

Odhikar's Statement on the 7th March incidents of sexual harassment against women

Odhikar deeply condemns the reported disgraceful incidents of sexual harassment of a number of women in different streets of Dhaka City allegedly by the ruling party activists, the day before International Women's Day. It was reported that the attackers chanted the slogan 'Joy Bangla' from the procession while they sexually molested women and obstructed the free and safe movement of the women in the streets. The procession was on its way to join the assembly to celebrate the UNESCO-recognized 7th March 1971 historical speech at Suhrawardy Udyan, Dhaka. At least seven brave victims of the molestation posted status in the social media. In this regard, a case was filed by the father of a victim with Ramna Police Station on 8 March 2018. According to the case statement, the incident happened when the girl was on her way home from her college in the Bangla Motor area, Dhaka. Around 15-20 youth surrounded her and started to assault her; and even tore her clothes. Meanwhile, the General Secretary of the ruling party and Minister of Road Transport and Bridges Obaidul Quader, commented that what happened outside the assembly venue was not the (political) party's concern, but a responsibility of the government.¹ Odhikar strongly demands that appropriate action be taken against those responsible.

Odhikar recalls the incident of 14 April 2015, on the occasion of Bengali New Year, where criminals began sexually harassing women in front of the gate of Suhrawardy Udyan at the northern side of the Raju Sculpture on Dhaka University campus. The victims of that attack did not get any justice. Odhikar expresses grave concern over the increasing number of incidents of sexual harassment and rape; and the blatant way in which they are occurring. Odhikar questions why the offenders enjoy impunity and why victims are not getting justice. Odhikar believes that violence against women increases as a result of the failure to bring perpetrators to justice and due to the absence of rule of law and lack of morality. Odhikar demands that the government immediately bring the perpetrators to justice after indentifying them, regardless of any social status or political affiliation and ensure the safety of present and potential victims and victim families.

In Solidarity,
The Odhikar Team
www.odhikar.org

¹ The Daily Star, 09/03/2018, please see the link <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/punish-them-1545622>