filed a General Diary at Fatulla Model Police Station.

⁸¹ According to Article 2 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. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-all-persons-enforced>

⁸² The daily Jugantor, 15 February 2022, <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/520273/>

⁸³ Every year in the last week of May, organisations consisting of family members of the disappeared commemorate International Week of the Disappeared in different countries of the world. The Federation of Association for the Relatives of the Detained Disappeared (FEDEFAM), a South American organisation formed in 1981 with relatives of the disappeared, first began observing the week against enforced disappearances. Since then, many organisations have been devoting the week in different countries of the world to the memory of the disappeared persons. The purpose of the Week is to intensify the ongoing campaign against disappearances.



Maayer Daak and Human Rights Defenders Network of Odhikar organised human chains against enforced disappearance during the International Week of the Disappeared (last week of May).

Photo: Odhikar

Torture, degrading treatment, custodial death and lack of accountability

45. During this reporting period, various types of allegations, including inhumane treatment of citizens⁸⁴, various forms of extortion⁸⁵, collecting money by threatening lawsuits⁸⁶, bribery⁸⁷, collecting money from an accused after detaining him at the police station⁸⁸, collecting money with threats of crossfire⁸⁹, and torture to death⁹⁰, were found against members of the law enforcement agencies. The government is using law enforcement agencies to

⁸⁴ The daily Naya Diganta, 11 May 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/mymensingh/662441/>

⁸⁵ The daily Jugantor, 7 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/538974/>

⁸⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 15 April 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/গাজীপুরে-দুই-যুবকে-মামলার-ভয়ে-দেখিয়ে-টাকা-নিল-পুলিশ>

⁸⁷ The daily Jugantor, 17 March 2022, <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/531532/>

⁸⁸ The daily Jugantor, 8 May 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/548764/>

⁸⁹ The daily Naya Diganta, 23 May 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/bangla-diganta/665094/>

⁹⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 15 April 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/লালমনিরহাটে-আটকের-পর-পুলিশের-নির্যাতনে-যুবকের-মৃত্যুর-অভিযোগ>

crack down on political opponents, government critics and dissidents, to silence voices before the next national elections. As a result, many members of law enforcement agencies have been implicated in human rights abuses and extrajudicial killings, but they have also been acquitted due to impunity.

Acts of torture and death due to torture

46. Acts of torture continued due to impunity and lack of implementation of the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act 2013. Victims of torture or degrading treatment and/or their family members have been harassed and threatened by the accused for filing cases against them.
47. In the night of 10 February 2019, Sub Inspectors Mizanur Rahman and Jalil and Assistant Sub Inspector Farid Bhuiyan of Kotwali Police Station, took Rajib Kar, an employee of a gold shop, from his house to the police station. It has been alleged that Police then beat Rajib Kar with a cricket bat, hit him in the face with boots and removed a nail with pliers. Finally, Rajib was stripped naked and given electric shocks to his penis. While taking away Rajib Kar, the policemen also took about 325 gms of gold and Taka 41,300 in cash from his wife and mother. The next day, Rajib Kar's family members took him out of the police station after giving the police two hundred thousand taka. When Rajib filed a case against the three police officers under the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act 2013, the Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court directed the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to investigate the case. It has been alleged that the police are threatening Rajib Kar because of the case he filed.⁹¹



Evidence of torture on the body of Rajib Kar (Photo: Prothom Alo, 12 June 2022)

⁹¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 12 June 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/পুলিশের-বিরুদ্ধে-মামলা-পালিয়ে-বেড়াচ্ছেন-বাদী>

48. The body of a young man named Mohammad Mamun, who fell into the river after being chased by police in Sreepur, Gazipur, was recovered on 5 April 2022. Mamun's elder brother Masum Mia said that Mamun was returning home after buying Iftar in the afternoon of 3 April. Four policemen led by ASI Shakil Ahmed of Sreepur Police Station arrested Mamun and started beating him. Mamun managed to escaped and jumped into the Banar River. Mamun has been missing since.⁹²
49. There was an allegation of the beating to death of a young man named Rabiul Islam by police in Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station. Rabiul's younger brother Sohag said that Rabiul went to a fair to buy toys for his daughter. He was arrested for gambling and beaten by police led by SI Halimur Rahman and died at Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital on 14 April. Locals blocked the Lalmonirhat-Patgram-Burimara highway in protest of the incident and demanded justice for the death.⁹³
50. On 21 May 2022, police arrested a grade nine student named Nasir Uddin on suspicion of being involved in stealing a motorcycle in Sreepur under Magura District, detained him at Sreepur Police Station and tortured him for three nights. Nasir said that after taking him to the police station, police handcuffed him and beat him after suspending him from the window grills. Police then blindfolded him and took him to a field near a lake, and threatened to kill him at a gun point if he did not confess. After that, members of the Detective Branch of Police also tortured him. On 24 May, the police produced Nasir before the court.⁹⁴
51. International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, is being observed on 26 June.⁹⁵ The Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Maayer Daak, Odhikar and the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) issued a [joint statement](#) in memory of the victims. On this day (June 26), human rights defenders associated with Odhikar and Maayer Daak organised meetings, rallies and human chains in different districts of the country, along with local

⁹² The daily Prothom Alo, 5 April 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/নদে-মিলল-পুলিশের-ধাওয়ায়-রাঁপ-দেওয়া-তরুণের-লাশ>

⁹³ The daily Prothom Alo, 15 April 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/লালমনিরহাটে-আটকের-পর-পুলিশের-নির্যাতনে-যুবকের-মৃত্যুর-অভিযোগ>

⁹⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 18 June 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/চোর-সন্দেহে-কিশোরকে-তিন-রাত-থানায়-আটকে-রেখে-নির্যাতনের-অভিযোগ>

⁹⁵ On 10 December 1984, the UN General Assembly adopted a united policy position or Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, established as a statutory legal force in international law. This policy came into force on 26 June 1986, and at the same time, in accordance with the resolution adopted by the General Assembly, it was decided to observe 26 June every year as the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. This day has been commemorating in different countries of the world since 1988.

people, victims and their families, who have been subjected to torture and various other forms of cruel and inhumane treatment.



Rallies and meetings to observe the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture on 26 June 2022; Photo: Odhikar

Death penalty and human rights

52. Accused persons are being sentenced to death in the lower courts due to the existence of death penalty provisions in various criminal laws prevalent in Bangladesh. Most of the victims are poor, less educated and disadvantaged.⁹⁶ Over the years, many accused have been languishing in condemned cells all over the country. Several have spent over a decade on death row, only to be released much later. Their families have in the meantime suffered financial losses due to this long imprisonment. A bench of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court recently ruled that if a person suffers due to a

⁹⁶ The daily New Age, 30 March 2022, <https://www.newagebd.net/article/166706/>

misjudgment, s/he can seek compensation or any appropriate reparation from the appropriate forum.⁹⁷

53. Detainees are mentally and physically affected as a result of being kept in a condemned cell (solitary confinement) for many years, in fear of being executed at any time. It is unreasonable and a violation of human rights to incarcerate convicts in a condemned cell as soon as the lower court passes a death sentence. The appeals process takes years – sometimes more than a decade. On 5 April 2022, a joint bench comprising of Justice Mohammad Mujibur Rahman Mia and Justice Ahmed Sohel of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, issued a rule asking as to why it would not be illegal to keep an accused person in condemned cell before the death sentence is finalized. On 2 September 2021, a Writ Petition was filed in the High Court Division by Zillur Rahman of Satkania, detained in the condemned cell of Chittagong Central Jail; Abdur Rashid of Sunamganj, detained in the condemned cell of Sylhet Central Jail; and Shah Alam of Khagrachhari, detained in the condemned cell of Cumilla Central Jail, challenging the legitimacy of keeping the accused persons in the condemned cell before the finalization of the death penalty. The appeals of the accused have been pending in the High Court Division. The defendants' lawyers said that Section 980 of the Jail Code has been challenged. The Code says that convicts sentenced to death will be kept separately in condemned cells.⁹⁸
54. **Between April and June 2022, a total of 89 persons were sentenced to death.**
55. On 7 June 2022, Golam Mostafa, a convict, committed suicide by hanging himself inside the bathroom of his condemned cell in Kashimpur High Security Central Jail in Gazipur.⁹⁹

Human rights violations in prisons

56. Despite allegations of widespread corruption and irregularities in the country's prisons, the government is not taking action against the perpetrators. As a result, human rights violations continue in prisons, including various forms of torture and ill-treatment. A notification was issued on 7 March 2022, stating that 10,000 jail guards of 68 jails would be transferred simultaneously over corruption in prisons. However, the jail guards alleged that the jail authority had decided to transfer them *en masse* to protect the corrupt jail superintendents and jailors.¹⁰⁰ It was learnt that there are

⁹⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 30 May 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/capital/ভুল-বিচারে-ভুক্তভোগী-ব্যক্তি-ক্ষতিপূরণ-চাইতে-পারবেন>

⁹⁸ The daily Naya Diganta, 5 April 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/law-and-justice/655182/>

⁹⁹ The daily Manabzamin, 8 June 2022 ; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=6587>

¹⁰⁰ The daily Jugantor, 25 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/545039/>

allegations of irregularities and corruption against the prison officials, including Superintendents and Jailors in almost all the prisons. The inquiry committee formed by the Department of Prisons has already found allegations against several people to be true.¹⁰¹

57. Prisons in Bangladesh always have more inmates than their actual capacity. There are also allegations that some of the inmates are dying due to inadequacy of doctors and medical facilities, and negligence by the prison authorities. There is widespread inequality in the medical treatment of prisoners. Poor prisoners are not easily admitted to hospitals even if they are ill and the prison hospitals are always full of more influential inmates. Many of the latter were admitted to the jail hospitals in exchange of money even though they were not ill.¹⁰²

58. **In the three months between April and June 2022, a total of 19 persons reportedly died in prisons due to ‘illness’.**

59. On 21 May 2022, a prisoner named Shahnaz Begum (59) died at Kashimpur Women's Central Jail. According to jail authorities, Shahnaz fell ill and died.¹⁰³

Public Lynching

60. Incidents of public lynching are very common in the country. On 6 May 2022, HM Ibrahim, an Awami League MP from Noakhali-1 constituency, has called on people in his locality to kill people by mob beatings. At a meeting he said, “I am ordering that nothing will happen if these miscreants are beaten to death. If you can, kill them with mass beatings.”¹⁰⁴ With such peoples’ representatives, the right to life and justice will never be achieved.

61. As a result of the loss of confidence in law enforcement agencies and the judiciary, there is a growing tendency among the general public to take the law into their own hands, leading to deaths in public lynching. On top of this, the promise made by a ruling party MP of impunity for mob beatings, will further encourage the killing of people by mass beatings. The present government has destroyed the state institutions to stay in power by force. As a result, there is a crisis of justice. The most dangerous aspect of this is the possibility of using ordinary people to kill political opponents or leaders and activists of the opposition, by publicly identifying them as criminals and causing them to be beaten to death by a lynch mob.

62. **In the three months between April and June 2022, 09 persons were killed by public lynching.**

¹⁰¹ The daily Jugantor, 25 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/545039/>

¹⁰² The daily Manabzamin, 6 June 2022; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=6308>

¹⁰³ Bangladesh Protidin, 22 May 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/539685/>

¹⁰⁴ The daily Jugantor, 8 May 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/548458/>

63. On 21 May 2022, a young man named Rabbi Hossain Chanchal (22) was beaten to death by locals on suspicion of being a thief, in Ilshamari Village of Ishwardi in Pabna.¹⁰⁵

Constitutional and State Institutions

64. The government has systematically transformed various important state institutions of the country into its subservient institutions through politicization. It is using various important state institutions such as the Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, Information Commission and National Human Rights Commission, to implement its political agenda. In this situation, the people have lost confidence in all state institutions.

Election Commission and the EVM system

65. Although Bangladesh has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the present government has been systematically destroying Bangladesh's electoral system since 2014. This violates the ICCPR. Article 25 (b) of the ICCPR¹⁰⁶ provides for universal suffrage and the right of the electorate to vote and to be elected in a fair poll by secret ballot. The Election Commission, as a constitutional body, is responsible for protecting the people's right to vote. Instead, Election Commissions constituted under this government have become dysfunctional institutions with widespread bias towards the current ruling party during elections. Kazi Habibul Awal¹⁰⁷, a former bureaucrat of the current government, was appointed as the Chief Election Commissioner after the term of the controversial Nurul Huda-led Election Commission expired. The ruling Awami League has used the Election Commission in 2014¹⁰⁸ and 2018¹⁰⁹ elections to seize power by

¹⁰⁵ The daily Manabzamin, 2022; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=4125>

¹⁰⁶ According Article 25(b) of the ICCPR, to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors.

¹⁰⁷ When Kazi Habibul Awal was appointed as a Secretary in the Law Ministry in 2009, the court declared his appointment illegal in 2010 due to the fact that the policy had not been followed. Regardless, the government appointed him as Defense Secretary in 2014 and later on promoted him to Senior Secretary. Although his should have gone into retirement, the government kept him in service with a two-year contract.

¹⁰⁸ The Caretaker Government system was incorporated in the Constitution through the 13th Amendment, as a result of a people's movement led by the then opposition Awami League and its alliance between 1994 and 1996 due to the continued enmity, mistrust and violence between the two main political parties (BNP and Awami League). Later this system received huge public support. However, in 2011 the caretaker government system was removed unilaterally by the Awami League government through the 15th amendment to the Constitution, without any referendum and ignoring protests from various sectors; and a provision was made that elections were now to be held under the incumbent government. As a result, the 10th Parliamentary elections were held on 5 January 2014, despite the boycotting of this election by a large majority of political parties and with reports and allegations of various kinds of election fraud and violence. The election was farcical and out of 300 constituencies, 153 MP's were declared elected uncontested even before the polling commenced.

¹⁰⁹ During the 11th Parliamentary elections on 30 December 2018, incidents of various irregularities, such as stuffing ballot boxes in most polling stations in the night before polling day; casting fake votes; voters being forced or coerced to vote

adopting various tactics.¹¹⁰ The 12th parliamentary elections are in 2023. As a result of the bitter experience of elections held under the current government in 2014 and 2018, most of the political parties in the country have stated that they will not participate in any more elections under the incumbent government.

66. It has been alleged that the ruling party is resorting to new tactics before the 12th Parliamentary elections. The strategy is to take votes through Electronic Voting Machines (EVM)¹¹¹ and the Awami League has already announced that the next Parliamentary elections will be held through EVM.¹¹² There are allegations that election results can be manipulated by using the EVM.¹¹³ As a result, even if voters vote for the symbol of their choice, it may go to the symbol of the ruling party. In other words, the elections will appear fair but the election results will be in favour of the ruling party. Most of the western countries, which are far ahead of Bangladesh in technological advancement, have canceled the use of EVMs due to the risk of fraud.¹¹⁴ Election expert Dr. Badiul Alam Majumder observed, “Our EVMs are of low quality. It does not leave a paper audit trail. Digital forgery can be done through this machine. The results of the Chittagong City Corporation election (the Awami League-nominated mayoral candidate won this election) have proved it.”¹¹⁵ The current Election Commission’s enthusiasm for this EVM system has been noticed. On 21 May 2022, Election Commissioner Mohammad Anisur Rahman said, at a meeting in Madaripur on voter update, “There is no better machine in the world like our EVM machines”.¹¹⁶
67. On 15 June 2022, elections for five Municipalities, four Upazilas and 176 Union Parishads were held in different parts of the country, including Cumilla City Corporation, under the new Election Commission. Although the main opposition BNP and other political parties boycotted the elections, there were allegations of rigging and violence in various parts of the country and

openly for the ruling party candidates; ‘capturing’ polling centres; arrests and forcibly ousting of polling agents of the opposition party-nominated candidates; and intimidation of voters by supporters of the ruling Awami League-nominated candidates, election officials and members of law enforcement agencies, occurred. As a result, most of the people could not vote. https://www.ti-bangladesh.org/beta3/images/2019/report/EPT/EPT_EX_EN_2019.pdf

¹¹⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 9 May 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/ইতিমকে-অগ্রাধিকারে-রেখেই-ভোটের-কৌশল>

¹¹¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 9 May 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/ইতিমকে-অগ্রাধিকারে-রেখেই-ভোটের-কৌশল>

¹¹² The daily Jugantor, 9 May 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/548825/>

¹¹³ The daily Jugantor, 10 May 2022

¹¹⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 2 June 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/opinion/column/ইতিম-স্মৃতিভ্রম-রোগ-ও-ডাকাত-প্রসঙ্গ>

¹¹⁵ The daily Jugantor, 10 May 2022

¹¹⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 2 June 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/opinion/column/ইতিম-স্মৃতিভ্রম-রোগ-ও-ডাকাত-প্রসঙ্গ>

allegations of changing the election results.¹¹⁷ Voting in the elections were held through both EVMs and ballots. Voters faced harassment due to various problems faced by voting through EVM. Prior to the elections, Awami League leaders publicly spoke about various irregularities, including occupying polling stations, intimidating voters¹¹⁸, and attacks on election rallies of independent and opposition candidates.¹¹⁹ Local Awami League MP, AKM Bahauddin, was allegedly present in the area, influencing the Cumilla City Corporation polls. Despite a letter from the Election Commission instructing Bahauddin to leave the area, he remained. The Election Commission failed to take any further action in this regard.¹²⁰ After the election, the Chief Election Commissioner moved away from his previous position on this issue and denied the initiative taken by the Election Commission to make MP Bahauddin leave Cumilla during the election.¹²¹

68. Voters suffered as a result of EVM voting in the Cumilla City Corporation elections. Many voters waited for hours and then left the polling stations without voting. Most of them were women and elderly voters. There were also allegations of irregularities through EVMs. Voters at the MI High School polling center in Ward 19 of the City Corporation complained that when they went to cast their votes, they saw only the 'boat¹²²' symbol displayed on the EVM. Presiding Officer Nazmul Amin had prevented Judicial Magistrate Omar Farooq from entering the booth when he went to the center to investigate the matter. At that time the Magistrate was asked to leave the center immediately.¹²³ Independent candidate Monirul Haque Sakku was ahead of the ruling Awami League candidate Arfanul Haque in 101 polling centers when the results were announced. The announcement of the results was postponed when Arfanul Haque's supporters attacked Monirul Haque Sakku and his supporters. Sakku's chief polling agent said that when it was observed that Monirul Haque Sakku was ahead in 101 polling centers, after receiving a phone call, the Returning Officer left his seat for 45 minutes. Upon his return, the Returning Officer declared Arfanul Haque the winner.¹²⁴

¹¹⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 17 June 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/কেন্দ্রে-ঘোষিত-ফলাফল-পাল্টে-গেল-রাত্রে-নির্বাচন-কার্যালয়-ঘেরাও>

¹¹⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 1 June 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/আমার-তো-সরকারি-গুন্ডা-আছে-বৌকার-চেয়ারম্যান-প্রার্থী>

¹¹⁹ The daily Jugantor, 9 June 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/560207/>

¹²⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 14 June 2022 ; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/প্রথম-পরীক্ষাতেই-ইসির-ভূমিকা-প্রস্রবদ্ধ>

¹²¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 21 June 2022

¹²² Electoral symbol of Awami League

¹²³ The Daily Star, 15 June 2022 ; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/elections/news/evm-displays-only-boat-some-cumilla-city-voters-allege-3047941>

¹²⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 16 June 2022; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=7839>

69. Apart from the Cumilla City Corporation elections, elections in five Municipalities, four Upazilas and 176 Union Parishads were held in different parts of the country. Incidents of irregularities and violence took place in the elections. In the Arjuntala Union Parishad in Senbagh, Noakhali, women voters went to the South Gorkata Forkania Madrasa polling center after 9 pm to cast their votes.¹²⁵ Independent chairman candidate Mushfiqur Rahman in Harani UP of Noakhali District and independent chairman candidate Amirul Islam in Chandi UP boycotted the polls. They alleged that their polling agents were beaten and kicked out of the polling centers by supporters of the Awami League nominated chairman candidate. Furthermore, the polling agents of Awami League nominated chairman candidate, entered the polling booths and began pressing the boat symbol on the EVMs since the morning of the polls. Members of law enforcement agencies, including the police, were present at the time but did not take any action.¹²⁶ Supporters of the ruling Awami League nominated chairman candidate took control over different polling centers of Saral Union and Baharchhara Union in Chittagong from noon onwards and voters were forced to vote for the boat symbol in their presence. Although these irregularities took place in front of the members of law enforcement agencies inside the polling stations, they did not take any action.¹²⁷ Independent chairman candidate Mohammad Shafiqul Alam, Islami Andolon nominated chairman candidate Moslem Musulli Musa and woman Member for reserved seat candidate Masuma Akhtar Nasreen alleged at a press conference that the Presiding Officer rigged the election results and declared Awami League nominated chairman candidate Ansar Uddin Mollah as the winner in Latachapali Union Parishad under Kalapara Upazila in Patuakhali District.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 16 June 2022 ; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/নোয়াখালীতে-ইভিএমে-ধীরগতি-রাত-৯টা-পর্যন্ত-ভোটের-লাইনে-নারীরা>

¹²⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 15 June 2022;

¹²⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 15 June 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/ইভিএমে-ধীরগতি-গোপন-কক্ষে-সাহায্যকারী-পোলিং-কর্মকর্তা>

¹²⁸ The daily Jugantor, 19 June 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/563877/>



A polling officer peeping into an occupied women's polling booth at Doiara Government Primary School Centre during the Comilla City Corporation election. Photo: Prothom Alo, 15 June 2022



Two voters in the same polling booth at the Shanta Gurni Government Primary School of Panchbibi Upazila of Joypurhaat District. Prothom Alo, 15 June 2022

Prevalence of corruption and the Anti-Corruption Commission

70. Allegations of corruption¹²⁹, looting¹³⁰, tender bids and recruitment trade¹³¹, extortion¹³² and possession of huge wealth and money beyond means,¹³³ were made against the ruling party leaders-activists, pro-government supporters of various professions, and government officials and employees. Due to this, corruption has taken a terrible form in every sector in Bangladesh. Corruption has severely damaged the livelihoods of the country's people and created

¹²⁹ The daily Manabzamin, 11 May 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/city/655106/>

¹³⁰ The daily Jugantor, 6 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/538323/>

¹³¹ The daily Jugantor, 25 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/545049/>

¹³² The daily Jugantor, 28 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/546071/>

¹³³ The daily Jugantor, 5 March 2022, <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/526898/>

dangerous income inequality.¹³⁴ Although the government has promised to spend Tk 40,000 crore on vaccination activities against Covid-19, the estimated purchase price of vaccines and the estimated total expenditure for vaccine management was Tk 12,993 crore to Tk 16,721 crore. As a result, there has been a discrepancy of around Tk 23,000 crore, according to Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).¹³⁵ It has also been alleged that large portions of illegally earned money have been laundered abroad. In 2021, the amount deposited by Bangladeshis in various banks in Switzerland or Swiss Banks alone was Tk 8,276 crore, which was the highest amount of money deposited by Bangladeshi nationals in foreign banks in two decades.¹³⁶ The government has announced special benefits for one year for declaration or return of the money and assets smuggled abroad, during the budget for 2021-2022 fiscal year.¹³⁷ This opportunity has only encouraged corruption and money laundering since criminalization of such acts and justice against them remain unimplemented.

71. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) was supposed to function as an independent and neutral body.¹³⁸ In this horrible state of corruption in the country however, the ACC has become a subservient body of the incumbent government. Although the ACC has, in some cases, tried to highlight acts of corruption committed by Awami League MPs and influential politicians and bureaucrats, the results of most of these investigations do not come to light.¹³⁹ Influential people are exempted even after allegations of bribery and corruption have been submitted to the ACC against them. The Verification and Selection Committee is not taking some of these complaints into account. In many cases, investigations have found the allegations to be true, but the case investigation recommendations are not implemented. Government officials accused of corruption are even joining the ACC on deputation.¹⁴⁰

Freedom of Expression

72. The present government is continuing to violate the freedom of speech, thought, conscience and opinion of the citizens and freedom of the media. In these three months, citizens have been sued, and tortured after being detained

¹³⁴ Bangladesh Protidin, 23 May 2022; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=4026>

¹³⁵ The daily Manabzamin, 12 April 2022 ; <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=323679>

¹³⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 17 June 2022 ; <https://www.prothomalo.com/business/bank/এক-বছরে-সুইস-ব্যাংকে-বাংলাদেশিদের-অর্থ-জমা-বেড়েছে-৫৫>

¹³⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 11 June 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/business/economics/পাচার-হয়েছে-তাই-ফেরতের-চেষ্টা>

¹³⁸ According to Article 3(2) of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2004 (Amended in 2016), this commission shall be an independent and neutral institution.

¹³⁹ The daily Jugantor, 21 May 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/553129/>

¹⁴⁰ The daily Jugantor, 11 April 2022 ; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/540123/>

and arrested for expressing independent views. The gagging of freedom of expression, done through enacting laws and persecution, has affected people from all walks of life. Both online and print and electronic outlets of speech and expression are closely monitored for items and writings that are 'perceived' to be offensive or derogatory to or critical of the government or 'important' individuals.

73. On 7 June 2022, angry people vandalized a police box at Jurain in Dhaka.¹⁴¹ In this incident, the police as plaintiff filed a case, accusing three named persons and 450 unidentified people. Mizanur Rahman of Jurain, who is associated with various public interest movements, spoke to the media about the issue and wrote a Facebook status, "It can be said that two incidents will happen. One: case trade. Two: bribery trade out of fear of lawsuits." Mizanur Rahman was picked up by police of Shyampur Police Station on 9 June, for talking to the media and posting on Facebook. When police denied arresting Mizanur Rahman after he was picked up, his family members were worried about whether he had disappeared. Police tortured him physically and mentally in police custody. The police accused Mizanur Rahman of being involved in the politics of the BNP and threatened to arrest all his family members for protests against the government. Police then blindfolded and handcuffed him and sent him to the Office of the Detective Branch (DB) of Police at Mintu Road, Dhaka. He was interrogated at the DB office and then released on bond to his family on the condition that he would not act against the state and the law.¹⁴²

The Data Protection (Draft) Act, 2022

74. The government has drafted a Data Protection Act, 2022 to protect information, saying it would restrict the use of personal information for commercial purposes without consent. However due to the ambiguity of the provisions of the draft law, lack of proper definition and the absolute power of the 'Digital Security Agency' mentioned therein, it has been alleged that the draft law is repressive like the Digital Security Act, 2018. The law, if enacted, will create administrative and governmental control over information in the name of protecting personal data. The law calls for the inclusion of Digital Security Agency as regulator of personal data security. The law gives the Director General of the Digital Security Agency unlimited and unfettered powers to establish a 'data protection office' as head of the agency. Such a law

¹⁴¹ On 7 June, a man was driving on the wrong side of the road on a motorcycle with his wife and was stopped by a police sergeant. After arguing with the sergeant, members of the public attacked and vandalized the Jurain Police Box. The daily Jugantor, 7 June 2022 ; <https://www.jugantor.com/capital/559636/>

¹⁴² The daily Manabzamin, 19 June 2022; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=8289>

is at risk of violating the right to privacy, as enshrined in the ICCPR and the Constitution of Bangladesh.¹⁴³

The Digital Security Act, 2018

75. Cases continue to be filed under the Digital Security Act (DSA), 2018 against dissidents, opposition leaders and activists and ordinary citizens for writing or 'liking/sharing' posts on social media, criticising the government, leaders of the ruling party or their family members. As a result, journalists are working in fear. The journalists accused in cases filed under the DSA are being detained in jail and have been appearing in court for months. The court has framed charges against many of the so-called accused. They and their families are suffering financially and emotionally due to the complexity of the cases woven against them. On 3 May, on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day, the (newspaper) Editor's Council said in a statement that the Digital Security Act had hampered the media's ability to operate independently.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, 79 percent of journalists believe that the DSA is an obstacle to the freedom of the media.¹⁴⁵
76. In the three months of April-June 2022, 19 people have been arrested under the Digital Security Act 2018, for allegedly posting criticisms against the Prime Minister, high-ranking officials of the government, their family members, and form making anti government comments in social media, and four people were arrested for making derogatory remarks against religion or religious people.
77. On 8 June 2022, Khulna Cyber Tribunal Judge Konika Biswas framed charges against Khulna NTV correspondent Abu Tayyab Munshi and Rampal's Loksamaj correspondent AS Sabur Rana, in a case filed under the Digital Security Act by Khulna Mayor (and Khulna Metropolitan unit Awami League President) Talkudar Abdul Khaleq.¹⁴⁶
78. On 5 June 2022, police arrested a Juba Dal leader Emdadur Rahman from Companiganj Upazila in Sylhet District, on the charge of 'insulting' the Prime Minister and Awami League president Sheikh Hasina on Facebook. Ahmed Reza, President of the Telikhal Union unit Chhatra League had, on 31 May, filed a case against Emdadur Rahman with Companiganj Police Station under the Digital Security Act, 2018.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ The daily Naya Diganta, 10 May 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/more-news/662186/>

¹⁴⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 3 May 2022 ; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/ডিজিটাল-নিরাপত্তা-আইন-গণমাধ্যমের-স্বাধীনভাবে-কাজের-ক্ষেত্রে-অস্ত্রায়-সম্পাদক-পরিষদ>

¹⁴⁵ The daily Manabzamin, 11 May 2022; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=2435>

¹⁴⁶ The Jugantor, 9 June 2022 ; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/560221/>

¹⁴⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 5 June 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/প্রধানমন্ত্রিকে-কটুক্তি-ডিজিটাল-নিরাপত্তা-আইনের-মামলায়-যুবদল-নেতা-গ্রেপ্তার>

79. Shamsul Alam, a student of Jahangirnagar University, was sentenced to seven years imprisonment by Dhaka Cyber Tribunal judge Ash Sams Joglul Hossain, on 6 June 2022, in a case filed under the Digital Security Act, 2018 for making 'offensive remarks' about former President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.¹⁴⁸
80. On 7 June 2022, Fazle Elahi, Rangamati District representative of the daily Kaler Kantho and NTV, was arrested under the Digital Security Act, 2018 for publishing news against Nazneen Anwar, daughter of Firoza Begum, former Awami League MP from Rangamati.¹⁴⁹

Freedom of the media

81. Due to the legal barrier and digital surveillance, journalists in Bangladesh are currently working in an atmosphere of insecurity. Editors, publishers and journalists believe that they are being closely monitored at the national to district level, which is hampering independent journalism.¹⁵⁰ In most cases, journalists are being forced to apply self-censorship. During this reporting period, journalists were attacked by pro-government miscreants¹⁵¹ while carrying out their professional duties and threatened implication in false cases by members of law enforcement agencies.¹⁵² The current situation of the media in Bangladesh has been highlighted in a report by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), in a report published on the World Press Freedom Day 2022, where RSF said that Bangladesh has fallen 10 steps lower in the World Press Freedom Index compared to last year. Bangladesh ranks 162nd out of 180 countries in the index with a score of 36.63.¹⁵³
82. Despite the low ranking in the WPF Index, the government is amending the Press Council Act to further harm journalists. On 20 June 2022, the Cabinet gave its approval to the draft Press Council (Amendment) Act, 2022. Earlier, the Press Council could only reprimand journalists for their offenses under the Press Council Act. However, as a result of the new amendment, the provision of monetary penalty has been added.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 6 June 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/বঙ্গবন্ধু-ও-প্রধানমন্ত্রিকে-নিষে-আপত্তিকর-মন্তব্য-জারি-ছাত্রের-সাত-বছরের-কারণ>

¹⁴⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 7 June 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/রাঙামাটিতে-ডিজিটাল-নিরাপত্তা-আইনের-মামলায়-সাংবাদিক-গ্রেপ্তার>

¹⁵⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 15 May 2022

¹⁵¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 15 April 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/capital/ছাত্রলীগ-নেতাকে-নিষে-ইতিবাচক-সংবাদ-না-করায়-চারিতে-সাংবাদিককে-মারধরের-অভিযোগ>

¹⁵² The daily Manabzamin, 4 April 2022 ; <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=322506>

¹⁵³ The daily Prothom Alo, 4 May 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/সংবাদমাধ্যমের-স্বাধীনতা-সূচকে-১০-ধাপ-পেছল-বাংলাদেশ>

¹⁵⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 21 June 2022 ; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/অর্থদণ্ডের-বিধান-রেখে-প্রেস-কাউন্সিল-আইনের-খসড়া-নিষে-বিএফইউজের-উদ্বেগ>

83. Between April and June 2022, 02 journalists were killed, 30 were injured, 06 were assaulted, 05 were attacked, 02 were arrested and 07 were threatened while carrying out their professional duty.
84. On 23 May 2022, Moin Uddin Manzur, president of the Sylhet Branch of the Electronics Media Journalists Association, was attacked and seriously injured by a group of youths during a chase between Chhatra League and Chhatra Dal in Sylhet.¹⁵⁵

Persecution of Linguistic (Urdu-Speaking) Minority

85. On 10 June 2022, during Friday prayers at Adamji Jame Mosque, the imam of the mosque called on Muslims to protest against the insulting of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in India. Sub Inspector (SI) Azizul Haque of Siddirganj Police Station, who was at the mosque, said the matter would be looked into by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and requested people not to create any disturbance. SI Azizul was attacked inside the mosque for saying this. In this incident, the police filed a case with Siddirganj Police Station naming 50 people and 125 unnamed as accused. After that, the police raided the 'Bihari Camp' (residences) of the Urdu-speaking minority community from midnight on 12 June to dawn on 13 June, and arrested 32 people, and took them to the police station. In protest of this incident, on 13 June, when the relatives of the arrestees gathered in front of the police station, members of the police and RAB baton charged them, threw tear gas shells and fired blank shots. At least 15 protesters were injured in this incident.¹⁵⁶

Violence against Women

86. Violence against women is all too common an occurrence in Bangladesh. In the three months from April-June 2022, women and girls were subjected to various forms of violence. It is alleged that leaders and activists of the ruling party and members of law enforcement agencies have been involved in various acts of oppression and violence against women.

Rape

87. During this period, children, adolescents, women with disabilities, brides and pregnant women have been subjected to rape and gang-rape. Women and child victims of rape have also been killed¹⁵⁷ and women have committed suicide¹⁵⁸ as a result of rape. In the last three months, reports show that the leaders and activists of the ruling party have committed rape and that ruling

¹⁵⁵ The daily Jugantor, 23 May 2022 ; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/554196/>

¹⁵⁶ The daily Jugantor, 14 June 2022 ; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/562015/>

¹⁵⁷ The daily Jugantor, 7 June 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/559401/>

¹⁵⁸ The daily Jugantor, 2 June 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/557537/>

party leaders and activists have saved the rapist before the people handed him over to the police.¹⁵⁹ During this reporting period, there were also allegations of rape against the police. A 15-year-old female rape survivor from Nilphamari, came before a bench comprising of Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim and Justice Shahed Nuruddin at the High Court Division of the Supreme Court and prayed for the justice that she had not received in the lower court. The girl told the court that she was raped by a member of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), but the lower court acquitted the rapist. The superior court ordered that action be taken in this regard.¹⁶⁰

88. On 15 May 2022, a student of BL College in Khulna was raped by Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) Inspector, Manjurul Ahsan Masud.¹⁶¹

89. On 22 April 2022, an 'under-17' female footballer was raped by Chhatra League leader Wahidul Alam Fakir Faisal and two of his associates in Nandail under Mymensingh District. The victim, on 23 April, lodged a rape case with Nandail Police Station against Wahidul Alam Fakir Faisal and his two accomplices, but the police accepted the case on 25 April as an 'attempted' rape. Later, the police were forced to record a rape case under pressure by locals. Police arrested Wahidul Alam Fakir Faisal.¹⁶²

Stalking/sexual harassment

90. Between April and June 2022, acts of stalking and sexual harassment of women have increased tremendously. Reviewing these incidents, it is seen that it is common for girls to be stalked on the way to and from school and tuition classes and when they are in public spaces such as educational institutions, entertainment centers and market places. In addition, it is common for female students studying in higher education institutions and working women to be subjected to sexual harassment on public transport and in public places.

91. On 6 April 2022, a student in Kishoreganj was dragged out of school and beaten by miscreants as she did not respond to a love proposal.¹⁶³ There have also been allegations of sexual harassment of patients by doctors¹⁶⁴, students by teachers in schools¹⁶⁵, colleges¹⁶⁶ and universities¹⁶⁷, pedestrians by

¹⁵⁹ The daily Jugantor, 21 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/543905/>

¹⁶⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 16 June 2022 <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/i-now-ask-you-justice-3048436>

¹⁶¹ The daily Jugantor, 16 May 2022 <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/551434/>

¹⁶² Information sent by local human rights defender associated with Odhikar, from Mymensingh; the daily Manabzamin, 28 April 2022 ; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=959>

¹⁶³ The daily Naya Diganta, 6 April 2022 ; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/dhaka/655472/>

¹⁶⁴ The daily Jugantor, 13 April 2022 ; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/541134>

¹⁶⁵ The daily Naya Diganta, 10 April 2022 ; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/more-news/656253/>

police¹⁶⁸ and by a senior government official¹⁶⁹. A woman has been subjected to horrific violence over her refusal to accept an indecent proposal¹⁷⁰, and family members have also been attacked for protesting against sexual harassment.¹⁷¹ Females have committed suicide as a result of sexual harassment.¹⁷²

Dowry-related violence

92. During this reporting period, due to dowry demands there have been incidents of suicide. To add to the inhumanity, several victims of the killings and violence were pregnant.¹⁷³
93. On 4 April 2022, a housewife named Mariam Akhter committed suicide by setting herself on fire as she could not bear the violence over non-payment of dowry in Munshiganj Sadar Upazila.¹⁷⁴
94. On 12 June 2022, a housewife named Moni Akhter was killed by her husband Shah Paran and his family members for not paying dowry in Burichang Upazila under Cumilla District.¹⁷⁵

Acid violence

95. Incidents of acid violence continue due to the lack of proper implementation of the Acid Control Act, 2002 and the Acid Crime Prevention Act, 2002. The victims are being deprived from justice as the cases remain pending for years.
96. Rozina Begum, a housewife who was burnt with acid and fire by her husband, died on 3 April 2022, while undergoing treatment at the hospital. Rozina's husband Zahirul Islam threw acid on her on 27 March because she did not give him money for his drug addiction, in Siddhirganj Upazila under Narayanganj District.¹⁷⁶
97. In the night of 9 June 2022, a housewife named Sharufa Begum (35) went to fetch water from a tube well in Doarabazar under Sunamganj District when an unidentified miscreant threw acid on her.¹⁷⁷

¹⁶⁶ The daily Jugantor, 11 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/bangla-face/540243>

¹⁶⁷ The daily Jugantor, 14 April 2022; <https://www.jugantor.com/national/541471>

¹⁶⁸ The daily Manabzamin, 19 April 2022 ; <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=324690&cat=1>

¹⁶⁹ The daily Manabzamin, 10 April 2022; <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=323347&cat=2>

¹⁷⁰ The daily Manabzamin, 26 April 2022; <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=325499>

¹⁷¹ The daily Jugantor, 6 May 2022 ; <https://www.jugantor.com/capital/548035/>

¹⁷² The daily Jugantor, 10 April 2022 ; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/bangla-face/539845/>

¹⁷³ The daily Jugantor, 17 April 2022 ; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/542064/>

¹⁷⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 9 April 2022 ; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/মুন্সিগঞ্জে-যৌতুকের-জন্য-নির্যাতনের-অভিযোগ-গায়ে-আগুন-দিয়ে-গৃহবধূর-মৃত্যু>

¹⁷⁵ The daily Jugantor, 14 June 2022 ; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/bangla-face/562113/>

¹⁷⁶ The daily Manabzamin, 4 April 2022 ; <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=322448>

¹⁷⁷ The daily Jugantor, 11 June 2022 ; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/560961/>

Cross-Border Human Rights Violations

98. During the three months between April and June 2022, the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) continued to harass and torture Bangladeshi nationals along the Bangladesh-India border. During this period, the BSF arrested and took farmers, violating international law, from inside Bangladesh while they were working on their own land. Furthermore, BSF have obstructed the construction of roads in the border areas of Bangladesh.¹⁷⁸ Along with the BSF, Indian nationals have also killed Bangladeshi nationals at the border.¹⁷⁹
99. **From April to June 2022, 02 persons were injured by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF). Among them, 01 Bangladeshi national was injured by firing and 01 was injured by stun grenade blast.**
100. On 12 April 2022, a Bangladeshi farmer named Mamun (36) was spraying pesticide on his land at Porsha border in Naogaon District when he was abducted by members of the BSF's 159 Kedarapara camp.¹⁸⁰
101. On 28 April 2022, BSF members shot, wounded and took away a Bangladeshi citizen Nazrul Ahmed alias Sefur Mia, from Juri border in Moulvibazar District.¹⁸¹

Human Rights of the Rohingya Population

102. Most of the able-bodied adult Rohingya men and women living in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar are passing a despondent life, depending on relief, due to the lack of legal livelihood opportunities. They are frustrated by the lack of progress of their repatriation to Myanmar. Rohingya men and women are fleeing the camps to different parts of the country and risking their lives by trying to go abroad by sea.¹⁸² Rohingya women have been raped while secretly leaving the refugee camps. On 13 April, a Rohingya girl was raped by two local youths named Kamal and Monir while she was secretly leaving Bhasanchar shelter in Subarnachar under Noakhali District.¹⁸³ Police detained 136 Rohingyas from Ukhia camp on 4 April and 50 from Teknaf, and 80 refugees from Ukhia on 5 April while they were fleeing the camps secretly.¹⁸⁴
103. The human rights organisation Fortify Rights has made allegations of various forms of repression, including torture, by police on Rohingya refugees. Fortify

¹⁷⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 15 April 2022 ; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/ফুলবাড়ী-সীমান্তে-বিএসএফের-আপত্তিতে-সড়ক-নির্মাণকাজ-বন্ধ>

¹⁷⁹ The daily Prothom Alo 28 May 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/ভারতীয়-সীমান্তে-পড়ে-ছিল-বাংলাদেশি-যুবকের-লাশ>

¹⁸⁰ The daily Naya Diganta, 12 April 2022 ; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/rajshahi/656749/>

¹⁸¹ The daily Jugantor, 30 April 2022 ; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/bangla-face/546780/>

¹⁸² The daily Jugantor, 20 May 2022 ; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/552863/>

¹⁸³ The daily Naya Diganta, 14 April 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/chattagram/657222/>

¹⁸⁴ The daily Jugantor, 10 April 2022 ; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/539787/>

Rights condemned the imposition of restrictions on the movement of Rohingya refugees in their camps during the Eid-ul-Fitr holiday in May 2022. The government also acknowledged that a group of 450 Rohingyas was temporarily detained during Eid-ul-Fitr on 4 and 5 May, for the security of tourists. In April-May, Rohingya refugees, including children, were subjected to various forms of harassment, including police torture, Fortify Rights said in a statement.¹⁸⁵

104. A situation has also been created for Rohingya refugees to migrate from India to Bangladesh. Rohingya refugees who fled Myanmar in 2012 later migrated to India from Bangladesh. But in recent times, the Indian government arrested and tortured Rohingyas and sent them to jail, which resulted in them returning to Bangladesh. On 4 May 2022, police arrested 453 Rohingya refugees from different areas, including Cox's Bazar beach.¹⁸⁶ A significant number of these refugees have reportedly fled from India.¹⁸⁷



On 4 May 2022 police detained 453 Rohingyas from different places in Cox's bazar including it's sea beach. It is to be reported that most of them fled from India. Prothom Alo, 11 May 2022

¹⁸⁵ Bangladesh: Investigate Refugee-beatings by Police, Lift Restrictions on Movement, Fortify Rights, 26 May 2022; <https://www.fortifyrights.org/bgd-inv-2022-05-26/>

¹⁸⁶ The daily Naya Diganta, 19 May 2022; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/miscellaneous/664356/>

¹⁸⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 11 May 2022 ; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/ভারত-থেকে-পালিয়ে-আসছে-রোহিঙ্গারা-কক্সবাজারে-ক্যাম্পে-ঠাই-৮০০-জনের>

Recommendations

1. Immediate steps must be taken to establish democracy in Bangladesh by forming an accountable government through free, fair and participatory elections under a neutral interim government and initiatives should be taken to prevent and put a check on human rights violations by reconstructing the dysfunctional institutions into effective, independent ones. To prevent fraudulence, the use of the Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) must be stopped in elections.
2. The UN Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) must adopt a new mandate on Bangladesh to collect evidence of gross human rights violations.
3. The government must refrain from repressive and unconstitutional activities. The right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association must be restored. The government should stop filing cases against 'unidentified persons'. Harassment and arrest of opposition leaders-activists and dissidents must stop. All political prisoners, including protesters arrested during various movements in Bangladesh, and prisoners of conscience, must be released immediately.
4. The current government's interference with constitutional and state institutions must stop. All political malpractice and violence must cease. Rule of law must be restored under an independent Judiciary and justice system.
5. Members of the law enforcement and intelligence agencies who are involved in extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, must be brought to justice under the country's criminal laws. They must not face mere 'departmental actions'. They have committed heinous crimes and must be tried accordingly.
6. The Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013 should be implemented properly and the directions of the High Court and the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, in the case of [BLAST and Others vs. Bangladesh and Others \(2003\)](#) should be followed to stop torture in remand. The government must ratify the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture. Investigation must be thorough and impartial.
7. Disappeared persons must be returned to their families. The government must accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and a domestic law must be enacted criminalising enforced disappearance.
8. Legal action must be taken by investigating allegations of irregularities, negligence and corruption against prison officials and all human rights violations, including torture and ill-treatment of prisoners must stop. Those involved in such criminal offenses should be punished under the current criminal laws of the land.
9. The government must stop interference with the media and respect freedom of expression. All cases filed against human rights defenders, including journalists, should be withdrawn and the violators must be brought to justice

subject to a proper investigation. The targeted ban on some print and electronic media must be removed.

10. All repressive and abusive laws, including the Special Powers Act, 1974, the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006, Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009 and the Digital Security Act, 2018 should be repealed immediately.
11. In order to stop violence against women and children, the perpetrators must be brought to justice under prevalent laws. Informal mediations and arbitrations of perpetrators of violence against women, including rapists, should be stopped and the police should properly investigate and arrest the accused and bring them to justice. Section 10 of the Suppression of Repression against Women and Children Act 2000 (amended 2003, 2011) must be amended to include the full and proper definition of 'sexual harassment' and 'stalking' as provided by the High Court Division in the decision of BNWLA and Others Vs. Bangladesh (2010).
12. The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) must stop the perpetration of all human rights violations, including the killing and torturing of Bangladeshi citizens along the border areas, and compensate the victims. India must abide by the border-related Agreements and Memorandum of Understanding signed between the two countries. India's domination and aggressive behaviour towards Bangladesh must cease.
13. Arrangements must be made for the repatriation of the Rohingya population by establishing their full civil and political rights. The Myanmar military and others responsible for the genocide against the Rohingya population must be brought to justice by expediting the ongoing trial at the International Criminal Court.
14. The ongoing state repression, intelligence surveillance and harassment on human rights organisations and human rights defenders must cease. The case filed against Odhikar's Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan and its Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan under the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (amended in 2009) must be withdrawn. The NGO Affairs Bureau must renew Odhikar's registration.
- 15.

Email: Odhikar.bd@gmail.com, Odhikar.documentation@gmail.com

Website: www.Odhikar.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Odhikar.HumanRights>

Twitter: @odhikar_bd

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 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.