



June 1, 2014

Human Rights Monitoring Report

May 1 – 31, 2014

Human rights violations along the Myanmar and Indian border

Political violence persists

The sixth phase of the Upazila Elections

Extrajudicial killings

Allegations of torture and death in RAB and police custody

Torture in custody and lack of accountability of law enforcement agencies

Allegations of enforced disappearance

Attempt made to abduct human rights defender Nur Khan

Barriers to meetings and assemblies

Freedom of the media

The trial of Mahmudur Rahman begins in Special Court

Public lynching continues

Violence against religious minority communities

Situation of ready-made garment workers

Violence against women

Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 remains

NGO Affairs Bureau yet to release Odhikar's funds

Odhikar believes that 'democracy' is a form of the State and presupposes that freedom and human rights are its foundations. Democracy is not merely a process of

electing a ruler. Democracy is the result of the peoples' struggle for inalienable rights, which become the fundamental premise to constitute the State defining collective aspirations and responsibilities. Therefore, the individual freedoms and democratic aspirations of the citizens – and consequently, peoples' collective rights and responsibilities - must be the foundational principles of the State.

The State's failure to recognise this at the founding moment is a continuing curse that people in Bangladesh are forced to carry. A State cannot be 'democratic' if the people do not realise and participate as 'citizens' in all sectors of the functioning of the state. The democratic legitimacy of the State is directly related to its commitment and capacity to ensure human rights, such as right to life and livelihood, right to environment and health; and the dignity and integrity of citizens. If all these are not ensured by the State, it cannot be called a 'democratic' state. These civil and political rights, as the foundational principles of the State, must remain inviolable; and accordingly, the Parliament, Judiciary and Executive cannot and should not have any power to abrogate them through any legislation, judicial verdict or executive order. The people's inviolable rights are the foundational principles of the State.

Odhikar, being an organisation of human rights defenders in Bangladesh, has been struggling to ensure these civil and political rights. Odhikar stands against all forms of human rights violations and accordingly participates and remains directly involved in the human rights movement in Bangladesh. Odhikar brings to the movement the strategic perspective that in its demand for civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, the human rights movement not only endeavours to protect the victims, but is also constitutive of a democratic state. In recent times, Odhikar's human rights defenders have been persecuted for their work and beliefs. However, this has only strengthened the organisation's resolve to fight for human rights, with no discrimination whatsoever.

The movement to establish the rights and dignity of every individual is part of the struggle to constitute Bangladesh as a democratic, political community. As part of its mission, Odhikar monitors the human rights situation of Bangladesh to report violations and defend the victims. In line with this campaign, Odhikar prepares and releases monthly situation reports. Odhikar has released this human rights monitoring report for May 2014, despite facing harassment and threats to its existence.

Human rights violations along the Myanmar and Indian border

1. Like the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) have been doing for a long time; the Border Guard Police of Myanmar have recently been threatening the human rights of Bangladeshi citizens at the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. It is to be mentioned that three sides of Bangladesh are surrounded by India and the South-East part of the country shares its border with Myanmar.
2. According to information gathered, in May 2014, one member of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) was shot dead by Border Guard Police (BGP) of Myanmar at the Painchhari border of Bandarban. This has caused panic and insecurity among the Bangladeshi citizens in the area. During this month, Indian Border Security Force (BSF) also killed four Bangladeshi citizens. Of them, one was gunned down, two were tortured and one drowned after falling into a river when the BSF chased him. One was shot and injured by the BSF. During this period, it has also been reported that 17 Bangladeshis were abducted by the BSF. Some incidents are as follows:
3. On May 28, 2014 at around 9:30 am Border Guard Police (BGP) of Myanmar opened fire at Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) members of newly set up Painchhari BOP when a patrol team of that Camp reached Dochhori and Techhori connecting areas of a canal at Naikkhonchhori border in Bandorban District. At that time BGB's Nayek Subeder, Mizanur Rahman was shot and died on the spot. BGP of Myanmar entered into Bangladesh territory, violating the UN Convention and took the body of Mizanur Rahman and his arms and ammunition. After that, the BGB took position with white flags near Pillar No. 50 at the border in order to bring back the body of Mizanur Rahman. On May 30, 2014 at around 3:00 pm, BGP sent word that the body had to be handed over to BGB near Pillar No. 52. BGP members of Myanmar opened fire again at the BGB members when they marched towards No. 52 pillar. Around 700 rounds of firing were exchanged between the two forces.¹
4. It is to be noted that, near the end of 1991, the then Myanmar Border Guards Nasaka attacked Reju Fatrajhiri BDR² Camp at Ghundhum border in Naikkhongchhori and looted arms and ammunition after killing a BDR member of Bangladesh. Due to this, acts of human rights violations

¹ The daily Naya Diganta, 31/05/2014

² BDR: Bangladesh Rifles was the previous name of Bangladesh border security force. Now it has been re-named as Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) after the BDR mutiny in February 2009.

occurred at the border area during that time and as a result, about 250,000 Rohingyas took shelter in Bangladesh.

5. Myanmar posted additional military men in sector No. 1 and 2 at Baliabazar, Fakirabazar, Walidong, Tumburu and Dhekiunia border areas of Myanmar after this incident.³ It is assumed that Rohingyas might have been pushed into Bangladesh, deliberately creating a fragile and insecure human rights situation at Bangladesh-Myanmar border.
6. In the morning of May 5, 2014 some Bangladeshi cattle traders went to India to bring back cows, through No. 280 pillar at Hatkhola border under Panchbibi Upazila in Joypurhat District. At that time, BSF members opened fire at them 50 yards away at the Indian border and a cattle trader named Jony Islam (22) was shot. He was admitted to an Indian hospital where he died.⁴
7. On May 13, 2014, six or seven Bangladeshi cattle traders entered Indian territory through the main pillar 93 at Munshipur border under Damurhuda Upazila in Chuadanga District, to bring cows. During this time, BSF members of Mohakhola Camp under Nodia District in India, chased them and caught a Bangladeshi called Hasibul (28). He was beaten and drowned by BSF. Later his body was taken to India.⁵
8. In the morning of May 19, 2014 BSF killed a Bangladeshi citizen named Sirajul Islam (40) by stabbing him with bayonets at Putkhali border under Sharsha Upazila in Jessore District. The deceased Sirajul Islam was the son of Siddique Hossain of Kayemkhola village under Jhikargachcha Upazila in Jessore. On May 18, 2014 at around 10:30 pm, Sirajul went to India with some cattle traders through the Putkhali border. The BSF chased them while they were returning with cows. Sirajul was caught by BSF members and taken to Angrail Camp where he was stabbed with bayonets. He died while under treatment.⁶
9. Many Director General level meetings of BGB⁷ and BSF were organised on various occasions. However, we have noticed that BSF has been repeatedly violating its commitment to stop killings at the border. BSF continues its anti-human rights activities on Bangladeshi citizens.

³ The daily Naya Diganta, 31/05/2014

⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 06/05/2014

⁵ The daily Jugantor, 14/05/2014

⁶ The daily Amar Desh, online report, 20/05/2014

⁷ Border Guard Bangladesh

10. Bangladesh is surrounded by India and, in part, by Myanmar. Its sovereignty is now under threat from both countries, while Bangladeshi citizens along the border areas live terrorized, insecure lives. Odhikar believes that the Bangladesh Government should demand specific explanations from both the Indian Government regarding the never-ending acts of killing, abduction and torture of Bangladeshi citizens living along the border areas perpetrated by BSF; and from the Myanmar government as to why the BGB patrol was attacked and a man killed.

Political violence persists

11. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in May 2014, 17 persons were killed and 412 injured in political violence. 31 incidents of internal violence in the Awami League and three in the BNP⁸ were recorded during this period. In addition to this, two persons were killed and 231 were injured in internal conflicts of the Awami League while 32 persons were injured in BNP internal conflicts.
12. Chhatra League⁹ and Jubo League¹⁰ activists are, to a great extent, involved in criminalisation of politics as a result political violence continues. Some examples of political violence in May are as follows:
13. On May 2, 2014, an altercation took place between some Chhatra League activists of F Rahman Hall¹¹ of the Dhaka University and a Sub Inspector of New Market Police Station, in a restaurant at Nilkhet, Dhaka. At one stage police arrested second year student of Political Science, Noushad; second year student of Economics, Bipul; second year students of Bangla, Mukit and Rassel; and a first year student of English, Sohan and took them to New Market Police Station. Due to this, Chhatra Leagues activists and students attacked the police station and brought out the detained Chhatra League activists. Chhatra League activists also vandalised the signboard of the New Market Police Station, the car of the officer-in-charge and his name plate. Three students and Constable Shamim, Sub Inspectors Hanif and Iftekhar and Ansar member Sabuj were injured during the attack.¹²
14. On May 8, 2014 at night, some Chhatra League leaders kidnapped a petty trader named Farhad Hossain from Sohrawardi Park and demanded a

⁸ BNP: Bangladesh Nationalist Party

⁹ Student wing of Awami League

¹⁰ Youth wing of Awami League

¹¹ One of the Residential Halls for male students of Dhaka University

¹² The daily Inqilab, 03/05/2014

ransom of five hundred thousand taka from his family. The family of Farhad Hossain informed the police, who arrested seven men including five Chhatra League leaders from TSC¹³; and rescued Farhad Hossain from Jagannath Hall of the Dhaka University. The arrestees were Sreejon Ghosh, Deputy Secretary (Sports) of the Central Committee of Chhatra League; Tanvirul Islam, Vice-President of Dhaka University unit Chhatra League; Anupam Chandra, Vice-President of Jagannath Hall unit Chhatra League; Abdullah Al Mamun, Student Scholarship Affairs Secretary of Mohsin Hall unit Chhatra League; Bappi, former vice-president of Jasimuddin Hall unit Chhatra League; and Chhatra League activists Himel and Arfan Patowari.¹⁴

15. On May 12, 2014 an altercation took place between supporters of Rangamati Municipality unit Awami League President, Mohammad Solaiman and supporters of former Chhatra League leader, Pankaj Purokayasta over submitting a tender bid of 22 hundred thousand taka regarding a Power Supply Development Project of the Power Development Board (PDB) in Rangamati. 10 people from both groups were injured during the clash.¹⁵
16. On May 13, 2014 Kaliganj Municipality ward unit BNP President, Ismail Hossain (48) was stabbed to death by criminals in Chapali village under Kaliganj Upazila in Jhenaidah District. A group of ruling party activists took position near a bridge and attacked Ismail Hossain while he was going to Chapali village to attend a mediation. They also cut the tendons of his hands and legs. He was admitted to Jessore Hospital with severe injuries, where he died.¹⁶
17. On May 20, 2014 criminals shot at and set fire to car containing Phulgazi Upazila Parishad Chairman and Awami League leader Ekramul Huq, in broad daylight near the Bilashi Cinema Hall on Academy Road in Feni. Phulgazi Union Parishad Chairman, Mohiuddin; the Editor of a local weekly newspaper Feni Samachar, Mohibullah Farhad; and driver Abdulla Al Mamun who were also in the car, were injured. At around 1:00 am on May 21, the elder brother of the deceased, Rezaul Huq filed a case with Feni Police Station accusing BNP leader and BNP backed Upazila Chairman candidate, Mahtab Uddin Chowdhury along with 35 unnamed men.¹⁷ A murder case was filed against BNP supporters and BNP activists were

¹³ Teachers and Students Centre

¹⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 10/05/2014

¹⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 14/05/2014

¹⁶ The Daily Ittefaq, 14/05/2014

¹⁷ Report sent by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Feni

arrested. In the meanwhile, it has been reported in the media that Awami League MP Nizam Uddin Hazari was involved in this incident.¹⁸ On May 24, RAB arrested eight youth from Bashundhara Residential Area in Dhaka, who were allegedly involved in the murder of Ekramul Huq. They were produced before journalists at the media centre of Rapid Action Battalion. In their statements, the arrestees said that Ekramul Huq was killed due to conflict with Awami League leader Zihad Chowdhury and establishing control over the area. However, some top level leaders of the Awami League were also reportedly involved in the killing.¹⁹

18. Odhikar observes that leaders and activists of the ruling party Awami League are involved in and encouraging criminalisation; and as a result political killings continue. Odhikar believes that the government must take legal action not only against the perpetrators, but also against its party activists who are involved in criminal activities, in order to stop criminalisation of politics. The Government also must play a neutral role in respect of investigation of the incidents of political killings.

The sixth phase of Upazila elections

19. On May 19, 2014, elections were held in 12 Upazilas under the sixth phase with reports of massive violence and rigging. There have been several allegations of 'capturing' polling centres; snatching away ballot papers and ballot boxes; casting fake votes; forcibly ousting polling agents of the opponents; and barring journalists from entering the polling stations; perpetrated by ruling party supported candidates.²⁰
20. Allegations of stamping ballot papers were found against the Assistant Presiding Officer, Ali Azam of Chanpur Government Primary School polling centre in Panchthubi Union under Sadar Upazila in Comilla.²¹
21. Worker's of Awami League supported candidate Abdul Matin Chowdhury were allegedly ousting polling agents of the opponent and casting fake votes in Kamarkhand Upazila under Sirajganj district.²²
22. Allegations of 'capturing' polling centres and casting fake votes were found against Awami League supported candidates in 29 polling stations under

¹⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 22/05/2014

¹⁹ The Jugantor, 25/05/2014

²⁰ The daily Inquilab, 20/05/2014

²¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 20/05/2014

²² Ibid

Taltoli Upazila in Barguna, despite the presence of law enforcement agencies.²³

23. Awami League announced the Upazila election schedules very soon after re-assuming power through controversial elections on January 5, 2014; and during the elections, incidents of snatching ballot papers and ballot boxes; rigging; fake votes and capturing polling stations resurfaced. Many people also died in election related violence.
24. Odhikar believes that ensuring transparent, creditable, free and fair elections is the Constitutional responsibility of the Election Commission (EC). The Election Commission has to conduct elections in a free, fair and impartial manner, without being bias towards the ruling party. This is the mandatory duty of the EC. The Election Commission has failed to hold a free, fair and impartial election.²⁴ Odhikar believes that it is very important to form a strong and effective Election Commission in Bangladesh; which would hold free and fair elections under a neutral interim government. The provision of elections under an interim government has been removed through the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which has caused serious political crisis. The scale of violence and illegal activities reported during the 10th Parliamentary Elections and Upazila Elections, establishes that Bangladesh still needs a neutral interim government to hold free, fair, inclusive and credible polls. The people of the country are still not able to freely practice this basic component of democracy without this system.

Extrajudicial killings

25. According to information gathered by Odhikar, a reported total of nine persons were extra judicially killed in May 2014. Types of deaths and the identities of the deceased are stated below:

Types of extrajudicial Killings

Crossfire/encounter/gun fight:

26. Among the nine persons extra judicially killed, five were killed in 'crossfire/encounters/gun fights'. Among them, four were killed by the police and one by the RAB.

²³ Ibid

²⁴ The Election Commission was also bias towards the ruling party in power during the 5 January 2014 Parliamentary elections and presented the Election schedule in November 2013 despite political violence and unresolved issues between the Awami League and the BNP-led Opposition.

Shot to death:

27. Among the deceased, one was shot and killed by police.

Tortured to death:

28. During this period, two persons were allegedly tortured to death. Among them one was tortured to death by the RAB and one by the police.

Beaten to Death:

29. During this period, one person was allegedly beaten to death by police.

Identities of the deceased

30. Of the nine persons who were killed extra-judicially, one was Kusholia Union unit General Secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami, one was member of the Purba Banglar Communist Party (ML), one was member of the Sarbahara Party, one was businessmen, one was a tea vendor, one was a welder and three were alleged criminals.

31. On May 7, 2014, Kusholia Union unit General Secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami, Ashraful Islam was shot dead by police in Kaliganj Upazila under Satkhira District. The Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Kaliganj Police Station, Golam Rahman claimed that police were informed by their sources that a group of criminals were holding a meeting at Bhodrokhali Primary School field. Receiving this information, a police team led by the OC reached the spot, where Ashraful was killed in 'gunfight' between police. Ashraful's wife, Papia Khatun alleged that her husband was picked up by police from their village home on May 6 at around 12:30 am and that Ashraful was shot and killed at Bhodrokhali Primary School ground.²⁵

32. Odhikar expresses grave concern over the incidents of extrajudicial killings. Odhikar believes that the country's laws and criminal justice delivery system are under serious threat due to the prevalence of extrajudicial killings; and that the government is not doing enough to stop this crime . The government must uphold human rights as committed to international forums and human rights defenders. Odhikar urges the government to immediately put a stop to extrajudicial killings and also demands that all perpetrators be brought to justice.

²⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 08/05/2014

Death in jail

33. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in May 2014, five persons died in jail due to 'illnesses'.

Allegations of torture and death in RAB and police custody

34. Allegations of torture against Major AZM Sakib Siddiqui, the Head of Bhoirab RAB camp under RAB-14 unit, were made by deceased Mohammad Shahnoor Alam's family. Mohammad Shahnoor Alam was a resident of Nabinagar Upazila under Brahmanbaria District. On May 20, 2014, the younger brother of the deceased, Mehedi Hassan organised a press conference at the National Press Club and stated that on April, 29, 2014 at noon his brother was arrested by members of RAB-14 from Boghdohor village under Nabinagar Upazila. At night he was beaten on different parts of his body, particularly, on his waist, feet and elbows for two and half hours. On April 30, 2014, RAB forced Abu Taher, a resident of Nabinagar Pashchimpara, to file a case against Shahnoor Alam. Later, Shahinur was sent to jail by the court. Shahinur was first admitted to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital; and later taken to Comilla Medical College Hospital when he became ill. On the evening of May 6, he died in hospital while under treatment. Mehedi Hassan alleged that a local manpower businessman, Nazrul made an 'arrangement' with the officer of RAB-14 to kill his brother.²⁶
35. The family of the deceased claimed that police of Boalia Model Police Station tortured to death one Ruhul Amin (22) in Rajshahi. Sirajul Islam, elder brother of the deceased Ruhul Amin, stated that on May 16, 2014 at night some non-uniformed policemen, led by Sub Inspector Brajo Gopal of Boalia Police Station arrested Ruhul Amin with 250 grams of 'ganja' from the Namobhodra area of Rajshahi city. Later police tortured to death Ruhul Amin in connection with a matter involving a leading drug peddler of Namobhodra area. However, police claimed that Ruhul Amin committed suicide by hanging himself in the toilet with part of a blanket.²⁷
36. Odhikar believes that torture during remand or interrogation is a serious violation of human rights. Despite the presence of Supreme Court directives

²⁶ The daily Jugantor, 21/05/2014

²⁷ Report sent by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Rajshahi.

as to the interrogation of an arrestee²⁸ and the claim of ‘zero tolerance’ on torture, the Government has not taken steps or effective measures to curtail torture and other forms of custodial violence and acts of impunity by law enforcement officers. Such lack of action against perpetrators only encourages human rights violations.

Torture in custody and lack of accountability of law enforcement agencies

37. Torture in custody is a very common practice in Bangladesh. When a person is arrested by law enforcement agencies, it is immediately presumed that he will be physically and mentally tortured or suffer ill treatment. Odhikar has, for the last 19 years, documented and carried out fact finding missions on incidents of torture, highlighting the fact that this practice must stop.
38. On January 7, 2014 at around 5:30 pm Jubo Dal²⁹ activist Mohammad Arafat was returning home after closing his hardware store at Sagorika Chourasta Mor in Chittagong Metropolitan City. At that time four or five men, claiming to be police, surrounded him in front of his shop and took him to Pahartoli Police Station in a private car. At around 6:10 pm Arafat was put in the lock-up. At 6:15 pm, three or four men in plain clothes came to the lock-up to get Arafat’s identity. Approximately ten minutes later, some more men in plain clothes came. They brought Arafat out of the lock-up, blindfolded him and took him to Sagorika seashore in a car. At that time Arafat thought that he was going to be killed in crossfire and was begging for his life. He was then asked whether he was a member of Chhatra Shibir³⁰ and also told to inform them of the whereabouts of Shibir leaders. Arafat said that he was not a member of Chhatra Shibir but a Jubo Dal³¹ activist. The men then shot him in his leg. Arafat fell down screaming. During that time some men gagged him and dragged him into the car and brought him to Chittagong Medical College Hospital. Arafat was taken to the Emergency Department of the hospital after his blindfold and gag were removed. Later he was shifted to Ward No. 26. Dr. Kawsar of that Ward

²⁸ BLAST and Others Vs. Bangladesh and Others, 55 DLR 323. The High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh enumerated 15 directives regarding the arrest, detention and interrogation of accused persons in order to avoid and prevent torture in remand/custody. In 2013, the Parliament also passed a torture prevention Act.

²⁹ Student wing of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

³⁰ Student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami

³¹ Youth wing of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

admitted him. Arafat was under the treatment of Dr. Kawsar with police protection for 4 months and 22 days at Bed No. 33. On January 7, 2014 Arafat's leg was operated on. But he had to go for another operation on January 12 due to infection and his left leg had to be amputated. On January 7, 2014, Sub Inspector Abu Sadek of Pahartoli Police Station, being a plaintiff, filed two cases accusing 13 persons, including Arafat under the Arms and Explosives Act. As per law, arrestees need to be produced before the court within 24 hours of arrest. But in this case, police detained Arafat in Chittagong Medical College Hospital under their custody for 4 months and 22 days without sending him to the Court, which is a gross violation of Section 61³² of the Code of Criminal Procedure. On March 13, 2014 investigating officer of the cases filed against Arafat under the Arms and Explosives Act, Sub Inspector Toyab Ali of Pahartoli Police Station submitted a charge sheet without showing him as arrested. In the case document, Arafat has been mentioned as being under treatment. The 12 other accused persons were awarded bail from the High Court Division of the Supreme Court; but Arafat did not get it as he was not shown as arrested; as a result, lawyers of Arafat could not appeal for his bail in the Court. On May 6, 2014 when Arafat's lawyers explained the situation to the Court, Chittagong Metropolitan Session Judge, S M Mujidur Rahman ordered the police to produce Arafat in Court on May 14. Due to a hartal on May 14, Arafat was produced before the Court of Chittagong Metropolitan Session Judge, S M Mujidur Rahman on May 19, 2014. The Court rebuked Sub Inspector Toyab Ali of Pahartoli Police Station and gave orders to the jail authority for Arafat's proper treatment. On May 20, 2014 Arafat was released from jail after getting bail from both cases. However, Arafat is still in fear of further police torture and harassment and is staying with relatives.³³

39. Odhikar observes that a section of the members of law enforcement agencies are getting involved in different criminal activities. Despite these allegations and reports, the government does not take any punitive action against erring members of law enforcement. As a result, they are enjoying impunity and increasing the people's mistrust of such agencies. The

³² Section 61 of the Cr.PC: Person arrested not to be detained more than twenty-four hours: No police-officer shall detain in custody a person arrested without warrant for a longer period than under all the circumstances of the case is reasonable, and such period shall not, in the absence of a special order of a Magistrate under section 167, exceed twenty-four hours exclusive of the time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the Magistrate's Court.

³³ Report sent by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Chittagong, 08/05/2014

government cannot avoid its responsibility for this inaction and the criminalisation of law enforcing agencies. Odhikar demands the government immediately bring members of law enforcement agencies involved in criminal activities to proper and effective justice.

Allegations of enforced disappearance against law enforcement agencies

40. Many incidents of enforced disappearance took place across the country before and after the controversial elections on January 5, 2014. These incidents still continue. The whereabouts of persons remain unknown after they are picked up by men alleging to be members of law enforcement agencies. The families of the victims claim that the members of law enforcement agencies are making arrests and since then the victims have been disappeared or their bodies are later found.³⁴ Law enforcement agencies deny any involvement.
41. On April 29, 2014 seven people, including Panel Mayor of Narayanganj City Corporation, Nazrul Islam and Advocate Chandon Kumar Sarkar were killed and their bodies thrown into the Shitalakkha River after being disappeared on April 27, allegedly by RAB-11 head Lt. Col. Tareque Sayeed; Major Arif Hossain; and Lt. Commander M M Rana. This allegation was made by Nazrul's father-in-law Shahidul Islam. Shahidul Islam also alleged that these killings were conducted by RAB for six crore taka, with the help of Sajedul Islam Chowdhury (alias Dipu Chowdhury), son of Disaster and Rehabilitation Minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya; and arranged by Siddhirganj Thana Awami League Vice-President Noor Hossain, over internal conflict in the ruling Awami League; and for establishing supremacy in Narayanganj.³⁵ It is to be mentioned that the head of RAB-11, Lt. Col. Tareque Sayeed is also the son-in-law of Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya.
42. On May 8, 2014 Shahnaz Parvin, the wife of Laksam Municipality unit BNP President, Humayun Kabir Parvez, in a press conference organised in Laksam, Comilla, claimed that former MP and Laksam BNP President, Saiful Islam Hiru and Humayun Kabir Parvez were disappeared by the

³⁴ Odhikar only documents allegation 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.

³⁵ The daily Jugantor, 06/05/2014

former head of RAB-11, Lt. Col. Tareque Sayeed. Their whereabouts are unknown since November 27, 2013.³⁶

43. Allegations of disappearance and killing of seven people at a time and the alleged involvement of a Minister's family have greatly increased the level of corruption and impunity in RAB and law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh and violate the constitutional and legal framework of the country. It is alleged that a number of RAB and police officers are involved in criminal activities due to being politically misused for a long time. This is a dangerous indicator of the deteriorating law and order situation. In the past, incidents of enforced disappearance were denied by responsible persons of the government and no action was taken against any member of law enforcement agencies, despite having evidence after investigation by the Home Ministry. As a result, incidents of enforced disappearance continue.
44. Odhikar expresses grave concern regarding the incidents of 'enforced disappearance'. It demands that the Government take stern action against the perpetrator by forming an impartial and independent inquiry committee.

Attempt made to abduct human rights defender Mohammad Nur Khan

45. On May 15, 2014 there was an attempt to abduct Mohammad Nur Khan, the Director of the Information and Investigation Cell of NGO Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), from in front of the ASK office in Lalmatia, Dhaka. Mohammad Nur Khan informed Odhikar that at around 5:10 pm, he along with his colleague took a rickshaw from outside the office after finishing work. At that time he saw a microbus about 30/35 yards ahead. When his rickshaw took a left turn, the microbus started following them. At that time, one of the passengers of the microbus was looking at him through the window. He also saw a man sitting in the microbus with a shotgun and the ages of the other men were between 28 and 30 years. Assessing the situation, he jumped off the rickshaw and ran back to the office.
46. Odhikar expresses grave concern over this incident and believes that Mohammad Nur Khan's life is in danger due to his being vocal against human rights violations.

³⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 10/05/2014

Meetings and assemblies prohibited

47. The right to freedom of assembly and the holding of peaceful meetings, rallies and processions are the democratic and political rights of every citizen as enshrined in Article 37 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The government and ruling party put up barriers to holding meetings and also attacked meetings and assemblies of the Opposition and groups that have alternative beliefs.
48. On May 3, 2014 police stopped the human chain programme organised by eminent citizens of the country at the South Plaza of the National Parliament to protest enforced disappearance, murder and kidnapping. Police arrested the owner of the megaphones and the rickshaw puller who carried them. Police also snatch away the banner, festoons and leaflets which were brought for the assembly.³⁷
49. On May 10, 2014 BNP organised an assembly in front of Narayanganj City BNP office in protest of the disappearance and murders of seven men in Narayanganj, including Advocate Chandon Sarkar and Narayanganj City Corporation Panel Mayor, Nazrul Islam. The said assembly was organised there as the administration did not allow BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to hold an assembly on May 14 in Narayanganj. A large number of police surrounded the BNP office and took away megaphones and banners. As a result, Narayanganj City BNP could not hold its rally.³⁸ Police did not allow a rally participated by victims family members, in protest of the on-going enforced disappearances, killings and abductions. On May 22, 2014 at 4.00 pm, BNP organised the assembly and rally at the auditorium of Dhaka Engineers Institute. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was supposed to deliver her speech as the chief guest. The meeting was organised in order to gather public opinion for disbanding RAB for their alleged involvement in enforced disappearance and killings. The party activists and victim families started gathering at the venue from 2.00 pm; but no one was able to enter the auditorium of the Engineers Institute due to police barricades. Police also locked the main gate of the auditorium. At around 2.30 pm police baton charged BNP leaders and activists and members of victim families, as they tried to get into the auditorium. Despite having permission to hold this programme, it had to be cancelled.³⁹

³⁷ The daily Naya Diganta, 04/05/2014

³⁸ Report sent by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Narayanganj

³⁹ Information gathered by Odhikar, 10/05/2014

50. On May 24, 2014 police stopped the rally organised by Jatiyotabadi Ainjibi Forum at the Supreme Court premises, held in protest of the killing of Advocate Chandon Kumar Sarkar and the on-going incidents of disappearance, killings and abduction. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was supposed to deliver her speech as the chief guest in the meeting. From the night of May 23, police interfered in and tried to halt the preparations being made for the programme. The entry points of the Supreme Court were blocked with iron fences by police, who also harassed and checked lawyers entering the Court premises. Furthermore, police kept the whole area blocked by taking control of the roads around the Supreme Court. They also arrested 15 lawyers from the Supreme Court.⁴⁰
51. Odhikar believes that this kind of prohibition and attacks on peaceful protest meetings and rallies are tantamount to interference with the democratic rights of the citizens of Bangladesh.

Freedom of the media

52. In May 2014, according to information gathered by Odhikar, one journalist was killed, five were injured, 15 were assaulted, one was threatened and one was sued. It has been alleged that in most cases, leaders and activists of the ruling party were involved in such incidents. Incidents of attack on journalists occur during the time of gathering news/information or due to publishing reports.
53. On May 5, 2014 Chhatra League activists beat a student named Rassel with bamboo rods on the assumption that he was a Shibir activist, at the Proctor's Office of the Jagannath University. Journalists went to the Proctor's Office to collect information about the incident when Jagannath University unit Chhatra League President FM Shariful Islam made obscene comments against them. When journalists protested, Chhatra League activists Kanon, Riyan, Rassel, Saimon, Asad, Mamun, Rony, led by Shariful Islam, attacked and beat Bangla News reporter Imran Ahmed; Bangladesh Protidin reporter, Mahbub Momtazi; and Shokaler Khabor reporter, Tanvir Ahmed in the presence of the Proctor, at the conference room of the Vice-Chancellor. During this time, 25 journalists were confined by Chhatra League activists and Shariful Islam was heard to comment, "Nothing will happen if one or two journalists' are killed".⁴¹

⁴⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 25/05/2014

⁴¹ The daily Manabzamin, 06/05/2014

54. On May 6, 2014 Khulna Metropolitan unit Jubo League leader Nazmul Sardar, along with his associates, went to Bagerhat to inaugurate an office belonging to the Transport Owners Association at Zero Point in Bagerhat. Another Jubo League leader Hafiz obstructed them, which triggered a clash between the two groups. Khulna Bureau Chief of Channel 24, Mamun Reza and a cameraperson, Khairul Alam were taking video footage for a feature on transportation with excessive passengers on the Khulna-Satkhira Highway, before this altercation started. They were caught up in the attack and Khairul Alam's skull was fractured and Mamun Reza got badly hurt.⁴²
55. On May 13, 2014 the Special Correspondent of the daily Prothom Alo, Shishir Modol was confined and beaten several times by the head of the Cardiac Department of Z A Sikdar Women's Medical College Hospital, Dr. Safiul Azam, when he went to collect information for a news report. Later Shishir Modol was admitted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University with severe injuries. He filed a case in this regard with Hazaribagh Police Station.⁴³
56. Odhikar expresses concern over the attacks on journalists while they carry their professional duty. Good, effective journalism, free from bias, acts as a social, cultural, political and legal indicator to the health of a country.

The trial of Mahmudur Rahman, Acting Editor of the daily Amar Desh, commences in Special Court

57. On May 28, 2014 the hearing of a case filed by the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) against the daily Amar Desh Acting Editor, Mahmudur Rahman commenced in the Special Judge Court set up at the Alia Madrassa ground in Bokshi Bazaar, Dhaka. Terming the ACC's case false, baseless and politically motivated, the lawyers of Mahmudur Rahman said that this case cannot be continued under any circumstances. However the Court has framed charges against him and fixed the dates for prosecution. At the beginning of the hearing Mahmudur Rahman, with Court's permission said, "ACC is being used as a repressive tool of the government. I do not anticipate any justice during an illegitimate regime. The fact of this case is that the ACC has filed it under instructions from the illegitimate Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and based it on false and fabricated information gathered by politically motivated officials of the Prime Minister's Office.

⁴² Report sent by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Khulna.

⁴³ The daily Prothom Alo, 14/05/2014

The ACC has taken cognizance of this false information”. In addition to that, Mahmudur Rahman also informed the Court that he was not given proper medical treatment in jail despite having Court Orders.⁴⁴

Public lynching continues

58. In May 2014, 11 people were reportedly killed due to public lynching.
59. Odhikar believes that the lack of respect for law; distrust of law enforcement agencies; the weak criminal justice system; and instability in the country has increased insecurity among people, who have resorted to taking the law into their own hands, fearing that they will not get justice any other way.

Violence against religious minority communities

60. Some influential and vested interest groups are attacking citizens belonging to religious minority communities over such issues as land and for extortion. Incidents of attacks on minority groups are being politicised and thus action cannot be taken against the perpetrators. Such incidents are continuing as the perpetrators are not punished.
61. On May 11, 2014 a group of criminals, led by local Awami League leader Bazlur Rahman Nayeem, attacked and beat citizens belonging to the Hindu community, while grabbing property belonging to a Hindu crematorium in Moharajpur village under Niamotpur Upazila in Naogaon District. During the attack, criminals vandalized images of Lord Shiva at a temple close to the crematorium and also set fire to the temple.⁴⁵
62. Odhikar condemns the crime of attacks on citizens belonging to minority communities. Odhikar urges the government to ensure the protection of the citizens belonging to all minority communities.

Situation of ready-made garment workers

63. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in May 2014, 49 workers were injured by the police and 12 workers were terminated during protests for due wages and other reasons.
64. On May 5, 2014 workers of Provotex Apparel Limited in Savar, blocked the Dhaka-Aricha Highway over the demand for overdue wages. Receiving this

⁴⁴ The daily Amar Desh online.com, 29/05/2014

⁴⁵ The daily Manabzamin, 14/05/2014

information, industrial police reached the spot and asked workers to leave the blockade. The angry workers declared that they would not leave the highway without their wages. Police baton charged at them; and at least 15 workers were injured.⁴⁶

65. Garment manufacturing factories are a very large source of revenue for Bangladesh and the factory workers are one of the main contributing factors to this success. The termination of workers without valid reasons, closing down of factories without prior notice, and the habit of not paying wages on time, violate their human rights; and these violations continue.

Violence against women

66. In May 2014, many women became victims of rape, dowry related violence, acid attacks and sexual harassment.

Dowry-related violence

67. In May 2014, according Odhikar documentation, 17 women were subjected to dowry violence. Of these women, it has been alleged that eight women were killed because of dowry, eight were abused in various ways over dowry demands and one committed suicide. Some incidents are as follows:
68. On May 4, 2014, a housewife named Aakhi Begum (22) was beaten to death allegedly by her husband Akram Mondol over dowry demands at Shalikha Purbapara village under Sonatola Upazila in Bogra District. Aakhi's father filed a case with Sonatola Police Station accusing three persons under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000. The Officer-in-Charge of Sonatola Police Station, Mohammad Khalekuzzaman said Akram often beat and ill-treated Aakhi for dowry during the seven years of their marriage. On that day, Akram beat Aakhi and killed her, following an altercation over the issue. He then hanged her body from the ceiling of her room and left.⁴⁷
69. On May 13, 2014, Biplob Hossain tried to kill his wife, Shompa Begum (22) by pouring kerosene on her and setting her on fire, at Chokrampur village under Sadar Upazila of Naogaon District. Various portions of Shompa's body were burnt. Neighbours rescued the housewife and took her to

⁴⁶ The daily Manabzamin, 05/05/2014

⁴⁷ The Daily Star, 06/05/2014

Naogaon Sadar Upazila Hospital in a critical condition. Police arrested two accused men named Azahar and Gittu in regard to this.⁴⁸

Acid violence

70. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in May 2014, it was reported that three women, two men and one girl became victims of acid violence.
71. On May 7, 2014, a schoolgirl named Suborna Akhter (13) became a victim of acid throwing after coming to attend a marriage ceremony in Mohisherchor village under Sadar Upazila of Madaripur District. On that day, Badsha Khandker, son of Rokman Khandker of Brahmondi village under Madaripur Sadar Upazila, was supposed to marry Lisa, daughter of Ismail Khan in Mohisherchor village under the same Upazila. But the marriage broke over an altercation between both sides due to various reasons. At around 9:30 pm member's of the grooms family entered the bride's house and threw acid, targeting the bride. It missed the target and hit bride's niece, Suborna.⁴⁹
72. Incidents of acid throwing are occurring due to lack of implementation of the Acid Crimes Prevention Act 2002 and the Acid Control Act 2002, as well as ineffective investigation and a weak criminal justice system.

Rape

73. In May 2014, Odhikar recorded a total number of 61 females who were raped. Among them, 20 were women, 37 were children below the age of 16 and the age of four persons could not be determined. Of the women, two were killed after being raped; nine were victims of gang rape. Out of the 37 child victims, six were killed after being raped; five were victims of gang rape. Furthermore, five girls were victims of attempted rape. Some incidents are given below:
74. On May 11, 2014 a six-year old child was strangled to death after being raped in Savar. Police arrested the rapist, Selim Mia (24) on May 12 from the Akran area of Birulia Union in Savar. Selim is the son of Kabir Uddin of Tona village under Sadar Upazila in Pirozepur District. Selim admitted that he strangled the girl to death.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ The daily Manabzamin and the Daily Ittefaq, 14/05/2014

⁴⁹ The daily Bangladesh Protidin, 09/05/2014

⁵⁰ The daily Jugantor, 13/05/2014

75. On May 10, 2014 a mentally disabled girl was gang raped by criminals in Ratanpur village under Sokhipur Upazila in Tangail District. It was learnt that four criminals of Hatibandha village raped the girl in a jungle while she was returning to Berabari village from her maternal uncle's house at Hatibandha. Later she was handed over to four other criminals of Ratanpur area who also gang-raped her. The victim was admitted to Tangail General Hospital. On May 13, 2014, her uncle, as plaintiff, filed a case with Sokhipur Police Station accusing eight criminals. Police arrested three accused persons, including Ramprashad, Alam Mia and Polash.⁵¹

Sexual harassment and stalking

76. According to information gathered by Odhikar, a total of 22 girls and women were victims of sexual harassment in May 2014. Among them, four were injured, three were abducted and 15 were sexually harassed in various ways. During this period, three men and a woman were injured by the stalkers when they protested against such acts.

77. Odhikar expresses serious concerns over the increase in violence against women. Odhikar believes that women are being victimized mainly due to lack of implementation of laws; failure of the Judiciary; lack of victim and witness protection; corruption and criminalisation of the members of law enforcement agencies; economic instability; and weak administration. Odhikar believes that since the perpetrators of violence against women escape punishment due to various reasons, potential violators are encouraged and incidents of violence increase. Odhikar demands that the perpetrators be brought to effective and proper justice.

Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (Amended in 2009 and 2013) is yet to be repealed

78. The repressive Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (amended in 2009 and 2013)⁵² (ICT Act) is still in existence. The latest

⁵¹ The daily Manabzamin, 14/05/2014

⁵² In 2013, the amendment made to the Act made the offence mentioned in Section 57 non-bailable and cognizable. Section 57 of the ICT Act states: (1) If any person deliberately publishes or transmits or causes to be published or transmitted in the website or in electronic form any material which is fake and obscene or its effect is such as to tend to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances, to read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it, or causes to deteriorate or creates possibility to deteriorate law and order, prejudice the image of the State or person or causes to hurt or may hurt religious belief or instigate against any person or organization, then this activity of his will be regarded as an offence.

amendment to the ICT Act was made on October 6, 2013. Section 57 of the ICT Act 2013, states that publishing or transmitting in a website in electronic form, of any defamatory or false information is considered to be a cognizable and non-bailable offence. Moreover, punishment for committing this offence has been increased for a term of a minimum of seven years and maximum of 14 years imprisonment. This law has curtailed the freedom of expression and the government is using this Act against human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers and people who have alternative beliefs.

79. Odhikar urges the government to repeal this repressive law immediately.⁵³

NGO Affairs Bureau is yet to release Odhikar's funds

80. The NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), which is under the Prime Minister's Office, has been putting up barriers against releasing funds for Odhikar's programmes to be implemented. The government has taken such a strategy to stop Odhikar from functioning as an effective human rights watch dog. Activities of the two-year 10-month project on 'Human Rights Research and Advocacy', funded by the Netherlands Embassy was accomplished in June 2013 but the NGOAB did not release its last phase of funds till date. This project had been implemented mainly to document, research and advocate on human rights violations by the Indian Border Security Force along the border, extrajudicial killings, political violence, rights of the religious and ethnic minority communities and violence against women. In order to implement the project on time, Odhikar had to borrow money from its general funds. It is to be mentioned that the NGOAB had been putting barriers to release fund of this project since October 2010.

81. After completion of the first year activities under the 'Education on the Convention against Torture and OPCAT Awareness Programme in Bangladesh' project, funded by the European Union, Odhikar applied for the release of funds for the second year's activities on March 6, 2013. On May 15, 2013 the Bureau gave 50% of the funds for the second year, after three months of the submission of Odhikar's request. On August 21, 2013 Odhikar submitted an application to the NGO Affairs Bureau for releasing the remaining 50% of funds, along with a project completion audit report of the first year. The NGOAB has been reluctant to give fund clearance to the

(2) Whoever commits offence under sub-section (1) of this section he shall be punishable for a term of minimum of seven years' imprisonment and a maximum of 14 years or a fine of Taka one crore or both.

⁵³ The ICT Act 2006 (Amended in 2009) is also the law under which the Secretary and Director of Odhikar have been charged.

said project. Over a year has passed, still the NGOAB has not released the remaining 50% of the project funds.

82. On April 9, 2014 Odhikar submitted an audit report and applied for the release of second year funds under 'Empowering Women as Community Human Rights Defenders' project, funded by the Finnish NGO Foundation for Human Rights (KIOS) after the completion of first year activities. The project was designed to take effective action in order to stop violence against women in four districts. Odhikar is facing difficulties to implement the project activities for the second year due to non-release of funds.
83. Odhikar urges the government to release its funding so as to continue its human rights activities.

Statistics: January-May 2014*							
Type of Human Rights Violation		January	February	March	April	May	Total
Extrajudicial killings**	Crossfire	20	13	7	14	5	59
	Tortured to death	0	2	1	0	2	5
	Shot to death	18	1	6	4	1	30
	Beaten to death	1	1	1	0	1	4
	Total	39	17	15	18	9	98
Disappearances		1	7	2	18	0	28
Human rights violations by Indian BSF	Bangladeshis Killed	1	1	2	2	4	10
	Bangladeshis Injured	4	3	3	2	1	13
	Bangladeshis Abducted	13	8	12	4	17	54
Death in Jail		1	5	4	7	5	22
Attack on journalists	Killed	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Injured	2	9	7	25	5	48
	Threatened	1	1	3	2	1	8
	Assaulted	0	1	0	2	15	18
	Arrested	4	0	0	0	0	4
Political violence	Killed	53	10	22	17	17	119
	Injured	1472	1166	1343	593	412	4986
Dowry related violence (including women victims, their children and relatives)		12	15	14	22	18	81
Rape		39	50	40	55	61	245
Sexual harassment /Stalking of women		14	12	29	25	22	102
Acid Violence		1	3	6	5	6	21
Public lynching		16	6	11	13	11	57
RMG Workers	Killed	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Injured	60	135	65	51	49	360

*Odhikar's documentation

**From January-May, 19 persons were extra judicially killed by the law enforcement agencies which is also included in the statistical part of Political Violence

Recommendations

1. The Government should protest strongly against human rights violations on Bangladeshi citizens by the Indian BSF and Border Guard Police of Myanmar and take initiatives to investigate and make the Indian and Myanmar Government accountable; and seek compensation for the families of the victims. The Government should also ensure the safety and security of the Bangladeshi citizens residing at the border areas. The government also needs to raise the issue of Rohingya refugees and their rehabilitation at regional and international forums.
2. Political violence must be stopped. The Government should take legal action against criminal acts perpetrated by its party activists. Free and fair Parliamentary elections must be held immediately by ensuring participation of all political parties, under a neutral, interim government.
3. Incidents of extrajudicial killings and torture by law enforcement agencies must be investigated and the perpetrators be brought to effective justice. The Government should ratify the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture.
4. The Government has to explain all incidents of enforced disappearances and killing allegedly perpetrated by the law enforcement agencies. The Government must bring the members of the security forces who are involved in the incidents of enforced disappearance and killing to justice. Odhikar urges the government to accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance adopted by the UN on December 20, 2006.
5. Peaceful meetings and assemblies should not be obstructed. The Government should refrain from attacking peaceful programmes and carrying out repressive, unconstitutional activities.
6. The Government must investigate incidents of attacks on journalists and take legal measures to punish the perpetrators. Freedoms of speech and expression must be ensured.
7. The Government should take all measures to protect the rights of the citizens belonging to religious and ethnic minority communities and ensure their security. The Government has also to ensure their right to perform religious and cultural practices.
8. Human rights violations of readymade garment factory workers must be stopped.
9. The Government must ensure the effective implementation of laws to stop violence against women and the offenders must be effectively punished. The

Government should also execute mass awareness programmes in print and electronic media in order to eliminate violence against women.

10. The repressive Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (Amended in 2009 and 2013) should immediately be repealed. All repressive measure taken against Odhikar must be withdrawn.
11. The NGO Affairs Bureau should release funds of Odhikar to continue its human rights activities.

Tel: +88-02-9888587, Fax: +88-02-9886208

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

Website: 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, with assistance from trained local human rights defenders.
4. Odhikar is consistent in its human rights reporting and is committed to remain so.