

Press Release

Odhikar commemorates International Women's Day 2018

To commemorate International Women's day, Odhikar organised a discussion meeting at its office on 8 March 2018. Odhikar expressed its concern that violence against women is increasing alarmingly in this country, which has a detrimental effect on women's human rights and political participation. On this day, Odhikar expresses solidarity with all the female family members of the victims of enforced disappearances in Bangladesh, for continuing their struggle. Odhikar also calls on the government and relevant stakeholders to protect the rights of female political prisoners from torture and degrading treatment in the cases of recent mass arrest. Odhikar demands that all forms of violence against women must stop and a safe environment for women in political and economic areas must be created.



Due to the culture of impunity and lack of accountability in all government institutions, the incidents of violence against women is prevailing in the country. According to information gathered by Odhikar, from January 2017 to February 2018, 124 women have been killed, 144 women were physically abused and 11 women committed suicide due to dowry related violence. During this time, 45 female were victims of acid violence and 259 women and 633 children were raped. Moreover, 268 girls have been victims of sexual harassment and 92 women were victim of attempted rape.

The meeting at Odhikar was presided over by Farida Akhtar, women rights activist and Executive Director of UBINIG. She criticized the decision to extend the tenure of female reserved seats in the National Parliament for another 25 years; and remarked that the women in these seats were selected and were thus a mere vote bank. She urged direct election of women to such seats. She also observed that the participation of female students in politics had gone down due to insecurity.

Taskin Fahmina, Gender Expert of Odhikar said that all forms of violence against women had increased, including child rape and child marriage. Although dowry is illegal it is still prevalent in our society, which also leads to violence against women. She also added there is no policy in the informal work sector, such as in the construction sector and these female workers were facing sexual harassment and being deprived from their rights. She added that due to dysfunctional criminal justice system and lack of political will, violence against women was not being combated.

Adilur Rahman Khan, Secretary of Odhikar said that women rights organisations were not showing solidarity in the incidents of state repression where female family members are victimised. He mentioned the movement of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo who fought against enforced disappearances in Latin America. He observed that it was unfortunate that today female participation in politics in Bangladesh had become meager due to the absence of rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association and rights to freedom of expression and opinion.

The meeting was also attended by development workers, students, rights activists and Odhikar's young human rights defenders.

In Solidarity,
The Odhikar Team