

1 October 2007



### **Odhikar Press Release**

## **Number of people tortured to death up by over 50% and 157 people killed by law enforcement agencies so far in 2007**

Odhikar, a human rights organisation, compiled a report comparing the human rights situation in Bangladesh in the first nine months of 2007 with the same period in 2006.

### **Extrajudicial Killing: 2007**

In the nine months from 01 January to 30 September 2007, 157 people were reportedly killed by the law enforcement agencies, of which, 64 were reportedly killed while in custody. Of the total killed, 83 were killed by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), 52 by the police, 7 by the Army, 7 by the Joint Forces, 3 by the Navy and 1 by officers of the Department of Narcotics Control, 1 by Jail Police and 3 by RAB and the police jointly.

Of the 157 people who were killed by law enforcement agencies so far in 2007, 107 were killed in so-called “crossfire” / encounter / gunfight / shootout<sup>1</sup> incidents, 29 were reportedly tortured to death and the remaining 21 died in various circumstances.

Of those 157 people who were reportedly killed by the law enforcement agencies, 79 were killed in so-called “crossfire” / encounter / gunfight / shootout by RAB. Two were reportedly tortured to death by RAB and another 2 were arrested by RAB and later died in hospital.

It was reported that 24 people were killed by the police in so-called “crossfire” / encounter / gunfight / shootout and that the police tortured 14 people to death. 11 people were shot dead by the police in circumstances that were not reported as so-called “crossfire” / encounter / gunfight / shootout, a further 1 person died in police custody, 2 people died in hospital after their arrest by the police.

Five people were reportedly killed due to torture by the Army, while 1 person died while trying to escape from an Army van. Another 1 person died in hospital after being arrested by the Army. 3 people were reported to have been tortured to death by the Navy.

Three people were reported to have been tortured to death by the Joint Forces while 1 person was reportedly killed by the Joint Forces in so-called “crossfire” / encounter / gunfight / shootout. One person who was arrested by the Joint Forces reportedly died in the hospital while 1 allegedly jumped off a six storey building and died while in the Joint Force’s custody. 1 person was arrested by the Joint Forces and died in a police station and another 1 was reportedly killed after being tortured by the officers of the Department of Narcotics Control, 1 person was tortured to death by the Jail Police and 3 people were killed in so-called “crossfire” / encounter / gunfight / shootout by RAB and the police jointly.

### **Political Allegiance of the victims**

It was reported that of the 157 persons, 8 were from the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), 5 from Awami League, 1 from Jatiyo Shomajtantrik Dol (JSD), 1 from United People’s Democratic Front (UPDF). And 8 from Purbo Banglar Communist Party, 9 from Purbo Banglar Communist Party (Jonojuddho), 7 from Purbo Banglar Communist Party (Red Flag), 7 from Biplobi Communist Party, 1 from New Biplobi Communist Party, 2 from New biplobi

communist party ( Mrinal Group), 2 from Gono Bahini, 6 from Gono Mukti Fouz, 4 from Sromojibi Mukti Andolon, 4 from Shorbohara Party.

***Other Characteristics of the victims***

Some of the victims were described in the press as being members of criminal gangs, namely: 3 from Gangchil Bahini, 1 from Masim Bahini, 1 from Haji Bahini, 1 from Lalchand Bahini, 1 from Panna Bahini, 1 from Matin Bahini and 1 from Salam Bahini. Two people were alleged arms smugglers, 3 alleged arms dealers, 3 alleged muggers, 1 was an alleged gambler, 2 were alleged drug peddlers, 2 were under trial prisoner, 1 was a prisoner, 1 alleged gunman, 1 was an extortionist, 1 was reported as an 'extremist', 19 were alleged dacoits and 28 alleged criminals were also among those reported killed.

Others descriptions of those reportedly killed included 3 farmers, 1 fruit vendor, 1 businessman, 1 contractor, 1 young man, 1 elderly man, 1 was a rickshaw driver, an unidentified worker, 1 police informer, 2 bus drivers, 1 was a freedom fighter, 1 female garments worker, 1 housewife, 1 was an ethnic minority leader, 1 adolescent boy and 1 was a person whose profession was unknown

**Extrajudicial Killing: 2006**

278 people were killed by the law enforcement agencies between 01 January and 30 September 2006.

Of the 278 people killed, 224 people were killed in so-called "crossfire" / encounter / gunfight / shootout incidents and 19 were tortured to death. The remaining 35 were killed in various other ways.

**Extrajudicial Killing - Comparing 2006 and 2007**

Compared with the first nine months of 2006 the number of extrajudicial killings by law enforcement agencies has decreased by 43.53% in 2007.

**So-called "crossfire" / encounter / gunfight / shootout**

The number of people killed in so-called "crossfire" / encounter / gunfight / shootout incidents has decreased by 52.23% in 2007 compared to the same period last year.

**Torture**

However, the number of people who were tortured to death increased by 52.63% this year as compared to 2006.

**Death in Jail: 2007**

Between 01 January and 30 September 2007 it was reported that a total of 68 people died in jail custody; among them 1 was reportedly tortured to death by jail police and another one reportedly died in a clash between prisoners. A further 66 prisoners, some on remand, reportedly died due to illness.

**Death in Jail: 2006**

During 01 January - 30 September 2006 a total of 48 people died in jail custody.

**Death in Jail - Comparing 2006 and 2007**

The number of people who were reported to have died in jail increased by 41.67%

### **Death in Police Station: 2007**

During this time 3 people died in police stations: it was reported that 2 persons died due to illness and 1 committed suicide.

### **Death in Police Station: 2006**

During 01 January to 30 September 2006 12 people died in police stations.

### **Death in Police Stations - Comparing 2006 and 2007**

Deaths in police stations decreased by 75.00%

### **Freedom of Expression: 2007**

In 2007 there were a total of 164 reported incidents violating freedom of expression. 32 journalists were reportedly injured, 11 journalists were arrested, 31 were assaulted and 75 were threatened. 12 legal cases have been filed against journalists and 1 journalist's house was attacked, 1 journalist was forced by the Bangladeshi Rifles to sign an agreement that he would not publish any news without their prior permission.

In August two TV channels were asked to refrain from broadcasting any provocative news, documentaries, talk-shows and discussions critical of the government. According to press reports, in separate orders, the Government held that it can ban or attach conditions on broadcasting provocative news, documentaries, talk-shows and discussions critical of the government under powers given to it by Article 5 of the Emergency Powers Rules 2007.

These restrictions were imposed following broadcasting of reports on disturbances in Dhaka University and other places in August.

In September, while the Government's advice on self-censorship and direct restrictions on the media is in place, one organisation, CSB News, has been temporarily shut down for allegedly filing forged documents to obtain frequency allocation.

### **Freedom of Expression: 2006**

In the first nine months of 2006 there were a total of 372 reported incidents of violations of freedom of expression. Among them, 1 journalist was killed, 138 journalists were injured, 4 were arrested, 35 journalists were assaulted, 80 were threatened, there were 19 reported incidences of attacks and legal cases were filed against 95 journalists.

### **Freedom of Expression - Comparing 2006 and 2007**

The statistics show that in 2007 the total incidents of attacks on journalists decreased by 55.91%

### **Rape: 2007**

Between 01 January and 30 September 2007 a total of 346 women and girls were reportedly the victims of rape (161 women and 185 girls). Of them, 38 women and 18 girls were killed after being raped and one woman committed suicide. Among those raped, 82 women and 46 girls were the victims of gang rape.

### **Rape: 2006**

Between 01 January and 30 September 2006 a total of 523 women and girls were reportedly the victims of rape.

### **Rape – Comparing 2006 and 2007**

The statistics show that in 2007 incidents of rape decreased by 33.84%

### **Acid: 2007**

A total of 118 people; 64 women, 35 men and 19 children, were the victims of acid attacks in 2007.

### **Acid : 2006**

123 people were the victims of acid violence between 01 January and 30 September 2006. In that year, 79 women 30 men and 14 children were victims of acid violence.

### **Acid – Comparing 2006 and 2007**

In 2007 the incidents of acid violence decreased by 4.07%.

### **Odhikar Recommendations:**

- As the Justice Habibur Rahman Commission continues its investigation into the incidents around the August student protests Odhikar urges the Commission to take cognizance of the events that occurred at the Aziz Supermarket Shahbagh, Dhaka on 23 August 2007.

According to media reports, hundreds of students – who had taken refuge in the accommodation above the supermarket after the government had imposed a curfew – were beaten by a group of soldiers.

Odhikar believes that examination of this event is critical to a full understanding of the events around the August protests which spread nationwide.

- In order to create an atmosphere suitable for conducting free and fair elections the Government should immediately lift the State of Emergency and remove all restrictions on political activities.
- In addition, Odhikar urges the authorities to adhere to the due process of law in all legal proceedings and, in particular, in relation to trials relating to allegations of corruption.
- Odhikar expresses its concern that, despite the Tri-Partite Agreement, garments workers at some factories are still not being paid the wages they are entitled to.

### **Methodology**

The data in this report was gathered from analysis of eleven national daily newspapers and information from Odhikar's nationwide network of human rights defenders.

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<sup>1</sup> Recently, 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.