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ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT 2019

BANGLADESH

Prepared by *Odhikar*

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Foreword

Human Rights Organisation *Odhikar* was established on 10 October 1994, with the efforts of some human rights activists, lawyers and academics who actively participated in the struggle against the autocratic rule of Lieutenant General Hussein Muhammad Ershad. *Odhikar* completed 25 years in 2019.

Since its inception, *Odhikar* has been relentlessly struggling to protect the civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of the people. *Odhikar*, as an organization of human rights defenders, has always sought to raise awareness of all human rights violations committed by the state and campaign for internationally recognized civil and political rights, to protest and prevent the state from violating human rights. Human rights violations are occurring in the country as an authoritarian government system is in place. In this situation, *Odhikar* has published the Annual Human Rights Report of 2019 monitoring the human rights situation of Bangladesh. This annual human rights report was prepared based on data collection, reports sent by human rights defenders associated with *Odhikar* from different districts of the country and information published in various media.

Odhikar has been facing state repression and harassment since 2013 due to its human rights activities. Despite this, *Odhikar* has maintained its commitment and highlighted human rights violations through defending human rights and publishing reports. Due to the repression, control and curtailment of freedoms of speech and expression, *Odhikar*, too has had to practice restraint in its reporting.

Odhikar expresses gratitude to all human rights defenders home and abroad, like-minded organisations and well-wishers who have cooperated with and expressed solidarity next to *Odhikar*. Their cooperation and solidarity has strengthened the struggle of *Odhikar* against human rights abuses.

To see the previous human rights reports of *Odhikar*, please visit www.odhikar.org; Facebook: [Odhikar.HumanRights](https://www.facebook.com/Odhikar.HumanRights); Twitter: odhikar_bd

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Executive Summary

1. The human rights situation in Bangladesh was quite alarming in 2019. *Odhikar's* Annual Human Rights Report 2019 highlights such issues as the destruction of democracy and violations of rights to freedom of speech and expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and of depriving people of their right to life. After assuming power in 2009, the Awami League government has consistently transformed various important government and autonomous institutions into subservient institutions through politicization. Subsequently, after the Awami League took power through controversial and farcical elections in 2014¹ and 2018, incidents of human rights violations, politicization, criminalization and corruption became rampant. Thus, the government now implements its political agenda through various state institutions, including the Election Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission, and the National Human Rights Commission.
2. The government used the Election Commission to hold the 11th Parliamentary elections on 30 December 2018² in the same manner as it had used the Commission to win the 10th Parliamentary elections in 2014. People are now wary of elections, resulting in the complete destruction of Bangladesh's electoral system after the 2014 and 2018 elections. Voters even boycotted local government elections including Upazila elections held in 2019. As a result, most of the polling centres were found to be empty.³
3. The trend of corruption in Bangladesh in 2019 remains the same as in previous years. The Awami League government, which has been in power for 11 years, attempts to impress upon the public that there is widespread development in the country. There were allegations of widespread looting in the name of development, illegal trade, tender-bids, extortion, stock market racketeering, money laundering and widespread looting in the banking sector⁴. Such allegations were made against leaders and activists of the ruling

¹ The Caretaker Government system was incorporated in the Constitution through the 13th amendment to the Constitution, as a result of people's movement led by the then Opposition Awami League and its alliance between 1994 and 1996 due to the continuation of enmity, mistrust and violence between the two main political parties (BNP and Awami League). Later this system received a huge public support. However, in 2011 the caretaker government system were removed unilaterally by the Awami League government through the 15th amendment to the Constitution, without any referendum and ignoring the protests from various sectors; and a provision was made that elections were now to be held under the incumbent government. As a result, the farcical 10th Parliamentary elections were held on 5 January 2014, despite the boycotting of this election by a large majority of political parties. The election was farcical and out of 300 constituencies, 153 MP's were declared elected uncontested even before the polling commenced.

² During the 11th Parliamentary elections on 30 December 2018, incidents of various irregularities, such as stuffing ballot boxes the night before polling day; casting fake votes; voters being forced or coerced to vote openly for the ruling party candidates; 'capturing' polling centres; arrests and forcibly ousting of polling agents of the opposition party-nominated candidates; and intimidation of voters by supporters of the ruling Awami League-nominated candidates, election officials and members of law enforcement agencies, occurred. As a result, most of the people could not vote. <https://www.ti-bangladesh.org/beta3/index.php/en/highlights/5749-2019-01-15-07-24-53>

³ The daily Prothom Alo, 11 March 2019; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?pagedate=2019-3-11&edcode=71&subcode=71&mod=1&pgnum=1&type=a>

⁴ The government gave licenses to the ruling party leaders and activist and also engaged them to govern/manage boards in different banks after the Awami League led government re-assumed power through a farcical election in 2014. As a result, a private company named Hallmark reportedly took several thousand crores (billions) of Taka through corruption from Sonali Bank. Furthermore, billions of taka were allegedly embezzled through corruption and loan scams from BASIC Bank (ACC did not investigation or file any case against the Chairman of the Managing Committee of the bank, Sheikh Abdul Hye Bachchu, due to his strong ties to the high command of the ruling party)

party, people supported by the government, belonging to different profession; and against government officials. As per law, the Anti-Corruption Commission⁵ (ACC) is an independent and impartial institution, however, being a biased institution, the ACC has not been able to take any effective action against people affiliated with the government.⁶

4. In 2019, numerous incidents of human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture, violation of freedom of expression, hindrances to meetings and rallies, took place in the country. During this period, widespread allegations of arrest, harassment, extortion and torture of citizens were reported against members of law enforcement agencies. Despite various human rights violations, the National Human Rights Commission was not seen to play any significant role in this regard.
5. Extrajudicial killings became widespread after the government launched nationwide anti-drug drives from 15 May 2018, which continue. Many people have been harassed in the name of such an operation. Incidents of extortion and bribery through intimidation and threats of 'crossfire'; tagging onto fabricated charges and orchestrated 'gunfights', all by members of law enforcement agencies, also occurred during this period.⁷ In addition, there were allegations of extrajudicial killings carried out to protect main criminal suspects. Along with Bangladeshi nationals, Rohingya refugees who took shelter in Bangladesh after fleeing genocide in Myanmar, had also become victims of extrajudicial killings.⁸
6. Although acts of enforced disappearance continue in the country, the government is constantly denying them. The UN Committee Against Torture in its concluding observation, raised concerns that the Bangladesh government had failed to disclose information about the unacknowledged detentions and disappearances, when the representatives of the Bangladesh government denied reported cases of enforced disappearances during the review of Bangladesh in the 67th session of the UN Committee Against Torture in July 2019.⁹
7. Allegations of various types of irregularities and corruption, including torture on inmates, were found in almost all the prisons in the country.¹⁰ Furthermore, the prisoners are living in inhumane conditions due to overcrowding in prisons, and there are allegations that prisoners died due to lack of doctors and inadequate medical care, as well as due to neglect by prison authorities.

<https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1615028>), Farmers Bank, which is currently known as Padma Bank (former Chhatra League leaders and the ruling Awami League supported intellectuals were in the Managing Board) owned by the then Home Minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir between 2012 and 2013 and Janata Bank.

⁵ Section 3(2) of the Anti Corruption Commission Act 2004 (amended in 2016) states that this commission shall be an independent and impartial commission.

⁶ Supra 4

⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 28 August 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1611486/>

⁸ The daily Jugantor, 1 September 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/216002/>; New Age, 14 September 2019; <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/jubo-league-man-murder-two-more-accused-killed-gunfight-1799668>; New Age, 16 September 2019; <http://www.newagebd.net/article/84687/another-rohingya-killed-in-gunfight>

⁹ Concluding observations on the initial report of Bangladesh, CAT/ C/BGD/CO/1; The daily Prothom Alo, 10 August 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1608889/>

¹⁰ The daily Manabzamin, 10 July 2019; <https://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=180571>

8. Lack of confidence in the police and the Judiciary, has contributed to incidents of public lynching of criminal suspects, without handing them over to police. In 2019, elderly persons, the mentally disable and women were lynched by mobs on the basis of rumors.
9. The provision of the death penalty exists in Bangladesh's law. There are allegations that the police compel accused persons to give statements through torture in remand¹¹ and based on such statements, the court may also award the maximum punishment to the accused. As a result, death row inmates are being imprisoned in the condemned cells for years. In 2019, a total of 327 persons were awarded death penalty by the lower courts of the country.¹²
10. In 2019, the government violated the right to hold peaceful rallies and meetings of the opposition party and dissidents by using police and Chhatra League¹³ and Juba League¹⁴ activists to attack them. Although the government has imposed restrictions on meetings of the opposition parties, the ruling Awami League and their political allies are able to hold rallies and meeting freely. Many leaders and activists of the opposition political party fled abroad and sought political asylum due to government suppression. The UN refugee agency, UNHCR estimates that in the last five years, 160,737 Bangladeshis have applied for political asylum in different countries, which is more than double that of the last five years.¹⁵
11. Since the Awami League came to power in 2009, it has consistently enacted and amended various repressive laws that violate the freedom of expression. By 2019, the government had amended the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 twice (in 2009 and 2013) and enacted the repressive Digital Security Act, 2018. It has been reported that the people who have alternative ideology, leaders-activists of the opposition, journalists and even ordinary citizens have been arrested and imprisoned under the Digital Security Act for writing against high-ranking individuals of the ruling party or its leaders and activists, on social media or 'likes / shares' posts written against the government and the ruling party or party leaders. In addition, dissemination of material and unbiased news has been disrupted in various ways, due to government pressure on the media and in most cases, journalists are being forced to apply self-censorship.
12. Awami League-backed Chhatra League and Juba League leaders and activists committed criminal activities throughout the country in 2019 and enjoyed impunity and political patronage.
13. In the absence of necessary security measures, workers in various occupations were killed in 2019. Many workers were killed due to fire. Throughout the year, workers of the readymade garment industry had been demonstrating in protest of termination of workers and for various demands, including unpaid wages. Members of the law enforcement agencies attacked them and several were killed. Workers of many garment factories have also been terminated

¹¹ The daily Jugantor, 31 August 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/215370/>

¹² The daily Jugantor, 5 April 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/163442/>

¹³ Student wing of the ruling party Awami League

¹⁴ Youth wing of the ruling party Awami League

¹⁵ The daily Manabzamin, 10 July 2019; <https://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=180571>

from jobs during this period.¹⁶ Furthermore, two jute mill workers died while state-owned jute mill workers were performing a hunger strike for various demands.¹⁷ Most construction workers in Bangladesh work without protection and many of them suffered casualties. In 2019, a large number of Bangladeshi women migrant workers returned to the country both alive and dead, due to various forms of suppression and violence, they had faced, including sexual harassment.

14. Violence against women, including rape, dowry violence, acid throwing and sexual harassment drastically increased in 2019, particularly incidents of rape and sexual harassment. Such violence on children was fatal during this period. In addition, there were also allegations of rape in police custody.
15. As in previous years, incidents of killing, abduction and torture of Bangladeshi nationals by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) along the India-Bangladesh border continued in 2019. India has dominated Bangladesh, taking advantage of the undemocratic system in the country.¹⁸ It is alleged that the Indian government has pushed people into Bangladesh, who have been excluded from the National Register of Citizens (NRC), which was made to identify illegal immigrants in India.¹⁹
16. The international arena legally recognised the allegations of brutal crimes committed against the Rohingya population in Myanmar in 2019. In the wake of an appeal by the International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor, Fatu Bensuda, on 4 July for investigating crimes against humanity in Myanmar, a three-member pre-hearing chamber, led by the ICC Judge Olga Herrera-Carbuccia on 14 November, ordered prosecutor Fatu Bensuda to conduct a full-fledged investigation into this matter.²⁰ Meanwhile on 11 November, the Gambia filed a lawsuit against Myanmar at the UN's highest judicial body, the International Court of Justice.²¹ A number of Latin American human rights organisations filed a lawsuit in Argentina against Myanmar State Council's Aung San Suu Kyi and several top officials in the country on 13 November, for the same allegations.²²
17. In 2019, several incidents of human rights violations took place against members of ethnic, religious and linguistic minority communities. The ruling party leaders-activists were allegedly involved in most of the incidents.
18. The government's repression and harassment on *Odhikar*, which accelerated in 2013, continued in 2019. Before the 2018 controversial Parliamentary elections on 30 December, the government spread various forms of propaganda and smear campaigns against *Odhikar* by using the pro-government media. During 2019, human rights defenders faced various forms of harassment, including surveillance, criminal charges, detention; and human rights related programmes were interrupted or barred.

¹⁶ The daily Jugantor, 4 September 2019; <https://www.dailyinqilab.com/article/231639>

¹⁷ The daily Jugantor, 9 May 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/175494/>

¹⁸ The daily Manabzamin, 3 August 2019; <https://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=184311>

¹⁹ The daily Manabzamin, 3 September 2019; <http://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=188659&cat=2>

²⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 15 November 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1624379>

²¹ New Age and Naya Diganta, 12 November 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/455413>

²² The daily Manabzamin, 15 November 2019; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=199169&cat=6/>

Introduction

Although a National Parliament, consisting of Members of the Parliament elected by the people's vote, is very important for a democratic state, there have been many disruptions in the electoral process during the 48 years of Bangladesh. One of the goals of the Liberation War against Pakistan's autocratic rule in 1971, was to establish Bangladesh as a democratic state. However, after independence, the Constitution was drafted without holding an election for a Constituent Assembly, which defeats democratic principles. The electoral system in Bangladesh has been stumbling from the very beginning as the election of the first National Parliament of Bangladesh, held in 1973, contained irregularities and vote rigging.²³ After the downfall of the autocratic ruler Lieutenant General Hussein Muhammad Ershad, by a mass movement in 1990, the National Parliament elections held in 1991 were considered the most free and fair elections after the independence. However, in the absence of its continuity, the Caretaker Government system was introduced in 1996, through many struggles and sacrifices, in order to hold free and fair elections.

The Awami League-led alliance formed a government after winning the elections held under a military-backed caretaker government in 2009. The incumbent Awami League government created a dire political crisis by amending the Constitution unilaterally in 2011, and repealing the caretaker system, ignoring objections from civil society and opposition political parties and without a referendum. As a result of the abolition of the caretaker government, the controversial and farcical 10th Parliamentary election²⁴ was held on 5 January 2014, which was boycotted by the Opposition; and the Awami League came to power again. At the 11th Parliamentary elections on 30 December 2018, held under the ruling Awami League government, all opposition political parties participated as the government had promised to conduct a free and fair election. However, the ruling Awami League broke its promise and came back to power by unprecedented²⁵ acts of irregularity and a farcical²⁶ election. The government destroyed the transition of power through elections and transformed itself into an authoritarian government by introducing a repressive regime. The two consecutive elections have created a huge vacuum in the country due to the loss of democracy, accountability and rule of law. As a result, the level of oppression has worsened as the state security forces and the ruling party leaders-activists recklessly commit human rights violations.

²³ "Amar Jobanbondi" by Nirmol Sen, pg 485

²⁴ The Caretaker Government system was incorporated in the Constitution through the 13th amendment to the Constitution, as a result of people's movement led by the then Opposition Awami League and its alliance between 1994 and 1996. However, in 2011 the caretaker government system were removed unilaterally by the Awami League government through the 15th amendment to the Constitution, without any referendum and ignoring the protests from various sectors; and a provision was made that elections were now to be held under the incumbent government. As a result, the farcical 10th Parliamentary elections were held on 5 January 2014, despite the boycotting of this election by a large majority of political parties. The election was farcical and out of 300 constituencies, 153 MP's were declared elected uncontested even before the polling commenced.

²⁵ Election Process Tracking: The Eleventh National Parliament Election 2018, Transparency International Bangladesh/ 3 April 2019; <https://www.ti-bangladesh.org/beta3/index.php/en/highlights/5749-2019-01-15-07-24-53>

²⁶ Incidents of various irregularities, such as stuffing ballot boxes the night before polling day; casting fake votes; voters being forced or coerced to vote openly for the ruling party candidates; 'capturing' polling centres; arrests and forcibly ousting of polling agents of the opposition party-nominated candidates; and intimidation of voters by supporters of the ruling Awami League-nominated candidates, election officials and members of law enforcement agencies, occurred.

A. Constitutional and State Institutions

1. Ever since the Awami League-led Alliance government came to power in 2009, various government, constitutional and autonomous institutions began to become heavily politicised. As a result, there is an absence of effective institutions to prevent political intolerance, undemocratic acts of the state and violations of human rights. It has also been alleged that qualified persons were not appointed to state institutions and administrative cadres for not being supportive of the ruling party's political ideology.²⁷
2. The most competitive examination for government jobs is the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) exam. Despite passing the three steps (preliminary, written and oral) in this exam, 230 candidates who passed in the last 10 BCS exams have not been recruited, due to objections noted in mandatory background checks carried out by the Special Branch of Police and in intelligence reports. The candidates had complaints that they were not being recruited due to 'political considerations'. The intelligence reports stated that the said candidates or their close relatives were supportive of anti-government political ideology and that there were adverse reactions by the public against them.²⁸

Electoral system and Election Commission

3. The electoral system of Bangladesh has been completely invalid since 2014. Although Bangladesh has ratified the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)²⁹, the Covenant is being violated by ignoring a free and fair electoral system. The Election Commission, as a constitutional body, has the responsibility to protect people's right to franchise. The current Election Commission, led by KM Nurul Huda, has become a dysfunctional institution by organising corrupt polls and favouring the ruling Awami League in the eleventh parliamentary elections.³⁰ With such a farcical election, the Awami League-led alliance came to power by taking away people's voting rights. Subsequently, this was replicated in the local government elections, held after the people lost their confidence in the electoral system and the Election Commission. From 10 March to 18 June 2019, Upazila Elections³¹ were held in 480³² upazilas of the country in five phases. The ruling Awami League and its political allies participated in the elections by nominating party candidate while the main opposition BNP and the left political parties boycotted the polls. In most upazilas, Awami League rebel candidates competed as independent candidates against Awami League

²⁷ The daily Naya Diganta, 31 October 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/452430>

²⁸ The daily Naya Diganta, 31 October 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/452430>

²⁹ Bangladesh acceded to the ICCPR in 2000. Article 25 (b) of the ICCPR states that: To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;

³⁰ The daily Naya Diganta, 31 December 2018; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/more-news/376801>;

<http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/376825/>; Prothom Alo, 31 December 2018;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=7&edcode=71&pagedate=2018-12-31>

³¹ The second tier of the local government.

³² The daily Prothom Alo, 8 March 2019; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?pagedate=2019-3-8&edcode=71&subcode=71&mod=1&pgnum=1&type=a>

nominated candidates. Of them, Awami League nominated Chairman candidates won in 120 upazilas without contest.³³ Voters' attendance was noticeably lower in these elections.³⁴ Even though voters' presence at the polling stations was very low, clashes occurred in many places during polls and followers of the Awami League-nominated Chairman candidates, were accused of stamping ballot papers and stuffing ballot boxes in the night before the elections³⁵, snatching ballot papers, vandalizing EVM machines³⁶, and 'capturing' polling centers³⁷ as in the eleventh parliamentary elections.



Voter less Waliya High School polling center in Natore, Lalpur. gives a polling agent time to take a nap. Photo: The daily Prothom Alo, 11 March 2019.



An almost deserted polling centre at Panchagarh Government Girls' High School where only 359 of a total of 4,149 voters had cast their vote until around 11:00am when the picture was taken. Photo: The Daily Star, 11 March 2019.

³³ The daily Prothom Alo, 27 March 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1585543/>

³⁴ The total number of voters at Jafar Imam Adarsh High School polling center (Women's Voting Center) in Chhagolnaiya Upazila elections of Feni district was 2,175. But only 4 vote were cast. The daily Jugantor, 19 June 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/189371/>
<https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/189371/>

³⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 25 March 2019; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?pagedate=2019-3-25&edcode=71&subcode=71&mod=1&pgnum=1&type=a>

³⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 19 June 2019; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?pagedate=2019-6-19&edcode=71&subcode=71&mod=1&pgnum=1&type=a>

³⁷ The daily Naya Diganta, 11 March 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/394476>



Ruling party activists, stamping ballot papers with the boat symbol and stuffing ballot boxes in Pachurukhi Government Primary School center in Ramganj Upazila, led by vice-president of Upazila Awami League, Azad Sheikh (right) and ward member Ismail Hossain Dulal (Left). Photo: The daily Naya Diganta 25 March 2019.



The election officer with stamped ballot papers, after a group of youth cast fake votes in Nimsa High School polling center at Burichang Upazila, Comilla. Other officers hide their faces. Photo: The daily Prothom Alo, 1 April 2019.

Corruption and the Anti Corruption Commission

4. Corruption has taken a terrible hold in every corner of Bangladesh. Due to its impact, the livelihood of the common people of the country is severely damaged. As most of the media, especially electronic media is pro-government, it does not publish the consequences of corruption. However, a few print media are daring to spread the news, although the rate is very low. The current government has now been in power for 11 years. Although it tried to give an impression to the public that there was widespread development in the country, there were allegations of widespread illegal trade, tender-bids, extortion, stock market racketeering, money laundering abroad and widespread looting in the banking sector³⁸, all in the name of

³⁸ The government gave licenses to the ruling party leaders and activist and also engaged them to govern/manage boards in different banks after the Awami League led government re-assumed power through a farcical election in 2014. As a

‘development’. Such allegations were made against leaders and activists of the ruling party, government supporters belonging to different professions and government officials.

5. In the seven months from April to November 2019, the market capital of 650 million taka has vanished from the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE). As a result, many people have been affected both directly and indirectly.³⁹ It is reported that an average of 5,500 people are being added to the list of billionaires every year in the country. At the end of March 2019, the number of billionaire depositors in the bank sector was 67,286 while there were 19,636 depositors in the bank until March 2009. Accordingly, 56,650 persons have been added to the list of billionaires in the last 10 years. As the number of billionaires increased, disparity between the rich and poor has become apparent.⁴⁰ Furthermore, it is alleged that 7,500 billion taka (approximately USD 886.03 million) is being laundered abroad every year from the country.⁴¹ The amount of money deposited by Bangladeshis in different banks in Switzerland (Swiss National Banks) is increasing every year. In 2009, the amount deposited in Swiss banks was 149 million Swiss francs. It stood at 617.7 million francs in 2018, which is Tk 53.73 billion⁴² in Bangladeshi currency.⁴³ In September 2019, the ruling party leaders, including Ismail Hossain Somrat, President of Dhaka South unit Jubo League⁴⁴; Khaled Mahmud Bhuiyan, Organizing Secretary of Dhaka South unit Jubo League; and G K Shamim, Cooperative Affairs Secretary of the Jubo League Central Committee, were arrested on charges of various kinds of corruption and irregularities, including running casinos illegally. It was reported that members of the police, ruling party leaders and bureaucrats were involved in and regularly received money earned illegally from the casinos. There were allegations that these Jubo League leaders laundered billions of Taka abroad.⁴⁵
6. As per law, the Anti-Corruption Commission⁴⁶ (ACC) is an independent and impartial institution, but in reality, the ACC has not been able to take any effective action regarding allegations of corruption against people involved with the present government, some of whom are allegedly also involved in the embezzlement of huge amounts of money from banks. Several times in the past, some ACC officials have been accused of widespread corruption,

result, a private company named Hallmark reportedly took several thousand crores (billions) of Taka through corruption from Sonali Bank. Furthermore, billions of taka were allegedly embezzled through corruption and loan scams from BASIC Bank (ACC did not investigation or file any case against the Chairman of the Managing Committee of the bank, Sheikh Abdul Hye Bachchu, due to his strong ties to the high command of the ruling party <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1615028>), Farmers Bank, which is currently known as Padma Bank (former Chhatra League leaders and the ruling Awami League supported intellectuals were in the Managing Board) owned by the then Home Minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir between 2012 and 2013 and Janata Bank.

³⁹ The daily Jugantor, 4 November 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/239905/>

⁴⁰ The daily Naya Diganta, 5 October 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/445520/>

⁴¹ The daily Jugantor, 8 September 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/218415/>

⁴² One Swiss franc is equivalent to 87 Bangladeshi taka.

⁴³ The daily Jugantor, 28 June 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/192760>

⁴⁴ Youth wing of Awami League

⁴⁵ The daily Jugantor, 20 September 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/222532/>

⁴⁶ Section 3(2) of the Anti Corruption Commission Act 2004 (amended in 2016) states that this commission shall be an independent and impartial commission.

including bribery.⁴⁷ Apart from this, ordinary people have been harassed by the ACC and there are instances of innocent people being kept in jail for a long time.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, ACC Chairman Iqbal Mahmud said, at a conference of District Administrators on 18 July 2019, that the Deputy Commissioners had been given the responsibility of overseeing the activities of the ACC at the field level as part of the overall administrative activities of the respective districts.⁴⁹ As a result, the administrative responsibilities of the ACC are likely to be hindered in the investigation and prosecution of officials accused of corruption at the field level.

National Human Rights Commission

7. The rules for the formation of the National Human Rights Commission found in the National Human Rights Commission Act 2009, are not satisfactory for the formation of an independent Commission. As a result, the Awami League government has formed a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) led by people loyal to it; and turned this Commission into a government-controlled and subservient institution.⁵⁰ Despite widespread incidents of human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture, and violations of freedom of expression and assembly taking place in the country, the NHRC was seen busy dealing with petty crimes, land-related disputes, extortion, drug abuse and public service related issues, bypassing grave human rights violations.⁵¹ As a result, there are no contributions to improving human rights coming out of the huge amount of funding that the donor agencies are giving to the National Human Rights Commission. Neither has the Commission been active against the surveillance, threats and attacks by various government agencies and the ruling party activists on human rights defenders who have been vocal against human rights abuses in the country.
8. On 22 September 2019, after the tenure of the Commission led by Kazi Reazul Huq, the Law Ministry issued a notification whereby it had appointed five members to the National Human Rights Commission, including former senior secretary Nasima Begum, as Chairman and former secretary Dr. Kamal Uddin Ahmed as permanent member of the NHRC.⁵² The new Commission has been

⁴⁷ ACC Director Khandaker Enamul Baser has been accused of taking bribe from DIG Mizanur Rahman Mizan, who was accused of acquiring illegal property including corruption.

⁴⁸ The daily Manabzamin, 4 February 2019; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=157885&cat=3>

⁴⁹ The daily Manabzamin, 20 July 2019; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=182060&cat=3/>

⁵⁰ On 30 December, the parliamentary elections were held with unprecedented rigging and farce. However, the NHRC Chairman Kazi Reazul Haque said in a press conference on 1 January 2019, that there was no incident of human rights violations during the eleventh Parliamentary elections. He further stated that the election was free, fair and neutral (<https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/128568>). On 30 December 2019, election day, leaders and activists of Subarnachar Awami League gang raped a BNP activist's wife due to her voting for a BNP nominated candidate in Noakhali's Subarnachar (<http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/381463>). The National Human Rights Commission formed an inquiry committee in this regard. Quoting the report of the inquiry committee, the NHRC Chairman said that the Commission's inquiry committee did not find any proof that the incident of rape and serious injuries in Subarnachar had any connection with the 11th Parliament election (<https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1574390/>).

⁵¹ Rights abuses go unabated as NHRC bypasses mandate/ New age, 10 December 2019;

<http://www.newagebd.net/article/93186/>

⁵² The daily Manabzamin, 23 September 2019; <https://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=191493>

formed by appointing obedient government officials. As a result, they remain silent on human rights violations and have turned the NHRC into a failed institution.

B. State Repression and Impunity

9. In 2018, Bangladesh was re-elected as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council⁵³ for a fourth term. On 7 June 2018, the Bangladesh government submitted human rights related pledges and commitments through a letter sent to the President of the UN General Assembly, before the election, as part of the Human Rights Council's candidacy.⁵⁴ However, the government has been involved in gross human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, and freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly and association by breaking those pledges and commitments.
10. The UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) reviewed the situation on the issue of torture in Bangladesh on 30 and 31 July, when Bangladesh submitted its preliminary report for the first time on 23 July 2019, after 20 years of ratification of the UN Convention against Torture.⁵⁵ In the concluding observation of the Committee, it stated that the allegations of torture in Bangladesh are not being investigated properly or adequately and the police often refuse to accept the complaints from the victim's families. It observed that the families of the complainants are later subjected to threats, harassment and retaliation. The Committee noted that there were credible allegations of custodial torture, arbitrary arrest, unacknowledged detention, disappearance and extrajudicial killings against RAB.⁵⁶

Extrajudicial killings

11. There have been reports of widespread extrajudicial killings committed by law enforcement agencies in 2019. During this period, on an average, more than one person has been killed extra-judicially every day. It is to be noted that law enforcement agencies used the term 'crossfire', 'gunfight', 'shootout' when in reality the killing is extrajudicial. Extrajudicial killings became rampant after the nationwide anti-drug drives happening since 15 May 2018. In most cases, persons were later killed in 'gunfights' after the victims were taken from their residence. However, members of law enforcement deny this. After analyzing the statements from law enforcement agencies and the cases related to the incidents of 'gunfight', it is found that the description of each incident is almost identical.⁵⁷ During this period, many people were harassed during the anti-drug operation and some law enforcement officials allegedly took money by threatening victims of death in 'crossfire' or tagging them to

⁵³ UN Human Rights Council was formed in March 2006 and among the UN member states, 47 states are its members.

⁵⁴ A/73/90; https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/73/90

⁵⁵ Bangladesh ratified the UN Convention against Torture on 5 October 1998.

⁵⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 10 August 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1608889/> Concluding observations on the initial report of Bangladesh, CAT/ C/BGD/CO/1

⁵⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 28 August 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1611486/>

criminal cases. Furthermore, there are allegations that political opponents were being killed in 'gunfight' over land related or financial disputes through political influence and/or in exchange for money.

12. In 2019, as per reports, a total of 391 persons were allegedly killed extra-judicially. Among the 391 persons killed, 376 were killed in 'crossfire/ encounters/ gunfights', six persons were allegedly tortured to death by police, eight persons were shot to death and one was beaten to death by police.

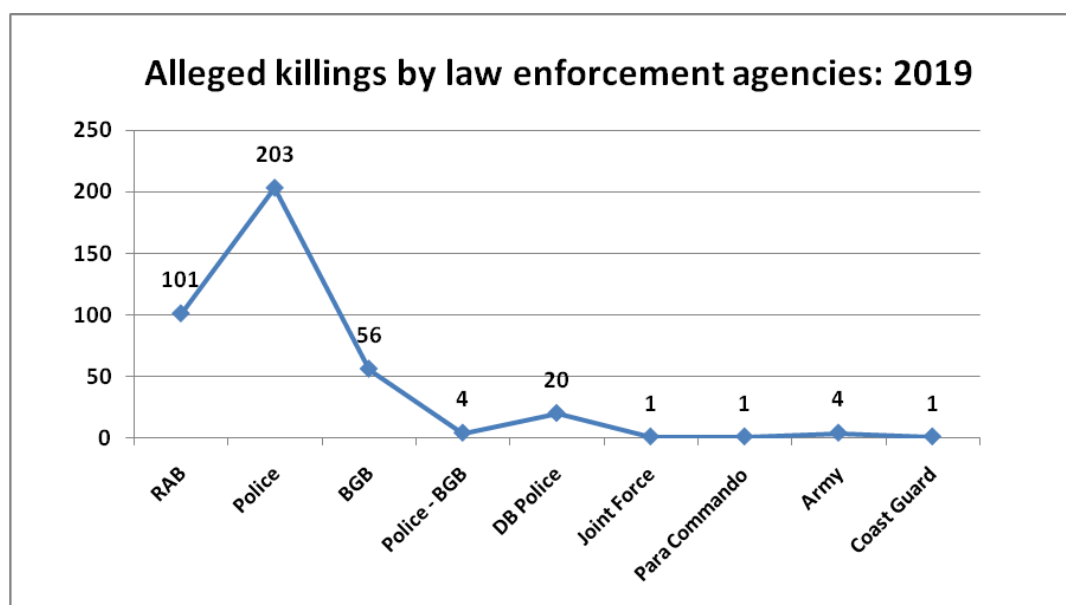


Figure 1

Two brothers, Kashem and Mohammad Hossain, were killed in an alleged 'gunfight' with police on 11 April and 20 July 2019 respectively in Satghoriapara under Teknaf Upazila of Cox's Bazar District. Hossain's wife, Sanjida Begum said that her husband was a farmer. In the afternoon on 20 July, plainclothes police arrested Hossain. The next day she learned that Hossain was killed in 'crossfire' with the police. Relatives and locals of the deceased men said that victims' family had a dispute over land with Mohammed Alam alias Babul and his brother, Awami Olama League leader Maulvi Badiul Alam of the area.⁵⁸

On 12 September 2019, a man named Abdul Basit, of Mankipur Union under Jakiganj Upazila in Sylhet District, was called over cell phone by Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin, the Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Jakiganj Police Station. He was then taken to a car in handcuffs and driven around to various places and then taken to a roadside in Rarai Village, along the India-Bangladesh border at around 2:30 am. The OC Nasir Uddin and Sub Inspector Mizan asked Basit to run. Basit started shouting 'save me', 'save me'. Hearing this, members of the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) approached and he was not killed. Basit was later produced before the court as an accused in a robbery case and the court sent him to jail. The victim's wife, Ruma Begum, alleged that the police tried to kill her husband in 'crossfire' for money.⁵⁹

13. Another form of extrajudicial killing is killing a person, under the pretext of 'gunfight' or 'crossfire', who is allegedly involved in important criminal

⁵⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 28 August 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1611486/>

⁵⁹ The daily Jugantor, 14 October 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/231713/>

incidents. These extrajudicial killings are alleged to have taken place to shield the main culprits actually involved in the incidents. As a result, the opportunity to know the truth is lost. Detainees are killed in a 'gunfight' even after they surrender.

Crossfire: 2019									
Months	RAB	Police	DB Police	Army	BGB	Police-BGB	Joint Force	Coast Guard	Total
January	7	16	0	0	2	1	0	0	26
February	8	16	0	0	3	0	0	1	28
March	4	17	3	0	5	3	0	0	32
April	9	17	1	0	3	0	1		31
May	18	23	0	0	6	0	0	0	47
June	13	16	1	0	8	0	0	0	38
July	11	14	2	0	6	0	0	0	33
August	7	18	3	4	5	0	0	0	37
September	7	22	4	0	4	0	0	0	37
October	9	14	2	0	5	0	0	0	30
November	2	9	2	0	3	0	0	0	16
December	6	11	1	0	3	0	0	0	21
Total	101	193	19	4	53	4	1	1	376

Table: 1

Sabbir Hossain alias Nayan, the main accused in the murder of a young man named Rifat Sharif, was shot dead by police on 2 July 2019 on the bank of Paira River in Purakata under Borguna Sadar Upazila. Earlier, police had arrested Nayan.⁶⁰ Nayan's mother Shaheda Begum alleged that Nayan was tortured to death. There were marks of injuries all over Nayan's body and his fingernails were missing and his ears were cut off. She claimed that Nayan was killed in a conspiracy to stop him from giving out information about the misdeeds of local influential people.⁶¹ It is to be mentioned that Sunam Debnath, Science and Technology Affairs Secretary of the district unit Awami League and son of Dharendra Debnath Shambhu, a member of the ruling Awami League Borguna Constituency-1, was the sponsor and protector of Nayan. Apart from political leaders, it is alleged that Nayan had good relations with police and he carried out various criminal activities in the city with their support.⁶²

In September 2019, seven Rohingya people named Nur Mohammad⁶³, Mohammad Shah, Abdus Shukkur⁶⁴, Hassan⁶⁵, Mohammad Abdul Karim, Nesar Ahmed⁶⁶ and Habibullah⁶⁷,

⁶⁰ The daily Jugantor, 2 July 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/194498/>

⁶¹ Bangladesh Protidin, 24 July 2019; <https://www.bd-pratidin.com/first-page/2019/07/24/442632>

⁶² The daily Prothom Alo, 28 July 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1606530/>

⁶³ The daily Jugantor, 1 September 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/216002/>

⁶⁴ The Daily Star, 25 August 2019; <https://www.thedailystar.net/top-news/bangladesh-jubo-league-leader-murder-2-rohingyas-killed-in-gunfight-1790092>

⁶⁵ The Daily Star, 27 August 2019; <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/omar-murder-one-more-rohingya-suspect-shot-dead-1791091>

who were accused in the murder of Jubo League leader Omar Farooq, were killed in 'crossfire' with police in Teknaf of Cox's Bazar District.

On 4 September, a person named Mohammad Belal (43) surrendered at Khulshi Police Station in Chittagong City. Belal was killed in a 'gunfight' with the police on Jalalabad Hill at 1:00 am that same day.⁶⁸

14. In some cases, law enforcement agencies claimed that drug peddlers got killed in 'gunfights' between two groups of drug dealers. However, the relatives of the deceased victims alleged that after the victims were taken away, they were not found anymore. Later they got to know that they were killed in 'crossfire'.

Information of alleged killings by law enforcement agencies during anti drug drives: 2019						
Months	RAB	Police	DB Police	BGB & Police	BGB	Total
January	7	11	0	1	2	21
February	2	8	0	0	3	13
March	0	10	0	3	4	17
April	4	7	1	0	3	15
May	5	15	0	0	6	26
June	6	8	1	0	8	23
July	5	8	1	0	6	20
August	4	3	1	0	5	13
September	2	1	3	0	4	10
October	0	8	0	0	3	11
November	2	0	1	0	1	4
December	2	4	1	0	3	10
Total	39	83	9	4	48	183

Table: 1.1

On 26 August 2019, the body of Mansoor Sheikh (45) was found at Bakal Islampur Char under Satkhira Sadar Upazila. Police claimed that he died in a 'gunfight' between two groups over drug peddling. Mansur's wife Shahnaz Khatun claimed that police took her husband away from their house on 26 August at noon. Some of her relatives even met Mansoor at the old Satkhira police outpost.⁶⁹

Torture and lack of accountability of law enforcement agencies

15. In 2019, numerous allegations of men being shot to death, arrested, harassed and of extortion and torture on citizens, were found against members of law enforcement agencies. Members of law enforcement agencies have become reckless due to the impunity they enjoy, as they are used to suppress political

⁶⁶ New Age, 14 September 2019; <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/jubo-league-man-murder-two-more-accused-killed-gunfight-1799668>

⁶⁷ New Age, 16 September 2019; <http://www.newagebd.net/article/84687/another-rohingya-killed-in-gunfight>

⁶⁸ The daily Jugantor, 5 September 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/217491/>

⁶⁹ The daily Jugantor, 24 August 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/212773/>

opposition. It is firmly established that the police extract confessional statements from an accused by torture and inhumane treatment during remand.⁷⁰ In 2013, the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act was passed, but due to fear and threats of reprisals, a majority of torture victims or families of the victims could not file cases under this law. Even if a case has been filed, the victim will be forced to withdraw the case due to intimidation. For example, Shahjalal⁷¹ who lost his eyes due to torture in the custody of Khalishpur Police Station was sentenced to two years imprisonment with a five thousand taka fine by Khulna Metropolitan Magistrate Amirul Islam on 4 November 2019 in a 'mugging' case lodged against him in 2017.⁷²

16. In some instances, it has been alleged that even though an arrested person died in custody due to torture, this had been publicized as 'suicide' to cover the act.

On 10 August 2019, a young man named Mamun (23) died in police custody after being arrested by Nilphamari police on suspicion of being involved in cattle theft. Police claimed that Mamun made a rope by tearing a Kantha⁷³ and committed suicide by hanging himself from a ventilator rod. However, the relatives of the deceased and the locals staged a protest around the police station claiming that Mamun was beaten to death by police.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Shamim Reza Rubel, a student of Independent University of Bangladesh was arrested under section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr.PC) on 23 July 1998 and he died at the Detective Branch of Police office the day after his arrest. Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) challenged sections 54 and 167 of the Cr.PC and filed a Writ Petition to the High Court Division of the Supreme Court regarding this incident. In 2003, the High Court Division declared that parts of sections 54 and 167 of the Cr.PC were contrary to some Articles of the Constitution. The High Court Division ordered the amendment of the existing rules of arresting someone and interrogating him in custody under section 54 of Cr.PC, within six months. The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court dismissed the prosecution's appeal against the judgment and afterwards on 10 November 2016 the Court gave a 19-point instruction guideline.

⁷¹ On July 18, 2017 in the evening, Shah Jalal went out of the house to buy powdered milk for his baby. At that time, Khalishpur police arrested him from the street near Boalkhali of Khulna city. He was detained in a cell of the Khalishpur police station. The police demanded one hundred fifty thousand Taka (USD 1860) bribe to release him, which Shah Jalal's family could not afford. At around 11:30 pm, the police allegedly took him out of the police station and gouged out his eyes by the side of Khulna Bishsho Road. After midnight, the police sent him to the Khulna Medical College Hospital while he was seriously bleeding from his eyes. Police claimed that Shah Jalal was caught by local inhabitants when he was snatching a woman's bag. On 19 July, Shah Jalal's family found him at Khulna Medical College Hospital with gouged eyes. Shah Jalal said that police had taken him to Khulna Bishsho Road at midnight in a pick-up van. There, the police tied his hands and legs and stabbed his eyes with a screwdriver. On 7 September 2017, Shah Jalal's mother Renu Begum filed case with Khulna Metropolitan Magistrate Court under sections 13/15 of the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, accusing 13 persons, including 11 police and Ansar personnel. While this matter was under investigation by DB police, on 30 April 2018, the family was forced to withdraw the case out of pressure by the police.

⁷² Information sent by human rights defender associated with *Odhikar*, from Khulna

⁷³ Kantha is a type of thin quilt made by layering old saris on each other and sewing them together.

⁷⁴ The daily Jugantor, 11 August 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/209393/>



Local people protest after surrounding the police station. Photo: Jugantor, 11 August 2019

17. On 18 October 2019, a message mocking Islam was allegedly sent through the Facebook Messenger account of Biplob Chandra Shuva, a student of Bhola Government College. When this message spread, protests commenced, demanding the punishment of Biplob. On 20 October, thousands of people gathered around the Borhanuddin Eidgah grounds and demanded his punishment. Clashes erupted between the police and the protesting mob, when the news spread that imams were being arrested. Four people were killed in the police firing and more than 150 people, including 10 policemen, were injured.⁷⁵

Enforced disappearances

18. Although there is evidence⁷⁶ of the involvement of state security forces in the incidents of enforced disappearance in Bangladesh, the cases of disappearances are being constantly denied by the government at both the

⁷⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 21 October 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1620209>

⁷⁶ On 2 March 2017, disappeared victim Mokhlesur Rahman Jony's wife Jasmine Nahar Reshma filed a writ petition (No. 2833/2017) before the High Court Division of the Supreme Court. Based on this petition, on 16 May 2017 a High Court Division Bench consisting of Justice Kazi Reza-ul Huq and Justice Mohammad Ullah asked the Chief Judicial Magistrate of Satkhira to submit an inquiry report to the High Court Division by 3 July 2017 regarding the disappearance of homeopathy physician Mokhlesur Rahman Jony. A Senior Judicial Magistrate of Satkhira, Habibullah Mahmud, submitted an inquiry report to the High Court Division on 4 July 2017 that found the Superintendent of Police Mohammad Altaf Hossain and former Satkhira Sadar Police Station officer-in-charge Emdadul Huq Sheikh, former Sub-Inspector Himel Hossain, were involved in the arrest of Sheikh Mokhlesur Rahman Jony and his subsequent disappearance. It was mentioned in the probe report that the OC Emdadul Huq Sheikh, SI Himel Hossain, were directly involved. (<http://www.newagebd.net/article/19321/>) In another case, Narayanganj District and Sessions Judge Syed Enayet Hossain on 16 January 2017 gave a verdict on the killing of seven persons subsequent their disappearance. 26 accused, including 16 RAB officers and commanding officer RAB-11, Lt. Col. (Retrd) Tareq Sayeed were sentenced to death. (<https://www.jugantor.com/news-archive/first-page/2017/01/17/93821/>)

national and international level. The government denied issues relating to disappearance, when the UN Committee Against Torture was reviewing the report on Bangladesh. In their concluding observations, the Committee expressed concern over the failure of the government to disclose information on unacknowledged detentions and disappearances.⁷⁷ Families of the disappeared persons are under surveillance, harassment and threats. The victims and their families are facing various problems due to financial crisis. Furthermore, many children are having psychological problems brought on by the disappearance of their fathers.

19. **A total of 34 persons were allegedly disappeared⁷⁸ after being picked up by members of law enforcement agencies, in 2019. Among them, eight were found dead, 17 were shown arrested after a few days of disappearance or seven surfaced alive, and the whereabouts of 9 persons remain unknown.**

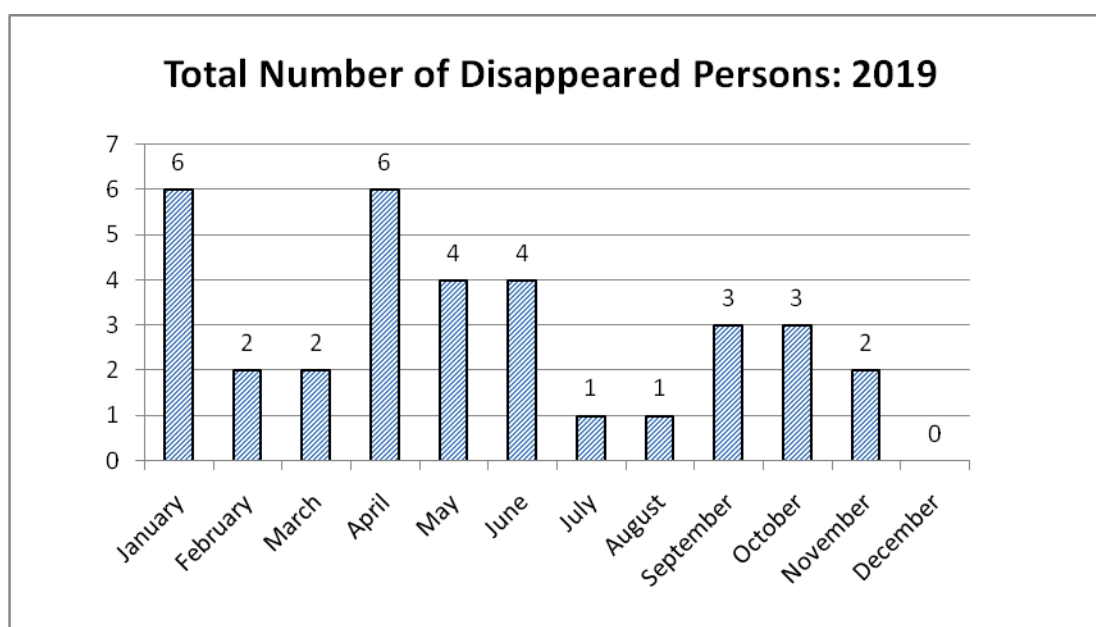


Figure 2

20. In many cases, although law enforcement agencies initially deny the arrest; days or months later, the arrested persons are produced before the public; or handed over to a police station and appear in Court, or the bodies of the disappeared persons are found. Some persons were also reported disappeared after they were labeled as 'Islamic extremists' in the name of countering terrorism.

On 13 January 2019, Zahirul Haque Khandaker, a former Captain in the Bangladesh Army, with his two colleagues Khorshed Alam Patwari and Sayed Akidul Ali were picked up from Dhaka by about 20 law enforcement personnel, many armed and wearing the black uniform commonly worn by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB). After that, their family members could

⁷⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 10 August 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1608889/> Concluding observations on the initial report of Bangladesh, CAT/ C/BGD/CO/1

⁷⁸ *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.

not trace them. On 23 September, the police produced the three of them before a Magistrate Court and sought remand for interrogation on charges of involvement with a "banned terrorist organization". The court granted a 9-day remand. On 11 October, Zahirul Haque Khandaker died at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University under the custody of the prison authority. It is alleged that he died in police custody after being tortured while he was detained. The inquest report states that there were numerous black marks on his abdomen. Zahirul Haque Khandaker died four days after Khorshed Alam Patwari and Syed Akidul Ali agreed to give "confessional statements" against their UK-based employer Shahid Uddin Khan. The circumstances of the death of Zahirul Haque Khandaker, after eight months of disappearance and his two colleagues agreeing to give confessional statements, raise questions. Meanwhile in April 2018, two brothers of Shahid Uddin Khan, Gias Uddin and Mohammad Ali, were taken away by law enforcement agencies. Of them, Gias Uddin was released after 11 days of disappearance, but no trace of Mohammad Ali was found. In addition to that, Shahid Uddin Khan's tax lawyer Muhammad Shahbuddin, was picked up by government authorities in May 2018. The lawyer's son filed a complaint to the police in this regard.⁷⁹

In the night of 2 May 2019, members of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB-6) allegedly picked up SM Hafizur Rahman Sagar (43) along with four people, from the house of Nazrul Islam in front of a mosque in East Baniyakhmar of Khulna Metropolitan City. Sagar's wife Hosne Ara Tania told Odhikar that at around 2:30 am on 2 May, a team of RAB-6 raided Nazrul Islam's house and arrested SM Hafizur Rahman Sagar and his business partners Mohammad Habibur Rahman (24), Md Rafiur Rahman Rajib (30) and Mohammad Abdul Mannan (50) from there and took them away. After getting this news, they contacted RAB-6 office on 4 May and the RAB Director (CO) Lt. Colonel Syed Mohammad Nurus Salehin Yusuf and Special Company Commander Mohammad Shamim Shikder admitted the detention of the three others but denied the arrest of Sagar. Later Sagar's family went to Khulna Sadar Police Station to file a General Diary (GD), but the Officer-in-Charge (OC) Humayun Kabir refused to accept it.⁸⁰ On 28 August, members of RAB-1 unit raided the Ashkona area in Dhaka and arrested four persons they alleged belonged to a extremist group 'Allar Dal'. One of them was Sagar.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Employee of UK-based Bangladeshi businessman died in custody: Johirul Haque Khandaker, a former army captain, was picked up from his Dhaka home in January/ by David Bergman, 22 November 2019; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/employee-uk-based-bangladeshi-businessman-dies-custody-191122110819149.html>

⁸⁰ Information sent by local human rights defender associated with Odhikar in Khulna

⁸¹ The daily Kaler Kantha, 28 August 2019; <https://www.kalerkantho.com/online/national/2019/08/29/808650>

Enforced Disappearances: 2019				
Month(s)	Total number of disappeared persons	Found dead	Found alive	Whereabouts of the disappeared persons still unknown
January	6	4	2	0
February	2	0	2	0
March	2	0	2	0
April	6	0	2	4
May	4	0	3	1
June	4	0	3	1
July	1	0	1	0
August	1	0	1	0
September	3	3	0	0
October	3	1	0	2
November	2	0	1	1
December	0	0	0	0
Total	34	8	17	9

Table: 2

Enforced Disappearance: 2019					
Month(s)	No. of the disappeared persons	Allegedly disappeared by			
		RAB	Police	DB Police	Other Law Enforcement Agency
January	6	3	1	0	2
February	2	0	0	1	1
March	2	0	1	0	1
April	6	0	0	2	4
May	4	2	0	0	2
June	4	3	1	0	0
July	1	0	0	0	1
August	1	0	0	0	1
September	3	0	1	2	0
October	3	1	0	2	0
November	2	0	1	0	1
December	0	0	0	0	0
Total	34	9	5	7	13

Table: 2.1

Dysfunctional criminal justice system and human rights abuses in prisons

21. There are allegations that many criminals are being punished or imprisoned while waiting for their sentence, due to an ineffective criminal justice system in Bangladesh. Occasionally, after one or two cases have been exposed, it is learned that the wrong person was detained in jail.⁸² All these detainees were subjected to torture and ill-treatment in the prison. Various types of irregularities and corruption, including physical and mental torture of inmates, trade with prisoners' food, receiving money for allowing visitors and for hospitalization of fit inmates so that they can stay in relatively better conditions, were found against the prison officials and employees of almost all jails.⁸³ In addition, many prisoners had become ill and died as a result of the humanitarian catastrophe created due to overcrowding, inadequate medical facilities and lack of doctors, nurses and ambulances in prisons. There is only one doctor for about ten thousand prisoners.⁸⁴ There are 13 central jails and 55 district jails in the country and the total capacity is 36,714. However, in 2019, inmates in the prisons were three times more than the actual prison capacity.⁸⁵ As of 22 December, there were 89,910 inmates in different jails in the country.⁸⁶
22. **In 2019, 60 persons died in jail. Among them, it was reported that 56 died due to 'illnesses', one was killed, two committed suicide and one died by fire.**

The country's first woman Prime Minister and BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia (74) has been detained in prison for 22 months. She was admitted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital due to serious illness. Earlier, she was allegedly kept in solitary confinement.⁸⁷ Khaleda Zia's sister Selima Islam met her in hospital on 25 October and 16 December. She said that Khaleda Zia's physical condition is very bad and that she is being deprived from proper treatment.⁸⁸ Doctors are allegedly not giving her medicine properly. It is also reported that her physical condition has no real resemblance to the medical board's

⁸² On 20 October, police arrested a serial killer named Babu Sheikh from Natore. On 6 May 2014, Babu Sheikh raped and killed a girl student of class seven in Noldanga upazila. The court sentenced two young men to life imprisonment in a case filed by victim's father. In the night of 15 May 2019, Babu Sheikh raped and killed Halima Khatun in Noldanga Upazila of Natore District and also killed her two-year-old disabled son, Abdullah, throwing in a pond next to her house. In this case, police interrogated deceased Halima Khatun's brother-in-law Mahabul Alam after taking him in remand and Mahabul Alam made a confessional statement in the court.

⁸³ The daily Manabzamin, 8 July 2019; <http://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=180233&cat=3>

⁸⁴ The Daily Star, 17 September 2019; <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/9-prison-doctors-for-90000-inmates-in-bangladesh-1801108>

⁸⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 2 April 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1586549/>

⁸⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 15 January 2020

⁸⁷ The Mandela Rules are known for ensuring human dignity of the prisoners, provision of medical care and the implementation of the policy of jail personnel for the prisoners, including the abolition of solitary confinement. Solitary confinement is defined in the policy of the UN Minimum Rules for Treatment of Prisoners. According to that definition, if someone is deprived from meaningful human communication for more than 22 hours, then it will be considered as a solitary imprisonment. The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules); Rule 44, Page 14; https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/GA-RESOLUTION/E_ebook.pdf

⁸⁸ The daily Jugantor, 26 October 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/236479/>

report.⁸⁹ On 19 December, Amnesty International issued a statement expressing deep concern over the physical condition of BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia.⁹⁰

On 30 April 2019, Advocate Palash Kumar Roy, a prisoner in Panchagarh District Jail, died at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.⁹¹ Palash Kumar Roy's mother Mira Rani blamed the jail authorities for the incident.⁹² On 8 May, a High Court Division Bench of the Supreme Court comprising of Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif and Justice Rajik Al Jalil, issued a Rule on why the failure to provide proper security of the prisoners will not be declared illegal and ordered a judicial inquiry into the incident of the death of Palash Kumar Roy.⁹³

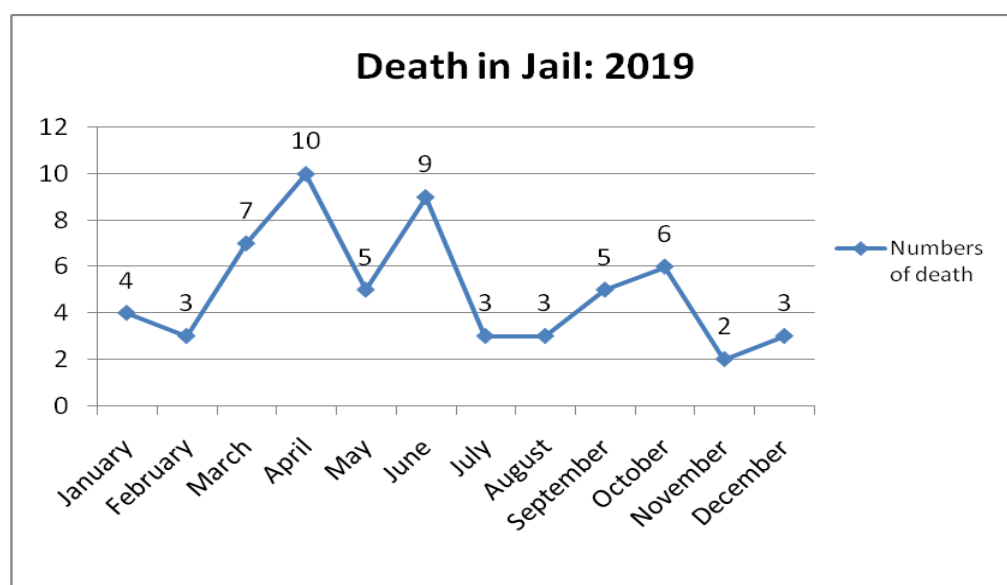


Figure 3

Death penalty and human rights

23. The provision of the death penalty remains in various criminal laws of Bangladesh. A large number of accused are being sentenced to death each year in the lower courts.
24. The accused, who were sentenced to death, were kept in a condemned cell (in solitary confinement) for many years and, fearful of being executed at any time, they become mentally and physically ill. Generally, the accused are forced to make confessional statements through torture during police remand⁹⁴ and based on such statements, the court passes the maximum

⁸⁹ The daily Jugantor, 16 December 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/politics/256230>

⁹⁰ <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ASA1314442019ENGLISH.pdf>

⁹¹ Kohinoor Chemical Company had filed a case against Palash. On 25 March, Palash had been accused of giving a speech against the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, her administration and the police, during a human chain formed with his family members demanding that the case filed by Kohinoor Chemical Company be withdrawn. In retaliation, the local ruling party activists beat him and handed him over to police. Later, a local man named Rajib Rana filed a case with Sadar Police Station against Palash on the allegation that he made derogatory comments against the Prime Minister. On 26 April, Palash Kumar was scheduled to be sent from Panchagarh District Jail to Dhaka Central Jail. However, in the morning, Palash ran out of the prison toilets on fire. He was admitted to Rangpur Hospital in a critical condition, and later he was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for better treatment.

⁹² The daily Jugantor, 6 May 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/174375/>

⁹³ The daily Jugantor, 9 May 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/175500/>

⁹⁴ On 15 April 2014, Mohammad Azam filed a case accusing unknown persons at Hazaribagh Police Station in Dhaka, of abducting his minor son Abu Sayed. Later the case was handed over to the Detective Branch (DB) of Police. Sub Inspector of DB Police Ruhul Amin, arrested Afzal, Saiful, Sonia and Shahin Raji of Mehendiganj under Barishal District. The DB Police

punishment to the accused. If the maximum punishment for a crime is the death sentence, the government can use the judicial system to imprison any person it dislikes for a long time.

On 3 July 2019, Rostam Ali, judge of the Additional District and Sessions Judge Court in Pabna, sentenced nine people to death in connection with the incident of bombing and shooting on a train carrying the current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in Ishwardi under Pabna District in 1994. All those awarded the death penalty were leaders and activists of the opposition BNP and its affiliated organisations Jubo Dal and Chhatra Dal.⁹⁵

As of 30 June 2019, 1,467 Death Reference cases from different jails of the country were pending in the High Court Division and 237 cases were pending in the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.⁹⁶

25. As per Odhikar's record, 327 persons were given to death penalty in 2019. Furthermore, two persons were executed in 2019.

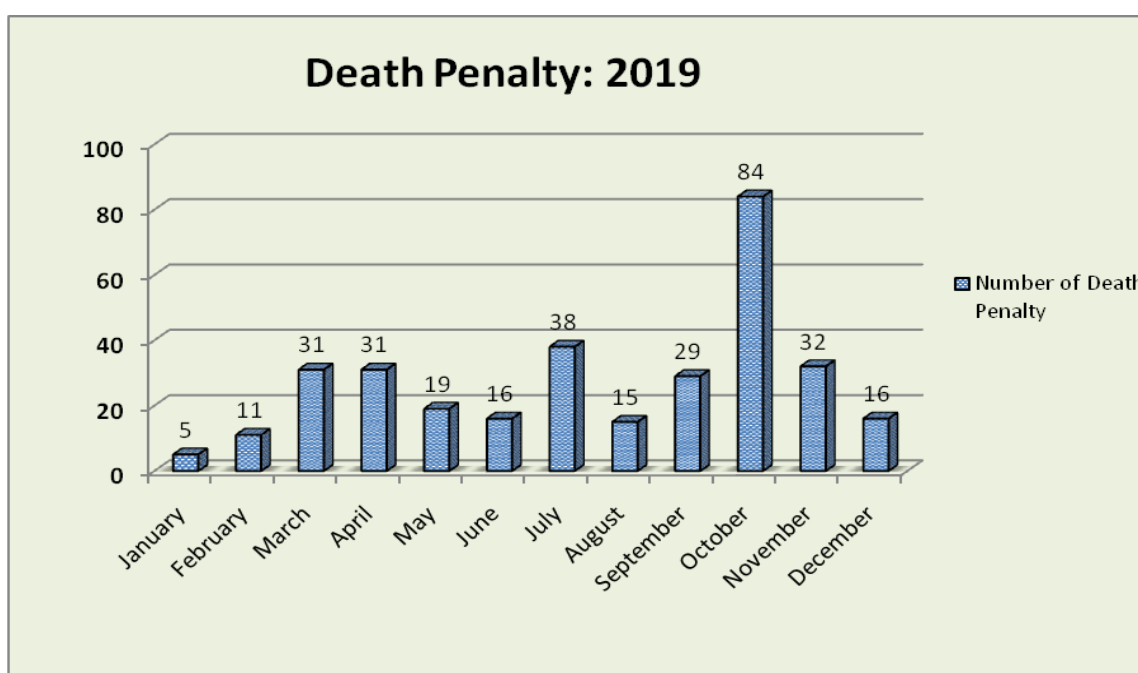


Figure 4

26. On 3 March 2019, one person named Saiful Islam Mamun was executed for killing Saudi Arabian Diplomat Khalaf Al Ali, in Dhaka. The death sentence of a man named Chand Mia alias Chandu was executed in Kashimpur Central

allegedly tortured them and forced them to confess to the court. Saiful alleged that the DB Police blindfolded and beat them and kicked them after throwing them to the ground. Later, they told the court, as per instructions of the DB Police, that they had killed Abu Sayed by throwing him in the river from a launch traveling to Barishal. In this case, they were imprisoned for several years and subsequently released on bail. However, on 29 August 2019, Afzal came to Senior Assistant Commissioner SM Shamim of the Pallabi Zone of Dhaka Metropolitan Police and told him that Abu Sayeed was alive and he was staying with his parents (<https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/215370/>). On 30 August, Sonia filed a case accusing seven persons for the alleged kidnapping and plotting of a false murder. Police arrested four persons, including Abu Sayeed and his father Mohammad Azam and mother Moinur Begum (<https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/215746/>).

⁹⁵ The daily Jugantor, 4 July 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/194999/>

⁹⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 12 July 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1603790/>

Jail in Gazipur on 24 July 2019, for the murder of two persons - Amir Abdullah Hasan and Sentu Mia in Keraniganj under Dhaka District in 2002.⁹⁷

Public lynching

27. Incidents of public lynching continued to occur in the country due to lack of confidence in the justice administration system, a culture of impunity, lack of confidence and mistrust in law enforcement, lack of implementation of laws and social unrest. The deaths due to mob beating is a violation of right to life enshrined in the Constitution of Bangladesh and Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In 2019, incidents of public lynching have dramatically increased across the country. Men and women had become victim's of mob beatings in different areas on suspicion of being child kidnappers.⁹⁸ As a result, several innocent people were killed.
28. **56 persons were killed in public acts of lynching in 2019.**



Figure 5

On 11 July 2019, an elderly, mentally disabled man named Dadan Ali, was beaten to death by locals on suspicion of theft in Amtali under Patuakhali District.⁹⁹

On 20 July 2019, a housewife named Taslima Begum was killed due to public lynching after she was suspected of being a child kidnapper, when she went to North Badda Primary School in Dhaka to inquire about admission for her child. Siraj, who was killed in public lynching on the same day at Siddhirganj in Narayanganj, had a speech and hearing disability.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ The daily Jugantor, 25 July 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/national/203019/>

⁹⁸ The Guardian, 24 July 2019; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/25/bangladesh-eight-lynched-over-false-rumours-of-child-sacrifices>

⁹⁹ The daily Jugantor, 13 July 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/bangla-face/198670>

¹⁰⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 22 July 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1605476>

C. Criminalisation of Politics, Political Suppression and Hindrance to Freedom of Assembly

29. The leaders and activists of the Awami League were involved in various types of criminal acts and violence, including attacks on candidates and leaders and activists of the opposition and massive vote rigging in the controversial elections on 30 December 2018. In continuation of these acts, the ruling Awami League leaders-activists committed widespread misconducts and violence throughout the year in 2019. During this period, several allegations of criminal acts, including attacks on opposition leaders-activists, killings, violence against women, suppression on dissidents, extortion in various places, land grabbing, creating torture cells¹⁰¹ in residential halls of different educational institutions and attacks on teachers, were reported against them.

There are allegations that on 11 March 2019, the Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) elections were held with several instances of irregularities and rigging, including ballot stuffing the night before the elections. In protest of these irregularities, during the election, all the panels, except Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), boycotted the elections.¹⁰²



Students hold pre-marked ballots as Dhaka University Proctor Golam Rabbani talks to journalists inside Bangladesh-Kuwait Maitree Hall during DUCSU polls. Photo: The Daily Star, 12 March 2019

¹⁰¹ Awami League-backed activists are suppressing ordinary students, opposition activists in 'torture cells' in various residential dormitories of students in educational institutions of the country. More than fifty torture cells were being made in 13 dormitories at Dhaka University. Chhatra League activists used to attack students at every university, including Dhaka University and then handed them over to police labeling them 'Shibir activists' those are unable to conform to Chhatra League opinion. Such repression continues to occur allegedly by the administration of the educational institutes, which are run by the government-backed teachers and with the direct and indirect cooperation of the police. On 30 June, Quota Reform Movement leader Mashiur Rahman was severely beaten by Chhatra League leaders, including Sopu and Rial with rods and sticks, leaving him seriously injured. Mashiur was forced to express what BCL asked him to say and made a video, which went viral in social media. After beating, Mashiur was handed over to Shahbag Police Station. He was released on bail after being detained in jail for two months.

¹⁰² The daily Manabzamin, 12 March 2019; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=163327&cat=2/>



Students protest with pre-marked ballots, alleging poll irregularities at the hall. Photo: The Daily Star, 12 March 2019



Students in hunger strike, demanding re-election of the Dhaka Central University Central Student Parliament. Photo: The daily Prothom Alo, 15 March 2019.

The murder of Abrar Fahad, a student of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), was widely discussed in 2019. On 6 October, Awami League-backed Chhatra League activists led by BUET unit Chhatra League General Secretary Mehedi Hassan Rasel, called Abrar to a room and beat him to death all because this young student gave a Facebook status against India's domination over Bangladesh.¹⁰³ The government was forced to arrest 21 activists of the Chhatra League in connection with Abrar's murder, due to mass student protests across the country. Police then filed a charge sheet on 14 November accusing 25 persons.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ The daily Prothom Alo, 9 October 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1618210>

¹⁰⁴ The Daily Star, 15 November 2019; <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/they-sought-strike-terror-students-1826848>



BUET student Abrar Fahad was beaten to death by BCL activists. Photo: Prothom Alo, 9 October 2019

The class attendance of a Chhatra League leader named Kamal Hossain Sourav, at the Rajshahi Government Polytechnic Institute, was very low and the Principal of the Institute, Farid Uddin, was reluctant to give him permission to appear in the examination. Enraged by this, on 1 November 2019, a group of BCL leaders and activists, led by Sourav, assaulted the principal and threw him into a pond. Farid Uddin filed a case against 57 persons with Chandrima Police Station in Rajshahi.¹⁰⁵

On 25 November 2019, a housewife and mother of two children was beaten after being disrobed by Udhuniya Union Ward 2 unit Awami League President Abdur Rashid and his four accomplices, in Ullapara under Sirajganj District. They also cut off her hair. When the news spread through social media, a case was filed with the police station on 2 December. The accused persons intimidated and threatened the housewife and her family members. As a result, that housewife was forced to flee her home.¹⁰⁶



Victim housewife (left), perpetrator Awami League leader Abdur Rashid (right). Photo: Jugantor, 9 December 2019

30. Although leaders and activists of the ruling party have been involved in widespread violence, including murder, they are enjoying impunity. It

¹⁰⁵ The Daily Star, 3 November 2019; <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/bcl-activists-push-principal-pond-1822465>

¹⁰⁶ The daily Jugantor, 8 December 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/national/253189/>

appears that the government had been forced to arrest party activists due to public pressure, but these leaders-activists were later released and/or acquitted.

On 19 October 2011, Abidur Rahman Abid, a third year student of Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) in Chittagong Medical College (CMC), was beaten by Chhatra League activists, including BCL leader Mofizur Rahman Jumma and CMC unit BCL General Secretary Bijoy Sarkar on suspicion of being a BNP activist. Abid was brought to Chittagong Medical Hospital for treatment in a critical condition, where BCL activists barred his treatment. As a result, Abid died on 21 October 2011. A case was filed in this regard accusing the 22 BCL leaders and activists. In February 2012, the police submitted a charge sheet in the court against 12 persons after dropping the names of 10 accused persons from the charge sheet. On 10 July 2019, Chittagong Fifth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge Jannatul Ferdous acquitted the 12 accused.¹⁰⁷

31. In 2019, 70 persons were killed and 3467 persons were injured in political violence. Furthermore, 234 incidents of internal violence in the Awami League, six in the BNP and three in the Jatiya Party were recorded during this period. 39 persons were killed and 2826 were injured in internal conflicts within the Awami League. On the other hand, one person was killed and 62 were injured within the BNP while 23 were injured in internal conflicts within the Jatiya Party.

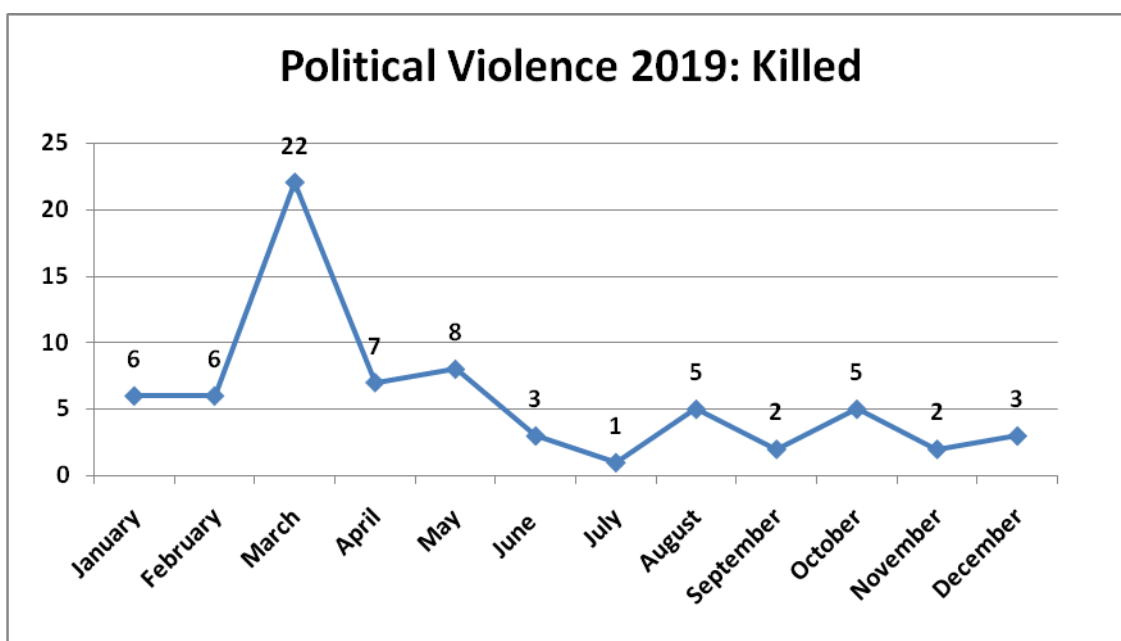


Figure 6

¹⁰⁷ The daily Kaler Kantha, 10 October 2019; <https://www.kalerkantho.com/online/country-news/2019/10/10/824731>

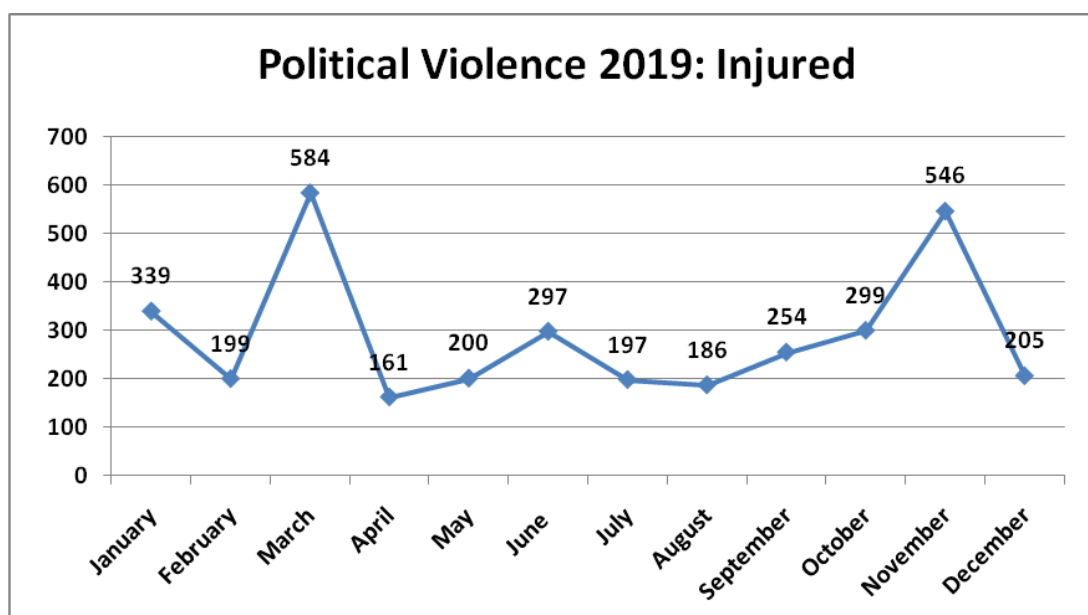


Figure 6.1

Political Violence: Statistics of Intra Party clashes 2019								
Month(s)	Due to intra party clash activists/ leader killed		Injuries: Intra party clash			Total Incidents of Intra Party clash		
	AL	BNP	AL	BNP	Jatiya Party	AL	BNP	Jatiya Party
January	4	0	320	0	0	39	0	0
February	6	0	192	0	0	17	0	0
March	9	0	447	0	0	43	0	0
April	2	0	106	0	0	8	0	0
May	3	0	187	0	3	15	0	1
June	3	0	272	0	0	20	0	0
July	0	0	186	0	0	10	0	0
August	5	0	131	0	0	14	0	0
September	1	1	183	24	0	17	2	0
October	2	0	237	20	0	13	1	0
November	1	0	460	18	20	23	3	2
December	3	0	105	0	0	15	0	0
Total	39	1	2826	62	23	234	6	3

Table: 4

Repression on opposition parties and dissidents and attacks and hindrance to freedom of assembly

32. In 2019, attacks and suppression on the opposition political parties and dissidents by the government became alarming. During this period, there were reports of fictitious cases filed against leaders and activists of the opposition political parties (especially BNP leaders and activists) arrests and re-arrests from the jail gate after a person had been released on bail. Women leaders and activists of the opposition were also arrested during internal

meetings. The present government has made it mandatory to get permission from the police for meetings, rallies or processions and even for internal meetings. There was no problem in getting police permission for holding meetings and rallies for the ruling party and its allies, but the opposition political parties, dissenters and other protesting organisations were denied police permission and their protest meetings and rallies stopped due to attacks by law enforcement agencies and Awami League-backed Chhatra League and Jubo League leaders-activists.

On 14 May 2019, police arrested 46 female members of Jamaat-e-Islami from an organisational meeting in Hatbowalia Village under Almadanga Upazila of Chuadanga District. The Superintendent of Police Mahbubur Rahman said that the women were meeting in Chuadanga to plan sabotage and distraction before Eid-ul-Fitr.¹⁰⁸ On 13 October, police arrested 14 female students, including members of the Pabna Islami Chhatra Sanstha for holding a meeting at a house in Mansurabad Residential Project area in Pabna. All those arrested were university and college students.¹⁰⁹

On 14 October 2019, Chittagong Metropolitan unit Jatiya Chhatra Dal¹¹⁰ (JCD) president Gazi Siraj Ullah was arrested from jail gate by the Detective Branch of Police when he was leaving Chittagong Central Jail on bail. It is to be noted that there are hundreds of political cases filed against Siraj Ullah. He was released from jail after being granted bail in 37 of these cases.¹¹¹

Protesting students and teachers of Jahangirnagar University surrounded the residence of the Vice Chancellor from the evening of 4 November 2019 under a banner of 'Jahangirnagar against Corruption', demanding the removal of the Vice Chancellor Farzana Islam after being accused of corruption. On 5 November, Awami League-backed Chhatra League activists attacked them and injured 35 persons, including seven teachers.¹¹² The police did not take any action against the attackers, but went to the house of nine organisers associated with the agitation and intimidated their family members.¹¹³



*BCL activists pounce on a protester near the VC's residence on Jahangirnagar University campus.
Photo: The Daily Star, 6 November 2019*

¹⁰⁸ The daily Naya Dignata, 15 May 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/more-news/410149/>

¹⁰⁹ The daily Naya Diganta, 15 October 2019; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/more-news/448234>

¹¹⁰ Student wing of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

¹¹¹ The daily Jugantor, 16 October 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/232677>

¹¹² The daily Prothom Alo, 6 November 2019;

¹¹³ The daily Prothom Alo, 12 November 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1623807>



A journalist rescues an injured protester. Photo: The Daily Star, 6 November 2019

On 23 October 2019, teachers of the primary schools from all over the country gathered in Dhaka under the primary teachers' association "Primary School Teachers Union Parishad" demanding an increase of pay scale and eliminating discrimination. When the teachers approached the Central Shahid Minar¹¹⁴, police baton charged and dispersed them. Several teachers were injured in the incident. The injured were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for treatment.¹¹⁵



Police stops primary school teachers' rally. Photo: Dhaka Tribune, 20 October 2019

On 28 October 2019, Awami League activists attacked the rally organised by Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) for a 17-point demand at Madarganj in Jamalpur District. At least 10 CPB leaders, including its central committee adviser Manjurul Ahsan were injured during this attack.¹¹⁶ Leaders and activists of CPB brought out a procession at Shantinagar in Dhaka in protest of the attack at CPB's rally in Jamalpur. Chhatra League activists attacked the procession. Shantinagar unit CPB Secretary Monjur Moin was injured during this attack.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Memorials to the martyrs of the Language Movement in 1952.

¹¹⁵ The daily Manabzamin, 24 October 2019 ; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=196004&cat=3/>

¹¹⁶ The daily Manabzamin, 30 October 2019; <http://mzamin.com/beta/article.php?mzamin=201532&cat=9/>

¹¹⁷ News Today24.com, 29 November 2019; <http://newstoday24.net/index.php/politics/683-2019-11-28-18-03-44>



Injured CPB leader Monjur Moin. Photo: News Today24.com, 29 November 2019

On 10 December 2019, BNP sought to hold a rally on the occasion of International Human Rights Day from its Head Office in Nayapalton, Dhaka. This was stopped due to police barrier.¹¹⁸

On 17 December, activists of the Liberation War Forum (comprising of ruling party leaders and activists) attacked a rally organised by the General Student Rights Protection Council in protest of the controversial and anti-Muslim citizenship law in India, in front of the TSC at Dhaka University. At least 10 students, including the DUCSU Vice President Nurul Haque Nur, were injured in the attack.¹¹⁹ In continuation of this incident, on 22 December, activists of the Muktiyudha Mancha entered the room of the DUCSU VP and attacked him, resulting in the injury of 30 students including Nurul Haque Nur. 14 of the seriously injured were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.¹²⁰



Injured DUCSU Vice President Nurul Haque Nur admitted to Dhaka Medical College hospital. Photo: Jugantor, 18 December 2019

¹¹⁸ The daily Jugantor, 11 December 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/254149>

¹¹⁹ The daily Jugantor, 18 December 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/national/256664>

¹²⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 23 December 2019



Students brought out a procession on the Dhaka University campus, protesting the attack on DUCSU Vice President Nurul Haque Nur and his followers. They also demanded the resignation of Proctor Prof AKM Golam Rabbani for his “inaction”. Photo: The Daily Star, 24 December 2019.

On 30 December 2019, Left Democratic Alliance brought out a protest rally towards the Prime Minister’s Office, demanding the resignation of the government and re-election under a caretaker government, due to the alleged vote rigging in the 11th parliamentary elections. When the procession reached Matsya Bhaban area of Dhaka, police attacked the protestors. At least 45 leaders and activists of the Left Democratic Alliance, including Saiful Haque, General Secretary of the Revolutionary Workers Party and Jonayed Saki, Coordinator of Gonosonghati Andolon, who organised the mass mobilization, movement, were injured.¹²¹



Police attack Revolutionary Workers Party’s General Secretary Saiful Islam during a protest rally of Left Democratic Alliance. Photo: Dhaka Times 24.com, 30 December 2019

¹²¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 31 December 2019



Police attack Gonosonghati Andolon's Coordinator Jonayed Saki during protest. Photo: Jugantor, 31 December 2019

Seeking of political asylum abroad

33. As in previous years, Bangladeshi citizens have tried to migrate through the risky sea route. Although the government claims that the country's economic growth rate has increased, the gap between rich and poor has widened. There is also widespread persecution on leaders and activists of the opposition in the country. They are becoming victims of enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killings and members of the law enforcement agencies file fictitious cases¹²² against them and allegedly torture them after arresting them under fabricated charges.¹²³ In such a situation, many political leaders and activists are seeking political asylum outside the country in order to protect themselves from political oppression. Furthermore, due to the severe crisis of livelihood, the citizens of Bangladesh are crossing the border after falling into the trap of human traffickers.

In the night of 9 May 2019, a big boat with 75 migrants left for Italy from the coast of Libya. Later the passengers were shifted to a smaller boat in the deep sea. The boat sank in a few moments and many passengers drowned, out of which 39 were Bangladeshi citizens.¹²⁴

On 26 November, some Bangladeshi nationals boarded a boat from Morocco that sank in the Mediterranean Sea on their way to Meleia in Spain. As a result, four Bangladeshi citizens died and two went missing.¹²⁵

46 Bangladeshi nationals were detained in captivity in the Akayuka area of Veracruz State in Mexico. The detainees claimed that they are activists of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). It is to be noted that LDP is a partner of the BNP-led 20-party Alliance. The detainees complained that they had left the country mainly because of the widespread oppression by the government due to being involved in opposition politics. Selina Akhter, mother of detained Zahid Hasan of Begamganj in Noakhali, said her son was hospitalized after being attacked by

¹²² The daily Naya Diganta, 12 November 2018; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/364023/>

¹²³ The daily Naya Diganta, 13 November 2018; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/364250/>

¹²⁴ The daily Jugantor, 12 May 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/second-edition/176554/>

¹²⁵ The daily Jugantor, 29 November 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/exile/249749/>

his opponent due to opposition politics (LDP). To save his life, he was sent abroad after selling land and property.¹²⁶

34. Most of those who have gone abroad by sea or by other ways have sought political asylum. According to the UNHCR, 160,737 Bangladeshi nationals have applied for political asylum in different countries in the last five years, which is more than double that of the previous five years. They have shown various reasons, including arrest, torture and persecution because of their involvement in opposition politics.¹²⁷

D. Freedom of Expression and Interference on Media and Repressive Laws

Persecution on dissenters

35. In 2019, people affiliated with the ruling party, filed cases of 'sedition' and under the Digital Security Act; and attacked the houses of dissenters and opposition leaders-activists because of their critical remarks against the government. It has become a trend to file multiple harassment cases in different areas of the country by the ruling party supporters, against dissidents and opposition political party leaders and activists. In addition, a senior law enforcement officer has even publicly threatened to take drastic action against anyone who expressed their opinion regarding the abrogation of Kashmir's special status.¹²⁸ Such public threats against freedom of opinion show how civil rights have deteriorated.

On 17 April 2019, Awami League's Religious Affairs Committee member and President of Joy Bangla Muktiyoddha Projanma League's Central Executive Committee, Akram Hossain Badal, filed a sedition case under Section 124 (a) of the Penal Code with the Court of Senior Judicial Magistrate Muhammad Abdun Noor in Kishoreganj, against BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir; Trustee of Gonoshastha Kendra Dr. Zafrullah Chowdhury; Advisor to BNP Chairperson, Mizanur Rahman Minu; and the Registrar of Gono University, Delwar Hossain, for the allegations of destroying developmental work of the state by creating instability through sabotage.¹²⁹ It is to be noted that those four men had criticised government actions at various political meetings.

On 9 August 2019, Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) Director General Benazir Ahmed, warned that strict action would be taken if anyone tried to instigate violence inside Bangladesh regarding the Kashmir issue in India.¹³⁰

Awami League-backed Chhatra League activists attacked and vandalized the house of BNP Chairperson's Advisor Shamsuzzaman Dudu in Chuadanga on 18 September 2019, for allegedly 'threatening to kill the Prime Minister' in a talk show on DBC TV channel.

¹²⁶ The daily Kaler Kantha, 26 October 2019; <https://www.kalerkantho.com/print-edition/first-page/2019/10/26/831298>

¹²⁷ The daily Manabzamin, 10 July 2019; <https://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=180571>

¹²⁸ On 5 August 2019, the Indian government canceled the special status of Kashmir by repealing Article 370 of the Indian Constitution.

¹²⁹ The daily Manabzamin, 20 April 2019; <http://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=168911&cat=6>

¹³⁰ The daily Naya Diganta, 10 August 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/431884/>

Meanwhile, two Awami League leaders have filed two sedition cases against Duda in Dhaka and Chittagong courts.¹³¹

Freedom of the media

36. As always, in 2019, the government put pressure on the mass media through intimidation, attacks and filing cases to disrupt objective journalism and publish unbiased news. Many media have been forced to maintain self-censorship. Almost all electronic media and most of the print media are owned by people who are loyal to the government party; and the only state TV channel, BTV is fully controlled by the government. The government has also granted permission for 11 new private TV channels in 2019.¹³² The owners of these private TV channels, are reported to be backed by the government. On one hand, the government is controlling the media through its own people and on the other, it is interfering on a small number of media that are still trying to work independently. The government's intervention on the mass media began by shutting down the pro-opposition electronic and print media - Diganta TV, Islamic TV and Amar Desh in 2013.
37. Reporters without Borders Index on Bangladesh 2019 states that during the ruling Awami League government, journalists were subjected to strict policies. According to the Media Freedom Index 2019, Bangladesh ranked 150th among South Asian countries. Bangladesh's rank was 146th in the 2018 index, and it has fallen a further four steps in 2019.¹³³ During the oppressive situation in 2019, police tortured journalists and filed cases against them and purposely included their names in the charge sheet in 'political cases'. There were various allegations of vandalizing newspaper offices, attacks on journalists, and death threats made to journalists by ruling party leaders-activists.
38. **In 2019, 45 journalists were injured, five were assaulted, five were attacked, 12 were threatened, four were arrested and 33 were sued while carrying their professional duty.**

¹³¹ The daily Jugantor, 20 September 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/222546>

¹³² The daily Jugantor, 12 November 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/242842/>

¹³³ World Press Freedom Index 2019, RSF <https://rsf.org/en/2019-rsf-index-asia-pacific-press-freedom-impacted-political-change>

Freedom of Media: 2019								
Month (s)	Journalists/ Reporters/ Correspondents							
	Injured	Assaulted	Attacked	Arrested	Threatened	Tortured	Sued	Total
January	4	0	2	2	1	0	1	10
February	8	0	0	2	1	0	4	15
March	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
April	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
May	19	1	1	0	1	0	0	22
June	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
July	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
August	2	2	0	0	3	0	0	7
September	4	0	0	0	0	0	3	7
October	0	0	0	0	1	0	16	17
November	0	0	2	0	2	0	7	11
December	3	0	0	0	1	1	2	7
Total	45	5	5	4	12	1	33	105

Table: 5

Superintendent of Police (SP) SM Jahangir Alam Sarkar was ‘closed’ from Feni on 12 May 2019 when news was published about his negligence in connection with the incident of the burning to death of Nusrat Jahan Rafi¹³⁴, a student of Sonagazi Madrasa in Feni District. SP Jahangir Alam became angry due to this, and the police submitted a charge sheet against some journalists in the court instantaneously, under his instruction, in relation to nine cases of vandalism¹³⁵, before he was transferred from Feni. Mohammad Shahadat Hossain, Editor of the local daily ‘Fenir Shomoy’ and Feni District correspondent of the daily Naya Digantha; Solaiman Hazari Dalim, local representative of Banglanews; Mainuddin Patwari, local representative of the daily ‘Shomoyer Alo’; and SM Yusuf Ali, local representative of the daily Adhikar were included in the charge sheet.¹³⁶

Activists of an organization called the Liberation War Mancha (formed by the ruling Awami League party leaders-activists) attacked and vandalized the Daily Sangram Office after publishing a report referring to Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah as a ‘martyr’ who was hanged for crimes against humanity. They also set fire to newspapers. The newspaper’s editor Abul Asad was assaulted and brought out of his office. Later, the police reached the spot and took Abul Asad to Hatirjheel Police Station. The chief reporter of the daily Sangram, Ruhul Amin Ghazi alleged that police were present at the time of attack but did not stop the attackers.¹³⁷ The police did not take any action against the government-backed attackers, but

¹³⁴ On 27 March 2019, Shirin Akhter, the mother of Nasrat Jahan Rafi, filed a case against Siraj-ud-Daulah, Principal of Sonagazi Islamia Senior Fazil Madrasa of Feni District for sexually harassing her daughter Nusrat. She did not withdraw the case even after intimidation. On 6 April, Nusrat went to the Madrasa to appear for her Alim exam, which is equivalent to Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination. At that time, the followers of the principal called Nusrat to the roof of the Madrasa’s cyclone shelter and set her on fire after pouring kerosene on her. Nusrat died on 10 April, when she was admitted to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

¹³⁵ These cases were filed against the opposition BNP and Jamaat leaders and activists at various police stations in Feni before the eleventh parliamentary elections on 30 December 2018.

¹³⁶ Information sent by local human rights defender associated with *Odhikar*, from Feni

¹³⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 14 December 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1629210>

Abul Asad was charged with sedition and a case filed under the Digital Security Act 2018 and the police took him on 3-day remand through the court.¹³⁸

Police arrested Faridul Mostafa Khan, editor of Cox's Bazar Bani without a warrant on 21 September 2019, for publishing reports on various irregularities and corruption perpetrated by members of police, including the Officer-in-Charge of Teknaf Police Station, Pradeep Kumar Das. On 19 December 2019, the family members of Faridul Mostafa Khan made this allegation at a press conference in Cox's Bazar. He was brought to Teknaf from Dhaka and tortured at the police station. Chili powder was rubbed in his eyes as alleged by Faridul Mostafa's daughter Sumaiya Mostafa, at the press conference.¹³⁹

Imposition of the repressive Digital Security Act 2018 and section 57 of the ICT Act, 2006 (amended 2009 & 2013)

39. In 2019, citizens were sued and arrested under the repressive Digital Security Act 2018, for publishing any form of criticism against the government and the ruling party's high-level individuals or party leaders on social media. As a result, self-censorship is being used to express different opinions on social media due to widespread fear among the citizens. During this period, there was widespread government scrutiny on social media.
40. **In 2019, 42 persons were arrested under the Digital Security Act, 2018 and six persons were arrested under the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (amended 2009 and 2013).**

On 11 May 2019, police arrested Gazipur District correspondent of the daily Prothom Bor, Mohammad Mozahid, when Sreepur Upazila unit Awami League-backed BCL President Zakirul Islam Ziku filed a complaint with Sreepur Police Station on charges of defamatory remarks and propaganda against the Prime Minister. A case has been filed against him under the Digital Security Act 2018.¹⁴⁰

Munir Uddin Ahmed, a Khulna correspondent of the Daily New Nation and former General Secretary of Khulna Press Club, was arrested on 20 October 2019, after he had allegedly expressed his opinion about the incident of Bhola¹⁴¹ on his Facebook, targeting the Inspector General of Police (IGP). On 21 October, Sub Inspector Shariful Alam of Khulna Police Station filed a case against Munir Uddin Ahmed under the Digital Security Act. He was later sent to jail by the court. He was detained in Khulna District Jail till 31 December.¹⁴²

On 26 December 2019, Jagannath University unit Chhatra League Publicity Secretary, Aurnob Hor, filed a case with Dhanmondi Police Station, Dhaka under the Digital Security Act against the Dhaka University Central Student Union (DUCSU) Vice-President Nurul Haque Nur and Rashid Khan, joint convener of the General Student Rights Protection Council, for allegedly carrying 'religious incitement and propaganda and defamation'.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ The daily Jugantor, 13 December 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/national/255214>; The daily Jugantor, 14 December 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/national/255533>

¹³⁹ The daily Jugantor, 20 December 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/257424>

¹⁴⁰ Manabadhikar Khabar, June 2019; <http://manabadhikarkhabar.com/epaper/index.php?id=28-5-2019-44>

¹⁴¹ Four people were killed in a massive clash 'Touhidi Janata' and police in Borahanuddin under Bhola District over allegations of derogatory remarks over Islam religion and the Prophet (saw) on Facebook.

¹⁴² Information sent by local human rights defender associated with Odhikar, from Khulna

¹⁴³ The daily Jugantor, 29 December 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/260738>

On 9 January 2019, a Cyber Tribunal judge Ashsams Jaglul Hossain, sentenced cell phone businessman Mohammad Monir (20) to seven years of rigorous imprisonment in a case filed under section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act, for allegedly distorting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's picture on Facebook.¹⁴⁴

E. Bangladesh and its Neighbouring States

Human rights violations at the Bangladesh-India border by Indian BSF

41. Human rights violations, including killing, abduction and torture of Bangladeshi nationals by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) continued in 2019 along the Bangladesh-India border. Indian BSF killed 11 Bangladeshis in 2018 at the border areas. About four times more Bangladeshi civilians were killed in 2019 than 2018. Apart from the BSF, Bangladeshi citizens were also killed by Indian nationals at the border. On 25 November, a Bangladeshi cattle trader, Abdul Gani (30) was beaten to death by Indian nationals at Damurhuda border in Chuadanga.¹⁴⁵ Despite the continued killings of Bangladeshi nationals at the hands of BSF, no action was taken by the Bangladesh government to protect its citizens. Instead, the Foreign Minister AK Abul Momen told journalists on 12 October 2019, "those who died at the border, illegally entered India or went to rob. If the illegal entry is stopped, the killings at the border will also be stopped".¹⁴⁶
42. It is to be mentioned that according to the Memorandum of Understanding and related treaties signed between the two countries, if a citizen of one country crosses the border illegally, it should be identified as infiltration and accordingly the person should be arrested and handed over to the civil authorities.¹⁴⁷ However, it appears that Indian BSF has long been killing or torturing or shooting people to death, violating the agreement and international law when BSF members see anyone near the border or if someone crosses the border.¹⁴⁸ BSF members have also illegally entered into Bangladesh territory and attacked Bangladeshi civilians.
43. **In 2019, 41 Bangladeshis were killed by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF). Furthermore, 40 were injured by the BSF. Moreover, 34 Bangladeshi nationals were abducted by BSF.**

¹⁴⁴ The daily Jugantor, 10 January 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/second-edition/131631/>

¹⁴⁵ The daily Jugantor, 27 November 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/248641>

¹⁴⁶ The daily Manabzamin, 13 October 2019; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=194373>

¹⁴⁷ New Age, 24 September 2016; <http://archive.newagebd.net/253126/bsf-kills-2-bangladeshis-borders/>

¹⁴⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2010/12/09/trigger-happy/excessive-use-force-indian-troops-bangladesh-border>

Human rights violation by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) against Bangladeshi citizens 2019

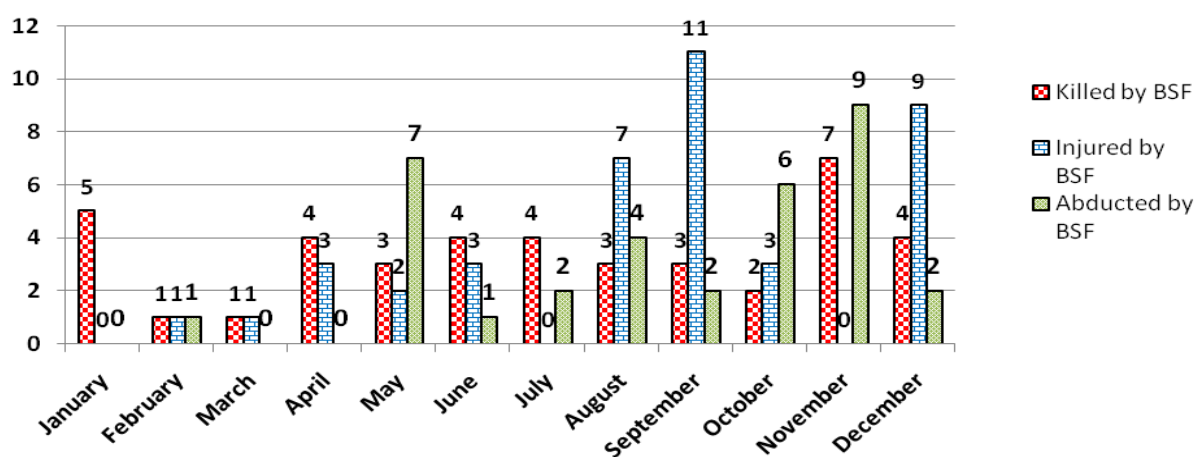


Figure 7

Table 6: Bangladeshi citizens who were killed by BSF in 2019

Sl. No.	Name and age of victim(s)	Identity of victim(s)	Place of Incident	Date of Incident
1	Khalilur Rahman (23)	Bangladeshi citizen	Bhujaripara border in Dimla upazila, Nilphamari	15.01.2019
2	Jahangir Alam (21)	Bangladeshi citizen	Dharmagar border, Ranisankail upazila, Thakurgaon	18.01.2019
3	Jenarul (30)	Cattle trader	Minapur border, Haripur upazila, Thakurgaon	22.01.2019
4	Jamal Uddin (45)	Cattle trader	Char Ashariadaha border, Godagari upazila, Rajshahi	24.01.2019
5	Sohel Rana Babu (14)	Bangladeshi citizen	Jagodal area, Ranishankail in Thakurgaon	28.01.2019
6	Asadul Islam (42)	Cattle trader	Nabinagar border, Patgram upazila, Lalmonirhat	02.02.2019
7	Tipu (20)	A cowboy	Wahedpur border, Shibganj, Chapainawabganj	04.03.2019
8	Milon Ali (17) and Senarul Islam (24)	Bangladeshi citizen	Shibganj upazila, Chapainawabganj	02.04.2019
9	Bisharot Ali Bishu (22)	Cattle trader	Masudpur border, Shibganj, Chapainawabganj	20.04.2019
10	Mohammad Suman (22)	Cattle trader	Dangaon border, Haripur, Thakurgaon	22.04.2019
11	Kabirul Hosen Molla (32)	Bangladeshi citizen	Kushkhali border of Satkhira Sadar	11.05.2019
12	Mohammad Alam (40)	Cattle trader	Dharmajoin border, Biral, Dinajpur	26.05.2019
13	Mohidul Islam (24)	Cattle trader	Roumari border, Kurigram	29.05.2019
14	Jahirul Islam (25)	Bangladeshi citizen	Gilabari border at Bholahat upazila in Chapainawabganj	04.06.2019

15	Manarul Islam (27)	Cattle trader	Shingnagar frontier under Shibganj in Chapainawabganj	20.06.2019
16	Bakkar and Selim	Cattle traders	Bakherali border in Chapainawabganj	24.06.2019
17	Ershadul Haque (35)	Cattle trader	Near Sreerampur border of Patgram in Lalmonirhat	07.07.2019
18	Dulal Uddin (18)	Bangladeshi citizen	Near Kironganj border of Shibganj under Chapainawabganj	08.07.2019
19	Royal Rahman and Saddam Hossain Patal	Cattle traders	Wahedpur border, Shibganj Chapainawabganj	11.07.2019
20	Robi (30)	Bangladeshi citizen	Ramkrishnapur union Charpara, Doulatpur border, Kushtia	03.08.2019
21	Mohammad Abdullah (45)	Cattle trader	Thakurpur border, Damurhuda, Chuadanga	13.08.2019
22	Abdur Rouf (37)	Bangladeshi citizen	Uttar Dimai border area, Borolekha, Moulvibazar	24.08.2019
23	Babul Mia (24)	Bangladeshi citizen	Patgram border in Lalmonirhat	03.09.2019
24	Nazim Uddin (35)	Cattle trader	Rajpur border point of Jibannagar in Chuadanga	05.09.2019
25	Mohammad Kamal (32)	Cattle trader	Kathaldangi border, Haripur, Thakurgaon	20.09.2019
26	Jahurul Islam (30)	A cow shepherd	Masudpur Indian border in Shibganj upazila, Chapainawabganj	13.10.2019
27	Srikant Singh (32)	A brick kiln worker	Kandhal border, Haripur, Thakurgaon	20.10.2019
28	Abdur Rahim (50)	Bangladeshi citizen	Palianpur village of Maheshpur upazila of Jhenaidah	03.11.2019
29	Suman (25)	Cattle trader	Moheshpur border in Jhenidah	08.11.2019
30	Ukil Miah (25) and Khokon Miah (25)	A college student and a businessman	Babelakona border of Sherpur	18.11.2019
31	Babul	Bangladeshi citizen	Roumari border, Kurigram	24.11.2019
32	Abdul Goni (30)	Bangladeshi farmer	Chakulia border area of Damurhuda upazila, Chuadanga	26.11.2019
33	Salman Ahmed (18)	Bangladeshi citizen	Dona border area, Kanaighat, Sylhet	28.11.2019
34	Abul Hashem	Cattle trader	Nageswari upazila, Kurigram	03.12.2019
35	Saju (40)	Cattle trader	Nagorvita border, Baliadangi, Thakurgaon	19.12.2019
36	Rezabul Islam (30)	Cattle trader	Haripur upazila of Thakurgaon	22.12.2019
37	Anwar (32)	Smuggler	Masudpur border, Shibganj, Chapainawabganj	25.12.2019

On 27 April 2019, BSF members arrested a Bangladeshi cowherd named Azim Uddin (28) at the Sappahar border under Naogaon District and tortured him severely. Members of the BSF pulled out 10 fingernails of the young man and tortured him in different ways.¹⁴⁹



BSF members tortured Bangladeshi citizen Azim Uddin at Sapahar border in Naogaon. Photo: Manabzamin 28 April, 2019

On 2 September 2019, 10 Bangladeshi farmers were injured in BSF firing at Char Khanpur border in Rajshahi District, when they were working on their land within the borders of Bangladesh, BSF members came in a truck and opened fire on them. BSF members also seized their equipment.¹⁵⁰

On 13 September 2019, BSF members of Amit Camp under Shitalkuchi Police Station entered Bangladesh and stopped the construction work of the two-storied Keramotia Boro Masjid (mosque) at Borokhata Dolapara border under Hatibandha Upazila in Lalmonirhat District.¹⁵¹

India's interference on Bangladesh

44. The Government of India is considered partially responsible for the undemocratic system that has been created in Bangladesh, including the breakdown of Bangladesh's electoral system.¹⁵² The Awami League government, which came to power through a farcical election, has given the opportunity to India to dominate Bangladesh and violate human rights.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ The daily Jugantor, 28 April 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/171750/>

¹⁵⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 3 September 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1612393>

¹⁵¹ The daily Manabzamin, 15 September 2019; <https://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=190309&cat=3>

¹⁵² Before the controversial and fraudulent elections on 5 January 2014, almost all political parties in Bangladesh decided to boycott the polls. At that time, the then Indian Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh came to Bangladesh and succeeded in trying to bring the Jatiya Party, which was earlier decided to boycott the elections, to the polls. BBC Bangla, 16 November 2016; <https://www.bbc.com/bengali/news-46237664>

¹⁵³ The Indian government is taking transit advantage from Bangladesh at almost no cost. At the request of India, Bangladesh has reduced the 'fee' for transporting goods to the state of Assam and Tripura in India, from BDT 1054 to BDT 192 per ton (<https://www.bd-pratidin.com/abroad-paper/2019/11/24/477559>). Despite protests from all sections, India

45. On 5 October 2019, seven Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) were signed between the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and the Prime Minister of India. Although India unilaterally benefited through the MoU, no interest of Bangladesh was protected. Under one of the MoU, India can withdraw 1.82 cusecs of water from the Feni River of Bangladesh and take it to Tripura.¹⁵⁴ Feni River is the property of Bangladesh. Its origin, flow, and geographical location ensure that the Feni River does not flow at the international river boundary line. India has been trying for many years to prove the Feni River an international river, to meet the scarcity of water in several northeastern states in India.¹⁵⁵ According to the Memorandum of Understanding, if India withdraws water during the dry season, water supply in various irrigation project and the areas of Bangladesh which are beside the river, Mirsarai of Chittagong; Ramgarh Upazila of Khagrachari District; Chhagolnaiya, Parasuram, Sonagazi, Phulgazi Upazilas of Feni District; some parts of Chaudagram area of Comilla District; and some parts of Noakhali and Lakshmipur Districts, will be affected. As a result, millions of hectares of land will be unfit for cultivation. The country's second largest irrigation project, the Murali Irrigation Project, will become inefficient.¹⁵⁶ Another MoU involves India setting up 20 radar system networks along the coast of Bangladesh in the Bay of Bengal. This network will be a strategic resource for India and supportive for the country's Navy. India will be able to respond to any threat to its national security and sovereignty by launching this surveillance system.¹⁵⁷ However, surveillance of any other country along the coast of Bangladesh will jeopardize its national security. According to the Memorandum of Understanding, India will also use Chittagong and Mongla ports of Bangladesh, which will have a huge negative impact in Bangladesh.
46. The Indian government has also asked for 12 acres of land near Bangladesh for expansion of the runway of Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport in Agartala, the capital of the state of Tripura. The land was sought at the border of Brahmanbaria district in Bangladesh.¹⁵⁸
47. For a long time, India has been depriving Bangladesh from its right to water during the dry season and for this reason, most of the rivers of Bangladesh are now almost dead. Although the Teesta agreement is of utmost necessity for Bangladesh's water rights, the Government of India has not signed the Teesta Agreement with the Government of Bangladesh. An extreme condition is already prevailing in the Padma Basin due to the Farakka Dam. During the monsoon season, the government of India has been violating international law by artificially creating floods in Bangladesh by opening the sluice gates of Farakka and Ghazaldoba barrages, which has no remedy. There are more than four thousand kilometers of land borders between India and Bangladesh.

continues to build the Rampal power plant. The construction of this power plant will destroy the Sundarbans of Bangladesh and the diversity around it and which will eventually push Bangladesh to a catastrophic humanitarian and natural disaster.

¹⁵⁴ The daily Naya Dignata, 6 October 2019; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/445893/>

¹⁵⁵ The daily Naya Dignata, 7 October 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/446149>

¹⁵⁶ The daily Naya Dignata, 7 October 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/446149>

¹⁵⁷ The daily Jugantor, 7 October 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/229114>

¹⁵⁸ The daily Manabzamin, 3 August 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/429978>

India has built a barbed wire fence throughout the border.¹⁵⁹ India has also constructed a fence inside the zero line, at Phulbari border in Kurigram district in Bangladesh, violating international law. In Tetulia Upazila of Panchagarh District, land of Bangladeshi citizens have fallen inside the fence.¹⁶⁰ Ziaul Hassan of Sardarpara Village of this Upazila said that at least seven bighas of their land were lying inside a barbed wire fence. They are not allowed to go there to cultivate. Another Bangladeshi, Anjuara Begum, said that all their land fell inside a barbed wire fence. BSF does not allow them to go to their land.¹⁶¹



Barbed wire fence along India-Bangladesh border. Photo: Dhaka Tribune.

48. The Indian government has already started pushing into Bangladesh, people who have been excluded from the National Registration for Citizenship (NRC) prepared for identifying illegal immigrants in India. More than 1.9 million people were excluded from the final list of the NRC prepared in the Assam State of India. It is to be mentioned that since the commencement of the NRC work in Assam, India has been publicizing that the people who have been excluded are Bangladeshi citizens.¹⁶² Indian police arrested several Bangla speaking people during raids in various parts of Bengaluru in South India in May. Of them, 59 people were taken to West Bengal and detained.¹⁶³ Meanwhile, India is pushing Bangla-speaking Indian nationals into Bangladesh through the India-Bangladesh border and members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) are arresting them and sending them to jail. The majority of the detainees are Muslim.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ The daily Naya Diganta, 3 October 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/445062>

¹⁶⁰ The daily Jugantor, 23 October 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/235325>

¹⁶¹ The daily Naya Diganta, 3 October 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/445062>

¹⁶² The daily Manabzamin, 3 September 2019; <http://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=188659&cat=2>

¹⁶³ BBC, 27 November 2019; <https://www.bbc.com/bengali/news-50559797>

¹⁶⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 21 November 2019

Acts of genocide against Rohingya population in Myanmar

49. On 25 August 2017, the Myanmar army and Buddhist extremists began genocide on the Rohingya and their expulsion from Myanmar. In these operations, members of the Rohingya community have been subjected to various forms of violations, including torture, murder, enforced disappearance, gang rape, and arson on homes and land. On 28 August 2017, the Bangladesh government proposed a joint operation¹⁶⁵ against the Rohingya 'rebels' at the Bangladesh-Myanmar border with the government of Aung San Suu Kyi in connection with the genocide in Myanmar, but subsequently retreated from this stand due to criticism; and the victims of genocide were allowed to enter Bangladesh. The Rohingya people then took shelter in 34 refugee camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas in Cox's Bazar District of Bangladesh. The Rohingyas have been subjected to various types of state and non-state violence, harassment and obstruction in Myanmar, India and Bangladesh in 2019.
50. On 4 January 2019, the remaining Rohingyas in the Rakhine state of Myanmar were reportedly attacked again by the Myanmar Army in retaliation for the attacks on four border posts in Myanmar's Buthidaung, by the insurgent armed group Arakan Army.¹⁶⁶ Rohingyas had taken shelter in India at different times in the past, but the Indian government is now forcing them to move from there to Bangladesh. Between 1 December 2018 and 16 January 2019, as many as 1,300 Rohingya refugees were deported from India and entered Bangladesh.¹⁶⁷ The Bangladesh government has not protested or taken any action against such deportation. Meanwhile, the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) arrested these Rohingyas and sent them to the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar.¹⁶⁸
51. Repatriation of Rohingyas in Myanmar and their transfer to Bhasanchar of Bangladesh were two very important issues in 2019. The Myanmar government, on 22 August 2019, gave clearance certificates to 3,540 Rohingyas for repatriation to Myanmar for a second term. Rohingyas refused to return to Myanmar, as the Myanmar government did not fulfill any of their core demands¹⁶⁹. As a result, the second repatriation initiative failed.¹⁷⁰ 61 national and international NGOs in Bangladesh and Myanmar issued a joint statement on the escalation of the Rohingya crisis and the repatriation process and said that the current situation in Myanmar does not guarantee the security and ensure the rights of the Rohingya.¹⁷¹ The UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, visited Bhasanchar on 24 January 2019 and said that the Rohingyas should not be hurriedly transferred there without assessing the

¹⁶⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 30 August 2017

¹⁶⁶ The daily Naya Diganta, 9 January 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/379202>

¹⁶⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 17 January 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1575017>

¹⁶⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 18 January 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/opinion/article/1575039>

¹⁶⁹ The main demands include restoration their citizenship, recognition of Rohingya ethnicity, protecting their security and fundamental rights in Rakhine.

¹⁷⁰ Distrust holds them back", The Daily Star, 23 August 2019; <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/rohingya-repatriation-distrust-holds-them-back-1789192>

¹⁷¹ The daily Manabzamin, 22 August 2019; <http://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=186760&cat=6>

situation if a cyclone occurred and without adequate scrutiny of the island's facilities.¹⁷² However, a document published by Reuters shows that the United Nations is making plans to help the government relocate thousands of Rohingya refugees to the remote island Bhasanchar. *Odhikar* believes that if the Rohingyas are transferred to the disaster prone area, they might face natural calamities and their repatriation process is likely to be stalled.

52. On 25 August 2019, on the eve of two years of Rohingya genocide, Rohingya refugees organised a peaceful protest. At that time, the Rohingyas expressed their desire to return to Myanmar if their citizenship is restored, their ethnicity as Rohingya is recognised, and their security and fundamental rights in Rakhine are ensured.¹⁷³
53. On 7 September 2019, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) ordered all mobile operators to stop 3G and 4G services from evening to the next morning in the Rohingya refugee camp areas. Since then, 3G and 4G services are unavailable in the camps. Moreover, selling of new SIM cards has been stopped as per instruction of the government, at Ukhiya and Teknaf areas in Cox's Bazar.¹⁷⁴ It has been alleged that the government has taken this decision to reduce the flow of information to the Rohingyas and to prevent them from gathering freely and expressing political views. As a result, the activities of local and international service providers have been disrupted.
54. On 4 July 2019, Fatu Bensuda, a Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court (ICC), appealed to the ICC to allow the investigation into crimes against humanity. On 14 November, a three-member pre-hearing chamber led by the ICC Judge Olga Herrera Carbuca instructed Fatu Bensuda to investigate whether crimes against humanity on the Rohingyas had been committed or not.¹⁷⁵ Meanwhile on 11 November, the Gambia, filed a lawsuit against Myanmar at the UN's highest judicial body – the International Court of Justice. In a 46 page petition, the Gambia made allegations of genocide on the Rohingya people, gang rape of Rohingya women and acts of arson their homes in the Rakhine state of Myanmar.¹⁷⁶ On 13 November, a number of Latin American human rights organisations filed a lawsuit in Argentina against Myanmar State Council's Aung San Suu Kyi and several top officials of the country for the same allegations.¹⁷⁷ The hearing on the crimes against humanity took place from 10 to 12 December 2019 at the International Criminal Court against Myanmar.¹⁷⁸
55. On 5 December 2019, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) said in a report, that the administrative and overhead costs of some UN agencies and international NGOs are higher compared to their spending on their

¹⁷² BBC Bangla news, 25 January 2019; <https://www.bbc.com/bengali/news-47003349>

¹⁷³ The daily Naya Dignata, 26 August 2019; www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/435139/

¹⁷⁴ "All SIMs in Rohingya camps to be verified in 7 days", The Daily Star, 8 September 2019;

<https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/no-mobile-phone-services-for-rohingya-refugees-1794367>

¹⁷⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 15 November 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1624379>

¹⁷⁶ New Age 12 November 2019; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/90354>

¹⁷⁷ The daily Manabzamin, 15 November 2019; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=199169&cat=6>

¹⁷⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 13 December 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1629127>

programmes for Rohingyas and local communities in Bangladesh. The report stated that there are also allegations of corruption and irregularities in the operations of the refugee camps and in the use of grants meant for the displaced Rohingya people and members of the local community. UN Women is on top of the list, spending 32.6 per cent of its funds as overhead costs while the figure for the UNHCR was 25.98 per cent. TIB prepared this report based on information on seven UN organisations for the January 2017 – October 2019 period collected from the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator.¹⁷⁹

56. Nine countries, including China, voted against adopting a resolution at the UN General Assembly on 27 December condemning the human rights abuses against Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar. A total of 134 countries supported the approval of the resolution seeking Myanmar to ensure justice for all violations of human rights, while 28 abstained from the vote.¹⁸⁰

F. Labour Rights

57. Workers of both the formal and informal sectors, have been subjected to various human rights violations in 2019. Furthermore, migrant women workers have returned home after becoming victims of various types of violence, including sexual violence abroad.
58. **In 2019, 97 workers died and 354 were injured in formal and informal sectors.**

Situation of RMG factory workers

59. The ready-made garment industry is one of the largest sources of foreign revenue for Bangladesh. There are 3.5 million workers in this industry. The contribution of workers associated with this industry is immense. Unfortunately, the government and the factory owners have used the workers without ensuring their rights of security, wages, health, medical benefits, maternity leave and right to form trade unions. In 2019, several incidents of closing down of factories without notice, harassment, sudden termination of workers and not paying wages on time, occurred and this has resulted in labour unrest. According to BGMEA, 31,600 workers lost their jobs due to the closure of 61 garment factories from January to November 2019. Furthermore, as per data of the Export Promotion Bureau, the export of the industry declined by 7.78% from July to November.¹⁸¹ The women workers who are associated with this industry are constantly being subjected to discrimination and violence. It is to be mentioned that although more than 60% of workers in this sector are women¹⁸², in many factories women workers are facing

¹⁷⁹ New Age, 6 November 2019; <http://www.newagebd.net/article/92791/tib-finds-irregularities-in-running-rohingya-camps>

¹⁸⁰ “No solution to Rohingya crisis in sight despite Bangladesh effort”, New Age, 29 November 2019; <http://www.newagebd.net/article/94964/no-solution-to-rohingya-crisis-in-sight>

¹⁸¹ “Double trouble for RMG”, The Daily Star, 20 November 2019; <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/double-trouble-rmg-1845232>

¹⁸² Dhaka Tribune, 3 March 2018; <https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/2018/03/03/womens-participation-rmg-workforce-declines>

different types of deprivation and physical and mental repression. It was learned in a survey conducted by US-based Fair Labour Association, in collaboration with the Awaz Foundation, that female workers in the readymade garment factories in Bangladesh have been deprived of the benefits they are entitled to as per law concerning maternity leave and childcare rights.¹⁸³

One worker was killed and many were injured when police attacked workers who were in protest with various demands. Workers of the RMG factories started their movement in Dhaka from 5 January 2019 and soon workers in adjacent areas too began demanding implementation of the minimum wage structure and pay arrears. Police barred and attacked this movement. In continuation of this movement, on 8 January, during protests, a worker named Mohammad Suman Mia (22) was killed in police firing.¹⁸⁴ Due to their participation in the labour movement, 11,000 workers of 99 factories in Dhaka, Savar, Ashulia, Gazipur and Narayanganj were terminated and 3,500 workers have been accused in 34 cases.¹⁸⁵



Sumon Mia, shot to death by police. Photo: The Bangla Tribune, 8 January 2019.



Police action against protesting workers on 14 January. Photo: The daily Naya Diganta, 18 January 2019

¹⁸³ "Female RMG workers in Bangladesh deprived of maternity benefits: study", New Age, 20 October 2019; <http://www.newagebd.net/article/88178/female-rmg-workers-in-bangladesh-deprived-of-maternity-benefits-study>

¹⁸⁴ The daily Naya Diganta, 9 January 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/379168/>

¹⁸⁵ The daily New Age, 13 February 2019; <http://www.newagebd.net/article/64683/11000-rmg-workers-fired>

Workers in RMG factories have been subjected to violence by factory owners or officers at various times. On 9 March 2019, a woman worker named Hazera, at a garment factory named Four H Apparels in Chittagong, committed suicide on the same day factory officials humiliated her over an allegation of stealing.¹⁸⁶

On 25 July 2019, a worker named Delwar Hossain was beaten by the factory owner's men over allegations of stealing, in Easy Garment factory at West Hajipara area of Dhaka. He succumbed to his injuries during treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on the same day.¹⁸⁷

On 23 December 2019, a woman worker, Fahima Khatun, became ill at a factory named Kazipur Fashion Limited in Savar, Dhaka. When she requested leave, the factory authority insulted her in front of other workers. Feeling humiliated, she jumped from the 7-storey building and committed suicide.¹⁸⁸

Situation of Workers in Readymade Garment Sector: 2019		
Killed / Died	Injured	Termination
3	300	394

Table: 7

Situation of jute mill workers

60. Workers of the state-run jute mills started lay-off and blockade programmes from 5 May 2019 for a-9 point demand, including allocation of necessary funds in the jute sector, payment of arrears, payment of wages, implementation of recommendations of the National Wage and Productivity Commission, payment of provident fund and gratuity for retired workers, reinstatement of terminated workers, and recruitment and fixing against vacancies of workers. On 7 May 2019, police baton charged and fired rubber bullets at workers in the Demra area of Dhaka when workers brought out a procession. From 13 May, the state-owned jute mill workers called an indefinite strike. Jute mill workers observed hunger strike unto death demanding an 11-point demand for arrears, in Khulna from 10 December.¹⁸⁹ Two workers, Abdus Sattar¹⁹⁰ and Sohrab Hossain¹⁹¹, died on 12 and 15 December respectively while on hunger strike. The jute mill workers started a hunger strike again in different places, including Jashore, Khulna, Rajshahi, Chittagong and Narshingdi from 30 December over the same demands.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 14 March 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1583328/>

¹⁸⁷ The daily Jugantor, 26 July 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/203309>

¹⁸⁸ The daily Manabzamin 24 December 2019; <https://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=205144&cat=6>

¹⁸⁹ The daily Jugantor, 9 May 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/175494/>

¹⁹⁰ The daily Jugantor, 13 December 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/254913>

¹⁹¹ The daily Jugantor, 16 December 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/255975>

¹⁹² The daily Prothom Alo, 31 December 2019

Fire at auto spinning mill

61. On 2 July 2019, six persons were killed due to fire in a factory named Auto Spinning Ltd at Nayanpur area under Sreepur Upazila in Gazipur District¹⁹³; 19 persons were killed in a plastic factory at Prime PET and Plastic Industries Limited in Keraniganj, Dhaka on 11 December¹⁹⁴; and 10 persons were killed at a Luxury Fan Factory in Gazipur on 15 December.¹⁹⁵ Most of the victims were workers. Relatives of the victims said that if the factory had an adequate water supply and the opportunity to exit quickly, no one would have died in the fire.¹⁹⁶ Although Prime PET and Plastics Industries did not have environmental clearance and fire fighting capability, the administration was silent on the issue.¹⁹⁷ The workers said that even though it was a large factory, there was only one gate to enter and exit. This was the main reason for the increase in casualties.¹⁹⁸ Meanwhile, officials of the Factory Inspection Department said that Luxury Fan Factory had no approval and no fire license or adequate fire extinguishing system.¹⁹⁹

Condition of construction workers

62. In Bangladesh, a large number of construction workers work in the informal sector. Construction workers have an enormous contribution in the construction of roads, bridges and buildings, but in this sector, workers are appointed in risky jobs without any security measures. As a result, workers are dying or become crippled due to various accidents. Furthermore, these workers are being discriminated against in areas of security, of wages, social safety nets and other benefits. Women workers in this sector are subjected to more discrimination than men as the latter are given priority in the construction industry. The condition of women workers is obviously more vulnerable. They are often forced to work at even lower than the minimum wage. Moreover, they have to work without having any separate toilet, bathing area, safe water and childcare facility.

Condition of migrant workers

63. It is alleged that the Bangladeshi government has not taken any effective steps for the welfare and protection of the migrant workers, despite Bangladeshi migrant workers contributing a lot to the socio-economic system, sending a huge amount of remittance back to the country by working abroad.

64. In 2019, at least 20,000 women migrant workers returned to the country after being subjected to various types of violence.²⁰⁰ Dalia, a migrant worker, who returned to the country said that there were around 400 women in a safe

¹⁹³ The daily Manabzamin, 4 July 2019; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=179679&cat=2>; and the Daily Star, 4 July 2019; <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/6-killed-in-gazipur-spinning-factory-fire-1766464>

¹⁹⁴ The daily Jugantor, 16 December 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/255957>

¹⁹⁵ The daily Jugantor, 16 December 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/255950>

¹⁹⁶ The daily Manabzamin and the Daily Star, 4 July 2019; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=179679&cat=2>

¹⁹⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 13 December 2019

¹⁹⁸ The daily Naya Dignata, 13 December 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/463752>

¹⁹⁹ The daily Jugantor, 17 December 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/256263>

²⁰⁰ The daily Manabzamin, 5 November 2019; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=197896&cat=2>

home at the Bangladesh Embassy in Saudi Arabia. Everyone had taken shelter there after being victims of various types of violence. Many were beaten and sexually assaulted while at work.²⁰¹ In the Middle East, there were various forms of oppression, including sexual assault on women workers. Earlier, many women workers who had returned to the country had expressed acts of suppression on them.²⁰² More than a hundred female workers returned to Bangladesh in 2019. Apart from murder and suicide, there were cases of rape and torture. However, the Bangladesh Embassy could not take a single incident into the legal process.²⁰³ Although the government could not take any effective steps to protect migrant workers, it tried to justify its lapses. Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said at a press conference that two hundred and 70 thousand women had gone to Saudi Arabia for work. Among them, the bodies of 53 workers had returned. About eight thousand returned from work. The figure (of the deceased) he remarked, is very small as a percentage.²⁰⁴ According to a report by the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Foreign Employment, about 35 percent of women domestic workers returning from Saudi Arabia had been subjected to physical and sexual abuse there. In addition, 44 percent of the women were not given regular salary or wages.²⁰⁵

Nazma Begum (42), a widow and mother of two children from Shingair in Manikganj District, was sent to Saudi Arabia after being told she had a job at a hospital, she was actually given work as a domestic help. When the house owner was committing various forms of violence, including sexual and physical abuse on her, she telephoned home and requested her family to rescue her. Despite various attempts, the relatives of Nazma could not bring her back to the country.²⁰⁶ Nazma died on 2 September 2019, at a hospital in Saudi Arabia. On 24 October, Nazma's body arrived in the country. It is to be noted that a broker, Siddique, sent Nazma Begum to Saudi Arabia one year ago, after she paid him 180,000 taka.²⁰⁷

On 31 October 2019, the body of domestic worker Parvin Akhter arrived in the country. The cause of death was 'suicide' in her death certificate. Her family alleged that Parvin had informed them about acts of violence on her through phone calls home, since she moved to Saudi Arabia.²⁰⁸

G. Violence against Women

65. Violence against women increased drastically in 2019 compared to other years. During this period, many women and girls became victims of domestic violence, including dowry related violence, rape and sexual harassment. There are allegations of the involvement of ruling party leaders-activists and

²⁰¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 28 August 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1611515/>

²⁰² New Age, 10 June 2018; <http://www.newagebd.net/article/43316/overseas-jobs-shrinking> and the daily Naya Dignata, 11 June 2018; www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/324510

²⁰³ The daily Manabzamin, 5 November 2019; <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=197896>

²⁰⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 17 November 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/we-are/article/1624755>

²⁰⁵ Ibid

²⁰⁶ The daily Jugantor, 25 October 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/national/236386/>

²⁰⁷ The daily Manabzamin, 29 October 2019; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=196393&cat=9>

²⁰⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 3 November 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1622488>

members of law enforcement agencies in perpetrating violence against women.

Rape

66. Incidents of rape rose to alarming levels in 2019. During this period, incidents of child rape had also increased, which is a matter of grave concern. In most cases, victims of rape do not get justice. Influential people influence the justice system by intimidating or otherwise 'managing' witnesses and victim-families. In addition to this, it is alleged that the ruling party leaders and activists gain a large amount of money through mediation of such cases. Even the police station is often involved in hushing up incidents of rape these cases.²⁰⁹
67. In 2019, *Odhikar* recorded that a total number of 1080 women and children had been raped. Among them, 330 were women, 737 were girls below the age of 18 and the identity of 13 persons were not reported. Of the women, 150 were victims of gang rape, 10 were killed after being raped and two committed suicide. Out of the 737 girls, 137 were victims of gang rape, 32 were killed after being raped and five committed suicide. Furthermore, 149 women and girls were also the victim of attempted rape.

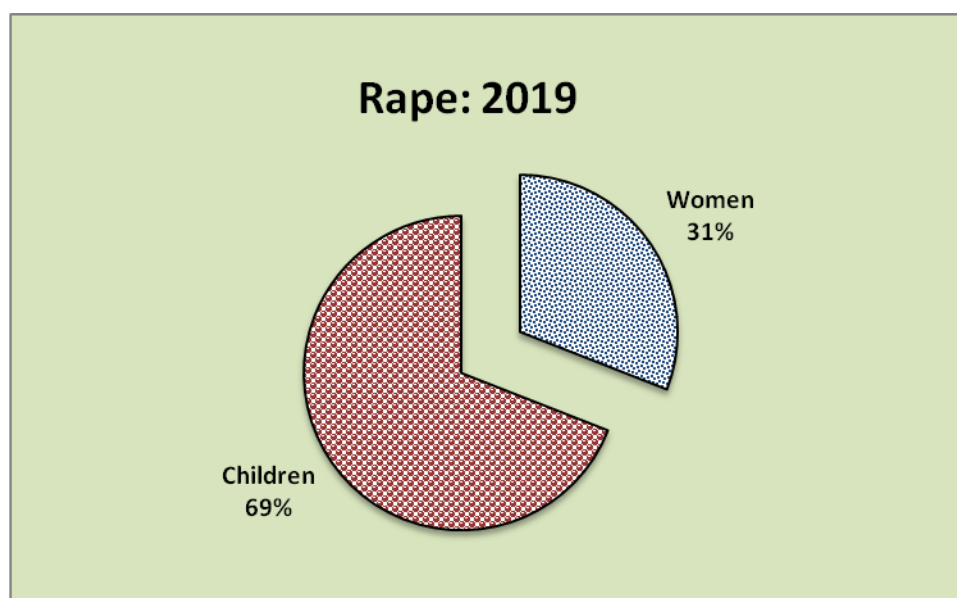


Figure 8

²⁰⁹ The daily Jugantor, 16 July 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/features/protimoncho/199726>

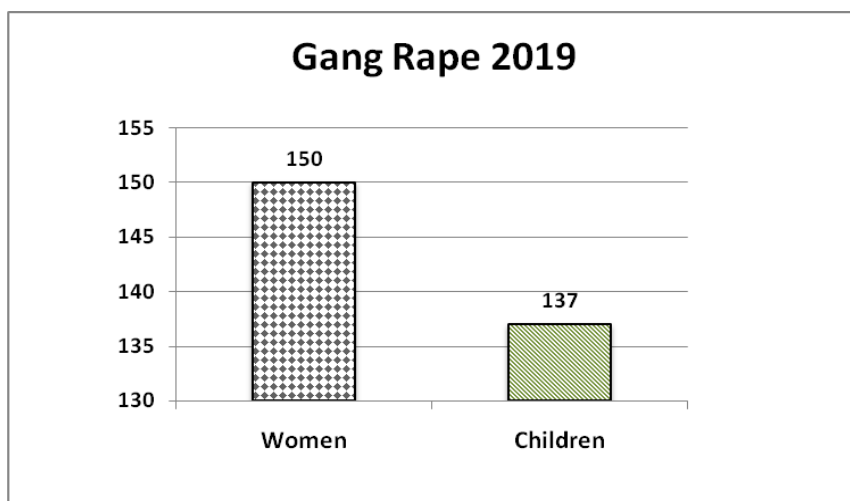


Figure 8.1

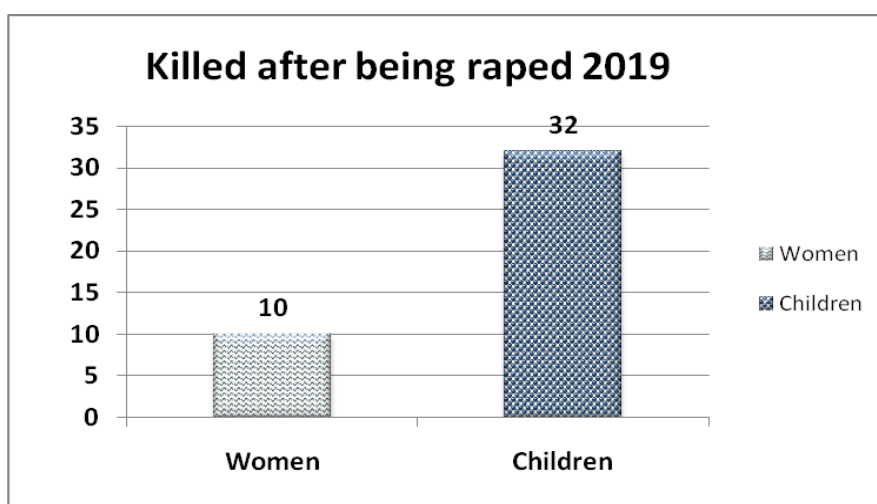


Figure 8.2

Awami League activists gang raped a housewife in Subornachar under Noakhali District for voting for BNP nominated candidate in the eleventh parliamentary elections on 30 December 2018. On 13 October 2019, the Public Prosecutors declared hostile two witnesses who took the stand on behalf of the accused while testifying in the case at the Prevention of Women and Children Repression Tribunal in Noakhali.²¹⁰

On 26 October 2019, a housewife was taken to Charpiyal and raped by Belal Patwari, Mohammad Rasid Palowan, Shaheen Khan and Kiran while she was on her way to her in-law's house in Manpura on a speedboat from Charfashion under Bhola District. Then the speedboat driver took the women, along with her rapists, to Nazrul Islam, who is the proprietor of the speedboat and the former President of Dakkhin Sakuchia Union unit Chhatra League. However, Nazrul let the rapists leave and raped the woman himself, while taking a video of the rape incident. Nazrul then threatened to release the video on Facebook if she told anyone.²¹¹

A young man named Miron raped a young madrasa student in Sudharam under Noakhali District. Two youths named Saheed and Mizan raped the child. Later, her father went to the

²¹⁰ The daily Jugantor, 14 October 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/231734>

²¹¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 28 October 2019

Sudharam Model Police Station to file a complaint when the child became ill. Sub Inspector Bipul Kumar Ghosh, without taking the case, ordered the Awami League leader Chayedul Haque Chhadu to settle the matter through arbitration. After being informed about this incident, when some journalists visited the spot, Chayedul Haque threatened them not to investigate.²¹²

Sexual harassment

68. Stalking and sexual harassment is commonplace in Bangladesh, especially in public places. In 2019, a large number of female students were sexually harassed by teachers at various educational institutions. There have also been allegations of sexual harassment against ruling party leaders-activists and members of law enforcement agencies. Women have been sexually harassed in the workplace and while traveling on public transport. After being victimized, women have been subjected to assaults and even killed during protest. Some committed suicide after being sexually assaulted.
69. **In 2019, a total of 189 women and children were victims of sexual violence. Of them, 14 committed suicide, six were killed, 21 were injured, 34 were assaulted, two were abducted and 112 were victims of stalking/sexual harassment. During this time, seven men were killed, 21 men were injured, and one woman was killed, eight women were injured and two women were assaulted by the stalkers when they protested such acts.**

Girls victims of stalking: 2019							
Months	Suicide	Killed	Injured	Assaulted	Abducted	Other	Sub Total
January	0	0	2	2	0	0	4
February	0	0	0	3	0	5	8
March	2	0	0	0	0	4	6
April	4	2	2	8	1	8	25
May	0	0	3	8	0	9	20
June	1	1	2	0	0	5	9
July	0	2	3	1	0	16	22
August	3	0	3	2	1	23	32
September	0	1	1	0	0	6	8
October	0	0	4	2	0	4	10
November	3	0	0	3	0	15	21
December	1	0	1	5	0	17	24
Total	14	6	21	34	2	112	189

Table: 8

²¹² The daily Jugantor, 22 November 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/246758>

Months	Men victimized for protesting			Women victimized for protesting			
	Killed	Injured	Total	Killed	Injured	Assaulted	Total
January	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
February	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
March	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
April	0	2	2	0	2	0	2
May	0	2	2	0	1	2	3
June	0	2	2	0	0	0	0
July	1	3	4	1	0	0	1
August	1	3	4	0	5	0	5
September	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
October	1	2	3	0	0	0	0
November	2	4	6	0	0	0	0
December	1	1	2	0	0	0	0
Total	7	21	28	1	8	2	11

Table: 8.1

One of the most discussed incidents of this year was the death of Nusrat Jahan Rafi, a student of Sonagazi Islamia Senior Fazil Madrasa in Feni District, who was sexually harassed by madrasa principal Siraj Ud Daulah and subsequently burnt to death due to her protest.²¹³ The government was forced to arrest the culprits and completed a speedy trial due to pressure from the public and some media. On 24 October, the court awarded the death sentence to 16 accused persons.²¹⁴

Saturia Upazila unit Jubo League General Secretary Abdul Khalek used to harass a female school teacher on her way to school in Saturia under Manikganj District. On 27 April 2019, Abdul Khalek, along with his associate Shahinur Islam, tried to kidnap the school teacher from her house. Her husband was beaten when he barred them. Later police arrested Abdul Khalek.²¹⁵

A seventh grade girl student named Soya Saha committed suicide on 22 April 2019, after being sexually harassed by some criminals, including one Tanin Talukder on her way to and from school in Sarishabari under Jamalpur District.²¹⁶

²¹³ On 27 March 2019, Shirin Akhter, the mother of Nasrat Jahan Rafi, filed a case against Siraj-ud-Daulah, Principal of Sonagazi Islamia Senior Fazil Madrasa of Feni District for sexually harassing her daughter Nusrat. She did not withdraw the case even after intimidation. On 6 April, Nusrat went to the Madrasa to appear for her Alim exam, which is equivalent to Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination. At that time, the followers of the principal called Nusrat to the roof of the Madrasa's cyclone shelter and set her on fire after pouring kerosene on her. On 8 April, Nusrat's elder brother Mahmudul Hasan Noman filed a case with the Sonagazi Model Police Station, mentioning the names of eight people, including Principal Siraj ud Daulah. Nusrat died on 10 April, when she was admitted to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical condition. The court gave the Order to the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to investigate the case. Madrasa Principal Siraj-ud Daulah, Sonagazi Islamia Senior Fazil Madrasa unit Chhatra League President Shahadat Hossain Shamim, Sonagazi Islamia Senior Fazil Madrasa unit Chhatra Dal President Nur Uddin, including 12 people who were arrested under this case, admitted responsibility for the killing of Nusrat. The PBI submitted a charge sheet in the court of Senior Judicial Magistrate Zakir Hossain on 29 May, accusing 16 people, including, Sonagazi Upazila unit Awami League President Ruhul Amin, Municipal unit Awami League Joint Secretary and Municipal councilor Maksud Alam, Lecturers of English Department of the madrasa Absar Uddin and Mohammad Shamim.

²¹⁴ The Daily Star, 25 October 2019; <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/brutal-murder-feni-madrasa-16-get-death-penalty-1818355>

²¹⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 30 April 2019

²¹⁶ The daily Jugantor, 24 April 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/170261>

Dowry related violence

70. Unlawful demands for dowry have led to several inhumane incidents, including women being tied to trees and their heads shaved; setting women on fire; strangulation; cutting tendons of hands and legs; and stabbing to death over dowry demands have been reported in 2019. Some of the victims were pregnant. Women with disabilities, children and adolescents who have been victims of child marriage were also killed for dowry. According to the Dowry Prohibition Act 1980, and the Prevention of Oppression against Women and Children Act 2000, giving and taking dowry and committing violence for dowry, are punishable offences, but this perverted culture is prevalent in society. There is almost zero implementation of law in terms of giving and taking dowry. Even family members of the women suffer extreme psychological pain due to dowry demands.
71. **In 2019, 103 married women were subjected to dowry violence. Among them, 48 were killed and 55 were physically abused due to dowry demands. Moreover, five victims of child marriage were also subjected to dowry violence. Among them, four were killed and one was physically abused.**

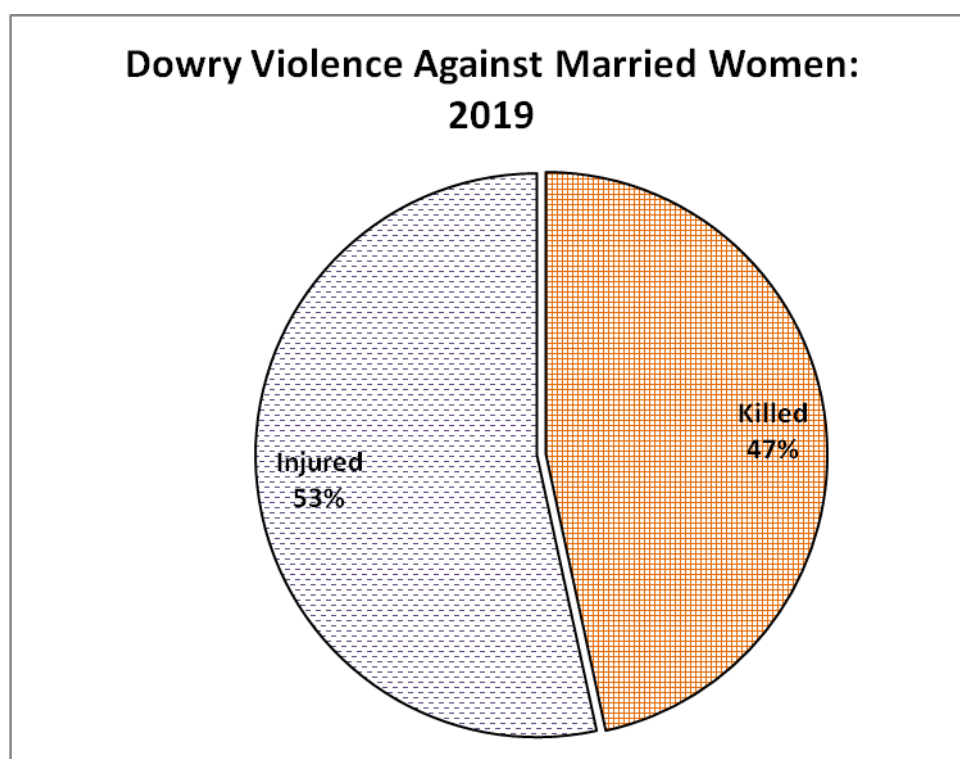


Figure 9

On 18 January, a pregnant house wife Afroza Akhter Pushpa in Tongi under Gazipur District²¹⁷; on 18 February, a 9th grade student and pregnant housewife Jannatul Ferdous Shimu in Phulbari under Mymensingh District²¹⁸; on 10 March, a pregnant housewife Chandradhar in Fatikchhari under Chittagong District²¹⁹; on 12 April, a victim of child

²¹⁷ The daily Jugantor, 20 January 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/city/135419>

²¹⁸ The daily Manabzamin, 20 February 2019; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=160247&cat=9>

²¹⁹ The daily Jugantor, 11 March 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/153651>

marriage, Sathi Akhter (14), in Gafargaon under Mymensingh District²²⁰; on 30 April, a pregnant housewife Simla Begum in Kalia Upazila under Narail District²²¹; on 8 May, a pregnant housewife Ribha Akhter in Kalyanpur of Dhaka²²²; on 13 May, a victim of child marriage, Farzana (15) in Nandigram under Bogura District²²³; on 29 October, a speech impaired housewife Marzia Akhter Lipi in Kaliganj under Gazipur District²²⁴; were all killed by their husbands and members of their in-laws over dowry demands.

Gafur Sardar, a housewife's father, committed suicide on 25 April 2019 after he could not bear the pressure of paying dowry of two hundred thousand taka, demanded by his son-in-law in Gouranadi under Barisal District.²²⁵

Acid violence

72. After analyzing the cause of acid attacks, it was found that acid violence resulted when victims refused to accept love proposals, due to dowry demands, for seeking justice for rape, and due to land related dispute. In 2019, almost all of the victims of acid violence were women and children. Although acid violence is an extreme human rights violation, according to a report from the Ministry of Home Affairs, most of the accused are being acquitted, as the allegations in the cases relating to acid violence could not be proved. Only 9 percent of the accused were given punishment. In the last 16 years, there were 2,169 cases in relation to acid violence.²²⁶ Police submitted final reports in 866 cases, claiming that the allegations had not been proved. Of these cases, only 199 persons were convicted and 1,950 accused were acquitted. According to the Acid Crime Prevention Act of 2002, a trial has to end within 90 working days, but the cases are kept pending for years. As a result, the victims are deprived from justice.²²⁷
73. In 2019, it was reported that 31 persons became victims of acid violence. Of them, 21 were female and 10 were male.

Reasons for Acid Violence: 2019						
Sl	Reasons for acid violence	Women	Girls	Men	Boys	Total
1	Dowry related issues	3	0	0	0	3
2	Refusal of Proposal for/ marriage, Love, dating or sex	1	1	0	0	2
3	Marital Problems/ Family dispute/ Divorce	4	2	0	1	7
4	Stalking	1	0	0	0	1
5	Conflict over land, property or inheritance	1	1	1	0	3

²²⁰ The daily Jugantor, 18 April 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/168120>

²²¹ The daily Jugantor, 3 May 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/bangla-face/173397>

²²² The daily Prothom Alo, 10 May 2019

²²³ The daily Naya Diganta, 15 May 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/bangla-diganta/410097/>

²²⁴ The daily Naya Diganta, 31 October 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/more-news/452448/>

²²⁵ The daily Jugantor, 26 April 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/171252>

²²⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 24 January 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1575905/>

²²⁷ Ibid

6	Previous Enmity	1	0	5	0	6
7	Withdrawn case	0	0	1	0	1
8	Dispute over not teaching tailoring works	0	1	0	0	1
9	Unidentified Reasons	4	1	0	2	7
	Total	15	6	7	3	31

Table: 9

On 24 January, two sisters, Habiba Akhter (20) and Ayesha Akhter (10) in Madhabpur Upazila under Habiganj District²²⁸; on 12 March, a girl student of class IX, Rima Begum in Komolganj under Moulvibazar District²²⁹; on 28 September, two children named Ratan Sarkar (10) and Shariful Islam (12) in Chatmohor under Pabna District²³⁰; on 21 October, Fatema Sultana (29) and her daughter Zakia (2) in Ashashuni under Satkhira District²³¹; and on 16 November, Swarwati Malo in Madhukhali upazila under Faridpur District²³², all suffered acid violence.

Nasir, the husband of a woman who was gang-raped²³³ at Subarnachar under Noakhali District, was threatened by some criminals, including the persons accused of the rape Joynal, Rashel, Zakir, Farukh and Mannan, on 26 August 2019 when he was returning home after attending a human chain programme demanding justice for his wife in front of Noakhali Press Club. At around 3:00 am, criminals threw acid on Nasir when he went out of his room to go to the outside toilet.²³⁴

H. Human Rights Violations in Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minority Communities

74. In 2019, incidents of attacks on citizens belonging to ethnic minority communities and setting fire to their houses; attacks on houses of religious minority citizens and vandalizing their places of worship; and incidents of police attacks on linguistic minorities occurred. Even though it is reported that ruling Awami League leaders and activists are involved in these incidents, no investigation or action was taken. On 28 July 2019, the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) submitted a charge sheet to the court on the incident of the killing of three members of the Santal community during a clash between Santals and a combination of Rangpur Sugar Mill's workers and employees, with activists of Awami League-backed Chhatra League and Jubo League and the police. Santal houses were also set on fire on 6 November 2016 in Gobindganj under Gaibandha District. Although former Member of Parliament (Awami League) Abul Kalam Azad and members of

²²⁸ The daily Jugantor, 25 January 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/137534>

²²⁹ The daily Manabzamin, 14 March 2019; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=163496&cat=9>

²³⁰ The daily Manabzamin, 30 September 2019; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=192451&cat=9>

²³¹ New Age, 23 October 2019; <http://www.newagebd.net/article/88527/man-throws-acid-on-ex-wife-daughter-in-satkhira>

²³² The Daily Star, 18 November 2019; <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/acid-thrown-housewife-faridpur-1828708>

²³³ A housewife was gang-raped by the ruling party leaders and activists for voting sheaf of paddy (election symbol of BNP) in Subornachar under Noakhali District during the 11th Parliamentary elections on 30 December 2018.

²³⁴ The daily Naya Diganta, 27 August 2019; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/435409>

police were proved to be involved in the incident, their names were not included in the charge sheet.²³⁵

In the night of 25 January 2019, criminals vandalized the effigies at a Kali Mandir (Hindu temple) in Kolmakanda Upazila under Netrokona District. Yamin (22), son of Awami League leader Jalal Uddin, was arrested for his alleged involvement in the incident.²³⁶

On 12 February 2019, people with banners from different organisations attacked and vandalized the houses and shops of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, demanding a shutdown of their three-day long Annual Conference in Ahmadnagar of Panchagarh District. Later the District administration cancelled the permission for holding the conference.²³⁷

In the early morning of 24 March 2019, a group of criminals, led by local Awami League leader Hossain Mosharraf, attacked the houses of the ethnic minority Pahan community with sharp weapons and sticks and set the homes on fire in Dhamurhat Upazila under Naogaon District. It was learnt that the local leader of the ruling Awami League allegedly led the arson attack in order to occupy the land. As a result, at least 37 landless families, mostly from the indigenous Pahan community, became homeless. The police arrested Hossain Musharraf in this incident.²³⁸



At least 37 homes, were burnt to ashes by alleged land grabbers. This woman could only find a broken lantern, a pitcher and a mug from the ashes of her home. Most of the victim families are now living under the open sky. Photo: The Daily Star, 27 March 2019.

On 5 October 2019, members of the linguistic minority (Urdu-speaking)²³⁹ community living in the Mohammadpur Geneva camp in Dhaka, held a protest, demanding an end to the electricity load-shedding.²⁴⁰ Clashes took place first with supporters of local ward councilor and Awami League leader Habibur Rahman Mizan and then with the police. During the clashes, at least 50 Urdu speaking people were injured when police fired tear gas shells and

²³⁵ It is to be noted that a judicial inquiry report filed to the High Court Division on 9 March 2017, also showed evidence of the involvement of three policemen in the burning of Santal's house. The daily Prothom Alo, 29 July 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1606642>, New Age, 29 July 2019; <http://www.newagebd.net/article/79948> and New Age, 29 July 2019; <http://www.newagebd.net/article/79948>

²³⁶ The daily Naya Diganta, 27 January 2019; www.dailynayadiganta.com/more-news/383633/

²³⁷ The daily Jugantor, 14 February 2019; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/144239>

²³⁸ The Daily Star, 27 March 2019; <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/goons-evict-37-landless-families-1720927>

²³⁹ After the liberation war, Urdu-speaking citizens were unable to return to Pakistan and trapped in Bangladesh.

²⁴⁰ It is known that the electricity bill was being paid by the United Nations through the Ministry of Disaster and Relief of Bangladesh for about 40,000 Urdu-speaking camps. The Dhaka Power Development Corporation (DPDC) started load-shedding of the electricity in the camps due to the non-payment of electricity bill of 24 crore and 60 lac taka till July 2019. There is no electricity in the camp for 8-10 hours every day. DPDC says load-shedding will continue until the electricity bill is not paid. Citizens of the Urdu-speaking minority community were protesting against it.

*bullets at the protesters. Of the injured, a young man named Mohammad Rocky lost his an eye due to police firing.*²⁴¹

I. Hindrance to Human Rights Activities

75. The government persecution of *Odhikar*, that began in 2013, continued in 2019. The government has used law enforcement agencies, the NGO Affairs Bureau, the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Election Commission, and the print and electronic media (owned by supporters of the government) to gag *Odhikar*'s voice against human rights abuses. The case filed under the Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (Amendment 2009) against the Secretary and Director of *Odhikar* is still ongoing. Although *Odhikar* submitted an application to the NGO Affairs Bureau under the Prime Minister's Office for the renewal²⁴² of its registration in 2014, the registration is yet to be renewed. In order to halt all human rights activities, the NGO Affairs Bureau has stopped fund clearance for all projects for more than five years and completely barred any approval of any new project. The Standard Chartered Bank also suspended *Odhikar*'s bank accounts as part of the government's repression. Furthermore, human rights defenders associated with *Odhikar* have been subjected to various forms of harassment, including surveillance, arrest and hindrance to organise programmes due to their bold position on human rights violations. *Odhikar* also has to maintain self-censorship while reporting on human rights abuses, due to curtailment of freedom of expression.

*A human rights defender associated with Odhikar from Mymensingh and journalist of Bdpress24.com, Abdul Kaium, was arrested on 11 May 2019 by members of the Detective Branch (DB) of Police, who were actually under orders of a local influential person, Mohammad Idris Khan (who is a close relative of a MP of the ruling party). Kaium was allegedly tortured in DB Police custody.*²⁴³ *Later he was sued under the Digital Security Act, 2018.*

On 28 May 2019, a human chain programme organised by human rights defenders affiliated with Odhikar in Sirajganj, to commemorate the occasion of International Week of the Disappeared, was stopped by RAB.

²⁴¹ The daily Naya Diganta, 6 October 2019; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/445892>

²⁴² On 13 May 2019, *Odhikar* filed a Writ Petition (numbered 5402/2019) to the High Court Division of the Supreme Court; the court issued a Rule upon the NGO Affairs Bureau as to why the inaction of the Respondent to grant renewal of registration, pursuant to application made by the Petitioner dated 25.09.2014, shall not be declared to be without lawful authority and of no legal effect; and why the Respondent shall not be directed to renew registration of the Petitioner from 2015 onwards in accordance with law. The Rule was made returnable within 2 (two) weeks.

²⁴³ Joint Statement by AHRC and CIVICUS, "BANGLADESH: HRD tortured while in arbitrary detention must be released and charges be dropped", <https://civicus.org/index.php/fr/component/tags/tag/bangladesh>

Recommendations

1. Democracy must be ensured by establishing an accountable government through free, fair, inclusive and credible elections, under a neutral caretaker government or under the direct supervision of the United Nations; and initiatives must be taken to fix the dysfunctional institutions.
2. The government must stop political interference on the constitutional and state institutions, which must remain unbiased and neutral in order to function effectively.
3. Political violence and criminalisation must stop. The government must take legal action against the ruling party leaders and activists for criminal activities.
4. The government must stop extrajudicial killings. Members of law enforcement agencies who are involved in incidents of extrajudicial killings, torture and inhuman incidents must be brought to justice.
5. The government should investigate all incidents of enforced disappearance and explain the killings after the disappearance. Persons who are disappeared must be recovered and returned to their families. Members of the state security forces and other law enforcement agencies who are involved in enforced disappearances must be brought to justice. The government must accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.
6. The government must accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture; and effectively implement the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013; and the High Court and Appellate Division directives contained in the matter of BLAST and Others Vs. Bangladesh and Others. Human rights violations in prisons must be stopped. Bangladesh should also implement the recommendations given by the UN Committee Against Torture during the review on Bangladesh at its 67th session.
7. Punishment of law enforcers for criminal offences should not be limited to mere departmental action, such as temporary suspension, demotion or closure. No one is above the law. Members of law enforcement agencies who have been involved in criminal offenses, like all other criminals, should be brought under criminal process.
8. The government should refrain from repressive, unconstitutional and undemocratic activities. It must respect the rights to freedom of assembly and association guaranteed in the Constitution. The government should stop filing cases against unidentified persons so as to discourage sweeping arrests. The government must also stop harassment and arrest of leaders and activists of the opposition political parties. Political prisoners must be immediately released.
9. Interference on freedoms of expression and the media must be stopped. All false cases filed against journalists and human rights defenders should be withdrawn and incidents of attacks on them must be properly investigated and the responsible persons be brought to justice. The ban on the publication of the daily Amar Desh and on the broadcasting of Diganta TV, Islamic TV and Channel 1 must be removed.

10. All repressive and abusive laws, including the Special Powers Act, 1974, the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (amendment 2009 and 2013) and the Digital Security Act, 2018 must be repealed. Cases filed under these laws should be withdrawn and those arrested should be released.
11. An enabling environment will have to be created for workers in the readymade garment industry and other industries, including the paying of adequate wages, ensuring security, preventing discrimination and creating effective policies for their work. Factories will have to be designed with proper infrastructure and adequate facilities and security measures; and with regular and credible safety inspections.
12. The rights of the workers have to be implemented in accordance with the ILO Conventions, ensuring the right to trade unions in all industries, including readymade garment factories. Children should be prevented from being engaged in hazardous work and credible and unbiased sexual harassment prevention committees should also be formed in all factories as per the High Court directives. Human rights violations and harassment of workers must be stopped by the police and factory owners. *Odhikar* demands an effective policy and its implementation, for workers in the informal sector including the construction industry, be ensured.
13. Migrant workers, especially women workers, should be protected by the government of both sending and receiving States and people involved in human trafficking must be brought to justice. For migrant workers who are suffering from financial, physical and psychological abuses, the Bangladeshi Missions abroad should take adequate measures to monitor the safety and security of the workers.
14. Citizens belonging to the minority community, be they language, ethnic or religious communities, must be protected and the state and government must take special measures to ensure their full rights in the exercise of their language, religion and culture. The government must bring all persons guilty of persecution of such groups under trial.
15. The government must ensure proper implementation of laws to stop violence against women and children and the offenders must be effectively punished under prevalent laws and the government should execute mass awareness programmes in the print and electronic media, in order to eliminate all forms of violence against women and children and create empathy and respect. Mediation should be stopped for perpetrators of violence against women, including rapists, and in order to get justice for women, the police must properly investigate and arrest the accused and bring them to justice since these are legally recognised criminal offences. Criminals affiliated with the ruling party should not be given immunity.
16. Indian government must take measures to ensure that the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) stops human rights violations, including killing and torturing of Bangladeshi citizens along the border areas; and the Bangladesh government must put pressure on the Indian government to compensate the victims of violence. India must respect and follow the border agreement. The Indian government must stop its interference and aggressive attitude on

Bangladesh. India should give Bangladesh a fair and equitable right to water and it must immediately stop all artificial flooding activities that adversely affect Bangladesh. The construction and operation of the hazardous Rampal Power Plant must be stopped to save Bangladesh's environment and ecology and India must stop fencing at zero line at Bangladesh-Indian border.

17. After ensuring the civil and political rights of Rohingya population, safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation of the Rohingyas to Myanmar should be ensured. The international community must put effective pressure on the Myanmar government and support the establishment of the human rights of the Rohingya community in Myanmar. *Odhikar* urges the UN Member States to assist the International Criminal Court to prosecute all perpetrators, including the Myanmar military and Buddhist extremists, for committing genocide against the Rohingya population.
18. The on-going state of repression on *Odhikar* and human rights defenders associated with it, must stop. The case filed against *Odhikar*'s Secretary and its Director under the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (Amended in 2009) must be withdrawn as it lacks credibility and evidence and is obviously a form of persecution. The NGO Affairs Bureau must renew *Odhikar*'s registration, the application of which is pending with it. The government must release the funds of *Odhikar* to enable it to continue its human rights activities.

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Twitter: [Odhikar_bd](https://twitter.com/Odhikar_bd)

Notes:

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

Appendix:

Statistics on Human Rights Violations between 2009 and 2019

Table: 1

Extrajudicial Killings: 2009 - 2019																			
Year	Allegedly perpetrated by the members of-																		
	RAB	Police	RAB-Police	Joint Force	Ansar	Army	BGB (Former BDR)	Police-BGB (former BDR)	RAB- Coast Guard	RAB-Police-Coast Guard	Coast Guard	DB Police	Forest Guard	Jail authorities/Police	Police and Armed Police Battalion, RAB, BGB Armed Battalion	BGB-RAB	Railway Police	Security Forces	Para Commando
2019	101	203	0	1	0	4	56	4	0	0	1	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2018	136	276	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	46	1	0	0	0	2	0	1
2017	33	117	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2016	51	118	0	1	0	0	2	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
2015	53	126	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
2014	29	119	0	11	1	2	5	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
2013	38	175	1	8	0	0	11	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	64	0	0	0	0
2012	40	18	2	0	3		2	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
2011	43	31	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
2010	68	43	9	0	0	0	1	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2009	41	75	25	0	2	3	5	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total	633	1301	41	22	6	11	90	37	15	3	7	68	2	4	64	1	4	1	1

Table: 1.1

Crossfire/ Gunfight/ Shootout: 2009 - 2019														
Year (s)	RAB	Police	RAB-Police	Joint Force	Army	BGB (Former BDR)	Police-BGB	RAB- Coast Guard	RAB-Police-Coast Guard	Coast Guard	DB Police	Forest Guard	BGB-RAB	Grand Total
2019	101	193	0	1	4	53	4	0	0	1	19	0	0	376
2018	136	270	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	45	1	2	458
2017	32	104	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	139
2016	51	92	0	1	0	0	1	4	0	0	2	0	0	151
2015	48	97	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	148
2014	23	83	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	119
2013	27	36	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	65
2012	40	7	2	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	53
2011	42	15	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	65
2010	65	21	9	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	101
2009	38	63	25	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	129
Total	603	981	40	13	8	57	5	15	3	6	68	1	4	1804

Table: 2

Enforced Disappearances: 2009 - 2019				
Year(s)	Total number of Disappeared persons	Found Dead	Returned Alive	Whereabouts of the disappeared persons still unknown
2019	34	8	17	9
2018	98	12	62	24
2017	88	9	64	15
2016	93	14	68	11
2015	67	11	48	8
2014	39	10	21	8
2013	54	2	19	33
2012	26	1	12	13
2011	32	5	1	26
2010	19	1	0	18
2009	3	1	0	2
Total	553	74	312	167

Table: 3

Death in Jail: 2009 - 2019	
Year (s)	Jail Custody
2019	60
2018	81
2017	58
2016	63
2015	51
2014	54
2013	59
2012	63
2011	105
2010	60
2009	50
Total	704

Table: 4

Public Lynching: 2009 - 2019	
Year (s)	Total
2019	56
2018	48
2017	47
2016	53
2015	132
2014	116
2013	125
2012	132
2011	161
2010	174
2009	127
Total	1171

Table: 5

Death Penalty: 2010-2019				
Year (s)	Death Penalty (Given)		Year (s)	Execution of Death Sentence
2019	327		2019	2
2018	319		2018	0
2017	303		2017	3
2016	229		2016	6
2015	173		2015	3
2014	176		2014	0
2013	291		2013	2
2012	77		2012	1
2011	97		2011	4
2010	76		2010	9
Total	2,068		Total	30

Table: 6

Political Violence: 2009 - 2019			
Year (s)	Killed	Injured	Total
2019	70	3,467	3,537
2018	120	7,051	7,171
2017	77	4,635	4,712
2016	215	9,053	9,268
2015	197	8,312	8,509
2014	190	9,429	9,619
2013	504	24,176	24,680
2012	169	17,161	17,330
2011	135	11,532	11,667
2010	220	13,999	14,219
2009	251	15,559	15,810
Total	2,148	124,374	126,522

Table: 6.1

Political Violence: Statistics of Intra Party clashes: 2009 - 2019								
Year (s)	Killed: Intra party clash		Injuries: Intra party clash			Total Incidents of Intra Party clash		
	AL	BNP	AL	BNP	Others*	AL	BNP	Others
2019	39	1	2826	62	23	234	6	3
2018	53	3	3225	115	0	281	14	0
2017	66	0	3327	225	10	314	22	1
2016	73	3	3586	232	5	335	15	1
2015	40	2	3884	157	12	364	11	1
2014	43	2	4247	397	119	374	39	6
2013	28	6	2980	1592	68	263	140	3
2012	37	6	4330	1619	47	382	146	5
2011	22	3	3770	1234	20	340	104	4
2010	38	7	5614	1146	60	576	92	9
2009	38	2	6092	865	0	663	75	0
Total	477	35	43,881	7,644	364	4,126	664	33

Note: Others included Jatiyo Party, Samajtantrik Chattrra Front, JSD etc

Table: 7

Repression against Ethnic Minority: 2012 - 2019						
Year (s)	Killed	Injured	Abducted	Property Damage	Land Grabbing	Rape
2019	18	1	2	0	1	4
2018	28	26	2	0	0	18
2017	1	0	0	309	1	8
2016	1	15	0	0	0	5
2015	19	28	1	0	1	17
2014	20	58	8	63	0	11
2013	32	32	71	5	0	8
2012	30	78	34	0	0	15
Total	149	238	118	377	3	86

Table: 7.1

Situation of Ethnic Minority: 2012-2019					
Alleged Perpetrator/s	Number of victims				
	Killed	Injured	Abduction	Rape	Land grabbing
Bangalee Settlers	4	42	1	55	3
Youth/s from ethnic minority groups	1	0	0	12	0
Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS)	17	28	0	0	0
United People's Democratic Front (UPDF)	8	3	70	0	0
Jana Sanghati Samiti (MN Larma Group)	4	1	0	0	0
Jana Sanghati Samity (JSS) Santu Group	5	1	0	0	0
United People's Front (UPDF) and JSS (MN Larma Group)	0	6	0	0	0
Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) and United People's Front (UPDF) jointly	8	19	4	0	0
Intra Party clash of JSS	1	0	0	0	0
Clashes between Pahari and Bengali	0	5	0	0	0
Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) and Bangali Chhatra Parishad (BCP)	0	15	0	0	0
Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) and Bangali Settlers	0	8	0	0	0
Two groups of Mro National Party (MNP)	1	0	0	0	0
Police	0	10	0	0	0
Army men	6	0	0	2	0
BGB members	0	0	0	2	0
Joint force (Army, Police and Ansar)	0	6	0	0	0
Law enforcement agency	0	11	0	1	0
Unknown Miscreants	94	83	43	14	0
Total	149	238	118	86	3

Table: 8

Freedom of Media : Attack against Journalists/Media: 2009 - 2019										
Year (s)	Killed	Injured	Assaulted	Attacked	Arrested	Abducted	Threatened	Tortured	Sued	Total
2019	0	45	5	5	4	0	12	1	30	102
2018	0	71	22	2	4	0	11	1	15	126
2017	1	24	9	1	0	0	11	0	7	53
2016	0	53	16	1	1	0	9	0	31	111
2015	1	90	10	4	10	0	34	1	18	168
2014	1	92	24	2	6	0	19	0	33	177
2013	0	146	37	7	5	0	33	1	19	248
2012	5	161	50	10	0	0	63	2	36	327
2011	0	139	43	24	1	0	53	0	23	283
2010	4	118	43	17	2	1	49	0	13	247
2009	3	84	45	16	1	2	73	0	23	247
Total	15	1,023	304	89	34	3	367	6	248	2,089

Table: 9

Situation of Workers in Readymade Garment Sector: 2010 - 2019		
Total Killed	Total Injured	Total Termination
1,320	13,995	16,052

Table: 10

Dowry related violence against women: 2009 - 2019				
Years	Killed	Physically abused	Suicide	Total
2019	48	55	0	103
2018	71	69	2	142
2017	118	127	11	256
2016	107	94	5	206
2015	119	77	6	202
2014	123	103	11	237
2013	158	261	17	436
2012	273	535	14	822
2011	305	192	19	516
2010	235	122	22	379
2009	227	81	11	319
Total	1,784	1,716	118	3,618

Table: 11

Rape: 2019				
Years (s)	Total number of victims	Total number of w	Total number of children	Unidentified age of females
2019	1080	330	737	13
2018	635	176	457	2
2017	783	225	553	5
2016	757	232	511	14
2015	789	293	479	17
2014	666	244	393	29
2013	814	336	452	26
2012	805	299	473	33
2011	711	246	450	15
2010	559	248	311	0
2009	456	213	243	0
Total	8,055	2,842	5,059	154

Table: 11.1

Years (s)	Gang Rape			
	Women	Girl Children	Unidentified Age	Total
2019	150	137	7	294
2018	89	88	0	177
2017	93	108	2	203
2016	107	99	6	212
2015	141	131	5	277
2014	118	92	17	227
2013	127	94	15	236
2012	101	84	12	197
2011	119	115	5	239
2010	119	95	0	214
2009	97	79	0	176
Total	1261	1122	69	2,452

Table: 11.2

Years (s)	Killed after being raped			
	Women	Girl Children	Unidentified Age	Total
2019	10	32	0	42
2018	15	32	0	47
2017	14	18	0	32
2016	17	12	2	31
2015	32	33	0	65
2014	31	34	1	66
2013	30	40	1	71
2012	31	39	5	75
2011	54	34	2	90
2010	61	30	0	91
2009	64	33	0	97
Total	359	337	11	707

Table: 12

Sexual Harassment / Stalking: 2011- 2019			
Year (s)	Number of victim girls	Number of protesting male relatives/ friends attacked (by stalker/s)	Number of protesting female relatives/ friends attacked (by stalker/s)
2019	189	28	11
2018	157	44	8
2017	242	83	24
2016	271	84	15
2015	191	95	10
2014	272	40	16
2013	357	89	9
2012	479	122	20
2011	672	187	42
Total	2,830	772	155

Table: 13

Acid Violence: 2009-2019							
Year (s)	Female		Total Female Victims	Male		Total Male Victims	Grand Total
	Adult Women	Girls		Adult Men	Boys		
2019	15	6	21	7	3	10	31
2018	11	6	17	5	4	9	26
2017	33	9	42	9	1	10	52
2016	26	5	31	7	2	9	40
2015	29	7	36	10	1	11	47
2014	44	10	54	7	5	12	66
2013	36	5	41	10	2	12	53
2012	58	20	78	17	10	27	105
2011	57	10	67	25	9	34	101
2010	84	16	100	32	5	37	137
2009	64	13	77	20	4	24	101
Total	457	107	564	149	46	195	759

Table: 14

Killing, Injuries and Abduction Committed by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) against Bangladeshi Citizens: 2009-2019				
Years (s)	Killed	Injured	Abducted	Total
2019	41	40	34	115
2018	11	24	16	51
2017	25	39	28	92
2016	29	36	22	87
2015	44	60	27	131
2014	35	68	99	202
2013	29	79	127	235
2012	38	100	74	212
2011	31	62	23	116
2010	74	72	43	189
2009	98	77	25	200
Total	455	657	518	1,630