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Human Rights Monitoring Report

November 1 – 30, 2015

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Odhikar believes that 'democracy' is a form of the State and that freedom and human rights are its foundations. Democracy is not merely a process of electing a ruler; it is the result of the peoples' struggle for inalienable rights, which become the fundamental premise to constitute the State. 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 basis of democracy 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 willingness, commitment and capacity to ensure human rights, dignity and integrity of citizens. If the state does not ensure full participation in the decision making process at all levels – from the lowest level of administration to the highest level – it cannot be called a 'democratic' state. Citizens realise their rights and responsibilities through participation and decision making processes. The awareness

about the rights of others and collective benefits and responsibilities, can be ensured and implemented through this process as well. There is no alternative. The Parliament, Judiciary and Executive cannot and should not, have any power to abrogate fundamental civil and political rights through any legislation, Judicial verdict or Executive order, as such rights are inviolable and are the foundational principles of the State.

Odhikar, being an organisation of human rights defenders in Bangladesh, has been struggling to ensure internationally recognised civil and political rights of citizens. Odhikar stands against all forms of human rights violations; and participates and remains directly involved in the human rights movement in Bangladesh. The dimension of constituting a democratic state has been achieved through historical movements and the universality of these civil and political rights has been established worldwide through various international declarations, conventions and treaties.

Odhikar does not believe that the human rights movement merely endeavours to protect the 'individual' from violations perpetrated by the state; rather, it believes that the movement to establish the rights and dignity of every individual is part of the struggle to constitute Bangladesh as a democratic state. As part of its mission, Odhikar monitors the human rights situation in order to promote and protect civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of Bangladeshi citizens and to report on violations and defend the victims. In line with this campaign, Odhikar prepares and releases human rights status reports every month. The Organisation has released this human rights monitoring report of November 2015, despite facing persecution and continuous harassment and threats to its existence since August 10, 2013.

Political violence

1. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in November 2015, seven persons were killed and 551 were injured in political violence. 35 incidents of internal violence in the Awami League and three in the BNP¹ were also recorded during this period. Two persons were killed and 427 were injured in the internal conflicts of the Awami League while 51 persons were injured in conflicts within the BNP.
2. The political situation of Bangladesh is in a deep crisis due to the absence of an accountable government. The law and order situation of the country has deteriorated seriously and incidents of killing continue. Members of the law enforcement agencies are also being attacked and killed by criminals and

¹ BNP: Bangladesh Nationalist Party

incidents of attacks and killing foreigners has taken the country by shocked surprise. In this prevailing situation, the Election Commission has declared Municipality Elections under a political banner. At the same time, the Joint Forces and police have been conducting operations and randomly arresting leaders and activists of the opposition parties, over allegations of 'destructive activities'. Furthermore, allegations have been made from different districts, that meetings and assemblies of the BNP are being stopped by the government. Criminalisation of the Chhatra League² and Jubo League³ and intra-party clashes also continue unabated. These groups are directly involved in violent altercations with lethal weapons. Some incidents are as follows:

3. On November 4, 2015 a Constable named Mukul Hossain of the Industrial Police, was attacked and stabbed to death in broad daylight by criminals at a Dhaka-Tangail highway check post in Baroipara of Ashulia under Savar Upazila in Dhaka. During the attack, criminals tried to snatch away the guns from the police and when police resisted, they stabbed and seriously wounded Mukul Hossain and Nure Alam. During this time, three other policemen escaped from there leaving their guns behind. Four more policemen were injured during the attack.⁴
4. On November 6, 2015 a violent altercation took place between activists of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal or JSD (the Inu supported faction) and activists of Awami League, in Chandgram Village under Bheramara Upazila in Kushtia District over establishing supremacy in the area. On behalf of JSD, the clash was led by Minaz Mandol, Amin and Kota Malitha; and by Omar Mandol on behalf of Awami League. At least 10 persons from both sides were injured.⁵ In the early morning of November 11, 2015, JSD supporter Babul Mandol succumbed to his injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. When news of the death of Babul Mondol spread, on November 12, JSD activists attacked and vandalized the houses belonging to Awami League supporters and also set fire to some of them.⁶
5. On November 14, 2015 a clash took place between supporters of former Convener of Bianibazar Upazila unit Chhatra League, Abul Kashem and supporters of Chhatra League leader Pavel Mahmud, over establishing supremacy in Bianibazar Government College in Sylhet. At one stage of the altercation, supporters of one group entered a classroom. When supporters of the other group tried to enter the same classroom, a clash occurred between the two groups. At that time, activists and supporters of both groups

² Student wing of Awami League

³ Youth wing of Awami League

⁴ The daily Jugantor, 05/11/2015

⁵ The daily Manabzamin, 08/11/2015

⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 13/11/2015

indiscriminately opened fire in the classroom. At least eight people, including two Chhatra League activists, Bayezid Mahmud and Saju Ahmed, were injured.⁷

Elections, mass arrests and the human rights situation in jails

6. On November 2, 2015 the President of Bangladesh issued an Ordinance by amending the Local Government Act, incorporating the provision of holding elections under political party symbols. This was published on November 3, 2015 as a Gazette. On November 9, the Cabinet approved the amended draft law. Decisions were made through this amendment that all local government elections, including the upcoming Pourashova (Municipality) Elections, will be held under a political banner.⁸ On November 5, the Election Commission (EC) sent the final draft of the electoral Code of Conduct to the Law Ministry for vetting, after the issuance of this Ordinance for holding local government elections with political identification and symbols. It was mentioned in the draft Code of Conduct of the Election Commission that the Prime Minister, Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Ministers, Chief Whip, Leader of the Opposition, Deputy leader of the Parliament, Deputy leader of the Opposition, State Ministers, Deputy Ministers or any person who has the same status and government facility; Whip, Mayor of the City Corporation and Members of Parliament, will be able to take part in election campaigns. It is to be noted that the above-mentioned persons were unable to take part in the election campaign under the previous Electoral Rules and Code of Conduct.⁹ The EC did not take the opinion of the people, or the opposition political parties before finalising the electoral Rules for Municipality Elections, although this was the first time such elections were being held under political party symbols. Later the EC deviated from its proposal to amend the Rules due to massive criticism. On November 22, the National Parliament passed three Bills keeping the provisions of holding elections under party symbols only for Mayor elections in Municipalities, Chairman elections in Upazilas and Union Parishad elections. The EC has declared the election schedule on November 24 and the Municipality polls will be held on December 30 in 236 Municipalities.¹⁰ The leaders and activists of the ruling party are reportedly winning elections through fake votes by forcefully taking over or 'capturing' polling centres; and attacking candidates belonging to the opposition political

⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 15/11/2015

⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 10/11/2015 and the daily Manabzamin, 12/11/2015. Local elections had always involved a process where people would vote for popular local figures, who are candidates with no political colour. Giving local level elections a political identity by the use of these symbols will drive away this practice.

⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 11/11/2015

¹⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 01/12/2015

party, in the local government elections held in recent times. However, the Election Commission did not take any action against such irregularities and criminal offences. The EC has violated its constitutional oath by favouring and being subservient to the ruling party; and has totally failed to hold elections in a free, fair and impartial manner. In the meanwhile, allegations have been found that the leaders and activists of the opposition parties have been arrested indiscriminately across the country, as the preparations for holding Pourashova Elections take place. Many were allegedly arrested merely due to their political identity. Members of civil society in the country believe that, the upcoming Pourashova Elections cannot be held in free and fair manner under party symbols and patronage.

7. In November 2015, the Joint Forces and police reportedly arrested 5481 persons by conducting special drives across the country. Most of the arrestees are engaged with the politics of opposition political parties - BNP and Jamaat-Shibir. Many of the arrestees had no cases filed or warrants of arrest against them. Houses belonging to the leaders and supporters of BNP-Jamaat have been locked and shops and business institutions closed.¹¹ During this period, the Vice-Chairman of Chitalmari Upazila under Bagerhat District and the President of the Upazila unit Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal¹², Runa Gazi was arrested along with her 13-month old baby.¹³ Ward No. 3 of Pallabi Thana unit BNP President Abu Taiyab recently returned home after Haj and has been arrested over allegations of assisting in destructive activities of Jamaat-Shibir during the period he was at Haj. He even showed the police relevant documents as evidence of his absence from Bangladesh, but to no avail.¹⁴
8. As a result of these mass arrests, the prisons of Bangladesh are facing tremendous pressure, causing a human disaster due to even more overcrowding. The total official capacity of all sixty-eight prisons in the country is 34,460. However, as of November 15, 2015 there were a total of 78,822 inmates in the jails.¹⁵ The prison authority is also struggling to maintain such huge numbers. According to sources, there is insufficient space for sleeping and a scarcity of food, medicine, water and sanitation.¹⁶
9. On November 10, 2015 by-elections for the Chairman candidate of Shingra Upazila Parishad and Vice-Chairman of Gurudaspur Upazila Parishad were marked with irregularities and the capturing of polling centres by supporters of the ruling party. At the beginning of the poll, the ruling party supporters

¹¹ The daily Jugantor, 10/11/2015

¹² Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal is a women wing and affiliated to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

¹³ The daily Naya Diganta, 14/11/2015

¹⁴ The Bangladesh Protidin, 16/11/2015

¹⁵ The Bangladesh Protidin, 16/11/2015

¹⁶ The daily Naya Diganta, 18/11/2015

forcibly ousted the polling agents of BNP-supported candidate, Foyzun Nesa Putul from at least 10 polling centres, including Aagtirail, Bashbaria, Nurpur, Haripur, Rakhalgachha, Raksa under Shingra Upazila. The Upazila unit BNP Secretary General, Advocate Mojibar Rahman Montu alleged that supporters of Awami League-backed candidate Shafiqul Islam Safi forced the voters to stamp ballot papers openly in these polling stations by ousting the polling agents of the BNP-supported candidate. Furthermore, the ruling party and government supporters also snatched away ballot papers from the Presiding Officer and stamped ballot papers at Raksa Polling Centre. In this situation, BNP-supported candidate Foyzun Nesa Putul boycotted the controversial election and organised a press conference to protest. In Gurudaspur Upazila Parishad by-election, Upazila unit BNP President and Upazila Chairman Abdul Aziz's son Mintu; and his nephew's sons Raju and Hamidul, were seriously injured when supporters of the Awami League-backed candidate attacked the Dharabarisa High School polling centre.¹⁷

Hindrance to meetings and assemblies

10. The Government is barring meetings and assemblies of the opposition and groups with alternative beliefs; and also engages the law enforcement agencies to attack such gatherings. The political situation of the country has become repressive as a result of the government's restraint on opposition parties and alternative voices; by taking away the rights to freedom of expression and assembly and curtailing the holding of peaceful meetings and rallies. Some incidents are as follows:
11. On November 5, 2015 the bi-annual conference of Tongibari Upazila unit BNP under Munshiganj District was stopped by police. The conference was to be held at a field in front of the house of the General Secretary of District unit BNP, Ali Azgar Ripon Mallik in Sonarang. Ali Azgar Ripon Mallik said that in the night of November 4, police from Tongibari Police Station visited the meeting spot thrice and instructed the organisers not to hold any meeting or gathering.¹⁸
12. On November 7, 2015 police barred BNP leaders and activists of Chittagong when they went to 'Biplob Udyan' to pay tribute and lay flowers on the occasion of 'Revolution and Solidarity Day'. At that time, police did not allow BNP activists to enter the grounds of the Biplob Udyan.¹⁹
13. Odhikar believes that the present government has led the country towards a fragile and volatile situation by repealing the Constitutional provision of

¹⁷ The daily Manabzamin and Naya Diganta, 11/11/2015

¹⁸ The daily Manabzamin, 06/11/2015

¹⁹ The daily Manabzamin, 08/11/2015

conducting Parliamentary elections under a non-partisan caretaker government. As a result, human rights violations, criminalisation of politics and the poor law and order situation have caused deterioration at all levels, under the current government; who assumed power without the people's mandate and through a controversial Parliamentary Election on January 5, 2014. Odhikar demands an impartial election with the participation of all political parties, under a neutral government or under the supervision of the United Nations; in order to make a democratic and accountable government.

Extrajudicial killings continue

14. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in November 2015, 13 persons were killed extra judicially by alleged 'crossfire/encounters/gunfights'. Among them, nine persons were killed by the police and four by RAB. Of the killed, one was a BNP leader, one was a member of Jamaatul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB) and 11 were alleged criminals.
15. The law and justice delivery system of the country is becoming increasingly unstable due to the persistence of extrajudicial killings. Incidents of such killings were claimed to be 'gunfight' or 'crossfire'²⁰ by RAB and police, however, the family members of the victims alleged that their relatives were shot dead by members of law enforcement agencies. The impunity of law enforcement agencies, in terms of extrajudicial killings, is all too common, despite repeated demands to bring the responsible parties to justice.

Allegations of enforced disappearance²¹ against law enforcement agencies continue

16. According to information gathered by Odhikar, from January to November 2015, 59 persons have been disappeared; of them, 34 were shown as arrested after being disappeared; seven persons surfaced alive; and 10 bodies have been found. The whereabouts of eight persons are still unknown.²²

²⁰ On November 15, 2009 a Bench of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, issued a *suo moto* Rule on the government regarding the deaths of two brothers, Lutfar Khalashi and Khairul Khalashi in 'crossfire' in Madaripur. In the Rule the Court asked the government to show why the killings of the two brothers in 'crossfire' would not be declared illegal. On December 14, 2009 the State (Attorney General) appealed for time during the hearing to the same High Court Division Bench. The Court ordered that the practice of 'cross fire' be stopped until the hearing of the case is completed

²¹ Article 2 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance states, "enforced disappearance" as: "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."

²² 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.

17. In Bangladesh enforced disappearance is imposed against people who have been labeled as 'enemies of the State', or pose as a threat; on the pretext of maintaining peace and order and protecting national security. The families of the victims claim that the members of law enforcement agencies are making arrests and since then the victims have disappeared or their bodies are later found. In some cases, law enforcement agencies deny the arrest; but days later, the bodies of the disappeared persons are recovered or the arrested persons are produced in public or handed over to a police station and appear in Court. 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 investigations by the Ministry of Home Affairs.²³ As a result, incidents of enforced disappearance continue. Some incidents are as follows:
18. The family of Mohammad Saifuddin (38) alleged that a group of armed men claiming to be members of the Detective Branch (DB) of Police picked him up from his house on October 28, 2015. Mohammad Saifuddin is a businessman and owner of M/s. Bismillah Aluminum Industries in old Dhaka. Saifuddin's brother-in-law and Manager of Bismillah Aluminum Industries, ASM Badsha Mia informed Odhikar that on October 28 at around 6:45 am, a navy-blue microbus stopped in front of Saifuddin's house at West Shahid Nagar. Two more navy-blue microbuses were parked in Lane No. 4 nearby. Later, five men in plainclothes, with small arms, went to the fourth floor of the house and woke up Saifuddin and told him to open the door, saying that they were from DB Police and Lalbagh Police Station. The armed men also claimed that they had a search warrant for this operation. Some men were also waiting downstairs. Saifuddin opened the door and the men entered the room and asked Saifuddin to come down with them for a discussion. As soon as Saifuddin stepped down, the men forcibly picked him up into a microbus and left. On behalf of Saifuddin's family a General Diary (GD numbered 1244) was filed with Lalbagh Police Station in this regard on October 28, 2015. Saifuddin's family still do not know where he is.²⁴
19. In the early morning of November 9, 2015 a man named Habibur Rahman Sumon (30) was killed in 'gunfight' with the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) during an operation at the Sattola slum in the Mohakhali area of Dhaka. This news was made public through a press conference from RAB Headquarters. Habibur's wife Rokshana Akhter said that they heard about the death of Habibur in the morning. She alleged that on October 5, 2015 a group of men

²³ The daily Prothom Alo, 12/08/2012 <http://archive.prothom-alo.com/detail/date/2012-08-12/news/281302>

²⁴ Information gathered by Odhikar

claiming to be members of the intelligence agency picked up her husband in a gray microbus from the Board Bazaar area of Tongi in Gazipur. She filed a General Diary with Joydebpur Police Station in this regard. 15 days ago, a man named Hafez informed her that Habibur was in the custody of an 'agency' at Minto Road and he took three hundred thousand taka from her after assuring her of organising his release. Hafez cut off all contact after taking the money.²⁵

20. RAB-5 claimed that on November 12, 2015 at around 1:00 am, three men named Rajib Hossain Sumon (25), Noushad Hossain Rubel (27) and Kajol Chandra Burmon (25) were arrested, with arms, from Chapainabaganj Municipal area on suspicion regarding the murder of Japanese citizen Kunio Hoshi. However, the families of the three youths alleged that they were picked up by some men identifying themselves as DB Police, more than a month ago. The family of Noushad Hossain Rubel said that Rubel was picked up by plain clothed men claiming to be DB Police, from his father-in-law's house in Rajshahi three days after Kunio Hoshi's murder. Two of Rubel's brother were later picked up and released after five days. In the meanwhile Rajib Hossain Sumon's mother Bobby Begum said that her son was picked up on October 5, 2015 by members of the law enforcement agency claiming to be DB Police. When they went to the police station to file a General Diary the police did not accept it. The family of Kajol Chandra Burmon alleged that Kajol was picked up and taken by a group of men claiming to be DB Police from the District Judges Court in Rangpur, when he had gone to appear before the court for a case on October 5. On October 8, Kajol's mother Arti Rani Roy filed a General Diary at the local police station in this regard.²⁶ It is to be mentioned that on October 3, 2015 Japanese citizen Kunio Hoshi (65) was shot dead by three men in Alutari Village of Sarai Union under Kaunia Upazila in Rangpur District.
21. On November 20, 2015 Mozaffar Hossain, President of Rangpur Metropolitan unit BNP and the Vice-President of the Central Committee of Jatiyabadi Muktijoddha Dal, was picked up by a group of men in plainclothes claiming to be members of RAB, from his house in Rangpur. Mozaffar's nephew Rubayet Hossain Khan informed Odhikar that at around 5:00 am on November 20, RAB members surrounded their house. Rubayet came out of the house when RAB members called him out. 10 to 15 men asked him to show them his uncle's house. When Rubayet asked for their identity, as they were not in uniform, the men said that they were from RAB. At that time he

²⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 11/11/2015

²⁶ The daily Jugantor, 14/11/2015

saw a microbus and a jeep in front of the house. When he pointed out his uncle Mozaffar's house to the men, they started pushing on the collapsible gate. Mozaffar Hossain came out of the house. The men asked him to come to Rangpur RAB office with them. Mozaffar changed his clothes and when he was getting into the microbus, one of the men took his cell phone. Around 15 minutes later, RAB called Rubayet from Mozaffar's cell phone and said "Mozaffar is with us. You do not worry about him. Come to RAB office tomorrow morning". On November 21, 2015 at around 9:00 am, Rubayet and Mozaffar's wife went to the RAB office. After entering the RAB office, the man who had taken Mozaffar's cell phone from him met them and said that Mozaffar was fine. After that, they decided to wait at the RAB office. However, at noon, RAB denied the arrest or taking of Mozaffar into their custody. Later Mozaffar's family informed this matter to Rangpur Police Station, Office of the Superintendent of Police and Muktiyoddha Sangsad (Freedom-fighters Society).²⁷ On November 24, 2015, RAB-13 claimed that Mozaffar Hossain was arrested from Mohendra Nagar area of Lalmonirhat district. Later he was produced before the Court after showing him as arrested under Section 54²⁸ of the Cr. P.C.

22. Odhikar believes that every incident of alleged enforced disappearance needs to be investigated in an independent and unbiased manner. Odhikar demands that the government take immediate measures to return the disappeared persons to their families and take action against the perpetrators.

Death in jail

23. In November 2015, a reported four persons died in prison due to 'illness'.
24. Jails in Bangladesh are grossly over-crowded. It is alleged that due to lack of effective sanitation and proper treatment facilities and due to negligence by the prison authorities, many prisoners become ill. Furthermore, allegations are made by inmates that they are given sub-standard and small amounts of food; and that the prisoners are ill-treated when they complain against such treatment.
25. Odhikar demands the better treatment for all inmates in every jail. Deprivation of fundamental rights in jail is a violation of human rights.

²⁷ Information gathered by Odhikar

²⁸ Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure allows Police to assert without a warrant if the police have reasonable suspicion that a person has committed a crime. It is a widely misused section of the Law.

Human rights violations on religious minority communities

Attacks at the places of worship belonging to the Hindu community and one of their leaders

26. Incidents of land grabbing, intimidation, extortion and various kinds of illegal activities, including attacks on places of worship belonging to religious minority citizens, continue. Attacks on places of worship have become a common phenomenon during Durja Puja, the largest religious festival of the Hindu community. Such attacks continue due to the unavailability of justice for similar incidents; and also due to the politicisation of these incidents.²⁹
27. On November 5, 2015, at midnight, criminals vandalized the effigy of goddess Lakshmi at Malipara Durga Temple, in Sukhanpukur area under Gabtoli Upazila in Bogra District. The criminals threw the broken effigy into the adjacent pond. The President of Malipara Durga Temple, Promoth Mali said that on November 3, they worshiped goddess Lakshmi in this temple. In the morning of November 6, a housewife named Lili Rani of Malipara informed the people about the incident.³⁰
28. On November 12, 2015 criminals vandalized effigies of goddess Lakshmi at Koibatpara Sri Sri Lakshmi Temple in Courtgaon Village of Koain Union under Sirajdikhan Upazila in Munshiganj District. On November 12 at around 12:45 in the early morning, Courtgaon Village resident, Momo saw the broken hands and head of the effigy of Lakshmi. Later she informed this to the President of the Temple Committee, Babu Nogen Das. Nogen Das said that a few days ago they had worshiped the goddess Lakshmi at the temple. They did not know who had vandalized the effigy.³¹
29. On November 14, 2015 local criminals Rabbi, Anik, Ekmon, Sabuj, Khairul, Niloy and Raja attacked Sarbojanin Sri Sri Shyama Puja Mandir (temple) at Uttarpara under Savar Municipality in Dhaka. During the attack, criminals verbally abused the women and men who had come to worship. Five people, including the priest of the temple, Jibesh were injured in the attack.³²
30. On November 24, 2015 Alok Sen, General Secretary of the Faridpur District unit of the Hindu Buddha Christian Okkya Parishad, was stabbed and injured by criminals in Faridpur. Alok Sen's wife Shikha Ghosh, said that at around

²⁹ The attacks are blamed on the opposition parties and 'religious' groups although eyewitness accounts may state otherwise. See Odhikar's fact finding report on the attacks at Ramu and Cox's Bazaar, dated 29/09/2012 at www.odhikar.org

³⁰ The daily Manabzamin, 07/11/2015

³¹ Report sent by Human Rights Defender associated with Odhikar from Munshiganj.

³² The daily Jugantor, 15/11/2015

4:00 pm, two youths called her husband out from their house at Char Kamalapur and started stabbing him with sharp weapons. Hearing her husband's scream, she rushed out on street and tried to save him. At that time, the two youths pushed her and stabbed her husband again and left. Both the attackers were masked.³³

Attack on Shia Muslim mosque

31. On November 27, 2015 criminals attacked a mosque belonging to the Shia Muslim community in Chokkanu Village under Shibganj Upazila in Bogra District³⁴. Eye-witnesses said that around 15 people were waiting at the mosque for the evening prayer. Three or four men entered the mosque and closed its main door. They opened fire at the Shia Muslims there and left. The Imam of the mosque, Shahinoor Rahman, muezzin (one who calls Muslims to pray) Moazzem Hossain and Abu Taher and Aftab Uddin were shot. Later Moazzem Hossain died at the Shahid Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogra.³⁵

Threats to Christians Priests

32. Bishops and officials of the churches in Rangpur and Dinajpur were given death threats by criminals. A hand written letter in the name of Atul Roy, son of Gonesh Roy of Uttarpara in Dinajpur District, was delivered to Father M. Barnbas of the Baptist Church in Rangpur, by post. He received the letter on November 26, 2015. In the letter threats were given to the priests of 10 Christian organisations, including Father M. Barnbas. Their names were mentioned in the letter. On November 25, 2015 Father Karls, Bishop of Birganj Upazila Catholic Church in Dinajpur, was given death threats through his cell phone.³⁶

33. Odhikar strongly condemns the incidents of attacks on places of worship belonging to the religious minority community and demands the government bring all perpetrators involved in such incidents to justice; and ensure the security of citizens belonging to all minority communities.

³³ The daily Prothom Alo, 25/11/2015

³⁴ It must be noted that in Dhaka, during the Muharram celebrations on October 24, 2015, five bombs exploded midst a large gathering of Shia Muslims who were preparing the Tasia Procession. 150 people were wounded and two people died.

³⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 28/11/2015

³⁶ The daily Manabzamin, 27/11/2015

Freedom of the media and expression

34. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in November 2015, seven journalists were injured and one was threatened.
35. The acts of pressure on the media, threatening and filing cases against journalists continue. Odhikar believes that this kind of action is contrary to the rights to freedom of thought and expression.

Attack on journalists

36. On November 8, 2015 Rajshahi correspondents of Jamuna Television were going to Mohonpur of Rajshahi with an assignment. On the way to Mohonpur, some Jubo League activists, led by local Jubo League leader Hafiz, were collecting extortion money from various vehicles, at Mougachhi Bidirpur area. When journalists were taking photos of this incident, Jubo League activists led by that Jubo League leader attacked the journalists and vandalized their vehicle. Staff reporter of Jamuna TV, Sohrab Hossain and cameraman Tareque Mahmud Rassel were injured during the attack. The injured journalists were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. Though some police personnel from Mohonpur Police Station were present during the incident, they did not come forward to save the journalists.³⁷
37. On November 22, 2015 the body of Salauddin Qader Chowdhury was taken to Raujan in Chittagong for burial, after the execution of his death sentence for crimes committed against humanity. A group of criminals attacked and opened fire on the vehicle of Mohona TV at Gohira Bazar area of Raojan, when journalists were returning from Raujan after covering the burial event. Chittagong Bureau correspondent of Mohona TV, Rajib Sen was shot and injured. Mohona TV's photographer Rimon said that the attackers might have been local Awami League and Chhatra League activists.³⁸

Online media to be registered and to come under the government scanner

38. On November 9, 2015 the Department of Information under the Ministry of Information, through a notification, instructed online media publishers to apply for the registration of online newspapers by December 15, 2015. The Information Ministry has already drafted new policy guidelines to monitor and regulate online media. On October 28, 2015, the Cabinet Committee on Law and Order discussed how the online newspapers and news portals could be held responsible for 'misleading and inconsistent information' and the

³⁷ The daily Jugantor, 09/11/2015

³⁸ The daily Manabzamin, 23/11/2015

need to make the online media accountable. This notification had been issued soon after the instruction given by the government. The government has drafted a National Online Mass Media Policy 2015, which will empower the proposed National Broadcasting Commission to coordinate and monitor online news portals. The new draft policy prescribes a ban on posting what it calls 'misleading and inconsistent' information and data.³⁹

39. Odhikar believes that the government decided to bring online media under registration in order to control freedom of expression and to bar the media belonging to publishers who have alternative beliefs. The present government, after assuming power, has been trying to control the mass media. Currently almost all electronic media are under government control. The government has imposed controls on the newspapers and electronic media belonging to the opposition. The acting Editor of the daily Amar Desh, Mahmudur Rahman has been detained in jail for political reasons from April 11, 2013. Apart from banning the publication of Amar Desh, broadcasting of Diganta TV and Islamic TV were also shut down by the government for reporting on the violent operation of the state security forces against a Hefazate Islam gathering and rally on May 5 and 6, 2013 at Shapla Square in Motijheel, Dhaka.

Hindrance to freedom of expression

40. On November 12, 2015 at around 1:30 am, the Dhaka University authority apprehended Imran, a third year student of the Home Economics Department; a first year student of Bangla Department, Firoze; Abdur Rahman, a third year student of Islamic Studies Department; a first year student of Education and Research Institute, Golam Mostafa; and Hanif, a third year student, from Bijoy Ekattor Hall⁴⁰ of Dhaka University, for giving status on their facebook accounts against the government and the Prime Minister; they were handed over to the Shahbagh Police Station. The Acting Proctor of the University, Professor Dr. M Amzad Ali said that the Proctorial team went to Bijoy Ekattor Hall to apprehend seven students based on information received from the Hall. At that time five students were found but two others could not be caught.⁴¹ The Officer-in-Charge of Shahbagh Police Station, Abu Bakar Siddique informed Odhikar that the arrestees were sent to court after showing them as arrested under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The investigation against them continues.

³⁹ The daily New Age, 10/11/2015

⁴⁰ Students residential hall

⁴¹ The daily Jugantor, 14/11/2015

41. The government blocked almost all social networking media and mobile messaging and internet applications, including Facebook, Viber and WhatsApp from November 18, 2015 for an indefinite period on the pretext of maintaining 'security' in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) at first verbally and later in a written order, asked all mobile phone operators in the country and the International Internet Gateway (IIG) operators to stop social media and networking apps. Such an order had been issued by the BTRC which was signed by the Assistant Director of its Systems and Services Department, Tousif Shahriar. Later on, through a similar order, other mobile messaging and internet applications including Line, Tango and Hangout were stopped. Furthermore, on November 18, 2015 from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm internet connections across the country were shut.⁴² It is to be mentioned that in January 2015, the government blocked Viber, Tango, WhatsApp, Mypeople and Line on the pretext of 'security' during the blockade programmes of the BNP led 20-Party Alliance.⁴³

Use of the repressive Information and Communication Technology Act 2006

42. According to information gathered by Odhikar, from January to November 2015, 29 persons were arrested under the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (amended 2009 and 2013).
43. On November 5, 2015 police arrested Mohammad Shahjahan, President of Char Martin Union unit Jamaat-e-Islam, from Hajirhat Bazar under Ramgati Upazila in Lakshmipur District, for posting photographs mocking the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Information Minister Hasanul Huq Inu, in his Facebook account. A case was filed against him under the Information and Communication Technology Act.⁴⁴
44. The latest amendment to the ICT Act was made on October 6, 2013. Section 57⁴⁵ 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

⁴² The daily Naya Diganta, 19/11/2015

⁴³ The daily Prothom Alo, 19/11/2015

⁴⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 07/11/2015

⁴⁵ 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.

(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 10 million or both.

this offence has been amended from a maximum of 10 years imprisonment, with no minimum; to 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 opinions and views.

45. Odhikar expresses grave concern over the persistence of the state interference to freedom of expression of the citizens of Bangladesh. Odhikar believes that it is a misuse of power to arrest or harass anyone whose personal opinion goes against the government. Odhikar demands that the government repeal the draconian Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (Amended in 2009 and 2013).

Human rights violations by BSF in border areas

46. According to information collected by Odhikar, in November 2015, three Bangladeshi citizens were shot and killed by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF). Furthermore, one Bangladeshi man was shot and injured and two were tortured. Two men were allegedly abducted by the members of BSF.
47. BSF has continued human rights violations on Bangladeshi citizens at the border areas over the years, ignoring protests made by various rights groups from both sides of the border. This matter has also been repeatedly raised in regular meetings between border guards of the two countries. The BSF has not deviated from its policy of shooting at anyone seen near the border.
48. According to the Memorandum of Understanding and related treaties signed between Bangladesh and India, if citizens of either country illegally cross the border, it would be considered trespass and as per law those persons should be handed over to the civilian authority. However, we have noticed that India has been, over the years, repeatedly violating such treaties, killing or physically harming anyone seen near the border or anyone trying to cross the border; and also attacked Bangladeshi citizens by illegally entering Bangladesh, which are clear violations of international law and human rights.
49. In the early morning of November 26, 2015 two Bangladeshi citizens named Nazrul Islam and Abdul Khaleque Sarkar were shot dead by the members of Indian BSF of Tarali Camp under 76 Battalion in Tarali area at Toluigacha border under Satkhira Sadar Upazila.⁴⁶
50. Odhikar believes that the role of the Bangladesh Government should be strong, independent and sovereign in order to protect its citizens. No

⁴⁶ Prothom Alo, 27/11/2015

independent and sovereign state would passively watch its citizens being indiscriminately killed, tortured and abducted by another state.

Public lynching continues

51. In November 2015, six people were reportedly killed due to public lynching.
52. People are being killed by public lynching in different places of the country. The lack of respect for law, distrust of the police and instability in the country has increased the fear and insecurity among people. Odhikar believes that due to a weak criminal justice system, the tendency to resort to public lynching is increasing, as people are losing their confidence and faith in the police and judicial system.

Violence against women

53. Incidents of violence against women continue. Women of Bangladesh are becoming regular victims of various forms of violence including dowry violence, rape, sexual harassment by stalkers, acid attacks and domestic violence.

Dowry-related violence

54. In November 2015, according to Odhikar documentation, 18 women were subjected to dowry violence. Of these women, it has been alleged that 10 were killed because of dowry and eight women were physically abused over dowry demands. One brutal example of such violence is as follows:
55. On November 5, 2015 a housewife named Sheuly Akhter's eyes were gouged out with a knife by her husband Jewel; and she was locked inside the home. Hearing her screams, neighbours and police rescued her by breaking the lock; and admitted her to the local hospital. Sheuly Akhter said that she married Jewel five years ago. This was her second marriage. She said that Jewel was a drug addict and often beat her for the property she will get from her ex-husband. On November 7, Sheuly Akhter underwent surgery at the National Eye Science Institute and Hospital. Doctors said that Sheuly Akhter will never regain her sight.⁴⁷

Rape

56. In November 2015, Odhikar recorded a total number of 60 females who were raped. Among them, 21 were women, 36 were children below the age of 16

⁴⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 7&8/11/2015

and the age of three victims could not be determined. Of the women, two were killed after being raped and 15 were victims of gang rape. Out of the 36 child victims, one was killed after being raped; five were victims of gang rape. 11 women and children were victims of attempted rape.

57. On November 7, 2015 a housewife came to shop at Noluta Bazar in Langulia Village under Shakhipur Upazila in Tangail District. While returning home, some criminals took her to Paharkanchanpur forest and raped her. On November 8, the housewife filed a case in this regard accusing Al-Amin, Jitu Mia, Nazimuddin, Shahdat Hossain and Abdus Salam. Police arrested two of the accused persons.⁴⁸

Sexual harassment

58. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in November 2015, a total of 23 girls and women were victims of sexual harassment. Of them three were killed, four were injured, four were assaulted and 12 were victims of stalking. During this time, 59 men were injured by the stalkers when they protested.
59. On November 7, 2015 a female student (SSC examinee) tried to commit suicide after being assaulted by three stalkers in Mohammadpur Upazila under Magura District. The mother of the student informed that at noon, three local criminals named Tufan, Chhantu and Wahidul physically assaulted her daughter in Polashbaria Village, while she was returning home after a tuition class. The criminals fled when local inhabitants approached the area, hearing her screams. After returning home extremely upset, she tried to commit suicide.⁴⁹

Acid violence

60. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in November 2015, it was reported that one woman became a victim of acid violence.
61. On November 13, 2015 at night, a group of criminals threw acid on housewife Nargis Akhter (35) through the window of her home, over a land-related dispute, in Joynandat Village under Kaharole Upazila in Dinajpur District. Police informed that Nargis Akhter's face and some portion of her body were burnt with acid. She was admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.⁵⁰
62. Odhikar expresses grave concern over the incidents of violence against women. Odhikar believes that women and men are both affected due to the deterioration of the law and order situation, corruption and a failure of the judicial system; for which women are being severely victimized. Since the

⁴⁸ The daily Jugantor, 10/11/2015

⁴⁹ The daily Jugantor, 08/11/2015

⁵⁰ The Daily Star, 15/11/2015

perpetrators of violence against women escape punishment, potential violators are encouraged and incidents of violence increase.

Hindrance to Human Rights, Rule of Law and Social Activities

New provisions to the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Ordinance 1978 against anti-government remarks and recommendation for cancelling TIB's registration

63. On November 17, 2015 a Parliamentary Sub-committee recommended the incorporation of provisions into the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Ordinance 1978 for taking action against Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for making derogatory remarks about the State, Parliament or the Constitution. The Sub-committee on the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs made the decision at a meeting with its Chairman Suranjit Sengupta while scrutinising a Bill that sought amendment to the 1978 Ordinance.⁵¹ It is to be mentioned that on October 25, 2015 Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) published 'Parliament Watch', a report on monitoring the second and sixth parliamentary sessions of the 10th National Parliament. The Parliamentary watchdog came up with the move after the Executive Director of TIB, said that the Parliament had turned into a puppet theatre. Suranjit Sengupta said, "the NGOs should be engaged in service related work and should not make comments about Parliament. It seems that they (NGOs) are trying to run parallel to the state and government, which is out of their jurisdiction".⁵² On November 9, 2015 the ruling party Awami League lawmakers and the parliamentarians belonging to the Opposition, Jatiya Party, in reaction, criticised the TIB in the National Assembly. Terming TIB's Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman an 'illiterate doctorate', Suranjit Sengupta said, "he spoke up against the Parliament and the Constitution, which is tantamount to sedition. He will be charged for sedition for this act".⁵³ On November 18, at a meeting in the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs made recommendations to cancel TIB's registration for comparing the Parliament to

⁵¹ The daily New Age, 18/11/2015

⁵² The daily New Age, 11/11/2015

⁵³ The daily Prothom Alo, 10/11/2015

a 'puppet theatre'. Meanwhile, Suranjit Sengupta said that the NGO Affairs Bureau may cancel TIB's registration based on this recommendation.⁵⁴

Activities of Odhikar hindered

64. Odhikar, as a human rights organisation, has come under government fire during various regimes, for being vocal against human rights violations and for campaigning to stop them. However, the present Grand Alliance government, led by the Awami League, after assuming power in 2009, started harassment on Odhikar for its reports on the human rights situation of the country. On August 10, 2013 at 10:20 pm, Odhikar's Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan was picked up by persons claiming to be from the Detective Branch (DB) of Police, for publishing a fact finding report on extrajudicial killings during a rally organised by the religious group Hefazate Islam on May 5-6, 2013. The police, at first, denied detaining him. Adilur and Odhikar's Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan, were charged under section 57(1) of the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (Amended 2009). They were in jail custody and later, Adilur and Elan were released on bail after spending 62 and 25 days in prison respectively. On August 11, 2013 at night, the DB Police raided the Odhikar office and confiscated two CPUs (Central Processing Unit) and three laptops, which contained sensitive and confidential information and documents relating to victims of human rights abuses. Odhikar regularly faces harassment by different organs of the government. Adilur Rahman Khan, staff members of Odhikar and the office are under surveillance by intelligence agencies. Human rights defenders who are associated with Odhikar are being watched and sometimes harassed and human rights activities hindered.
65. On 29 August 2015, the National Press Club authority abruptly cancelled a programme, which was scheduled to be held on 30 August at the National Press Club auditorium. At 5:20 pm on 29 August, Odhikar received a phone call from an employee of the National Press Club that, as per the instructions of the General Secretary, the Club was cancelling its permission; and would not allow Odhikar to host the programme at their premises. It must be noted that the booking was made on July 11. August 30 is the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, to remember all those who have been disappeared and to show solidarity and support to their families. At 9:30 am on that day, family members of victims of enforced disappearance were to come together at a solidarity meeting at the National Press Club auditorium. This was scheduled to be jointly organised by members of the families of the

⁵⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 19/11/2015

disappeared, the Asian Federation against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), the Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC), the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Odhikar. The meeting was organised to allow family members of victims of disappearance to recall the incidents, remind everyone of the issue and demand justice and recovery. Odhikar also received information that a few victim families who were supposed to attend the programme had been threatened over the telephone and told not to participate. On August 30, 2015 law enforcement agencies in various districts also inquired about local human rights defenders who are associated with Odhikar; and advised them not to conduct any programmes in relation to the International Day of the Victims Enforced Disappearance.

66. On November 25, 2015 during the UN International Day against Violence against Women, local level human rights defenders associated with Odhikar in Madaripur and Thakurgaon, were accosted and obstructed by police when they were holding programmes on the issue of violence against women.
67. The NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), which is under the Prime Minister's Office, has barred the release of all project related funds of Odhikar, for about two years, in order to stop its human rights activities. The Organisation is still operating due to the volunteer services of grassroots level human rights defenders associated with Odhikar and their commitment to human rights activism.
68. As a human rights organisation, it is Odhikar's duty to highlight human rights violations and take appropriate action and measures to prevent future violations. The Government is harassing Odhikar, everyone associated with the organisation and victims of human rights violations; gagging their voices and hampering Odhikar's activities.
69. The present government is too eager to restrain the rights of freedom of expression and assembly of human rights organisations and NGOs, which contravenes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and the UN Declaration of Human Rights Defenders.

Statistics: January-November 2015*													
Type of Human Rights Violation	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	Total	
**Extrajudicial killings	Crossfire	12	30	9	8	14	6	7	19	9	9	13	136
	Shot to death	5	5	2	1	0	3	0	0	4	0	0	20
	Beaten to death	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
	Strangled to death	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Tortured to death	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	0	6
	Others	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
	Total	18	38	12	9	18	9	7	20	13	13	13	170
Shot on legs by law enforcement agencies	2	16	8	1	3	0	0	0	2	1	0	33	
Disappearances	14	9	11	3	3	3	0	2	0	11	3	59	
Human rights violations by Indian BSF	Bangladeshis Killed	2	5	1	9	3	3	5	3	4	3	3	41
	Bangladeshis Injured	11	7	5	4	2	6	5	6	7	4	3	60
	Bangladeshis Abducted	4	9	3	0	0	1	3	0	0	5	2	27
Attack on journalists	Injured	6	3	16	16	5	0	6	1	1	0	7	61
	Threatened	1	1	0	2	10	15	1	1	0	1	1	33
	Assaulted	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	7
	Tortured	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Arrested	2	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	8
Political violence	Killed	48	40	33	11	5	11	5	13	8	7	7	188
	Injured	1947	722	580	262	272	320	475	426	564	654	551	6773
Dowry related violence (including women victims, their children and relatives)	13	15	15	13	17	14	23	17	17	30	18	192	
Rape	33	45	41	44	82	65	65	108	109	94	60	746	
***Sexual harassment /Stalking of women	19	9	19	6	9	13	5	34	26	17	23	180	
Acid violence	8	4	3	5	4	1	5	6	0	8	1	45	
Public lynching	12	7	8	15	15	11	9	19	11	8	6	121	
Arrest under Information and Communication Technology Act	1	2	3	1	1	6	2	4	7	1	1	29	

*Odhikar's documentation

**On January-March five persons were allegedly extra judicially killed by the law enforcement agencies during political violence which is also included in the statistical part of the Political Violence.

***It is to be noted that numerous women became victims of sexual harassment by gangs in Dhaka University campus during celebrations of Bangla New year on April 14, 2015 which could not be determined as victim women didn't report, so that in the statistical part of sexual harassment/stalking of women couldn't be added.

Recommendations

1. In order to control unstable and confrontational politics, an initiative of forming an accountable government needs to be taken immediately, through holding free and fair Parliamentary elections by ensuring the participation of all political parties, under a neutral, interim government or under the supervision of the United Nations.
2. Incidents of extrajudicial killings by law enforcement agencies must be investigated and the perpetrators be brought to effective justice. Extrajudicial killings in the name of 'crossfire' and 'gunfight' must be stopped.
3. The law enforcement agencies must follow the international guidelines "Basic Principles on the use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials" and the "UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials".
4. The Government has to explain all incidents of enforced disappearance and post-disappearance killings, allegedly perpetrated by law enforcement agencies. All victims of disappearance should be returned to their families. The Government must bring the members of the security and law enforcement agencies, 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. Interference to freedom of expression and of the media must be stopped. The Government must deviate from its decision regarding the registration of online media. The ban on the publication of the daily Amar Desh and the broadcasting of Diganta TV, Islamic TV and Channel One should be removed. All persons who were detained for political reasons, including Acting Editor of the daily Amar Desh Mahmudur Rahman, should be released immediately. All repressive laws, including the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (amendment 2009, 2013) and the Special Powers Act, 1974 must be repealed.
6. The Government should refrain from attacking peaceful public events and from carrying out repressive, unconstitutional activities. The Government must stop mass arrests.
7. The Government should take all measures to protect the rights of the citizens belonging to religious, ethnic and linguistic minority communities and ensure their security. Perpetrators of attacks on all minority communities and on their places of worship must be brought to justice through a thorough and unbiased investigation.
8. The Government should protest strongly against human rights violations on Bangladeshi citizens by the BSF and take initiatives to investigate and make

the Indian Government accountable; and compensate the families of the victims. The Government should also ensure the safety and security of the Bangladeshi citizens residing at the border areas.

9. The Government must ensure the effective implementation of laws to stop violence against women and the offenders must be effectively punished under prevalent laws. The Government should also execute mass awareness programmes in the print and electronic media, in order to eliminate violence against women.
10. The Government must stop harassing human rights and civil society organisations which are critical against corruption and human rights abuses by the government. The government must stay out of its decision to cancel TIB's registration.
11. The case filed against Odhikar's Secretary and its Director under the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (Amended in 2009) must be withdrawn. All repressive measure and harassment against human rights defenders associated with Odhikar should be stopped. The government must release the funds of Odhikar to enable it to continue its human rights activities.

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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.