



9 October 2026

**“The Proposed Cyber Security Act will Violate Human Rights”  
Odhikar’s Statement on its 32 Years of Defending Human Rights**

On 10 October 2026, Odhikar marks 32 years since its establishment. On this day in 1994, Odhikar, an organisation of human rights defenders, was established through the efforts of several individuals who had participated in the struggle against the illegal rule of military dictator Lieutenant General Hussain Muhammad Ershad.

On the occasion of its 32nd anniversary, Odhikar remembers the victims of human rights violations around the world and expresses its solidarity with human rights defenders who are committed to the struggle against authoritarian regimes and to establishing the right to self-determination around the world. Odhikar expresses its sincere gratitude to all human rights defenders, international organisations, local networks, supporters, and well-wishers who have stood by it through out these 32 years.

Since its establishment, Odhikar has continued its struggle to build a democratic state based on equality, human dignity, and social justice. It has also been monitoring the country’s human rights situation with the aim of establishing and protecting the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of the people.

Over the years, under various governments, Odhikar has faced harassment and persecution for protesting human rights violations, while human rights defenders associated with Odhikar across the country have been subjected to various forms of attacks at different times. In particular, during the 15-and-a-half-year authoritarian rule of Sheikh Hasina, the harassment and persecution of Odhikar reached an extreme level.

Odhikar’s anniversary is being observed at a time when, due to the 2024 July mass uprising in Bangladesh, an elected government has come to power through free elections. However, within just a few months, many of the actions of this BNP-led government have come into conflict with the spirit of the July mass uprising, and incidents of human rights violations are inevitably taking place. Soon after assuming power, the BNP-led government refused to implement the verdict of the referendum, while important human rights-related Ordinances promulgated during the interim government’s tenure, lapsed because they were not passed by Parliament.

Among Odhikar’s current concerns are the Enforced Disappearance Prevention and Redress Act and the National Human Rights Commission Act. It is deeply concerning that these laws have removed the NHRC’s authority to investigate human rights violations committed by law-enforcement agencies. Miraj Sheikh, who was subjected to enforced disappearance in April 2026, has still not been found. There have also been initiatives to enact a repressive Cyber Security Act, which criminalises freedom of expression by reintroducing offences relating to defamation, humiliation, bullying and “spreading rumours”, potentially making legitimate criticism, satire, journalism and political speech subject to criminal sanctions. Criticizing the current government, has also led to an arrest under the Anti-Terrorism Act. Odhikar urges the government to amend these laws as soon as possible.



In addition, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) has been renamed and a new force, the Special Response Battalion (SRB), has been formed along similar lines. Odhikar is very concerned that this SRB may also violate human rights like its predecessor.

No country can make progress without human rights and good governance. On the occasion of its 32nd anniversary, Odhikar pledges to continue its uncompromising struggle to establish the democratic values, justice, and human rights of the people of Bangladesh.

The Odhikar Team