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Human Rights Monitoring Report

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Clashes between Bangali settlers and members of the ethnic minority communities at Rangamati and Khagrachori;
Political violence continues: Two students killed during clashes at Dhaka and Rajshahi Universities;
BDR mutiny trials begin at Panchagar, Thakurgaon and Dhaka. Trial at Rangamati continues;
The Government refuses to extend Odhikar's Torture Prevention Project;
Attacks on journalists;
21 die in Sweater factory fire at Gazipur;
Violence against women continues

Odhikar is concerned with civil, political, social and cultural rights and as part of its work agenda, has been observing the human rights situation in Bangladesh. In line with this campaign, an account of the human rights situation of Bangladesh covering the period of February 2010 is presented below.

Clashes between Bangali settlers and members of the ethnic minority communities at Rangamati and Khagrachori

1. On February 20, 2010, there was a physical altercation between some people belonging to the ethnic minority community from the villages of Gongaram and Betchori of Baghaichori, Rangamati and the local Bangali settlers. The clash had stemmed from previous unresolved issues. About 200 houses were torched during the clash. Both groups have claimed 14 people to be missing, but so far the bodies of two persons have been found.¹
2. Again on 23 February 2010, another physical altercation took place between the members of the ethnic minority community and local Bangali settlers at the Khagrachori Municipality area under Khagrachori district. About 66 houses were burnt down and 50 people were injured during this altercation. One Bangali employee of Khagrachori Municipality was killed during this period.² Curfew has been imposed for two nights and Section 144³ under the Code of Criminal Procedure was imposed for six consecutive days by the district administration to control the situation.⁴
3. Odhikar expresses strong dissatisfaction over the violence in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the clashes between the people of the ethnic minority community and the Bangali settlers. It also deeply regrets the torching and looting that went on due to the rift that had accumulated over the land

¹ The Daily Ittefaq, 22/02/2010

² The Daily Star, 24/02/2010

³ Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure deals with power to issue temporary orders in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger

⁴ The Dially Jugantor, 26/02/2010

- issue which resulted from the discrimination of the State and lack of political will. Odhikar demands that a Judicial Enquiry Commission be formed to carry out fair investigations into the incidents.
4. Odhikar notes with concern that the apathetic attitude of the Government, provocative statements of various political parties and direct involvement of the Army in the clashes have caused the situation at the Hill Tracts to take a violent turn. The lives of all the people belonging to the ethnic minority community have been pushed into uncertainty after severe violations of human rights, which involved torture and torching of houses, both direct and indirect instigated by various groups. The residents of the Hill Tracts are now spending their days in great fear and tension and utter helplessness. The failure of the Government to provide a principled direction to end the violence along with the failure of the law enforcement agencies to curb the violence and restore peace have left the possibility that the distance created between the ethnic minority communities and the Bangali settlers may lead to a longstanding rift.
 5. Odhikar strongly believes that all land-related disputes are to be resolved by the Land Commission through identifying the illegally encroached-upon lands. Odhikar also believes that the issues concerning the ethnic minority communities are both intricately related to the ownership of land as well as the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The people of the ethnic minority communities of Bangladesh are gradually losing their hold over their property because the Bangladesh Constitution does not guarantee collective property rights of the ethnic minority communities. The absence of any recognition to the right to self-determination of the ethnic minority people in the Bangladesh Constitution leaves no scope for this community to ventilate their anger concerning political or other issues. Furthermore, the Peace Accord was signed without paying attention to these two important issues. Therefore, enmity and violence still prevail in those areas where ethnic minority communities live side by side with Bangali settlers. The communal rift between the two only add fuel to the fire. Unless the issues of land ownership and self-determination are resolved the communal rift in the Hill Tracts may contribute to the destabilising of the country.
 6. Odhikar urges the government to take effective steps in order to ensure human rights of all the people living in the Hill Tracks. Odhikar believes that an immediate effective settlement of the issues relating to land ownership and self-determination are needed to curb this long-lasting problem.

Political violence continues: Two students killed during clashes at Dhaka and Rajshahi Universities

7. A student named Abu Bakar was killed in clashes between two groups of the Awami League-backed Chattra League⁵ at the Dhaka University on February 1, 2010. The clash took place between Chattra League's A F Rahman Hall⁶ Unit President Saiduzzaman Faruk and its General Secretary Mehedi Hasan, over establishing supremacy in the political landscape of the University. Both groups attacked each other with long knives, butcher knives, canes and hockey sticks. During the clash Abu Bakar was severely injured in front of his

⁵ Student wing of Bangladesh Awami League

⁶ Male students' hall of residence

- room on the third floor of A F Rahman Hall. He died in Dhaka Medical College Hospital on February 3, 2010.⁷
8. On February 4, 2010, Home Minister Sahara Khatun at a joint meeting of three Ministries, held at the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs said, "This is a stray incident. It is no big deal. Such things happen."⁸ Odhikar believes that such statement of the Home Minister will inspire criminals to carry out acts of violence and may lead to further killings in the campuses, disrupting the higher education of the vast number of students who are not involved in violent politics.
 9. On February 8, 2010, the Islami Chattra Shibir⁹ of Rajshahi University unit attacked and killed one member of the Awami League-backed Chattra League and injured many others, including policemen. The Islami Chattra Shibir was trying to establish its dominance over the halls of residence at Rajshahi University. This attack led to the demise of Faruk Hossain a fourth year student of the Department of Mathematics and an activist of the Awami League-backed Chattra League. Firoy Mahmud and Saidur Rahman, fourth year students of the departments of Management and Bangla respectively had their tendons cut and were shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital from Rajshahi. The other injured persons have been receiving treatment at the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital and in other various private clinics.
 10. Odhikar condemns the ongoing political violence inside the campuses. It also demands that the guilty parties be arrested and brought before justice.
 11. According to information gathered by Odhikar, 23 were allegedly killed and 1697 were injured in political violence in the month of February. There were also 54 incidents of internal violence of the Awami League and 08 incidents of the BNP so far recorded. In addition to this, 02 people were killed and 685 injured in Awami Leagues internal conflict while 52 people were injured in the BNP initiated violence.

BDR mutiny trials begin at Panchagar, Thakurgaon and Dhaka

12. After its commencement at Rangamati, Feni and Satkhira, the BDR mutiny trials began at Panchagar and Thakurgaon on 3 and 4 February 2010 and at Dhaka on 23 February, 2010. A three-member bench has been formed as per the BDR law. Major General Moinul Islam, Director General of the BDR chairs every panel as judicial head.
13. Human rights defenders of Odhikar from Thakurgaon have informed that on the first day of the trial of the accused BDR members belonging to the 20 Rifles Battalion, 39 new BDR Jawans¹⁰ were accused. As per the direction of the Court, the Police immediately arrested the newly accused from the BDR Battalion Headquarters and sent them to prison. Meanwhile, charges were framed against 12 out of 25 BDR members. Charges have been framed against 51 persons so far after showing them as arrested.
14. On the first day of the proceedings, the plaintiff of the case DAD¹¹ Nurul Islam Fakir, submitted allegations against 51 rebel BDR members under the

⁷ The Daily Prothom Alo, 04/02/2010

⁸ The Daily Prothom Alo, 05/02/2010

⁹ Student wing of Jamat-e-Islami

¹⁰ Jawans: Soldiers

¹¹ Deputy Assistant Director

BDR law. After taking cognizance of the allegations, the Court directed 12 out of the 25 BDR members, who were arrested earlier and detained in Thakurgaon District Jail, to be shown arrested under the present case. The Court also directed the remaining 39 BDR members under safe custody to be arrested and sent to jail. With regard to these persons, the Prosecutor of the case and Commander of 20 Rifles Battalion Lt. Colonel Mahfuz Alam said that 13 persons out of the 25 who were not accused of anything, would be brought under the departmental regulations.

15. On the second day of the trial, February 4, 2010, 51 accused and arrested BDR members were brought before the 'Special Court-2'. The hearing of the framing of charges was also held on that day. Lt. Colonel Mahfuz Alam, Commander of the 20 Rifles Battalion and the Prosecutor of the case gave a description of the situation prevailing at the BDR camp on February 26, 2009. He also informed that the legal counsel nominated by the accused would have the opportunity to defend their clients following the stages involving initial examination of the accused. The DG¹² also directed summaries of the account, given by the witnesses, to be delivered to the accused. The Court stated further that the legal counsel nominated by the accused would be unable to cross-examine the witnesses. Rather the responsibility of cross-examining the witnesses would rest on the accused themselves.
16. It was learnt from the Thakurgaon jail authorities that the families of the 39 arrested BDR members did not know about their arrest. As a result, no one came to see them at the jail gate after their arrival.
17. At the press briefing held by the Government Prosecutor and Commander of 20 Rifles Battalion, Lt. Colonel Mahfuz Alam, that followed the completion of the 2nd day of trial, the journalists asked as to why DAD Nurul Islam Fakir was the plaintiff of the case instead of being an accused, as he was seen openly leading the mutiny. Lt. Colonel Mahfuz had no answer to that.
18. From the information gathered by the human rights defenders of Odhikar from Panchagar, it was learnt that on February 3, 2010, the plaintiff of the case Subedar Major Aminul Huq read out the allegations against 29 BDR members which included 21 members who had been previously arrested and also 8 new members who were involved in the mutiny at the Panchagar 25 Rifles Battalion on February 26, 2009. He alleged that the accused BDR members had violated discipline under Section 10(1) of the BDR Ordinance of 1972. Later on the Court directed that the 21 BDR members detained in the Panchagar District Jail along with new 8 BDR members on duty at the 25 Rifles Battalion be shown arrested in this case and that they be sent to jail.
19. At 11.00 am on February 2, 2009, Operations Officer of the BDR, Major Md. Hasibul Hossain Nabi told the local journalists that the family members of the accused BDR members would be allowed to be present during the Court proceedings to observe the judicial operations. Apart from senior Officers of the BDR, no one knew whether the accused would be brought before the Court on the first day of the trial. However, the relatives of the BDR members arrested on May 11, 2009, arrived at Panchagar before the trials began. They spent the night in various hotels across the district and sat in front of the 25 Rifles Battalion Headquarters as morning broke out with the

¹² Director General of BDR

- hope of seeing their relatives. The BDR authorities, however, did not allow the relatives to enter the battalion headquarters or the Special Court.
20. Tahmina Chowdhury, wife of Lance Nayek Medical Assistant Abu Md. Nazer Chowdhury, had come to see her husband from Comilla. She said, "I have been trying to maintain my family on half the salary of my husband. My husband is not guilty."
 21. The human rights defenders of Odhikar in Dhaka informed that the trial of the Peelkhana mutiny is underway at the Durbar Hall of BDR Headquarters at Peelkhana, where much of the violence took place. The Subedar-in-Charge Md. Shah Alam, who is also the plaintiff of the case read out the allegations brought against the accused. A total of 86 Jawans have been accused in this case. Among them, two are absconding and 19 are in jail after being arrested under murder cases.

The trial of the BDR mutiny at Rangamati continues

22. It was learnt from the information provided by the human rights defenders of Odhikar at Rangamati that the judicial proceedings started in the Special Court-4 established at the BDR Sector Headquarters of Rangamati at 2.00 pm on February 14, 2010. Major General Moinul Islam, Director General of the BDR chaired the proceedings. He was assisted by Deputy Attorney General Md. Sohrawardy, Lt. Colonel Abdur Rouf and Major Golam Mostafa Al Mamun.
23. At the beginning of the trial when the accused were directed by the Court to present their arguments, the accused read out their written statements. They claimed in their statements that the allegations brought against them were absolutely false and baseless. According to them, DAD Riazuddin Ahmed, the plaintiff of the case, brought false allegations against them based on personal grudge and enmity. After presenting their written statements, the accused BDR members submitted them before the Court.
24. Faruk Ahmmed and Jahedul Islam, the two brothers of Sepoy Abul Kalam Azad, who had come to see the proceedings of the Court stated to Odhikar, "We want proper justice. After hearing the statement of our brother he cannot be termed a criminal on any ground. He is totally innocent and is a victim of a conspiracy."

The Government refuses to extend Odhikar's Torture Prevention Project

25. The Government has refused the application for extension of Odhikars' EU OPCAT project for training and raising awareness on prevention of torture. On April 28, 2009, the NGO Affairs Bureau under the Office of the Prime Minister gave approval to Odhikar to carry out programmes relating to the prevention of torture as well as the protection of human rights under the project titled, 'Human Rights Defenders Training and Advocacy Program in Bangladesh'.
26. After receiving the approval, Odhikar carried out various advocacy programmes which involved prevention of human rights violations, how victims of torture could be assisted and how human rights defenders could be trained in this regard, raising awareness against torture, campaigns to make torture a punishable offence and enacting an appropriate law and the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture. Odhikar had also organised advocacy workshops and rallies at Satkhira,

- Jessore, Kushtia, Sirajganj, Rajshahi and Tangail under this programme. The local MPs, District Administrators, Police Superintendents, representatives of various political parties, representatives of the Local Government, media, human rights activists and victims of torture participated in the events.
27. On June 27, 2009, under the project, Odhikar organised a Tribunal against Torture and a roundtable discussion on the incidents of torture that took place during the State of Emergency to commemorate the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. On August 31, 2009, Odhikar received a letter dated August 17, 2009, from the NGO Affairs Bureau ordering it to shut down its torture prevention programmes. The letter was signed and stamped by the NGO Affairs Bureau authority and stated that the project has been cancelled because of objections expressed by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
 28. Odhikar filed a writ petition at the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh challenging the cancellation of the project. The High Court Division of the Supreme Court issued a rule against the government on 11 October 2009 and at the same time stayed the impugned order of the NGO Affairs Bureau and accordingly works under the project resumed. Odhikar continued to function under this project till 31 December 2009, highlighting cases of torture and ill treatment by law enforcement agencies.
 29. After the completion date of the OP-CAT project arrived, it was extended for three more months. Receiving the EU approval for extension of the OP-CAT project up to the end of March, 2010, RCT, Denmark requested its partner, Odhikar, to extend the project up to March 2010. As part of the renewal process, Odhikar submitted the project again on January 17, 2010 to the NGO Affairs Bureau, along with the project budget and prescribed government forms for three month extension (from January-March 2010).
 30. On February 11, 2010, the NGO Affairs Bureau again refused to give permission for the extension of the said project, on the basis of the previous objection from the Ministry of Home Affairs. The letter was signed by Md. Enamul Huq, Assignment Officer, NGO Affairs Bureau, Office of the Prime Minister, Government of Bangladesh.
 31. Despite the fact that the Government has publicly declared a 'zero tolerance to torture', it is doing nothing to prevent torture and the impunity of the law enforcement agencies, let alone join the fight against human rights abuse. By ignoring the incidents of torture, the Government is encouraging such activities.
 32. Odhikar believes that it has earned the wrath of the Government because Odhikar has continuously been vocal against all forms of torture and extra-judicial killings. The decision of the Government demonstrates its lack of willingness to stop torture and extra-judicial killings.

Attacks on journalists

33. The supporters of the Awami League-backed Chattra League have physically assaulted Odhikar's human rights defender Arafatuzzaman Babu, who is also Munshiganj District representative of the newspaper the Daily Shokaler Khabor. Recently the conventions of four units of the Chattra League were suspended due to internal clashes between the Munshiganj unit of Awami League. On February 2, 2010 when Arafatuzzaman Babu went to gather

- information on the suspension of the convention from Md. Mohiuddin, President of the Munshiganj District Awami League at his residence, the Publicity Secretary of the District Chattra League Forhad Hossain Gofur and his cohorts snatched away Babu's mobile phone, identity card and the keys of his motorbike. They locked him up in a room and physically assaulted him. Babu was admitted to the Munshiganj General Hospital for treatment.
34. On February 11, 2010, the acting Editor of the Daily Amar Desh, Mahmudur Rahman, was attacked by unknown criminals. When Mahmudur Rahman was on his way home from work, a group of criminals attacked his car at the Tejgaon area. The attack left the car windows broken.
 35. On February 11, 2010, the Rajshahi University Chattra League unit brought out a procession in protest of the killing of its member Faruk and gathered in front of the University library. The Chattra League members beat up Mosaddek Ali, a 3rd year student of the Department of Islamic History and Culture, who was present at the scene. He was punched and was hit with bamboo sticks. Journalists have also been assaulted by the Awami League-backed Chattra League activists when they went to collect information and to take photos of this incident. Their cameras were also broken. Azhar Uddin and Shoumitro Majumdar, photo-journalists of the Daily Prothom Alo and the New Age were severely injured.
 36. On February 14, 2010, the activists of Awami League-backed Chattra League beat up two journalists in the presence of the police. The journalists were attacked when they tried to take photos of the fact that the Chattra League had closed down the admissions process of the Kushtia Government College. Touhadi Hasan, Kushtia district representative of the Daily Prothom Alo and Sharif Biswash, representative of Desh TV were admitted to the Kushtia General Hospital for treatment.
 37. On February 23, 2010, Khalilur Rahman Sumon, human rights defender of Odhikar and a staff reporter of the local Daily Probaho, was stabbed and severely wounded by a group of criminals. It was learnt that Sumon was returning home from his office at around 11 PM. When he reached the front of the Bangobashi School at Khalishpur in the city, two unidentified persons grabbed him. Afterward 7/8 persons joined them and blindfolded and stabbed Sumon onto his shoulder, chest and belly with sharp weapons. He was admitted to the Khulna Medical College Hospital with severe injuries.
 38. On February 25, the Editor of New Age, Nurul Kabir received threats from a caller claiming to be 'Mamun' who threatened him and his family of dire consequences if he continued to write and speak against 'terrorism of various sorts'.
 39. Odhikar condemns the incidents of journalists and other human rights defenders being assaulted and threatened by criminals while performing their professional duties.
 40. Odhikar demands that the criminals be arrested immediately and brought to justice.
 41. In the month of February, 14 journalists were injured, 08 threatened and 08 assaulted, 02 were attacked and a case has been filed against 01 journalist.

Extra-judicial killings

42. During the month of February 2010, 12 people have reportedly been killed extra-judicially. It has been further alleged that of these people, 07 were

killed by RAB¹³ and 03 by the Police and 02 by RAB-Police joint operation. Of these casualties, 02 died while they were in custody of the law enforcement agencies.

Types of death

Crossfire/encounter/gun fight:

43. It has been alleged that of these extrajudicial killings, 10 out of 12 deceased were killed in 'crossfire/encounters/gun fights'¹⁴. Among them, 06 were killed by RAB, 02 by Police and 02 by RAB-Police joint operation.

Deaths due to torture

44. It has been alleged that out of the 12 deceased, 01 was tortured to death by Police and 01 by RAB.

Identities of the deceased

45. Of the 12 deceased, 02 belonged to the Purbo Banglar Communist Party (Red Flag), 01 belonging to the Islami Chattra Shibir, 01 was an employee of the Apollo Hospital, Dhaka, 01 youth, 06 were alleged criminals and 01 was alleged robber.

Death in jail custody

46. It has been found that 06 people died while in jail custody due to illness during the month of February. Among them, 01 allegedly committed suicide.

Human rights violations at the Bangladesh-India border

47. On February 14, 2010, Border Security Force of India (BSF) abducted Nayek Mujibur Rahman of Bangladesh Rifles after injuring him with bullets from Dibir Haor area under Nijpat Union of Jaintapur Upazila under Sylhat District of Bangladesh. Nayek Mujibur Rahman was handed over after the flag meeting at Tamabil frontier on February 17, 2010. Again on February 26 and 28, 2010, the BSF fired at the Bangladeshi people at the same border area.

48. As per the information gathered by Odhikar, during the month of February 2010, there have been numerous incidents of human rights violations at the border by the Indian BSF. During this time, 05 persons were killed and 06 were injured by the BSF.

49. Odhikar notes with concern that despite the fact that human rights organisations have been persistently raising the issue of rights violations at the borders, no steps are being taken to stop such incidents. Neither the families of the affected persons are being compensated in any way.

21 died when sweater factory catches fire at Gazipur

50. On February 25, 2010, at least 21 garment workers, including 15 women, died from smoke inhalation when fire broke out at a sweater factory at

¹³ Rapid Action Battalion

¹⁴ Reports in the press have increasingly used more than one of the terms "crossfire", "encounter", "gunfight" and "shootout" in one article to describe the same incident. It is, therefore, no longer possible for Odhikar to determine which of these descriptions best describes an incident of extra-judicial killing. Odhikar has, therefore, grouped these incidents together.

Bhogra in Gazipur. At around 9:10pm, the first floor of Garib & Garib Sweater Factory caught fire. It has been reported that collapsible gates at all the floors of the factory were closed when fire broke out. As a result, workers working at the 7th floor could not come out.¹⁵ According to the fire brigade sources, the panicked workers tried to escape the fire by rushing towards the upper floors of the factory building and a number of them died of smoke inhalation there. Fire fighters could not say for sure what caused the fire but they mentioned that an electric short circuit could be the cause. Eleven fire engines were used to extinguish the flames and six ambulances were used for rescue operations.

51. Odhikar expresses its deep concern over the recurrence of such incidents in the garment industry and demands quick and effective intervention of the government to ensure safety of the lives of the garment workers.
52. In the month of February, 15 workers have been injured while protesting in demand of their overdue wages at the ready-made garments factories.
53. Odhikar demands that the Government should cancel the license of those garments factories which are not following the tripartite agreement and thereby causing labour unrest.

Violence against women

Female students of the Anondamohon College of Myemensingh assaulted

54. On February 1, 2010, a group of criminals posing as students assaulted female students of the Anondamohon College at Mymensingh. The incident took place at the end of the centennial celebrations of the establishment of the College. The incident took place on the third day of the celebrations, at a concert organised by the College unit of the Chattra League and the Chattra Shangshad. During the incident, a group of criminals assaulted the female students. Some female students informed that members of the Awami League-backed Chattra League were behind the incident. They also alleged that the Police who were present there to maintain security, remained inactive during the occurrence.

A female student assaulted at the Shahid Minar¹⁶

55. The Awami League-backed Chattra League activists of Master Da Surjosen Hall, Muhsin Hall and Kobi Jashimuddin Hall, harassed a female student in front of the TSC¹⁷ of Dhaka University when she came to lay flowers at the Shahid Minar on February 21¹⁸, 2010. The accompanying family members of the female student protested the incident. Later on the Chattra League activists stopped the girl and her family members in front of the Vice-Chancellor's residence and grievously injured them using hockey-sticks and bamboo sticks¹⁹.
42. Odhikar expresses its deep concern and condemns these two incidents. Odhikar urges the Government to take effective measures that would end violence against women altogether.

¹⁵ The Daily Shamokal, 27/02/2010

¹⁶ The Shahid Minar is a national monument in Dhaka, Bangladesh, established to commemorate those killed during the Language Movement demonstrations of 1952.

¹⁷ TSC: Teachers and Students Centre.

¹⁸ February 21 is being celebrated as Shahid Dibosh as well as the International Mother Language Day

¹⁹ The Daily Manabzamin, 22/02/2010

Rape

43. In the month of February 2010, 30 women and girls were raped of which 15 were adults and 15 were children²⁰. Of the 15 female adults raped, 03 were killed after being raped and 10 were gang raped. Of the 15 girls who were raped, 03 were killed after being killed, 06 were subjected to gang rape and 01 committed suicide. Of them, 01 housewife was raped by a member of Ansar²¹ at Jessore district and 01 eight-year-old girl was raped by a member of the VDP²² at Joypurhat district.

Dowry related violence

44. In the month of February 2010, 27 women were subjected to dowry²³ related violence. It has been alleged that of these women, 18 were killed due to dowry related issues and 08 were tortured in various ways. During this period of time, 01 women committed suicide after failing to cope with dowry related torture.

Acid violence

45. In the month of February 2010, 05 persons were victims of acid violence. Of these, 03 were women and 02 were men.

Recommendations

46. Actions must be taken against those involved in the Rangamati and Khagrachori incident after a proper investigation by the Judicial Inquiry Committee.
47. Transparency and accountability must be maintained during the trial of the BDR Jawans accused of treason. For the sake of proper justice and the preservation of the rights of the accused, the accused in the BDR mutiny must be given the right to choose their own defense counsel.
48. The Government must take steps to bring an end to political violence and those involved must also be made accountable before the law. The law enforcement agencies must play a pivotal role in ending such forms of violence.
49. The refusal to extend Odhikar's torture prevention programme must be withdrawn.
50. The Government must keep its word and put into practice its 'zero tolerance' for torture.
51. The Government must take effective steps with the goal to end violence against women. The offender must be brought to justice and the victim must be adequately provided with necessary assistance. The Government must play an active role in this process.
52. The persons responsible for the attacks against journalists must be arrested and brought to justice.

²⁰ 'Children' are those below 16 years of age, as per the Children's Act, 1974.

²¹ Ansar: An auxiliary force of the law enforcement agencies

²² VDP: Village Defense Party

²³ The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980 makes the giving or taking/ demanding of dowry an offence, punishable with imprisonment and/or fine.

53. The government should take quick and effective measures to ensure safety of the lives of the garment workers.

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Notes:

1. Odhikar seeks to uphold the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the people.
2. Odhikar documents and records violations of human rights and receives information from its network of human rights defenders and monitors media reports in twelve national daily newspapers.
3. Odhikar conducts detailed fact-finding investigations into some of the most significant violations.
4. Odhikar is consistent in its human rights reporting and is committed to remain so.