



# **Three-Month Human Rights Monitoring Report on Bangladesh**

**Reporting Period: January - March 2023**

**Prepared by Odhikar**  
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## Foreword

Odhikar as a human rights organisation has been raising public awareness of all human rights violations committed by the state since its inception in 1994. It also campaigns for internationally recognized civil and political rights and has always tried to prevent the state from violating human rights.

Odhikar has been facing extreme state repression and harassment since 2013 while carrying out its human rights activities. Despite ongoing state harassment and obstructions, Odhikar continues to highlight human rights violations.

Odhikar has faced severe obstacles to carrying out its human rights activities due to government repression, regulation and interference with freedom of expression. As a result, Odhikar has had to impose self-censorship in publishing its reports. In this adverse situation, Odhikar has prepared the human rights report for the first three months of 2023, based on reports sent by the human rights defenders associated with it and data published in various media.

Website: [www.odhikar.org](http://www.odhikar.org)

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## Contents

<b>Statistics: Human Rights violations</b> .....	1
<b>Introduction</b> .....	2
<b>Political Repression and Disruption of Meetings and Assembles</b> .....	3
<i>Disruption and attacks on freedom of assembly</i> .....	5
<i>Criminal activities and acts of violence by the Ruling Party</i> .....	8
<b>Freedom of Expression and the Media</b> .....	10
<i>Freedom of the media</i> .....	11
<b>The Imposition of Draconian Laws</b> .....	13
<i>The Digital Security Act, 2018</i> .....	13
<i>The Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009</i> .....	15
<b>Constitutional and State Institutions</b> .....	15
<i>Election Commission and electoral system</i> .....	15
<i>Anti-Corruption Commission</i> .....	19
<b>State Repression and Impunity</b> .....	20
<i>Lack of accountability and torture and degrading treatment by members of law enforcement agencies</i> .....	20
<i>Enforced disappearances</i> .....	24
<i>Extrajudicial killings</i> .....	27
<i>Human rights violations by state security forces in the name of suppressing 'Islamic militants'</i> .....	28
<i>Human rights violations in prisons</i> .....	29
<i>The death penalty</i> .....	30
<b>Public Lynching</b> .....	31
<b>Violence against Women</b> .....	32
<i>Rape</i> .....	32
<i>Sexual harassment</i> .....	32
<i>Dowry related violence</i> .....	33
<i>Acid violence</i> .....	33
<b>Violation of Human Rights of Minority Citizens</b> .....	33
<b>Neighbouring Countries: India and Myanmar</b> .....	35
<i>India's Interference with Bangladesh and Human Rights Violations by BSF</i> .....	35
<i>Human Rights abuses on the Rohingya Population</i> .....	37
<b>State Repression on Odhikar</b> .....	38
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	41

## Statistics: Human Rights violations

Statistics: January - March 2023*					
Type of Human Rights Violation		January	February	March	Total
Extrajudicial killings	Crossfire	0	0	2	2
	Tortured to death	1	0	1	2
	Shot to death	0	0	1	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Enforced Disappearances		2	5	1	8
Death in Jail		15	6	5	26
Political Violence	Killed	8	3	8	19
	Injured	375	1,144	488	2,007
Death Penalty	Sentenced to death	25	18	50	93
	Execution of death sentence	2	1	0	3
Human rights violations by Indian BSF	Bangladeshis Killed	2	3	0	5
	Bangladeshis Injured	3	2	0	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>
Attack on journalists	Injured	21	17	16	54
	Assaulted	4	10	3	17
	Arrested	1	0	1	2
	Threatened	3	1	4	8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>81</b>
Public lynching		6	5	4	15
Arrest under the Digital Security Act, 2018	For allegedly posting critical post against Prime Minister, high-ranking officials of the government, their family members, anti-government and the Indian Prime Minister's visit to Bangladesh in social media	9	10	5	24
	For allegedly making derogatory remarks on religion or religious people	3	0	0	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>27</b>

\* Odhikar documentation

## Introduction

The human rights violations in the first three months of 2023 are a continuation of the human rights violations that have been going on for the past 14 years. After the current Awami League government came to power in 2009, it has been using all the state institutions, including the Election Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the National Human Rights Commission, to implement its political agenda. Even the Judiciary is alleged to be controlled by the government. The government is using its party leaders and law enforcement agencies to crack down on opposition leaders and ordinary citizens. During this reporting period, they attacked opposition parties and filed false and fabricated cases against them and carried out mass arrests.<sup>1</sup> Various human rights violations have occurred, including enforced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings. During this period, freedom of expression has been severely curtailed and citizens of different walks of life and professions have been sued and arrested under the repressive Digital Security Act, 2018.

Odhikar believes that if the issues related to human rights, including restoration of the voting rights of the country's citizens, are not resolved, Bangladesh will be heading towards an even dire situation.

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<sup>1</sup>Prothom Alo, 21 December 2022; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/57vkv840o5>

## Political Repression and Disruption of Meetings and Assembles

1. The ruling Awami League government blocked free and fair elections in the country and usurped power through controversial and farcical elections, destroying the democratic environment and all accountability. The government's repression on opposition political parties and dissidents has become widespread due to the continued authoritarian regime. In the first three months of 2023, the government carried out a massive crackdown on the leaders and activists of the opposition political parties (especially BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami) using false and fictitious cases as its weapons. Members of the law enforcement agencies filed cases against thousands of opposition party leaders and activists.<sup>2</sup> BNP leaders and activists were arrested from indoor meetings and cases were filed on the charge of 'planning sabotage'. After attacking and injuring BNP leaders and activists, Awami League leaders and activists filed cases against them. It is alleged that members of the law enforcement agencies raided the houses of citizens, including opposition party members, over false and fictitious cases<sup>3</sup> and without warrant. Later, it was alleged that many of the arrested were illegally detained and tortured without producing them in court within the required 24 hours.<sup>4</sup> The police also arrested BNP leaders from family functions<sup>5</sup> and after raiding the house of a BNP leader, the police arrested his son.<sup>6</sup> During this period, shops owned by the leaders and activists of the opposition political parties have been locked down.<sup>7</sup> The government treated political prisoners inhumanely. Their bails have either been delayed or they were granted bail in one case but, they have been shown as arrested in another and remained in jail.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, after getting bail, some people were re-arrested from the jail gate. Ruhul Kabir Rizvi's wife Arjuman Ara Begum alleged that the imprisoned Senior Joint Secretary General of BNP was taken from Keraniganj Central Jail to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Court in Dhaka on 2 March 2023, standing in a prison van and brought back to the jail in the same manner. She said, Rizvi is physically ill. He always has to walk with a cane.<sup>9</sup> Mohsin Mollah, the father of imprisoned joint secretary of Dhaka University unit Chhatra Dal<sup>10</sup>, Abdur Rahim Roni, died on 14 January 2023. Abdur Rahim's lawyer applied

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<sup>2</sup>Jugantor, 13 February 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/644535/>

<sup>3</sup>Jugantor 11 February 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/643909/>

<sup>4</sup>Naya Diganta, 17 January 2023; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/more-news/720985/>

<sup>5</sup>Jugantor, 8 February 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/second-edition/643016/>

<sup>6</sup>Jugantor, 3 January 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/631014/>

<sup>7</sup>Prothom Alo, 14 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/to5l8ijg7i>

<sup>8</sup>Naya Diganta, 3 February 2023; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/politics/725124/>

<sup>9</sup>Jugantor, 2 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/politics/650616/>

<sup>10</sup>Student wing of BNP

for his parole to attend his father's funeral, but the government did not allow it.<sup>11</sup> Apart from BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, the government also persecuted the leaders and activists of the Liberal Democratic Party and Gono Odhikar Parishad. Courts have consistently dismissed cases filed by the opposition against accused police officers.<sup>12</sup>

2. Opposition political activists and dissidents seek refuge abroad due to the widespread political repression in the country. In 2021, about 20,000 Bangladeshi citizens applied for asylum in EU countries. In 2022, its number reached 33,729. According to EUA data, the number of applications from Bangladeshis has exceeded all records since 2008. It should be noted that if someone is being tortured in his country due to caste, religion, nationality or politics or if someone's life is in danger, he can apply for protection in European countries, according to international law.<sup>13</sup> Below are some examples of the government repression:
3. On 7 January 2023, Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General Shahadat Hossain Selim, organised a meeting at his home in Ramganj, Lakshmipur District. Before this meeting was held, leaders of Chhatra League and Jubo League, led by general secretary of Korpara Union unit Awami League Taslim Hossain, attacked and vandalized Selim's house.<sup>14</sup>
4. On 25 February 2023, the Gono Odhikar Parishad organised a representative meeting in Khulna. On 23 February, Khulna District unit member secretary Hamidur Rahman Rajib and Bagerhat District unit member secretary Nurul Islam were arrested by the police. Police beat up Rajib while arresting him. Rajib was later shown as arrested in a drug case with one kilogram of *Ganja* and Nurul Islam was shown as arrested in an old sabotage case filed against Jamaat-e-Islami members. Golam Rahman, a muezzin of the mosque next to Rajib's house, said that Rajib was not involved in the sale of *Ganja*. Nurul Islam's wife, Nazneen Akhter, said that after her husband was picked up by the police, he was questioned as to why he was involved with the Gono Odhikar Parishad. It is worth mentioning that Gono Odhikar Parishad is not a banned organisation. When Gono Odhikar Parishad organised a press conference on 25 February to protest the arrest, the police stopped it.<sup>15</sup>
5. On 27 March 2023, police of Gulshan Police Station arrested 16 people, including three 'Hafiz' of the Quran<sup>16</sup>, three children and two women, while they were offering *Tarabi* prayers at the Islamic Enterprise (Qur'an Education

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<sup>11</sup>Samakal, 14 January 2023; <https://samakal.com/politics/article/2301151293/>

<sup>12</sup>Prothom Alo, 23 January 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/capital/dlpm8dav1e>

<sup>13</sup>Prothom Alo, 27 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/world/europe/vsflrw2z6r>

<sup>14</sup>Manabzamin, 8 January 2023; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=37366>

<sup>15</sup>Samakal, 26 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/2302159057/>

<sup>16</sup>Hafiz of the Quran is a person who knows the Koran by heart. The term used by Muslims for someone who has completely memorized the Quran.

Center) in Shahzadpur area of Dhaka. The police remanded 11 of the arrested persons through the court. A case under the Special Powers Act, 1974 and Explosive Substances Act, 1908 has been registered against them. The Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Gulshan Police Station, Farman Ali said that all those arrested are leaders and activists of Jamaat-e-Islami. They were gathered there and agitating for the downfall of the government.<sup>17</sup> In the FIR, it is said that the group was preparing to carry out subversive activities, including crude bomb attacks with the aim of damaging the image of the government and damaging the state and people's property. However, the number one witness of the case, Rasel Miji, said that the police called him on 27 March at around 11:00 pm and made him a witness. He knew nothing of what had or had not happened. He learnt from the police that those arrested are members of Jamaat-e-Islami, but he did not see any crude bombs there.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Disruption and attacks on freedom of assembly***

6. In 2023, the government continued to suppress opposition parties and dissidents by curtailing their right to freedom of assembly. The current government has made it mandatory to obtain police permission for organising a rally or procession and even indoor meetings, which is a violation of Article 37 of the Constitution. During this period, the government attacked peaceful meetings and processions of BNP and other opposition political parties<sup>19</sup> and organisations<sup>20</sup>, using law enforcement agencies and its student and youth wing leaders and activists. In many cases, the police and the ruling Awami League leaders jointly carried out these attacks.<sup>21</sup> The ruling Awami League has created an atmosphere of conflict across the country by announcing programmes against each programme of the BNP on the same day.<sup>22</sup> During this period, the ruling party members set up guard on the streets and created obstacles for the leaders and activists of the opposition party on the way to the meetings and attacked and injured them on their way back.<sup>23</sup> The Awami League held a 'peace rally' by occupying the BNP stage in Natore.<sup>24</sup> At that time, there were allegations of attacks, vandalism, arson and looting on BNP leaders and activists' businesses and houses. On 11 February 2023, 15 people were shot when police opened fire on BNP leaders and

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<sup>17</sup>Manabzamin, 29 March 2023; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=48830>

<sup>18</sup>Samakal, 29 March 2023; <https://epaper.samakal.com/nogor-edition/2023-03-29/10/10149>

<sup>19</sup>Samakal, 11 February 2023; <https://epaper.samakal.com/nogor-edition/2023-02-11/16/4190>

<sup>20</sup>Jugantor, 11 January 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/633627/>

<sup>21</sup>Samakal, 11 January 2023; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/2301150773/>

<sup>22</sup>New Age, 15 February 2023; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/194476/>

<sup>23</sup>Jugantor, 12 February 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/644447/>

<sup>24</sup>Prothom Alo, 12 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/ncaugll13i>



activists in Satgram Union under Araiহার Upazila in Narayanganj during the BNP rally at Ward and Union level across the country.<sup>25</sup> Police and Awami League leaders filed a case against 2500 BNP leaders and activists in various places, including Sirajganj, Noakhali, Khulna, Panchagarh, Kishoreganj and Rajshahi after the ruling party members and police attacked the BNP rally.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the police have filed a case against about 1000 leaders and activists of BNP in Kamalnagar of Lakshmipur, Jhalkathi, Sirajganj, Bhaluka of Mymensingh, Araiহার of Narayanganj, and Maheshpur of Jhenaidah.<sup>27</sup> Even on Independence Day, on 26 March 2023, the police blocked and arrested opposition party leaders and activists while they were going to the Martyr's memorial to pay tribute to the martyrs. Police carried out the raid the night before the programme and arrested BNP leaders and activists on false charges.<sup>28</sup>



*BNP leaders and activists were preparing to start a rally in front of the Upazila BNP office. Chhatra League leaders and activists beat Masum Billah, joint convener of Barguna's Patharghata Municipality unit BNP. Photo: Prothom Alo, 12 February 2023*



*Bogura District unit Chhatra League members attacked the programme of Gono Odhikar Parishad at the PTI intersection area of Bogura town. Photo: Prothom Alo, 10 February 2023*

<sup>25</sup>Samakal, 12 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/politics/article/2302156413/>

<sup>26</sup>Samakal, 13 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/2302156582/>

<sup>27</sup>Jugantor, 13 February 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/644535/>

<sup>28</sup>Prothom Alo, 11 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/chxvkrpxjd> and Naya Diganta, 11 February 2023; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/khulna/727039/>

7. On 10 January 2023, when patients and their relatives protested and blocked the road in Chittagong Medical College Hospital, demanding a reduction in dialysis fees for kidney patients, the police baton charged the protesters. At least 20 people were injured in this incident. The police arrested Mohammad Mustakim, the son of a patient named Nasrin Akhtar, and filed a case against him along with 40/50 unidentified persons.<sup>29</sup>
8. On 16 January 2023, leaders and activists of Chhatra League<sup>30</sup> under the leadership of Ghorashal Municipality unit Chhatra League's former vice-president Rubel, attacked Chhatra Dal<sup>31</sup> while the latter were preparing for a procession in Palash Upazila under Narsingdi District. At that time Rubel openly shot Palash Upazila unit Chhatra Dal member secretary Mostafizur Rahman Papon in the leg.<sup>32</sup>



*Shot and injured Mostafizur Rahman Papon, Member Secretary of Palash Thana unit Chhatra Dal. Photo: Naya Diganta, 16 January 2023*

9. On 4 February 2023, members of the ruling party attacked BNP leaders and activists while they were going to the BNP Khulna divisional rally. At that time, the ruling party members beat sick and old people too and left them seriously injured.<sup>33</sup>
10. On 17 February 2023, Chhatra League leaders-activists launched an attack on the founding anniversary of the Chhatra Odhikar Parishad in Dhaka University twice. At least 20 members of Chhatra Odhikar Parishad were injured in this incident.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Jugantor, 11 January 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/633627/>

<sup>30</sup>Student of Awami League

<sup>31</sup>Student wing of BNP

<sup>32</sup>NayaDiganta, 16 January 2023; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/dhaka/720856/>

<sup>33</sup>ProthomAlo, 6 February 2023; [https://images.eprothomalo.com/PA/2023/02/06/dh/5\\_07/e6cbf86e\\_426658\\_2.jpg](https://images.eprothomalo.com/PA/2023/02/06/dh/5_07/e6cbf86e_426658_2.jpg)

<sup>34</sup>Samakal, 18 February 2023; <https://epaper.samakal.com/nogor-edition/2023-02-18/16/6469>

11. On 15 March 2023, Chhatra League and Swechchasebak League<sup>35</sup> leaders and activists attacked a Taxpayer Protection Council's Nagar Bhaban siege programme demanding the withdrawal of increased house tax, under Chittagong City Corporation, and 30 protesters were injured.<sup>36</sup>



*Injured people from the Chittagong Nagar Bhaban siege, being treated at the hospital. Photo: Prothom Alo, 17 February 2023*

## ***Criminal activities and acts of violence by the Ruling Party***

12. In the first three months of 2023, harassment and violence by leaders and activists of the ruling party became widespread. Several allegations of criminal activities, including brutality against ordinary citizens<sup>37</sup> and children<sup>38</sup>; extortion<sup>39</sup>; mugging<sup>40</sup>; embezzlement of relief rice<sup>41</sup>; occupying government property<sup>42</sup>; embezzlement of TR-Kabikha<sup>43</sup> money<sup>44</sup>; rape<sup>45</sup> and violence against women etc. were found against members of Awami League, Chhatra League and Jubo League. During this period, many ordinary students were injured in the brutal violence of Chhatra League leaders and activists in various places and educational institutions. Allegations of various other crimes, including seat trading<sup>46</sup>; kidnapping and ransom<sup>47</sup>; snatching tender bids<sup>48</sup>; extortion<sup>49</sup>; beating and sexual harassment of students<sup>50</sup>, have

<sup>35</sup>Voluntary wing of Awami League

<sup>36</sup>Samakal, 16 March 2023; <https://samakal.com/chittagong/article/2303162425/>

<sup>37</sup>Jugantor, 8 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/second-edition/655892/>

<sup>38</sup>Daily Star, 6 February 2023; <https://bangla.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news-448151>

<sup>39</sup>Samakal, 13 January 2023; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/2301151033/>

<sup>40</sup>Jugantor, 11 February 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/644038/>

<sup>41</sup>Samakal 17 January 2023; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/2301151803/>

<sup>42</sup>Jugantor, 2 February 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/640843/>

<sup>43</sup>Test Relief (TR) and Food for Work programmes for the poor.

<sup>44</sup>Prothom Alo, 6 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/wzff2wt2qy>

<sup>45</sup>Samakal, 9 January 2023; <https://samakal.com/biday-2022/article/2301150412/> and Jugantor, 18 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/655802/>

<sup>46</sup>Jugantor, 18 February 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/646203/>

<sup>47</sup>ProthomAlo, 3 March 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/qw9898xv54>

<sup>48</sup>Samakal, 14 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/dhaka/article/2302156841/>

been found against them. It has been made compulsory for ordinary students to attend Chhatra League programmes in educational institutions across the country. Violence was unleashed on those who did not join the programme. On 22 February 2023, Chhatra League leaders and activists beat at least 35 people, including students and abused them with vulgar language, for not joining the programmes of Chhatra League in Rajshahi College.<sup>51</sup> Chhatra League members set up torture cells in various educational institutions and carried out violence on students.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, it is alleged that the Chhatra League leaders and activists committed violence against ordinary students by labelling them Shibir activists.<sup>53</sup> On 12 February, a Hindu student named Krishna Roy was detained and physically tortured by some people, including the general secretary and joint general secretary of the Chhatra League's hall unit in Shaheed Suhrawardy Student Hall of Rajshahi University.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, on 8 February, Chittagong University unit Chhatra League leaders and activists beat four students of the university with cricket stumps, pipes and sticks, labelling them Shibir activists. Among them, Zahid Hossain and Sakib Hossain were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital's Intensive Care Unit (ICU) with serious injuries.<sup>55</sup> In addition, women leaders and activists of Chhatra League have also committed various types of violence on students.<sup>56</sup> On 12 February, Phulpori, a first-year student at Islami University in Kushtia, was ill-treated by female Chhatra League leaders Antara, Moabiya and Tabassum. Phulpori was videoed being undressed by them.<sup>57</sup> Rajshahi University's Munnujan Hall unit Chhatra League vice-president Tajnova Thimi threatened to get her friends to rape a female student.<sup>58</sup>

13. In the first three months of 2023, Awami League, Chhatra League and Jubo League leaders and activists clashed due to conflict of interest and used local weapons and guns on each other.<sup>59</sup> On 22 February 2023, a seventh-grade student named Rasel (14) was killed in a clash between two factions of the Awami League in Raipur under Lakshmipur District.<sup>60</sup> In most cases the

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<sup>49</sup>Daily Star, 5 February 2023; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/extortion-money-du-bcl-men-vandalise-shop-3239151>

<sup>50</sup>Samakal, 16 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/politics/article/2302157162/>

<sup>51</sup>Prothom Alo, 23 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/n2c9a4a2p5>

<sup>52</sup>Prothom Alo, 11 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/1x790ovwvr>

<sup>53</sup>Samakal, 10 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/2302156187/>

<sup>54</sup>Jugantor, 18 February 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/646204/>

<sup>55</sup>Prothom Alo, 12 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/1x790ovwvr>

<sup>56</sup>Samakal, 23 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/politics/article/2302158470/>

<sup>57</sup>Samakal, 16 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/politics/article/2302157162/>

<sup>58</sup>Jugantor, 2 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/650372/>

<sup>59</sup>Prothom Alo, 27 February 2023;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=272a7e368eb&imageview=1&epedate=27/02/2023>

<sup>60</sup>Prothom Alo, 22 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/tv2318a30q>

accused have not been brought to justice as they enjoy impunity under the shelter of the ruling party.<sup>61</sup>

14. **Between January and March 2023, political violence has left at least 19 people dead and 2,007 people injured. In these three months, 76 incidents of internal conflict between Awami League and five of BNP have been recorded. In the internal conflict of Awami League seven people were killed and 654 people were injured and in the internal conflict of BNP 39 people were reported to have been injured.**
15. On 4 January 2023, Chhatra League leaders and activists, led by Anwar Hossain, a member of Ishwardi Municipality unit Jubo League, attacked ordinary people due to a dispute over a road accident in Ishwardi town under Pabna District. At this time a rickshaw puller named Mamun Hossain (25) was killed when Anwar Hossain shot him with a pistol.<sup>62</sup>

## Freedom of Expression and the Media

16. In the first three months of 2023, interference of the government and members of the ruling party in the freedom of expression and media of the citizens, was noticeable. After the Awami League came to power in 2009, control of the media began and has now become widespread. As a result, objective and impartial news dissemination is disrupted. Most of the media in Bangladesh are under the control of the government or government-backed individuals. Due to the lack of freedom of expression, people use alternative media, including Facebook, to express their views and share news/information. However, the government is suppressing dissidents and creating an environment of fear by taking the freedom of media away through enforcement of the Digital Security Act 2018. In this situation, journalists are imposing self-censorship on themselves. During this period, journalists have been attacked by leaders and influential members of the ruling party while they were performing their professional duties and cases have been filed against them and they have been arrested.
17. Article 43 of the Constitution guarantees citizens' right to privacy in personal and other communications, but the government is violating such rights. The government has bought advanced surveillance technology from an Israeli company, Wispear to monitor the people.<sup>63</sup> The government has also announced the legal use of this technology. On 12 January 2023, in response to a question in the National Parliament, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan

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<sup>61</sup>Prothom Alo, 23 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/dn1rnobno8>

<sup>62</sup>Manabzamin, 5 January 2023; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=37019>

<sup>63</sup>Haaretz, 10 January 2023; <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/security-aviation/2023-01-10/ty-article.premium/israeli-spy-tech-sold-to-bangladesh-despite-dismal-human-rights-record/00000185-9692-d16a-a987-f6b75dd00000> The Times of Israel, 10 January 2023; <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-owned-firms-reportedly-selling-spyware-to-bangladesh-with-no-oversight/>

Kamal said that an initiative has been taken to launch a legal system of communication through cell phone or internet.<sup>64</sup> Pro-government media outlets have illegally leaked phone conversations of government critics over the past few years; which violated the rights to privacy, personal liberty and security of citizens.

18. At the Ekushey Book Fair<sup>65</sup> 2023, the government-controlled Bangla Academy did not allocate a stall for Adarsh Publishing House in order to stop it from selling books written by dissidents. It should be noted that Adarsh Publishing did not get a stall for three books which are alleged to have been penned against the government.<sup>66</sup>
19. The government and government supporters have continued to persecute the relatives of Bangladeshi bloggers, human rights activists and journalists, who are abroad or in exile. On 17 March 2023, Mahinur Ahmed Khan, the brother of Bangladeshi journalist Zulkarnain Saer Khan<sup>67</sup> living in Europe, was attacked by four unidentified men with iron rods and sticks in front of his house in West Sheorapara area of Mirpur, Dhaka.<sup>68</sup> Locals told Mahinur's family members that the attackers were supporters of Humayun Rashid Jony, an Awami League member.<sup>69</sup> The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said it had previously documented retaliatory behaviour against the family members of exiled Bangladeshi journalists, one of which was the arrest of the sister of US-based Bangladeshi journalist Kanak Sarwar in October 2021.<sup>70</sup>
20. On 1 January 2023, Jubo League and Chhatra League leaders-activists attacked and injured Maruf Hossain Munna, a member of Magura District unit Jubo Dal, for posting on Facebook against a Member of Parliament of the ruling party in Magura.<sup>71</sup>

## *Freedom of the media*

21. **From January to March 2023, 54 journalists were injured, 17 were assaulted, two was arrested and eight were threatened for carrying out their professional duty.**

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<sup>64</sup>Samakal, 14 January 2023; <https://epaper.samakal.com/nogor-edition/2023-01-14/1/5720>

<sup>65</sup> The Ekushey Book Fair is the national book fair of Bangladesh arranged each year by [Bangla Academy](#) and takes place for the whole month of February in Dhaka.

<sup>66</sup>Samakal, 18 January 2023; <https://samakal.com/lifestyle/article/2301151889/>

<sup>67</sup>Investigative journalist Zulkarnain Saer Khan lives in exile in the U.K. where he works as a researcher with Qatari broadcaster Al-Jazeera's investigative unit, recently published investigative reports on [alleged corruption](#) by government officials with the ruling Awami League party, favouritism and human rights abuses and the country's expanding [surveillance apparatus](#).

<sup>68</sup> Al Jazeera, 24 March 2023; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/24/bangladesh-investigative-journalist-brother-beaten-with-rods>

<sup>69</sup>Manabzamin, 25 March 2023; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=48310>

<sup>70</sup>CPJ 24 March 2023; <https://cpi.org/2023/03/unidentified-men-attack-brother-of-exiled-bangladeshi-journalist-zulkarnain-saer-khan/>

<sup>71</sup>Samakal, 2 January 2023; <https://samakal.com/industry-trade/article/2301149283/>

22. On 23 January 2023 at approximately 11:00 am, Raghunath Khan, Satkhira District correspondent of Deepta Television and of a local newspaper named Bangla '71, was picked up by some men claiming to be members of law enforcement agencies in Satkhira, as alleged by his wife. When they contacted the police in this regard, the police denied taking Raghunath. However, Raghunath was shown as arrested later that evening from Sapmara Setu area under Debhata Police Station of Satkhira on charges of creating 'sabotage'.<sup>72</sup>
23. On 9 February 2023, Chhatra League chased students who were demanding the transfer of the Fine Arts Institute of Chittagong University to the university's main campus. When Marjan Akhtar, Chittagong University correspondent of the daily Samakal, wanted to record the incident, she was surrounded by Chhatra League leaders and activists and harassed and threatened. At the same time, RTV's photojournalist Emraul Kaus Mithu was also assaulted by Chhatra League members.<sup>73</sup>
24. On 11 February 2023, during separate rally of BNP and Awami League in Hatkora area of Gangutia Union of Dhamrai under Dhaka District, supporters of Gangutia Union unit Awami League President Quader Khan attacked and assaulted Jugantar Dhamrai correspondent Shamim Khan and broke his leg while he was gathering news about the altercation that ensued between leaders and activists of Awami League and BNP. Quader Khan was already angry with Shamim as news of scandals and acts of corruption against Quader Khan had come to light in Jugantar. At that time the attackers snatched away the identity card, cell phone, camera, and cash from Shamim Khan. Shamim Khan was admitted to Sauria Health Complex. The police did not accept Shamim Khan's case regarding this incident.<sup>74</sup>
25. On 15 March 2023, journalists were baton-charged and beaten by the police while performing their professional duties at the Supreme Court Bar Association elections. Eight journalists were injured.<sup>75</sup>
26. About 15 members of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) arrested Prothom Alo's staff reporter Shamsuzzaman Shams on 29 March at around 4:00 am from Ambagan area of Savar, for publishing 'false and fabricated' news in Prothom Alo regarding price hike and access to food on 26 March, Independence Day. At that time, they seized a laptop, two cell phones and a portable hard disk used by Shamsuzzaman. On 28 March, at 2:15 am, Dhaka Metropolitan North Ward No. 11 unit Jubo League General Secretary Syed Mohammad Golam Kibria filed a case under the Digital Security Act, 2018

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<sup>72</sup>Prothom Alo, 28 January 2023;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=2812c0fb9cc&imageview=1&epedate=28/01/2023>

<sup>73</sup>Samakal, 12 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/shoili/article/2302156525/>

<sup>74</sup>Samakal, 12 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/samakal-investigation/article/2302156569/>, Jugantor, 16 February 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/645838/>

<sup>75</sup>Jugantor, 15 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/national/654901/>

with Tejgaon Police Station, mentioning the name of Shamsuzzaman and against some anonymous persons. On 29 March midnight, Executive President of Bangabandhu Foundation, Abdul Malek, filed a case against Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman at Ramna Police Station under the Digital Security Act, 2018. Shamsuzzaman has also been accused in this case. Other persons accused include 'unnamed' persons, including the Associate Cameraman of the daily Prothom Alo.<sup>76</sup> After 30 hours of detention on 30 March, Shamsuzzaman was brought to court by the police.<sup>77</sup> On 3 April, Shamsuzzaman got bail from the court in a case filed with Ramna Police Station under the DSA and walked out of the jail the same day, five days after his detention.<sup>78</sup>



*Prothom Alo journalist Shamsuzzaman Shams being produced in Dhaka's Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court. Photo: Prothom Alo, 31 March 2023.*

## **The Imposition of Draconian Laws**

27. The government continues to crack down on the country by enforcing various repressive laws, including the Digital Security Act, 2018 and Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009.

### ***The Digital Security Act, 2018***

28. The government is suppressing citizens by imposing the repressive Digital Security Act (DSA), 2018. As a result, freedom of expression of the citizens is being severely hampered. Every month, leaders and activists of the ruling

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<sup>76</sup>Prothom Alo, 30 March 2023;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=3033d17338d&imageview=1&epedate=30/03/2023>

<sup>77</sup>Prothom Alo, 31 March 2023;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ArticleView?eid=1&edate=31/03/2023&pgid=432589&ismag=false&paid=1&epedate=31/03/2023>

<sup>78</sup>Daily Star, 9 April 2023; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/prothom-alo-reporter-shams-gets-bail-another-dsa-case-3292716>



party file an average of four cases under the DSA.<sup>79</sup> On 31 March 2023, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk said in a statement that the Digital Security Act is being used to arrest, harass and intimidate journalists and human rights defenders across Bangladesh, and to suppress the voices of online critics. He called on the authorities to immediately suspend its application of the DSA and bring necessary amendments to its provisions to bring the law in line with international human rights law.<sup>80</sup>

29. **Between January to March 2023, a total of 27 people were arrested under the Digital Security Act, 2018. Among them, 24 were arrested for online posts/comments criticizing the Prime Minister, high-ranking persons of the government and/or their family members and for making ‘anti-government’ comments; and three persons were arrested for posting ‘provocative’ religious comments.**
30. Ali Aslam, General Secretary of Kazipur Upazila unit Jubo League, filed a case under the Digital Security Act against a person named Ashkar Pain on 25 January for allegedly making ‘derogatory’ remarks about late Health Minister Mohammad Nasim on Facebook. On 9 February, the police arrested Ashkar Pain.<sup>81</sup>
31. On 29 March 2023, Helal Akbar Chowdhury, former Deputy Finance Secretary of the Central Jubo League, filed a case under the DSA against Jugantar’s special correspondent in Chittagong, Mahbub Alam, at the Chittagong Cyber Tribunal due to the publication of an investigative report on Bangladesh Railway’s alleged acts of corruption, land grabbing and tender bidding.<sup>82</sup>
32. On 16 January 2023, Dhaka Cyber Tribunal Judge AM Zulfikar Hayat sentenced Mufti Kazi Mohammad Ibrahim to one year imprisonment in a case filed under the DSA on charges of spreading a ‘false and provocative’ video on social media.<sup>83</sup>
33. On 30 January 2023, Dhaka Cyber Tribunal Judge AM Zulfikar Hayat sentenced Shafiur Rahman Farabi to seven years imprisonment under the Information and Communication Technology Act<sup>84</sup> on charges of ‘provocative religious remarks’ on social media.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>Prothom Alo, 14 January 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/qp3hcqlybg>

<sup>80</sup> OHCHR, 23 March 2023; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/bangladesh-turk-urges-immediate-suspension-digital-security-act-media>

<sup>81</sup>Prothom Alo, 9 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/7yuxaqf6ta>

<sup>82</sup>Jugantor, 31 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/660308/>

<sup>83</sup>Manabzamin, 16 January 2023; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=38648>

<sup>84</sup>The ICT Act 2006 (amended in 2013) is the fore runner of the DSA. It is still in force, although the more repressive DSA is used.

<sup>85</sup>Prothom Alo, 31 January 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/zuthpbk8a8>

34. On 8 February 2023, Rangpur Cyber Tribunal Judge Abdul Majeed sentenced Paritosh Sarkar of Rangpur to 11 years imprisonment in a case filed under the DSA on charges of ‘insulting religion’ on Facebook.<sup>86</sup>
35. On 2 March 2023, a person named Iqbal Hossain was jailed for 1 year and 4 months under the DSA by Dhaka Cyber Tribunal Judge AM Zulfiqar Hayat, for allegedly hurting religious sentiments.<sup>87</sup>

### ***The Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009***

36. On 19 February 2009, the Awami League government enacted the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), and has used the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009 to crack down on opposition party leaders and activists, including BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, across the country to quell anti-government movements. Police arrested 25 leaders and activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and Chhatra Shibir on charges of holding a secret meeting under the guise of a social gathering and annual feast, in Betbaria area of Chapainawabganj Sadar Upazila on 18 February 2023. Police said that various books written by Jamaat leaders were recovered from them and that they filed a case against the arrested under the ATA in this regard.<sup>88</sup> On 20 March 2023, BNP leaders and activists from Sirajdikhan and Srinagar Upazilas under Munshiganj District went to Banani Club in Dhaka. The police arrested 54 BNP leaders and activists from the club on charges of planning ‘sabotage’. A case has been filed against them under the ATA.<sup>89</sup>

## **Constitutional and State Institutions**

37. The Awami League government has permanently politicized various important state institutions of the country into submissive institutions. As a result, institutions including the Election Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission, and the National Human Rights Commission, have become bias in favour of the regime and the party in power, and thus dysfunctional.

### ***Election Commission and electoral system***

38. The electoral system of Bangladesh has completely collapsed and the people have been deprived from their right to franchise. The current Election Commission led by Chief Election Commissioner Abdul Awal has not gained the trust of most political parties and ordinary citizens. It is alleged that the

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<sup>86</sup>Prothom Alo, 9 February 2023;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=92f5d574a6&imageview=1&epedate=09/02/2023>

<sup>87</sup>Prothom Alo, 2 March 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/2pv0fyhn1a>

<sup>88</sup>Jugantor, 31 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/660332/>

<sup>89</sup>Prothom Alo, 20 March 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/lbl18cfe8z>

current Commission is trying to conduct another one-sided, rigged election just like the previous Election Commissions headed by Kazi Rakibul Huda and Nurul Huda under the incumbent Awami League government. Even though various types of irregularities and fraud occurred in different elections held under the current Election Commission, the Commission has not taken any effective action against them. It has been alleged that government supporters are now resorting to rigging the elections of various professional organisations as well. In the elections of the Dhaka Bar Association held on 22 and 23 February<sup>90</sup> and in the elections of the Gazipur District Lawyers' Association on 2 March<sup>91</sup>, it has been alleged that the candidates of the ruling party won by resorting to ballot paper looting and rigging. In the election of the Supreme Court Bar Association held on 15 and 16 March, the pro-BNP lawyers were beaten by the police and the Awami League-backed lawyers won by occupying the polling station on 15 March.<sup>92</sup>



*A journalist was beaten by the police while on duty at the Supreme Court Bar Association Auditorium. Photo: Prothom Alo, 16 March 2023*

39. The by-election of Gaibandha-5 constituency, which was cancelled on 12 October 2022 due to widespread violence, was held on 4 January 2023 with the same irregularities as before. The former General Secretary of Gaibandha District unit Chhatra League, Mostak Ahmed Ranju and his supporters spread their influence in the polling centre by erecting a barricade outside the Napiter Hat Government Primary School of this constituency. Ranju was seen hanging a journalist's ID card, issued by the Election Commission, on his own

<sup>90</sup>Prothom Alo, 25 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/7rx1dxri3z>

<sup>91</sup>Jugantor, 5 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/651385/>

<sup>92</sup>Prothom Alo, 16 March 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/pogsenu61v>

neck. Ranju admitted that he is not a journalist. When asked how he got this card, Ranju said the Election Commission should be asked.<sup>93</sup>

40. By-elections were held on 1 February in six vacant seats where BNP MPs had resigned. The ruling party Awami League and its allied political parties participated in this election. Most of the polling stations were empty as voters had abstained from voting.<sup>94</sup> Even though BNP was not the main opponent, there were incidents of violence in this election. Supporters of the ruling party prevented supporters of rival candidates and voters from going to the polling centres.<sup>95</sup> Awami League's nominated candidate violated the Code of Conduct extensively before the elections.<sup>96</sup> Before the by-election in Brahmanbaria-2 constituency, there were allegations that the rival candidates standing against Awami League-supported independent candidate Abdus Sattar, were intimidated<sup>97</sup> and most of the candidates were forced to withdraw from the election.<sup>98</sup> Supporters of Abdus Sattar were also seen in the polling booth.<sup>99</sup> Supporters of the Awami League nominated candidate did not allow the voters of the independent candidate to enter the polling centre in the Chapainawabganj-2 by-election. When supporters of the independent candidate stood next to Rahanpur AB Government High School polling centre, supporters of the Awami League nominated candidate beat them and chased them away. Supporters of the Awami League candidate did not allow the voters of independent candidates to enter two centres in Jambaria and Baragachi areas under Bholahat Upazila and Radharnagar Government Primary School polling centre under Gomstapur Upazila.<sup>100</sup> In Chapainawabganj-3 constituency, 15 election offices of independent candidate Samiul Haque, were vandalized and set on fire allegedly by supporters of Awami League nominated candidate and Samiul Haque's supporters were beaten.<sup>101</sup> After the election, supporters of the winning Awami League candidate attacked and vandalized a hotel owned by Habibur Rahman, a supporter of the defeated independent candidate Samiul Haque.<sup>102</sup> In an election meeting of Bogura-6 Constituency on 6 January, General Secretary of Bogura Sadar Upazila unit Awami League, Mahafuzul Islam, said that those

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<sup>93</sup> Prothom Alo, 4 January 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/rk0f3sgwjo>

<sup>94</sup> Prothom Alo, 1 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/06z2va0r2n> and Samakal, 2 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/lifestyle/article/2302154502/>

<sup>95</sup> Prothom Alo, 2 February 2023;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=220ed2507e&imageview=1&epedate=02/02/2023>

<sup>96</sup> Samakal, 29 January 2023; <https://samakal.com/food/article/2301153904/>

<sup>97</sup> Samakal, 2 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/lifestyle/article/2302154502/>

<sup>98</sup> Prothom Alo, 29 January 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/cbuzjww4rv>

<sup>99</sup> Prothom Alo, 1 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/81mv05h6td>

<sup>100</sup> Prothom Alo, 1 February 2023;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=126d1199b4&imageview=1&epedate=01/02/2023>

<sup>101</sup> Prothom Alo, 30 January 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/v1zjone2td>

<sup>102</sup> Manabzamin, 3 February 2023; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=41217>

who will not vote for 'boat' symbol in the by-election should not go to the polling centre.<sup>103</sup> Meanwhile the Election Commission has given instructions to reduce the presence of journalists in the polling stations on election day in Bogura-6 and Bogura-4 constituencies.<sup>104</sup> Awami League nominated candidate in Bogura-6 constituency has been accused of taking over polling centres by forcibly ousting the polling agents of independent candidates in 135 out of 143 polling stations.<sup>105</sup>



*Someone in the polling booth 'assisting' a voter, as seen in the Alinagar Govt Primary School polling centre in Sorail. Photo: Prothom Alo, 2 February 2023*

41. On 16 March 2023, voting for hundreds of positions in the local government was held amid various irregularities, including blocking the Presiding Officer, exploding crude bombs and shooting in the polling centres, and taking Electronic Voting Machines outside. Voter turnout was low. In Chittagong's Boalkhali Upazila Parishad by-election, local Jubo League leader Nirmalendu Dey Sumon took away the EVM out from Jyoisthpura Ramani Mohan High School polling centre. Furthermore, Durbar Dighirpar Government Primary School polling centre was occupied by Jubo League leader Shahadat and Masjidbari Government Primary School polling centre was occupied by Union Chhatra League President Yunus Azam Khokon. Chhatra League leaders and activists opened fire at the Khadimpur Union Parishad polling centre in the airport area of Sylhet Sadar Upazila.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>Samakal, 23 January 2023; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/2301152817/>

<sup>104</sup>Naya Diganta, 30 January 2023; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/more-news/724103/>

<sup>105</sup>Prothom Alo, 2 February 2023;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=220ed2507e&imageview=1&epedate=02/02/2023>

<sup>106</sup>Samakal, 17 March 2023; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/2303162654/>



*Nirmalendu Dey alias Sumon, a joint convener of Sreepur union Jubo League, pictured taking away a component of the EVM from the Jaisthapura Ramani Mohan High School centre in Boalkhali of Chittagong.*

*Photo: Prothom Alo, 17 March 2023*

## ***Anti-Corruption Commission***

42. There are various allegations of corruption against the leaders and activists of the ruling party and government supporters belonging to different professions and government officials<sup>107</sup> and employees<sup>108</sup>. Most of the ill-gotten money has been laundered abroad<sup>109</sup> and used to buy houses/ real estate there.<sup>110</sup> The global network of investigative journalists ‘Organized Crime and Corruption Report Project’ or OCCRP mentioned in a report on their website that Mohammad Abdus Sobhan, Member of Parliament and Publicity and Publication Secretary of the Central Committee of the ruling Awami League, bought several houses in New York at a cost of 4 million dollars.<sup>111</sup> Taksim A Khan, who served as the Managing Director of Dhaka WASA<sup>112</sup> for 13 years, has been accused of buying 14 houses in the United States with money earned through irregularities and corruption.<sup>113</sup>
43. Although the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has investigated some cases of corruption involving Members of Parliament, influential politicians and bureaucrats of the current government, most of the accused are being acquitted in these cases. A Member of Parliament spoke at a public meeting about his role in shielding a ruling party leader from an ACC case. On 4 January 2023, Cumilla-7 Constituency Member of Parliament Pran Gopal Dutta said that the corruption charges against Mofizul Islam, the former Mayor of Chandina Municipality in Cumilla, should be dropped from the

<sup>107</sup>Samakal, 31 January 2023; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/2301154142/>

<sup>108</sup>Samakal, 2 March 2023; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/2303159844/>

<sup>109</sup>Jugantor, 16 January 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/635338/>

<sup>110</sup>Prothom Alo, 14 January 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/gfkryulc4h>

<sup>111</sup>OCCRP, 13 January 2023; <https://www.occrp.org/en/investigations/bangladeshi-politician-close-to-prime-minister-hasina-secretly-owns-over-4-million-in-new-york-real-estate>

<sup>112</sup>Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority

<sup>113</sup>Samakal, 9 January 2023; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/2301150299/>

ACC.<sup>114</sup> On the other hand, the ACC has continued the legal process, including investigation and filing of cases, against top leaders of the opposition party BNP.

## **State Repression and Impunity**

44. Under the current government, state repression of citizens has reached extreme levels. The government is using members of law enforcement agencies to suppress political opponents, government critics, and dissidents, and to help ruling party candidates win in elections. The administration has been politicized to such an extent that civil servants are attending political programmes of the ruling party, in violation of service rules and despite being employees of the Republic. As a result, the state, the government and the ruling party have all become one. Due to this, they are enjoying impunity in favour of the government even though there are allegations of suppression and ill-treatment against them. Shahadat Hossain, the Officer-in-Charge of Baghaichhari Police Station, was present on stage at a conference of Jubo League in Baghaichhari Upazila of Rangamati on 11 February 2023.<sup>115</sup>



*The Officer-in-Charge of Baghaichhari Police Station on the guest stage during an Upazila Jubo League conference at Baghaichhari in Rangamati. Photo: Samakal, 12 February 2023.*

## ***Lack of accountability and torture and degrading treatment by members of law enforcement agencies***

45. Lack of accountability and impunity continue to lead to reckless behaviour by members of law enforcement agencies. During this period, members of the law enforcement agencies arrested and tortured opposition leaders-activists and their family members, in order to suppress anti-government movements. There have also been reports of deaths due to torture in custody. On 10 January 2023, Mohammad Wadud Khandkar, a victim of police torture, died at Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital in Dhaka. On 10 December 2022,

<sup>114</sup>Manabzamin, 10 January 2023; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=37679>

<sup>115</sup>Samakal, 12 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/2302156541/>

police went to the house of Masood Rana and Zahid Khandkar, who are associated with BNP, at Bandar under Narayanganj District, to arrest them in regard to a BNP rally. After failing to find them, the police arrested their brother, a grocer Mohammad Wadud (who is not involved with politics) and took him to the police station and tortured him. While detained in Narayanganj District Jail, Wadud's feet became infected and he fell seriously ill due to torture. On 2 January 2023, Wadud was admitted to Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital in Dhaka, after being released from jail on bail from the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, where he later died.<sup>116</sup>

46. In addition to suppression of opposition party leaders and activists, there are various other allegations against members of law enforcement agencies, including torture<sup>117</sup> of ordinary citizens; mugging<sup>118</sup>; bribery<sup>119</sup>; extortion with threats to kill in crossfire<sup>120</sup>; arresting innocent citizens instead of the main accused and sending them to jail<sup>121</sup>; accusing a child in a criminal case after increasing his age<sup>122</sup>; harassment and arrest 'trade'<sup>123</sup>. Due to impunity and lack of proper implementation of the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013, members of the law enforcement agencies continue to torture.



*Nazim Uddin was arrested due to the similarity of his name with an accused. Photo: Prothom Alo, 19 February 2023*

<sup>116</sup>Jugantor, 12 January 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/second-edition/634180/>

<sup>117</sup> Samakal, 19 March 2023; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/2303163126/>

<sup>118</sup> Samakal, 11 March 2023; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/2303161469/>

<sup>119</sup> Jugantor, 9 February 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/643181/>

<sup>120</sup> Jugantor, 15 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/654697/>

<sup>121</sup> Prothom Alo, 19 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/zx1bo5ycdu>

<sup>122</sup> ProthomAlo, 17 January 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/o1hapv9hr0>

<sup>123</sup> Arrest trade: Policemen make money from arbitrary detention and release. Prothom Alo, 20 January 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/lg5n8u1cvt>





*An accused in a criminal case who is a student of class three and his cousin with his parent in the court premises of Habiganj. Photo: Prothom Alo, 17 January 2023*

47. On 17 January 2023, a yarn trader named Mohammad Rabiul Islam was tortured and killed in the custody of Bason Police Station in Gazipur District. Rabiul's nephew Ashraful Islam said that on 14 January at around 2:00 am, Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Mahbub Hossain and ASI Nurul Islam of Bason Police Station arrested his uncle Rabiul without an arrest warrant. The police demanded money from Rabiul's family saying that he would be released later. Taka 30,000 was paid, later the police said Rabiul will not be released unless Tk 500,000 is paid. On 17 January at 9:00 pm, ASI Mahbub Hossain came to their house and asked them to go to the police station and said that Rabiul will be released. Later, when Ashraful went to the police station with his aunt, the police took a signature from him on a blank sheet of paper and told them to go home saying that Rabiul will be released. After a while, they were informed from the police station that Rabiul died in a road accident on the way home. Rabiul's family alleged that the police tortured and killed Rabiul because they were not paid the money they demanded. Due to this incident, angry people blocked the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway and protested. The angry crowd vandalized the Police Outpost and set fire to two motorcycles.<sup>124</sup> As a result, the police took the opportunity and filed a case against 300 unidentified people, including 10 leaders and activists of BNP and Jamaat over this incident.
48. On 22 March 2023, Sultana Jasmine (45), an office assistant of Chandipur Union Land Office, was arrested by the members of Rapid Action Battalion (RAB)-5 from Mukti intersection in Naogaon town on charges of financial fraud and taken to a microbus.<sup>125</sup> On the same day Sultana fell seriously ill in RAB custody and was admitted to Naogaon Government Hospital and later

<sup>124</sup>Jugantor, 19 January 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/636395/>

<sup>125</sup>Samakal, 28 March 2023; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/2303164577/>

shifted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. On 23 March, the local government director (Joint Secretary) of Rajshahi Division Enamul Haque filed a case against Sultana under the Digital Security Act, 2028 at Rajpara Police Station while she was under treatment at hospital.<sup>126</sup> In this case, the statement of the plaintiff and information given in the statement were found to be inconsistent.<sup>127</sup> On 24 March, Sultana passed away while undergoing treatment at Rahshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH). Director of RMCH Brigadier General FM Shamim Ahmed said that Sultana Jasmine had an injury on the right side of her head when she was admitted to the hospital.<sup>128</sup> Sultana's son Shahed Hossain Saikat alleged that his mother was a victim of conspiracy. She was tortured while in RAB custody, due to which she died.<sup>129</sup> At the time of admission at the RMCH, RAB said that Sultana fell and got injured during interrogation. RAB claimed that the RMCH authority's statement about Sultana's head injury is incorrect.<sup>130</sup> Sultana's autopsy team head, RMCH Assistant Professor of forensic medicine department Dr. Kofiluddin, said that Sultana had multiple injuries or haemorrhage in her brain. Multiple injuries occur in the brain only when bleeding occurs due to severe trauma.<sup>131</sup> The inquest report of Sultana's body did not match the information of the forensic doctor. The forensic doctor who conducted the post-mortem said that Sultana had an injury on the left side of her forehead. However, Executive Magistrate Jasmin Akhter did not mention head injuries in her inquest report.<sup>132</sup> Relatives alleged that Sultana was hastily buried on the orders of RAB and that RAB members stood around during the burial.<sup>133</sup> On 28 March, a dual bench of High Court Division of the Supreme Court comprising of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice Ahmed Sohel heard a Writ Petition as to whether Sultana Jasmine was taken by RAB with any force, even though there was no case against her and whether RAB took Sultana to a police station or office and interrogated her. The Court also wanted to know whether RAB's behaviour was lawful before she was taken to the hospital.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>126</sup>Samakal, 28 March 2023; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/2303164577/>

<sup>127</sup>Jugantor, 29 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/659593/>

<sup>128</sup>Jugantor, 29 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/659593/>

<sup>129</sup>Jugantor, 27 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/second-edition/659041/>

<sup>130</sup>Samakal, 28 March 2023; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/2303164577/>

<sup>131</sup>Jugantor, 29 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/659593/>

<sup>132</sup>Samakal, 29 March 2023; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/2303164736/>

<sup>133</sup>Samakal, 28 March 2023; <https://epaper.samakal.com/nogor-edition/2023-03-28/1/9769/detail>

<sup>134</sup>Samakal, 29 March 2023; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/2303164736/>



Sultana Jasmine. Photo: Samakal, 29 March 2023

## ***Enforced disappearances***

49. Acts of enforced disappearance have created a frightening environment in Bangladesh. People belonging to the opposition parties and dissidents are said to be the victims of most enforced disappearances. There have been allegations that some persons who have been released from prison have been taken away from the prison gate and disappeared. Although government officials regularly deny cases of enforced disappearance, state security forces have been alleged to be involved in every incident of disappearance and, in some cases, there is evidence of the disappearance.<sup>135</sup> Allegations were made that the disappeared persons were tortured while in captivity. Massive anti-disappearance campaigns have reduced the trend of outright disappearances and long-term detentions after disappearances.
50. **A total of eight persons were allegedly disappeared after being picked up by members of law enforcement agencies, according to data gathered by Odhikar between January and March 2023. Among them, one was disappeared by RAB, one was by police, three by DB Police, and three were disappeared by men claiming to be members of law enforcement agencies.**

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<sup>135</sup>On 2 March 2017, disappeared victim Mokhlesur Rahman Jony's wife Jasmine Nahar Reshma filed a writ petition (No. 2833/2017) before the High Court Division of the Supreme Court. Based on this petition, on 16 May 2017 a High Court Division Bench consisting of Justice Kazi Reza-ul Huq and Justice Mohammad Ullah asked the Chief Judicial Magistrate of Satkhira to submit an inquiry report to the High Court Division by 3 July 2017 regarding the disappearance of homeopathy physician Mokhlesur Rahman Jony. A Senior Judicial Magistrate of Satkhira, Habibullah Mahmud, submitted an inquiry report to the High Court Division on 4 July 2017 that found the Superintendent of Police Mohammad Altaf Hossain and former Satkhira Sadar Police Station officer-in-charge Emdadul Huq Sheikh, former Sub-Inspector Himel Hossain, were involved in the arrest of Sheikh Mokhlesur Rahman Jony and his subsequent disappearance. It was mentioned in the probe report that the OC Emdadul Huq Sheikh, SI Himel Hossain, were directly involved. (<http://www.newagebd.net/article/19321/>). In another case, Narayanganj District and Sessions Judge Syed Enayet Hossain on 16 January 2017 gave a verdict on the killing of seven persons subsequent their disappearance. 26 accused, including 16 RAB officers and commanding officer RAB-11, Lt. Col. (Retrd) Tareq Sayeed were sentenced to death. (<https://www.jugantor.com/news-archive/first-page/2017/01/17/93821/>)

**Seven of them were later resurfaced alive; and information of one victim could not be ascertained.**

51. On 25 January 2023, Abdur Rafee, an employee of a private organisation and associated with the politics of Jamaat-e-Islami, was picked up in a white-microbus by some people claiming to be members of the Detective Branch (DB) of Police from Banani area of Dhaka. Rafee's wife Hajera Khatun said that when she went to Banani Police Station to file a General Diary in search of her husband, the police did not take it. Later, when they searched for Rafee at the DB police office at Mintu Road, the DB said that they did not arrest her husband.<sup>136</sup> On 30 January, police showed him as arrested in a case filed with Hatirjheel Police Station and produced him before the court. On 27 February, Rafee got bail from the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, and he was released from Keraniganj Central Jail on 28 February. Rafee was picked up again by the DB police from the jail gate after his release on bail. On 2 March, the DB police sent him to court after showing him as arrested in a case filed with Banani Police Station. Abdur Rafee's family did not know his whereabouts for two days before he was produced before the court.<sup>137</sup>
52. On 22 January 2023, Abu Hossain Rajon, an employee of a private hospital, was picked up by some people claiming to be members of law enforcement agency from Moghbazar area of Dhaka. When Rajon's family contacted different police stations in Dhaka, the latter denied Rajon's detention. A photograph published in the daily Manabzamin on 29 January 2023 shows that Rajon was detained in Hatirjheel Police Station at that time. Rajon's wife Shamima Sultana said that Rajon used to write about the price hike of daily commodities and the current education system on social media.<sup>138</sup> Seven days after being picked up on 29 January, Rajon was shown as arrested in a case filed with Hatirjheel Police Station following a clash between police and Jamaat on 30 December 2022. He was sent to court.<sup>139</sup> In the court premises, Rajon told his family members that he was taken to the Office of the Detective Branch (DB) of Police from Hatirjheel Police Station every day while he was detained and the police tortured him. The police beat his legs and back.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup>Prothom Alo, 28 January 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/capital/ev03f08j84>

<sup>137</sup>Information gathered by Odhikar.

<sup>138</sup>Manabzamin, 29 January 2023; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=40508>

<sup>139</sup>New Age, 30 January 2023; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/193064/ibn-sina-exec-held-at-police-station-for-nearly-a-week-family>

<sup>140</sup>Daily Star, 30 January 2023; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/lawyer-tortured-sent-jail-3233851>



*Abu Hossain Rajon while detained in Hatirjheel Police Station. Photo: Manabzamin, 29 January 2023*

53. It has been alleged that on 2 February 2023 Selim Hossain, a village doctor, was picked up from his chamber in Gazi Bazar of Jashore by a group of people who said they were members of law enforcement agencies. He was taken away in a white microbus. Selim's family said that they searched for Selim in different police stations, Jashore DB office, RAB and PBI after the incident. No one acknowledged Selim's detention.<sup>141</sup> Selim Hossain's wife Tanisha Akhter Najma informed the Human Rights Defenders Network of Odhikar that one of their relatives is a former DIG of Police. He inquired about Selim and told them that a case has been filed with Khilgaon Police Station under the Anti-Terrorism Act against Selim on 12 February. When they went to Khilgaon Police Station to search for Selim, the police station authorities said that the case has been filed but Selim Hossain was not in their custody. Selim was shown as absconding by the police. Later they came to know that Selim was in the custody of RAB-3. But RAB-3 denied it. On 19 February, a lawyer named Advocate Abdullah Al Mamun called her from a Dhaka court and informed her that her husband had been showed as arrested in a case filed with Khilgaon Police Station and had been brought before the court by the police.<sup>142</sup>
54. On 19 February 2023, Lalmonirhat District and Sessions Judge acquitted two persons named Mehdi Hasan and Jamal Uddin in a case filed under the Anti-Terrorism Act. On 21 February, Mehdi and Jamal were picked up by 8/9 plainclothes men in a white microbus after their release from Lalmonirhat District Jail. Mehdi's father Abdul Latif said when he met the Superintendent of Police (SP), he was told that he did not know anything about this matter.<sup>143</sup> Family members of both youths said law enforcement agencies took

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<sup>141</sup>Samakal, 7 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/2302155631/>

<sup>142</sup>Information sent by human rights defender associated with Odhikar from Jashore.

<sup>143</sup>Samakal, 24 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/rangpur/article/2302158823/>

them to Dhaka and interrogated them. At around 11.30 am on 24 February, members of law enforcement agencies handed Mehdi Hasan and Jamal Uddin over to their families in Dhaka.<sup>144</sup>

55. On 13 March 2023 at around 10:00 pm, former government official and space scientist Fazlul Haque (70) was picked up in a white-coloured microbus by some people claiming to be DB police, from Baitul Haram Mosque area at Mohammadpur, Dhaka. Fazlul Haque's wife Maqsuda Begum said that despite searching various places, including the local police station and DB office, no one acknowledged the arrest of her husband.<sup>145</sup> On 16 March, Fazlul Haque was shown as arrested by police in a case filed under the Special Powers Act 1974, with Mohammadpur Police Station. Fazlul Haque's wife Maqsuda Begum said that the police had accused her husband of planning to sabotage a Jamaat-e-Islami meeting in Mohammadpur area on 15 March. However, he was picked up on 13 March.

### ***Extrajudicial killings***

56. Extrajudicial killings have largely subsided after the United States imposed sanctions on RAB and seven of its former and current officers on 10 December 2021, for gross human rights violations. However, such killings continue.
57. **Between January and March 2023, a total of five persons were reportedly killed extra-judicially. Of these five people, two were killed by the police, two by the RAB and one by the BGB. It is also alleged that among the five killed, two were killed in 'crossfire'/'gunfight', two were tortured to death, and one was shot to death.**
58. A team of RAB-11 went to Bardagaon area under Sonargaon Upazila of Narayanganj late in the night of 17 March 2023, to arrest an accused in a murder case named Abdus Selim. At that time, local people asked for their identity, when they did not give it, they suspected them of being robbers and called the National Emergency Service to ask for police help. After that, when the local people started shouting 'robbers', more people from Bardagaon Village came forward. The men in plainclothes then identified themselves as RAB members. Eyewitnesses said that the RAB personnel opened fire after local people started shouting 'robbers'. A video later obtained of the incident shows 18 gunshots being heard at that time. Abul Kashem (65) was shot and died on the spot. After that, RAB members stayed in Bardagaon Village till late night and searched various houses. Later they arrested 20 people.<sup>146</sup> Meanwhile RAB filed a case against 21 named people, including Abdus Selim

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<sup>144</sup>Daily Star, 26 February 2023; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/two-youths-who-were-picked-return-home-3257401>

<sup>145</sup>Naya Diganta, 16 March 2023; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/more-news/734584/>

<sup>146</sup>Prothom Alo, 19 March 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/z25bjcx7vz>

and 70 to 80 unnamed people, accusing them of attacking RAB members and attempting to snatch a suspect from custody. RAB arrested five family members of the deceased Abul Kashem. The arrestees are Abul Kashem's son Nazrul Islam (40), nephews Hazrat Ali (36), Jahangir Hossain (42), Amanullah (38) and grandson Rubel (31). They were sent to jail through the court in connection with the attack on RAB.<sup>147</sup>

### ***Human rights violations by state security forces in the name of suppressing 'Islamic militants'***

59. In the name of 'counter-terrorism', any citizen in the country is at risk of being labelled as an 'Islamic militant' and there have been allegations of torture and degrading treatment by the state security forces. The victims of this torture by the security forces are the poor people who are working ordinary jobs. The state security forces are claiming that all these people have returned to normal life from being militants, even if they have never been militants.
60. On 16 March 2023, the police claimed that the 33 accused and freed on bail 'militants' of Belpur Police Station under Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, have returned to normal life. However, the accused strongly protested this in front of the media. They claim that they are ordinary working people. At various times law enforcement agencies had detained them and obtained false confessions from them and filed false cases of 'involvement in militancy'. One of them is Hayatullah, a rod mason by profession. Hayatullah said that he was forcibly taken from the road to a car and tortured after being detained. After that, the police filed a case against him claiming he was caught with Jihadi books. A tubewell mechanic, who did not wish to be named, said he was called to do some work. He was then forcibly taken into a car and detained and tortured for seven days. Later he was taken to Holidagachi area and shown as arrested with two Jihadi books and a pistol. Another victim, who sells medicine, said that he was detained after leaving the mosque after Asr prayers.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup>Samakal, 19 March 2023; <https://epaper.samakal.com/nogor-edition/2023-03-20/16/6800>; Daily Star, 20 March 2023; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/narayanganj-rab-raid-they-showed-no-ids-half-hour-passed-3275466>

<sup>148</sup>Bangla Tribune, 16 March 2023; <https://www.banglatribune.com/country/rajshahi/790072/>



*The 33 accused persons who appeared in court in Rajshahi. Photo: Bangla Tribune, 16 March 2023*

## ***Human rights violations in prisons***

61. It is alleged that the authoritarian government is arresting opposition political activists by filing false and fictitious cases, to suppress the protests and also imprisoning many ordinary people without any evidence. As a result, prisons are overcrowded. There have been allegations of inhumane treatment of the prisoners. Furthermore, there are allegations that the food provided to the inmates in prisons by the jail authority is substandard. The prisoners who are financially stable can buy food from the canteen inside the jail, but most of the prisoners are too poor to do so. Thus, they are forced to eat this low-quality food. A team of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) recently conducted an investigation into corruption in Jashore Central Jail regarding food quality and canteen business. According to the ACC investigative report, out of 1300 prisoners, only 300-400 prisoners can buy food from the canteen. However, the food price in all these canteens run by the jail authorities is double or triple the outside prices. As a result, the jail officials get a huge amount of money from the canteen. There are allegations that the prison authorities deliberately provide substandard food, so that the prisoners are forced to buy food from the canteen.<sup>149</sup> Apart from the corruption related to food, there are widespread allegations against the officials and employees of almost all the prisons for committing various types of irregularities and corruption, including torture of inmates detained in the prisons.
62. An allegation of the torture of a prisoner named Amanullah (45) was found in Kashimpur Jail-1. On 16 March, Amanullah's wife Nusrat Jahan lodged a complaint with the Deputy Commissioner of Gazipur seeking remedy. Nusrat Jahan alleged that her husband Amanullah has been imprisoned in Kashimpur Jail-1 since 2022. Since Jailor Tariqul Islam joined the jail, the

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<sup>149</sup>Jugantor, 19 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/656037/>



bribery trade in prisons has become extreme. Tariqul Islam unlawfully demanded five hundred thousand taka from them for various 'developmental works' in the prison. At one point, fearing that her husband would be tortured, she gave Tk 500,000 to Jailor Tariqul Islam. Later Senior Jail Superintendent Shahjahan Ahmed demanded 10 hundred thousand taka after joining the jail. When they expressed their inability to pay this money, the torture started on her husband. On 4 March 2023, the chief jail guard tortured her husband on the orders of Tariqul Islam.<sup>150</sup>

63. **28. In the three months between January - March 2023, a total of 26 persons reportedly died in prisons. Among them 25 persons died due to 'illness' and one committed suicide.**

64. Prisoners suspected of being 'Islamic extremists' are allegedly being treated inhumanely in the prisons. On 7 January 2023, prisoners detained on suspicion of being 'Islamic extremists' at Kashimpur High Security Central Jail in Gazipur, staged a protest demanding blankets, visits from family once a week, to be allowed to use the phone and for the facility to walk outside the cell.<sup>151</sup> There is also a shortage of doctors in prisons and when inmates are seriously ill, they have to go through a long process to get better treatment.<sup>152</sup> As a result, prisoners are dying behind bars.

## *The death penalty*

65. Due to the prevalence of the death penalty, accused persons are being given the death sentenced in the lower courts every year. On 21 March 2023, Madaripur Additional District and Sessions Judge Begum Lailatul Ferdous ordered the death penalty for 23 people for killing a person named Rajib Sardar.<sup>153</sup> The disposal rate is very low compared to the Death References submitted to the High Court Division of the Supreme Court from different districts of the country. As a result, many accused have been languishing in condemned cells across the country for years. After the death sentence is pronounced by the court, several necessary legal steps have to be passed to execute the death penalty. In Bangladesh, the sentenced person is kept in a solitary condemned cell after the death sentence is pronounced by the lower court.<sup>154</sup> A person imprisoned in a condemned cell has to live under extreme stress due to the fear of being executed at any time. On 26 January 2023,

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<sup>150</sup>Jugantor, 23 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/657561/>

<sup>151</sup>Jugantor, 8 January 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/second-edition/632788/>

<sup>152</sup>Jugantor, 26 February 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/649273/>

<sup>153</sup>Prothom Alo, 21 March 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/zgo7lgu8mt>

<sup>154</sup>Jugantor, 27 February 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/national/649517/>

Nazrul Islam (30), who was sentenced to death by a lower court, committed suicide in the condemned cell of Kashimpur High Security Jail in Gazipur.<sup>155</sup>

66. The High Court Division of the Supreme Court issued an Order with Rule on 5 April 2022 when the three defendants who were sentenced to death in the condemned cell filed a Writ Petition in the High Court Division challenging the legality of keeping the accused in condemned cell before the death sentence was finalized through the judicial and administrative forum. At the same time, the court directed the Inspector General of Prisons to submit a report to the court, including the number of convicts in the condemned cells and their facilities. In a report submitted by the prison authority to the High Court Division bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice Ahmed Sohel on 27 February, it has been mentioned that the number of prisoners in the condemned cells till November 2022 was 2,657 while the total number of death row prisoners was 2,162.<sup>156</sup>
67. **From January-March 2023, a total of 93 persons were sentenced to death and three of the convicted were executed in jail.**
68. In the first three months of 2023, three persons were executed by hanging in Kashimpur Central Jail. Among them Saiful Islam Rafiq was executed on 8 January<sup>157</sup>, Shukur Ali on 22 January<sup>158</sup> and Aminul Islam on 9 February.<sup>159</sup>

## Public Lynching

69. Social unrest has increased as state and constitutional institutions have become dysfunctional, creating an atmosphere of unaccountability and impunity in the country. There is a tendency among common people to take the law into their own hands. As a result, people are being killed in public lynchings. This has created the opportunity for a trend of killing people with mass beatings for personal interests. In these three months, there have been cases of people being killed by mob violence. Most of them were suspected to be thieves.
70. **In the three months between January and March 2023, 15 persons were killed in public lynching. Some incidents are as follows:**
71. Two youths named Nuru Mia and Ismail Hossain, on suspicion of robbery on 12 January in Muradnagar, Cumilla<sup>160</sup>; a teenager named Rabbi Mia on suspicion of stealing a motorbike on 3 March in Kuliarchor, Kishoreganj<sup>161</sup>;

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<sup>155</sup>Samakal, 26 January 2023; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/2301153421/>

<sup>156</sup>ProthomAlo, 28 February 2023;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=28299336e11&imageview=1&epedate=28/02/2023>

<sup>157</sup>Jugantor, 10 January 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/633375/>

<sup>158</sup>Prothom Alo, 22 January 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/sybcnlahn>

<sup>159</sup>Samakal, 11 February 2023; <https://epaper.samakal.com/nogor-edition/2023-02-11/6/4221>

<sup>160</sup>Jugantor, 14 February 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/634686/>

<sup>161</sup>Jugantor, 5 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/651435/>

and a tea stall owner named Mohammad Mamun Mia (35) on suspicion of being a thief on 26 March at Shishu Hospital area in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar of Dhaka.<sup>162</sup>

## Violence against Women

72. Various forms of oppression and violence against women continue due to lack of accountability and a culture of impunity. There are allegations of various types of violence, including rape against leaders and activists of the ruling party. The number of prosecutions and convictions of the perpetrators in all these cases is negligible.

### *Rape*

73. In the first three months of 2023, there are allegations of rape against the leaders of the ruling party<sup>163</sup> and the police.<sup>164</sup>

74. On 4 February 2023, UP member Robin Chowdhury allegedly raped a woman worker (30) after tying up her husband in the Sitakunda area of Chittagong.<sup>165</sup>

### *Sexual harassment*

75. During this reporting period, allegations of sexual harassment of women were found against the ruling party leaders and activists. On 10 January 2023, the High Court Division bench comprising of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice Ahmed Sohel of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, ordered the implementation of the High Court verdict regarding the formation of committees to prevent sexual harassment of women and children in all educational institutions, including universities. Despite this High Court Order, sexual harassment continues in educational institutions. Allegations have been received that female students are being harassed by Chhatra League leaders and activists in Jashore Government Michael Madhusudan (MM) College. Chhatra League activists harassed female students on their way to and from the campus. A month ago, they tried to pick up a student.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>162</sup>Jugantor, 27 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/658864/>

<sup>163</sup>Samakal, 7 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/drmjb41qni>

<sup>164</sup>Jugantor, 24 March 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/657917/>

<sup>165</sup>Prothom Alo, 5 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/74rdjbui8t>

<sup>166</sup>Prothom Alo, 24 March 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/mma1jgghv9>

## ***Dowry related violence***

76. There has been widespread violence against women in the country over dowry demands. Women are burnt, beaten, strangled, hacked to death over non-receipt of dowry.
77. On 7 February 2023, a housewife named Popi Aktar was killed by her husband Saddam Hussain and his family members by strangulation with an electric wire and suffocation with a pillow, for not paying the demanded dowry of Tk. 200,000, in Kenduaunder, Mymensingh District. At the time of Poppy's marriage, Saddam was given Tk 100,000 as dowry. After that, Tk. 80,000 more was given when Saddam demanded more money. Saddam continued to press for another Tk. 200,000. Saddam finally killed Poppy after failing to receive money. RAB-14 arrested Saddam Hussain and his elder brother Shah Alam.<sup>167</sup>

## ***Acid violence***

78. There is an allegation against the police that no prompt action is being taken in cases filed under the Acid Control Act, 2002. How the acid gets to the hands of the accused, remains out of the investigation. Analyzing the incidents over the past few years, it has been found that most cases of acid violence occurred due to disputes over property. Apart from this, cases of acid throwing occur due to rejection of love and immoral proposals and non-receipt of dowry.<sup>168</sup>
79. On 26 March 2023, a housewife named Fatema Begum (31) was killed by her husband Arif Hossain and his family members by burning her with acid after failing to receive dowry money in Fatulla under Narayanganj District.<sup>169</sup>

## **Violation of Human Rights of Minority Citizens**

80. Between January and March 2023, criminals attacked places of worship of the Hindu community, Ahmadiyya community and citizens belonging to ethnic minority groups, and vandalized and looted their homes. Such incidents continue to occur due to lack of arrests and trials and politicization of the past incidents.
81. On 1 January 2023, Lama Rubber Industry Limited evicted the ethnic minority Mro in order to occupy their land and attacked them in Rengen Mropara, vandalized and set fire to their houses and looted them in Lama Upazila under Bandarban District. Lama Rubber Industry Limited has been trying to evict the Mro and occupy their land for several years. On 26 April 2022, Lama

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<sup>167</sup>Samakal, 13 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/2302156572/>

<sup>168</sup>Prothom Alo, 23 February 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/u18dnp2hap>

<sup>169</sup>Samakal, 27 March 2023; <https://samakal.com/food/article/2303164536/>

Rubber Industry Limited was accused of burning 350 acres of Jum land belong to the Mro community.<sup>170</sup>



*Houses of the Mro community after the attack and arson at Rengenpara in Lama Sarai, Bandarban. Photo: Prothom Alo, 2 January 2023.*

82. On the night of 5 February 2023, unknown miscreants vandalized 12 idols in a Hindu temple at Sindhurpindi area under Baliadangi Upazila in Thakurgaon District.<sup>171</sup> In a press conference held on 7 February, Thakurgaon District branch of Bangladesh Hindu Christian Welfare Front alleged that idols were vandalized to divert from the ongoing anti-government movement across the country.<sup>172</sup>
83. On 3 March 2023, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat organised a three-day Salana Jalsa (Annual Conference) at Ahmednagar in Panchagarh District. Some organisations, including Islami Andolan Bangladesh, submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner on 2 March demanding the bar of this Jalsa and the leaders and supporters of those organisations blocked the Tentulia-Dhaka Road at Chowrangi intersection in Panchagarh town. On that day two houses belonging to the Ahmadiyya community were set on fire and vandalized. On 3 March, protestors gathered at Chowrangi intersection in the town with processions from various mosques of Panchagarh District after Jumma prayers, to demand the Jalsa be banned. Police stopped them when the protestors wanted to go towards Korotowa bridge. When the protestors clashed with police, BGB and RAB joined the police. Protesters torched a traffic police office, 25 Ahmadiyyas homes and four shops owned by individuals belonging to Ahmadiyya community in the city. Two youths named Arifur Rahman (28) and Zahid Hasan (23) were killed and at least 50 persons, including two journalists were injured in this clash. After that, the district administration cancelled the permission of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat's Salana Jalsa.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>170</sup>Prothom Alo, 2 January 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/imqpnfytb6>

<sup>171</sup>Daily Star, 6 February 2023; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/idols-desecrated-12-temples-thakurgaon-3240001>

<sup>172</sup>NayaDiganta, 7 February 2023; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/rangpur/726133/>

<sup>173</sup>Prothom Alo, 4 March 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/swyz6pi0g4>



*Police and protestors face to face at Chowrangi intersection in Panchagarh town demanding the closure of Ahmadiyya Jamaat's 'Salana Jalsa'. Photo: Prothom Alo, 4 March 2023*

## **Neighbouring Countries: India and Myanmar**

### ***India's Interference with Bangladesh and Human Rights Violations by BSF***

84. There has been no change in the attitude of the Indian government towards Bangladesh. Before the controversial and farcical elections on 5 January 2014, almost all political parties in Bangladesh decided to boycott the elections. At that time the then Foreign Secretary of the Government of India, Sujata Singh, came to Bangladesh and on behalf of the government she successfully convinced the Jatiya Party, which had decided to boycott the elections, to participate in the elections.<sup>174</sup> The 12<sup>th</sup> National Parliament elections are likely to be held in January 2024. On 15 February 2023, Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra visited Bangladesh and met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and said, "India has full support for your leadership."<sup>175</sup> Such statement of Vinay Kwatra is based on the same formula as the former Indian Foreign Secretary Sujata Singh's interference with Bangladesh elections. The Awami League government came to power through two farcical elections and India is trying again to exert influence in the upcoming parliamentary elections of Bangladesh.
85. On 5 November 2017, Bangladesh signed an Agreement to purchase electricity from Indian conglomerate Adani Group (affiliated to India's ruling party). 1600 MW of electricity will be supplied to Bangladesh from this coal-based power plant located in the Godda area of Jharkhand in India. The current government of Bangladesh has given unprecedented special benefits to Adani Group while buying this power. Additional concessions offered to

<sup>174</sup>BBC Bangla, 16 November 2018; <https://www.bbc.com/bengali/news-46237664>

<sup>175</sup>Jugantor, 16 February 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/645491/>

Adani include the cost of unused coal to be paid by Bangladesh if it consumes less power than the declared demand. Equipment maintenance, plant operation, plant capacity payment – all the terms contained in the contract are not offered to any other power plant in Bangladesh. As a result, Bangladesh has to spend a lot to get electricity from Adani Group.<sup>176</sup> To buy electricity generated from Adani Power Station, one has to pay almost three times more than the electricity generated in the country. The Power Purchase Agreement has an obligation to purchase power from Adani Power at this higher price.<sup>177</sup> Adani can sell the electricity from its Godda power plant to any third party apart from the Power Development Board (PDB) of Bangladesh.<sup>178</sup> It is to be noted that at the end of January 2023, Hindenburg Research published a report accusing Adani Group of stock market evasion and account manipulation and fraud. Indian opposition leaders say the group’s founder, Gautam Adani, has long-standing ties with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.<sup>179</sup>

86. In the first three months of 2023, human rights violations on Bangladeshi citizens at the hands of members of the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) continued. During this reporting period, BSF members entered into Bangladesh territory and attacked Bangladeshi citizens and continued killing, abducting and torturing<sup>180</sup> Bangladeshi citizens along the Bangladesh-India border.
87. **From January to March 2023, five Bangladeshis were killed and five were injured by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF). Among those who were killed, four were gunned down, one was tortured. Among the five who were injured, three were shot, and two were tortured.**
88. On 1 January 2023, a Bangladeshi citizen named Biplab Mia (22) was shot dead by BSF members at Burimari border under Patgram Upazila in Lalmonirhat District.<sup>181</sup>
89. On 17 February 2023, a Bangladeshi day labourer named Shahabul Islam (23) was shot dead by BSF members at Hili border in Dinajpur District.<sup>182</sup> The family of the deceased Shahabul alleged that they asked the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) officials to take an initiative and retrieve the body, after

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<sup>176</sup>Samakal, 1 March 2023; <https://samakal.com/economics/article/2303159642/>

<sup>177</sup>Samakal, 18 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/2302157542/>

<sup>178</sup>Samakal, 1 March 2023; <https://samakal.com/economics/article/2303159642/>

<sup>179</sup>The Indian Express, 30 January 2023; <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-economics/what-is-hindenburg-research-accused-adani-fraud-8404531/>

<sup>180</sup>Jugantor, 18 January 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/636331/>

<sup>181</sup>Prothom Alo, 2 January 2023;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=21543709e6&imageview=1&epedate=02/01/2023>

<sup>182</sup>Samakal, 18 February 2023; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/2302157584/>

learning that the BSF had invited the BGB for a flag meeting. Unfortunately, the BGB did not show any interest in bringing Shahabul's body back.<sup>183</sup>

90. On 25 February 2023, a Bangladeshi citizen named Sumon Mia was seriously injured due to torture by the BSF members at Chandrapur border in Kaliganj of Lalmonirhat. He died on 28 February while undergoing treatment at Rangpur Medical College Hospital.<sup>184</sup>

### ***Human Rights abuses on the Rohingya Population***

91. On 17 January 2023, Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report accusing members of the Armed Police Battalion (APBn) for extorting, arbitrarily arresting and harassing Rohingya refugees. HRW stated in the report that at least 16 cases of serious abuses and harassment of Rohingyas in APBn camps in Cox's Bazar shelter camp, have come to their attention.<sup>185</sup> The members of this force demanded bribes from the Rohingyas. APBn members also threatened arrest if Rohingyas could not pay the bribe. Sitara Bibi of the shelter camp said that she had given a bribe of Tk 3,000 to the APBn members during her son's marriage. She said that if they had not given this money to APBn members, then APBn would have filed a false case of drug trafficking against her son. It is to be noted that on 22 November 2022, APBn members arrested a betel leaf seller Sayedul (57) and demanded a bribe of 100,000 taka from his family. A case was filed against Sayedul accusing him of keeping 2,000 pieces of yaba as he could not pay the money.<sup>186</sup>
92. The UN refugee agency UNHCR said in a statement that Rohingya refugees are choosing to make dangerous journeys to other countries in search of safety, security, reunification with their families and for livelihood. Dangerous sea voyages of Rohingya women and children increased five times more in 2022 compared to 2021.<sup>187</sup> In 2022, more than 3,500 Rohingya attempted the dangerous sea crossing from Myanmar or Bangladesh. At least 348 of them died or are missing.<sup>188</sup> On the other hand, the influx of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh continues. On 18 January 2023, hundreds of houses of Rohingyas, who took refuge in the border, were burnt on the Zero Line in Tumburu border of Naikhongchhari in Bandarban during clashes between two armed groups. Many of them left the Zero Line and entered Bangladesh.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>183</sup>New Age, 22 February 2023; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/194907/>

<sup>184</sup>Jugantor, 28 February 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/649950/>

<sup>185</sup>Human Rights Watch, 17 January 2023; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/01/17/bangladesh-rampant-police-abuse-rohingya-refugees>

<sup>186</sup>Prothom Alo, 17 January 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/6m5o71foox>; Human Rights Watch, 17 January 2023; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/01/17/bangladesh-rampant-police-abuse-rohingya-refugees>

<sup>187</sup>Jugantor 18 January 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/world/asia/mdrb8t0dbm>

<sup>188</sup>Naya Diganta, 18 January 2023; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/miscellaneous/721275/>

<sup>189</sup>Manabzamin, 23 January 2023; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=39594>



93. As Rohingya refugees are being sent to Bhasanchar, many of them are also trying to leave Bhasanchar. On 18 January 2023, while fleeing from Bhasanchar shelter project, three Rohingya refugees were apprehended by the locals from Charbalua area of Char Elahi Union under Companyganj Upazila of Noakhali District and handed over to the police.<sup>190</sup>
94. A 22-member Myanmar delegation interviewed and verified the information of 475 Rohingya refugees in various refugee camps in Teknaf and Ukhiain from 15 March 2023. During this interview, apart from verifying the information of Rohingyas, they were made to sign papers and their pictures taken. Members of the delegation did not answer any questions from the Rohingyas. However, many Rohingyas told the Myanmar delegation that no Rohingya will return to Rakhine State from Bangladesh's refugee camps unless they receive citizenship. They also asked that UNHCR should be involved in the repatriation process and representatives of international human rights organisations should be allowed to visit Rakhine State. Rohingya refugee Salim Ullah claimed that the interview appeared to be staged, saying that there is no sign of the villages across the Naf River from which 800,000 Rohingyas were pushed to Bangladesh after 25 August 2017. Army camps and military barracks have been set up in their place. People belonging to the Mogh community have already been settled in some Rohingya villages. If the repatriation starts, the Rohingyas have no opportunity to resettle in the houses they left behind. As in Bangladesh, they will have to spend their lives in detention in the refugee camps there (Rakhine). UNHCR considers that the situation in Myanmar's Rakhine State is not favourable for the repatriation of Rohingya refugees.<sup>191</sup>

## State Repression on Odhikar

95. Odhikar and its activists have never stepped aside from the movement to protect human rights, despite being subjected to human rights violations by state security forces. Due to this, extreme state repression on Odhikar began in 2013, which continues in 2023. In 2013, Odhikar's Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan and Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan were detained under the notorious Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act 2006 (amended 2009), for publishing a fact-finding report on extrajudicial killings. The trial of this case is being heard at the Cyber Tribunal of Dhaka.<sup>192</sup> On 31 March 2023,

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<sup>190</sup>Jugantor, 19 January 2023; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/636589/>

<sup>191</sup>Prothom Alo, 20 March 2023; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/058hkj8d4b>

<sup>192</sup> On 14 February 2021, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court (AD) dismissed the application for dismissal of the case filed against the Secretary and Director of Odhikar and directed that the case be referred to the Cyber Tribunal for hearing. Subsequently, a review application was filed with the AD seeking reconsideration of Odhikar's application for dismissal of the case. While the review application was pending before the AD, the first hearing of the case commenced on 12 September 2021 at the Dhaka Cyber Tribunal. The lawyer for Odhikar's Secretary and Director informed the Tribunal of

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk stated that the Digital Security Act, 2018 (which is a more repressive form of the ICT Act) is being used to arrest, harass, and intimidate journalists and human rights defenders across Bangladesh, and to suppress the voices of online critics. He called on Bangladesh authorities to suspend immediately its application of the Digital Security Act. In the statement, he also expressed concern over the ongoing trial of the case filed in 2013 under the ICT Act against Odhikar Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan and Director Nasiruddin Elan.<sup>193</sup>

96. On 20 March 2023, the US State Department published a global report on the human rights situation in 2022. The Chapter on Bangladesh in the report is titled, '2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Bangladesh'.<sup>194</sup> On 21 March 2023, Bangladesh's State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam commented on this report stating, "The report has given examples of some NGOs, INGOs and CSOs. One of these organisations is Odhikar.... I would like to state very clearly, Odhikar does not have any valid license or registration to carry out activities in Bangladesh. Odhikar's application for renewal of its registration was not taken into account. The matter is in the High Court."<sup>195</sup> Odhikar would like to remind all concerned that the registration with the NGO Affairs Bureau is applicable only for receiving foreign funds. No organisation is required to be registered or licensed to exercise the right to freedom of association in accordance with domestic and

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the application for review (Review Petition No. 8/2021, dated 04/04/2011) pending in the Appellate Division and appealed to the Tribunal to take necessary steps after the review hearing in the AD. But the Tribunal did not grant the prayer and fixed 5 October 2021 as the date for taking evidence and examining witnesses for the Prosecution (PW) of the Cyber case No. 1/2013. The Tribunal then proceeded to take evidence and examined witnesses for the Prosecution on 9 November and 24 November 2021. On 15 December the PW was not present, so the next date for examination was set for 20 January 2022. On 20 February, the next date, the PW to be examined was absent as well, and the same thing occurred on the next given date, on 28 March. On 8 May a PW was examined but on the next given date, 9 June 2022, it was learnt at the Tribunal, that the PW who was to be examined that day, had passed away several months ago. The Tribunal fixed 13 July 2022 as the next date. The PW was not examined on 13 July as the witness did not come. The PW who was to be examined on 3 August had also died. The PW who was to be examined on 22 August was also deceased. However, the defendants still had to appear at the Tribunal on those days. The PW was examined on 5 and 26 September, 17 October and 27 November respectively. The Tribunal fixed 15 January 2023 as the next date. As the government witness did not appear on 15 January, the court fixed the next date on 29 January. Cyber Tribunal Judge AM Zulfiqar Hayat also ordered that the government's evidence be taken on every working day from the next hearing. On 29 January, two government witnesses testified. Since the testimony of the investigating officer of this case, Police Inspector Mohammad Ashraf Islam, had not been completed, the court fixed 1 February as the day for taking his remaining testimony. The Tribunal fixed 20 February as the next date for taking evidence. No witness appeared in court on 20 February. On that day, the evidences seized by the Intelligence and Crime Information Department (North) DMP, under General Diary No.268, dated 10/08/2013, was produced by P.W.-18, and the defendant appealed to exclude from producing the seized evidences in the said case, as they were not under the GD which was the basis of the trial. But the court rejected the appeal. The court fixed 2 March as the day for examining witness. Again, the witness did not appear and the court fixed 19 March as the next day of hearing. As the witness did not appear on 19 March, the court fixed 5 April for the next date of hearing.

<sup>193</sup>OHCHR Press Release, 31 March 2023; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/bangladesh-turk-urges-immediate-suspension-digital-security-act-media>

<sup>194</sup>2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Bangladesh, US Department of State; <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/bangladesh/>

<sup>195</sup>Samakal, 22 March 2023; <https://epaper.samakal.com/nogor-edition/2023-03-22/2/7472>

international human rights obligations. Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Defenders as well as Article 38 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh preserve this fundamental right.

## Recommendations

1. In order to free the people of Bangladesh from the authoritarian regime, the international community, including the United Nations must urgently support the restoration of a transparent, fair and participatory electoral democracy.
2. The UN Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) must adopt a new mandate on Bangladesh to collect evidence of gross human rights violations.
3. The Government's interference with constitutional and state institutions must be stopped and the government must refrain from controlling the Judiciary. Political violence and criminalisation must cease. Rule of law must be reinstated and reinforced with a truly independent Judiciary and justice system.
4. Citizens' right to peaceful assembly must be protected and guaranteed. Attacks on and harassment of opposition political parties and dissidents must be stopped. The government must refrain from repressive and unconstitutional activities.
5. Government interference on freedom of expression and media must be stopped. All cases filed against all human rights activists, including journalists, must be withdrawn and the perpetrators must be brought to justice subject to a fair and impartial investigation into the attacks on them. The targeted ban on Amar Desh, Diganta TV, Islamic TV and Channel One should be lifted.
6. All repressive laws, including Special Powers Act 1974, Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (Amendments 2009 & 2013), Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009 (Amendments 2012 & 2013), Digital Security Act, 2018 and its Rules 2020 should be immediately repealed. The cases filed under these laws should be withdrawn.
7. Members of the law enforcement agencies who are involved in human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearance, torture and inhumane treatment, must be brought to justice and punished as per law of the land. Law enforcement agencies and security forces must be made to follow the Basic Principles on the use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials.
8. The government must ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture. The Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013 must be implemented effectively and the High Court and Appellate Division directives contained in the matter of BLAST and Others vs. Bangladesh and Others (2003) must be followed to control and prevent violations.
9. All victims who still remain disappeared must be returned to their families. The government must accede to the International Convention for the

Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. A Domestic law should be enacted criminalising enforced disappearance a punishable offense and those involved in disappearances should be prosecuted.

10. To stop violence against women and children, the perpetrators should be prosecuted and punished as per prevalent laws. Shelter homes must be established in all districts for women victims of domestic violence. Section 10 of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 should be amended by including the definition of sexual harassment and stalking, as given in the judgment of the 2010 Writ Petition filed by the BNWLA and other women's rights organisations.
11. Those citizens who are in minority, because of their language, ethnicity or religious beliefs, should be protected and the state and government must take special measures to ensure their full rights in the practice of their language, religion and culture.
12. All kinds of human rights violations, including killing and torture by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on Bangladeshi citizens at the border must be stopped. India's invasive and aggressive behaviour towards Bangladesh must stop.
13. The governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar must ensure voluntary, dignified and safe repatriation of the Rohingya people by establishing and guaranteeing their full civil and political rights, including restoration of Myanmar citizenship. Justice must be ensured for the crimes committed against the Rohingyas. Involuntary relocation of Rohingya refugees to Bhasanchar should be stopped.
14. The ongoing state repression on Odhikar must cease. The case filed against Odhikar's Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan and its Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan under the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (amended in 2009) must be withdrawn. The NGO Affairs Bureau must renew Odhikar's registration.

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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.
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.