



**BANGLADESH**  
**Three Month Human Rights Report**

April – June 2024

Prepared: Odhikar  
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## Foreword

Since its establishment in 1994, Odhikar has been relentlessly fighting to defend the civil, political, economic social and cultural rights of the people. Odhikar stand by the victims of human rights violations and work for truth and justice regardless of ideology and political affiliation.

As the Awami League government took away the people's right to vote and axed the power through farcical elections, a huge vacuum has been created in the country in terms of democracy, accountability and rule of law. As a result, the government has resorted to repression to remain in power, and human rights defenders are being persecuted for speaking out.

Odhikar has been facing extreme state repression and harassment since 2013 while carrying out its activities as a human rights organisation. Despite continued harassment and obstruction by the state, the Organisation continues to monitor human rights violations in accordance with international human rights law and standards. The government's repression, regulation and interference with freedom of expression have led to the imposition of self-censorship in publishing reports. In this adverse situation, Odhikar has prepared this human rights report for the three months of April, May and June 2024, based on reports sent by human rights defenders associated with it, and the data published in various media.

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

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## Statistics: January - June 2024\*

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Type of Human Rights Violation	January	February	March	April	May	June	Total	
Extrajudicial killings	Tortured to death	1	1	0	0	1	1	4
	Shot to death	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Beaten to death	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>
Enforced Disappearances		0	0	2	4	4	0	10
Death in Jail		15	15	11	6	6	8	61
Political Violence	Killed	22	15	8	8	18	20	91
	Injured	1555	385	202	198	897	789	4026
Death Penalty	Sentenced to death	36	43	32	27	37	30	205
	Execution of death sentence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Human rights violations by Indian BSF	Bangladeshis Killed	2	0	4	3	2	2	13
	Bangladeshis Injured	0	1	5	5	3	2	16
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>29</b>
Attack on journalists	Killed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Injured	29	14	8	15	14	4	84
	Assaulted	2	2	2	7	6	0	19
	Attacked	0	0	6	3	1	0	10
	Threatened	9	2	9	1	1	2	24
	Sued	0	2	1	5	0	9	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>154</b>	
Public lynching		6	4	8	4	5	1	28

\* Odhikar documentation

## Suppression of the Political Opposition Continued

1. Many leaders and activists of the opposition parties were arrested during the Police operation prior to the one-sided and farcical Parliamentary elections on 7 January, 2024. Those who had escaped arrest went into hiding. After the Election, those who had been arrested started appearing before the lower courts with anticipatory bail from the High Court. In these three months from April to June 2024, numerous opposition leaders and activists, particularly those from BNP, had appeared in the lower courts. But in most cases, the court had sent them to jail without bail.<sup>1</sup> During the release of this Report, many leaders and activists of the opposition party continue to remain detained in jails across the country. Lawyers and relatives of the victims have complained that in most of theailable cases, the courts had sent them to jail without granting them bail.<sup>2</sup> Later, after being granted bail, they had to face various obstacles to secure their release from prison. There are allegations that members of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), National Security Intelligence (NSI) and the Special Branch (SB) of the Police are obstructing the release of the opposition leaders and activists, even after they had secured bail from the court.<sup>3</sup>
2. On 23 April 2024, Saiful Islam Nirob, the former President of the Central Committee of Jubo Dal<sup>4</sup>, was granted bail by the court and had gone to the gate of Dhaka Central Jail to leave. He was then arrested in another case, and sent back to prison. Even earlier, after being granted bail by the court, Nirob was arrested on 20 March in an old case.<sup>5</sup> Finally, after 16 months of imprisonment, Nirob was released from prison on 21 June 2024.<sup>6</sup> It is to be noted that there are 454 political cases filed against Saiful Islam Nirob. In seven cases, the court had sentenced him to 21 years of imprisonment.<sup>7</sup> Due to the non-cooperation of the prison authorities, the jailed BNP leaders are at risk of death due to lack of treatment. Khulna District unit BNP Member Secretary SM Monirul Islam Bappi had suffered a heart attack while he was incarcerated in Khulna District Jail. It has been alleged that the jail authorities were requested to give him proper treatment, but they had not taken any action towards that extent. As a result, Monirul Islam Bappi's physical condition has seriously deteriorated as was complained by the Khulna district BNP leaders in a press conference.<sup>8</sup> On 21 June 2024, Gholam Kibria Makhon, the former President of Bhashantek Thana Unit BNP had passed away. Senior Joint Secretary General of BNP Ruhul Kabir Rizvi alleged that Makhon was tortured by the police after repeated arrests. Makhon had died due to torture.<sup>9</sup> On 8 April, Haripur Thana Unit Jubo Dal General Secretary Akram Hossain

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<sup>1</sup> Naya Diganta, 25 April 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/city/830340/> and Manabzamin, 26 April 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=107049>

<sup>2</sup> Samakal, 11 May 2024; <https://samakal.com/politics/article/236549/>

<sup>3</sup> New Age, 14 March 2024; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/227819/>

<sup>4</sup> Youth wing of BNP

<sup>5</sup> Manabzamin, 30 April 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=107754>

<sup>6</sup> Jugantor, 22 June 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/818982/>

<sup>7</sup> Manabzamin, 30 April 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=107754>

<sup>8</sup> Manabzamin, 17 May 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=110145>

<sup>9</sup> Jugantor, 22 June 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/818970/>

(40) died in police custody of Haripur Police Station under Thakurgaon District. Haripur Upazila Health and Planning Officer Dr. Mohammad Shahnuzzaman had said that the police had brought Akram Hossain to the hospital when he was already dead. Thakurgaon District Unit BNP leaders had alleged that Akram Hossain died due to lack of treatment in police custody.<sup>10</sup>

3. Arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention of the opposition leaders and activists continue to occur. On 20 April 2024, local Jamaat-e-Islami leader Advocate Al Farooq Abdul Latif, along with his two political colleagues Mazharul Islam and Khairat Hossain Basunia, went to his sister-in-law's house in Syedpur under Nilphamari District, and the police had arrested them from there. The police claimed that the duo participated in a secret meeting and had planned activities of sabotage.<sup>11</sup> On 7 May, Mahidul Hasan Hiru, the former President of Dhaka University Unit Chhatra Dal, was picked up in a microbus by 12/13 people posing as members of law enforcement agencies from the Siddheshwari area of Dhaka. The Chief of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Detective Branch and DMP Additional Commissioner Mohammad Harun-or-Rashid told reporters that they did not arrest anyone named Mahidul Hasan Hiru.<sup>12</sup> However, the next day on 8 May, Hiru was shown arrested at Dhunat Police Station in Bogura District.<sup>13</sup>
4. When the leaders and activists from the opposition parties went to appear before the courts, they were either directly arrested by the police in the court premises, or members of the ruling party had apprehended and handed them over to the police.<sup>14</sup> On 22 April, 20-25 leaders and activists of Rajshahi Metropolitan Unit Jamaat-e-Islami went to Rajshahi Court to appear in a case while they were on bail from the High Court Division of the Supreme Court. Soon after they had arrived at the court premises, the police and members of the Detective Branch surrounded them and arrested 10 people. In the meantime, Jamaat-e-Islami Rajshahi Metropolitan Unit Secretary Imajuddin appeared before the court after escaping police arrest, and when he appealed to the court to be spared from police harassment, the court had ordered that he be sent to jail. When the journalists also protested the role of the police, the police had attacked them and took away many of their cameras.<sup>15</sup>
5. The attacks and oppression by the leaders and activists of the ruling Awami League against the leaders and activists of the opposition parties continue to occur. Out of many cases, two examples will be mentioned here. Barishal District Unit Chhatra Dal<sup>16</sup> Vice-President SM Hira stopped coming to his home in Toriki Village under Gournadi Upazila due to fear of being attacked by local Awami League leaders and activists. But when he had come to his house on 12 May to attend an urgent matter, he was attacked by Chhatra

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<sup>10</sup> The Daily Star, 9 April 2024; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/jubo-dal-leader-dies-police-custody-3585311>

<sup>11</sup> Naya Diganta, 20 April 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/city/829114/>

<sup>12</sup> Jugantor, 8 May 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/second-edition/802926/>

<sup>13</sup> Jugantor, 9 May 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/803188/>

<sup>14</sup> Naya Diganta, 25 April 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/politics/830487/>

<sup>15</sup> Naya Diganta, 22 April 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/politics/829710/>

<sup>16</sup> Student wing of BNP

League<sup>17</sup> leaders and activists who had left him severely injured on the street.<sup>18</sup> On 21 May, 10-15 Chhatra League leaders and activists attacked Chhatra Dal's former President and BNP Executive Committee member Kazi Raunokul Islam and Chhatra Dal's former Vice-President Jhalak Mia with sticks, hammers and sharp weapons, and left them seriously injured. The injured individuals were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.<sup>19</sup>



*Chhatra League attacked Barishal District unit Chhatra Dal Vice-President SM Hira. Photo: Naya Diganta, 15 May 2024*

6. Around 1,800 leaders and activists from the opposition parties were jailed before the one-sided national elections on 7 January, 2024. Among them were 31 central leaders. Their sentencing process is still ongoing.<sup>20</sup> On 21 May, Dhaka's Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court Judge Rajesh Chowdhury had sentenced 11 BNP leaders and activists, including Jamaat-e-Islami Assistant Secretary General ATM Azharul Islam, who was on death-row for Crimes Against Humanity, to one-and-a-half years in jail in a case regarding setting vehicles on fire. Out of the 14 witnesses included in the charge sheet, the State did not produce anyone as witnesses except four members of the police force.<sup>21</sup>
7. Many leaders and activists from the opposition parties are seeking asylum outside the country to avoid political persecution. According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), 12 percent of those who had drowned in the Mediterranean Sea while trying to migrate to Europe in the first three months of 2024, were Bangladeshis.<sup>22</sup> Thus, Bangladeshi asylum seekers who come to France risking their lives first apply for asylum to the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA). In 2023, a total of 8,600 Bangladeshis applied for asylum in France. In their petitions, they cited various forms of persecution including arrests, torture,

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<sup>17</sup> Student wing of Awami League

<sup>18</sup> Naya Diganta, 15 May 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/city/835059/>

<sup>19</sup> Prothom Alo, 22 May 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/capital/84toh4pn6i>

<sup>20</sup> Prothom Alo, 30 May 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/5lmvvaqy6n>

<sup>21</sup> Prothom Alo, 22 May 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/47n1ql139q>

<sup>22</sup> Manabzamin, 8 May 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=108871>

harassment and trumped-up charges, for engaging in opposition politics under the current authoritarian regime.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Disruptions and attacks on meetings and assemblies***

8. The government has continued to suppress the opposition and dissidents by violating their right to freedom of assembly. During this reporting period, the [police had prevented and attacked the peaceful meetings](#) and processions of BNP and other opposition political parties, as well as [various organisations agitating for various demands](#), and filed cases against the protesters and arrested them. In addition, the police had also arrested leaders and activists from the opposition parties for 'sabotage' from indoor meetings.<sup>24</sup> Even a protest rally by the less-fortunate who are deprived of rice, under the [vulnerable group feeding \(VGF\) programme](#), was attacked by the Jubo League<sup>25</sup>, and a [human chain programme by teachers from Cumilla University](#) was also attacked by the Chhatra League. A few examples out of many such cases are given below:
9. On 11 May 2024, job aspirants had marched from Dhaka University's Raju Sculpture demanding that the age of joining the government service be increased to 35 years. The police in Shahbagh baton-charged the job aspirants and arrested 13 protestors.<sup>26</sup>



*Protesters were stopped by the Police while marching towards Ganobhaban, demanding that the age limit for entry into government service be increased to 35 years. Photo: Samakal, 11 May 2024*

<sup>23</sup>Manabzamin, 8 April 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=105131>

<sup>24</sup>Manabzamin, 26 May 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=111501>

<sup>25</sup>Youth wing of Awami League

<sup>26</sup>Dhaka Tribune, 11 May 2024; <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/education/346251/>





*Police action against protesters in Shahbagh, Dhaka, demanding the age of joining the government service be increased to 35 years. Photo: Naya Diganta and Manabzamin, 12 May 2024*

10. On 8 June 2024, the police had stopped BNP leaders and activists from holding a rally in Kaburhat-Sardarpara area of Kushtia. The police had clashed with the BNP leaders and activists and filed a case with Kushtia Sadar Police Station, naming 37 people and another 250 unknown people as accused. The police had arrested four people, including Kushtia District Unit BNP Vice-President Kutubuddin.<sup>27</sup>
11. To make BNP's central programme a success, on 28 June 2024, local BNP leaders and activists had organised a preparatory meeting in Sreepur under Gazipur District. While the meeting was going on, the police raided the venue and arrested four people, including Moshir Rahman Titu, Joint General Secretary of Upazila BNP. Local BNP leaders and activists made allegations that there was no previous case against the arrested. The police had arrested and charged them in a fabricated case of 'sabotage'.<sup>28</sup>

## **Criminal Acts and Violence Committed by the Ruling Party**

12. Corruption, malfeasance and violence of Awami League and its affiliated organisations are still ongoing. The leaders and activists of the ruling party are involved in various acts of violence including murder, but most of them are enjoying impunity.<sup>29</sup> It appears that the government was initially forced to arrest their leaders and activists due to the pressure of public opinion, but later these leaders and activists were spared from punishment. The ruling party leaders and activists organised children and juveniles and formed 'Kishore Gang' (Teenage Gang), and are conducting various criminal activities with them.<sup>30</sup> As a result, members of the Gang are involved in various crimes, including murder, extortion, land grabbing, robbery and sexual harassment under the shelter of the ruling party.<sup>31</sup> On 5 April 2024, Kurban Ali, a dentist, was killed by members of this Gang when he came to save his son Ali Reza, a madrasa student, from being attack by them in West

<sup>27</sup> Manabzamin, 30 June 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=116361>

<sup>28</sup> Jugantor, 29 June 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/821989/>

<sup>29</sup> Naya Diganta, 2 April 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/825887/>

<sup>30</sup> Prothom Alo, 19 April 2024; <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/local-news/un0zq34rx3>

<sup>31</sup> Jugantor, 19 April 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/index.php/todays-paper/last-page/796054/>

Feroze Shah residential area under Akbar Shah Police Station in Chittagong. The leader of this Gang, Golam Rasul, is a former leader of the Awami League-backed Chhatra League (student wing of the ruling party).<sup>32</sup>

13. Leaders of the ruling party became Members of Parliament (MPs) through a controversial and farcical elections. As a result, they have no responsibility and accountability towards the people. Many MPs are accused of various criminal offences, including smuggling. However, they continue to commit such crimes because of impunity. Awami League leader Anwarul Azim Annar became the first MP for the Jhenaidah-4 constituency in 2014. Prior to becoming an MP, he had an arrest warrant against him issued by Interpol on charges of money laundering, smuggling and human trafficking.<sup>33</sup> After Awami League came to power in 2009, his name was removed from Interpol. There were 21 cases against him. Later, he was acquitted and/or discharged from the cases.<sup>34</sup> It is alleged that he was killed in Kolkata, India due to [internal disputes](#) within the Awami League while carrying smuggled gold.<sup>35</sup>
14. During this period, various allegations, including of [gold smuggling](#), [drug peddling](#), [tender bidding](#), [money looting](#), [extortion](#), [forceful occupation of other's properties](#), [destruction of the environment by cutting hills](#) and [oppression against students](#) were found against leaders and activists of Awami League and its affiliated organisations.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, local people caught four people, including the Swechchasebak<sup>37</sup> League leader, Rasel, while stealing an electrical transformer in Sonargaon under Narayanganj District.<sup>38</sup> There are allegations of various kinds against the Chhatra League in the education sector, including [killing students](#), suppressing students, extortion, clashes due to internal disputes and occupying dormitory seats of public universities. However, the university administrations did not take any action against them.<sup>39</sup>



*A Swechchasebak League leader who carried a gun and intimidated his opponents over a land dispute in Gazipur. Photo: Jugantor, 21 April 2024*

<sup>32</sup> Prothom Alo 19 April 2024; <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/local-news/un0zq34rx3>

<sup>33</sup> Dhaka Tribune, 22 May 2024; <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/347224/>

<sup>34</sup> Prothom Alo, 23 May 2024; <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/politics/4g26guqnlm>

<sup>35</sup> Daily Star, 2 June 2024; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/mp-azim-murder-azim-taxed-every-gold-bar-smuggled-3624426>

<sup>36</sup> Naya Diganta, 21 April 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/829343/>

<sup>37</sup> Volunteer wing of the ruling Awami League

<sup>38</sup> Manabzamin, 26 May 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=111503>

<sup>39</sup> Prothom Alo, 25 May 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/xpakg49trh>

15. In most cases, the police do not accept cases brought by victims to the police stations regarding ill-doings and violence carried out by Awami League leaders and activists.<sup>40</sup> During this reporting period, leaders and activists of the ruling party had attacked police stations to take away the accused Awami League persons.<sup>41</sup>
16. Due to corruption and criminalization, members of the ruling Awami League have clashed with each other due to conflicts related to the expansion of dominance in the area and various other interests.<sup>42</sup> Many [Awami League leaders and activists](#), including [ordinary people](#), were killed and injured in these incidents.<sup>43</sup> During the upazila elections held at this time, there were massive clashes between the two parties.
17. **Between April and June 2024, at least 46 people killed and 1,884 people injured in political violence.<sup>44</sup> During this reporting period, 101 incidents of internal conflict between Awami League while four incidents of internal conflict between BNP have been recorded. In the internal conflict of Awami League 13 people were killed and 875 people were injured while seven people were injured in the internal conflict of BNP.**

## Politicization of State Institutions

18. Since the Awami League-led government came to power in 2009, all the State, Constitutional and Autonomous institutions, including the Election Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the National Human Rights Commission have been used to implement the government's political agenda.
19. In 2009, 824 BDR<sup>45</sup> *jawans* were acquitted in the murder case related to the BDR mutiny. However, these BDR *jawans* have been imprisoned for more than 15 years due to lack of progress in the case filed against them under the Explosives Act. On 5 May 2024, relatives of the jailed BDR *jawans* formed a human chain in front of the Rangpur Press Club, demanding a speedy trial.<sup>46</sup> The United States of America has sanctioned former Army Chief General (Retd.) Aziz Ahmed for allegedly undermining public confidence in Bangladesh's democratic institutions, government institutions and processes. This was the first time that the US government had imposed sanctions on a former Army Chief in Bangladesh.<sup>47</sup> It is to be noted that the 2018 controversial and farcical Eleventh Parliamentary election was held during the tenure of General Aziz as the Army Chief.

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<sup>40</sup>Samakal, 11 June 2024; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/241694/>

<sup>41</sup>Daily Sun, 9 June 2024; <https://www.daily-sun.com/post/752407>

<sup>42</sup>New Age, 16 April 2024; <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/232744/>

<sup>43</sup>New Age, 22 June 2024; <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/238552/>

<sup>44</sup>The figures included the casualties in election related violence.

<sup>45</sup>Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) later renamed as Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB)

<sup>46</sup>Naya Diganta, 6 May 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/city/832824/>

<sup>47</sup>Daily Star, 21 May 2024; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/us-sanctions-ex-army-chief-aziz-family-members-3615096>

## ***Prevalence of corruption and Anti-Corruption Commission***

20. During the tenure of the current government, corruption has reached alarming levels. The leader of the ruling party and her family members<sup>48</sup>, trusted government officials<sup>49</sup> and leaders and supporters of the government<sup>50</sup> amassed huge wealth through corruption, but the poverty in the country has reached an extreme. The money of the ordinary people is being embezzled by opening fake companies in the name of Multi-Level Marketing (MLM) in the country. A top leader of Awami League is also involved in this.<sup>51</sup> It has been alleged that most of this money is being smuggled abroad.<sup>52</sup> It was learnt that 394 Bangladeshis have built a huge wealth in Dubai's housing sector. In 2022, they owned 641 properties in Dubai.<sup>53</sup> In addition, 3,604 Bangladeshis have built a second home in Malaysia.<sup>54</sup> The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is working as a subservient institution of the government in this situation. It is alleged that they are following the 'pick and choose' method to act against the corrupt individuals at the behest of the government. Even if an investigation starts against someone under compulsion, they are later acquitted.
21. Mohammad Matiur Rahman, a member of the National Board of Revenue, is alleged to have acquired a large wealth through corruption.<sup>55</sup> His wife Laila Kaniz is the Relief and Social Welfare Secretary of the Narsingdi District Unit Awami League. She became Upazila Chairman unopposed with Awami League's nomination.<sup>56</sup> There have been allegations of corruption against Mohammad Matiur Rahman for a long time and the ACC has formed investigation team four times to investigate his corruption over the past 18 years. However, each time he had been acquitted from corruption charges.<sup>57</sup> It is alleged that pro-government individuals have caused huge damage to financial institutions, including banks through corruption.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, ICB Islamic Bank is in a severe liquidity crisis and customers are not being able to withdraw even a small amount of money.<sup>59</sup> The ACC is also giving immunity to the person involved in the bank loan fraud.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, apart from opposition political leaders, the ACC is being used against dissident

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<sup>48</sup>Manabzamin, 25 April 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=107014>

<sup>49</sup>Jugantor, 20 May 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/807002/>

<sup>50</sup>Prothom Alo, 23 April 2024;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=2347ce35edd&eid=1&imageview=0&epedate=23/04/2024&sedid=1>

<sup>51</sup>Jugantor, 11 June 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/815394/>

<sup>52</sup>Manabzamin, 21 June 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=115051>

<sup>53</sup>Manabzamin, 17 May 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=110191>

<sup>54</sup>Manabzamin, 1 April 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=104138>

<sup>55</sup>Jugantor, 21 June 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/818491/>

<sup>56</sup>Prothom Alo, 26 June 2024;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=266a172472c&eid=1&imageview=0&epedate=26/06/2024&sedid=1>

<sup>57</sup>Jugantor, 21 June 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/818505/>

<sup>58</sup>Prothom Alo, 7 May 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/business/bank/r9pxwzvq2n>

<sup>59</sup>Daily Star, 19 May 2024; <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/banks/news/icb-islamic-bank-struggling-pay-back-depositors-3613121>

<sup>60</sup>TBS News, 23 April 2024; <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/crime/tk832cr-embezzlement-court-bars-saad-musa-group-md-wife-leaving-country-835006> Samakal, 30 April 2024; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/234859/>

individuals or institutions if there is a dispute between them and government-related individuals.<sup>61</sup>

## ***Electoral systems in Bangladesh and Election Commission***

22. The incumbent government has instituted an extremely repressive regime, destroying fair electoral system, which is contrary to the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh<sup>62</sup> and international law<sup>63</sup>. In [2014](#)<sup>64</sup>, [2018](#)<sup>65</sup> and [2024](#), the electoral system of Bangladesh has been destroyed by disenfranchising people through controversial and farcical elections. The Election Commission has become partners of the government in this misdeed. In the last 15 years, the Election Commission has lost the public's trust due to the Commission standing-in favour of the ruling Awami League. There have also been instances where an influential leader of the ruling party or a Member of Parliament were able to arrange an uncontested election to have the candidate of their choice win in their area, due to the destruction of the electoral system. Awami League's Member of Parliament ABM Fazle Karim Chowdhury's Constituency Raujan of Chittagong has not held any Upazila, Municipality and Union Parishad elections for the past eight years. No other candidate dares to contest against the candidate nominated by Fazle Karim Chowdhury. As a result, they were elected unopposed.<sup>66</sup> Due to such rigged elections, the number of voters is drastically reduced day by day, however, there are allegations that an inflated voter turnout is being shown in the elections.<sup>67</sup>

## ***Local Government Elections 2024: Union Parishad and Upazila Parishad Elections***

23. Union Parishad and Upazila Parishad elections were held over the three months after the one-sided 12<sup>th</sup> National Parliament elections of 2024. The main opposition BNP, along with other Left and Islamist political parties also

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<sup>61</sup>Daily Star, 2 May 2024; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/prof-yunus-13-others-granted-bail-graft-case-3600121>

<sup>62</sup> Article 11 of the Constitution of Bangladesh states "The Republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured."

<sup>63</sup> Article 25(B) of the ICCPR states "To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors". Bangladesh is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Such a staged and controversial election process is a violation of the ICCPR.

<sup>64</sup>The 10th National Parliament elections were held unilaterally on 5 January 2014 despite the boycott of almost all political parties. The Parliamentary Elections were not only farcical (153 MPs were elected unopposed before the polls), but were also marked by cases of snatching of ballot boxes, capturing of polling stations and intimidation of voters.

<sup>65</sup>In the 11th Parliamentary Elections on 30 December, 2018, the ruling Awami League nominated candidates in most of the polling stations, sealed the ballot papers the night before the polls and stuffed the ballot boxes, casted fake votes, forced the voters to vote for the ruling party candidates, occupied the polling centres and arrested and ousted the polling agents of the opposition candidates and committed other irregularities, including intimidation of voters, which were unprecedented. DW, 31 December 2018; <https://www.dw.com/en/has-bangladeshs-ruling-party-won-a-managed-election/a-46907035> Daily Star, 16 January 2019; <https://www.thedailystar.net/bangladesh-national-election-2018/bangladesh-election-2018-irregularities-47-out-50-seats-tib-1687840>

<sup>66</sup>Samakal, 24 April 2024; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/233887/>

<sup>67</sup>Jugantor, 26 May 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/805571/>

boycotted these elections. In this situation, the ruling party Awami League organised the elections without a Party Symbol. As a result, Awami League leaders and activists competed against each other. The Union Parishad elections conducted during this period were held amid violence. The police, RAB, BGB had opened fire in order to bring the situation under control.<sup>68</sup>

24. The sixth Upazila Parishad elections were held in four phases in the three months from April to June in 401 Upazilas. Before each phase of elections, most of the candidates were [elected unopposed](#) and almost all of them were [Awami League leaders](#). Ahead of the elections, [widespread clashes](#) between supporters of rival candidates across the country resulted in many casualties.<sup>69</sup> Most of the people involved in violence are affiliated with Awami League. During this period, there were [allegations of clashes](#), attacks on election camps, vandalism of business institutions and vehicles and other violations of the Code of Conduct.<sup>70</sup> In addition, the Awami League leaders and activists threatened the voters in different areas to not go to the polling stations.<sup>71</sup>
25. Every phase of the election was held amid various irregularities, including violence, not allowing the polling agents of the opposition to enter the polling stations, [casting fake votes](#), [snatching ballot boxes and ballot papers](#), forcibly stamping ballot papers, the ‘capturing’ of polling centres, and attacks on journalists. In many places polling officers were involved in these irregularities.<sup>72</sup> Most of the voters refrained from voting in this Election as the people could not vote due to the unprecedented rigging by the ruling party in the previous elections. As a result, the subsequent voter turnout was the lowest it has ever been since the last 5 upazila elections.<sup>73</sup> Apart from this, allegations of irregularities were also found in the counting of votes by the Election Commission.<sup>74</sup> Supporters of local Awami League leader and chairman candidate [attacked journalists](#) and injured them while collecting election-related news.<sup>75</sup>
26. **A total of 16 people were killed and 1,204 people were injured in the violence surrounding this rigged election.**

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<sup>68</sup>Prothom Alo, 29 April 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/8pbthfcf6m>

<sup>69</sup>Jugantor, 10 June 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/national/814924/>

<sup>70</sup>Prothom Alo, 4 June 2024;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=46b3aeac4b&eid=1&imageview=0&epedate=04/06/2024&sedId=1>

<sup>71</sup>Prothom Alo, 24 May 2024;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=2457861cb6c&eid=1&imageview=0&epedate=24/05/2024&sedId=1>

<sup>72</sup>Samakal, 9 May 2024; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/236291/>

<sup>73</sup>Manabzamin, 9 May 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=109028>

<sup>74</sup>Samakal, 4 June 2024; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/240460/>

<sup>75</sup>Manabzamin, 9 May 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=108990>



*A person voting openly instead of going to the secret room at Dari Satyavandi Government Primary School Polling Center in Araiহার উপজেলা of Narayanganj. Photo: Prothom Alo, 22 May 2024*



*At the last minute of voting in the Upazila Parishad elections, the Police recovered the ballot box from a pond that was looted from the Debgram Pilot Model High School Polling Station in Akhaura Municipality of Brahmanbaria. Photo: Prothom Alo, 22 May 2024*



*Local people blocked the Dhaka-Khulna highway for an hour with the body of Wasikur Bhuiya, who was killed in the post-election violence in Gopalganj. At that time, the protesters stopped traffic by burning tires and throwing tree trunks on the road. Photo: Prothom Alo, 16 May 2024*

## State Repression

### *Enforced disappearances*

27. The government has used enforced disappearance as a tool to suppress political movements and silence dissenting voices, creating an environment of fear in the country. In cases of disappearances, the police usually refuse to take complaints and the families of the victims of enforced disappearances are under surveillance and threats. As a result of extensive anti-disappearance campaigns the tendency to hold victims in secret detentions for long periods of time after disappearances have reduced. Although the cases of disappearance have been proved, such heinous crimes are constantly being denied by the government at the national and international level. In the report of the [132<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances](#) (WGEID) of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Government of Bangladesh had been asked about the whereabouts of Mohammad Rahmatullah, a student and electrician from Dhamrai Upazila under Dhaka District, who was disappeared by RAB on 29 August 2023.<sup>76</sup>
28. Bangladesh has not signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and no domestic law has been made against disappearances. Hill Women's Federation Leader Kalpana Chakma was allegedly abducted by the security forces from her home in Lailaghona under Baghaichhari Upazila in Rangamati District on 11 June 1996. A kidnapping case was filed by her family. After 28 years of Kalpana Chakma's abduction, on 23 April 2024, the Senior Judicial Magistrate of Rangamati, Fatema Begum Mukta, rejected the plea of the plaintiff Kalindi Kumar Chakma against the final report and upheld the final report of the police.<sup>77</sup>
29. There are allegations that some people are being disappeared after being tagged as 'Islamic militants'.
30. In the early morning of 28 March 2024, a person named Md. Rashed Mia was picked up from his house in Muktagachha under Mymensingh District by the Detective Branch (DB) of Police and was disappeared for a few days. Rashed Mia's brother Bashed Mia informed Odhikar that a group of people claiming to be members of the law enforcement agency came to Rashed's house at around 1:00 am and asked him to open the door. As Rashed did not open the door, about 14 people broke the door and entered inside and handcuffed Rashed. They had also rummaged through his house claiming that he had weapons in the house. During the operation some of the men were wearing jackets inscribed with "DB" and were carrying handcuffs, pistols and walkie-talkies. Later, they picked up Rashed in a white Hiace microbus (numbered Dhaka Metro-034263). Bashed Mia said that Sub-Inspector Rasel of Muktagachha Police Station and local Awami League activists Lal Mahmud and Hamidul were present during the operation. Rashed's wife Shapla Khatun and elder daughter Rubaiya were beaten and kicked by the police

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<sup>76</sup>Samakal, 23 May 2024; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/238519/>

<sup>77</sup>New Age, 24 April 2024; <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/233427/>



when they had obstructed the men from taking Rashed away. Rubaiya was admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital with serious injuries. On 28 March, when the family contacted Muktagachha Police Station, RAB-14 office and District DB office, they all denied arresting Rashed. The police did not receive their complaint when the family went to police station to file a General Diary. Later, on 31 March, Rashed was shown arrested in a case filed under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009 with Demra Police Station. After 17 days of detention, Rashed's family members found him in Dhaka Central Jail, Keraniganj. Bashed Mia also said that in 2020 him and Rashed were picked up from their house by RAB-14. After being kept in RAB custody for seven days, they were produced before a Mymensingh court in a case under the Anti-Terrorism Act. After the hearing of witnesses the court released both of them as being innocent.<sup>78</sup>

31. On 3 April 2024 at around 2:30 am, Mohammad Shamsul Haque, a lawyer's assistant, was blindfolded and taken away by some men identified as DB police, from his house at Boubazar area of Kakrail in Dhaka. Shamsul Haque's wife Nurunnahar said that they went to police station and DB office in search of her husband, but no one acknowledged the arrest of her husband.<sup>79</sup> Nurunnahar informed Odhikar that when she went to Banani Police Station to file a General Dairy (GD) in this regard, the police did not accept her GD. On 8 April, she along the family went to police station again so that police authorities received a missing complaint. At that time, they were informed by the police station that Shamsul Haque was being produced in court on the same day. Later came to know that a case has been filed against her husband for posting anti-government posts on Facebook and he was sent to jail.<sup>80</sup>
32. On 23 April 2024 at around 11:00 pm, former leader of Dhaka Metropolitan Unit Chhatra Dal, Monirul Islam Munshi and his driver Mahbubur Rahman Shohag were reportedly picked up by members of the Detective Branch (DB) of Police in plain clothes from the Postgola area. Abdul Ahad, Deputy Commissioner of Wari Division of the Metropolitan Detective Branch (DB) of Police, said that no one with that name had been arrested.<sup>81</sup> On 26 April, Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) Unit's Additional Commissioner Mohammad Asaduzzaman had said during a press conference that former Chhatra Dal Leader Monirul Islam Munshi, and Munshi's car chauffer Mahbubur Rahman Shohag were arrested in a case regarding setting fire to a bus belonging to Achim Paribahan, and burnt the bus conductor to death on 29 October 2023.<sup>82</sup>
33. On 11 May 2024 at approximately 12:30 am, Hefazat-e-Islam leader Hafez Abdul Mabud was abducted from his house in Hathazari area and at around 2:00 am, a teacher named Mohammad Lokman was picked up from his house in Pachanlaish area of Chittagong by a group of people claiming to be

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<sup>78</sup>Report sent by human rights defender associated with Odhikar from Mymensingh.

<sup>79</sup>Naya Diganta, 6 April 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/miscellaneous/826923/>

<sup>80</sup>Interview with Nurunnahar, wife of the disappeared victim, Mohammad Shamsul Haque

<sup>81</sup>Jugantor, 25 April 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/second-edition/798448/>, Samakal 25 April 2024;

<https://epaper.samakal.com/nogor-edition/2024-04-25/17/6375>

<sup>82</sup>Samakal, 28 April 2024; <https://epaper.samakal.com/nogor-edition/2024-04-28/13/7356>

members of the intelligence agency. On 13 May, the leaders of Hefazat-e-Islam held a press conference in Chittagong and alleged that they had informed the Hathajari Model Police Station, local public representatives, local administration and intelligence agencies about the abduction of Abdul Mabud. But no trace of Abdul Mabud was found until he was shown arrested on 14 May.<sup>83</sup> Lokman's family members also contacted various units of the law enforcement agencies, but they had denied arresting him. Relatives of Mohammad Lokman said that after three days of Lokman's disappearance, the Mansurabad DB office had called and asked them to bring clothes for Lokman. On 14 May, Hafez Abdul Mabud and Lokman were shown arrested by the Anti-Terrorism unit as members of the banned organisation Ansarullah Bangla Team.<sup>84</sup>

34. On 2 May 2024, Dilwar Hossain (32), a Bangladeshi-origin British citizen, was picked up by some men wearing DB uniforms in Sylhet. Shahid Mia, an eyewitness to this incident, said that the police had stopped a Toyota Prado SUV near Kazir Bazar Bridge in the city at around 9:00 pm that day. At that time, a police pickup truck and a silver-coloured Toyota Hiace microbus were parked nearby. Later, about 8 men wearing DB jackets took Dilwar out of the car and beat him up. After picking him up in their car, one of the men drove the Prado SUV towards the Dhaka-Sylhet highway. The Hiace microbus and the police pickup truck had also followed him.<sup>85</sup> In a press briefing at RAB-9 CPC-2 Srimangal office, on 27 May, Commander Arafat Islam, Director of Legal and Media wing of RAB headquarters, said that RAB had arrested a British citizen named Dilwar Hossain with a pistol, two rounds of bullets and drugs along from Jagchhora tea estate area under Srimangal Upazila in Moulvibazar District during an anti-narcotics operation.<sup>86</sup>
35. **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 April and June 2024. Among them, seven persons were disappeared by the Detective Branch of Police and one was by police. All of them were later resurfaced alive and showed them arrested under different criminal laws.**

### ***Extrajudicial killings***

36. On 17 May 2024, a housewife named Suraiya Khatun (52) died in the custody of RAB-14 CPC-2 Bhairab Camp in Kishoreganj. It is to be noted that Suraiya Khatun's pregnant daughter-in-law Rekha Akhtar was killed for dowry demands on 26 April. On 2 May, Rekha Akhtar's mother Ramisha Khatun filed a case in Mymensingh Women and Children Suppression Prevention Tribunal against Suraiya Khatun, her husband Azizul Islam and son Tajjul Islam Limon over the allegation of killing Rekha Akhtar. On the orders of the court, the case was recorded at Nandail Police Station on 13 May, and Sub

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<sup>83</sup>Manabzamin, 14 May 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=109788>

<sup>84</sup>Report sent by human rights defender associated with Odhikar from Chittagong

<sup>85</sup>Jugantor, 6 May 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/802404/>

<sup>86</sup>Report sent by human rights defender associated with Odhikar from Sylhet.

Inspector (SI) Nazmul Hasan was assigned for investigating the case. Suraiya Khatun's husband Azizul Islam alleged that on the night of 16 May, SI Nazmul Hasan called them to Nandail Police Station and handed them over to RAB. After being detained, Suraiya Khatun was tortured and killed. In this incident, a case of unnatural death was filed with Nandail Police Station following the application of Dr. Bulbul Ahmed, Health and Family Planning Officer of Bhairab Upazila Health Complex. Dr. Bulbul Ahmed said that on 17 May, RAB members brought Suraiya Khatun to the hospital after she had already died.<sup>87</sup> In this incident, RAB-14 Bhairab Camp Commander Lieutenant Fahim Faisal, Deputy Assistant Director Iqbal Hossain, Corporal Mohibul Islam, Constable Monir Hossain and Nandail Police Station Sub-Inspector Nazmul Hasan were withdrawn from duty.<sup>88</sup>

37. It has been alleged that a housewife named Afroza Begum (40) died from being tortured while in the custody of Abhaynagar Police Station in Jashore. Afroza Begum's eldest son Arif Hossain Munna said that on 1 June 2024 at around 11:30 pm, a group of policemen led by Sub Inspector Saiful of Abhaynagar Police Station came to Afroza Begum's house and body-searched his mother on the allegation of her mother possessing drugs. After finding nothing, the police tied his mother to a fan and tortured her. The police then brought her to the police station unconscious. They did not allow her to take any medicine or food. Afroza was first taken to the Upazila Health Complex and was later taken to Jashore 250 Bed Hospital. Munna had said that before reaching the hospital, his mother's body became cold. Dr. Hasib Mohammad Ali Hasan of the Hospital's emergency department said that Afroza had died before being brought to the hospital.<sup>89</sup> Munna alleged that the police tortured his mother to death for a bribe of Two Hundred Thousand Taka.<sup>90</sup> Munna also said that they went to Jashore City to talk to a lawyer to file a case, but they were threatened over a phone call for doing so and was told to not file a case. As a result, they are now suffering from insecurity.<sup>91</sup>
38. **Between April and June 2023, a total of four persons were reportedly killed extra-judicially. Of these four people, three were killed by the police, one by the RAB. It is also alleged that among the four killed, two were tortured to death, one was shot to death and one was beaten to death.**

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<sup>87</sup> Manabzamin, 19 May 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=110465>, Daily Star 19 May 2024;

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/woman-dies-rab-custody-3613151>

<sup>88</sup> Daily Star 21 May 2024; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/death-rab-custody-rab-official-si-withdrawn-3615041>

<sup>89</sup> New Age 3 June 2024; <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/236779/woman-dies-in-police-custody>

<sup>90</sup> Daily Star, 3 June 2024; <https://www.thedailystar.net/star-multimedia/news-multimedia/news/woman-dies-police-custody-jashore-family-alleges-torture-3625606>

<sup>91</sup> Prothom Alo, 5 June 2024;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=5651f81945&eid=1&imageview=0&epedate=05/06/2024&sedId=1>

## ***Torture and other ill-treatment, deaths in custody and lack of accountability by members of law enforcement agencies***

39. The government is using law enforcement agencies to suppress political opponents, government critics and dissidents. As a result, many members of law enforcement agencies enjoy impunity for human rights abuses, unlawful activities, and corruption. Although there are widespread cases of torture and other ill-treatment of citizens in the country, very few of them are made public. Due to the lack of proper implementation of the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act 2013, torture and other ill-treatment continue. The widespread filing of false cases by members of law enforcement agencies poses a threat to justice. The citizens are being harassed and the Judiciary is also having to bear the burden.<sup>92</sup>
40. On 16 April 2024, two policemen in plainclothes went to Tahirpur of Sunamganj district on a motorcycle to arrest the warrant-accused Ramiz Uddin (55). When they arrested Ramiz, a scuffle took place between them. At one point, Ramiz freed himself from the hands of the two policemen and ran away. ASI Zia ran after Ramiz and hit him on the neck with a coconut branch, causing Ramiz to bleed from his nose and mouth. In this situation, the policemen left without arresting Ramiz. Ramiz's family members rescued him and took him to the doctor, who had declared him dead.<sup>93</sup>
41. On 11 May 2024, a group of people, including Sub-Inspector (SI) Rezaul Karim of the District Detective Branch of Police went to the house of a Saudi expatriate named Nurul Alam Nuru in Thaliara Village of Brahmanbaria Sadar Upazila, to arrest him in connection with a case. However, after not finding Nurul at home, the policemen allegedly physically-assaulted Nurul's family members, including his father, wife and children. At one stage, SI Rezaul Karim allegedly pointed a pistol at Nurul's wife Bonna Begum's forehead and fired blank shots. Later the police had allegedly robbed their money and gold ornaments from the house.<sup>94</sup>



*DB Police Officer pointing a firearm at Bonna's head after failing to arrest her husband during a raid in Brahmanbaria. Photo: Daily Star, 14 May 2024*

<sup>92</sup>Naya Diganta, 31 May 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/839134/>

<sup>93</sup>Manabzamin, 18 April 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=105963>

<sup>94</sup>Daily Star, 14 May 2024; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/db-officer-points-gun-womans-head-during-raid-3609291>

42. On 1 June 2024, gold trader Sumon Howladar and his two associates of Joypara area of Dohar, Dhaka, were going to Shingair under Manikganj district by auto-rickshaw with 95 *bhoris* of gold. On the way, a microbus and a motorcycle with RAB stickers on them stopped the auto-rickshaw and a group of people led by Mohammad Shamsuzzaman, Deputy Assistant Director of Gazipur Training Centre of RAB-1, took Sumon and his companions out of the car, beat them, tied their eyes and hands with a black cloth and took them away in a microbus. They had also taken away the gold that was with them. After learning about the incident, the locals intercepted the microbus and rescued Suman, and handed over the five people who had identified themselves as members of RAB, to the law enforcement agencies.<sup>95</sup> Being an Army Officer, Shamsuzzaman, who was accused of being the main organiser of the incident, was later handed over to the Army.<sup>96</sup>
43. On 9 June 2024, a man named Mostafizur Rahman was arrested by the police in Shailkupa under Jhenaidah district. After learning about this incident, Mustafizur's relatives went to Shailkupa Police Station and asked the policemen there to know the reason behind his arrest. Enraged by this, the police on duty in front of the police station beat Mustafizur's relatives. At one point when the police had opened fire on them, Mustafizur's cousin Feroz Hossain (29) was shot in the right hand. When Feroz Hossain was admitted to the Orthopaedic and Rehabilitation Centre Hospital with serious injuries, the doctors had to amputate his right hand on 10 June.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, Sub-Inspector Laltu Rahman of Shailkupa Police Station filed a case against 45 to 500 unknown people with the names of 115 people for allegedly attacking the police station. Feroz Hossain was made Defendant No. 32 in this case. Mustafizur Rahman, who was arrested in this incident, filed a complaint in the Complaint Cell of the Inspector General of Police. He mentioned in his complaint that on 22 May, he was framed in a case relating to a violent clash in Shailkupar's Bandekhali. After his arrest, the Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Shailkupa Police Station tortured him and Superintendent of Police Azim-ul-Islam forced him to lick his shoes.<sup>98</sup>



*Feroz Hossain injured in police firing. Photo: Samakal, 3 July 2024*

<sup>95</sup>Samakal, 2 June 2024; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/240142/>

<sup>96</sup>Samakal, 3 June 2024; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/240304>

<sup>97</sup>Samakal, 3 July 2024; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/244668/>

<sup>98</sup>Samakal, 3 July 2024; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/244668/>

44. During this period, various allegations have been found against members of the law enforcement agencies, including [extortion](#); [imprisoning ordinary people on fake charges drug peddling](#); [arresting innocent people due to the similarity in names](#); [torture](#) and [taking bribes](#). Apart from this, there were incidents of arresting innocent people and implicating them in criminal cases, while the real accused individuals remain at large. As a result of one such incident, the court was forced to acquit all the accused in a drug-related case. On 15 May, Additional Sessions Judge of Patuakhali AKM Enamul Karim announced the verdict of a drug case filed six years ago. The court observed in the verdict that elite forces like RAB, without being able to arrest the real accused, caught a person from the street and showed that he had been arrested with Phensidyl, which undermined the reputation of RAB.<sup>99</sup>
45. During this period some members of law enforcement and intelligence agencies were accused of acquiring large amounts of assets through irregularities and corruption. Benazir Ahmed, former DG of RAB and former Inspector General of Police, who was very close to the government, has been accused of acquiring billions of Taka in his own name and in the name of his wife and children through abuse of power, irregularities and corruption in the country and abroad.<sup>100</sup> Benazir bought a large amount of property from the people belonging to the Hindu community at a very low price<sup>101</sup>. Furthermore, he used four passports consistently as a 'private employee' despite being a government official.<sup>102</sup> The authoritarian government used Benazir Ahmed to suppress the opposition. As a result, Benazir has been given several awards by the government. He was given the Integrity Award for being 'free from corruption'.<sup>103</sup> The United States of America imposed sanctions against him on 10 December 2021, for human rights violations.<sup>104</sup> In view of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC's) application on 23 May, the court of Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge Mohammad Assams Jaghlul Hossain ordered the seizure of properties belonging to Benazir Ahmed and his wife, children and some relatives.<sup>105</sup> After the Court Order, the ACC found a large amount of assets in the name of Benazir Ahmed and his wife Zeeshan Mirza, children and some relatives in the first phase.<sup>106</sup> On 26 May, the same Court also confiscated these properties in view of the ACC's application.<sup>107</sup> However, Benazir Ahmed and his family members withdrew the money from the bank before their accounts were seized by the court. Benazir and his family left the country via Dhaka's international airport while the ACC investigation was on-going.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Prothom Alo, 25 May 2024;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=255de448872&eid=1&imageview=0&epedate=25/05/2024&sedid=1>

<sup>100</sup>Prothom Alo, 27 May 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/94robvwix1>

<sup>101</sup>Prothom Alo, 3 June 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/rt4a25epxq>

<sup>102</sup>Samakal, 26 June 2024; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/243591/>

<sup>103</sup>Samakal, 1 June 2024; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/239981/>

<sup>104</sup>Prothom Alo, 3 June 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/rt4a25epxq>

<sup>105</sup>Manabzamin, 24 May 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=111245>

<sup>106</sup>Prothom Alo, 27 May 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/94robvwix1>

<sup>107</sup>Prothom Alo, 27 May 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/y4ngb0mhei>

<sup>108</sup>Prothom Alo, 3 June 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/rt4a25epxq>

46. Possessions of a large amount of money and assets have been found against Akram Hossain, Assistant Director of the Directorate of National Security Intelligence (NSI) and his wife Suraiya Parveen. It is alleged that Akram Hossain had acquired this wealth by abusing his power and extorting money by threatening to make negative reports against various businessmen and politicians. On 21 May 2024, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed a case against Akram Hossain and Suraiya Parveen on charges of acquiring assets outside of their known income.<sup>109</sup>
47. Additional DIG Sheikh Rafiqul Islam Shimul, working at Special Branch of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), has also been accused of irregularities regarding their wealth, pertaining to corruption and misuse of power.<sup>110</sup>
48. It has been alleged that former Police Commissioner of Dhaka Asaduzzaman Mia has also accumulated vast wealth in his own name and in the name of his family members.<sup>111</sup>

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

49. There have been allegations of rampant corruption, irregularities and drug trade in the prisons. Prison officials were found to be involved in this.<sup>112</sup> For example, it has been alleged that due to corruption in Chittagong Central Jail, ordinary prisoners are not given enough food. Jail officials take in hundreds of thousands of taka every month by embezzling a large portion of government-provided food for prisoners.<sup>113</sup> Prison officials are collecting huge sums of money from the relatives of the prisoners in the name of meeting the prisoners on 'emergency calls'.<sup>114</sup> In addition, the prisoners do not get food as per the official limit of three meals a day. The prisoners had also complained that the food allotted to them for going to the court for their appearance in their case was not given to them as well. Because of this, most of the prisoners must buy expensive food from the canteen.<sup>115</sup>
50. There have been allegations of torture and other ill-treatment of political prisoners as well as opposition party leaders in the country's prisons.<sup>116</sup> On 11 February 2023, BNP-backed lawyers filed a Writ Petition in the Bench comprising of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice Md. Atabullah of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, seeking instructions to form an independent inquiry committee, including internationally-recognised human rights activists, to investigate the death of 13 BNP leaders and activists in various prisons of the country and to submit the investigation report to the court.<sup>117</sup> On 28 May, a Bench consisting of Justice Mostafa Zaman Islam and Justice SM Masud Hossain Dolan of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court ordered the disposal of the Writ Petition within 30 days and the prison

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<sup>109</sup>Prothom Alo, 29 May 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/eezfo2jtgz>

<sup>110</sup>Jugantor, 20 May 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/807002/>

<sup>111</sup>Prothom Alo, 24 June 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/anfs449012>

<sup>112</sup>Kaler Kantha, 30 April 2024; <https://www.kalerkantho.com/online/national/2024/04/30/1383652>

<sup>113</sup>Jugantor, 21 May 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/807372/>

<sup>114</sup>Naya Diganta, 23 June 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/844287/>

<sup>115</sup>Jugantor, 8 June 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/814148/>

<sup>116</sup>Naya Diganta, 29 February 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/817629/>

<sup>117</sup>Prothom Alo, 11 February 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/6rdo7khsrt>

authorities were asked to implement this directive.<sup>118</sup> There is a shortage of doctors in prisons and when inmates are seriously ill, they have to go through a long process to get better treatment. As a result, many prisoners are dying. Even most of the inmates who are not financially well-off, do not get the opportunity to be admitted to prison hospitals when they are seriously ill.<sup>119</sup>

51. There are allegations of lack of security measures for inmates undergoing treatment in the hospital's prison cells. On 14 April 2024, an intellectually-impaired prisoner named Tariqul Islam beat another prisoner named Mohammad Motahar to death with a steel stand for hanging saline bottles in the prison cell of Barisal Shere Bangla Medical College Hospital. The incident took place when the jail authorities arranged for him to stay in a cell with two other prisoners, even though he was supposed to be kept in the Mental Ward of the hospital as per the rules.<sup>120</sup>
52. **Between April and June 2024, a total of 20 prisoners reportedly died in prisons. Among them, 17 persons died due to 'illness', two committed suicide and one was killed by fellow inmate.**

### *The death penalty*

53. In the prevailing laws of Bangladesh, the provision of the death penalty is in operation. The maximum penalty of death is widely imposed in lower courts despite the existence of alternative sentencing arrangements. In many cases, courts are imposing death sentences in flawed trials based on confessions obtained through torture. In view of a Writ Petition on 30 January, a Bench comprising of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice Mohammad Atabullah of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court asked why the imposition of 'death' as a punishment without a general policy would not conflict with Articles 7, 27, 31, 32 and 35 of the Constitution, and issued a Rule on why a policy shall not be framed for 'death penalty' as punishment.<sup>121</sup>
54. Death row inmates have been languishing in condemned cells for years because of slow appeal hearings. As of 13 May 2024, 2,515 death row convicts were incarcerated in condemned cells.<sup>122</sup> There are currently 1,019 death reference cases<sup>123</sup> pending in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, which is the highest in the last 20 years. A woman named Sharifa Begum has been imprisoned in a condemned cell since 1998. The appeal of this prisoner, who has been imprisoned in a condemned cell for 24 years, has not yet been resolved. According to the prison authorities, no other female convict in prison history had to stay in a condemned cell for such a long time. Like Sharifa Begum, another person named Abdus Samad has been imprisoned in the condemned cell for 24 years.<sup>124</sup> At present the rate of disposal of death

<sup>118</sup>Jugantor, 29 May 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/second-edition/810469/>

<sup>119</sup>Prothom Alo, 28 June 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/8n3ue0qt16>

<sup>120</sup>Jugantor, 14 April 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/794782/> New Age, 14 April 2024; <https://www.newagebd.net/post/Country/232619/accused-beaten-to-death-at-hospital-prison-cell>

<sup>121</sup>Jugantor, 3 April 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/national/law-justice/791754/>

<sup>122</sup>Manabzamin, 15 May 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=109898>

<sup>123</sup>If an accused is sentenced to death by a judicial court, it requires the approval of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court for execution.

<sup>124</sup>Desh Rupantor, 1 July 2024; <https://www.deshrupantor.com/519875/>



references in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court is low.<sup>125</sup> Keeping death-row convicts in condemned cells till their trial is final is unjustified and a violation of human rights. Before the final disposal of the case, on 3 September 2022, three prisoners in their condemned cell at Chittagong Central Jail filed a Writ Petition challenging the legality of keeping the death row-accused in a condemned cell. After the hearing of this Writ, on 13 May 2024, the Bench comprising of Justice Sheikh Hasan Arif and Justice Mohammad Bazlur Rahman of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court ruled that the person receiving a death sentence cannot be kept in a condemned cell or solitary confinement before all judicial and administrative processes are completed.<sup>126</sup> The Court ordered that those who have been kept in condemned cells or in solitary confinement before the finalisation of their death sentence, be gradually transferred to ordinary cells. The Court's judgment observed that death row prisoners should be treated like other prisoners and be allowed to apply for bail. In appropriate cases, the High Court should grant bail to the applicant under Section 426 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.<sup>127</sup> Justice M Enayetur Rahim of the Chamber Court of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court adjourned this judgment given by the High Court Division on 15 May till 25 August 2024.<sup>128</sup>

**55. In the three months of April-June 2024, the lower courts have sentenced 94 persons to death.**

## Public Lynching

56. Due to the dysfunctional criminal justice system and a lack of trust in law enforcement agencies, people are taking the law into their own hands and killing individuals through mass beatings.
57. On 8 April 2024, Sohel Rana, a bus driver of Itihash Paribahan, and his assistant, Hridoy, were beaten to death for an argument over the bus fare in Savar, Dhaka.<sup>129</sup>
58. On 18 April 2024, nine construction workers were locked up on the suspicion that Muslim workers had set fire to the Panchpalli Barwari Kali Temple of Dumain Union under Madhukhali Upazila in Faridpur District. When the local Union Council Chairman and Awami League leader Shah Asaduzzaman was informed over telephone, he came to the spot and hit a worker named Ashraful with an iron rod. At that time, he was accompanied by UP Member Ajit Biswas and VDP<sup>130</sup> member Amrit Kumar Bose. Soon after this, the local Hindus attacked the workers. Two labourer brothers Ashraful and Arshadul were killed on the spot. Other workers were also seriously injured in the attack.<sup>131</sup> The inquiry committee of the district administration found the

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<sup>125</sup>Jugantor, 25 May 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/808873/>

<sup>126</sup>Jugantor, 14 May 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/804829/>

<sup>127</sup>Jugantor, 14 May 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/804829/>

<sup>128</sup>Prothom Alo, 16 May 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/w2qsw9rvmo>

<sup>129</sup>Daily Star, 9 April 2024; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/passengers-beat-driver-conductor-death-3585201>

<sup>130</sup>Village Defense Police

<sup>131</sup>Daily Star 20 April 2024;

involvement of Shah Asaduzzaman, Ajit Biswas and Amrit Kumar Bose in this case.<sup>132</sup>

59. **At least 10 people were killed in public lynching in these three months of April-June 2023.**

## **Freedom of Expression**

60. Freedom of expression in Bangladesh is in the 'critical' category according to Article Nineteen. The organisation has published this information in its "Global Freedom of Expression Report-2024". In terms of freedom of expression, Bangladesh ranks 128<sup>th</sup> among 161 countries in the world, with a score of 12.<sup>133</sup> According to a report by Access Now, a New York-based organisation working on human rights in the digital space, the purpose of every incident of internet shutdown in Bangladesh was to suppress dissent.<sup>134</sup> In addition to obstructing the expression of opinions of opposition party leaders and dissidents, the ruling party members have opened fake accounts and spread misleading information against the opposition party leaders and activists through social media. For this reason, Facebook's parent organisation Meta has closed 50 Facebook accounts and 98 pages. In a report, Meta had said that the Facebook accounts and pages were suspended for violating Meta's policies for engaging in organised dishonesty.<sup>135</sup>

## ***Imposition of the repressive Cyber Security Act and trials under the Digital Security Act continue***

61. Since the passage of the repressive Cyber Security Act, 2023, journalists and politicians have continued to be accused under this Act.<sup>136</sup> Besides, even though the much-criticized Digital Security Act, 2018 has been repealed, the ongoing cases filed under this Act have continued to be filed and prosecuted in the courts without withdrawal. Politicians and journalists have been the most accused group in cases under the Digital Security Act in the last five years. Among the complainants, 78 percent of the complainants are associated with Awami League politics.<sup>137</sup>

62. On 16 May 2024, Sunamganj District Unit Chhatra League Finance Secretary Abu Sufian filed a case against six people under the Cyber Security Act, 2023 at the Sylhet Cyber Tribunal for publishing insulting and satirical pictures of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on social media. Taking cognizance of the case,

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<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/two-killed-faridpur-mob-beating-3590851> and Manabzamin, 22 April 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=106599>,

<sup>132</sup>Prothom Alo, 14 May 2024;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=145250a25db&eid=1&imageview=0&epdate=14/05/2024&sedid=1>

<sup>133</sup>New Age 21 May 2024; <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/235723/>

<sup>134</sup> Access Now, <https://www.accessnow.org/internet-shutdowns-2023/> Samakal, 16 May 2024;

<https://samakal.com/technology/article/237453/>

<sup>135</sup>Prothom Alo, 1 June 2024; <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/homnik1p8m>

<sup>136</sup>Manabzamin, 28 February 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=99472>

<sup>137</sup>Prothom Alo, 30 April 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/jphp4xoc6i>

the court ordered the police of Chhatak Police Station to investigate the matter.<sup>138</sup>

63. On 13 May 2024, Dhaka Cyber Tribunal Judge AM Zulfiker Hayet sentenced Tithy Sarkar, a student of Jagannath University, to five years in prison for making derogatory comments about religion on social media, including Facebook. However, when Tithy Sarkar pleaded guilty and applied for probation<sup>139</sup>, the court granted it.<sup>140</sup>

### ***Freedom of the media***

64. There has been tremendous pressure on the media under the authoritarian rule. In such situations, journalists at the local level are working under severe risk. As a result, journalists are forced to impose self-censorship. During this reporting period, while performing their professional duties, journalists have been subjected to various types of harassment, including [attacks, assaults and threats by the police](#), leaders and activists of the [ruling party, pro-government miscreants and influential people](#). Journalists were banned from entering Bangladesh Bank as well.<sup>141</sup>



*A group of criminals beat up journalist Manik Hossain and broke his leg in Puibeel Village of Vangura Upazila in Pabna. Photo: Daily Star, 17 April 2024*

65. On 21 June 2024, Bangladesh Police Service Association (BPSA) issued a statement claiming that partial, motivated and indiscriminate reports about several former and current members of Bangladesh Police had been published via mass media and social media recently. The BPSA statement had said that some media outlets were publishing and circulating derogatory negative news against some police officers due to a personal vendetta and protecting their own interests, which is against the ethics of journalism. It had also said

<sup>138</sup>Manabzamin, 17 May 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=110200>

<sup>139</sup> According to section-5 of the Probation of Offenders Ordinance, 1960, a court may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, instead of sentencing the person at once, make a probation order, that is to say, an order requiring him or her to be under the supervision of a probation officer for such period, not being less than one year or more than three years.

<sup>140</sup>Daily Star 14 May 2024; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/dsa-case-jnu-student-gets-5yrs-jail-1yr-probation-3609176>

<sup>141</sup>Prothom Alo, 25 April 2024; <https://en.prothomalo.com/business/local/rcknqn7yf0>

that all these media were publishing defamatory and negative news about the current and former members of the police purposefully, which has the effect of tarnishing the image of the police. It is to be noted that various reports have been published in the media recently about the corruption and assets of former Inspector General of Police (IGP) Benazir Ahmed and his family, as well as former Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Mohammad Asaduzzaman Mia and his family.<sup>142</sup> Meanwhile on 22 June, the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and the Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) issued a statement to counter the BPSA statement. They said that they considered the language used by some leaders and organisations as a reaction to the publication of corruption news, as a threat to independent journalism.<sup>143</sup> Expressing deep concern and as a protest against the BPSA's statement on journalism, the Editors Council<sup>144</sup> on 23 June says that BPSA's statement is an expression of indecent and unreasonable behaviour towards independent media and impartial journalism.<sup>145</sup>

66. On 30 April 2024, criminals led by Awami League's former Member of Parliament and Chakaria Upazila Parishad Chairman-candidate Zafar Alam attacked Mohammad Ullah, Manabzamin Chakaria correspondent and General Secretary of Chakaria Press Club in Chakaria, Cox's Bazar. At that time, two cell phones and money were taken away from Mohammad Ullah. The attackers had tried to kill him. He was later admitted to Chakaria Health Complex. It is to be mentioned that journalist Mohammad Ullah has been publishing reports on various irregularities of MP Zafar Alam since the last general elections.<sup>146</sup>



*Mahmud Ullah, General Secretary of Chakaria Press Club, undergoing treatment in the hospital for allegedly being beaten up by the supporters of former Member of Parliament of Cox's Bazar Zafar Alam. Photo: Business Standard, 1 May 2024*

<sup>142</sup>Prothom Alo, 21 June 2024; <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/vui06dspnw>

<sup>143</sup>TBS News, 23 June 2024; <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/police-service-associations-statement-threat-independent-journalism-bjc-882461>

<sup>144</sup>An organization of editors in the mainstream newspapers

<sup>145</sup>Daily star, 24 June 2024; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/bpsa-statement-threat-against-media-freedom-3639876>

<sup>146</sup>TBS News, 1 May 2024; <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/crime/former-coxs-bazar-mp-cohorts-allegedly-beat-journo-threaten-maim-sue-15-more-840701>

67. Rajbari District correspondent of Maasranga TV, Imran Hossain; District correspondent of the daily Gonomukti, Atowar; and district correspondent of the daily Shomoyer Kagoj, Shahidul Islam went to the Mulghar Union Parishad office for collecting information regarding irregularities surrounding the VGF rice distribution and illegal digging in Bejkola area of Mulghar Union under Rajbari Sadar Upazila. As a result, Union Chairman and General Secretary of the Upazila Unit Awami League, Sheikh Mohammad Wahiduzzaman became furious, and the Chairman along with one of his associates assaulted the journalists.<sup>147</sup>
68. On 9 May 2024, the police beat Pimpol Borua, a staff reporter of Dhaka Tribune, while collecting information during a violent clash between the two factions of Chhatra League in Chottogram College in Chittagong.<sup>148</sup>
69. **From April to June 2024, at least 33 journalists were injured, 13 were assaulted, four were attacked, four were threatened, and 14 journalists were sued for carrying out their professional duty.**

## Condition of Readymade Garment Workers

70. Despite the readymade garment (RMG) industry being a major contributor to Bangladesh's foreign exchange earnings and the accumulation of significant wealth for factory owners, there has been little improvement in the working and living conditions of the workers. Rather, workers are being suppressed and deprived from their rights in various ways. The working condition of female workers is especially vulnerable. The RMG workers in the country are living in fear and suppression while the owners enjoy impunity for their human rights abuses in the garments factories. Furthermore, workers' rights have also been violated with the help of the state.<sup>149</sup> During this reporting period, there were clashes between workers and the police when workers had organised protest rallies for various demands, including the payment of their arrears and opening closed factories. The police also harassed workers, lodging a number of cases against them.
71. On 1 April 2024, a female worker named Hasina Begum of Silver Composite Textile Mill Ltd. requested the factory authority for a leave when she fell ill. However, the authority ordered her to continue her work without approving her leave application. At one stage Hasina Begum's condition deteriorated and she was admitted to a private hospital where she had died.<sup>150</sup>
72. The authority of an RMG factory named Abonti Colour Tex Ltd. in Shashongaon of Narayanganj did not pay wages to their workers for the month of March. On 21 April, workers noticed that the factory was locked when they went to work. Subsequently, the workers tried to talk with the factory authority but they were forced out of the factory premises. The workers staged a protest rally and blocked the Dhaka-Munshiganj Road in protest. A clash had later taken place between the police and the workers

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<sup>147</sup>Prothom Alo, 8 April 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/vpio9p8ezn>

<sup>148</sup>Prothom Alo, 15 May 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/kpl0v3patg>

<sup>149</sup>Amnesty 1 May 2024; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/05/bangladesh-garment-workers-must-receive-rights-based-compensation-and-justice-immediately/>

<sup>150</sup>Prothom Alo, 3 April 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/ty01upv18e>

when the police tried to remove the workers from the road. In this incident, 28 workers and bystanders were injured.<sup>151</sup> On 27 April, the police filed a case with Fatulla Police Station against 30 individual workers and 800 unknown persons.<sup>152</sup>

## Human Rights Violations of Ethnic Minority and Religious Communities

73. In these three months, there have been allegations of human rights violations against citizens belonging to religious and ethnic minority communities. On 2 and 3 April, armed men from the so-called Kuki-Chin National Front allegedly robbed two banks and abducted a bank manager in Ruma and Thanchi, Bandarban. As a result of this, various state security forces engaged in repressive activities against the citizens belonging to the Bawm community, in the name of joint operations. On 8 April, three Bawm students were arrested on the way to their village for the New Year festival and Eid holidays of the Pagari community from the security check post, on 'suspicion' of being involved in the bank robbery incident. On that day, 54 men and women from the Bawm community were arrested. The arrested women were also detained along with their children.<sup>153</sup> After their arrest, these people were interrogated in the sun for a whole day and were not given any food.<sup>154</sup> The fear of arbitrary detention has made it difficult for the people of the Bawm community and other ethnic minority communities to make a daily living. In a joint statement, 43 eminent citizens of the country said that although allegations of human rights violations were raised during a series of joint operations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, these allegations had never been investigated, rather the information given by the law enforcement agencies was disseminated through the media as the 'truth'.<sup>155</sup>
74. On 10 June 2024, the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) launched an operation to evict the Harijan community without providing any alternative accommodation for the construction of a modern vegetable market in the sweepers' colony of Miron Jolla, a Harijan community residence in Bangshal, Dhaka. At that time, workers of the DSCC broke a wall and some structures, but then retreated when the Harijan community had obstructed them. In pursuance of a Writ Petition on 13 June, the High Court Division of the Supreme Court ordered the non-eviction of Harijan City Colony and at the same time imposed a one-month stay on the eviction proceedings. It is to be noted that the people of this Harijan community have been living in this colony for hundreds of years. At present around 4,000 people of Harijan community live here.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>151</sup>Samakal, 22 April 2024; <https://epaper.samakal.com/nogor-edition/2024-04-22/15/5455>

<sup>152</sup>Manabzamin, 28 April 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/dhaka/830905/>

<sup>153</sup>New Age, 1 May 2024; <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/234060/>

<sup>154</sup>Prothom Alo, 23 May 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/roibdj3i0a>, Amnesty 22 May 2024; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa13/8076/2024/en/>

<sup>155</sup>New Age, 1 May 2024; <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/234060/>

<sup>156</sup>TBS News, 13 June 2024; <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/high-court-halts-eviction-harijan-colony-one-month-876446>

## Violence against Women

75. There were allegations of repression and violence committed against women and children between April and June 2024. During this period, members of the ruling party were reportedly involved in the incidents of violence against women. Furthermore, there were allegations against the police for not lodging any complaints in such incidents.<sup>157</sup>

## Rape

76. During this period, many women and children have been victims of rape and gang-rape. Several women and [children were raped and killed](#), and several [victims of rape committed suicide](#). During the reporting period, there were allegations of rape against [leaders of the ruling party](#) and [members of the police](#). Allegations were found against the [police for not taking complaints](#) against incidents of rape and [attempts to rape](#). A rape victim was threatened by a leader of the ruling party to prevent the victim from filing a complaint.<sup>158</sup> A housewife, along with her husband and child, went into hiding due to fear after a ruling party leader had attempted to rape her.<sup>159</sup> An individual who was accused of raping a woman beat and threatened her after being released from prison on bail. As a result, she had committed suicide.<sup>160</sup> Furthermore, influential people have also been accused of covering up the incidents of rape through arbitration.<sup>161</sup>

## Stalking/Sexual harassment

77. There were allegations of stalking and sexual harassment of women by teenage gangs comprised of juvenile delinquents, that have been formed across the country under the shelter of the ruling party.<sup>162</sup> When an individual protested or obstructed them from committing these acts of sexual harassment, members of the gang attacked and even killed the protestors.<sup>163</sup> In some cases, the victims had committed suicide.<sup>164</sup> In many cases, the police were accused of releasing stalkers from the police stations.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, allegations of sexual harassment were also found against [teachers of different educational institutions](#), including [Dhaka University](#).

78. Some delinquents, including Mohammad Al Amin and Masum Mia used to stalk a Madrassa student in Chatalpar Village under Nasirnagar Upazila in Brahmanbaria. In this incident, the father of the Madrassa student made a complaint to Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) against those delinquents. In the complaint, a youth named Munna has been made a witness. Being enraged,

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<sup>157</sup>Samakal, 18 May 2024; <https://epaper.samakal.com/nogor-edition/2024-05-18/75482>

<sup>158</sup>Jugantor, 5 April 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/792761/>

<sup>159</sup>Manabzamin, 28 June 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=116062>

<sup>160</sup>Samakal, 26 May 2024; <https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/239005/>

<sup>161</sup>Jugantor, 2 June 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/812023>

<sup>162</sup>Manabzamin, 23 April 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=106715>

<sup>163</sup>Jugantor, 15 May 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/805183/>

<sup>164</sup>Jugantor, 16 May 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/805817/>

<sup>165</sup>Prothom Alo, 15 April 2024; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/1jpb8p1hvm>

- criminals attacked Munna on 17 April and left him seriously injured. On 21 April, Munna had died in a hospital in Dhaka while undergoing treatment.<sup>166</sup>
79. A newly-wedded bride was picked up in a microbus by Bhangura Upazila Unit Chhatra League President Atiqul Islam Biplob for refusing his indecent proposal in Bhangura, Pabna. Biplob is very close to Awami League's local MP and his son who is the Mayor of Bhangura Municipality. The victim's family did not receive any remedy even after filing a complaint at the police station against Biplob.<sup>167</sup>

### ***Dowry-related violence***

80. Although giving and receiving dowry is a criminal offense under the [Dowry Prohibition Act, 2018](#), and the [Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000](#), widespread acts of violence against women over dowry demands continued in the country. Most of the victims of dowry-related violence have been deprived from justice due to the lack of rule of law. During this period, [women were beaten](#) as well as [burnt to death](#) for the non-payment of dowry. In addition, a woman was also [killed by having the tendons of her hands and legs severed](#). [Members of the law enforcement agencies](#) and a [judge](#) were also involved in dowry-related violence during this reporting period.
81. On 10 April 2024, a pregnant housewife named Khadiza Akhtar was burnt with diesel by her husband Ibrahim Pradhan for dowry demands in Matlab South Upazila under Chandpur District. On 13 April, Khadiza succumbed to her injuries while undergoing treatment.<sup>168</sup>
82. On 13 May 2024, a final-year student of Rangpur Medical College and housewife Shahina Akhtar was killed by her husband Jahangir after having the tendons in her hands and legs severed for dowry demands in Kuptola Union under Gaibandha Sadar Upazila.<sup>169</sup>

### ***Acid violence***

83. Acid violence is a severe violation of human rights. Incidents of acid violence continued in the country due to the lack of implementation of the Acid Control Act, 2002 and Acid Offence Control Act, 2002. Victims of acid violence have been deprived of justice as the cases filed for having acid thrown at them have been pending for years.
84. In the early morning of 17 April 2024, Shahin Munshi and his wife Sumi threw acid on a housewife over an enmity related to a criminal case in Urfi Paschimpara in Gopalganj Sadar Upazila.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup>Manabzamin, 23 April 2024; <https://mzamin.com/news.php?news=106715>

<sup>167</sup>Samakal, 13 April 2024; <https://samakal.com/whole-country/article/232229/>

<sup>168</sup>Jugantor, 16 April 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/795025/>

<sup>169</sup>Jugantor, 15 May 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/805229/>

<sup>170</sup>Jugantor, 19 April 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/796118/>



## Bangladesh and its Neighbouring Countries

### *India's interference with Bangladesh and human rights violations by BSF*

85. The Indian ruling class heavily supported the incumbent government in the farcical and controversial [2014](#)<sup>171</sup>, [2018](#) and [2024](#)<sup>172</sup> Parliamentary elections to exert influence over Bangladesh. Through this unethical support, India plays an active role in destroying the democratic system of Bangladesh. Taking advantage of the dysfunctional democratic system of Bangladesh, India is using the Bangladesh government to take various kinds of unethical privileges. Exploiting this opportunity, the Indian government took transit facilities over Bangladesh almost free of cost and disproportionately enjoyed other commercial opportunities. India has been depriving Bangladesh of its equitable right to water during the dry season for a long time and because of this most of Bangladesh's rivers are now dead. The Teesta Treaty was very important for the realisation of Bangladesh's right to water. But during the visit of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India on 21 and 22 June, several agreements and Memorandums of Understanding were signed between the two countries, but the Indian government did not execute the Teesta agreement with the Bangladesh government. After the Bangladesh-India Bilateral Meeting, India's Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra said that there was an important discussion between the two leaders to start a railway connection from one part of India to another using the territory of Bangladesh. This train is scheduled to start running in July.<sup>173</sup> Most of the citizens of Bangladesh believe that Bangladesh's sovereignty will be endangered if this train starts running. Apart from this, human rights violations against the citizens of Bangladesh by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) along the Bangladesh-India border have reached an extreme level. During this reporting period, BSF members, besides killing and torturing Bangladeshis, had also entered Bangladesh's territory and fired at Bangladeshi citizens, and prevented the repair of the dam on the Manu River in Bangladesh along the border.<sup>174</sup>

86. On 2 April 2024, a Bangladeshi citizen named [Saiful at Gomostapur border](#) in Chapainabaganj District; on 22 April, a Bangladeshi farmer [Mohammad Hassan at Kasba border](#) in Brahmanbaria District; on 26 April, a Bangladeshi named [Abul Kalam at Patgram border](#) in Lalmonirhat district; and on 8 May, two Bangladeshi youth named [Abdul Jalil \(24\) and Yasin Ali \(23\) at Tetulia border](#) in Panchagarh District were shot dead by BSF members.

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<sup>171</sup>Before the controversial and fraudulent 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 successfully tried to bring the Jatiya Party, which had decided to boycott the elections at that time, to the elections. Jatiya Party members are now ministers in the current government and are also the opposition in the Parliament. [www.dw.com/bn/নির্বাচন-না-হলে-মৌলবাদের-উত্থান-হবে/ধ-17271479](http://www.dw.com/bn/নির্বাচন-না-হলে-মৌলবাদের-উত্থান-হবে/ধ-17271479)

<sup>172</sup>Prothom Alo, 16 March 2024; <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/politics/r0sze4q4rp>

<sup>173</sup>Daily Star, 20 June 2024; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/pms-india-visit-defence-teesta-project-port-likely-be-agenda-3637121>; Naya Diganta, 23 June 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/844294/>

<sup>174</sup>Jugantor, 15 May 2024; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/805207>

87. On 9 June 2024, a Bangladeshi citizen named Anwar Hossain (50) was shot dead by BSF members at Budichang border in Cumilla District. The local residents of that area had informed that Anwar Hossain was in Bangladesh's territory. BSF members called him close to the fence and shot him dead.<sup>175</sup> On 26 June, a Bangladeshi named Nurul Islam was shot dead by BSF members at Kaliganj border in Lalmonirhat District.<sup>176</sup>
88. On 12 May 2024, BSF members chased some Bangladeshi women when they went to no-man's land for collecting wood at Phulbari border in Kurigram District. BSF members entered Bangladesh land and shot to them.<sup>177</sup>
89. **From April to June 2024, seven Bangladeshis were shot dead and 10 were injured by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF). Among the 10 who were injured, nine were shot, and one was tortured.**

### *Human rights of Rohingya population*

90. The houses of the Rohingyas are being burnt amidst fierce fighting between Myanmar's military junta and armed rebel groups from April to June. As a result, the Rohingyas are leaving their villages. Thousands of Rohingyas have taken refuge on the banks of the Naf River in Myanmar to come to Bangladesh to save their lives. Members of the law enforcement agencies have been guarding the border to prevent Rohingyas from entering Bangladesh. Syedullah, a Rohingya youth who had escaped, said that along with the Myanmar Army, the Arakan Army is attacking the Rohingyas in Rakhine. On 23 May, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tom Andrews, called on Bangladesh to withdraw from the 'closed border policy' and shelter the Rohingya people who have been displaced by persecution in Rakhine.<sup>178</sup> Ever since 25 June, when fierce fighting had started between Myanmar's military junta forces and armed rebel groups in Maungdaw, Rakhine, Rohingya women, men and children left their homes to save their lives and tried to enter Bangladesh by crossing the Naf River on boats; but were turned away by BGB members.<sup>179</sup> The Rohingyas are being forced to join the Myanmar Army to fight against the Arakan Army in this war. Human Rights Watch estimates that around 1,000 Rohingya have been forced to join Myanmar's Army since February 2024.<sup>180</sup> According to human rights groups and Rohingya sources, since February, at least 1,500 Rohingya men and boys have been forcibly recruited by Myanmar's military from villages in Rakhine state in Myanmar and refugee camps in Bangladesh.<sup>181</sup>

<sup>175</sup>New Age, 9 June 2024; <https://www.newagebd.net/post/Country/237342/bangladeshi-killed-in-bsf-firing-in-cumilla>

<sup>176</sup>Daily Star, 27 June 2024; <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/bsf-shoots-bangladeshi-dead-near-border-3642606>

<sup>177</sup>Naya Diganta, 15 May 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/835085/>

<sup>178</sup>Naya Diganta, 24 May 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/837357/>

<sup>179</sup>Naya Diganta, 28 June 2024; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/845554/>

<sup>180</sup>Human Rights Watch, 9 April 2024; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/10/myanmar-military-forcibly-recruiting-rohingya>

<sup>181</sup>Voice of America; <https://www.voanews.com/a/young-rohingya-men-abducted-forced-into-human-shield-roles-by-myanmar-military/7636436.html>

## **Hindrance to Odhikar Activities**

91. On 14 September 2023, Dhaka Cyber Tribunal judge AM Zulfiqer Hayet sentenced Odhikar's Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan and Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan to two years in prison and fined them BDT 10,000 each in a case filed against them under the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006, for publishing a fact-finding report on extrajudicial killings in 2013. Currently both are now out of prison under bail. In 2022, the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB) under the Prime Minister's Office refused to renew Odhikar's registration, and Odhikar has not received its registration back since then. Despite the ongoing state repression and obstructions, Odhikar continues to highlight human rights violations. Odhikar has had to impose self-censorship in publishing its reports due to government repression, regulation and interference with freedom of expression.

## Recommendations

1. 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.
2. Attacks on, and harassment and arrest of opposition political parties and dissidents must be stopped. All political prisoners, including detained protesters must be freed.
3. The Government's interference with Constitutional and State Institutions must be stopped and the government must refrain from controlling the Judiciary.
4. All human rights abuses, including torture and other ill-treatment of prisoners must cease. 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. The government must ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.
5. All victims who 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 as punishable offense and those involved in causing such disappearance must be prosecuted.
6. Government interference on freedom of expression and media must be stopped. All cases filed against all human rights defenders, including journalists, must be withdrawn. Attacks on journalists must be properly investigated and those responsible must be brought to justice.
7. All repressive laws including Special Powers Act 1974, Information and Communication Technology Act 2006, Anti-Terrorism Act 2009 and Cyber Security Act 2023 must be repealed immediately. All cases filed under these laws must be withdrawn.
8. To stop violence against women and children, criminals must be tried and punished swiftly. Necessary amendments to relevant laws and comprehensive social awareness programmes on issues like sexual harassment should also be undertaken.
9. India's dominance and aggressive behaviour on Bangladesh must be stopped. All kinds of human rights violations including the killing and torture of Bangladeshi citizens by the Indian BSF along the border areas must be stopped.
10. The attacks on the Rohingya population in Rakhine must stop and their citizenship must be returned. Permanent and voluntary repatriation of Rohingyas with full social and political rights should be arranged with security.

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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.