

Human Rights Monitoring Report

1-30 April 2018



Odhikar has, since 1994, been monitoring the human rights situation in Bangladesh 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. 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. Odhikar has always been consistent in creating mass awareness of human rights issues using several means, including reporting violations perpetrated by the State and advocacy and campaign to ensure internationally recognised civil and political rights of citizens. The Organisation unconditionally stands by the victims of oppression and maintains no prejudice with regard to political leanings or ideological orientation, race, religion or sex. In line with this campaign, Odhikar prepares and releases human rights status reports every month. The Organisation has prepared and disseminated this human rights monitoring report of April 2018, despite facing persecution and continuous harassment and threats to its existence since 2013. Although many incidents of human rights violations occur every month, only a few significant incidents have been highlighted in this report. Information used in the report was gathered by human rights defenders associated with Odhikar and also collected from the national dailies.

Statistics of Human Rights Violations: April 2018

Statistics: January-April 2018*							
Type of Human Rights Violation		January	February	March	April	Total	
Extrajudicial killings	Crossfire	18	6	17	28	69	
	Shot to death	1	1	0	0	2	
	Torture to death	0	0	1	1	2	
	Total	19	7	18	29	73	
Enforced Disappearances		6	1	5	2	14	
Death in Jail		6	5	9	7	27	
Human rights violations by Indian BSF	Bangladeshis Killed	2	1	0	0	3	
	Bangladeshis Injured	3	5	1	0	9	
	Bangladeshis Abducted	2	0	0	3	5	
	Total	7	6	1	3	17	
Attack on journalists	Injured	12	6	1	2	21	
	Assaulted	1	3	3	0	7	
	Threatened	2	1	3	0	6	
	Total	15	10	7	2	34	
Political violence	Killed	9	5	9	11	34	
	Injured	619	424	335	426	1804	
Dowry related violence against women		12	16	15	21	64	
Rape		46	78	66	61	251	
Sexual harassment /Stalking of females		15	14	25	23	77	
Acid violence		2	1	3	4	10	
Public lynching		5	6	8	1	20	
Situation of workers	RMG workers	Killed	0	0	1	0	1
		Injured	20	0	40	0	60
	Workers in other sectors	Killed	9	11	7	8	35
		Injured	8	4	0	3	15
Arrest under Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (amended 2009 and 2013)**		2	1	0	0	3	

*Odhikar's documentation

** 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.

Introduction

1. The situation of human rights for the month of April 2018 has been analyzed through this report, where freedom of expression, democracy and deprivation from right to life of citizens are highlighted. The country's human rights situation was found to be declining from the beginning of the 2018 due to the repressive attitude and policies of the government. In order to analyse the human rights situation of April 2018 it is important to review the human rights situation of previous periods. The Awami League led Alliance government remains in power since 2009, thus the human rights violations of 2018 are the continuation of a trend that commenced in 2009. The Awami League led Grand Alliance had committed to establish justice, rule of law, transparency and human rights; and to stop extrajudicial killings, through its election manifesto during the ninth Parliamentary Elections in 2008. However, after winning the elections, the Awami League deviated from its commitment in quite a blatant manner. The Awami League re-assumed power for a second term through controversial Parliamentary Elections¹ on 5 January 2014 and the government has created a state of fear in the country by suppressing people and violating civil and political rights through repressive laws, policies and practices. The government has systematically politicized various important government and independent institutions and made them subservient to the government and the ruling party since 2009. As a result, a culture of tyranny is prevailing and aggravated the perpetration of human rights violations.

¹ The Caretaker Government system was incorporated in the Constitution through the 13th amendment to the Constitution, as a result of people's movement led by the then Opposition Awami League and its alliance between 1994 and 1996 due to the continuation of enmity, mistrust and violence between the two main political parties (BNP and Awami League). Later this system received a huge public support. However, in 2011 the caretaker government system were removed unilaterally by the Awami League government through the 15th amendment to the Constitution, without any referendum and ignoring the protests from various sectors; and a provision was made that elections were now to be held under the incumbent government. As a result, the farcical 10th Parliamentary elections were held on January 5, 2014 despite the boycotting of this election by a large majority of political parties. The election was not only farcical (for example, 153 MP's were declared elected uncontested even before the polling commenced), it was a hotbed for election-related crimes such as ballot-box stuffing, capturing of polling stations, intimidation of voters and violence.

Election, Political Violence and Criminalisation

2. The 11th Parliamentary Election is expected to be held in December 2018. In 2011, the Awami League government unilaterally removed the popular caretaker government (CTG) system through the 15th Amendment to the Constitution; and thus the provision of holding general elections under the CTG was removed. As a result, extremely controversial 10th parliamentary elections were held on 5 January 2014. Since then almost all local government elections and Parliamentary by-elections were marred with widespread irregularities, violence and rigging. After the tenure of the controversial Election Commission headed by Rakib Uddin Ahmed ended, a new Election Commission headed by KM Nurul Huda² was formed. This new Commission has also become controversial, because most of the elections held under it show that it has repeated the failures of its predecessor; and its inaction against electoral violence and election related offences was obvious. In the past people used to willingly participate in the elections held under an interim caretaker system³. But the present government has not only taken away the right to franchise since from 2014 but has also created a culture of occupation and almost destroyed the local government system through expelling elected people's representatives and ordering local elections to be held under political party symbols. The government suspended people's representatives belonging to the (out of Parliament opposition) Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami, accusing them in different cases; and also stopped them from participating in meetings and assemblies, by using law enforcement agencies against them.⁴

² The President of Bangladesh appointed the new commission after the tenure of controversial Election Commission headed by Rakib Uddin Ahmed in February 2017.

³ Elections held under the caretaker government system from 1996 to 2008.

⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 7 April 2017

On 12 April 2018, police stopped the car of Khandkar Abu Ashfak, Chairman of Nababganj Upazila under Dhaka District and the General Secretary of Dhaka District unit BNP, while he was going to the Upazila office to attend a monthly meeting. Police threatened to arrest him and prevented him from attending the meeting.⁵

3. On 25 April 2018 allegations of various election related irregularities including 'capturing' polling centres and casting fake votes were found against supporters of the ruling Awami League nominated Chairman candidate, Enamul Huq in Mohishashura Union Parishad under Narshingdi District. During the poll, outsiders entered polling centres and stamped ballots with the electoral symbol of the ruling party candidate, including centres at Damer Bhaola Government Primary School, Chanderkandi Government Primary School, Bothuadi Government Primary School and Kotalir Chor Bilpar Baitul Koran Madrasa. Furthermore, criminals fired blank shots outside Mohishashura Kasimul Ulum Madrasa polling centre, creating panic among voters. As a result, voters left the polling centre. After 11:00 am, all the polling centres became almost empty. Candidates from the opposition parties reported such irregularities to members of law enforcement agencies, but there are allegations that they did not assist them. Meanwhile BNP nominated candidate Tofazzal Hossain, Islami Shasantantra Andolon nominated candidate Mufti Kausar Ahmed and Independent candidate Alamgir Bhuiyan (the present Chairman) boycotted the election.⁶
4. Criminalisation of politics and criminal activities of leaders and activists of Awami League have been increasing ever since the Awami League led alliance assumed power in 2009 and such practice continues in April 2018. Many allegations of various criminal acts, including extortion, forcefully acquiring tender bids, land grabbing, abductions, violence at educational institutions, attacks on students protesting for various demands at educational institutions,

⁵ The daily Jugantor, 13 April 2018; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/second-edition/37962/>

⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 26 April 2018;

attacks on ordinary citizens, acts of violence against women, sexual harassment etc, were reported against the ruling Awami League's affiliated organisations – mainly Chhatra League⁷ and Jubo League⁸. Furthermore, they are also involved in incidents of internal conflict which are linked to matters of vested interest and are openly using lethal weapons against each other. In most cases, they get away with impunity. In some cases the accused were arrested but were usually acquitted by the court⁹.

• On 7 April 2018, a clash took place between the Organising Secretary of Madaripur District unit Chhatra League Sajib Sardar and his supporter and Chhatra League leader Manjur Ali and his supporters, over establishing supremacy in Madaripur. As a result, at least 40 persons, including some female students of Nazimuddin College and eight policemen were injured. Among the injured, six were shot.¹⁰ • On 22 April 2018, a violent altercation occurred between supporters of Awami League MP AKM Rahmatullah and supporters of Beraid Union Parishad Chairman and General Secretary of Badda Thana unit Awami League, Jahangir Alam over establishing supremacy in the Beraid area under Badda Police Station in Dhaka. Jahangir Alam's younger brother Kamruzzaman Dukhu was shot dead during the clash.¹¹

5. In April 2018, according to information gathered by Odhikar, 11 persons were killed and 426 persons were injured in political violence. Furthermore, 26 incidents of internal violence in the Awami League and one in the BNP¹² were also recorded during this period. Eight persons were killed and 327 were injured in internal conflicts within the Awami League while 12 were injured in conflicts within the BNP.

⁷ Student wing of Awami League, the ruling party.

⁸ Youth wing of Awami League.

⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 26 January 2018

¹⁰ The daily Naya Diganta, 8 April 2018; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/308521>

¹¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 23 April 2018;

¹² BNP: Bangladesh Nationalist Party.

Hindrance to freedom of assembly

6. Like previous months, right to freedom of assembly was violated in April 2018. Police and many leaders and activists of Awami League barred peaceful programmes organised by BNP across the country in protest of the allegedly politically motivated sentence against Khaleda Zia.¹³ They also attacked the rally and arrested BNP leaders and activists and stopped their programmes. Furthermore, the random arrest of opposition party leaders and activists on the pretext of holding 'secret meetings' and for 'vandalism' is becoming very common.

On 10 April 2018 police arrested six BNP leaders, including General Secretary of Satkhira District unit BNP Sheikh Toriqul Islam and District unit Jubo Dal President Abul Hasan Hadi, from another BNP leader Masum Billah's house located at Nobarun School intersection in Satkhira town, due to allegations of holding a secret meeting and conspiring to create mayhem and disruption of peace.¹⁴ On 29 April 2018 police arrested 17 BNP leaders-activists, including Acting General Secretary of Dhaka Metropolitan (South) unit BNP, Habibur Rashid, from a building located at Banglamotor area in Dhaka, for the allegations of holding a 'secret meeting'.¹⁵

7. Apart from attacking the opposition party BNP, the government is using its party activists and police to attack and stop protest rallies of other organisations. On 8 April 2018, thousands of students blocked the Shahbagh intersection at Dhaka as part of the countrywide protests demanding among other things, reduction of quota in the government service from 56% to 10%. During this time police threw tear gas shells, pellet bullets and hot water, and even baton charged protesting students to disperse them. When students were retreating from the police attacks, the Chhatra League leaders-activists attacked them. As a result,

¹³ On 8 February 2018, the main opposition party BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was sentenced to five years imprisonment in a verdict under the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case filed during the military-backed caretaker government in 2007 and sent to prison the same day.

¹⁴ The daily Naya Diganta, 12 April 2018; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/309675>

¹⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 30 April 2018

more than 100 students were injured.¹⁶ After that incident, at midnight, some unknown people attacked the residence of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dhaka and vandalized the house.



Police throwing tear gas shells at students in protest at a Dhaka demanding quota reform in government service.

Photo: Prothom Alo, 9 April 2018



Police beating a protestor at Shahbagh Dhaka. Photo: Prothom Alo, 10 April 2018

¹⁶ The daily Jugantor, 9 April 2018; <https://www.jugantor.com/campus/36732/>

In the early morning on 9 April 2018, Chhatra League leaders and activists chased the protesting students.¹⁷ At that time Chhatra League activists opened fire at protestors; as a result a fourth-year student of Public Administration of Dhaka University, Ashiqur Rahman, was shot in the chest. He was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical condition. The bullet in his chest is yet to be removed.¹⁸

8. Furthermore, several female students including Morsheda Akhter of Kobi Sufia Kamal Hall of the University were beaten by Chhatra League because of their involvement in the protest. Allegations of beating students were also found against Kobi Sufia Kamal Hall unit Chhatra League President Iffat Jahan Esha.¹⁹ It is to be mentioned that residential halls of the educational institutions across the country are allegedly controlled by Chhatra League. On 10 April 2018 the University authority and police filed four cases with Shahbagh Police Station, accusing a 'large number of unnamed' students for the incident of protest in Dhaka University campus, for committing violence and vandalization of the Vice-Chancellor's residence.²⁰ As a result, there is a possibility of arresting and harassing anyone and not just the opposition student leaders and activists.

On 11 April 2018, Jahangirnagar University unit Chhatra League activists attacked students protesting for quota reform at the University. As a result, at least 15 persons, including female students were injured.²¹

9. Due to the protest by students, on 11 April, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina declared the removal of the quota system in Parliament and students suspended their actions. But soon after the postponement of protests, concerned persons who were involved in organising the protests, including the ordinary students, were being suppressed by Chhatra League leaders-activists who started to threaten them on campus and in residential halls. On 20 April at midnight, the

¹⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 10 April 2018; www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1467091/

¹⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 17 April 2018; <http://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1471371>

¹⁹ The daily Naya Diganta, 12 April 2018; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/309704>

²⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 12 April 2018;

²¹ Ibid

Provost of Kobi Sufia Kamal Hall and Central Committee Member of Jubo Mohila League, Sabita Rezwana, forcibly ousted 20 female students from the dormitory, who were involved in the protest.²² While the Hall Provost was ousting the students she also threatened to give their names to the government intelligence agencies.²³

10. On 19 April 2018 rickshaw-pullers in Barisal brought out a procession in protest of the removal of battery-run rickshaws by the Barisal Metropolitan Police and demanding the issuing of licenses through a policy. When the procession reached Fazlul Huq Avenue of the city, they blocked the road and stopped traffic. At that time, police attacked the workers peaceful procession. As a result at least 20 rickshaw-pullers and others were injured. Police arrested six protestors, including some women activists and SPB²⁴ leader Imran Habib Rumon.²⁵

²² The daily Jugantor, 20 April 2018; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/40132/>

²³ The daily Manabzamin, 21 April 2018; www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=114167&cat=2/

²⁴ Socialist Party of Bangladesh

²⁵ The daily Jugantor, 20 April 2018; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/40032/>



Police attack rickshaw pullers in Barisal. Photo: collected by Odhikar.

Extrajudicial killings

11. Extrajudicial killings continue due to a weak criminal justice system and impunity of the killers given by the State. In some cases, even children are becoming victims of extrajudicial killing. It is a blatant example of the violation of right to life and right to personal liberty, which violates Article 32²⁶ of the Bangladesh Constitution and Article 6²⁷ of the ICCPR.

12. According to information gathered by Odhikar, 29 persons were reportedly killed extra-judicially in April 2018. Among the 29 persons extra judicially killed, 28 were killed in ‘crossfire/encounters/gun fights’. Of them, 12 were killed by the police, 12 by the RAB, three by the DB Police and one by the BGB²⁸. Furthermore, among the deceased, one person was allegedly tortured to

²⁶ Article 32: No person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty save in accordance with law.

²⁷ Article 6: Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.

²⁸ BGB: Border Guard Bangladesh

death by police. Of the 29 persons who were killed extra-judicially, one was a regional leader of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (Red Flag), one was a regional commander of Maoist Bolshevik Reorganisation Movement (MBRM), one was a farmer, one was a child film actor, one had been accused of stabbing a police officer, one was accused of murder, four were accused of rape and 19 were alleged criminals.

In the early morning of 6 April 2018 a child named Mohammad Rakib Hawlader was killed in 'gunfight' with police after being arrested at Wari in Dhaka. Police claimed that Rakib was a mugger. Rakib's mother Rita Begum said that in the night of 4 April 2018, Sub Inspector (SI) Jyotish Chanda of Wari Police Station arrested her son from the house. Rakib's father Mohammad Mohsin Hawlader claimed that Rakib was only 14 years old and he also performed as a child actor in films. Police killed Rakib in the name of crossfire.²⁹ On 11 April, Rita Begum filed a case with Dhaka Metropolitan Session Court against four police officers, including the Officer-in-Charge of Wari Police Station under the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013. The Court recorded the statement of the plaintiff and passed an Order to set up a judicial inquiry committee to investigate the matter.³⁰

Public lynching and death in jail

13. Due to a weak criminal justice system, impunity of law enforcement agencies and corruption, people are losing their confidence and faith in the police and judicial system. As a result, ordinary citizens are taking the law in their own hands and the tendency to resort to public lynching is common. **As a result, incidents of killings by mob violence continue in April 2018, where one person was killed in such a manner.**
14. Furthermore, many inmates allegedly die in jail due to lack of proper treatment facilities and negligence by prison authorities. There are allegations that people

²⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 7 April 2018

³⁰ The daily Manabzamin 12 April 2018; www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=113031&cat=10/

become ill due to the effects of torture in police remand, which cause their death later when they are sent to jail.

Political suppression and torture in remand

15. Almost every day police are arresting leaders and activists of the out-of-Parliament opposition parties – BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami; and some are arrested again after being released on bail, from the jail gate.³¹ Arrested leaders and activists of the opposition parties were allegedly tortured after being taken into remand. On 10 November 2016, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court issued a 19-point guideline³² to judicial and law-enforcement officials regarding arrests without warrant and the procedure of remand. Such guideline is yet to be implemented. Police arrested BNP Joint Secretary General, Moazzem Hossain Alal; Swechchasebak Dal³³ President, Shafiul Bari; Chhatra Dal (Dhaka North) President, S M Mizanur Rahman; and Chhatra Dal (Dhaka North) Vice-President, Zakir Hossain (who died in jail on 12 March 2018 allegedly due to torture), without following the Supreme Court order. On 2 April 2018, a High Court Division Bench of the Supreme Court, comprising of Justice Moinul Islam and Justice Mohammad Ashraful Kalam issued a Rule after hearing a Writ Petition as to why their arrest should not be declared illegal and unlawful.³⁴
16. Due to torture and degrading treatment in police remand, many arrestees have died in custody over the decades. The Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013 was passed after relentless demands from human rights defenders. Regrettably, a vast majority of the torture victims and family members are not

³¹ The daily Naya Diganta, 10 April 2018; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/309098>

³² Shamim Reza Rubel, a student of Independent University of Bangladesh was arrested under section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr.PC) on July 23, 1998 and he died at the Detective Branch of Police office the day after his arrest. Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) challenged sections 54 and 167 of the Cr.PC and filed a writ petition to the High Court Division of the Supreme Court regarding this incident. In 2003, the High Court Division declared that parts of sections 54 and 167 of the Cr.PC were contrary to some Articles of the Constitution. The High Court Division ordered the amendment of the existing rules of arresting someone and interrogating him in custody under section 54 of Cr.PC, within six months. The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court dismissed the prosecution's appeal against the judgment and afterwards on November 10, 2016 the Court gave a 19-point instruction guideline.

³³ Voluntary wing of BNP

³⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 3 April 2018

able to file any cases under this Act due to fear of reprisals; and those cases that have been filed are yet to see light.

On 13 April 2018 a farmer named Krishnapada Das died in the custody of Bhola Police Station. The deceased's family alleged that Krishnapada Das died in the police lock-up cell due to torture.³⁵

Enforced disappearances

17. Enforced disappearance (ED) is a crime against humanity as per the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)³⁶. Allegations of ED started to become more common in Bangladesh since 2009 after the Awami League led Alliance government came to power. It is reported that leaders and activists of the opposition parties became victims of enforced disappearance before and after the controversial Parliamentary elections in 2014. International and regional human rights organisations fear that incidents of enforced disappearance might increase ahead of the upcoming 11th Parliamentary Elections in December 2018 and leaders-activists of the opposition parties and dissenters might be the victims of such crime.³⁷

18. Although various investigation reports show that incidents of enforced disappearance exist, despite the fact that the government repeatedly denies that enforced disappearances occur. It has been observed by analysing incidents of disappearance, that men claiming to be members of law enforcement agencies are involved in picking people up without any warrant and taking them away in a microbus or car. Such practise is common by members of law enforcement agencies. For example, on 16 April 2018 members of the Detective Branch (DB) of Police forcibly picked up Nurul Huq, Rashed Khan and Faruq Hossain, three

³⁵ The daily Jugantor, 14 April 2018; http://epaper.jugantor.com/2018/04/14/2/details/2_r11_c5.jpg

³⁶ Bangladesh ratified the Rome Statute of the ICC on 23 March 2010.

³⁷ Joint oral statement on enforced disappearances in Bangladesh by the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) submitted to 36th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council. <https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=24796>

Joint Conveners of Bangladesh Chhatra Odhikar Surakkha Parishad (Bangladesh Students Rights Protection Council), an organisation formed by students of Dhaka University to demand the reformation of the quota system. They were taken to the DB Police office blindfolded. The protesting students became angry over the arrests and as a result, they were released in one hour. Nurul Huq said that they were given death threats by the police. He also said that they were only able to return as many people had witnessed them being picked up from in front of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.³⁸ Many people have been taken away in a similar manner, which is later denied by law enforcement agencies. After that they did not return or their bodies were later found. Some are showed as arrested after several days or months of disappearance.

19. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in April 2018, two persons were allegedly disappeared³⁹ and their whereabouts remain unknown.

On 5 April 2018 some men claiming to be members of the DB Police stopped a bus named Jonaki Paribahan at Boropole area on the Begumgnj-Feni road which was going to Lakshmipur from Chittagong. Mohammad Masud and Saiful Islam, both traders and residents of Lakshmipur were travelling on that bus and the men took them away, as alleged by their family. The whereabouts of Mohammad Masud and Saiful Islam are still unknown.⁴⁰ Saiful's father Mohammad Ismail Hossain informed Odhikar that they went to Begumganj Police Station under Noakhali District and Chandraganj Police Station under Lakshmipur District to file a General Diary (GD), but police did not register their GD. Meanwhile, Ayesha Akhter, wife of Mohammad Masud, told Odhikar that she filed a GD at Chandraganj Police Station a week after the incident.⁴¹

³⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 17 April 2018

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ Bangladesh Protidin, 17 April 2018, <http://www.bd-pratidin.com/last-page/2018/04/17/322926>

⁴¹ Information gathered by Odhikar

Freedom of the media

20. The government is controlling most of the media, particularly the electronic media and putting pressure on it through different means, which hinders accurate and impartial reporting and proper journalism. Almost all electronic media and a large number of the print media's owners belong to pro-government people or ruling party supporters. The state owned TV channel, Bangladesh Television (BTV) is totally under the control of the government. In 2013 the government closed down pro-opposition electronic media - Diganta TV, Islamic TV - and the publication of the print media, the daily Amar Desh. Furthermore, members of law enforcement agencies are attacking journalists while they collect information.

On 23 April 2018 police attacked Arman Kaisar and Mohammad Manik, correspondent and cameraperson of Bangla TV respectively while they were gathering information about a BNP programme at Dhaka.⁴²



Journalists formed a human chain in front of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner's office in protest of the attack on Bangla TV reporter Arman Kaisar and its cameraperson Mohammad Manik. Photo: Prothom Alo, 25 April 2018

⁴² The daily Prothom Alo, 25 April 2018

Repressive laws

21. Section 57⁴³ of the Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (Amended 2009 and 2013) curtails freedom of expression and it is contrary to the Constitution. Incidents of filing cases and imprisoning people for writing comments or even giving 'like' in Facebook posts critical of high-level persons in the government or/and their family members continues. On 29 January 2018, the Cabinet approved the draft 'Digital Security Act 2018' (DSA) after recommending that five sections be revoked, including section 57 of the ICT Act. The proposed law is going to be enacted as another repressive law as the removed sections of the ICT Act have been incorporated into the DSA. Furthermore, there are fears that section 32⁴⁴ of the approved draft DSA relating to spying on computer and other digital crimes, can be used by the government as a weapon against human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers and against public opinion. As a result, civil society activists and journalists demand the repeal of this section. However, without taking into consideration such demand, on 9 April 2018, the Telecommunication and Information Technology Minister Mostafa Jabbar placed the Digital Security Bill in Parliament.⁴⁵
22. On 19 April 2018, Bangladesh Editors Council recommended to amend section 21, 25, 28, 31, 32 and 43 of the proposed Digital Security Act, after a meeting with the Law Minister Anisul Huq and the Telecommunication and Information

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.

⁴⁴ Section 32 states that if anyone collects, publishes or preserves or assists in preservation of any confidential information/reports through computer, digital device, computer network or any other electronic form, by illegally entering into an office of the government or a semi-government, autonomous or statutory body, it will be considered a crime of computer or digital spying. Due to this the accused person will have to face punishment of 14 years in jail or pay Tk. 2.5 million as fine or both. If such crime is committed twice by the same person, he/she will be sentenced life imprisonment or 10 million taka fine or both.

⁴⁵ The daily Jugantor, 10 April 2018; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/36851/>

Technology Minister Mostafa Jabbar as such sections are violations to freedom of expression and contrary to independent journalism.⁴⁶

Allegations of widespread corruption and the Anti Corruption Commission

23. Lack of transparency and accountability is prevailing in the country due to an absence of an elected government and effective Parliament. As a result, acts of corruption have widely expanded and a state of plundering of resources has been created. In most cases, leaders and activists of the Awami League and various professionals affiliated to the government are allegedly involved in corruption. There are allegations of money laundering⁴⁷, corruption in the stock market and banking sector⁴⁸ mainly committed by Awami League leaders and persons affiliated with the government. Despite the existence of such a terrible situation of corruption, the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) was not seen taking any effective action against persons affiliated to the government.⁴⁹ Although the ACC filed a few cases against influential politicians of the ruling party, the legal proceedings against them are very slow.

⁴⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 20 April 2018;

⁴⁷ According to a Washington based research institution, Global Financial Integrity, report from 2005 to 2014, USD 61.63 billion was laundered abroad from Bangladesh. Of this, USD 9.10 billion was laundered abroad in 2014. Furthermore, 20 more Bangladeshi names, including controversial businessman Musa bin Shamsar, have been incorporated in the second list of the highly discussed Paradise Papers scam. All of them have illegally laundered money from Bangladesh to Malta. The daily Jugantor, 16/02/2018; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/18058/>

⁴⁸ Corruption in the banking sector became extreme due to lack of accountability and nepotism after the Awami League led government re-assumed power through a farcical election in 2014. During this period, the government gave licenses to the ruling party leaders and activist and also engaged them to govern/manage boards in different banks.

⁴⁹ The Anti Corruption Commission relieved some senior Awami League leaders and people associated with the ruling party of graft charges in 2013. Among them former parliamentarian HBM Iqbal and former Chief Whip and Awami League leader Abul Hasnat Abdullah were acquitted by this Commission. In June 2013, the ACC relieved former Minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir of an allegation of corruption. Furthermore, many government officers were acquitted from the graft charges. The ACC also acquitted the ruling party MP from Cox's Bazaar-4, Saimum Sarowar and his wife Syeda Selina Akhter, the Awami League MP from Narayanganj-4, Shamim Osman from charges. Between January and August 2014, about 1,600 politicians, backed by the ruling party Awami League, and high-level government officers were given clean chits. Among them, the ACC had given clean chits to the Deputy Leader of the Parliament, Sajeda Chowdhury; former Health Affairs Adviser to the Prime Minister Syed Modasser Ali; the Disaster Management and Relief Minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya; the Health Minister, Mohammad Nasim; and former Ambassador of Bangladesh to the Philippines, Mazeda Rafiqun Nesa.

24. On 10 April 2018, the ACC arrested four accused persons, including Mahbubul Huq Chisti, former Chairman of the audit committee of Farmers Bank, under a forgery case in Farmers Bank. But the ACC did not take any action against the former Chairman of the Bank – former Home Minister and current Member of Parliament, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir. Apart from an investigation of documents of Farmers Bank by the ACC, a report of the Bangladesh Bank was also examined. The Bangladesh Bank’s report states that Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir and Mahbubul Huq Chisti had taken a portion from the loans given to clients.⁵⁰ In the meanwhile, the ACC continues legal proceedings and gives verdicts in cases filed against top BNP leaders. The ACC has commenced investigations against 10 BNP leaders, including four of its Standing Committee members over allegations of money laundering and acquiring illegal property.⁵¹

Workers’ rights

25. Incidents of closing down factories without notice, termination of workers and not paying wages on time are occurring regularly in the readymade garment (RMG) industries. As a result workers’ unrest continues. Furthermore, workers in many factories are deprived from trade union rights; and women workers are being discriminated against and become victims of physical and mental abuse. Moreover, accidents including building collapses and fire occur due to the negligence of the factory authority and lack of monitoring by the government.

The factory authority of a RMG industry named United Trousers Limited in Savar, Dhaka has not paid the workers their wages for the months of February and March 2018, on various pretext. As a result, on 17 April 2018, workers started to protest after closing the factory down. When they tried to block the road, the Industrial Police dispersed the workers from the spot.⁵²

⁵⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 11 April 2018

⁵¹ The daily Jugantor, 3 April 2018; <https://www.jugantor.com/national/34302/>

⁵² The daily Manabzamin, 18 April 2018; www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=113687&cat=9/

26. 24 April 2018 makes the fifth year of the Rana Plaza building collapse in Savar. In 2013 on this day, a 9-story building named Rana Plaza collapsed, causing many deaths and casualties. During that time, approximately 5000 workers were working in five garment factories in this building. 1135 bodies were recovered by fire-fighters and rescuers and 2438 workers were rescued alive after this incident. The physical condition of many survivors is getting worse and many workers are suffering psychologically. The trial of the accused persons, including the owner of Rana Plaza (and Jubo League leader) Sohel Rana is yet to be finished even after four years. The rules of constructing and using buildings are still not followed properly due to the negligence of the administration. Furthermore, several vulnerable buildings were identified after this accident; but those buildings are yet to be destroyed. As a result, many RMG factories are still in operation in dilapidated buildings which were constructed without following the Building Code.

27. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in April 2018, eight workers in the informal sector were killed while they were working. Furthermore, three construction workers were injured on site.

28. Odhikar is monitoring the condition of construction workers in Bangladesh. The construction workers are discriminated in various ways and their rights are also violated. The contributions of construction workers are enormous in making roads, bridges and buildings. But these workers are being discriminated against in areas of wages, social safety nets and other benefits. Among them, the condition of women workers is more susceptible to violations. They are forced to work below the minimum wage. Furthermore there are no safety measures such as using gloves or masks during work. It is observed that construction workers work under risk and in most of the cases they do not have toilets, and place for taking bath after work, nor any place to keep their children in the workplace.

Violence against Women

29. Violence against women in the country is increasing at an alarming rate. Women are becoming victims of violations including rape, dowry related violence, sexual harassment and domestic violence. Women are being sexually and physically harassed in public transport. **Currently incidents of child rape have significantly increased. A reported 77 women and 173 children were raped in the last four months.** Despite widespread incidents of violence against women and girls, the status of trial and punishment of the perpetrators is very frustrating.⁵³ In most cases victims are not getting justice due to intervention by the ruling party. Sometimes, following the decision of the Home Ministry, the prosecution did not continue the trial process out of political consideration.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the trial of sexual harassment against women on Dhaka University campus during Pohela Boishakh⁵⁵ on 14 April 2015 has not been initiated yet.⁵⁶
30. **According to information gathered by Odhikar, in April 2018, a total of 23 women and children were victims of sexual violence. Of them, one later committed suicide, five were injured, seven were assaulted and 10 were victims of stalking/sexual harassment.**

On 2 April 2018, some criminals stabbed and injured Lima Akhter (14), a Madrasa student, for refusing love proposals in Shreepur under Gazipur District. A case was filed with Shreepur Police Station accusing Hridoy, Rubel, Nazmul and Delwar in this regard.⁵⁷

31. **In April 2018, Odhikar recorded that a total number of 61 females had been raped. Among them, 24 were women and 37 were girls below the age of 18. Of**

⁵³ The daily Prothom Alo gathered primary information of 7,864 cases of rape, gang rape, attempt to rape, killings and provocation to suicide in dowry violence and sexual harassment filed under five Tribunals of Dhaka District between 2002 to October 2016. Among them, 4,277 cases were resolved but punishment is given in only 110 cases. Only in 3% of the cases were perpetrators punished. On the other hand, in 97% cases, accused either withdrew before the trial or were acquitted after the trial.

⁵⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 8 March 2018

⁵⁵ Bangla New Year

⁵⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 14 April 2018; www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1470251/

⁵⁷ The daily Bangladesh Protidin, 3 April 2018; <http://www.bd-pratidin.com/country-village/2018/04/03/319479>

the women, 11 were victims of gang rape and two were killed after being raped. Out of the 37 girls, eight were victims of gang rape and one was killed after being raped. 11 women and girls were also victims of attempted rape.

32. After analysing the status of trial of 5500 cases relating to rape, death due to rape and gang-rape (including death and murder) registered in different tribunals at Dhaka in 15 years, it was found that perpetrators have been punished in only 3% of the completed cases. Rape cases were more common in police stations, having jurisdiction in areas belonging to poor people and garment workers. A large majority of the complainants of rape were members of very low income families.⁵⁸

On 11 April 2018 the wife of a carpenter went to the Union Parishad (UP) office for matters relating to her family problems, in Bijoypur Village under Phulgazi Upazila in Feni District. At that time the UP Chairman and Joint Secretary of Upazila unit Awami League, Nurul Islam raped her. Police arrested Nurul Islam in this regard.⁵⁹

- 33. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in April 2018, a total of 21 women were subjected to dowry violence. Of these women, 10 were allegedly killed and 11 were physically abused due to dowry demands.**

On 22 April 2018, a housewife named Anwara was allegedly beaten to death by her husband Farooq Mia after failing to give him fifty thousand Taka as dowry, in Rajnagar area under Moulavibazar District.⁶⁰

- 34. Odhikar documented four women victims of acid violence in April 2018.**

On 2 April 2018 a housewife named Aklima went to drop her daughter at school at Hazaribagh area of Dhaka City where a youth threw acid on her face.⁶¹

⁵⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 19 April 2018; <http://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1472636/>

⁵⁹ Report sent by local human rights defender associated with Odhikar from Feni.

⁶⁰ The daily Manabzamin, 24 April 2018;

⁶¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 3 April 2018;

Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017 promotes child marriage

35. On 6 March 2018, in a statement UNICEF said that the incidents of child marriage had decreased worldwide, but has increased in Bangladesh. Bangladesh stands fourth in child marriage prevalence.⁶² On 27 February 2017, the 'Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017' was passed by the National Parliament.⁶³ A provision for the marriage of minor girls and boys in 'special circumstances' has been incorporated in this law, stating that their marriage (below the age of 18) can be done with the consent of the Court and parents, following due process and for 'best interest'.⁶⁴ As a result, in effect, this section legalizes the marriage of minor girls and boys. Bangladesh is a child marriage prone country. Child marriages could not be prevented despite the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 where the minimum age for marriage for a female was fixed at 18 years and for a male at 21 years.⁶⁵ This 'special provision' in the 2017 Act is a catalyst for increasing child marriages in the country.

Bangladesh's relation with India and Myanmar

Aggressive policy of India towards Bangladesh

36. To hold political and economic supremacy over Bangladesh India played a major role in destroying the democratic system in Bangladesh through direct interference in the 5th January 2014 controversial elections.⁶⁶ After this election, a major political crisis was created in Bangladesh and strengthened Indian political, economic and cultural aggression⁶⁷ on Bangladesh to establish

⁶² The daily Prothom Alo, 07/03/2018, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/172370/Child-marriage-increases-in-Bangladesh-UNICEF>

⁶³ The daily Jugantor, 28/02/2017, www.jugantor.com/first-page/2017/02/28/104781/

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ The daily Jugantor, 28/02/2017; www.jugantor.com/first-page/2017/02/28/104781/

⁶⁶ 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, which is peculiar. <http://www.dw.com/bn/নির্বাচন-না-হলে-মৌলবাদের-উত্থান-হবে/a-17271479>

⁶⁷ 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. It was decided that Bangladesh will buy power from India in higher rate worth about two lac crore taka. The environmentally hazardous initiative to build the Rampal Power Plant with an

supremacy over Bangladesh through various means. 2018 is a significant year for Bangladesh because the 11th Parliamentary elections is to be held in December this year. People of Bangladesh are waiting for a free, fair and participatory election. But it is a matter of concern that activity and analysis by Indian policymakers ahead of this election are visible, which is reminding everyone of India's role in holding the 2014 controversial elections.

37. Apart from various activities related to Indian aggression, members of the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) are killing, torturing and robbing Bangladeshi citizens after illegally trespassing into Bangladesh territory, which is a clear violation of international law and human rights.

38. Director General (DG) of Indian Border Security Force, KK Sharma on 26 April 2018 at the 46th DG level conference between the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), said that no Bangladeshi national was killed this year along Bangladesh-India border till date.⁶⁸ **However, Odhikar reports show that so far three Bangladeshi citizens were killed by BSF in 2018. Of them, Kadam Ali was shot dead at Roumari border under Kurigram District; and Manjurul Alam was shot dead at Patgram border under Lalmonirhat District in January 2018 while in February, Shariful Islam was shot dead by BSF in Shibganj under Chapainababganj District.**⁶⁹ Odhikar believes that wrong information given by the BSF DG would legitimise the killings spree and other human rights violations by the BSF along the Bangladesh-India border areas. Odhikar would like to reiterate to the BSF DG and the Indian government that 25 Bangladeshis were killed by BSF in 2017, of

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

⁶⁸ The daily Jugantor, 27 April 2018; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/42788/> and New Age, 27 April 2018; <http://www.newagebd.net/article/39916/no-bangladeshi-killed-by-indian-border-force-this-year-says-bsf-dg>

⁶⁹ For details, see Odhikar's monthly human rights reports. www.odhikar.org

them two were children.⁷⁰ It is to be mentioned that none of the incident of killing by the BSF is brought to justice.

Acts of genocide against Rohingyas in Myanmar

39. The Myanmar Army is frantically seeking ways to get away with impunity for acts of genocide and atrocities carried out against Rohingya Muslims in the Rakhine (Arakan) state of Myanmar. The Myanmar government has restricted international human rights organisations, including the UN fact finding mission, the UN Special Rappourter on Myanmar to enter into the Rakhine state. Army camps, security check posts and Buddhist villages are being constructed in the former Rohingya majority areas in order to wipe out evidences of mass killing and destruction; despite the fact that signs of mass graves have been exposed through investigative reports by international media.⁷¹ Furthermore, the Myanmar government has expressed 'serious concern' over an attempt at the International Criminal Court to open a probe against perpetrators who were involved into acts of genocide against Rohingya Muslims. It was reported that a statement from Aung San Suu Kyi's State Counsellor office dismissed the claims and said the Court has no jurisdiction.⁷²

40. An agreement was signed by Myanmar and Bangladesh for repatriation of Rohingyas in Myanmar. However, the repatriation process might put them in danger further if Rohingya refugees are sent back to Myanmar without creating a suitable environment of repatriation and bringing the Myanmar Military and Buddhist criminals who were involved in violence, to justice. In mid-April, eight more families, comprising of 32 Rohingya members, entered Bangladesh and have taken refuge in Teknaf.

⁷⁰ For details, see Odhikar's annual human rights report of 2017. http://www.odhikar.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Annual-HR-Report-2017_English.pdf

⁷¹ The daily Naya Diganta, 5 April 2018; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/detail/news/307666>

⁷² The Daily Star, 14 April 2018; <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/rohingya-crisis-icc-has-no-jurisdiction-over-probe-1562563>

41. On 13 April 2018 a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Bangladesh government and UNHCR in a programme at the UNHCR headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.⁷³ However, the UNHCR Director General Filippo Grandi said that Myanmar is still not suitable for safe, dignified and sustainable repatriation.⁷⁴
42. At least one hundred thousand Rohingya refugees are at risk of serious humanitarian disaster, including storms, floods and landslides during the rainy (Monsoon) season. Odhikar urges the appropriate authorities to take quick action to avoid humanitarian disasters in Rohingya camps during Monsoon.

Hindrance to human rights activities of Odhikar

43. The government continues to harass Odhikar for being vocal against human rights violations and for campaigning to stop them. Human rights defenders who are working fearlessly to gather information and carry out their profession impartially are harassed and victimised.⁷⁵ Odhikar is releasing human rights monitoring reports every month despite challenges. Various countries including domestic, regional and international human rights organisations use to refer Odhikar's information while producing country report on human rights. **On 22 April 2018, the US Department of State published a report on the human rights situation of Bangladesh, where in various sections, references of different human rights organisations, including Odhikar was used.** In this context, the Information Minister was highly critical of the State Department report and on the same date said, "Odhikar had reported that thousands of people belonging to Hefazate Islam were killed in Shapla Chottor. They could not give a list of the deceased when the government asked them to provide with the list. Later it was

⁷³ The daily Samakal, 13 April 2018; <http://www.samakal.com/bangladesh/article/1804779>

⁷⁴ The Daily Star, 14 April 2018; <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/responsibility-myanmars-1562572>

⁷⁵ 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 Bhola 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. Three human rights defenders associated with Odhikar from Kushtia and Munshiganj – Hasan Ali, Aslam Ali and Sheikh Mohammad Ratan – were sent to jail in cases filed under the ICT Act.

revealed that many people who they claimed dead were found alive. This is a proof that Odhikar does not produce reliable reports".⁷⁶ Odhikar conducted a fact finding mission into incident of extrajudicial killings that took place on 5 and 6 May 2013 centering around the assembly of Hefazate Islam Bangladesh at Shapla Square, Motijheel, Dhaka and it published a report showing 61 persons were killed. The statement given by the Information Minister regarding Odhikar saying that it had published a report claiming thousands of Hefazate men were killed is therefore incorrect and inflammatory.

44. Odhikar had informed the Ministry in 2013 in its reply that it would not hand over the list of deceased for the sake of the security of the members of the victims' families. Odhikar was receiving information through its human rights defenders network, that members of many victim-families were receiving threats, harassed and suppressed by the state security forces and ruling party men. **Odhikar requested the Government to form a neutral Investigation Commission headed by a retired Judge of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, and stated that it would send the list of the deceased persons to that Commission. Odhikar has given the list and evidence to one national and five regional and international human rights organisations.** The government did not form any inquiry commission headed by a retired Judge of the Supreme Court; instead the members of DB Police picked up Odhikar's Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan in the night of 10 August 2013. Later Adilur Rahman Khan and Odhikar's Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan were accused under section 57(1) of the Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (amended 2009). Both were detained for 62 and 25 days in jail respectively and are now free on bail. Since then, Odhikar staff members and human rights defenders who are associated with Odhikar across the country have been under watch by intelligence agencies and facing harassment, intimidation and hindrance in human rights activities. Furthermore, the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), which

⁷⁶ The Daily Ittefaq, 23 April 2018; <http://www.ittefaq.com.bd/national/2018/04/23/154785.html>

is under the Prime Minister's Office, has withheld renewal of Odhikar's registration and barred the release of any new project funds since more than four years in order to stop its human rights activities. The Standard Chartered Bank also started to harass Odhikar through different ways from 2013 after the government started repression to Odhikar. Currently the Standard Chartered Bank has made dormant all accounts of Odhikar. The incumbent government is gagging the voice of Odhikar against human right violations and continues its smear campaign against Odhikar.

Recommendations

1. Democracy must be restored by establishing an accountable government through free, fair and inclusive elections, under a 'caretaker' government or even under the supervision of the United Nations.
2. The Government should refrain from repressive, unconstitutional and undemocratic activities. Rights to freedom of expression and assembly of the opposition political parties and people who have alternative beliefs have to be respected. The government must stop harassment, including arrest operation against opposition and dissenters.
3. The Government must stop political violence. The government must also take legal action against the ruling party leaders and activists for criminal activities.
4. Interference on the Judiciary must stop. The government must refrain from such activities to ensure Independence of the Judiciary.
5. Incidents of extrajudicial killings and torture by law enforcement agencies must be investigated and the perpetrators must be brought to effective justice.
6. 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 matters of Chhatra

Dal leader Zakir Hossain, who was tortured to death in remand, has to be impartially investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice.

7. 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 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”.
8. 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 must accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2006.
9. Freedoms of speech, expression and the media must be ensured and protected. The Government must take action to conduct a proper investigation to bring the perpetrators, who attacked human rights defenders and journalists, to justice.
10. 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.
11. All repressive and abusive laws, including the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (amendment 2009 and 2013), the Foreign Donation (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act 2016, and the Special Powers Act, 1974 must be repealed. The government should refrain from enacting the Bill of the proposed Digital Security Act.

12. Trade union rights should be guaranteed at all the ready-made garment factories and workers rights should be protected as per ILO Conventions. In order to stop sexual harassment in workplace a sexual harassment prevention committee needs to be created in every industry. A legal framework or policy must be made for all workers in the informal work sector, including construction site to prevent discrimination.
13. The Government must ensure effective implementation of laws to stop violence against women and children and the offenders must be effectively punished under prevalent laws. The ruling party affiliated criminals, who are attacking women, should not be given impunity. The Government should also execute mass awareness programmes in the print and electronic media, in order to eliminate violence against women and put perpetrators to justice.
14. India must refrain from establishing political and economic supremacy over Bangladesh. Indian Border Security Force (BSF) must stop human rights violations, including killing and torturing Bangladeshi citizens along the border areas. The construction of the Rampal coal-based power plant must also be stopped to prevent ecological and human disaster in Bangladesh. Odhikar also demands a fair solution to the current trade imbalance between the two countries.
15. In order to protect the right to life and human dignity of the Rohingya people, Odhikar demands peace and human rights be established immediately in the Rakhine state (Arakan) of Myanmar, with UN initiatives. Odhikar also urges that the UN take initiatives to ensure the right to self-determination of the Rohingya people. The international community must put effective pressure on the Myanmar government and support the establishment of the human rights of the Rohingya community in Myanmar. At the same time, all those responsible, including the Myanmar Army and Buddhist extremists must be made accountable at the international level for committing genocide.

16. The case filed against Odhikar's Secretary and its Director under the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (Amended in 2009) must be withdrawn. The NGO Affairs Bureau must renew Odhikar's registration which is pending since April 2014. 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.