

29 August 2026

Press Release



On the 29th of August, Odhikar observed the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances also noting that it has been two years since Bangladesh acceded to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons From Enforced Disappearances. The programme took place at the Bishwo Shahitto Kendro in Dhaka, and was attended by victims, victim families, members of parliament, human rights defenders, diplomats, members of civil society and journalists.



The event was moderated by Odhikar's Director of Programmes, Sazzad Hossain, and opened by Director of Advocacy Taskin Fahmina who presented a paper on enforced disappearances.

The first victim of enforced disappearance since the BNP government came into power, was Miraj Sheikh from Bagerhat. He was disappeared on the 10th of April 2026 and his whereabouts are, to this day, unknown. His wife, mother, child and sister were present at the meeting. His wife went into the details of his abduction at the hands of the Coast Guard, making a direct plea to the Prime Minister for information and his safe return. Additionally,

she spoke on the hardships she and her family have faced since his abduction, including financial issues and societal stigma around enforced disappearance family members as well as pressure from law enforcement.



Odhikar Intern and the daughter of an enforced disappearance victim, Anisha Islam Insha, recounted her father's 2019 abduction from Mirpur, detailing the severe societal stigma, financial hardship and psychological trauma suffered by her family. She condemned the state's ongoing treatment of enforced disappearance as a political tool rather than a grave human rights violation.

Jamaat-E-Islami MP and enforced disappearance survivor Mir Ahmad Bin Quasem labelled the draft Prevention and Remedy of Enforced Disappearance Act, 2026 as a "garbage law" that infringes on constitutionally protected free speech and eliminates legal recourse. National Citizen Party MP Abdullah Al Amin warned that interagency investigations are inherently flawed because enforced disappearances rely on interagency cooperation. A M Mahbub Uddin Khokon, President of the Supreme Court Bar Association and Bangladesh Nationalist Party MP, criticised the draft Prevention and Remedy of Enforced Disappearance Bill, 2026, specifically targeting the proposed five-year prison sentence for unproven complaints and criticized interagency investigations. He cited the disappearance of Ilias Ali where security forces representatives denied involvement in open court without any subsequent progress in the investigation.

Victims and family members provided moving testimonies of ongoing state abuse and institutional failure, including Amena Akter Bristy, who shared the financial ruin and isolation forced upon her family following the disappearances of her husband and brother-in-

law 15 years ago. She expressed disappointment over the lack of assistance from the current BNP-led government.

Brigadier General Hasinur Rahman highlighted the structural absurdity of expecting low-ranking officers to investigate senior officials. Former ambassador M. Maroof Zaman of United for the Victims of Enforced Disappearance (UVED), asserted that to meet international standards, the NHRC must possess an autonomous investigative body with unrestricted access to detention sites and records, along with transparent appointments that include a reserved Commissioner seat for a survivor or family member.

Abdul Qaiyum from Voice of Enforced Disappearance Persons (VOED), stated that widespread fear is persistent against victims' and their families.

OHCHR officer Zahid Hossain further highlighted critical inconsistencies between Bangladesh's national legal framework and its international treaty commitments. He emphasised the need for Bangladesh's government to submit the report on enforced disappearances over the last 2 years since accession to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED), before the deadline next month.

Odhikar strongly calls on the government to amend the draft Prevention and Remedy of Enforced Disappearance Act, 2026. According to Odhikar, the current form of the draft may create serious obstacles to justice, including restrictions on the freedom of expression of the victims of enforced disappearance and their families. Odhikar reiterates its solidarity with the victims of enforced disappearance and their families.