



Training on Documentation and Fact-Finding on Torture

17 to 19 October, 2025

Day 1: 17 October 2025

From 17 to 19 October, a training session on “*Documentation and Fact Finding on Torture*” was held at the Hope Center in Savar, Dhaka. The programme was jointly organized by Odhikar and OMCT to equip participants with foundational knowledge and practical skills necessary for effective documentation and fact-finding in cases of torture and to raise awareness about the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT).



Photo 1: Participants with Resource Persons

General Concepts of Human Rights and Human Rights Conventions

The first day commenced with two sessions facilitated by Md. Sazzad Hussain, Member of the *Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances*. In the opening session on **General Concepts of Human Rights and Human Rights Conventions**, Md. Sazzad Hussain explained the core characteristics that define human rights, including universality, indivisibility, and the principle that all individuals are rights-holders while states are duty-bearers. He outlined the major categories of rights: civil and political rights, economic, social, and cultural rights, and collective rights such as the right to development and a healthy environment. Md. Sazzad Hussain introduced participants to foundational human rights documents, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and explained the nine core international human rights treaties adopted by the United Nations.



Photo 2: Sazzad Hussain discussed on General Concepts of Human Rights and Human Rights Conventions

Sazzad Hussain was discussing on General Concepts of Human Rights and Human Rights Conventions

He also provided an overview of the UN human rights mechanisms and discussed regional human rights systems that reinforce universal norms across different continents.

Rights, Duties, and Obligations of States

The second session addressed the **Rights, Duties, and Obligations of States** under international law. Md. Hussain discussed key state rights such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence, before turning to the corresponding duties states bear in the international community. These include respecting sovereignty, peacefully settling disputes, refraining from the use of force, cooperating for peace and security, and protecting the environment. He mentioned the three core obligations of states in human rights law: the obligation to respect (not interfere with rights), the obligation to protect (prevent violations by third parties), and the obligation to fulfill (take positive measures to realize rights). Md. Hussain concluded by highlighting states' collective responsibilities in promoting international peace, solidarity, and accountability before international courts and human rights bodies.

OPCAT and Bangladesh Law

The next session was delivered by **Saira Rahman Khan**, Secretary of Odhikar and Professor of Law at BRAC University, who addressed **CAT, OPCAT, and Bangladesh Law**. She began by explaining the Convention against Torture (CAT), which Bangladesh acceded to in 1998, emphasizing its definition of torture and noting that pain arising from lawful sanctions is excluded. She outlined the state obligations under CAT and mentioned that exceptional circumstances such as war, political instability, or public emergency can not justify torture. She highlighted that despite joining CAT in 1998, Bangladesh only enacted the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act in 2013, and that a 2003 Supreme Court directive ensuring safeguards during interrogation, such as the presence of a lawyer and video recording, has never been implemented. She explained that torture remains a common police practice, often used to extract confessions, for extortion, or as a means of discrimination against the poor and political opponents.



Photo 3: Dr. Saira Rahman Khan speaks on the Convention Against Torture (CAT), the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT), and their relevance to Bangladesh's legal framework

Detailing the 2013 Act, Professor Khan noted that orders from superiors or national emergencies cannot excuse torture and described the complaint process through the Sessions Court, including medical examination within 24 hours. Turning to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT), she explained that it requires states to establish a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) – an independent body with access to detention centers, detainee data, and authority to make recommendations for reform.

Professor Khan concluded by highlighting that Bangladesh acceded to OPCAT on 17 July 2025, marking its second major international human rights commitment after signing the instrument of

accession to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance on 29 August 2024. She noted that Bangladesh is now obligated to form an NPM and is under greater international scrutiny regarding torture prevention, expressing hope that future governments will fulfill these commitments sincerely.

After that session, a documentary titled “**Kashmir’s Torture Trail**” was screened, marking the conclusion of **Day 1** of the programme.

Day 2: 18 October, 2025



Photo 4: Participants with resource persons

Documentation and Fact-Finding for Combating Torture

The day began with a session by **Taskin Fahmina**, Director of Campaign and Advocacy at Odhikar, on human rights documentation and fact-finding. She explained that documentation



Photo 5: Taskin Fahmina discusses human rights documentation and fact-finding

systematically records, analyzes, and preserves violations to ensure justice, accountability, and a historical record. She added that sources include primary (victim interviews, observations, complaints, photos/videos) and secondary (media reports, court judgments, organizational publications). Ms. Taskin Fahmina outlined the process, defining objectives, collecting data, preparing tools, training teams, and storing information electronically, emphasizing the ‘five Ws and one H’ for accuracy. Fact-finding was described as uncovering verified truth, supporting

victims, legal processes, and advocacy. Ms. Taskin Fahmina concluded her session by explaining the sensitive and confidential interview techniques, especially for survivors of torture, sexual violence, and children.

Experience as a Fact-Finder

The second session was conducted by **ASM Nasiruddin Elan**, Director, Administration of Odhikar. He shared his personal experiences as a human rights defender and fact-finder. ASM Nasiruddin Elan described the challenges he faced in documenting cases of enforced disappearances and torture, including his own arrest for publishing a fact-finding report, illustrating the risks associated with human rights work in Bangladesh. He reflected on Odhikar's struggles during that period, underscoring the courage, accuracy, and persistence required in fact-finding missions. In this session, **Abdul Kaium** was with ASM Nasiruddin Elan. He explained practical methods for gathering authentic information, verifying data sources such as through Google archives, and cross-checking digital records. Mr. Elan encouraged participants to continue engaging in documentation of new disappearance cases and to cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances to ensure accountability and transparency.

Role Play on Fact-Finding and Documentation

Following the morning sessions, participants took part in a role-play exercise, divided into two teams, to demonstrate the process of fact-finding and documentation. Each group simulated interviews with victims, witnesses, and investigators to practice documentation techniques.



Photo 6: Role Play on Fact-Finding and Documentation

Advocacy and Networking

In the afternoon, Taskin Fahmina led a comprehensive session on **Advocacy and Networking** for human rights protection. She defined advocacy as a long-term effort to influence policies, laws, and public attitudes in favor of human rights, while networking was described as the process of building cooperation among individuals and organizations to amplify collective impact. Ms. Taskin Fahmina outlined the key objectives of advocacy, including protecting individuals from torture and discrimination, raising public awareness, promoting legal and policy reforms, and ensuring justice for victims. She identified several advocacy tools and methods, such as Workshops, conferences, policy monitoring, lobby meetings and seminars, media advocacy, etc. Ms. Taskin Fahmina concluded by emphasizing that effective advocacy requires persistence, evidence-based communication, and collaboration through human rights networks that share resources.

Group work and presentation

The day concluded with group work, where four teams delivered presentations summarizing their learning.



Photo 7: Group work and presentation

Day 3: 19 October, 2025

Experiences of Human Rights Defenders in Handling Torture Cases

The day began with a deeply engaging session titled “Experience of Human Rights Defenders in Handling Torture Cases” where local-level human rights defenders associated with Odhikar, Abdul Kaium, Shahin Aziz Moinuddin, Osman Zahangir, and Nuruzzaman, shared their firsthand experiences of factfinding work on enforced disappearances and torture from districts including Mymensingh, Barishal, Rajshahi, Chittagong and Khulna.



Photo 8: Experience of Human Rights Defenders in Handling Torture Cases

Participant TED Talks

Following the experience-sharing session, participants took part in an interactive TED Talk-style activity, where each participant delivered a short speech on **Torture**.



Photo 9: TED Talk on the Issue of Torture

Closing Ceremony

The training programme concluded with a closing ceremony, led by ASM Nasiruddin Elan and Taskin Fahmina. Both speakers expressed gratitude to the participants for their active engagement and urged participants to apply the knowledge and skills acquired over the three days in their professional and personal capacities, to strengthen human rights documentation and advocacy efforts across Bangladesh.

The ceremony concluded with the distribution of certificates among participants, marking the successful completion of the training programme.



Photo 10: certificate distribution and closing