

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women 2016

Statement of Odhikar

November 25 is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. 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. 17 years have passed since, but women in Bangladesh are still facing various forms of violence. Violence against women is immensely high in Bangladesh. They face domestic violence, including dowry-related violence; rape; acid attacks; various forms of sexual harassment and discrimination. Besides, human rights of girls are violated due to early marriage. In order to make public and private spaces safe, secure and discrimination free for all women, we have to build resistance against the violence. This year, the slogan for the day is 'raise money to end violence against women'.

According to information gathered by Odhikar, from January 2001 to October 2016, 3068 women have been killed, 2036 women were physically abused and 219 women committed suicide due to dowry related violence. During this time, 6128 women and 5842 children were raped. From, January 2014 to October 2016, 288 women were victims of attempted rape. Furthermore, from January 2003 to October 2016, 1246 women were victims of acid violence. Moreover, between January 2010 and October 2016, 2440 girls have been victims of sexual harassment.

In many cases, the perpetrators are getting away with impunity because of lack of implementation of laws a weak criminal justice system, corruption in police and administration, erosion of social values, criminalisation of politics and political patronage over 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 Judiciary must be sensitive and impartial and free from any influence which would be detrimental against the victim of violence;
- Proper implementation of the existing laws to stop violence against women needs to be ensured;
- Cases of violence against women should not be withdrawn due to political pressure or consideration;
- 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.
- Raising money to end violence against women should be properly utilized through transparency and accountability.