



August 1, 2017

Human Rights Monitoring Report

July 1 - 31, 2017

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Odhikar believes that democracy is not merely a process of electing a ruler; it is the result of the peoples' struggle for inalienable rights, which become the fundamental premise to constitute the State. Therefore, the individual freedoms and democratic aspirations of the citizens - and consequently, peoples' collective rights and responsibilities - must be the foundational principles of the State.

The democratic legitimacy of the State is directly related to its willingness, commitment and capacity to ensure human rights, dignity and integrity of citizens. If the state does not ensure full participation in the decision making process at all levels - from the lowest level of administration to the highest level - it cannot be called a 'democratic' state. Citizens realise their rights and responsibilities through participation and decision making processes. The awareness about the rights of others and collective benefits and responsibilities, can be ensured and implemented through this process as well. The Parliament, Judiciary and Executive cannot and should not, have any power to abrogate fundamental civil and political rights

through any means, as such rights are inviolable and are the foundational principles of the State.

Odhikar, being an organisation of human rights defenders in Bangladesh, has been struggling to ensure internationally recognised civil and political rights of citizens. Odhikar stands against all forms of human rights violations; and participates and remains directly involved in the human rights movement in Bangladesh.

Odhikar does not believe that the human rights movement merely endeavours to protect the 'individual' from violations perpetrated by the state; rather, it believes that the movement to establish the rights and dignity of every individual is part of the struggle to constitute Bangladesh as a democratic state. As part of its mission, Odhikar monitors the human rights situation in order to promote and protect civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of Bangladeshi citizens and to report on violations and defend the victims. In line with this campaign, Odhikar prepares and releases human rights status reports every month. The Organisation has released this human rights monitoring report of July 2017, despite facing persecution and continuous harassment and threats to its existence since August 10, 2013.

Statistics: January-July 2017*										
Type of Human Rights Violation		January	February	March	April	May	June	July	Total	
Extrajudicial killings	Crossfire	15	17	19	8	8	12	17	96	
	Shot to death	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
	Tortured to death	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	5	
	Beaten to death	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	
	Total	16	17	20	10	9	13	18	103	
Enforced Disappearances**		6	1	21	2	20	7	3	60	
Death in Jail		1	5	4	2	4	6	7	29	
Human rights violations by Indian BSF	Bangladeshis Killed	2	2	0	2	0	4	2	12	
	Bangladeshis Injured	3	9	3	1	3	5	4	28	
	Bangladeshis Abducted	5	1	1	4	1	2	9	23	
	Total	10	12	4	7	4	11	15	63	
Attack on journalists	Killed	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
	Injured	2	3	0	2	2	1	2	12	
	Assaulted	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	
	Threatened	0	4	3	0	0	2	0	9	
	Total	2	9	3	3	2	3	3	25	
Political violence	Killed	5	7	6	12	11	6	3	50	
	Injured	217	325	428	595	575	325	308	2773	
	Total	222	332	434	607	586	331	311	2823	
Dowry related violence against women		17	14	20	26	22	29	24	152	
Rape		44	51	69	54	83	79	60	440	
Sexual harassment /Stalking of women		14	22	35	23	14	17	22	147	
Acid violence		3	7	4	5	5	6	4	34	
Public lynching		1	3	8	5	2	2	3	24	
Situation of workers	Ready-made Garments workers	Killed	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	13
		Injured	0	20	21	70	15	50	70	246
		Terminated	1034	1733	43	0	0	0	0	2810
	Workers in other sectors	Killed	3	2	11	19	4	9	1	49
		Injured	7	8	16	22	0	0	2	55
Arrest under Information and Communication Technology Act***		0	3	1	4	1	4	6	19	

*Odhikar's documentation

** Odhikar only documents allegation of enforced disappearance where the family members or witnesses claim that the victim was taken away by people in law enforcement uniform or by those who said they were from law enforcement agencies.

*** The cases of arrests under the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act that are documented are those where the presentations/statements in question are considered critical against high officials of the government and their families.

Extrajudicial killings

1. According to documentation gathered by Odhikar, 18 people were reported as being extra judicially killed in July 2017.
2. The victim-families continue to allege that members of law enforcement agencies arrested their relatives and later staged the drama of 'crossfire' or 'gunfight' after shooting them dead. The government constantly denies incidents of extrajudicial killing, despite repeated demands from the victim families and human rights defenders to bring the perpetrators to justice. As a result, the law enforcement agencies are enjoying impunity in this regard. It is alleged and reported that many incidents of such killing occurred through instructions from the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB)-police and leaders of the ruling party. The ruling party Awami League Member of Parliament (MP) from Dhaka-19 constituency, Dr. Enamur Rahman on July 19, 2017, during an interview with the daily Manabzamin, said that once there were many criminals and hooligans in Savar but they have now become silent. He said that five men had been killed in crossfire and 14 others are on the list. After making the list a few criminals held his legs and begged for their lives.¹ Savar Upazila unit Awami League president Hasina Doula said in this regard that the statement of MP Dr. Enamur Rahman was correct and that the law enforcement agencies had done this with the consent of the MP.²
3. On July 13, 2017 two men were shot and injured by Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) at the Dhakeshwari temple area in Lalbagh, Dhaka. RAB claimed that both were muggers. As per statement of RAB, a few muggers were gathered in front of the Dhakeshwari temple. Receiving the information, a team of RAB-10 chased them. As a result a gunfight took place between RAB and the alleged 'muggers'. RAB admitted two injured persons to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and one them, Alamgir (40) succumbed to his injuries the same night.³ Alamgir's father Khadem Chakladar said that Alamgir used to drive a private car in Dhaka. His wife and two children lived in the village. Alamgir's sister Nilupha also claimed that her brother was not a mugger.⁴
4. On July 18, 2017 Lima Akhter, the wife of deceased Ismail Hossain, who was killed in Savar in a 'gunfight' with police, filed a complaint with the Chief Judicial Magistrate of Dhaka against 13 persons, including Birulia Police Outpost in-charge SI Tariqul Islam, Constables Babul, Mohsin and Shahim, for allegedly killing her husband. The court after taking cognizance of the case asked Savar Model Police Station to investigate this matter. Lima Akhter mentioned in the FIR that on June 8, 2017, SI Tariqul Islam and others came to

¹ The daily Manabzamin, 19 July 2017; www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=74741&cat=2/

² The daily Jugantor, 20 July 2017; www.jugantor.com/second-edition/2017/07/20/141456/

³ The daily Prothom Alo, 16 July 2017; <http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1253546>

⁴ The daily Naya Diganta, 16 July 2017; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/236093>

their house and took her husband, After a few hours of this incident, she came to know that her husband was shot dead.⁵

Type of death

'Crossfire/encounters/gunfights'

5. 17 persons were reported killed by 'crossfire/encounters/gunfights'. Among them 10 were allegedly killed by police and seven by RAB.

'Tortured to death'

6. One person was allegedly tortured to death by police.

The identity of the deceased:

7. Of the 18 persons who were killed extra-judicially, 16 were alleged criminals and the identities of two persons could not be determined.

Death in jail

8. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in July 2017, a reported seven persons died in prison due to 'illness'.
9. Deprivation of medical treatment in jail is a violation of human rights. It is alleged that due to lack of proper treatment facilities and negligence by prison authorities, many prisoners become ill and some die. Prisoners sometimes became ill due to the effects of torture in police remand, which cause their death later when they are sent to jail custody.

Allegations of torture, degrading treatment and lack of accountability of law enforcement agencies

10. Allegations against the police, of acts of torture, harassment and extortion have been reported. Members of law enforcement agencies are enjoying impunity due to the government practice of using such agencies against its political opponents, critics and dissenters, as a way to suppress them. After a prolonged campaign against torture, on October 24, 2013 the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013 was passed in the Parliament. However, there is no change in the actual situation, due to lack of implementation of this law.
11. An allegation of torture on Shah Jalal (31) was made against Khalishpur police. On July 18, 2017 at around 6:30 pm, the Khalishpur police arrested Shah Jalal from the street near Boalkhali of Khulna city when he went out in the evening to buy milk powder for his baby. He was detained in a cell of the

⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 20 July 2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1258376/

Khalishpur Police Station. The police demanded one hundred and fifty thousand Taka (USD 1860⁶) bribe, which Shah Jalal's family could not afford. At around 11:30 pm, the police allegedly took him out of the police station. They gouged out both of Shah Jalal's eyes by the side of Khulna Bishsho Road. After midnight the police sent him to the Khulna Medical College Hospital while he was seriously bleeding from his eyes. Meanwhile police claimed that Shah Jalal was caught by local inhabitants when he was snatching a woman's bag. After that he was lynched by the public and angry people gouged his eyes out. Later police rescued him. On the other hand Shah Jalal's wife Rahela Begum said that on July 18, 2017 in the evening, her husband went out of the house to buy milk powder for their 10-month old baby.⁷ She was informed that police arrested him, suspecting him to be a mugger and took him to Khalishpur Police Station. At around 9:00 pm, Rahela went to the police station with food for Shah Jalal. But police did not allow her see him. Later Rahela served food to Shah Jalal in the police cell after paying one hundred Taka bribe. At around 11:30 pm, the police allegedly took him out of the police station. At that time Shah Jalal's eyes were normal. In next morning she came to know at the police station that her husband was admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital.⁸ Shah Jalal's father Zakir Hossain said that his son told him that the police took him to the side of Khulna Bishsho Road at midnight in a pickup van. There, the police tied his hands and legs and put a screw driver into both of his eyes. On July 19, Shah Jalal was referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where a doctor said that his eyes were gouged out with a metallic weapon.⁹

12. On July 19, 2017 a girl named Nahida died after an operation due to stomach pain at Jononi Clinic in Nachole Upazila under Chapainabaganj District. In the same night, Nahida's father Nasiruddin filed a case against Mahfuzur Rahman, who conducted the operation for not being a doctor. Police arrested Mahfuzur Rahman and took him into remand. On July 26, police informed that Mahfuzur Rahman committed suicide by hanging in the toilet of the police station cell. However, Mahfuzur Rahman's family alleged that he died due to torture in police custody for not giving one hundred thousand taka bribes to police. Mahfuzur Rahman's brothers Mohammad Julhas and Mohammad Shahin Alam said that after taking his brother into remand Nachole police demanded one hundred thousand taka from their family. They could give 20 thousand taka to police. At around 10:00 am on July 26, they saw Mahfuzur in good health in the lock-up. At around 2:00 pm, police called up and informed them that Mahfuzur committed suicide. The

⁶ 1 USD = BDT 80.64

⁷ Information sent by local human rights defender associated with Odhikar from Khulna.

⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 20 July 2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1258706/

⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 21/07/2017; <http://epaper.prothom-alo.com/view/dhaka/2017-07-21/5>

deceased's family claimed that the entire incident was staged by police and that police tortured Mahfuzur to death and hung his body in the toilet.¹⁰

Enforced disappearances

13. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in July 2017, three persons were allegedly disappeared. Of them, one was later freed alive and the whereabouts of two persons remain unknown.¹¹
14. Many people have disappeared after being picked up by men claiming to be members of law enforcement agencies. The families of the disappeared and witnesses claim that members of law enforcement agencies, or men claiming to be from such agencies, arrest and take away the victims and then they are no longer found. In some cases, law enforcement agencies deny the arrest; but days later, the arrested persons are released in an unknown place or handed over to a police station and produce in Court, or the bodies of the disappeared persons are later recovered. Similarly, as per news reports and statements from families, many political leaders have disappeared, the whereabouts of whom, are still unknown. Furthermore, many victim-families are being regularly harassed by the government, ruling party activists and law enforcement agencies. For example, BNP leader and former Parliamentarian Ilias Ali's wife Tahsina Rushdir Luna along with her son and daughter were travelling to London on July 9 to attend her son's Bachelor Degree Convocation programme. They were stopped by immigration police at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka. Tahsina Rushdir Luna said in this regard that she was waiting with a boarding pass to get on the flight. At that time the airport authority wanted to see her documents and she was kept waiting for about one and a half hours. At one stage, an officer approached her and said that she was not allowed to travel to London. When the reason was asked, the officer said that she was not given permission to travel due to security reasons.¹² Tahsina Rushdir Luna filed a writ petition to the High Court Division of the Supreme Court. On July 10, a High Court Division Bench comprising of Justice Tariq-ul-Hakim and Justice Mohammad Faruque ordered the relevant authority not to bar Tahsina Rushdir Luna and her children from travelling. As a result, on July 12, they could travel to London.¹³
15. The high-ups of the government have been repeatedly denying the incidents of enforced disappearance and claiming that the victims are voluntarily hidden. Although denials of such incidents are made by the government and

¹⁰ The daily Jugantor, 29/07/2017; www.jugantor.com/news/2017/07/29/143676/

¹¹ Odhikar only documents allegation of enforced disappearance where the family members or witnesses claim that the victim was taken away by people in law enforcement uniform or by those who said they were from law enforcement agencies.

¹² The daily Prothom Alo, 10 July 2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1245161

¹³ The Bangladesh Pratidin, 13 July 2017; <http://www.bd-pratidin.com/last-page/2017/07/13/247167>

security forces, it has been proved in an inquiry report of the Judicial Magistrate, that enforced disappearances existed and continue to occur. A Senior Judicial Magistrate of Satkhira, Habibullah Mahmud, submitted an inquiry report to the High Court Division of the Supreme Court on July 4, 2017 that found the involvement of three higher police officials in the arrest of homeopathic physician Sheikh Mokhlesur Rahman Johnny and his subsequent disappearance¹⁴ According to the probe report, Satkhira Superintendent of Police Mohammad Altaf Hossain and former Satkhira Sadar Police Station officer-in-charge Emdadul Huq Sheikh, former Sub-Inspector Himel Hossain, were involved with the arrest and disappearance. It was mentioned in the probe report that the OC Emdadul Huq Sheikh, SI Himel Hossain, were directly involved with this incident. The Director General of the National Security Intelligence (NSI) did not send the call list of the suspected police officers when asked. The report says that in recent times Magistrates' courts received several complaints about such arrests and denials by the police.¹⁵ On July 16, 2017 the High Court Division Bench after hearing the judicial inquiry report, ordered the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to find out Mokhlesur Rahman Johnny and asked the Inspector General of Police (IGP) to take necessary measures in this regard.¹⁶

Public lynching continues

16. In July 2017, three persons were reportedly killed due to public lynching.
17. Due to a weak criminal justice system, lack of respect for law, distrust of the police and instability in the country, the tendency to resort to public lynching is increasing. People are losing their confidence and faith in the police and judicial system. As a result, incidents of killings by mob violence continue.

Political criminalization and violence continues

18. In July 2017, according to information gathered by Odhikar, three persons were killed and 308 persons were injured in political violence. Furthermore, 24 incidents of internal violence in the Awami League and four in the BNP¹⁷ were also recorded during this period. Three persons were killed and 183

¹⁴ On August 4, 2016 at around 9:30 pm, Sub-Inspector Himel of Satkhira Sadar Police Station arrested Sheikh Mokhlesur Rahman and took him to the Police Station from the Rabony Cinema Hall intersection of the town where he had gone to buy medicine for his father. Later on August 5, 6 and 7, 2016 the family members of Mokhlesur Rahman provided food to him at the police station custody cell and also talked to him. They also spoke to the then Officer-in-Charge of the Police Station Emdadul Huq and SI Himel, regarding Mokhlesur Rahman. The police informed them that Johnny had involvement with 'Islamic extremists' and demanded a huge amount of money for his release. On August 8, 2016 the family did not find Johnny at the Police Station and the police refused to inform them of his whereabouts.

¹⁵ The Daily New Age, 09 July 2017; <http://www.newagebd.net/article/19321/>

¹⁶ The daily Manabzamin, 17 July 2017; www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=74385&cat=10/

¹⁷ BNP: Bangladesh Nationalist Party

were injured in internal conflicts of the Awami League while 28 were injured in conflicts within the BNP.

19. Significant changes were made in the politics of Bangladesh after the controversial election¹⁸ on January 5, 2014. Incidents of political violence and criminalisation were perpetrated mainly by the ruling party leaders and activists due to the running of the country in undemocratic and autocratic way. As a result, suppression on the opposition political parties, particularly leaders and activists of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami continued. Across the country, the ruling party and its leaders and activists belonging to the Chhatra League¹⁹ and Jubo League²⁰ are involved in various criminal activities and violence such as over powering tender bids and land grabbing, attack on police, violence in educational institutions and violence against women, etc. They are attacking leaders and activists of the opposition political parties and even the ordinary people are not spared. They are involved in incidents of internal conflict which were linked to vested interest; and mainly occurred using political influence. During violent public political altercations, these groups were seen carrying and using lethal weapons. In most cases, the perpetrators (the ruling party leaders-activists) could not be brought to justice. Some examples are given below:
20. On July 6, 2017 police arrested a Jubo League activist named Asaduzzaman, who was an accused in an attempted murder case in Mymensingh. Asaduzzaman was put in a police van and was being taken to the police outpost in town. On the way to the police outpost, 10-15 Jubo League activists, led by Mymensingh Metropolitan unit Jubo League member Moniruzzaman, stopped the police van when it reached the College Road intersection of the town and snatched Asaduzzaman away. Later a group of 20-25 Jubo League activists led by Moniruzzaman attacked the number 2 police outpost situated at Town Hall intersection and vandalized it. A few policemen were injured during this incident.²¹
21. On July 13, 2017 an altercation took place between supporters of Sylhet District unit Chhatra League Joint Secretary Sanjay Chowdhury and supporters of MC College unit Chhatra League leader Titu Chowdhury over establishing supremacy in MC College in Sylhet. During the incident both groups vandalized a students' dormitory. It is to be mentioned that on July 8, 2012, 42 rooms belonging to four blocks of the MC College students'

¹⁸ Most of the political parties registered with the Election Commission, including the then main opposition BNP led 18-Party Alliance boycotted the 10th Parliamentary elections held on January 5, 2014 as their demands for elections under an interim caretaker government were ignored. As a result, 153 MP's of the ruling Awami League and its alliance out of 300 constituencies were declared elected uncontested even before the polling commenced. The people of Bangladesh lost their voting rights through this election.

¹⁹ Student wing of Awami League.

²⁰ Youth wing of Awami League.

²¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 08 July 2017; <http://epaper.prothom-alo.com/view/dhaka/2017-07-08/1>

residential hall were torched during a clash between Chhatra League and Chhatra Shibir²². After that the residential hall was re-built. Although Chhatra League activists were found responsible for such incident during an inquiry conducted by the college authority, however, the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) submitted a final report²³ to the court after investigation.²⁴



On July 8, 2012 Sylhet MC College's student residential hall was set on fire. Photo: Prothom Alo, 14 July 2017

22. On July 17, 2017 an altercation took place between supporters of Sylhet District unit Chhatra League leader Pavel Mahmud and supporters of Upazila unit Swechchasebak League²⁵ President Abul Kashem over establishing supremacy at Bianibazar Government College (situated in the constituency of Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid) in Syhet. A Chhatra League activist named Khaled Ahmed Litu was shot dead in the class room of the college in this connection.²⁶



Deceased Khaled Ahmed. Photo: Prothom Alo, 18 July 2017

²² Student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami

²³ A final report is the report submitted by police after investigation when they cannot confirm or find evidence of an offence or a particular suspect.

²⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 14 July 2017; <http://epaper.prothom-alo.com/view/dhaka/2017-07-14/2>

²⁵ Voluntary wing of Awami League

²⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 18 July 2017; <http://epaper.prothom-alo.com/view/dhaka/2017-07-18/1>

Election Commission and future elections

23. The electoral system in Bangladesh has entirely collapsed and people are deprived from their right to vote through the controversial and farcical 10th Parliamentary elections held on January 5, 2014. In the past, elections were generally conducted in a festive manner and people used to willingly participate in the elections. But there is no scope for the people to vote freely in the current existing political atmosphere. Ensuring transparent, credible, free and fair elections is the Constitutional responsibility of the Election Commission (EC). However, the previous Election Commissions have totally failed to deliver, and tried to claim that elections held under them were transparent, free and fair – as an attempt to cover their failures. After the tenure of the controversial Election Commission headed by Rakib Uddin Ahmed in February 2017, people and political parties hoped that a fair and strong new Election Commission would be formed. Although the President of Bangladesh appointed a new Election Commission through a search committee in February 2017, the elections²⁷ held under this new Commission have repeated the failures of its predecessor. Furthermore, various activities of the Election Commission Secretariat have already created controversy.
24. On July 9, 2017 the Election Commission Secretary Mohammad Abdullah had nominated the transfer order of 33 election officials, including five regional officers and 18 district election officers, after taking consent of the Chief Election Commissioner K M Nurul Huda.²⁸ There were allegations that junior officers have been positioned in senior posts during reshuffle in the field level. Furthermore, many officials were transferred to better places through political influence and recommendations.²⁹ It was learnt that Election Commissioners were not informed about this transfer. On July 12, four Election Commissioners held an unofficial meeting and Election Commissioner Mahabub Talukder submitted a note to the Election Commission Secretary in this regard.³⁰
25. The Election Commission is getting prepared for the 11th Parliamentary elections and an election roadmap was declared on July 16, 2017. In this roadmap, seven doable matters have been identified. Such as the review of the legal framework and its reform; taking suggestions from relevant stakeholders to simplify the electoral process; re-demarcation of the constituency; preparation and supply of accurate voters list; making polling stations following the rules and procedures; registration of new political parties and evaluation of the registered political parties; and capacity-

²⁷ Elections in 14 Upazila Parishads (including a by-election) and in four Municipalities were held on March 6, 2017; and Comilla City Corporation Elections were held on March 30 under the new Election Commission.

²⁸ The daily Naya Diganta, 14 July 2017; <http://m.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/235555>

²⁹ The Bangladesh Pratidin, 17 July 2017; <http://www.bd-pratidin.com/last-page/2017/07/17/248243>

³⁰ The daily Naya Diganta, 14 July 2017; <http://m.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/235555>

building activities of relevant stakeholders to conduct fair elections. Dialogue with political parties is also incorporated in the roadmap as part of election preparation. Chief Election Commissioner K M Nurul Huda while declaring the election roadmap said that the EC did not have any role at the moment to prevent police barriers in political party programmes. Creating a level playing field for the political parties is not the mandate of the Election Commission.³¹

26. It is not clearly mentioned in the roadmap about inclusive elections with the participation of all political parties. The Election Commission did not even clarify how it would create a level-playing field for all. However, leaders and activists of the opposition parties are suppressed in various ways by law enforcement agencies under the current political context. They are also deprived of holding peaceful meetings and assemblies. Meanwhile, the ruling party is organising meetings and assemblies without any hindrance, campaigning for their election candidates and also attacking meetings and assemblies of the opposition political parties with members of law enforcement agencies. Moreover, the Election Commission kept the decision of using Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) pending, despite the fact that most of the political parties are not in favour of using EVM.

Hindrance to freedom of assembly

27. Due to lack of an accountable governance system in the country, the government started suppression of the opposition and alternative or dissenting voices, by severely curtailing the right to freedom of expression, and preventing peaceful meetings and assemblies. As a result, the political atmosphere of the country has turned repressive. Conducting peaceful meetings, assemblies and rallies are the democratic and political rights of everyone, as guaranteed in Article 37 of the Constitution. Barring and attacking peaceful meetings, assemblies and rallies, means blocking the path of democracy and violation of constitutional and human rights of the citizen.
28. On July 11, 2017 in the afternoon, Narayanganj District unit National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Port organised a meeting at Chashara Shaheed Minar³² in Narayanganj city, as a part of a countrywide protest for the cancellation of the Rampal power plant. At the end of the meeting, a protest rally came out of the Shaheed Minar and crossed the main road of the city and ended at the railway gate number 2. At that time, some youth with sharp weapons and sticks attacked the National Committee's Narayanganj unit members including Arif Bulbul, Poet Ahmed Babul, Shahin Mahmud, Amal Akash and some cultural activists while they

³¹ The daily Jugantor, 17 July 2017; www.jugantor.com/first-page/2017/07/17/140275/

³² The Shaheed Minar (Martyr Monument) is a national monument built in memory of the mother language martyrs, who were killed on 21 February 1952 during the Bangla Language Movement in 1952.

were waiting inside the Shaheed Minar due to rain. The attackers stabbed Arif Bulbul's head with sharp weapons and beat others with sticks.³³

29. There were allegations that police intervened an informal discussion meeting of the leaders of different political parties at the house of Jatiya Somajtantrik Dal (JSD) President ASM Abdur Rab at Uttara, Dhaka. On July 13, 2017 at around 7:00 pm, Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Convener of Nagorik Oikko; Qader Siddiqui, President of Krishok Shromik Janata League; Khalekuzzaman Bhuiyan, General Secretary of Bangladesher Somajtantrik Dal; Bazlur Rashid Feroz, leader of Bangladesher Somajtantrik Dal; AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, former President of Bangladesh and President of Bikolpo Dhara; Mahi B Chowdhury, leader of Bikolpo Dhara; SM Akram and Subrata Chowdhury, leaders of Gono Forum; Saiful Haque, General Secretary of Biplobi Workers Party; Bonhishikha Jameli, leader of Biplobi Workers Party; and Abdul Malek Ratan, General Secretary of Jatiya Somajtantrik Dal attended the meeting. Badiul Alam Majumdar, Secretary of Sushasoner Jonno Nagorik (SUJON) was also present. At that time, a few policemen told them that the meeting could not be done without permission. Then Abdur Rab said that it was a social and family programme. At one stage, police took position outside the house. Mahmudur Rahman Manna said that police threatened them not to hold the meeting.³⁴
30. On July 20, 2017 students of seven government colleges under Dhaka University gathered in front of the National Museum at Shahbagh with a 7-point list of demands, including declaration of exam dates. They tried to blockade the Shahbagh intersection. Police baton charged the protestors and threw tear gas shells. Several students were injured during the attack. Among them, two were critical. Police arrested 18 students and later six were freed.³⁵ Siddiqur Rahman, whose eyes were seriously wounded by a tear gas shell, was admitted to the National Institute of Ophthalmic and Eye-science. The incident was witnessed all over the country due to a video footage showing a police man approached the students and throwing tear gas shells at them from a very close range. Doctors informed that Siddiqur had very little chance of regaining his sight.³⁶ On July 21, 2017 police filed a case with Shahbagh Police Station against 1200 unknown students accusing them for attempted murder.³⁷

³³ Information sent by human rights defender associated with odhikar from Narayanganj

³⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 14 July 2017; <http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1251316/>

³⁵ The daily Jugantor, 21 July 2017; www.jugantor.com/first-page/2017/07/21/141515/

³⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 23 July 2017; <http://epaper.prothom-alo.com/view/dhaka/2017-07-23/1>

³⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 22 July 2017; <http://www.bd-pratidin.com/first-page/2017/07/22/249646>



Police obstructed the protest rally of the students of seven government colleges in front of the national museum at Shahbagh. During this time, police threw tear gas shells at the students. Photo: Prothom Alo, 21 July 2017



Siddiqur Rahman at the National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital, Dhaka. He was injured during a students demonstration at Shahbagh. Photo: Prothom Alo, 23 July 2017

31. On July 22, 2017 at least 25 BNP leaders and activists were injured when the ruling party supported Chhatra League and Jubo League attacked a programme of BNP while collecting party members in Hathazari, Chittagong. Furthermore, on the same day, police stopped a meeting organized by BNP at Nolkhola Bondor under Doshmina Upazila in Patuakhali District.³⁸

Hindrance to freedom of expression and the media

32. Interference on the media and freedom of expression, by the government and the ruling party members has become a regular phenomenon. The present government is severely suppressing people who criticise the government and those who have alternative beliefs. Odhikar is observing with grave concern

³⁸ The daily Naya Diganta, 23/07/2017; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/238004>

that citizens are being accused of different charges under various sections of criminal laws, including the Information and Communication Technology Act, for their comments or opinions.

33. On April 7, 2017 Bangladesher Samyabadi Dal (ML) organised a memorial meeting of the late freedom fighters at the Shaheed Minar square under Charghat Police Station in Rajshahi. During the meeting, local Awami League supported Chhatra League and Jubo League leaders-activists attacked and stopped the meeting over allegations that the meeting was criticising the government. Three months after the incident, on July 6, 2017 a case was filed against the Jatoyo Mukti Council's Central Secretary Dr. Faizul Hakim; President of Pabna city committee, freedom fighter Mojibor Rahman; President of Ishwardi thana committee, Abul Kalam Azad; and Convener of Charghat thana committee and Central leader of Bangladesher Samyabadi Dal (ML) Dr. Abdul Hakim under section 153, 153(a), 505, 505(a) of the Penal Code, 1860. The allegations were brought by Mohammad Raihanul Haque Rana, a Chhatra League activist. The case is numbered 08/81, dated 06/07/2017.³⁹
34. On July 6, 2017 Omar Sharif, a teacher of the Department of Business Administration of International Islamic University located at Sitakunda in Chittagong, was suspended over the allegations of using invective language against former President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (father of the current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina) on Facebook. On July 8, 2017 a case was filed against him with Sitakunda Police Station under Section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act.⁴⁰

Freedom of the media

35. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in July 2017, two journalists were injured, one was assaulted and four were sued while they were performing their professional duties.
36. Accurate and impartial reporting and proper journalism are hindered as the government puts pressure on the media. As a result, in most cases, journalists are forced to practice self-censorship. In spite of that, journalists are being attacked by criminals backed by the ruling party, while gathering information or in relation to publishing reports. When journalists publish anything critical against the government or write any comment on social media, especially on Facebook and if it goes against the government, then the government is becoming hostile and taking steps to harass them. This has become a matter of violation of freedom of thought and conscience. In the National Online Media Policy, the notorious section 57 of the Information and Communication

³⁹ Information collected by Odhikar

⁴⁰ The daily Manabzamin, 8 July 2017; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=72947&cat=9/>

Technology Act can be applied to prosecute the media. In the last part of the National Online Policy, which was approved by the Cabinet on June 19, 2017, several other laws, including the ICT Act have been mentioned and it says that no information or data can be disseminated, published and broadcasted by violating these laws and without the regulations of the laws.⁴¹

Attack on Journalists

37. On July 10, 2017 Awami League supported Chhatra League leader of Rajshahi University, Saiful Islam Bijoy was going to the University on a bus named 'Desh Travels'. At that time, an altercation took place between the bus conductor and Bijoy as the former did not allow Bijoy to smoke on the bus. At 10:30 am, when the bus reached the main gate of Rajshahi University, about 10-12 leaders and activists of Rajshahi University unit Chhatra League, including the Vice-president Ahmed Sajib, Organising Secretary Abid Al Ahsan Laban, and Secretary of Legal Affairs Saiful Islam Bijay stopped the bus and vandalized it. Hearing the news, Arafat Rahman, the University correspondent of the Daily Star and a second year student of the Mass Communication and Journalism Department, went there and took photographs of the incident. Chhatra League leaders-activists attacked and beat Arafat. At that time, some policemen were present there but did little. Arafat was admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.⁴²

Repressive Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (amended 2009 and 2013) remains in force

38. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in July 2017, six persons were arrested under the Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (amended 2009 and 2013).

39. The imposition of section 57⁴³ of the Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (Amended 2009 and 2013) has increased alarmingly. This Act is being used by the government as a weapon against human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers and public opinion. Odhikar has been campaigning for a long time to repeal this repressive Act. Filing cases and imprisoning people for writing comments against the high-level persons in

⁴¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 23 July 2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1261751/

⁴² Report sent by human rights defender associated with odhikar from Rajshahi and the daily Jugantor, 11 July 2017; www.jugantor.com/news/2017/07/11/138568/

⁴³ Section 57 of the ICT Act states: (1) If any person deliberately publishes or transmits or causes to be published or transmitted in the website or in electronic form any material which is fake and obscene or its effect is such as to tend to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances, to read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it, or causes to deteriorate or creates possibility to deteriorate law and order, prejudice the image of the State or person or causes to hurt or may hurt religious belief or instigate against any person or organization, then this activity of his will be regarded as an offence.

(2) Whoever commits offence under sub-section (1) of this section he shall be punishable for a term of minimum of seven years' imprisonment and a maximum of 14 years or a fine of Taka 10 million or both.

the government using social media is becoming very common. As a result, many people who are writing in social media, including Facebook, are forced to maintain self censorship. Currently, people including journalists and teachers are being sued under Section 57 of this Act and many of them have been arrested. The government recently said that sections 54, 55, 56 and 57 of the ICT Act will be repealed. But it has been learnt that these four sections will be included in the Digital Security Act, which has recently been drafted. The Information Minister, Hasanul Huq Inu spoke in favor of this repressive law in the Parliament but human rights defenders in Bangladesh have become very vocal for repealing the law that obstructs freedom of speech and expression. The Information Minister said on July 12, 2017 that it was not true that many journalists are being harassed under the Information and Communication Technology Act. Compared to the number of journalists in the country, very few journalists had been arrested under Section 57 of this Act.” Hasanul Huq Inu further said that this law is not against human rights.⁴⁴

40. Anwar Hossain and Mohammad Farhad Hossain filed two cases under Section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act with the Chandpur Judicial Court, against Mohammad Shahjahan, correspondent of the daily Prothom Alo and Freedom fighter Mozammel Haider Chowdhury under Hajiganj Upazila in Chandpur District. In the FIR, they said that a report titled “Freedom fighters selection process postponed in Hajiganj” published in daily Prothom Alo on May 16, 2017 said that due to the negligence of (Awami League) MP of Chandpur- 5 constituency, Sector Commander Major (Retd) Rafiqul Islam Bir Uttam, the freedom fighters selection process could not be completed. As a result, local freedom fighters, conscious citizens and the ordinary people were shocked and offended. The plaintiff of the case, Farhad Hossain, said that the MP had been insulted by the report. Mohammad Ali Shahjahan, the correspondent of the daily Prothom Alo said that freedom fighter Mozammel Haider Chowdhury filed a writ petition in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court on the selection process of freedom fighters and that the report had been written by citing him.⁴⁵
41. On July 7, 2017 a case was filed against senior journalist Ajmal Haque of the daily Shokaler Khobor, under section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act, with Mothbaria Police Station under Pirojpur District, alleging that he shared news on Facebook about Independent MP Rustam Ali Farazi.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 13 July 2017; <http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1250231>

⁴⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 11 July 2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1246321/

⁴⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 12 July 2017; <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/journalist-helal-facing-case-under-ict-act-gets-hc-bail-1431952>

42. Abul Mansur Ahmed, Professor of Faculty of Mass Communication and Journalism of Dhaka University, filed a case against Fahmidul Haque, Professor of the same department, with Shahbagh Police Station under the Information and Communication Technology Act. Both sides were blaming each other for delays in the publication of the results of the Masters exams of the Department. Fahmidul Haque took part in a conversation with students through a Facebook 'closed group'. In the FIR, Mansur Ahmed has alleged that Fahmidul Haque made disrespectful statements against him in the Facebook group. It is to be mentioned that Fahmidul Haque is one of the petitioners who filed a writ petition to repeal section 57 of the ICT Act.⁴⁷

Situation of Workers' rights

43. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in July 2017, 13 ready-made garment workers were killed and 50 were injured due to a boiler explosion. Furthermore, 20 ready-made garment workers were injured when they were escaping a factory fire. Apart from this, one worker was killed and two workers were injured due to gas cylinder explosion in a food product factory.

Situation of Workers in Readymade garment industries

44. Garment manufacturing factories are a very large source of revenue for Bangladesh and the factory workers are one of the main contributing factors to this success. However, due to extreme irresponsibility and serious negligence, the workers have repeatedly been facing disaster. Odhikar believes that it is very important to investigate the incident of the Rana Plaza disaster properly and bring the perpetrators to justice. The current situation of impunity may lead to the cause of new disasters.

45. More than one hundred workers were killed in a fierce fire incident in two garment factories named Smart Garments in Ashulia in January 2013 and Tazreen Fashions in November 2012 and thousands of workers died in the collapse of Rana Plaza in April 2014.

46. Victim families have expressed frustration over the lack of justice because of long pending cases. In April 2005, 64 people died when Spectrum Sweater Factory collapsed in Savar, and the matter has been pending in court for nine years.

47. The government has formed industrial police to control and suppress workers' movement. These police forces are accused of working for the interest of garment factory owners, but no effective measures have been taken by the government to protect the workers. As a result, the list of injured and casualties is getting longer. Odhikar demands that the government bring the

⁴⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 14 July 2017; <http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1251566/>

people responsible for these incidents, before justice and to publish the correct list of the injured and missing people. Odhikar also demands compensation to and rehabilitation of injured workers and the families of those killed.

13 people killed in a boiler explosion in a garment factory

48. On July 3, 2017 at around 7:00 pm, a boiler explosion occurred at Multi Fabs Limited at Nayapara area of Kashimpur in Gazipur. Many bodies were found inside the collapsed building when firemen started rescue operations in the devastated building. Among the dead, was an engineer named Amirul Islam. In this incident, 13 people were killed and at least 50 people were injured. One is missing. The deceased persons were - Mahbubur Rahman (23), son of Shahar Ali from Namajkhali Village under Sonatola Police Station in Bogra; Abdus Salam (55), son of late Moksed Ahmed from Bamonsundar Village under Mirshorai Police Station in Chittagong; Gias Uddin (30), son of Bachchu Chhoiyal from Modna Village in Chandpur Sadar; Al Amin (30), son of Ayub Ali Sarder from Gobra Village under Harishpur Police Station in Magura; Biplob Chandra Shil (38), son of Manidanath from Borat Bazar area under Goalanda Police Station in Rajbari; Mujibur Rahman (36), son of Sagar Ali Mir from Kunda Village under Nasirnagar Police Station in Brahmanbaria; Solaiman Mia (30) from a locality under Palashbari Police Station in Gaibandha. The names of two other deceased were Mansur (30) and Arshad Hossain (36), but their background was unknown. The identity of the other three could not be found.⁴⁸ Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) of Chakraborty Police Outpost, Abdur Rashid filed a case with Joydebpur Police Station in this regard. In this case, 8-10 more unknown people and deceased Abdus Salam, Ershad Hossain and Mansurul Haque, have been accused for the explosion. It has been mentioned in the FIR that despite knowing the risks, the accused persons started up the boiler without the permission of the authority. The labour organisations alleged that negligence of the garment factory authority and the mismanagement of the monitoring of government institutions caused this horrific explosion.⁴⁹ After the accident, the district administration and the fire service formed an inquiry committee. On July 13, Deputy Commissioner of Gazipur, Muhammad Humayun Kabir published an inquiry report in his office. The inquiry committee has identified seven reasons for the accident, five mechanical and two administrative. In the report, the mechanical defect of a safety bulb has been identified as the main cause of the accident. Problems in physical plugs, metallic degradation, problems in pressure and electrical signals, damaged pressure gadget, blocked delivery line, faulty lever, high pressure due to the shaking of the

⁴⁸ Report of human rights defender associated with Odhikar from Gazipur

⁴⁹ The daily New Age, 6 July 2017; <http://www.newagebd.net/article/19076/case-against-3-dead-workers-10-others>

boiler, failure to release excess pressure and lack of proper supervision on the operators by the boiler maintenance authority were also reported. Furthermore, the boiler registration had expired.⁵⁰



The remains of the building of Multi Fabs Limited after the boiler explosion. Photo: Prothom Alo, 7 July 2017

Aggressive policy of India towards Bangladesh

49. No changes are seen with regard to the aggressive policies⁵¹ towards Bangladesh by the Indian government. India is depriving Bangladesh from right of getting water in the dry season and the country is violating international law by creating artificial floods in Bangladesh by opening all the sluice gates of the Farakka and Gajalodoba Dams during the monsoon season.⁵² Furthermore, the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) is killing and abducting Bangladeshi citizens indiscriminately along the border areas and

⁵⁰ The daily Jugantor, 14 July 2017; www.jugantor.com/city/2017/07/14/139615/

⁵¹ Before conducting the controversial and farcical January 5, 2014 National election, almost all political parties of Bangladesh decided to boycott it. At that time, the then Indian Foreign Secretary Sujata Singh visited Bangladesh and succeeded to convince Jatiya Party to join the election. Members of the Jatiya Party are now in the government (Ministers of the current government) and at the same time are the opposition in Parliament. It is clear that India had played a major role in destroying democratic system in Bangladesh for keeping Indian political, economic and military supremacy on Bangladesh and gave unconditional support to the controversial election in January 5, 2014. India is taking transit facility through Bangladesh at almost no cost (the shipment fee for carrying goods is Tk 192.22 per ton) under an amended Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT) signed between India and Bangladesh on June 6, 2015; and is also taking advantage of other business and trade facilities. Of them, a decision was made that Bangladesh will buy electricity worth two thousand billion taka from India – an expensive rate. Bangladesh will have to pay one hundred and ninety thousand nine hundred seventy five taka in a 25-year term. Furthermore, the environmentally hazardous initiative to build the Rampal Power Plant with an Indian company, near the Sundarbans and a decision to implement an inter-river connection project, will lead Bangladesh to terrible human disaster and environmental catastrophe. Moreover, the Indian government decided to put up a fence along no-man's land, which will be within 150 yards from the zero line along the border.

⁵² BBC, September 1, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/bengali/news-37244367>

are entering Bangladesh and taking Bangladeshi citizens away; which is a clear violation of international law and human rights.

Severe deterioration of the flood situation in Bangladesh due to opening the dams in India

50. Due to severe flooding, India opened all the gates of the Gajaldoba Dam. Floodwater is coming into Bangladesh, which is reeling from the excessive rainfall as well from India. The water levels of Teesta River rose and the flood situation worsened in the northern region of Bangladesh. Teesta water has flooded 15 thousand homes of 25 villages in the vast areas of Purba Chhatnai, Khogakhoribari, Tepakhoribari, Khalisha Chapani, Goyabari under Dimla Upazila; and Gol Munda, Dawabari, Shaulmari and Koimari union under Joldhaka Upazila in Nilphamari District. Furthermore, small islands and villages surrounded by rivers of Hatibandha and Kaliganj Upazilas under Lalmonirhat District have been flooded. It has been estimated that the floods will severely degrade the entire northern region when the water moves from the upstream. It is to be mentioned that, in 1998, India built the Gajaldoba Dam 60 kilometers upstream of Teesta Barrage. India opens all the 54 gates in this dam to clear floodwater. This brings floods to Bangladesh. Again, in the dry season, 2,918 cusec water entered through the Teesta-Mahananda canal from the upstream of Gajaldoba Dam. With this water irrigation is provided on two hundred 22 thousand hectares of land of Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, Koch Bihar and Malda districts of India.⁵³ At that time Bangladesh does not get water. Meanwhile, due to the increase of floods in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh of India, with overwhelming floods, water from more than 100 river-branches flow into the Brahmaputra, and this water is rapidly coming down through the Brahmaputra River. The opening of sluice gates of the Ijuli Nipco Company's Hydro Electric dam in Arunachal Pradesh has added thousands of cusecs of extra water to the Brahmaputra River. This water is coming down towards Bangladesh. This contributes to the floods in different parts of northern Bangladesh.⁵⁴

⁵³ The daily Jugantor, 11 July 2017; www.jugantor.com/first-page/2017/07/11/138537/

⁵⁴ The daily Naya Diganta, 15 July 2017; www.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/235805



Several villages of Dimla are under water due to flood coming from Teesta River. Photo: Jugantor, 11 July 2017

Human rights violations of Bangladeshi citizens by Indian BSF in border areas

51. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in July 2017, two Bangladeshis were gunned down by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF). Four persons also sustained bullet injuries by the BSF. Nine Bangladeshis were also abducted by the BSF personnel.
52. On July 5, 2017 at night 4-5 cattle traders went near Doi Khawa border at Gotamari Union under Hatibandha Upazila in Lalmonirhat District. When they reached sub pillar 11 of main pillar 905, a patrol team of Indian BSF from Paglimari camp of Koch Bihar District chased them and detained one of the cattle traders. Members of Indian BSF tortured him and shot him dead.⁵⁵
53. On July 2, 2017 at night a Bangladeshi cattle trader named Saiful Islam (35) was shot dead and another named Abdul Hai (40) was injured due to Indian BSF's firing at Dewanganj border under Jamalpur District. Later BSF took the body of Saiful Islam away.⁵⁶

Violence against women

54. Incidents of violence against women continue, including incidents of rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment and acid violence. Women are becoming victims of such violence due to non-implementation of laws, a prevailing culture of impunity of government, relevant authority and police administration and also lack of awareness in society.

Rape

55. In July 2017, Odhikar recorded a total number of 60 females who were raped. Among them, 16 were women and 44 were girls. Of the women, six were victims of gang rape. Out of the 44 girls, six were victims of gang rape and

⁵⁵ The daily Nayadiganta, 7 July 2017; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/233583>

⁵⁶ The daily Jugantor, 4 July 2017; www.jugantor.com/news/2017/07/04/136551/

two were killed after being raped. Six women and girls were also victims of attempted rape. Some examples are as follows:

56. On July 15, 2017 a newly married man named Selim went to his maternal grandfather's house at Ahammadabad Betal Village of Banaripara Upazila under Barisal District. At midnight, president of Upazila unit Chhatra League, Sumon Mollah and 4-5 other persons came to the house and wanted to check his marriage documents. After that they took the couple to Ahammadabad Betal Club. Where Sumon Mollah detained Selim and raped his wife. After getting the information, the local Chairman informed the matter to police and Sub Inspector (SI) Ruhul Amin rescued them and took them to the police station. Police arrested Sumon Mollah after filing a case with Banaripara Police Station in this regard.⁵⁷
57. On July 17, 2017 Convener of Bogra Shramik League, Tufan Sarkar kidnapped a student from her house and raped her. Later, he used a few ruling party activists and a woman Councilor to pressurise the girl not to disclose the matter. On July 28, 2017 they beat the girl and her mother after taking them away from their house and shaved their heads. Police arrested Tufan Sarkar and his wife Asha Khatun, Ali Azam Dipu, Atikur Rahman Rupom, Marjia Hasan Rumki, Ruma Khatun, Runu, Munna and Jitu in this regard.⁵⁸



Bogra District unit Shramik League convener Tufan Sarkar along his associates Rupam, Ali Azam and Atiqur Rahman arrested in allegation of rape. Photo: Prothom Alo, 30 July 2017

Dowry-related violence

58. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in July 2017, a total of 24 women were subjected to dowry violence. Of these women, it has been alleged that 10 were killed, 13 were physically abused and one committed suicide due to dowry demands. One example is as follows:

⁵⁷ The daily Jugantor, 17 July 2017; www.jugantor.com/last-page/2017/07/17/140296/

⁵⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 30 July 2017; www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/1270381/

59. On July 1, 2017 a housewife named Khushi Khatun was beaten to death by her husband Rajib Hossain due to demands for fifty thousand Taka as dowry.⁵⁹ It is to be mentioned here that according to the Dowry Prohibition Act 1980, giving and taking dowry is a punishable crime but this degenerate culture is prevalent in society and non implementation of the law is widely visible.

Stalking

60. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in July 2017, a total of 22 females were victims of stalking and violence. Of them, one committed suicide as she could not bear the harassment from the stalker, two were injured, two were assaulted, one was abducted and 16 were victims of stalking. During this time, two men were killed; eight men and three women were injured by the stalkers for protesting such incidents. One incident is as follows:

61. On July 3, 2017 Jewel Bepari, Joint Convener of Chhatra League of Ichhapur Union under Ramganj Upazila in Laxmipur District, kidnapped a girl at gunpoint. She was a student of class VIII of Khajuria High School, from Sondara Village. Jewel Bepari had been harassing the student for a long time. Jewel Bepari and his associates started threatening the family when the student's mother filed a case with the police station. Fearing the threats, the student's family left the village.⁶⁰

Acid violence

62. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in July 2017, three women and one girl became victims of acid violence. An example is as follows:

63. On July 9, 2017 two brothers named Abdur Razzak and Harun along with their friend Barek came with a motor bike and threw acid on Morjina Begum, a house wife who resided in Bhuapur Upazila under Tangail District. This was done over a land dispute and when Morjina along with her sister-in-law was going to the Upazila town from their house. Police could not arrest any accused person.⁶¹

Hindrance to human rights activities of Odhikar

64. The present government continues to harass Odhikar for being vocal against human rights violations and for campaigning to stop this. The government, after assuming power in 2009, started the harassment on Odhikar for its reports on the human rights situation of the country. On August 10, 2013 at

⁵⁹ The daily Manabzamin, 13 July 2017; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=72244&cat=9/>

⁶⁰ The daily Jugantor, 5 July 2017; www.jugantor.com/our-chittagong/2017/07/05/137037/

⁶¹ The daily Jugantor, 11 July 2017; www.jugantor.com/news/2017/07/11/138569/

night, Odhikar's Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan was picked up by persons claiming to be from the Detective Branch (DB) of Police, for publishing a fact finding report on extrajudicial killings during a rally organised by the religious group Hefazate Islam on May 5-6, 2013. Adilur and Odhikar's Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan, were later charged under section 57(1) of the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (Amended 2009). They were detained in prison and later, Adilur and Elan were released on bail after spending 62 and 25 days in prison respectively. Odhikar regularly faces harassment by different organs of the government. Adilur Rahman Khan, staff members of Odhikar and the office are under surveillance by intelligence agencies.

65. Human rights defenders who are working fearlessly to gather information and carry out their profession impartially are harassed and victimised. For instance, in March 2016, a journalist and human rights defender associated with Odhikar, Mohammad Afzal Hossain, was shot and severely wounded by police while he was observing the irregularities of a local government election in Bhola⁶² and in February 2017, another human rights defender associated with Odhikar, journalist Abdul Hakim Shimul, was shot dead by Shahjampur Municipality Mayor and Awami League leader Halimul Huq Miru.⁶³
66. Furthermore, the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB) has, for more than three years, barred the release of all project related funds of Odhikar and withheld renewal of its registration in order to stop its human rights activities. The Organisation is still operating due to the volunteer services of grassroots level human rights defenders associated with Odhikar and its members and staff and their commitment to human rights activism.

⁶² For details, please see Odhikar's monthly report of March 2016. <http://odhikar.org/human-rights-monitoring-report-march-2016/>

⁶³ For details, please see Odhikar's monthly report of February 2017. <http://odhikar.org/human-rights-monitoring-report-february-2017/>

Recommendations

1. The Government must bring to effective justice, the members of the law enforcement agencies, involved in incidents of extrajudicial killings and torture. The Government must accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture; and effectively implement the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013, and the High Court and Appellate Division directives contained in the matter of BLAST and Others Vs. Bangladesh and Others. The Government should follow the recommendations made by the UN Human Rights Committee in its 119th session to end torture. The law enforcement agencies must also follow international guidelines “Basic Principles on the use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials” and the “UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials”.
2. The Government has to investigate and explain all incidents of enforced disappearance and post-disappearance killings, allegedly perpetrated by law enforcement agencies. The Government must take effective measures to recover the victims of enforced disappearance and return them to their families. The Government must bring the members of the security and law enforcement agencies who are involved, before the law. The Government should follow the recommendations made by the UN Human Rights Committee in its 119th session to criminalise enforced disappearance in the national laws. The government must sign and ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2006.
3. An initiative needs to be taken immediately to conduct free, fair and inclusive national elections under a neutral interim government or even under the supervision of the United Nations. The government must take effective legal action in order to stop criminalisation of the ruling party activists.
4. The Government must refrain from repressive, undemocratic and unconstitutional activities. Rights to freedoms of assembly and association of the opposition political parties, people who have alternative beliefs and dissenters must be ensured, as per the Constitution and international norms.
5. Freedoms of speech, expression and the media must be ensured and protected. The Government must bring the perpetrators of attacks on human rights defenders and journalists to justice through proper and impartial investigation. The ban on the publication of the daily Amar Desh and on the broadcasting of Diganta TV, Islamic TV and Channel One must be removed. All repressive laws, including the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (amendment 2009, 2013) and the Special Powers Act, 1974 must be repealed.

6. The ready-made garment factories and other factories need to be brought under synchronized security programmes and adequate wages must be given to workers; and all factories should be made with adequate infrastructural and other facilities. Trade union rights should be guaranteed at all the ready-made garment factories and workers rights should be protected as per ILO Conventions.
7. India must give Bangladesh the right to water and must stop all activities that are creating artificial flooding in Bangladesh immediately. The construction of the Rampal coal-based power plant must be stopped to prevent ecological and human disaster in Bangladesh.
8. The Government should protest strongly against human rights violations on Bangladeshi citizens by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and initiatives taken to investigate and make the Indian Government accountable. The victim-families must also be compensated. The Government must also ensure the safety and security of the Bangladeshi citizens residing along the border areas.
9. The Government must ensure the effective implementation of laws to stop violence against women and children and the offenders must be effectively punished under prevalent laws. The Government should also execute mass awareness programmes in the print and electronic media, in order to eliminate violence against women.
10. The case filed against Odhikar's Secretary and its Director under the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (Amended in 2009) must be withdrawn. All repressive measures and harassment against human rights defenders associated with Odhikar should be ceased. The government must release the funds of Odhikar to enable it to continue its human rights activities.

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Notes:

1. Odhikar seeks to uphold the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the people.
2. Odhikar documents and records violations of human rights and receives information from its network of human rights defenders and monitors media reports.
3. Odhikar conducts detailed fact-finding investigations into some of the most significant violations, with assistance from trained local human rights defenders.
4. Odhikar is consistent in its human rights reporting and is committed to remain so.