



Odhikar denounces the imprisonment of its Secretary and Director under the Information and Communication Technology Act

Dhaka, 14 September 2023: The Cyber Tribunal, Dhaka today has sentenced to two years imprisonment and Taka 10,000 fine each, to Odhikar's Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan and Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan for allegedly breaching Section 57 of the repressive Information and Communication Technology Act 2006. They were charged for releasing a report on extrajudicial killings committed on 5 and 6 May 2013, centering around the Hefazat-e-Islam protests.

This is the first time in Bangladesh's 52-year history that human rights defenders have been jailed for reporting human rights violations. On the night of 10 August 2013, Adilur Rahman Khan was picked up by members of the Detective Branch (DB) of Police. He was kept disappeared overnight and was produced in court in the afternoon of the next day. Nasiruddin Elan subsequently surrendered in the court. Later, Khan and Elan were charged under the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (Amended in 2009). Both were released on bail after spending 62 and 25 days in jail respectively. After a 10-year long judicial harassment, the Dhaka Cyber Tribunal judge AM Zulfikar Hayat pronounced the judgement and sentenced them today.

Odhikar denounces the arrest, trial and imprisonment of these two human rights defenders. It believes that justice has not been served. As an organisation Odhikar has drawn the sustained wrath of the establishment for becoming the voice of the victims of human rights violations, including those of enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary detention and against the suppression of free expression and assembly; and for its engagement with the United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms. Earlier the government arbitrarily deregistered the organisation. Today's judgement is likely to have a chilling effect on human rights defenders and civil society organisations around the country.

In solidarity,
The Odhikar Team