



4 May 2025

12 Years of Extrajudicial Killings Resulting from Law Enforcement's Crackdown on Hefazat-e-Islam Rally in Dhaka in 2013

Odhikar's Statement

In 2013, during the Hasina-led regime, law enforcement agencies carried out a severe crackdown on Hefazat-e-Islam's protest rally at Shapla Chattar in Motijheel, Dhaka, leading to scores of extrajudicial killings. The incident occurred on May 5-6, 2013.

Odhikar carried out an on-site fact-finding mission into the extrajudicial killings and published a report confirming the extrajudicial execution of at least 61 individuals. Despite the scale of this mass killing, no other human rights group nor the National Human Rights Commission protested the incident at the time. After the incident, members of law enforcement agencies and local Awami League leaders and activists reportedly intimidated the victims' families.

After Odhikar published its investigation, the Awami League government asked Odhikar to provide a detailed list of the names and addresses of the victims. Considering the need to protect the affected families from further persecution, Odhikar called for the formation of a judicial inquiry commission led by a retired Supreme Court judge and stated that it would submit the list to that commission. However, the government did not establish any independent inquiry commission. Instead, on the night of 10 August 2013, members of the Detective Branch (DB) of police forcibly picked up Odhikar's Secretary, Adilur Rahman Khan, from the gate of his residence. When Gulshan Police Station and DB officials were inquired about his whereabouts, they initially denied his detention. Adilur was forcibly disappeared for the entire night and was produced before the court the next day. After Adilur was formally shown as arrested under the controversial Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, the DB took him into remand. On 11 August 2013, the DB raided Odhikar's office, seizing laptops, desktops, and various documents stored there. These documents contained sensitive information on victims and families affected by enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, and violence against women.

To harass Odhikar and damage its reputation, different intelligence agencies reportedly provided fabricated lists of victims to media outlets for dissemination. During this period, news agencies loyal to the government published manipulated reports based on these fabricated lists.

Later on, Adilur Rahman Khan and Odhikar's Director, ASM Nasir Uddin Elan, were accused in a case filed under the repressive Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (amended in 2009). Adilur and Elan were detained for 62 and 25 days, respectively.

After enduring 10 years of judicial harassment, on 14 September 2023, Justice AM Zulfiqar Hayat of Dhaka's Cyber Tribunal convicted Adilur and Elan without any evidence and sentenced them to two years in prison. Additionally, the then-Hasina government sought to use its law enforcement agencies, the NGO Affairs Bureau, the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Election Commission, and government-loyalist print and electronic media to systematically harass and discredit Odhikar for its voice against human rights violations.

The case of the massacre at the Hefazat-e-Islam gathering resurfaced after a student-led mass uprising forced Hasina to step down and flee to India on 5 August 2024. On 12 March 2025, the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) issued arrest warrants against Sheikh Hasina and nine others on charges of orchestrating the massacre at Shapla Chattar under her supreme command as the then-Prime Minister.

Odhikar calls for the following actions to ensure justice for the Shapla Chattar mass killing:

1. A thorough investigation to ensure that those involved in this massacre are held accountable.
2. Rehabilitation support by the government to the victims' families.
3. Withdrawal of all false cases filed in connection with the incident.