



Discussion Meeting on the Convention against Torture and the Optional Protocol in the Chattogram Division

On 25 October 2025 human rights organisation Odhikar convened a public dialogue on the Convention Against Torture (CAT) and its Optional Protocol (OPCAT), recently ratified by Bangladesh. Held in Chattogram, the event brought together 60 participants—including survivors of torture, law enforcement and prison officials, political representatives, media, academics, civil society actors, legal professionals, and youth. Moderated by Odhikar’s Director, ASM Nasiruddin Elan, the forum aimed to raise awareness of Bangladesh’s obligations under CAT and OPCAT, and to examine the roles of law enforcement, political actors, and civil society in preventing torture and ensuring justice.



Photo: Odhikar’s Human Rights Defenders with the victims of torture and kneecapping

Odhikar’s Advocacy Director, Taskin Fahmina, opened the discussion by introducing key concepts related to torture and emphasising that no justification for torture is acceptable under any circumstances. She outlined the responsibilities of State Parties under OPCAT, including the establishment of a National Preventive Mechanism, and stressed the importance of legal processes to support survivors and hold perpetrators accountable. The forum was marked by deeply moving testimonies from survivors of torture, particularly from Satkania Upazila.



Photo: Participants of the Meeting

Political representatives condemned past abuses and called for accountability. Abu Sufian (BNP) stated that human rights defenders were persecuted under the previous authoritarian regime and expressed hope that his party would support efforts to end torture. Principal Nurul Amin (Jamaat-e-Islami) demanded compensation for victims and moral reform within police forces to improve their treatment of accused individuals. Rafsan Jani (National Citizen Party) described the previous regime as fascist, accusing it of dehumanising opposition activists and colluding with the media to justify torture. Junayed Rahat, a youth injured during the July mass uprising, reported ongoing threats from perpetrators and appealed for protection. Civil society representatives offered critical reflections on systemic issues. Prof. Dr Md Enayet Ullah Patwary (University of Chittagong) called for reform of colonial-era policing laws and warned that legal changes alone would not prevent torture unless political actors ceased using law enforcement for partisan interests. Jahedul Karim Kochi (Chattogram Press Club) urged vigilance to prevent the rise of new authoritarian forces following the upcoming elections. Advocate Zia Habib criticised police complicity in shielding perpetrators, citing efforts to protect former Inspector Pradeep Kumar Das, accused of extrajudicial killings and torture. Institutional representatives acknowledged challenges and called for reform.

Mohammad Faisal Ahmmed (Deputy Police Commissioner, Chattogram Metropolitan Police) emphasised the need for political commitment and public oversight to prevent human rights violations by law enforcement. Mohammad Rakib Sheikh (Deputy Jailor, Chattogram Central

Jail) attributed deaths in custody to inadequate medical services, including a chronic shortage of physicians and psychiatrists, which often leads to preventable deaths and suicides.



Photo: Representatives from law enforcement agencies and the prison authority in Chattogram

The voices of the Survivors:



Photo : Victims of torture and kneecapping

Md. Kamaluddin (46), a survivor of torture and a Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami activist from Satkania, Chattogram said that around 4:00 pm on 3 July 2014, at Dewanhat in Chattogram,

he was forcibly taken into a microbus by a group of five to six plainclothes individuals, led by Kazi Shafique, a police officer from Satkania Police Station. He was blindfolded, his hands tied, and transported to an unknown location. According to Kamal, this incident occurred one week after he refused to comply with a demand for BDT one million made by local Awami League leader Nazrul Islam Manik, working for former Awami League-affiliated MP Abu Reza Muhammad Nezamuddin Nadwi of the Chattogram-15 constituency. From the initial location, Kamal was moved to another site, where he was made to stand with his arms spread apart. His blindfold was removed, and although it was dark, he could see approximately 20 individuals present—including police officers, four to five Awami League members, and several others from the microbus. Among them was Manik, who told him they would not have taken him there if he had paid the money earlier. What followed was a brutal assault: he was kicked and beaten, and someone from the crowd shot him in the leg. When he asked for water, his request was denied. Kamal was subsequently taken to Chattogram Medical College Hospital. After one month and ten days of treatment—during which his leg was amputated—he was produced before a court and implicated in eight fabricated criminal cases, including charges under the Arms Act. Although he was shown as arrested on 5 July, the actual arrest took place on 3 July. After spending 26 months in prison, he was granted bail, only to be re-arrested at the jail gate. He was released from Satkania Police Station only after paying a bribe.

Md Shahidul Islam (43), from Satkania Upazila and a Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami activist, recounted that on 22 July 2014, approximately fourteen individuals in plainclothes arrived in eight minibuses, forced him to wear a burqa and abducted him from the western side of Dolu Bridge in Satkania. He was handcuffed and blindfolded during transport to an unknown location. Shahidul recognised the voices of two officers from Satkania Police Station, Nazmul and Yasin Arafat. He was held in confinement for 19 days. During this period, individuals would arrive every two to three days and subject him to severe physical abuse, including beatings with a hammer. On the evening of 10 August, he was taken to his elder brother's home in Satkania Pourashava, where he had been residing. Approximately 70 police personnel present, including officers Nazmul and Kazi Shafique. There, he was beaten again, along with his brother, sister-in-law, and their children. He was then taken to Satkania Police Station, where the Chattogram District Superintendent of Police (SP) was present. In front of the SP, officers Nazmul and Arafat reportedly asked him whether he would leave Jamaat or die. When he requested water, they forced him to consume an entire family-sized tube of toothpaste. He was then taken to the residence of local MP Abu Reza Muhammad Nezamuddin Nadwi, who pointed at him and said, "Kill the son of the bitch." Shahidul was

taken to Babunagar Ashrayan Prokalpa, where he was forcibly made to lie down. There, police personnel reportedly fired six rounds of shotgun pellets under his right knee and broke his left hand. He lost consciousness. Subsequently, he was admitted to Chattogram Medical College Hospital. During treatment, his right leg was amputated and a metal rod was implanted to stabilise his broken hand. After one month and 21 days of hospitalisation, Shahidul was produced before a court and implicated in 17 fabricated criminal cases. Despite his fragile condition, the court sent him to jail. After being granted bail, he was re-arrested at the jail gate on seven separate occasions and taken to Satkania Police Station, where he was again sent to jail through the court after being implicated in new cases. In total, he was named in 36 criminal cases. He was finally released on bail after 22 months and 18 days in prison. No medical treatment was provided during his incarceration. Of the cases filed against him, eight remain pending. Shahidu is unable to engage in any income-generating activities, he survives with his wife and five-year-old daughter, relying on support from friends and his party, Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami. He also shared that his first wife left him following his injury and imprisonment.

Sajo Akter (48), a female survivor of torture from Satkania Upazila, shared her experience at the forum. On the night of 20 October, 2014 she was shot three times in her left leg while attempting to stop police officers from shooting her brother, Osman Gani, who had been arrested due to his affiliation with the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami party. After losing consciousness from the gunshot wounds, she was admitted to a local hospital by unidentified individuals. She later received treatment at Chattogram Medical College Hospital and the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopedic Rehabilitation (NITOR) in Dhaka. During her three months and ten days of treatment at NITOR, her left leg was amputated. As a result of the police shooting, Sajo has been left physically disabled. She cannot walk properly and continues to suffer pain in her amputated leg. Her monthly medical expenses amount to at least BDT 6,000, which she struggles to afford. She lives in hardship with her unemployed husband and three children.

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