



July-August Mass Uprising 2024 — Looking Back

Odhikar, a human rights organisation, was established on October 10, 1994, through the efforts of some human rights activists who had participated in the struggle against the illegal rule of dictator Lieutenant General Hussain Mohammad Ershad, with the goal of building a democratic state based on equality, human dignity, and social justice. *Odhikar* has been subjected to harassment and oppression under various governments for protesting against human rights violations. Human rights activists associated with *Odhikar* have also been attacked and arrested in various ways at various times, for speaking out against human rights violations during the authoritarian Hasina government's more than 15-year rule.



In the mass uprising of July-August 2024, the then Secretary of *Odhikar*, Adilur Rahman Khan, and other human rights activists associated with *Odhikar* from across the country actively participated in the resistance struggle. The Hasina government committed mass killings, enforced disappearances, and torture to suppress this movement. Human rights activists associated with *Odhikar* collected and documented information on these grave human rights violations and shared it with regional and international human rights organisations, including the United Nations. During this time, human rights activists associated with *Odhikar* were arrested, tortured, detained, and shot while playing an active role in the movement. On the evening of July 29, 2024, the Detective Branch of Police (DB Police) had detained *Odhikar* activist Mohammad Rashedul Islam from Rajshahi due to his involvement in the movement, and subjected him to extensive torture. On July 30, Rashed was handed over to Motihar Police Station. A case was filed against him under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908 and he was sent to prison. Rashed was released from prison after August 5, 2024.

On the other hand, Golam Mostafa Rubel, another human rights activist associated with *Odhikar* from Sirajganj, was summoned and detained by members of DB Police and questioned about *Odhikar*'s involvement in the movement. August 1 was declared as 'July 32' by the students and the general public. On July 32 (August 1), *Odhikar*'s Director Nasir Uddin Elan and *Odhikar* activists

defied the curfew in front of the National Press Club and joined the procession alongside students and members of the public. On July 33 (August 2), a protest rally titled '*Drohojatra*' (March of Resistance) was organised in front of the National Press Club. *Odhikar's* then Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan, Director Nasir Uddin Elan, and then Coordinator Sazzad Hossain actively took part in the programme. Also on this day, human rights activists associated with *Odhikar* in Khulna joined the procession of students and members of the public from the Shibbari intersection in Khulna. When the procession had reached Khulna University, the police and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) opened fire with live ammunition, and also used rubber bullets and tear gas shells against the crowd. At that time, Shahidul Islam, a human rights activist associated with *Odhikar*, was severely injured after being struck by a baton and hit with rubber bullets in the hand and stomach.

On the morning of July 34 (August 3), human rights activists organised a protest rally in front of the National Press Club to protest the repression and genocide of the fascist government. In the rain, *Odhikar's* then Secretary, Adilur Rahman Khan, addressed the protest rally along with others. *Odhikar's* Director Nasir Uddin Elan, Senior Researcher Taskin Fahmina, and then Coordinator Sazzad Hossain were also present at the rally. Afterwards, a procession emerged from around the corner of Shikkha Bhaban, and subsequently, another rally was organised on the opposite side of the Press Club. The then Secretary of *Odhikar*, Adilur Rahman Khan, along with other human rights activists, also spoke at this rally. That afternoon, a large gathering of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement was held at the Central Shaheed Minar. Adilur Rahman Khan, Nasir Uddin Elan, and other *Odhikar* activists participated in the event. During the gathering, the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement announced the August 5 'March to Dhaka', based on a single-point demand.

On July 35 (August 4), human rights activists associated with *Odhikar* joined the Shahbagh rally and, later that evening, participated in the student-people's movement despite the imposed curfew. On July 36 (August 5), *Odhikar's* Senior Researcher Taskin Fahmina defied the curfew and went to Jahangir Gate with others. This unprecedented uprising by students and the masses ultimately led to the authoritarian ruler Sheikh Hasina fleeing to India on July 36 (August 5).

Odhikar activists have been, are, and will continue to be at the forefront of the struggle to protect human rights — a testament to their unwavering commitment.