

Quarterly Human Rights Report January-March, 2008

BSF kills 21 Bangladeshis in 3 months One woman raped every day

Odhikar published this report to highlight human rights situation in Bangladesh in first quarter of 2008. The report is based on Odhikar's information received and monitoring of state of human rights in last three months. As a part of its mandate, Odhikar is committed to uphold civil, political as well as socio, economic and cultural rights of the people.

- **India Bangladesh border violence**

In last three months, serious human rights violations continued unabated in and around frontiers with India. Odhikar recorded killings of 21 Bangladeshis by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF), while 12 Bangladeshis were reportedly injured by BSF firing. BSF allegedly abducted 8 persons. Odhikar noted that despite highlighting persistent serious violations, there was no indication of reduction of violations, or investigation into these incidents, or compensation to victims or their families.

- **Extrajudicial Killings**

The crimes of extrajudicial killings went on in the first quarter of 2008, during which, 16 persons were reportedly killed by law enforcement agencies. Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) reportedly killed 5 persons, while Police killed 7. Combined RAB-Police operation reportedly killed 1 person, and BDR reportedly killed another person. Coast Guards reported killed 2 persons. Out of 16 persons 4 were allegedly killed in custody.

- ***Circumstances of deaths***

Odhikar also recorded the circumstances under which these persons were killed extra-judicially. 5 persons were killed in RAB crossfire/ encounter/ gunfight/ shootout¹; 4 persons were killed in police crossfire/ encounter/ shootout/ gunfight, 1 person was killed in crossfire/ encounter/ gunfight/ shootout by RAB-police jointly and other 2 persons were killed in crossfire/ encounter/ gunfight/ shootout by the coast guards. During this period, 3 persons were allegedly tortured to death by police and another person was tortured to death by Bangladesh Rifles.

- ***Political allegiance of the victims***

According to reports, political affiliations of some of these victims of extrajudicial deaths are as follows: One was a member of Awami League and 2 were members of Purbo Banglar Communist Party. One a member of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (Red Flag), one of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (Jonajuddho), one from New Biplobi Communist Party and one was a member of Maobadi Sangstha.

¹ 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.

- **Other characteristics of the victims**

2 were alleged dacoits, while 2 others were alleged drug dealers and 2 were alleged smugglers. One of them was reportedly a businessman and the professional identities of 2 others were not known.

- **Death in Jail**

It was reported that 25 persons died in prison custody, reportedly due to illness between 1 January and 31 March 2008. Among them, one was detained ward commissioner and BNP leader Abdul Qayyum Khan. His family members, however, claimed that he died due to lack of medical treatment.

- **Death in police station**

During this period, one person reportedly committed suicide at Mirpur police station.

- **Freedom of Expression**

In the last three months under State of Emergency, victimizations of journalists continued. In the period under review, a total of 17 incidents were noted. Among them five journalists were reportedly injured, while 8 more were threatened. Moreover, pressure on journalists remain unchanged for publishing of factual reports, contravening recognized rights of journalists under national and international laws.

- **Rape**

Violence against women remained alarmingly high over this period. In last three months, a total of 95 women and girls reportedly became victims of rape, thus making about one reported rape a day. Amongst those victims, 42 were adults and 53 girls². Out of these 42 women, 16 were reportedly killed after being raped, 1 committed suicide after the incident and 27 were victims of gang rape. On the other hand out of 53 girls, 9 were reportedly raped and then killed. Fourteen girls became victims of gang rape while one committed suicide.

- **Acid Violence**

Between January and March, a total of 31 persons reportedly fell victim to acid violence, among them, 20 were women, 7 children (4 girls and 3 boys) and 4 men.

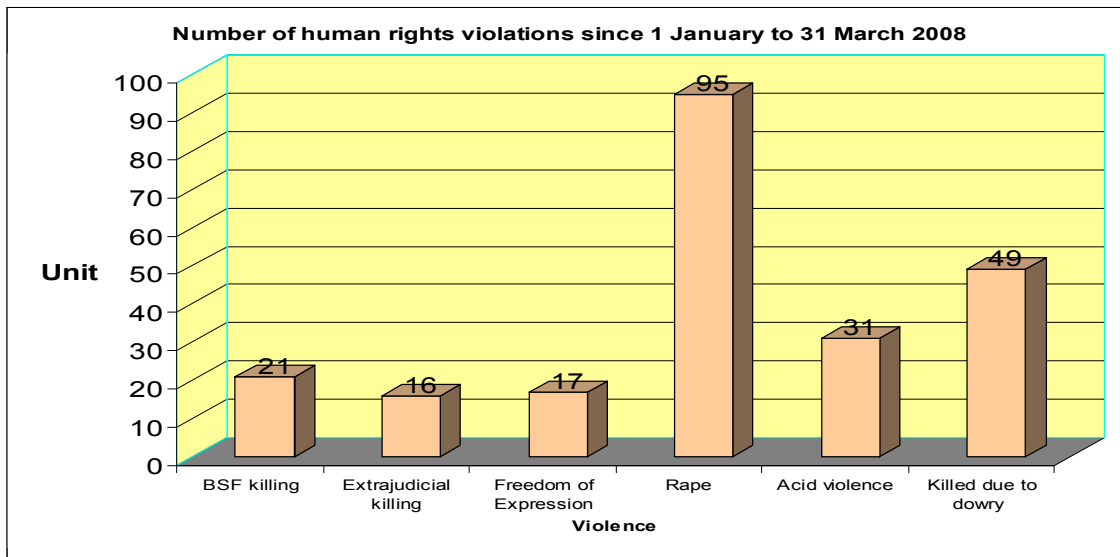
- **Dowry**

In yet another serious form of violence against women, during this period, it was reported that a total of 68 women became victims of violence stemming from dowry demands. Due to dowry related violence, a total of 49 women were killed and 17 were tortured. During this time, 2 women reportedly committed suicide, as they could not bear the abuse anymore.

**Statistics of Human Rights violations
January to March 2008**

Name of the violation	Number of violence
BSF killing	21
Extrajudicial killing	16
Freedom of Expression	17
Rape	95
Acid violence	31
Killed due to dowry	49

² As per the Children's Act 1974, an adult is a person above the age of 16 years.



Odhikar Recommendations

- That the Government should take immediate and effective steps to stop killing Bangladeshi citizens by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and violations of human rights along Bangladesh borders with India.
- The Government must take serious actions to stop all forms of acts of violence against women and children and effectively prosecute the perpetrators in accordance with the law. Victims of gender violence must be ensured of necessary support, compensation and reparations.
- Extrajudicial killings being negation of rule of law, the Government must publicly condemn incidents of extrajudicial killings, issue immediate orders to stop such violations, institute independent inquiries of all extrajudicial killings and bring those involved to account. The Government must end the prevailing culture of impunity. The Government must also cease from carrying out tortures and investigate and prosecute those found responsible.
- The Government must end its practice of intimidating journalists and ensure and guarantee freedom of expression.

Address: Odhikar: House 65E (2nd Floor), Road 17-A, Banani, Dhaka-1213, Bangladesh, Tel: 88-02-9888587,

Fax: 88-02-9886208, email: odhikar.bd@gmail.com, odhikar@citech-bd.com, Web: www.odhikar.org

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.