



July 1, 2014

Six-Months Human Rights Monitoring Report

January 1 – June 30, 2014

On average, 18 persons were killed extra judicially every month

Torture in custody continues

Perpetration of disappearance by men claiming to be from law enforcement

132 persons were killed in political violence in six months

The Upazila Elections 2014

By-election of Narayanganj-5 constituency

Attack on the 'Bihari Camp' at Mirpur

Violence against religious minority communities

Barriers to meetings and assemblies

Violation of right to freedom of the media

Government's negative attitude towards freedom of association and of expression

Bangladesh-India and Bangladesh-Myanmar relations

Situation of ready-made garment workers

Violence against women

Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 remains

Odhikar believes that 'democracy' is a form of the State and presupposes that freedom and human rights are its foundations. Democracy is not merely a process of electing a ruler. Democracy is the result of the peoples' struggle for inalienable rights, which become the fundamental premise to constitute the State, defining collective aspirations and responsibilities. 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 State's failure to recognise this at the founding moment is a continuing curse that people in Bangladesh are forced to carry. A State cannot be 'democratic' if the people do not realise and participate as 'citizens' in all sectors of the functioning of the state. The democratic legitimacy of the State is directly related to its commitment and capacity to ensure human rights, such as right to life and livelihood, right to environment and health; and the dignity and integrity of citizens. If all these are not ensured by the State, it cannot be called a 'democratic' state. These civil and political rights, as the foundational principles of the State, must remain inviolable; and accordingly, the Parliament, Judiciary and Executive cannot and should not have any power to abrogate them through any legislation, judicial verdict or executive order. The people's inviolable rights are the foundational principles of the State.

Odhikar, being an organisation of human rights defenders in Bangladesh, has been struggling to ensure these civil and political rights. Odhikar stands against all forms of human rights violations and accordingly participates and remains directly involved in the human rights movement in Bangladesh. Odhikar brings to the movement the strategic perspective that in its demand for civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, the human rights movement not only endeavours to protect the victims, but is also constitutive of a democratic state. In recent times, Odhikar's human rights defenders have been persecuted for their work and beliefs. However, this has only strengthened the organisation's resolve to fight for human rights, with no discrimination whatsoever.

The movement to establish the rights and dignity of every individual is part of the struggle to constitute Bangladesh as a democratic, political community. As part of its mission, Odhikar monitors the human rights situation of Bangladesh to report violations and defend the victims. In line with this campaign, Odhikar prepares and releases monthly situation reports. Odhikar has released six-monthly human rights monitoring report from January – June 2014, despite facing harassment and threats to its existence.

On average, 18 persons were killed extra judicially every month

1. Laws and the criminal justice delivery system are under serious threat due to the prevalence of extrajudicial killings. Families of the victims alleged that their relatives were being shot and killed by the members of law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, the Ministers of the government have made

statements in support of extrajudicial killing at various times. On March 8, 2014 Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan stated, at a BBC-Bangladesh dialogue held at the BIAM Auditorium in Dhaka, that “those who are involved in criminal activities, set fire to vehicles in the name of protest, cut peoples tendons off, if they are killed in crossfire it should not be called extrajudicial killing”.¹

2. After the Awami League assumed power, a total of 870 persons were allegedly killed extra judicially between January 6, 2009 and June 30, 2014. Despite the allegations, the government did not take any action against any member of the law enforcement agencies regarding a single incident of death through an independent and impartial investigation. There are even allegations that the government supports extrajudicial killings.
3. According to information gathered by Odhikar, a reported total of 108 persons were extra judicially killed, between January and June 2014. This means that on average, 18 persons were killed extra judicially every month. The types of deaths and the identities of the deceased 108 persons are stated below:

Types of extrajudicial killings

Crossfire/encounter/gun fight:

4. Among the 108 persons extra judicially killed, 66 were killed in ‘crossfire/encounters/gun fights’. Of them, 39 were killed by the police, 14 by the RAB, eight were by the joint force, two by the RAB-BGB and three were killed by the Coast Guard.

Tortured to death:

5. During the first six months of 2014, seven persons were allegedly tortured to death. Among them it was reported that one was tortured to death by the RAB and six by the police.

Shot to death:

6. Among the deceased, 30 persons were shot and killed during this period. Of them 20 were reportedly killed by police, four were by RAB, two by Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), three by joint force and one by the Army.

Beaten to death:

7. Among the deceased, four were beaten to death by the BGB and one by the police.

¹ The Amader Shomoy, 09/03/2014

Identities of the deceased

8. Of the 108 persons who were killed extra-judicially, 12 were leaders-activists of BNP, three were activists of Awami League, 21 were activists of Jamaat-Shibir, three were members of the Purba Banglar Communist Party (ML), two were members of the Sarbahara Party, one was activist of Jatiya Gonotantrik Party, one was member of New Biplobi Communist Party, two were rulling Awami League backed chairman candidates in the upazila poll, one was the agent of Awami League backed vice-chairman candidate, one was the wife of a rival chairman candidate of BNP, one was a member of Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), two were businessmen, one was a garment worker, one was a welder, one was a day-labourer, one was a mason, one was a student, one was a driver, two were a contractor and his assistant, one was a journalist, one was a tea vendor, one was a petty entrepreneur, one person's profession could not be identified and 46 were alleged criminals. Some incidents are as follows:
9. On January 20, 2014 police recovered the body of Chhatra Dal leader Atiqur Rahman (26) from Nariadanga bypass road under Syedpur Upazila in Nilphamari District. He was one of the accused persons in a case of an attack on the motorcade² of the then Member of Parliament (currently Minister for Cultural Affairs) Asaduzzaman Noor on December 14, 2013 at Ramganj Bazaar in Nilphamari. Atiqur's elder brother, Aminul Islam said that Atiqur was in hiding since the incident of attack on the motorcade. He came to know that Atiqur and Mohidul (26) were arrested by Detective Branch Police on January 13, 2014 at night, from a house adjacent to Shafia Girls School under Deldwar Upazila in Tangail.³ The family of Atiqur could not find his whereabouts after searching him at various places. Two days before that incident, on January 18, the body of Golam Rabbani, the Laxmichap union unit BNPs Organising Secretary and another accused person involved in the attack on Asaduzzaman Noor's motorcade, was recovered by Nilphamari police. The family of Golam Rabbani alleged that RAB arrested Rabbani from a relative's house. Some days later his body was found.⁴
10. On January 27, 2014, Vice-President of Tala upazila unit Chhatra Dal⁵, Azharul Islam (28) was shot dead by joint forces in Satkhira. On January 26, Azharul Islam was arrested by members of the joint forces from a shrimp factory at Ghona. The wife of Azharul Islam, Kamini Parvin Chompa said, she, her mother-in-law and her son waited at Tala Police Station till 12.00 at

² On December 14, 2013, motorcade of the then Member of Parliament Asaduzzaman Noor was stuck near Ramganj bridge in Nilphamari when Jamaat-Shibir activists cut off the roads. A clash between police, Awami League and Jamaat-Shibir took place during that time. Four Awami League activists and one Jamaat activist were killed during the clash.

³ The daily Prothom Alo, 21/01/2014

⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 21/01/2014

⁵ Chhatra Dal is the student wing of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

night, after her husband was arrested. At around midnight they were forced to leave the police station gate. She came to know that few moments later seven or eight police vehicles arrived in front of the station and took her husband away. The next morning she learnt that her husband was shot dead sometime between midnight and in the early hours of 27 January, at the Magura Kheyaghat area.⁶

11. On March 3, 2014 at around 11.00 am, contractor Mohammad Washim and his assistant Songram Chowdhury were killed in 'crossfire' by RAB at Washim's residence at 131 New Jurain under Kadamtoli Police Station in Dhaka. Families of the deceased men claimed that they were shot and killed in their presence by RAB. Sonia Begum, wife of Washim and Salma Chowdhury, wife of Songram alleged that some of Washim's employers were also beaten after being arrested by RAB and were forced to make false statements that Washim and Songram had abducted them.⁷
12. On May 7, 2014, Kusholia Union unit General Secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami, Ashraful Islam was shot dead by police in Kaliganj Upazila under Satkhira District. The Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Kaliganj Police Station, Golam Rahman claimed that police were informed by their information that a group of criminals were holding a meeting at Bhodrokhali Primary School field. Receiving this information, a police team led by the OC reached the spot, where Ashraful was killed in 'gunfight' between police. However, Ashraful's wife Papia Khatun alleged that her husband was picked up by police from their village home on May 6 at around 12:30 am and that Ashraful was shot and killed at the Bhodrokhali Primary School ground.⁸
13. Odhikar believes that extrajudicial killings are making a mockery of the country's laws and criminal justice system. If any person is found guilty, the Court will punish him/her in accordance with law. However it has been seen that a significant number of RAB and police officers are committing extrajudicial killings either by getting involved in criminal activities or being instructed by 'higher authority', which is a matter of grave concern. Odhikar urges the government to immediately put a stop to extrajudicial killings and also demands that all perpetrators be brought to justice.

Torture, inhuman and degrading treatment in custody

14. Torture in the custody of law enforcement agencies is widespread and a common practice in Bangladesh. When a person is arrested by law enforcement agencies, the fears that he will be physically and mentally

⁶ The daily Manabzamin, 28/01/2014

⁷ Fact finding report of Odhikar, 04/03/2014. This incident had been incorporated on Odhikar's monthly report for March 2014. Page 14.

⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 08/05/2014

tortured or suffer ill treatment are well-founded. Odhikar has, for the last 19 years, documented and carried out fact finding missions on incidents of torture, highlighting the fact that this practice must stop.

15. On February 1, 2014 Mohammad Mohsin (27), son of Sultan Uddin and a resident of Baroigaon village in Chokrada Union under Shibpur Upazila in Norshingdi, was arrested by police of Shibpur Police Station as a suspect in a robbery case. The family of Mohsin alleged that he was tortured by police in a room on the first floor of the police station for three days after he was arrested and as a result Mohsin died and later the police publicized that Mohsin had committed suicide by hanging.⁹
16. Allegations of acts of torture against Major AZM Sakib Siddique, the Head of Bhoirab RAB camp under RAB-14 unit, were made by Shahnoor Alam's family. Shahnoor Alam was a resident of Nabinagar Upazila under Brahmanbaria District. On May 20, 2014, his younger brother, Mehedi Hassan, organised a press conference at the National Press Club and stated that on April, 29, 2014 at noon his brother was arrested by members of RAB-14 from Boghdohor village under Nabinagar Upazila. At night he was beaten on different parts of his body, particularly on his waist, feet and elbows, for two and half hours. On April 30, 2014, RAB forced Abu Taher, a resident of Nabinagar Pashchimpara, to file a case against Shahnoor Alam. Later, Shahnoor was sent to jail by the court. When Shahnoor became ill, he was first admitted to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital; and later taken to Comilla Medical College Hospital. On the evening of May 6, he died in hospital. Mehedi Hassan alleged that a local manpower businessman, Nazrul made an 'arrangement' with the officer of RAB-14 to kill his brother.¹⁰ On June 1, 2014, Mehedi Hassan filed a case in the Court accusing Major AZM Sakib Siddique, the Head of Bhoirab RAB camp under RAB-14 unit and Deputy Director, Mohammad Enamul Huq and nine other members of RAB. On June 4, the senior Judicial Magistrate of Brahmanbaria District, Nazmun Nahar ordered Rupak Kumar Saha, the Officer-in-Charge of Nabinagar Police Station to receive the case. On June 5, Magistrate Nazmun Nahar was 'closed' by the Chief Judicial Magistrate Mostak Ahmed Shahdani from the cognizable court which was effective from June 8, 2014.¹¹ On June 8, Magistrate Mohammad Kawsar of Brahmanbaria District and Session Judge Court, amended previous orders in relation to this case; and ordered the Officer-in-Charge of Nabinagar Police Station to take the case after investigation.¹²
17. On June 14, 2014 a 22-year old youth named Shahin Molla was tortured to death allegedly by police at Dasar Police Station in Madaripur District. On

⁹ Fact finding report of Odhikar

¹⁰ The daily Jugantor, 21/05/2014

¹¹ The daily Manabzamin, 06/06/2014

¹² The Prothom Alo, 15/06/2014

June 8 at around 8:30 pm, Sub Inspector of Dasar Police Station, Nazmul Hassan arrested Shahin and his friends Mukut and Shah Alam from Naiarbari Bridge at Gaoranodi. The aunt of the deceased, Selima Begum, alleged that SI Nazmul Hassan sent messages to the guardians of the three men through a police informer, Nazrul Islam, after they were taken to the police station. When their guardians reached the police station, SI Nazmul Hassan demanded seventy five thousand Taka bribe from them for releasing the three arrestees. At night, the families of Mukit and Shah Alam arranged the release by paying seventy thousand Taka. Selima Begum was ready to pay 20 thousand taka for releasing her nephew Shahin, but SI Nazmul told her that he will not be able to release him unless fifty thousand taka was paid. On June 9, Selima Begum managed to collect the money by borrowing it from her relatives and went to SI Nazmul. SI Nazmul told her that Shahin could not be released as a case had been filed against him. On the same date, Shahin was shown as arrested under the Narcotics Control Act and produced before the court and the court sent Shahin to jail. On June 10, 2014, Selima went to visit Shahin in jail, and the latter said he was severely tortured by police, led by SI Nazmul in custody because they could not pay the money. On June 14, Shahin became seriously ill and was admitted to Madaripur District Hospital, where he died.¹³

Inhuman and degrading treatment

Victim arrested for speaking at Odhikar's meeting against torture

18. On March 10, 2014 Odhikar organised a meeting on the ratification of the OPCAT and Mass Awareness Campaign for the Prevention of Torture in Narayanganj, where a victim of torture, Mohammad Ezaz, shared how he was tortured by police. On March 16, Narayanganj District Detective Branch police arrested him for speaking at the meeting and sent him to Court on March 17. He was shown as arrested in a case under the Narcotics Control Act. It is to be mentioned that on March 6, Mohammad Ezaz, who is a businessman of Riverview Market, was returning home at night when he passed the Narayanganj River-Police Camp. At that time, two other businessmen of Riverview Market, Rakib and Khokon told Ezaz that two men claiming to be members of police had taken their wallets while they were being searched. Ezaz went with the businessmen, and after identifying the two men as members of police, Ezaz asked them whether anything illegal had been found from the two businessmen. The policemen replied that they did not find anything. Ezaz then said they were businessmen of the market and asked the policemen to leave. Narayanganj River-Police Camp In-charge, Sub Inspector

¹³ The daily Prothom Alo, 16/06/2014

Nazrul came up and wanted to know what was wrong. The plain clothed policemen told him that Ezaz had released the two businessmen. Hearing this, SI Nazrul asked Ezaz to come to the police camp to give more information about the two businessmen. After taking Ezaz to the camp, SI Nazrul blindfolded him and tortured him by tying his arms and legs. At that time two policemen took away Ezaz's shoes. Later he was produced before the Court on March 7, 2014 by showing him as an accused in a case in relation to a land dispute. The Court granted him bail. On March 8, Ezaz briefed the journalists at the Narayanganj Press Club as to what had occurred. Later on March 10, Ezaz gave his testimonial at the meeting organised by Odhikar, which was published in various local newspapers on March 11, 2014. This infuriated SI Nazrul. As a result, Ezaz was arrested on March 16 by SI Shafique of DB police from his shop at Riverview market and he was sent to jail through Court. On March 25, he was released on bail.¹⁴

Jubo Dal activist's leg amputated as a result of gunshot and detained for 4 months and 22 days without producing him before the court

19. On January 7, 2014 at around 5:30 pm Jubo Dal¹⁵ activist Mohammad Arafat was surrounded by four or five men, claiming to be police, in front of his hardware shop at the Sagorika Chowrasta area in Chittagong Metropolitan City. He was taken to Pahartoli Police Station in a private car. Later the police blindfolded Arafat and took him to Sagorika seashore in a car. He was then asked whether he was a member of Chhatra Shibir¹⁶ and also told to inform them of the whereabouts of Shibir leaders. Arafat said that he was not a member of Chhatra Shibir but a Jubo Dal¹⁷ activist. The men then shot him in his leg. Arafat was taken to the Emergency Department of the Chittagong Medical College Hospital after his blindfold and gag were removed. Later he was shifted to Ward No. 26 of the same hospital. On January 7, 2014 Arafat's leg was operated on. He had to go for another operation on January 12 due to infection and his left leg had to be amputated. On January 7, 2014, Sub Inspector Abu Sadek of Pahartoli Police Station, being a plaintiff, filed two cases accusing 13 persons, including Arafat under the Arms and Explosives Act. As per law, arrestees need to be produced before the court within 24 hours of arrest; but in this case, police detained Arafat in Chittagong Medical College Hospital under their custody for 4 months and 22 days without sending him to the Court. On March 13, 2014 investigating officer of the cases filed against Arafat under the Arms and Explosives Act, Sub Inspector Toyab Ali of Pahartoli Police Station, submitted a charge sheet without showing him

¹⁴ Report send by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Narayanganj, 18/03/2014

¹⁵ Student wing of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

¹⁶ Student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami

¹⁷ Youth wing of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

as arrested. In the case document, Arafat has been mentioned as being under treatment. The 12 other accused persons were awarded bail from the High Court Division of the Supreme Court; but Arafat did not get it as he was not shown as arrested; as a result, lawyers of Arafat could not appeal for his bail in the Court. On May 6, 2014 when Arafat's lawyers explained the situation to the Court, Chittagong Metropolitan Session Judge, S M Mujidur Rahman ordered the police to produce Arafat in Court on May 14. Due to a hartal on May 14, Arafat was produced before the Court of Chittagong Metropolitan Session Judge, S M Mujidur Rahman on May 19, 2014. The Court rebuked Sub Inspector Toyab Ali of Pahartoli Police Station and gave orders to the jail authority for Arafat's proper treatment. On May 20, 2014 Arafat was released from jail after getting bail from both cases.¹⁸

20. Torture in custody is a severe violation of human rights. Bangladesh does not respect the obligations despite being a party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. According to this Convention, "No person shall be subjected to torture whether in physical or mental and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". Article 35(5) of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh stated the same. On October 24, 2013 ruling party Parliamentarian, Saber Hossain Chowdhury also presented the 'Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Bill, 2013' in the Parliament which was passed into an Act by the Members of Parliament through a voice vote. Despite this new Law, incidents of deaths due to torture in custody continue.
21. Odhikar believes that torture during remand or interrogation is a serious violation of human rights. Despite the claim of 'zero tolerance' on torture, the Government has not taken steps or effective measures to curtail torture and other forms of custodial violence and acts of impunity by law enforcement officers. Such lack of action against perpetrators only encourages human rights violations.
22. Odhikar urges the Government to implement the recommendations given by the High Court Division of the Supreme Court in the 2003 judgement of BLAST vs. Bangladesh¹⁹ and to effectively implement the new anti-torture law of 2013.

¹⁸ Report sent by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Chittagong, 08/05/2014

¹⁹ BLAST and Others Vs. Bangladesh and Others, 55 DLR 323. The High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh enumerated 15 directives regarding the arrest, detention and interrogation of accused persons in order to avoid and prevent torture in remand/custody. In 2013, the Parliament also passed a torture prevention Act

Death in Jail

23. According to information gathered by Odhikar, between January to June 2014, 26 persons reportedly died in jail. Among them 23 persons died allegedly due to 'illnesses', three persons allegedly committed suicide.

Public lynching

24. From January to June 2014, 63 persons were killed allegedly due to public lynching by mobs.
25. Odhikar believes that the lack of respect for law; distrust of law enforcement agencies; and due to the weak criminal justice system, the tendency of taking the law into one's own hands is increasing, as people are losing their confidence and faith in the police and Judiciary.

Allegations of enforced disappearance against law enforcement agencies

26. According to information gathered by Odhikar, from January to June, 2014, 28 persons have been disappeared after being picked up allegedly by the men claiming to be members of law enforcement agencies.
27. Many incidents of enforced disappearance took place across the country before and after the controversial elections on January 5, 2014. These incidents still continue. The whereabouts of persons remain unknown after they are picked up by men alleging to be the members of law enforcement agencies. The families of the victims claim that the members of law enforcement agencies are making arrests and since then the victims have been disappeared or their bodies are later found.²⁰ Many members of law enforcement agencies have reportedly been involved in criminal activities as the government has politically misused these agencies for a long time. This is a dangerous indicator of the deteriorating law and order situation. In the past, incidents of enforced disappearance were denied by responsible persons of the government and no action was taken against any member of law enforcement agencies, despite having evidence after investigation by the Home Ministry. As a result, incidents of enforced disappearance continue. Some incidents are as follows:
28. On April 29, 2014 seven people, including Panel Mayor of Narayanganj City Corporation, Nazrul Islam and Advocate Chandon Kumar Sarkar were killed and their bodies thrown into the River Shitalakkha after being disappeared on

²⁰ 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.

April 27, allegedly by RAB-11 head, Lt. Col. Tareque Sayeed; Major Arif Hossain; and Lt. Commander M M Rana. This allegation was made by Nazrul's father-in-law Shahidul Islam. Shahidul Islam also alleged that these killings were conducted by RAB for six crore taka, with the help of Sajedul Islam Chowdhury (alias Dipu Chowdhury), son of Disaster and Rehabilitation Minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya; and arranged by Siddhirganj Thana Awami League Vice-President Noor Hossain, over internal conflict in the ruling Awami League; and for establishing supremacy in Narayanganj.²¹ It is to be mentioned that the head of RAB-11, Lt. Col. Tareque Sayeed is also the son-in-law of Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya. On May 11, 2014, a Division Bench of the High Court Division comprising of Justice Mirza Hossain Haider and Justice Mirza Khurshid Alam Sarkar passed an order to arrest the three former RAB officers. After the order from the High Court, Narayanganj District Police arrested Lt. Col. Tareque Sayeed; Major Arif Hossain on May 17 and Lt. Commander M M Rana on May 18 from the Dhaka Cantonment area. They were shown as arrested under section 54²² of the Code of Criminal Procedure and were produced before the Narayanganj District Court. In the meantime all three²³ of them have made statements before the Magistrate under 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, incriminating themselves. They have been transferred to Dhaka Central Jail.²⁴ On June 14, 2014 at night, one of the prime accused persons of the seven murders, Narayanganj City Corporation's Councilor Nur Hossain along with his associates Wahiduzzaman Selim and Khan Sumon were arrested by Indian police from Indroprostha Apartments located at Koikhali, Baguihati in Kolkata. Currently they are detained in Dum dum Jail in India.²⁵ In the meanwhile, on June 30, 2014 Senior Judicial Magistrate of Narayanganj, H M Shafiqul Islam exempted Lt. Col. Tareque Sayeed; Major Arif Hossain on May 17 and Lt. Commander M M Rana from the case under section 54 of the Cr.PC and fixed the next date of hearing for two cases filed in relation to seven murders on August 20, 2014.²⁶

29. On May 8, 2014 Shahnaz Parvin, the wife of Laksam Municipality unit BNP President, Humayun Kabir Parvez, in a press conference organised in Laksam, Comilla, claimed that former MP and Laksam BNP President, Saiful Islam Hiru and Humayun Kabir Parvez were disappeared by the former head

²¹ The daily Jugantor, 06/05/2014

²² Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898 stated about the grounds, when police may arrest someone without warrant.

²³ Major Arif Hossain, Lt. Commander M M Rana and Lt. Col. Tareque Sayeed have made their statements before the Magistrate on June 4, 5 and 14 respectively.

²⁴ Information gathered by Odhikar

²⁵ The daily Jugantor, 23/06/2014

²⁶ The Court ordered their arrest under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. However, once they made statement before the Magistrate, incriminating themselves, they will be tried for the crime of murder.

of RAB-11, Lt. Col. Tareque Sayeed. Their whereabouts are unknown since November 27, 2013.²⁷

30. Odhikar expresses grave concern regarding the incidents of 'enforced disappearance'. Allegations of disappearance and killing and the alleged involvement of a Minister's family have greatly increased the level of corruption and impunity in RAB and law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh.
31. Odhikar demands that the Government rescue or recover the victims of enforced disappearances and take stern action against the perpetrators by forming an impartial and independent inquiry committee.

132 persons killed in political violence in six months

32. The political leadership has gained vested interest by misdirecting the youth of this country for a long time, taking advantage of their economic instability; and they have blocked the way for youth to play a timely positive role for the nation. The reality is that the leaders and activists of political parties in power are involved in criminal activities. It is very important to ensure a free, fair and impartial election through participation of all political parties in a democratic process, which will help in bringing political stability and also play a significant role to stop criminalization of politics.
33. According to information gathered by Odhikar, from January to June 2014, 132 persons were killed and 5224 injured in political violence. 163 incidents of internal violence in the Awami League and 13 in the BNP²⁸ were recorded during this period. In addition to this, 18 persons were killed and 1621 were injured in internal conflicts of the Awami League while two persons were killed and 129 persons were injured in BNP internal conflicts. Some examples are as follows:
34. On February 10, 2014, Chhatra League²⁹ leaders drove out 97 newly admitted students of Dhaka University from SM Hall³⁰. Chhatra League leaders told the students that they would not be allowed in the residential hall if they were not Chhatra League activists.³¹
35. On March 6, 2014 activists of Chhatra League and Jubo League vandalised Kabirhaat Police Station in Noakhali. On March 5, Mayor of Kabirhaat Municipality and General Secretary of Upazila unit Awami League, Zahirul Huq went to the police station at midnight to release Bakhtiar Hossain and Monir Hossain, brothers of Kabirhaat Municipality unit Chhatra League

²⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 10/05/2014

²⁸ BNP: Bangladesh Nationalist Party

²⁹ Student wing of Awami League, an associate organisation of ruling Awami League

³⁰ Residential hall of Dhaka University

³¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 11/02/2014

President, Moslem Uddin. At that time an altercation occurred with the Officer-in-Charge of the police station. After that, Chhatra League and Jubo League activists attacked Kabirhaat Police Station. In order to control the situation, police opened fire. Three policemen and four Chhatra League activists were injured in this incident.³²

36. On April 9, 2014 a Jamaat activist Alamgir Hossain (30) was killed and 10 people were injured in a clash between supporters of Awami League and Jamaat-e-Islami in Chor Dhulgagra village under Belkuchi Upazila in Sirajganj.³³
37. On April 13, 2014 physical altercations took place between supporters of Dhormagarh Union unit Awami League General Secretary, Farid Mia and its former Organising Secretary, Mezbaul Rob Polash over a tender bid for Dhormagarh Dighi (lake) in Madhabpur Upazila under Hobiganj District. At least 30 people were injured, of whom seven were shot during the clash. College student Sohel Mia (17) and one Kala Mia (55) later died in hospital.³⁴
38. On May 8, 2014 at night, some Chhatra League leaders kidnapped a petty trader named Farhad Hossain from Sohrawardi Park and demanded a ransom of five hundred thousand taka from his family. The family of Farhad Hossain informed the police, who arrested seven men including five Chhatra League leaders from TSC³⁵; and rescued Farhad Hossain from Jagannath Hall of the Dhaka University. The arrestees were Sreejon Ghosh, Deputy Secretary (Sports) of the Central Committee of Chhatra League; Tanvirul Islam, Vice-President of Dhaka University unit Chhatra League; Anupam Chandra, Vice-President of Jagannath Hall unit Chhatra League; Abdullah Al Mamun, Student Scholarship Affairs Secretary of Mohsin Hall unit Chhatra League; Bappi, former Assistant Secretary of Jasimuddin Hall unit Chhatra League; and Chhatra League activists Himel and Arfan Patowari. A kidnapping case was filed with Shahbagh Police Station.³⁶

Political violence centering 5th January elections and significance of credible elections

39. The controversial 10th Parliamentary Elections were held on January 5, 2014. On June 30, 2011, the then Awami League-led grand alliance government³⁷, in the presence of an absolute majority in Parliament, passed the Fifteenth Amendment Bill to the Constitution of the People's Republic of

³² Report send by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Noakhali, 07/03/2014

³³ Report sent by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Sirajganj.

³⁴ Report sent by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Sylhet.

³⁵ Teachers and Students Centre

³⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 10/05/2014

³⁷ On December 29, 2008, the then Awami League led Grand Alliance won a two-third majority in Parliament, under the 9th Parliamentary elections held under a military-backed caretaker government, which was in power from January 11, 2007 for about two years, instead of the Constitutional provision of ninety days.

Bangladesh, without any referendum or public opinion; and ignoring protests from various sectors of society, including the main opposition and other political parties. The Bill was adopted on July 3, 2011 after the then President, late Zillur Rahman gave his consent. This amendment abolishes the caretaker government system; and all future elections will be conducted under the ruling party. Most of the political parties including the then 18-Party Alliance led by BNP and Democratic Left Front boycotted the 10th parliamentary elections as it was not conducted under a 'caretaker' government. The Opposition alliance also called for resisting these elections. As a result of this boycott, 153 candidates from the ruling Awami League and its alliance were elected uncontested out of the 300 constituencies, even before the elections were held. Across the country, a total of 40,802,739 voters out of 91,948,861 voters could not cast their vote, as the candidates for the 153 constituencies, to which they belong, were declared elected unopposed.³⁸ Among the rest of the voters, only 12-15 percent could cast their votes on Election Day, as reported by various newspapers and election monitoring organisations.³⁹ Allegations of large-scale rigging were made by the unelected candidates. During the poll, candidates both from political parties and independent ones, boycotted elections in at least 31 constituencies in protest of vote rigging.⁴⁰ They organised press conferences and submitted written complaints to the Election Commission. At the same time, many allegations regarding fake votes were found in different polling centres. Furthermore, not a single vote was casted in 38 polling centres across the country, as recorded by media.⁴¹ In many polling centres, very few voters were present. The ruling party Awami League reassumed power through this controversial election and its former political alliance, Jatiya Party have become the Opposition; but have also accepted ministries of the government. As a result, an unprecedented example has been created where the same party is both in the Opposition and in the Government. A vulnerable situation for democracy has been created due to absence of an effective Opposition in the Parliament. Odhikar refrained from directly observing elections, due to the non participation of all political parties. However, Odhikar gathered primary and secondary level information on elections through its human rights defenders across the country and from the people working with different media.

40. Political violence started long before the 10th Parliamentary elections on January 5, as the Opposition alliance demanded that the elections not be held. The BNP led 18-Party Alliance announced continuous blockades and hartals soon after the declaration of the Election Schedule on November 25, 2013.

³⁸ The daily Manab Kantha, 08/01/2014 and Bangladesh Election Commission, <http://www.ecs.gov.bd/English/index.php>

³⁹ The daily New Age, 07/01/2014 and the Daily Star 06/01/2014

⁴⁰ The daily Samakal, 06/01/2014

⁴¹ The daily Manabzamin, 06/01/2014

Odhikar documentation shows that from November 25, 2013 to January 10, 2014, 21 persons died and 65 were injured in arson and petrol bomb attacks. Many ordinary people became victims of arbitrary arrest during the ‘special operation’ conducted by Joint Forces across the country, before and after the polls. Incidents of violence in many polling centres started the night before elections. During this time, several polling centres were set on fire. The Election Commission had to suspend polling at 392 centers in eight constituencies across the country, due to nonstop violence.⁴² Some incidents of election related violence are as follows:

41. On January 4, 2014, Jobaitul Huq (55), the Assistant Presiding Officer of Molani Chheprikura Government Primary School polling centre, died in Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital after being attacked by anti election protesters.⁴³
42. On January 5, 2014 some criminals led by Ashik Al Shams, son of the then State Minister for Home Affairs, Shamsul Huq Tuku and his APS Anisuzzaman stamped 475 ballot papers in Ebtedaye Madrassa polling centre and 238 ballot papers in Shahidnagar Government High School under Pabna-1 (Beda-Sathiya) constituency. The Presiding Officers of the two polling centres, Atiqur Rahman and Shakhawat Hossain filed written complaints to the Upazila Nirbahi Officer in this regard.⁴⁴
43. At around 6.00 am on the Election Day, a group of criminals threw petrol bombs and cocktails in Garozaripa Government Primary School polling centre under Sherpur-3 (Shreebardi-Jhenaigati) constituency. As a result, many important documents, including ballot papers, were burnt. Later polling in this centre was suspended. Two polling officers, Kalpana and Hira Nasrin were injured by crude bombs at around 10:00 am in Bagrakosa Sherpur High School polling centre. At around 2:30 pm, BNP supporters took away six ballot boxes with ballot papers from Digharpar Government Primary School centre. Later, polling at this centre was suspended.⁴⁵
44. Activists of BNP and Jamaat attacked Palpara and Sahapur polling centres under Tangail-2 (Gopalpur-Bhuapur) constituency at around 11:00 am on election day. The attackers ran away when police fired blank shots. At least five voters were wounded.⁴⁶
45. A group of criminals snatched away ballot boxes at around 2:00 pm from Chor Bhurungamari Government Primary School polling centre under Kurigram-1 constituency. The Assistant Presiding Officer, Swapon Kumar was injured during this attack.⁴⁷

⁴² The Daily Ittefaq, 16/01/2014

⁴³ The daily Prothom Alo, 06/01/2014

⁴⁴ The online versions of the daily Prothom Alo and Manabzamin, 05/01/2014

⁴⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 06/01/2014

⁴⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 06/01/2014

⁴⁷ Report sent by HRDs from Kurigram.

46. Eight activists of BNP and Jamaat were shot during a clash with police at Ramnagar Government Primary School polling centre under Manda Upazila of Naogaon-4 constituency. Among the injured persons, a Jubo Dal activist named Babul Hossain (28) died.⁴⁸

The Upazila Parishad Elections 2014

47. The Awami League announced the Upazila Election schedules immediately after reassuming power through Parliamentary elections on January 5, 2014; and during the elections, incidents of snatching ballot papers and ballot boxes; rigging; fake votes and capturing polling stations resurfaced. Many people were killed and injured in violence during the six phases of the election. The Upazila Elections were held in six phases between February and May 2014. Even though the local government elections are elections with no direct participation of political parties, the major political parties are taking keen interest in the candidates. The Bangladesh Nationalist party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami have participated in the Upazila Parisahd Elections, though it boycotted the 10th Parliamentary Elections on January 5, 2014. The first phase of elections were held on February 19; the second phase on February 27; the third phase on March 15; the fourth phase on March 23; the fifth phase on March 31; and the sixth phase of Upazila Elections were held on May 19, 2014.⁴⁹

The first phase of elections

48. Elections were held in 97 Upazilas on February 19, 2014 during the first phase of the Upazila Parisahd Elections. Incidents of clashes and altercations took place in many electoral areas and incidents of vandalising and taking away ballot papers and ‘capturing’ polling centres also occurred. The Election Commission postponed voting in 10 polling centres.⁵⁰ For example, incidents of fake votes; cocktail⁵¹ explosions; snatching away of ballot boxes; vandalism and destruction of electoral materials; entering polling centres and beating election officials all took place in 15 polling stations out of 49 in Sonatola Upazila under Bogra district. Supporters of Awami League nominated Chairman candidate, Sarwar Alam took control over Gazirchor Union Parishad polling centre under Bazitpur Upazila in Kishoreganj before the polling started. After the voting commenced, the Presiding Officer took signatures of the polling agents on election result sheets. Later, supporters of Sarwar Alam entered the polling booths and forced the polling agents of BNP

⁴⁸ Report sent by human rights defender associated with Odhikar from Naogaon, 06/01/2014

⁴⁹ Election Commission Bangladesh, <http://www.ecs.gov.bd/English/index.php>

⁵⁰ The daily Bangladesh Protidin, 22/02/2014

⁵¹ ‘Cocktails’ are small, homemade explosive devises or bombs.

supported candidate, Quayyum Khan to leave. Sarwar Alam's supporters remained till voting was finished.⁵²

The second phase of elections

49. On February 27, 2014 the second phase of elections in 114 Upazila Parishads were held with allegations of massive rigging. Clashes took place in many Upazilas during the elections. About 200 people were injured and two persons were killed in Sonaimuri of Noakhali during the violence.⁵³
50. Noakhali district was worst hit by electoral violence during the second phase of elections. On election day, the supporters of Awami League-backed Chairman candidate AFM Babul, tried to capture Nandiapara Degree College polling centre by firing gunshots and exploding crude bombs at around 1:30pm. A clash broke out as the supporters of the BNP backed Chairman candidate, Anwarul Haque, resisted the ruling party men. At one stage, law enforcers opened fire to bring the situation under control. Saddam Hossain, (22) a resident of Nandiapara and a supporter of Islami Chhatra Shibir⁵⁴ died on the spot. Voting was cancelled at all 117 polling stations in Noakhali Sadar Upazila as the situation went out of control.⁵⁵
51. Incidents of attacks and firing at supporters of the BNP supported candidates; stuffing ballot boxes; capturing polling stations; and casting fake votes also occurred in Munshiganj Sadar Upazila during the polls. At least 20 persons were injured. During the violence, supporters of Awami League-supported candidate Anisuzzaman Anis 'captured' almost all polling stations out of 106, after 10.00 am during the polls. The ruling party activists and supporters illegally stamped on ballot papers after forcibly driving out the agents of BNP supported candidates. In addition to this, Awami League activists started firing at supporters of the BNP supported candidate in front of Malirpathor Government Primary School polling centre. During this attack, Panchsar Union unit BNP's General Secretary Ayat Ali Dewan and his son Mamun Dewan were stabbed.⁵⁶

The third phase of elections

52. Three persons were killed in election related violence during the third phase of the Upazila Elections held on March 15, 2014. On election day, activists and supporters of Awami League 'captured' polling centres; ousted the opponent's polling agents and intimidated and obstructed voters at the polling stations in Bagerhat Sadar, Morelganj, Sharonkhola, Rampal and

⁵² The daily Prothom Alo, 20/02/2014

⁵³ The daily Manabzamin and Jugantor, 28/02/2014

⁵⁴ The student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami

⁵⁵ The Daily Star, 28/02/2014

⁵⁶ Report send by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Munshiganj, 28/02/2014

Mongla Upazilas. Awami League activists put check posts at various polling stations and obstructed opponent candidates and voters from entering the polling station. Activists of Awami League, led by local UP member and Awami League leaders Zahidur Rahman, Sabur Hossain and Motahar Rahman obstructed veiled women voters and female voters of the BNP-Jamaat parties at Karapara Union Parishad polling centre in Bagerhat Sadar Upazila. On getting this information, 10/12 Islami Chhatra Shibir⁵⁷ leaders and activists, including Shibir leader and student of Bagerhat Government PC College, Mohammad Manzarul Islam, rushed to the spot and helped voters to enter the polling station. Awami League activists attacked Shibir activists with sharp weapons and sticks. During this time Mohammad Manzarul (24) was caught by Awami League activists and taken to the Megnitola area where he was stabbed to death in broad day light.⁵⁸

The fourth phase of elections

53. Five persons were killed in election violence during the fourth phase of elections held on March 23, 2014. On election day, incidents of capturing polling centres, snatching away ballot papers, rigging, massive violence and shooting occurred in Gazaria Upazila under Munshiganj District. At around 11.00 am, clashes took place between supporters of Awami League MP Mrinal Kanti Das-backed Chairman candidate Refaetullah Khan Tota and supporters of Munshiganj District Awami League President Mohammad Mohiuddin-backed candidate Amirul Islam in Bororaipara Government Primary School polling center. During the clash, Baluakandi Union Parishad Chairman Shamsuddin Prodhan was stabbed by supporters of Tota. He died on the way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. At around 12.00 noon, a group of criminals attacked journalists and vandalized their vehicles on the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway in the Chor Bausia Dakshinkandi area. Four journalists were injured.⁵⁹ At least 50 persons, including Lucky Akhter, wife of BNP rebel candidate Abdul Mannan Dewan Mona, were injured during a clash between inhabitants of Dori Bausia village in Gazaria. On March 28, Lucky Akhter died in Dhaka Medical College Hospital while under treatment.⁶⁰

The fifth phase of elections

54. The fifth phase of Upazila Elections were held on March 31, 2014. One person was killed in electoral violence. The 19-Party⁶¹ Alliance-backed candidates,

⁵⁷ Student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami

⁵⁸ Report send by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Khulna and the daily Bangladesh Protidin, 16/03/2014

⁵⁹ Report send by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Munshiganj

⁶⁰ The daily Manabzamin, 29/03/2014

⁶¹ After 5th January elections, Jatiya Party's Presidium member Kazi Jafar Ahmed resigned from Jatiya Party and has created a separate Jatiya Party and joined the 18 Party Alliance. After that it has become 19 Party Alliance.

Awami League rebel candidates, Jatiya Party supported, and independent candidates in 23 Upazilas boycotted elections due to massive irregularities.⁶² From the morning of election day, leaders and activists of the ruling party cast fake votes openly by stamping the ballot papers in favour of Awami League backed Chairman candidate Obaidur Rahman in different polling centers in Madarganj Upazila under Jamalpur District. This is also the election area of Mirza Azam who is a State Minister for Textile and Jute. Voters were allegedly forced to leave the polling booth without casting their votes. A person carrying a badge of Awami League supported Chairman candidate Obaidur Rahman entered the female polling center of Nurunnahar Mirza Kashem Degree College and started casting fake votes openly by stamping the ballot papers. At that time a few female voters were waiting outside the polling center. BNP supported candidate Foyezul Islam boycotted the election at around 11.00 am on that day on grounds of ‘capturing’ polling centers by the ruling party activists.⁶³

The sixth phase of elections

55. On May 19, 2014, elections were held in 12 Upazilas under the sixth phase with reports of massive violence and rigging. There have been several allegations of ‘capturing’ polling centres; snatching away ballot papers and ballot boxes; casting fake votes; forcibly ousting polling agents of the opponents; and barring journalists from entering the polling stations; perpetrated by ruling party supported candidates.⁶⁴ Allegations of stamping ballot papers were found against the Assistant Presiding Officer, Ali Azam of Chanpur Government Primary School polling centre in Panchthubi Union under Sadar Upazila in Comilla.⁶⁵ Activists of Awami League supported candidate Abdul Matin Chowdhury were allegedly ousting polling agents of the opponent and casting fake votes in Kamarkhand Upazila under Sirajganj district.⁶⁶ Allegations of ‘capturing’ polling centres and casting fake votes were found against Awami League supported candidates in 29 polling stations under Taltoli Upazila in Barguna, despite the presence of law enforcement agencies.⁶⁷

By-election in Narayanganj-5 constituency

56. On June 26, 2014 by-election in Narayanganj-5 constituency was held amid allegations and reports of rigging and irregularities. Allegations of

⁶² The Daily Ittefaq and New Age, 01/04/2014

⁶³ The daily Prothom Alo (Online) 31/03/2014

⁶⁴ The daily Inquilab, 20/05/2014

⁶⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 20/05/2014

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Ibid

intimidation and obstruction of voters at the polling stations; ousting the polling agents of independent candidate, S A Akram and intimidation and obstructing the members of law enforcement agencies, who were on duty on election day, were reported. Voters' presence was found to be poor. Most of the polling stations were under the control of supporters of the ruling party Awami League MP Shameem Osman, brother of Jatiya Party candidate, Selim Osman. The Returning Officer had declared the results of 104 polling centres out of 141. The result of Malibagh Government Primary School polling centre at Bondor was withheld due to rigging and irregularities. Jatiya Party candidate, Selim Osman's brother and Awami League lawmaker Shameem Osman threatened and used abusive language to Assistant Superintendent of Police Mohammad Basiruddin, through cell phone as he did not allow Osman's men to capture Madanpur Kewdhala Government Primary School polling station. Independent candidate S A Akram alleged that the supporters of Jatiya Party were stamping ballot papers after capturing various polling centres. The Election Commission and the administration did not take any action after the specific allegations were made. The Returning officer told the journalists that voters' presence was poor. Initially the voter's turnout was reported 30% to 35%. But it became 45% after the declaration of election results. It is to be mentioned that this constituency was vacant after the death of Jatiya Party's Member of Parliament, Nasim Osman, another brother of Shameem Osman and Selim Osman.

57. Odhikar believes that ensuring transparent, creditable, free and fair elections is the Constitutional responsibility of the Election Commission (EC). The Election Commission has to conduct elections in a free, fair and impartial manner, without being bias towards the ruling party. This is the mandatory duty of the EC. However, the EC has failed to hold a free, fair and impartial election.⁶⁸ Odhikar believes that, It is very important to form a strong and effective Election Commission in Bangladesh; which would hold free and fair elections under a neutral interim government. Odhikar also believes that the provision of elections under an interim government has been removed through the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which has caused serious political crisis. The scale of violence and illegal activities reported during the 10th Parliamentary Elections and Upazila Elections, establishes that Bangladesh still needs a neutral interim government to hold free, fair, inclusive and credible polls. The people of the country are still not able to freely practice this basic component of democracy without this system.

⁶⁸ The Election Commission was also bias towards the ruling party in power during the 5 January 2014 Parliamentary elections and presented the Election schedule in November 2013 despite political violence and unresolved issues between the Awami League and the BNP-led Opposition.

Attack on 'Bihari Camp'⁶⁹ at Mirpur: 10 persons died due to fire and gunshots

58. In the morning of June 14, 2014 clashes took place between the Urdu speaking people of 'Bihari Camp' and supporters of the ruling party Awami League and Dhaka-16 constituency lawmaker, Ilias Molla at E & D Block of Kurmitola in Mirpur-12 in Dhaka city. During the clash, nine persons of a family died in fire and another person was shot dead. At least 50 people were injured during the clash which started at 5:30 am and continued till 12:30 pm. Those who died in fire were: Baby (40), wife of Yeasin, a resident of Bihari camp; his elder daughter Shahana (23); Shahana's son Maruf (3); his second daughter Afsana (20); youngest daughter Roksana (9); elder son Ashique (25); Ashique's pregnant wife Shikha (18); and twin sons Lalu and Bhulu (12). A Bihari youth named Azad (25) was shot dead and one man named Mohammad Josho (23) was reported as missing.
59. It was learnt that link road of the Airport-Mirpur flyover was made in 2007. During that time the New Kurmitola area came under the Bihari Camp. At that time it was decided that those families who lost land due to the construction of the link road, will be shifted to another place. As per decision, the Bihari families were shifted to slums created on the plots belonging to the National Housing Authority, located at the northern side of New Kurmitola Bihari Camp. In 2009, Ilias Molla encroached on 30 Bighas of land adjacent to Kurmitola Bihari Camp, with the help of local Awami League activists and made a slum there. That slum had been named 'Raju Slum' after the death of a Jubo League leader, Raju. Local Jubo League activists were taking care of the slum since it was made. Electricity had been arranged at Raju slum from the electric connection of Kurmitola Bihari Camp.⁷⁰ But the inhabitants of Raju slum had never paid any electric bill for this connection, although men of Ilias Molla were used to collect money for electric bills from every houses of Raju slum. They were collecting Taka 50 for a bulb and Taka 100 for a fan by proving illegal electric connections. Likewise, they collected Taka 200 – Taka 250 from every house, which comes to more than one hundred and fifty thousand taka in total every month.⁷¹ On June 10, 2014 Bihari leaders stopped illegal electric connections to Raju slum. Tension started in the area since then.

⁶⁹ During the partition of the Indian Sub Continent in 1947, when India and Pakistan were being divided, Muslims from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other areas of India took refuge in Pakistan. Many came to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). During the Liberation War, many of them supported Pakistan. After Liberation on 16 December 1971, many became assimilated within Bangladesh. Those who wanted to be repatriated to Pakistan, found refuge in the Red Cross sponsored camps, called 'Geneva Camps' in 1972. After several rounds of repatriation to Pakistan, those who were unable to go, remained as 'Stranded Pakistanis' in the Geneva Camps. They were stateless persons. They speak Urdu and not Bangla. However, many of their children who were born after the liberation of Bangladesh have become Bangladeshi nationals. This community remains vulnerable.

⁷⁰ Fact finding of Odhikar

⁷¹ The daily Manabzamin, 18/06/2014

On June 10 at around 10:30 pm, the inhabitants of the Raju slum blocked roads around the Mirpur flyover area for electricity in the slum. In order to remove blockade, police of Pallabi Police Station asked for help from MP Ilias Molla. At around 10:45 pm, Ilias Molla arrived on spot. At one stage, the people from Bihari Camp were entangled in argument with Ilias Molla. It was learnt while speaking with locals, that the argument had been replaced by a physical confrontation between some inhabitants of Bihari Camp and Jubo League activists, who came with Ilias Molla. To bring the situation under control, Ilias Molla called Jalal Uddin, President of Kurmitola Bihari Camp, on his mobile phone and asked him to provide electric connections to Raju slum. When he refused this proposal, Ilias Molla threatened Bihari community leaders. On June 11, 2014 in the evening, some inhabitants of Raju slum filed a case against Bihari community leaders, including Jalal Uddin. Local people informed that Jalal Uddin went into hiding since the case was filed. On June 13 at night, Biharis were celebrating the occasion of *Shab-e-Barat*⁷² with fireworks near Baunia Dam and link road of Bihari Camp. In the early morning of June 14, activists of Ilias Molla deliberately attacked Kurmitola Bihari Camp on the pretext of noise of protesting the fireworks.⁷³ During that time clashes occurred between the two groups. The local police also took side with the MP's men and attacked Biharis. MP Ilias Molla's men locked four houses in the Bihari Camp from outside and set fire to them by pouring kerosene in the presence of police. When Bihari Camp residents approached the houses to bring the fire under control, police threw tear gas shells and rubber bullets at them. Police also opened fire with live bullets. As a result, nine persons including women and children were burnt to death and one Azad was shot dead by police. It was seen in News video footage that local Jubo League activists beat Mohammad Josho, an inhabitant of Bihari Camp and left him severely injured. The whereabouts of Josho is unknown after the incident.⁷⁴ A total of six cases were filed in relation to this incident. Of them, police filed two cases and four cases were filed by local people. Bihari community people alleged that police are harassing Urdu speaking Bihari people instead of taking legal course of action against MP Ilias Molla.⁷⁵

60. Odhikar expresses grave concern and also condemns this incident. Odhikar believes that criminals with the help of the ruling party are attacking the weaker section of society in order to capture land and for extortion. Some members of law enforcement agencies are also involved in this

⁷² The preceding night is known as *Laylatul Bara'ah* or *Laylatun Nisfe min Sha'ban* in the Arab world, and as **Shab-e-barat** in Afghanistan, Iran, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. These names are translated to *the night of records, the night of assignment, the night of deliverance or the night of salvation*, and the observance involves a festive nightlong vigil with prayers.

⁷³ Allegations made by local Urdu speaking Biharis.

⁷⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 23/06/2014

⁷⁵ Information gathered by Odhikar.

criminalization. Odhikar urges the government to urgently form an inquiry commission led by a retired judge of the Supreme Court for a neutral and unbias investigation.

Violence against religious minority communities

61. Attacks on religious minority communities after every election have become a common phenomenon. Despite the known areas of vulnerable localities where such violence could take place, the apathy of the government and the administration is the single most worrying issue for human rights defenders concerned about the safety and security of these communities. Such incidents happen repeatedly due to the failure of arrest and punishment of perpetrators. Furthermore, the systematic politicisation of these incidents and the ensuing blame game makes the situation more vulnerable. Odhikar condemns this practice of attacking socially, economically and politically vulnerable groups belonging to Hindu, Christians or other religious and cultural minority communities by local thugs and power elites, during every pre and post election period. Some influential and vested interest groups are attacking citizens belonging to Hindu religion, taking the opportunity of violent political situation and also vandalise and set fire to places of worship. Incidents of attacks on citizens belonging to the Hindu community occurred across the country during and after the January 5 elections. Houses, shops and business offices and places of worship were attacked during that time.⁷⁶ Some incidents are given below:
62. On January 5, 2014 supporters of the BNP-led 18-Party Alliance ransacked and set fire to at least 150 houses and shops belonging to Hindu citizens at Kornai village of Chehelgazi union in Dinajpur. Victims alleged that the local Union Parishad member Nazir Ahmed; Akbar Ali of Dumurtoli; Mahbubul Alam of Katapara; Sahabul Alam of Mohadebpur; Abul Kana of Bokripara; and Nuhu Mia of Kornai village led the attack. All of them were known to be supporters of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami. Moreover, before election day, BNP and Jamaat activists threatened the citizens belonging to religious minority communities not to go to the polling stations.⁷⁷
63. On January 5, 43 families from the Hindu community were affected in post election violence in Malopara village under Abhoynagar Upazila in Jessore District. In retaliation, four houses belonging to Muslim families at Chapatola village adjacent to Malopara were vandalized and looted in the presence of police on January 6. At least seven persons from both sides were injured in

⁷⁶ It has been seen since the independence of Bangladesh that after every elections the religious minority communities have been deliberately targeted for political and financial benefits. Awami League, BNP, Jamaat and Jatiya Party - all are allegedly involved in this attack.

⁷⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 07/01/2014

these incidents. On December 27, 2013 Awami League leader and Whip of the 9th Parliament, Abdul Ohab, who was not nominated by the Awami League for the 10 Parliamentary elections; threatened religious minority groups in a public meeting at Sundals Primary School field to vote for him as an independent candidate. At around 10.00 am, four Hindu citizens were beaten by supporters of the 18-Party Alliance while on their way to the polling centre at Pukurkanda in Malopara. At around 4.30 pm, tension spread between both sides over the incident that took place in the morning when inhabitants of Champatola were returning via Malopara. A rumour was spread that two Muslims were killed by Hindus. On this rumour, supporters of the 18-Party Alliance carried out the attack at Malopara. The Alliance had control over the area 'Champatola' and Awami League controlled the area 'Chengutia Bazaar'. Before this attack, more than one hundred outsiders gathered at Chengutia Shalbon by five Nosimon⁷⁸ vehicles.⁷⁹

64. On January 7, 2014 a group of criminals attacked some Christian families at Bhagra in Shreepur Union under Jamalpur District. 15 persons were injured in this attack. The victims claimed that they were attacked by men who opposed the elections and because they voted for 'Boat'.⁸⁰
65. On May 11, 2014 a group of criminals, led by local Awami League leader Bazlur Rahman Nayeem, attacked and beat citizens belonging to the Hindu community, while grabbing property belonging to a Hindu crematorium in Moharajpur village under Niamotpur Upazila in Naogaon District. During the attack, criminals vandalized images of Lord Shiva at a temple close to the crematorium and also set fire to the temple.⁸¹
66. Odhikar expresses serious concerns over these criminal acts of violence against religious minority groups; and also condemns the government's failure to protect the life and livelihood of the citizens belonging to minority communities. Odhikar urges the government to ensure the protection of the citizens belonging to all minority communities.

Barriers to meetings and assemblies

67. The right to freedom of assembly and the holding of peaceful meetings, rallies and processions are the democratic and political rights of every citizen as enshrined in Article 37 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Moreover, putting up barriers to holding peaceful meetings by police is a violation of constitutional and fundamental human rights. Between

⁷⁸ Nosimon: local transport in South Eastern part of Bangladesh

⁷⁹ Fact finding report of Odhikar, 10-12/01/2014

⁸⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 09/01/2014

⁸¹ The daily Manabzamin, 14/05/2014. The boat is the symbol of the Awami League.

January - June 2014, many incidents of putting up barriers and attacks on meetings and assemblies have taken place.

68. On March 8, 2014 police stopped a rally organised by Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal⁸² on the occasion of International Women's Day. At around 10.00 am leaders and activists of the Mohila Dal prepared to bring out a rally from in front of the BNP central party office at Naya Paltan in Dhaka. A large number of police and plain-clothes members of law enforcement agencies were deployed around the BNP office. Riot cars and water cannons were also prepared. During this time, police dispersed the gathering when activists of Mohila Dal brought out a procession from Hotel Victoria lane. Later, Mohila Dal activists led by Mohila Dal President Nure Ara Safa and General Secretary Shirin Sultana tried to bring out rally, which was stopped by police.⁸³
69. On March 9, 2014 Gono Morcha and UBINIG jointly organised a human chain in protest of BT Brinjal⁸⁴ at Bharaimari Boro Bottola Mor in Chholimpur Union under Ishwardi Upazila in Pabna. A group of men led by Chholimpur Union unit Awami League President Abul Hashem Promanik, attacked UBINIG official Arfan Ali and forced the participants of the human chain to leave. Later, the protestors went to form a human chain in a BT Brinjal field in Mathalpara village, where 20-25 local men, including UP member Wazed Ali, Astol Ali and Khokon Sardar, led by Abul Hashem Promanik attacked them again and stopped the human chain programme. Men also stopped journalists present there when they tried to take photos of the attack. The central leader of the Sommilito Nari Somaj, rights activist Farida Akhter, was assaulted by attackers and Nur Mohammad, Golam Mostafa Roni, Nur Alam, Arfan Ali, Alif, Sofura Begum, Hafizur Rahman, Mofiz Prang, Shukchan Mia, Anowara Begum, Modhu Prang and Romecha Begum were injured. It is to be mentioned that the government has initiated to cultivate the controversial genetically modified crop, BT Brinjal, in Bangladesh. Many voluntary organisations and civil society groups are protesting against this initiative. The human chain programme was organised as part of this movement.⁸⁵
70. On May 3, 2014 police stopped the human chain programme organised by eminent citizens of the country at the South Plaza of the National Parliament to protest enforced disappearance, murder and kidnapping. Police arrested the owner of the megaphones and the rickshaw puller who carried them

⁸² Women wing of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

⁸³ The daily Manabzamin, 09/03/2014

⁸⁴ BT Brinjal is a genetically modified variety of eggplant that is reportedly extremely hazardous to health if consumed.

⁸⁵ Report send by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Pabna, 11/03/2014 ; protest note of anti BT Brinjal Morcha, 10/03/2014

Police also snatched away the banner, festoons and leaflets which were brought for the assembly.⁸⁶

71. On May 10, 2014 BNP organised an assembly in front of Narayanganj City BNP office in protest of the disappearance and murders of seven men in Narayanganj, including Advocate Chandon Sarkar and Narayanganj City Corporation Panel Mayor, Nazrul Islam. The said assembly was organised there as the administration did not allow BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to hold an assembly on May 14 in Narayanganj. A large number of police surrounded the BNP office and took away megaphones and banners. As a result, Narayanganj City BNP could not hold its rally.⁸⁷
72. Police did not allow a rally, participated by victims family members, in protest of the on-going enforced disappearances, killings and abductions. On May 22, 2014 at 4.00 pm, BNP organised the assembly and rally at the auditorium of Dhaka Engineers Institute. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was supposed to deliver her speech as the chief guest. The meeting was organised in order to gather public opinion for disbanding RAB for their alleged involvement in enforced disappearances and killings. The party activists and victim families started gathering at the venue from 2.00 pm; but no one was able to enter the auditorium of the Engineers Institute due to police barricades. Police also locked the main gate of the auditorium. At around 2.30 pm, police baton charged BNP leaders and activists and members of victim families, as they tried to get into the auditorium. Despite having permission to hold this programme, it had to be cancelled.⁸⁸
73. On May 24, 2014 police stopped the rally organised by Jatiyotabadi Ainjibi Forum at the Supreme Court premises, held in protest of the killing of Advocate Chandon Kumar Sarkar and the on-going incidents of disappearance, killings and abduction. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was supposed to deliver her speech as the chief guest in the meeting. From the night of May 23, police interfered in and tried to halt the preparations being made for the programme. The entry points of the Supreme Court were blocked with iron fences by police, who also harassed and checked lawyers entering the Court premises. Furthermore, police kept the whole area blocked by taking control of the roads around the Supreme Court. They also arrested 15 lawyers from the Supreme Court.⁸⁹
74. Odhikar believes that this kind of prohibition and attacks on peaceful protest meetings and rallies are tantamount to interference with the democratic rights of the citizens of Bangladesh.

⁸⁶ The daily Naya Diganta, 04/05/2014

⁸⁷ Report sent by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Narayanganj

⁸⁸ Information gathered by Odhikar

⁸⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 25/05/2014

Violation of right to freedom of the media

75. The reality is that most of the media, in particular, electronic media in Bangladesh are owned and controlled by supporters of the government. The present government closed down the electronic and print media owned by pro-opposition supporters/members such as Channel 1, Diganta TV, Islamic TV and the daily Amar Desh. The Acting Editor of the daily Amar Desh, Mahmudur Rahman has been detained in Kashimpur Central Jail-2 since April 11, 2013. In addition to this, incidents of attacks on journalists occur during the time of gathering news/information or due to publishing reports. It has been alleged that in most cases, leaders and activists of the ruling party were involved in such incidents.
76. From January to June 2014, according to information gathered by Odhikar, one journalist was killed, 50 were injured, 18 were assaulted, nine were threatened and 12 were sued.
77. On January 16, 2014 the printing press of the daily Inqilab at Ram Krishna Mission Road in Dhaka was sealed after a search by police. During this operation, News Editor Rabiullah Rabi, Deputy Chief Reporter Rafique Mohammad and Diplomatic Correspondent Atiqur Rahman were arrested. Furthermore, two computers and some documents were also seized and the server room and plate room were sealed by police. A report titled 'Indian force assists operation by Joint Forces in Satkhira' was published on January 16, in the daily Inqilab. Due to this report, a case was filed with Wari Police Station against the Editor, Publisher and Chief News Editor of the newspaper under the Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (Amendment 2013) and under the Penal Code.⁹⁰ After closing down the newspaper, the Editor apologized for the published report on its online version in the same night. On February 1, 2014 police reopened the printing press of the daily Inqilab.⁹¹ On February 20, the Court granted bail to three journalists.⁹²
78. On May 5, 2014 Chhatra League activists beat a student named Rassel with bamboo rods on the assumption that he was a Shibir activist, at the Proctor's Office of the Jagannath University. Journalists went to the Proctor's Office to collect information about the incident when Jagannath University unit Chhatra League President FM Shariful Islam made obscene comments against them. When journalists protested, Chhatra League activists Kanon, Riyan, Rassel, Saimon, Asad, Mamun, Rony, led by Shariful Islam, attacked and beat Bangla News reporter Imran Ahmed; Bangladesh Protidin reporter, Mahbub Momtazi; and Shokaler Khabor reporter, Tanvir Ahmed in the presence of the

⁹⁰ The daily Manabzamin, 17/01/2014

⁹¹ Amar Desh online version, 02/02/2014

⁹² Amar Desh online version, 21/02/2014

Proctor, at the conference room of the Vice-Chancellor. During this time, 25 journalists were confined by Chhatra League activists and Shariful Islam was heard to comment, "Nothing will happen if one or two journalists' are killed".⁹³

79. On May 24, 2014 the daily Prothom Alo published a report titled 'The local government assistance project at Bauphal exists on paper not in reality.' Due to this report, on May 26 Shaheen Hawlader, Organising Secretary of Kanokdia Union unit Awami League under Bauphal Upazila and follower of the Chief Whip of the Parliament, ASM Firoze filed a case at Speedy Trial Court in Patuakhali against Bauphal correspondent of the daily Prothom Alo, ABM Mizanur Rahman with accusation of extortion and mugging. On June 3, police submitted a report in the court after investigation. On June 9, the Court issued a warrant of arrest under sections 4 and 5 of the Law and Order Disruption (Speedy Trial) Act, 2002 against ABM Mizanur Rahman. It is to be noted that the ruling party men earlier filled two more cases against Mizanur Rahman accusing him of initiating a quarrel and rape. Mizanur Rahman had been acquitted from the case relating to the quarrel and police took a very long time to investigate and submit a final report under the rape case after finding no proof.⁹⁴
80. Odhikar expresses grave concern over the attacks on journalists while they carry their professional duty. Odhikar believes that democratic process will be under threat if freedom of expression and media is obstructed. Odhikar strongly condemns attacks on journalists and also demands that the criminals involved in attacking journalists should also be arrested and tried for their crimes. Odhikar also urges the journalists to report based on truth and should take part in good and effective journalism without being bias to anyone.

The Acting Editor of the daily Amar Desh, Mahmudur Rahman allegedly being deprived of treatment and his trial commences in a Special Court

81. The Acting Editor of the daily Amar Desh, Mahmudur Rahman has been detained in Kashimpur Jail-2 from April 11, 2013. A total of 69 cases are filed against him under various Acts, including the Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (Amended in 2009).⁹⁵ There are allegations that Mahmudur Rahman had been tortured in various ways during remand.
82. On April 19, 2014 Mahmudur Rahman was brought to the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Department of Bangbabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) from Kashimpur Central Jail for better medical

⁹³ The daily Manabzamin, 06/05/2014

⁹⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 17/06/2014

⁹⁵ Information gathered by odhikar

treatment. Chairman of the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Department, Professor Dr. Moinuzzaman advised him to come to the hospital from Kashimpur Jail to take treatment every alternative day without admitting him to the hospital as Mahmudur Rahman had severe pain in his right shoulder and hands. However, the family of Mahmudur Rahman said that he is in no physical condition to make the almost six-hour journey to and from BSMMU for physiotherapy every alternative day, due to severe pain in his hands and body. Mahmudur Rahman has been detained in jail from April 11, 2013 and received cruel and degrading treatment in remand. He has been suffering from osteo-arthritis and blood pressure and has severe pain in his right shoulder and hands and is suffering decay of vertebra for over a month. It is to be mentioned that, on April 16, 2014 on his application, the Court ordered the jail authority to provide Mahmudur Rahman with proper treatment in a specialized hospital.⁹⁶ Meanwhile on June 7, 2014 lawyers, and journalists of the Amar Desh alleged in a press conference at the National Press Club that the government is gradually pushing Mahmudur Rahman towards death.⁹⁷

83. On April 28, 2014 the charges against Mahmudur Rahman were framed by a District and Session Judge, Basudeb Roy, when he was produced before the Special District and Session Judge Court-3 from Kashimpur Jail under a case filed by the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC). Mahmudur Rahman addressed the Judge, "The Prime Minister had asked the ACC to file fabricated cases to punish me, as a report was published in the daily Amar Desh regarding corruption against the Prime Minister, her son and the Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Affairs Adviser".⁹⁸
84. On May 28, 2014 the hearing of a case filed by ACC against Mahmudur Rahman commenced in the Special Judge Court set up at the Alia Madrassa ground in Bokshi Bazaar, Dhaka. Terming the ACC's case false, baseless and politically motivated, the lawyers of Mahmudur Rahman said that this case cannot be continued under any circumstances. However the Court has framed charges against him and fixed the dates for prosecution. At the beginning of the hearing Mahmudur Rahman, with the Court's permission said, "ACC is being used as a repressive tool of the government. I do not anticipate any justice during an illegitimate regime. The fact of this case is that the ACC has filed it under instructions from the illegitimate Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and based it on false and fabricated information gathered by politically motivated officials of the Prime Minister's Office. The ACC has taken cognizance of this false information". In addition to that, Mahmudur

⁹⁶ The daily Naya Diganta, 21/04/2014

⁹⁷ The daily Amar Desh online.com, 08/06/2014

⁹⁸ The daily Amar Desh online version, 29/04/2014

Rahman also informed the Court that he was not given proper medical treatment in jail despite having Court Orders.⁹⁹

85. Odhikar believes that depriving from medical treatment of a detained person in jail is a grave violation of human rights. Odhikar demands the release of the daily Amar Desh editor Mahmudur Rahman from jail for the sake of better treatment.

Negative attitude of the government towards freedom of association and of expression

86. The present government refuses to take heed of the criticisms or opinions given or published by any institution, organisation or any individual towards the government or any of its institution. Rather the government becomes extremely attacking and it tries to link those organisations or individuals to 'militants' by any means; hold them in contempt by filling cases and cause harassment in various other ways. Human rights organisations and human rights defenders have become the main target of the government in this regard; because the main tasks of human rights defenders are to protest and fight against any injustice perpetrated by the government and also to refrain the government from doing wrongful acts through awareness. Recently the government, in principle, has approved of the new law drafted by the NGO Affairs Bureau in the Cabinet so that the human rights organisations and human rights defenders are put in constraints to get foreign funding for their activities.

The Cabinet approves the draft Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act, 2014

87. On June 2, 2014 the Cabinet approved the newly draft law 'The Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act, 2014'. Under this proposed law, the decision makers of the government will be empowered to monitor and evaluate voluntary activities of the NGOs. Individuals or NGOs who receive funds individually or collectively in order to implement projects will come under constant monitoring and evaluation under this Act. The decision-makers have also been given the authority to provide registration of NGOs under this law. In this regard, NGOs or voluntary organisations have to satisfy the decision makers. Moreover, the decision makers are also authorised to suspend or cancel the registration if any irregularities are found against any NGO during project implementation. However, the government can appoint an administrator to file cases against persons involved in the

⁹⁹ The daily Amar Desh online.com, 29/05/2014

targeted organisations or to operate a case in order to close down or dissolve any NGO or for any other reason. The affected NGO or person involved with such organisation may appeal to the Secretary, Prime Minister's Office within 30 (thirty) working days of the order for punishment, but the decision given by the Secretary shall be deemed final in this regard. Furthermore, the law prohibits receiving any foreign donations to any autonomous organisation like a university, which might put barriers to promote education programmes in Bangladesh.

88. Odhikar believes that the proposed NGO Law will violate freedom of expression and association; and will control human rights and voluntary organisations, which are vocal against human rights abuses. If it is passed as an Act in the Parliament many vocal human rights organisations which stand beside the victims, might be erased. Moreover, human rights related activities of the NGOs will possibly be stopped – thus gagging the voice of victims of abuse.

Harassment on Odhikar

89. On August 10, 2013 Odhikar's Secretary Advocate Adilur Rahman Khan was arrested, detained and there after the Organisation has been continuously harassed and intimidated by various government agencies. Such harassment commenced after the release of Odhikar's fact finding report on reported extrajudicial killings perpetrated by law enforcement agencies, during an assembly organised by the group Hefazate Islam on May 5-6, 2013. Although the government has been putting barriers on Odhikar's activities since 2009, which Odhikar has mentioned at different times, the present scenario is quite extreme. Monitoring and surveillance by the intelligence agencies on Adilur Rahman Khan, staff members of Odhikar and its office continue.
90. The NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), which is under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Office, has been putting up barriers against releasing funds for Odhikar's programmes to be implemented. Activities of the two-year 10-month project on 'Human Rights Research and Advocacy', funded by the Netherlands Embassy was accomplished in June 2013 but the NGOAB did not release its last phase of funds till date. This project had been implemented mainly to document, research and advocate on human rights violations by the Indian Border Security Force along the border, extrajudicial killings, political violence, rights of the religious and ethnic minority communities and violence against women. In order to implement the project on time, Odhikar had to borrow money from its general funds. It is to be mentioned that the NGOAB had been putting barriers to release fund of this project since October 2010.
91. After completion of the first year activities under the 'Education on the Convention against Torture and OPCAT Awareness Programme in

Bangladesh' project, funded by the European Union, Odhikar applied for the release of funds for the second year's activities on March 6, 2013. On May 15, 2013 the Bureau gave 50% of the funds for the second year, after three months of the submission of Odhikar's request. On August 21, 2013 Odhikar submitted an application to the NGO Affairs Bureau again for releasing the remaining 50% of funds, along with a project completion audit report of the first year. The NGOAB has been reluctant to give fund clearance to the said project. Over a year has passed; still the NGOAB has not released the remaining 50% of the project funds.

92. On April 9, 2014 Odhikar submitted an audit report and applied for the release of second year funds under 'Empowering Women as Community Human Rights Defenders' project, funded by the Finnish NGO Foundation for Human Rights (KIOS) after the completion of first year activities. The project was designed to take effective action in order to stop violence against women in four districts. Odhikar is facing difficulties to implement the project activities for the second year due to non-release of funds.
93. As a human rights organisation, it is Odhikar's responsibility to protest against all acts of human rights violations by the State and also make the people aware of human rights and state accountability. The government is attempting to gag dissenting and critical voices of Odhikar, including all human rights defenders, victims and several members of their families.

Criticism against TIB for releasing report on the Parliament

94. On March 19, 2014 Members of Parliament belonging to Awami League and Jatiya Party asked for a ruling from the Speaker of the Parliament regarding Transparency International, Bangladesh's report on 'Parliament Watch'¹⁰⁰. MPs of both the parties claimed that TIB's statement had disgraced the Parliament. They also demanded that TIB's funding source should be investigated to see whether they are funding to 'militants' and for 'terrorist activities'.¹⁰¹ It is to be noted that Transparency International, Bangladesh released a report 'Parliament Watch' on March 18, 2014. The report states that 222 hours and 36 minutes of the session had been lost due to lack of quorum in the ninth Parliament, which costs about 104 crore taka (USD 13,407,245.65). Furthermore, boycotting of Parliament for 342 days by the Opposition caused losses of four crore and 87 lac taka (USD 628,221.76). In a press conference TIB's Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said that the objective of this report was to make the Parliament accountable to the people. Regarding the 10th Parliament, Iftekharuzzaman said, "This is a Parliament without the

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.ti-bangladesh.org>

¹⁰¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 20/03/2014

Opposition. Although literally there is an Opposition in the Parliament but in reality there is none".¹⁰²

95. The current government is active in violating freedom of expression and association of human rights organisations and NGOs, which is contrary to the Constitution of Bangladesh and UN Declaration of Human Rights Defenders.

Attempt made to abduct human rights defender Mohammad Nur Khan

96. On May 15, 2014 there was an attempt to abduct Mohammad Nur Khan, the Director of the Information and Investigation Cell of NGO, Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), from in front of the ASK office in Lalmatia, Dhaka. Mohammad Nur Khan informed Odhikar that at around 5:10 pm, he along with his colleague took a rickshaw from outside the office after finishing work. At that time he saw a microbus about 30/35 yards ahead. When his rickshaw took a left turn, the microbus started following them. At that time, one of the passengers of the microbus was looking at him through the window. He also saw a man sitting in the microbus with a shotgun and the ages of the other men were between 28 and 30 years. Assessing the situation, he jumped off the rickshaw and ran back to the office.

Bangladesh-India and Bangladesh-Myanmar relations

97. Human rights violations along the Bangladesh-India border; and refusal of water sharing have put barriers to mutual friendly relationships between the people of the two countries. Adequate water sharing of 54 undivided rivers of Bangladesh is yet to be recognised. In addition to that, the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) is constantly violating international law and human rights norms by perpetrating acts of violence on Bangladeshi citizens living near the border. Furthermore, the Border Guard Police of Myanmar have recently been threatening the human rights of Bangladeshi citizens at the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. It is to be mentioned that three sides of Bangladesh are surrounded by India and the South-East part of the country shares its border with Myanmar.

Bangladesh deprived of getting adequate water

98. In 1982 India established a barrage across the River Teesta at Gajaldoba. After that India took water unilaterally to Mohananda River through a diversion canal. The Indian Government is following a very negative attitude in terms of releasing water. As a result, Bangladesh's largest Teesta Barrage Project is about to stop. This is the largest irrigation project in Bangladesh. The water flow has decreased from February, 2014. Now only 300 – 400 cusec water has

¹⁰² The daily Prothom Alo, 19/03/2014

been flowing through Teesta.¹⁰³ As a result, more than 100 kilometers of area at the Teesta basin is now suffering from scarcity of water. The dry river bed of Teesta has brought crisis to Bangladeshi farmers' life, mainly in the northern areas. The farmers of Nilphamari, Dinajpur and Rangpur are dependent on the Teesta Barrage Project. Water experts state that this adversity has been formed due to refusal of Teesta river water sharing, unilaterally by India. Bangladesh has 54 undivided rivers with India. Among them, the Teesta River is 366 kilometers long. This river runs from a glacier in Sikkim of India and winds through the Nilphamari District of Bangladesh. The Teesta River has been flowing along 117 kilometers in Bangladesh and 249 kilometers in Sikkim and West Bengal in India.¹⁰⁴ It is to be noted that India had struck first on Bangladesh's river flow by establishing the Farakka barrage on the River Ganges in 1975 and a large part of its flow had been diverted to the Bhagirothi River of that country.¹⁰⁵

99. Odhikar urges the United Nations and human rights defenders to actively campaign for adequate water from India in order to save the lives and livelihoods of the people of Bangladesh.

Human rights violations in border areas by BSF

100. According to information collected by Odhikar, between January to June 2014, 14 Bangladeshis were killed by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF). Of them nine were gunned down, four were tortured to death and one drowned after falling into a river when the BSF chased him. During this period, 23 Bangladeshis were injured. Of them 18 were injured by bullets, five were tortured. In addition to that, 59 Bangladeshis were allegedly abducted by the BSF.

101. On January 2, 2014 at night, a Bangladeshi cattle trader, Abdul Wahab Mia (45) was chased by inhabitants along the Mathabhanga border of Koch Bihar under West Bengal in India, from International Main Pillar 872 at Dhabolguri border under Patgram upazila in Lalmonirhat district. Later he was handed over to BSF and beaten to death by BSF and Indian citizens.¹⁰⁶

102. In the morning of May 19, 2014, BSF killed a Bangladeshi citizen named Sirajul Islam (40) by stabbing him with bayonets at Putkhali border under Sharsha Upazila in Jessore District. On May 18, 2014 at around 10:30 pm, Sirajul went to India with some cattle traders through the Putkhali border. The BSF chased them while they were returning with cows. Sirajul was caught by

¹⁰³ The daily JaiJaiDin, 18/03/2014

¹⁰⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 22/04/2014 and JaiJaiDin, 18/03/2014

¹⁰⁵ The weekly Amader Budhbar, 12/02/2014

¹⁰⁶ Report sent by human rights defender associated with Odhikar from Lalmonirhat, 03/01/2014

BSF members and taken to Angrail Camp where he was stabbed with bayonets. He died while under treatment.¹⁰⁷

103. On June 8, 2014 BSF members of Jhaodang camp opened fire at a group of Bangladeshi cattle traders at Agrobhulot border in Benapole under Jessore District, when they were returning from India with cows. At that time, a cattle trader named Parvez (21) was shot. Later Parvez died on the way to Bangladesh while other traders were bringing him in.¹⁰⁸

104. According to the Memorandum of Understanding and related treaties signed between the two countries, if citizens of both countries illegally cross the border, it would be considered trespass and as per law those persons should be handed over to the civilian authority. However, we have noticed that India has been repeatedly violating treaties, shooting at anyone seen near the border or anyone trying to cross the border; and illegally entering Bangladesh, which is a clear violation of international law and human rights. Odhikar believes that the role of the Bangladesh Government should be independent and sovereign in order to protect its citizens. No independent and sovereign state can ever accept the indiscriminate killing, torture and abduction of its citizens by another state without reason.

Human rights violations by Myanmar Border Guard Police

105. On May 28, 2014 at around 9:30 am Border Guard Police (BGP) of Myanmar opened fire at Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) members of the newly set up Painchhori BOP, when a patrol team of that Camp reached Dochhori and Techhori connecting areas of a canal at Naikkhonchhori border in Bandarban District. At that time BGB's Nayek Subeder, Mizanur Rahman was shot and died on the spot. BGP of Myanmar entered into Bangladesh territory, violating the UN Convention and took the body of Mizanur Rahman and his arms and ammunition. After that, the BGB took position with white flags near Pillar No. 50 at the border in order to bring back the body of Mizanur Rahman. On May 30, 2014 at around 3:00 pm, BGP sent word that the body had to be handed over to BGB near Pillar No. 52. BGP members of Myanmar opened fire again at the BGB members when they marched towards No. 52 pillar.¹⁰⁹

106. It is to be noted that, near the end of 1991, the then Myanmar Border Guards Nasaka attacked Reju Fatrajhiri BDR¹¹⁰ Camp at Ghundhum border in Naikkhongchhori and looted arms and ammunition after killing a BDR member of Bangladesh. Due to this, acts of human rights violations occurred

¹⁰⁷ The daily Amar Desh, online report, 20/05/2014

¹⁰⁸ Report sent by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Jessore.

¹⁰⁹ The daily Naya Diganta, 31/05/2014

¹¹⁰ BDR: Bangladesh Rifles was the previous name of Bangladesh border security force. Now it has been re-named as Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) after the BDR mutiny in February 2009.

at the border area during that time and as a result, about 250,000 Rohingyas took shelter in Bangladesh.

Situation of ready-made garment workers

107.Odhikar observes that clashes take place between the ready-made garment workers and factory owners mainly due to poor wages; and wages or bonuses not being paid on time; or on demands for increased wages. The tripartite agreement must be implemented in order to save this industry and the livelihood of factory workers.

108.According to information gathered by Odhikar, from January to June 2014, 259 workers were injured by the police during unrest; 81 workers were injured by the garment's authority; 135 were injured in stampedes to exit factories due to fire panic and other reason; and 32 workers were terminated.

109.On January 4, 2014, at least 20 persons were injured including four with gunshot wounds, in a clash between police and garment factory workers over protests demanding increased wages, in two RMG factories named Section Seven Ltd and Section Seven Apparels Ltd in Chittagong EPZ. Workers alleged that wages were supposed to be given under a new salary structure from December 2013. The factory authorities also obtained additional work from workers on the pretext of increasing their wages. Despite this, wages were not increased and the factory authorities could not give a proper explanation for this. As a result, angry workers gathered outside the factories. During this time, the authority closed the main gates of the factories, which caused the infuriated workers to vandalise the area.¹¹¹

110.On February 18, 2014 workers of CPM Composite Knitwear Limited were protesting for unpaid wages at Zinzira area in Savar, Dhaka. An altercation occurred with police when the factory workers vandalised the factory and blocked the roads. At least 100 people were injured, including 11 with gunshot wounds, during the clash. The workers claimed that they were yet to be paid three months' salary. The management changed the due dates several times but did not pay them until the violence took place. In addition to this, workers became furious when they heard about the possible closure of the factory.¹¹²

111.Workers of Softex-1 and Softex-2 garment factories at Hazi Kudrat Ali Super Market in Pallabi got a weekly holiday on March 6 after work. After the holiday, on March 7 in the morning, workers came to the factory to join work, but they found the main gate locked. The security officers inside the gate told workers that the factory was temporary closed by order of the owners, as the

¹¹¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 05/01/2014

¹¹² The daily Bangladesh Protidin, 19/02/2014

building structure was found to be vulnerable. This made the workers annoyed and the security officers stopped workers while they were trying to enter the factory by breaking the locks. Later, annoyed workers chanted slogans in front of the factories. On March 8 at around 9.30 am, hundreds of workers of Softex Garment factory gathered in front of Kudrat Ali Super Market and brought out a procession against the closing down of the factory without any notice and for the demand for payment of three months due wages. Workers put barricades on the main road of Pallabi and several vehicles on Pallabi-Gulistan Road were vandalised. Hearing of the unrest, workers of other garment factories joined them. At one stage, police baton-charged and fired blank shots and threw tear gas shells to disperse angry workers. At least 10 workers were injured in this incident.¹¹³

112. On May 5, 2014 workers of Provatex Apparel Limited in Savar, blocked the Dhaka-Aricha Highway over the demand for overdue wages. Receiving this information, industrial police reached the spot and asked workers to leave the blockade. The angry workers declared that they would not leave the highway without their wages. Police baton charged at them; and at least 15 workers were injured.¹¹⁴

113. On June 16, 2014 at least 30 persons were injured during a clash between men of the owners of the factory and workers of Aron Star Sweater factory at Rupgang in Narayanganj. Workers alleged that they were protesting inside the factory without joining work as the owners did not fulfill their 6-point demand, including the payment of salary and other benefits for the month of May, regular overtime and bonus. Workers also blocked the Dhaka-Sylhet highways.¹¹⁵

114. 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. The workers need to be brought under synchronized security programmes and the infrastructure of the factories to be built systematically.

Violence against women

115. Between January – June 2014, a significant number of women were the victims of rape, dowry related violence, acid attacks and sexual harassment. Odhikar believes that women are being victimised mainly due to lack of implementation of laws; failure of the Judiciary; lack of victim and witness protection; corruption and criminalisation of the members of law enforcement agencies; economic instability; and weak administration. Since the

¹¹³ The daily Manabzamin, 09/03/2014

¹¹⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 05/05/2014

¹¹⁵ The daily Jugantor, 17/06/2014

perpetrators of violence against women escape punishment due to various reasons, potential violators are encouraged and incidents of violence increase.

Dowry-related violence

116. According to Odhikar documentation, between January – June 2014, 103 women were subjected to dowry violence. Of these women, it has been alleged that 56 were women and one under age bride was killed because of dowry, 42 were violated in various other ways for dowry demands and four women allegedly committed suicide. Some incidents are as follows:
117. In the early morning of April 10, 2014, Joynal Abedin set fire to his wife Rozi Akhter by pouring kerosene on her while she was sleeping at their house in Ranirhat area under Rangunia Upazila in Chittagong District. After suffering for four days, Rozi Akhter died in the burn unit of Chittagong Medical College Hospital on April 14. Police arrested Joynal Abedin.¹¹⁶
118. On May 4, 2014, a housewife named Aakhi Begum (22) was beaten to death and her body hanged from the ceiling allegedly by her husband Akram Mondol, over dowry demands at Shalikha Purbapara village under Sonatola Upazila in Bogra District. Aakhi's father filed a case with Sonatola Police Station accusing three persons under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000.¹¹⁷
119. On May 13, 2014, Biplob Hossain tried to kill his wife, Shompa Begum (22) by pouring kerosene on her and setting her on fire, at Chokrampur village under Sadar Upazila of Naogaon District. Various portions of Shompa's body were burnt. Neighbours rescued the housewife and took her to Naogaon Sadar Upazila Hospital in a critical condition. Shompa's father filed a case with Naogaon Sadar Model Police Station accusing seven persons. Police arrested two accused men named Azahar and Gittu in regard to this.¹¹⁸

Rape

120. Between January to June 2014, a total number of 289 females were reportedly raped. Among them, 102 were women, 167 were children below the age of 16 and the age of 20 victims could not be determined. Of the women, 12 were killed after being raped, 47 were victims of gang rape and four committed suicide. Out of the 167 child victims, 16 children were killed after being raped, 43 were victims of gang rape and one child committed suicide. Furthermore, 31 girls were victims of attempted rape. Some incidents are given below:
121. On March 24, 2014 a housewife (22) was raped by criminals in Dhakkin Kaladi area of Matlab under Chandpur District. The victim filed a case with

¹¹⁶ Report sent by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Chittagong.

¹¹⁷ The Daily Star, 06/05/2014

¹¹⁸ The daily Manabzamin and the Daily Ittefaq, 14/05/2014

Matlab Police Station accusing five rapists Hussain Mohammad Kochi, Patti Babu, Lal Sharif, Tasif and Zamal Prodhania. After the case was filed, police of Matlab Police Station arrested Matlab Municipality (South) unit Chhatra League General Secretary, Hussain Mohammed Kochi. Activists and supporters of Chhatra League staged a violent demonstration and vandalised several CNG-run vehicles and shops in protest of the arrest of the Chhatra League leader.¹¹⁹

122. On April 15, 2014 an adolescent from Kaliganj of Satkhira was waiting for her mother at Zero Point in Khulna. Her mother was supposed to arrive from Barisal by bus. She could not communicate with her mother as her cell phone battery had run out of charge. She was waiting beside the Khulna-Satkhira Highways till night fall. At around 10:30 pm Mazeda (42), the wife of a restaurant owner, Shahidul called out to the girl to give her shelter. Restaurant owner Shahidul raped the girl at midnight while she was sleeping. The girl filed a case in this regard with Lobonchora Police Station accusing Shahidul and his wife Mazeda and police arrested Shahidul.¹²⁰
123. On May 10, 2014 a mentally disabled girl was gang raped by criminals in Ratanpur village under Sokhipur Upazila in Tangail District. It was learnt that four criminals of Hatibandha village raped the girl in a jungle while she was returning to Berabari village from her maternal uncle's house at Hatibandha. Later she was handed over to four other criminals of Ratanpur area who also gang-raped her. The victim was admitted to Tangail General Hospital. On May 13, 2014, her uncle, as plaintiff, filed a case with Sokhipur Police Station accusing eight criminals. Police arrested three accused persons, including Ramprashad, Alam Mia and Palash.¹²¹
124. On June 5, 2014 a female garment worker, who is a victim of Rana Plaza Collapse, was raped by one Shahabuddin by calling her on mobile phone to provide her with financial assistant in Savar, Dhaka.

Sexual harassment and stalking

125. According to information gathered by Odhikar, a total of 114 girls and women were victims of sexual harassment between January - June 2014. Among them, three were killed, 17 were injured, five were abducted, four were assaulted, eight committed suicide and 77 were sexually harassed in various ways. During this period, three men were killed, 17 were injured and four women were injured by the stalkers when they protested against such acts.

¹¹⁹ Daily Star 26 March 2014 / Naya Diganta 26 March 2014

¹²⁰ Report sent by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Khulna.

¹²¹ The daily Manabzamin, 14/05/2014

- 126.On February 3, 2014 Sabrina Yeasmin Iva (15) committed suicide by hanging herself due to threats received through SMS that her photographs, which were taken secretly, will be uploaded in the internet in Sujapur village Under Phulbari Upazila in Dinajpur District.¹²²
- 127.On April 15, 2014, a 15-year old madrassa student, Jamena Akhter was sexually harassed by Pallabi Thana unit Jubo League General Secretary Jewel Rana and his associates Rakib, Sahabuddin and Jewel at Pallabi's Bauniabad Colony in Dhaka. Jamena Akhter committed suicide in the evening after this incident.¹²³
- 128.On June 22, 2014 a college student named Rubel was stabbed to death by Chhatra League activist Abu Bakkar Siddiqui, when Rubel protested the incident of stalking to his younger sister in Khulna town.¹²⁴
- 129.Odhikar expresses serious concerns over the increase in violence against women. Odhikar demands that the perpetrators be brought to effective and proper justice.

Acid violence

- 130.According to information gathered by Odhikar, between January – June 2014, it was reported that 25 persons became victims of acid violence. Among them 16 women, five men, one boy and three girl became victims of acid violence.
- 131.On February 10, 2014 at midnight, Mohammad and his son Nobi Hossain threw acid on Modina Begum (43), wife of Mojnu Mia entering the house by breaking the windows. The attack was over a land related dispute in Choriakona village under Kotiadi Upazila in Kishoreganj District. A case was filed with Kotiadi Police Station in this regard. However, police could not arrest anyone.¹²⁵
- 132.On March 12, 2014 at around 8.30 pm a criminal in a veil knocked on the door of the house of businessman Rustam Ali at BRTC Bus stand area near the police station under Patharghata Upazila in Barguna District. When Rustam Ali's elder daughter Farzana opened the door, the criminal attacked her with acid in a syringe. Farzana tried to protect her eyes with her hands, but various parts of her body, including her face and hands were burnt. Farzana's mother and younger sister were also attacked when they ran hearing her scream.¹²⁶
- 133.Incidents of acid throwing are occurring due to lack of implementation of the Acid Crimes Prevention Act 2002 and the Acid Control Act 2002, as well as ineffective investigation and a weak criminal justice system.

¹²² The daily Naya Diganta, 07/02/2014

¹²³ The Daily Ittefaq, 16/04/2014

¹²⁴ The daily New Age, 23/06/2014

¹²⁵ Report sent by human right defender associated with Odhikar from Kishoreganj and the daily Manabzamin, 12/02/2014

¹²⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 15/03/2014

Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (Amended in 2009 and 2013) is yet to be repealed

134. The repressive Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (amended in 2009 and 2013)¹²⁷ (ICT Act) is still in existence. The latest amendment to the ICT Act was made on October 6, 2013. Section 57 of the ICT Act 2013, states that publishing or transmitting in a website in electronic form, of any defamatory or false information is considered to be a cognizable and non-bailable offence. Moreover, punishment for committing this offence has been increased for a term of a minimum of seven years and maximum of 14 years imprisonment. This law has curtailed the freedom of expression and the government is using this Act against HRDs, journalists, bloggers and people who have alternative beliefs.

135. Odhikar urges the government to repeal this repressive law immediately.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ In 2013, the amendment made to the Act made the offence mentioned in Section 57 non-bailable and cognizable. 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 one crore or both.

¹²⁸ The ICT Act 2006 (Amended in 2009) is also the law under which the Secretary and Director of Odhikar have been charged.

Statistics: January-June 2014*								
Type of Human Rights Violation		January	February	March	April	May	June	Total
Extrajudicial killings**	Crossfire	20	13	7	14	5	7	66
	Torture to death	0	2	1	0	2	2	7
	Shot to death	18	1	6	4	1	0	30
	Beaten to death	1	1	1	0	1	1	5
	Total	39	17	15	18	9	10	108
Disappearances		1	7	2	18	0	0	28
Human rights violations by Indian BSF	Bangladeshis Killed	1	1	2	2	4	4	14
	Bangladeshis Injured	4	3	3	2	1	10	23
	Bangladeshis Abducted	13	8	12	4	17	5	59
Death in Jail		1	5	4	7	5	4	26
Attack on journalists	Killed	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Injured	2	9	7	25	5	2	50
	Threatened	1	1	3	2	1	1	9
	Assaulted	0	1	0	2	15	0	18
	Arrested	4	0	0	0	0	1	5
Political violence	Killed	53	10	22	17	17	13	132
	Injured	1472	1166	1343	593	412	238	5224
Dowry related violence (including women victims, their children and relatives)		12	15	14	22	18	30	111
Rape		39	50	40	56	63	41	289
Sexual harassment /Stalking of women		14	12	29	25	22	12	114
Acid Violence		1	3	6	5	6	4	25
Public lynching		16	6	11	13	11	6	63
RMG Workers	Killed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Injured	60	135	65	51	49	115	475

*Odhikar's documentation

**From January-June, 19 persons were extra judicially killed by the law enforcement agencies due to political violence which is also included in the statiscal part of the Political Violence

Recommendations

1. Incidents of extrajudicial killings and torture by law enforcement agencies must be investigated and the perpetrators be brought to effective justice. The Government should ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.
2. The Government has to explain all incidents of enforced disappearances and killing allegedly perpetrated by the law enforcement agencies. The Government must bring the members of the security forces who are involved in the incidents of enforced disappearance and killing to justice. Odhikar urges the government to accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance adopted by the UN on December 20, 2006.
3. The Government should ensure accountability of all activities of law enforcement agencies and the government must also take effective measure to put a stop to their impunity.
4. The Government should take effective measure to stop political violence and the criminalisation of politics; and it should also take legal action against criminal acts perpetrated by its party activists. The law enforcement agencies must play effective role without being bias to political influence. Free and fair Parliamentary elections must be held immediately by ensuring participation of all political parties, under a neutral, interim government.
5. An independent inquiry commission must be formed immediately under a retired Judge of the Supreme Court in order to investigate the incident of attacks on 'Biharis' at Mirpur; and the perpetrators of this incident should be arrested and brought to justice.
6. The Government should take all measures to protect the rights of the citizens belonging to religious and ethnic minority communities and ensure their security. The Government has also to ensure their right to perform religious and cultural practices.
7. Peaceful meetings and assemblies should not be obstructed. The government should refrain from attacking peaceful programmes and carrying out repressive, unconstitutional activities.
8. Interference on the media must be stopped. The detained and ailing Acting Editor of the daily Amar Desh, Mahmudur Rahman should immediately be released. The ban on the publication of Amar Desh, Diganta TV and Islamic TV should be removed. The Government must investigate incidents of attacks on journalists and take legal measures to punish the perpetrators and brought to Justice. Freedoms of speech and expression must be ensured.
9. The Government must withdraw the Bill proposed by the NGO Affairs Bureau to control NGOs including human rights organisations. The

government should not put barriers to operate activities of human rights organisations and human rights defenders.

10. The NGO Affairs Bureau should release funds of Odhikar in order for it to continue its human rights activities.
11. The Government should protest strongly against human rights violations on Bangladeshi citizens by the Indian BSF and the Myanmar Border Guard Police (BGP) and take initiatives to investigate and make the Indian and Myanmar Government accountable; and compensate the families of the victims. The Government should also ensure the safety and security of the Bangladeshi citizens residing at the Bangladesh-India and Bangladesh-Myanmar border areas. The Government has also to be vocal at the regional and international forums with regard to rehabilitation of Rohingya refugees residing in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has to take bold steps in order to get adequate water from India through 54 undivided rivers.
12. Human rights violations of readymade garment factory workers must be stopped. RMG factories need to be brought under synchronized security programmes and the factories should be made with adequate infrastructural and other facility.
13. The Government must ensure the effective implementation of laws to stop violence against women and the offenders must be effectively punished. The Government should also execute mass awareness programmes in print and electronic media in order to eliminate violence against women.
14. The repressive Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (Amended in 2009 and 2013) should immediately be repealed. All repressive measure taken against Odhikar must be withdrawn.

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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 in twelve national daily newspapers.
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.