



November 24, 2015

## ***International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women 2015***

### Statement of Odhikar

November 25 is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. This year, the slogan for the day is 'Prevention'. In 1981, November 25 was declared as the International Day to eliminate violence against women in a conference on violence against women held in Latin America. On December 17, 1999, the United Nations officially designated the day to be observed worldwide. Sixteen years have passed since, but women in Bangladesh are still facing various forms of violence; mostly domestic violence, including dowry-related violence; rape; acid attacks; various forms of sexual harassment and discrimination. In order to make public and private spaces safe, secure and discrimination free for all women, we have to build resistance against the violence.

According to information gathered by Odhikar, from January to October 2015, 98 women have been killed, 63 women were physically abused and 6 women committed suicide due to dowry related violence. During this time, 33 women were victims of acid violence and 253 women and 409 children were raped. Moreover, between January and October 2015, 156 girls have been victims of sexual harassment and 79 women were victim of attempted rape.

In many cases, the perpetrators are getting impunity because of lack of implementation of law, a weak criminal justice system, corruption in police and administration, erosion of social values, criminalisation of politics and political patronisation of perpetrators. As a result, rule of law is being questioned and the perpetrators are being encouraged to commit such crimes repeatedly.

Odhikar's recommendations to stop violence against women:

- The Government must ensure proper implementation of the existing laws to stop violence against women;
- Rape cases should not be withdrawn due to political pressure or consideration;
- Cases of violation against women should be brought under the present speedy trial procedures to ensure justice;
- The Judiciary must be sensitive and impartial and free from any influence which would be detrimental against the victim of violence;
- The print and electronic media, and school textbooks must contain long-term awareness activities at all levels;
- The Government should enact a victim and witness protection law to ensure that victims and witnesses of all acts of violence and other criminal offences, are able to give statements and evidence under protection and with no fear of further threats, intimidation or harassment.