



May 25, 2015

International Week of the Disappeared
25–29 May 2015

Enforced disappearance is crime against humanity and considered an international crime. It also violates the fundamental rights of the Constitution of Bangladesh. Article 2 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance defines disappearance as the ‘arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law.’

The International Week of the Disappeared was first initiated by the Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of Disappeared-Detainees (FEDEFAM) in 1981 and adopted by many organizations of families of the disappeared and people’s organizations world-wide. The commemoration was also meant to step up the campaign against enforced disappearances which were then at their peak during the dark years of the dictatorship in many Latin American countries. Every year, during the last week of May, the families of the disappeared commemorate this week. Accordingly, Odhikar is observing the IWD from 25–29 May 2015 to pay tribute and solidarity to the victims of enforced disappearance and their families.

Odhikar, as a member of the Asian Federation against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), has been documenting the cases of enforced disappearance in Bangladesh and campaigning for the ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance since 2009. According to information gathered by Odhikar, from 2009 to April 2015, 205 people have allegedly ‘disappeared’. Among this large number, 28 people were found dead after being disappeared; 65 persons were set free after allegedly being left in different areas; and some were brought to courts and shown as having been arrested in criminal cases, a long time after being disappeared. The whereabouts of 112 are still unknown. Families of the disappeared people alleged that RAB, police and Detective Branch (DB) of the police were involved in the incidents of enforced disappearance.

Till now 94 countries signed and 46 State parties ratified the International Convention of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. On the International Week of the Disappeared, Odhikar urges the Government of Bangladesh to accede to the International Convention of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance to establish human rights and rule of law. Odhikar demands that the Government of Bangladesh thoroughly investigate each incident of disappearance speedily and efficiently; and give back the disappeared persons immediately to their family.