



Consolidated Report: National Consultations on Enforced Disappearances Odhikar



Odhikar, in collaboration with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Dhaka, convened a two-day consultation in Barishal on 19–20 September 2025 to facilitate dialogue among the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances (CIED), survivors and families of victims, and other key stakeholders. The consultation focused on assessing progress toward justice and exploring future pathways for accountability and redress.

The first day was facilitated by Odhikar Senior Researcher Taskin Fahmina, followed by Odhikar Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan on the second day. On the second day, Taskin Fahmina delivered a keynote presentation on enforced disappearances in Bangladesh. The two-day forum brought together about 110 participants, including representatives from CIED, survivors and families of victims of enforced disappearances, as well as civil society actors such as human rights defenders, journalists, youth leaders, and educators, fostering inclusive discussions on accountability and redress.

Over the course of two days, the consultations addressed both structural and human dimensions of enforced disappearances in Bangladesh. The first day focused on defining the practice and exploring comprehensive strategies for its permanent eradication. The second day underscored the urgent need for truth, accountability, and justice. Together, these discussions bridged legal analysis with lived experience, reinforcing the imperative for institutional reform and victim-centred redress.

I. Background and objectives:

In the aftermath of a student-led mass uprising that culminated on 5 August 2024, bringing an end to over fifteen years of authoritarian rule marked by systemic human rights violations including enforced disappearances and entrenched impunity, an interim administration established the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances (CIED) to investigate cases and facilitate justice.

Against this backdrop, the human rights organisation Odhikar, in collaboration with the OHCHR in Dhaka, convened two two-day consultations, the latest being in Barishal, bringing together CIED representatives, survivors and families of victims and civil society actors (e.g., youth leaders, journalists, and human rights defenders) to reflect on institutional responses and chart pathways forward. The consultations aimed to:

- Facilitate engagement between survivors, families, civil society, and the Commission
- Document lived experiences and institutional responses
- Identify strategies for justice, rehabilitation, and prevention

II. Key Participants

- Survivors and families of victims
- Human rights defenders, educators, students, and journalists
- Representatives from Odhikar and the CIED.

III. Testimonies and Survivor Accounts

At Barisal, as in the other meeting, survivors recounted traumatic experiences of abduction, fabricated charges, and prolonged unlawful detentions in secret detention cells. These violations have left lasting impacts, including social stigma, deteriorating mental health, and the loss of educational and livelihood opportunities.



Md. Kobirul Islam

While sharing his ordeal, Md. Kobirul Islam, who was abducted by the Detective Branch (DB) of police on 13 October 2016, said: “Three false cases were filed against me. I was released after spending nine years in prison. Now I am helpless.” Mr. Islam demanded acquittal from the false criminal charges brought against him and urged the government to support his reintegration into livelihood and society.

Abu Sufian, another survivor of enforced disappearance, who was unable to complete his education and was falsely charged under the Anti-Terrorism Act, shared: “I feel like a burden on my family and society. The false accusations of terrorism have brought unbearable stigma. I am mentally and physically unwell. I no longer want to live as a burden.”



Abu Sufian



Md. Jahirul Islam

Survivors Md. Jahirul Islam also recounted their tormenting experiences, echoing the collective call for justice. All survivors urged the government to withdraw the fabricated charges against them and to provide meaningful support for their rehabilitation and social integration.

Family members of the victims expressed deep anguish over missing loved ones and the lack of institutional transparency.

Nasima Begum carries the unbearable weight of four missing family members—her husband Mizanur Rahman Jamadder, brother-in-law Morshed Jamadder, brother Mizanur Rahman Shikder, and nephew Sumon Shikder. Although her husband’s body was reportedly recovered after being taken by plainclothes forces, the family remains uncertain about its identity. The Commission is awaiting DNA confirmation. The other three relatives are still missing, and no information has been received about them to date. Nasima’s voice trembled as she said: “I live with four absences every day. We don’t know where they are, or even if the body we buried was truly his. There is no closure—only silence.”



Nasima Begum and her family members



Firoza Begum

Firoza Begum, mother of Firoz Khan and Miraz Khan—both victims of enforced disappearance and still missing—described how she was paying the price of waiting, grieving, and not knowing. “This country has taken my two sons from me. My health is failing. I just want to know where my sons are.”

Humaira Haider Feeha, daughter of Abul Haider, who was abducted by members of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) on 23 December 2010, shared her grief: “My father has always been like the shade of a tree for me, and now he is not here to take care of me. I feel lost, with no way forward. I need support to stand beside my mother in managing our family.”



Humaira Haider Feeha



Abdul Halim

Abdul Halim, father of Abdul Mukaddas — a victim of enforced disappearance — expressed his anguish over the uncertainty surrounding his son’s fate: “I want to know what happened to my son. I want justice. Please do something so I can learn the truth, because I no longer have faith in our legal system.

former Major General Ziaul Ahsan, allegedly involved in severe cases of enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killings occurred during the previous authoritarian regime, was involved in her husband’s disappearance. She shared that she is struggling to raise their son alone.



Amena Akter Brishty

Amena Akter Brishty, wife of Firoz Khan, who was abducted on 24 August 2012, described her hardships and alleged that

IV. Commission of Inquiry: Roles and Responses

Three representatives from the CIED attended the two-day consultation. In their speeches, they highlighted their mandate and shared updates on their work:

Justice Farid Ahmed Shibli, a member of the CIED outlined the responsibilities of the Commission and explained its inquiry procedures. He emphasised the importance of issuing official certificates enabling families of victims to access bank accounts and manage or sell the victims’ properties. He also advocated for employment opportunities in the public sector for individuals who have returned from disappearances, as well as for their families.



Another member of the Commission, Nur Khan Liton, affirmed that the Commission's inquiry into unresolved cases of enforced disappearance remains ongoing, with commitments to holding perpetrators accountable. To update the forum, he stated that more than 1,800 cases of enforced disappearance have been filed with the Commission, and that evidence indicates involvement of multiple law enforcement and intelligence agencies—including RAB, CTTC, DB Police, DGFI, and NSI in enforced disappearances. Nur Khan Liton also revealed the existence of dehumanising operational practices, noting that victims were often assigned code names such as “Subject,” “Packet,” and “Bosta,” while the term “khalash” was used to denote their final fate.

Commission member Sazzad Hossain further elaborated on the role of law enforcement agencies and the manner in which they operated in relation to these incidents, and outlined the Commission's four-stage approach: identifying unaccounted victims, supporting legal action, enabling state-led rehabilitation, and producing evidence-based reports. He stressed that enforced disappearances must be eradicated from Bangladesh's reality.

The perspectives shared during the consultations reflect the Commission's evolving role, from procedural oversight to strategic reform and investigative accountability, underscoring the call for institutional action and survivor-centered justice.

V. Civil Society Perspectives

Civil society actors including educators Khan Shahinul Hoque (Govt. Hatem Ali College) and Faizul Nahar Haque (Islami College); Lawyer Shah Alam; student leaders Mohammad Rakib Ahmed (Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, Barisal University), Mokabbel Hossain (Inqilab Mancha), and Tanjila Baishakhi (Revolutionary Student Movement), voiced a strong call for prompt trials and accountability for enforced disappearances.

VI. Concluding Remarks

The consultation closed with reflections from Taskin Fahmina and ASM Nasiruddin Elan of Odhikar, who expressed gratitude to the Commission and participants for their engagement. Taskin Fahmina appealed to the government to support the rehabilitation of survivors and families of the disappeared, while Elan reaffirmed Odhikar's enduring commitment to justice and the eradication of enforced disappearances in Bangladesh. These closing reflections reinforced the collective resolve to pursue justice and institutional accountability.

VII. Strategic Recommendations

Drawing on the lived experiences, insights, and demands shared throughout the consultation, the following strategic recommendations outline pathways for systemic reform and survivor-centered redress:

1. Legal and Policy Reform

- Expedite trials and ensure independent investigations
- Strengthen protections against arbitrary detention

2. Support for Survivors and Families

- Withdraw false cases and provide psychosocial support
- Rehabilitate the survivors and families of victims (e.g. employment opportunities in public sector)

3. Documentation and Public Awareness

- Continue evidence-based reporting

4. Institutional Accountability

- Investigate agency involvement
- Ensure transparency in Commission proceedings

