

Bangladesh: New report reveals deliberate use of torture by law enforcement agencies

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Geneva (OMCT) – A new [report](#), published today, shows how law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh systematically use torture to silence dissent, while not sparing ordinary citizens. The report, titled “Cycle of Fear”, jointly published by the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and Odhikar, also highlights how the political deadlock feeds widespread impunity.

The report is based on a detailed examination of more than 300 cases of torture spanning the period 2009-2017, as well as on information gathered from victims, members of the executive, the judiciary, representatives of civil society and of international organizations. Findings reveal the use of extreme forms of physical violence during arrest or in custody, such as kneecapping, breaking bones, drilling holes in arms and legs, or eye-gouging. The prevailing perception in Bangladesh equates judicial remand with ill-treatment at best, horrific forms of torture at worst.

“Despite it having ratified the United Nations Convention Against Torture in 1998, Bangladesh has a dismal record, with torture a common practice that disproportionately affects the most vulnerable members of society”, said Gerald Staberock, OMCT Secretary General. “Torture is used to instill fear and quash dissent, to coerce confessions or as a routine tool for corrupt law enforcement agents to extract bribes. Impunity for perpetrators reigns supreme, further reinforcing these abhorrent practices.”

Allegations of torture, enforced disappearances and extra-judicial killings have increased during recent years, against the backdrop of the political crisis that plagues the country. Corruption and political appointments within the judiciary only reinforce the systematic failure to investigate complaints and punish perpetrators, with judges sending detainees back to detention even when they bear clear signs of torture.

“Torture brutalizes societies and feeds a cycle of revenge”, added Mr. Staberock. “Abuse by the State and a complete lack of accountability can only weaken the rule of law and faith in democratic institutions, thus feeding extremism. We call on Bangladesh to acknowledge the magnitude of the problem and start a complete overhaul of its law enforcement and judiciary systems.”

The report also makes concrete recommendations to Bangladesh and to the international community on countering impunity and on how to set a rule of law agenda in the country.

The World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) is the main global coalition of NGOs fighting torture and ill-treatment, with over 200 members in more than 90 countries. Its international secretariat is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Odhikar is a Dhaka based human rights organization, established in 1994 to monitor and create awareness about the abuse of civil and political rights in Bangladesh. It has special consultative ECOSOC status with the United Nations.

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