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Statement by Odhikar

Odhikar strongly protests Narendra Modi's statement on Bangladesh's Victory Day

The statement of the Indian Prime Minister on the victory day of Bangladesh's Liberation War of 16 December 1971, is in clear disregard to the sovereignty of Bangladesh, and its people who sacrificed their lives to achieve independence. Odhikar strongly condemns and protests Prime Minister Narendra Modi's misleading and distorted statement.

On 16 December 2024, on the occasion of Bangladesh's Victory Day, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote on his verified Facebook, *"Today, on Vijay Diwas, we honour the courage and sacrifices of the brave soldiers who contributed to India's historic victory in 1971. Their selfless dedication and unwavering resolve safeguarded our nation and brought glory to us. This day is a tribute to their extraordinary valour and their unshakable spirit. Their sacrifices will forever inspire generations and remain deeply embedded in our nation's history."*

This is not only a misleading statement, as it was Bangladesh's fight for liberation from Pakistan in 1971, but also glorifies Indian soldiers who now commit human rights violation on the people of Bangladesh along the border. Bangladeshi people are constantly being killed, injured, and abducted by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF). From January 2009 to September 2024, 586 Bangladeshis were killed and 770 were injured by the attacks that the BSF had unleashed. None of the perpetrators were brought to justice. Felani and Swarna Das are among many children were callously killed by the Indian BSF.

Since Sheikh Hasina became Prime Minister in 2009 it has been reported that India, regrettably, interfered in three successive national elections in Bangladesh. India's former Foreign Minister Sujata Singh visited Bangladesh in 2014 and had directly influenced the elections. As a neighbouring country India demonstrated disrespect to the aspiration for democracy of the Bangladeshis. During Sheikh Hasina's tenure Bangladeshi victims of enforced disappearances were renditioned to India. India collaborated with the Sheikh Hasina regime to jointly commit grave human rights violations.

In July-August 2024 when Sheikh Hasina's government was committing massacre against students and people in Bangladesh, the Indian government failed to denounce the human rights violations and continued supporting the Awami League regime. The Indian government has harboured key perpetrators, including Sheikh Hasina. The Indian ruling elites and pro-Hindutva politicians are consistently spreading disinformation about Bangladesh's mass-uprising. Most of the Indian media reports on attacks on Bangladeshi Hindus have already been proven false by credible fact-checking groups.

Indian Premier Narendra Modi's non-statemanship statement apparently is a continuation of is and his governments programme of undermining Bangladesh. Instead of sticking to a failed foreign policy, the Indian government should demonstrate respect to Bangladesh as an independent and sovereign state. India's unjustifiable interference in the democracy, human rights and sovereignty of the people of Bangladesh must end.