

Discussion meeting to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women



November 25 is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. To commemorate this day, Odhikar organised a discussion meeting on November 24, 2016. The meeting was presided over by Taskin Fahmina, Gender Consultant of Odhikar. She cited the objective of the meetings. Saira Rahman Khan, Professor of School of Law, BRAC University; ASM Nasiruddin Elan, Director of Odhikar; Rina Alam, wife of disappeared Nur Alam; Dr. A. Islam; and Barrister Nuzhat Binte Hossain spoke in the meeting. Samia Islam, Research and Documentation Officer of Odhikar read out a statement prepared by Odhikar.

Taskin Fahmina commented that this year's theme was 'raise money to end violence against women'. She said that this was an important theme and initiative. Money must be raised and used for this noble cause and to combat VAW. In Bangladesh women are considered the poorest of the poor and financial constraints are very often the main reason why women or their families are unable to seek justice for crimes of violence committed against them. The money that will be raised for the cause of ending violence against women must be used in an accountable and transparent manner.



Rina Alam, wife of Nur Alam, victim of enforced disappearance said that she could not run her husband's shop and hotel business due to pressure by the locality. Men, especially neighbouring shopkeepers mock her efforts in running her husband's businesses as she is a women. Her public affairs are very difficult to carry out. She has three young sons to look after and needs to run these businesses. She said she faces financial constraints.

Doctor A Islam said that she has recently noticed that more and more women were coming to her hospital with spinal injuries, some quite serious. She believed that several are due to domestic violence and noted that in many of these cases the beatings were severe. Women did not want to disclose the matter. She commented that we can only see the tip of the ice berg – as incidents of domestic violence were mostly hidden. There is a cycle of abuses and reconciliation which makes the incidents of domestic violence hidden. Dr. Saira Rahman Khan, Professor, School of Law, BRAC University mentioned several criminal laws for prosecuting perpetrators for violence against women - Domestic Violence Act 2010; the Suppression of Repression against Women and Children Act 2000 (amended in 2003); the Acid Crime Control Act 2002; as well as provisions in the Penal Code that prosecute crimes. She also emphasized on the guidelines and directives given by the High Court Division in the writ petitions of 2008 and 2010 on sexual harassment. She said that the court directives need to be followed and the law needs to be amended and implemented effectively as soon as possible to prevent other forms of violence against women from manifesting themselves. She also mentioned that the obligations under UNCEDAW must be respected more by the government and extended to more than just giving academic education to girls and women. She also observed that the reasons for the lack of justice for VAW victims was very similar to the reasons what most victims of crime lacked justice.

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The Odhikar Team