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ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT 2020

BANGLADESH

Prepared by *Odhikar*

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Foreword

Since its inception in 1994, *Odhikar* has been relentlessly struggling to protect the civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of the people. *Odhikar*, as an organisation 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. *Odhikar* unconditionally stands by the victims of oppression and maintains no prejudice with regard to their political leanings or ideological orientation and it advocates for establishing protection and justice for victims of human rights abuses.

Currently, an authoritarian government system is in place in the country and as a result human rights violations are common place. The biggest strength of *Odhikar* is the human rights activists and organisations in different countries of the world and the human rights defenders associated with it all over the country. *Odhikar* also publishes reports every quarter, based on fact-finding, research, and reports sent by human rights defenders from different districts of the country and data published in various media. A summary of *Odhikar*'s quarterly reports for 2020 is included in this annual human rights report.

Odhikar has been facing extreme state repression and harassment since 2013 due to its human rights activities. Despite the state's constant harassment and obstruction, the report highlights human rights violations in accordance with international human rights standards. It is to be noted that due to the violation of freedom of expression and the practice of self-censorship by the media, various human rights violations have not been reported at a normal pace. Again, victims were also afraid to disclose many serious incidents that have happened to them, for preserving their own safety. As a result, the incidence of actual human rights violations was possibly much higher than the figures given in this report.

Odhikar expresses gratitude to all human rights defenders at home and abroad, like-minded organisations and well-wishers who have cooperated with and expressed solidarity with *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. In April 2020, the full force of the COVID-19 pandemic hit Bangladesh ushering in with it widespread human rights violations, which are highlighted in this report. This report reviews violations of civil and political rights, state repression, deprivation of the right to life and other important human rights violations. Bangladesh has ratified eight of the nine key international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Convention against Torture. Bangladesh has also ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The human rights situation in Bangladesh kept deteriorating in 2020 while the government ignored its treaty obligations.
2. The Awami League government has introduced authoritarian rule in the country by systematically transforming various important state institutions into subservient institutions, through politicisation. The government has used these key institutions, such as the Election Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the National Human Rights Commission, to implement its political agenda. There are even allegations that the government is controlling the judiciary.¹ The farcical parliamentary elections held in 2014² and 2018³ under the bias Election Commission have completely shattered the electoral system of Bangladesh. Voters did not show any interest in voting as they did not have confidence in the government, Election Commission; and the electoral system – even in the by-elections and local government elections held in 2020. Most of the polling stations were found to be empty. As a result, the ruling party candidates ‘won’ through massive irregularities and fraud.
3. Due to the failure of the Bangladesh government in taking appropriate measures to control the COVID-19 pandemic, the deadly corona virus became widespread in the country and the sad state of the health system in Bangladesh became apparent. Issues such as the right to health, protection and employment have been affected by lack of effective information and appropriate decisions centering on COVID-19. According to official estimates,

¹ In 2017, the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs published a gazette of the Judicial Service (Disciplinary) Rules for the employment of judges of lower courts and Magistrates. The Service Rules states that matters relating to the discipline of subordinate judicial officers shall be regulated by the appropriate authority. Disciplinary Rules for the employment of judges of the lower courts were made by keeping the control of the lower judiciary in the hands of the government.

² 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.

³ During the 11th Parliamentary elections on 30 December 2018, incidents of various irregularities, such as stuffing ballot boxes in most of the polling stations in 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>

513,510 people in Bangladesh have been infected with the corona virus until 31 December 2020. Among them 7,559 have died.⁴ During this pandemic, corruption became rampant in the health and other sectors. Senior doctors were transferred or made 'officers on special duty' (OSD) for protesting against corruption in the health sector.

4. In 2020, the government severely curtailed freedoms of speech, thought, conscience and expression of citizens. During this period, the government brought social media under scrutiny. People from different walks of life, including dissenters, writers, bloggers, opposition leaders-activists, teachers, lawyers, journalists, cartoonist, imam of a mosque and many others have been arrested and jailed under the repressive Digital Security Act, 2018 for criticising the government's failure to deal with the Coronavirus outbreak, insulting 'religious sentiments' and 'liking / sharing' any post on social media about high-ranking members of the ruling party or their family members, ruling party MPs, ministers and even the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During this period, the government has issued the Rules⁵ of this law with the aim of enforcing the Digital Security Act 2018 more strictly. Law enforcement officials and ruling party members have filed lawsuits, and the courts refused to grant bail to those arrested under the Digital Security Act.
5. Objective and impartial news publishing has been disrupted as the government has put pressure on the media in various ways. In most cases, journalists have reportedly been forced to apply self-censorship. The Digital Security Act 2018 has been widely used against journalists for publishing news. During this period, journalists were attacked by pro-government miscreants while carrying out their professional duties and false and fabricated cases were filed against them. The pro-opposition electronic and print media - Diganta TV, Islamic TV and Amar Desh - have been shut down by the government since 2013. BTRC blocked the daily Amar Desh, which was recently launched as an online news portal from London, UK.⁶
6. In 2020, members of law enforcement agencies were again involved in various human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and torture - ignoring accountability. Ordinary people have been killed indiscriminately in the name of 'gunfight/crossfire'. There have been a number of allegations against law enforcement and security members, including shooting to death⁷, torturing to death in remand and forcing 'confessional' statements through inhumane treatment⁸, torture⁹, extortion of

⁴ Available at: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/bangladesh/>

⁵ Available at:

https://bcc.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bcc.portal.gov.bd/page/bdb0a706_e674_4a40_a8a8_7cfccf7e9d9b/2020-10-16-17-08-66d778e039591e0aa7302996e47f7216.pdf

⁶ AHRC statement, available at: <http://www.humanrights.asia/news/ahrc-news/AHRC-STM-018-2020/>

⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 4 March 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?pagedate=2020-3-4&edcode=71&subcode=71&mod=1&pgnum=1&type=a>

⁸ Jisa Moni (14), the daughter of Jahangir, a garment factory worker, of Deobhog in Narayanganj, went missing on 4 July 2020. Jahangir filed a case with Narayanganj Sadar Police Station on 6 August. In this case, Sub Inspector (SI) Shamim Mohammad of Narayanganj Sadar Police Station arrested Khalil Majhi, Abdullah and Rakib. The men were tortured and forced to confess before the court that they had raped and killed the girl and then thrown her body in the Shitalakshya River in Narayanganj. On 23 August, relatives of Jisa Moni brought her to the police station alive. Khalil Majhi's father Abdul Gafur said that SI Shamim took Tk. 6,000 from them saying that he would not torture him in remand. However, SI Shamim

money by threats to kill in crossfire¹⁰, filing false cases against innocent citizens by stuffing drugs in their pockets¹¹, arrests and imprisonment of innocent people instead of the main accused, harassment of and accusing children¹² in criminal cases.

7. In Bangladesh, the death penalty remains in criminal laws and the government has not shown any interest in abolishing the death penalty or even a moratorium. Rather, the death penalty has been added as the maximum punishment in rape cases. Two people were executed in 2020 for murder.
8. A dysfunctional justice system, impunity of law enforcement agencies and a lack of trust in institutions due to corruption have led to a growing tendency for ordinary people to take the law into their own hands. There have been many incidents of public lynching this year. Among those killed by mob beatings were night watchmen and day laborers.
9. In 2020, leaders and activists of the Awami League and its affiliated organisations, Chhatra League and Juba League have been accused of attacking leaders-activists of opposition political parties, abducting, beating university teachers, atrocities on students and ordinary citizens, and committing various acts of violence against women. Furthermore, leaders and activists of Awami League, Chhatra League and Juba League clashed with each other over conflicts of interest, which led to many casualties. Various lethal weapons, including firearms, have been used in these clashes.¹³ During

tortured his son during remand and forced him to confess in the court, under threat of crossfire. The daily Prothom Alo, 26 August 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=6&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-08-26>

⁹ In the evening of 3 June, a youth named Imran Hossain was returning home from Sabua Bazar area of Chaugachha Upazila under Jashore District on public transport. When the vehicle reached in front of Jashore University of Science and Technology, the policemen of Sajiali Outpost stopped it and started searching the bag of a boy sitting next to Imran. Fearing the police, Imran got out and ran. Police chased him and arrested him. He was then severely beaten by police and as a result, he fell unconscious. When he regained consciousness, the police told him they found Ganja in his pocket and arrested him. Later Imran's father Neshar Ali gave Tk 6,000 to police for Imran. Imran fell seriously ill that night and was admitted to hospital in the morning of 4 June. Doctors said that the condition of Imran Hossain's kidneys was very bad. He has been undergoing dialysis. The daily Prothom Alo, 9 June 2020;

<https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1661672/> New Age, 29 June 2020;

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/109760/hc-seeks-civil-surgeon-report-on-drug-test-of-torture-victim>

¹⁰ On 29 January 2020, Sohail, a cloth merchant from Keraniganj under Dhaka district, was arrested by plain clothed members of the Detective Branch (DB) of Police, Sub Inspector Syed Mahmudul Islam, Assistant Sub Inspector Forhad Ali, Constables Mohammad Rajib Ahmed, Mohammad Sumon, Mohammad Abdul Jobbar, Mohammad Rashel and Mohammad Mojammel Hossain, from his shop in Kaliganj. He was taken to the Looter Char area, threatened with death in crossfire and then released after taking four hundred and fifty thousand taka from him. Sohail filed a written complaint to the Dhaka District Police Superintendent seeking remedy for the incident. The Police Superintendent ordered the Officer-in-Charge of the DB Police, Nazrul Islam to investigate this matter. Later, according to the investigative report, the seven accused policemen were withdrawn from the DB and sent to the police line. The daily Jugantor, 31 January 2020;

<https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/273561>

¹¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 11 August 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/সিগারেট-খাওয়ার-অপরাধে-গ্রেপ্তার-পরে-পুলিশকে-সাজে>; The daily Naya Diganta, 11 August 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/city/520731>

¹² Kamrul Islam Bachchu filed a case at Sadar Police Station on 24 May 2019 against Mohammad Shaon and Mohammad Shamim for allegedly beating his son Yadin Islam and robbing his money and belongings, in West Jhalokathi area. The investigating officer of the case, Sub Inspector (SI) Montu Mia of Jhalokathi Sadar Police Station, submitted a charge sheet in court against six-year-old Mohammed Shaon, after showing his age 28 years on the charge sheet. On 20 January 2020, when the child appeared in Jhalokathi District and Sessions Judge Court, the court acquitted the minor Mohammed Shaon from the case. The daily Naya Diganta, 21 January 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/473886>

¹³ The daily Prothom Alo, 18 July 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?pagedate=2020-7-18&edcode=71&subcode=71&mod=1&pgnum=1&type=a>

this period, reported allegations of embezzlement of relief allocated for the poor affected by the coronavirus pandemic, were found against leaders and activists of the ruling party. There have also been a number of clashes between the two groups in the ruling party over the relief effort.

10. Reported allegations of irregularities, corruption and torture on inmates were leveled against officials and employees of the country's prisons and child development centres (detention centres for juvenile criminals). Many innocent citizens have been arrested and sent to jail due to corruption and impunity of members of law enforcement agencies. Prisoners fell ill in the prisons due to the humanitarian catastrophe caused by overcrowding in the prisons during this period. Due to the inadequacy of the medical facility in prisons and the shortage of doctors, most of the inmates have been deprived of medical treatment and many reportedly died. Many prisoners have been reported to be infected with COVID-19 due to overcrowding and lack of proper sanitation.¹⁴ As with prisons, juvenile detainees in child development centres have been subjected to various forms of torture and ill-treatment. These centres had one and a half times more inmates than their official capacity.¹⁵ On 13 August, three juveniles of the Jashore Child Development Centre were killed and 15 others were seriously injured when 18 juvenile detainees, were tortured over a dispute about a haircut, by five officials of the Centre.¹⁶
11. In 2020, the right to freedom of assembly of the opposition and dissidents continued to be curtailed. During this period, the government continued to crack down on opposition leaders and activists, including filing cases and making arrests. There were incidents of obstructions and attacks on the rallies of the opposition political parties and organisations gathered with various demands to the government. Cases were also filed against those holding indoor meetings held by the opposition leaders and activists for allegedly planning to carry out so-called 'sabotage'. Many opposition leaders and activists were forced to seek political asylum abroad as a result of widespread repression on politics and freedom of expression. Relatives of Bangladeshi human rights activists Pinaki Bhattacharya, AKM Wahiduzzaman, journalist Tasneem Khalil and blogger Asad Noor, who took political asylum abroad, have been allegedly harassed by law enforcement officials in the name of questioning.
12. In 2020, the condition of the workers was extremely precarious. During this period, workers in both the formal and informal sectors were subjected to various human rights violations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, workers engaged in various professions became unemployed during the 'general holiday' announced by the government (from 26 March – 30 May 2020). As a result, they and their families had to suffer more economic hardship. At that time there was also reports of widespread corruption in relief distribution

¹⁴ The Daily Star, 11 May 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/coronavirus-live-update-23-prison-guards-2-inmates-test-covid-19-positive-1901596>

¹⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 3 September 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/শিশু-উন্নয়ন-কেন্দ্রগুলোর-অচল-দশা>

¹⁶ The daily Jugantor, 14 August 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/334817>; the daily Naya Diganta, 16 August 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/521885>

across the country. In addition, there were many incidents of closure of factories, layoffs and non-payment of wages. During this period, various factories, including ready-made garment factories, sugar mills and jute mills were closed. Workers in all these factories and in tea gardens staged demonstrations and rallies demanding closure of factories, layoffs and arrears of wages. Workers who were in protest of their legitimate demands were attacked by the police and men associated with factory owners. A garment factory worker was shot dead by police at that time.

13. Although migrant workers have made a significant contribution to keeping the wheel of Bangladesh's economy turning, they have been harassed at Bangladeshi airports after their return and have been detained and sent to jail.¹⁷
14. As in previous years, women have been subjected to various forms of violence, but in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, violence against women multiplied. Due to the pandemic many families became homebound and men and women jobless. The mounting frustrations, coupled with an ingrained patriarchal mentality, caused an increase in acts of violence against women. During this period, domestic violence, dowry related violence, rape and other forms of violence became widespread. Rape victims and their family members had to face various adversities. The rate of child marriage has also increased.
15. The political and economic influence of the Indian government on Bangladesh and the killing, torture and abduction of Bangladeshi nationals by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on the Bangladesh-India border continued in 2020.
16. On 8 April 2020, the Myanmar President's Office issued a directive to comply with the UN Convention of Genocide and to preserve evidence of all violence committed in Rakhine State. However, during the ICC and ICJ investigations and after the order of the President of Myanmar, the attacks on Rohingyas in Rakhine State continued and many Rohingya fled the country and entered Bangladesh. On 26 May 2020, Human Rights Watch released new satellite images of Myanmar's Rakhine state. It found that a fire had broken out in the village of Let Kar in Rakhine State on 16 May and that about 200 houses had been destroyed. In 2020, a large number of Rohingya refugees tried to cross the dangerous sea route to go abroad. In April, more than 300 Rohingya, including 33 children floating in the sea, were rescued and sent to Bhasanchar. The families of the Rohingyas in Bhasanchar said they are being held there like prisoners without food and health care. There are reports that some of the female Rohingya refugees were raped and sexually harassed.¹⁸ Furthermore, some refugees have complained that they were beaten by the

¹⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 1 September 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/ভিয়েতনামফেবত-৮১-জন-অভিবাসী-শ্রমিককে-গেজার-দেখাল-পুলিশ>

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, 9 July 2020; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/09/bangladesh-move-rohingya-dangerous-silt-island> ; The Guardian, 22 September 2020; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/22/rohingya-refugees-allege-sexual-assault-on-bangladeshi-island>

Bangladeshi authorities in Bhasanchar.¹⁹ On 4 December, the government relocated 1,642²⁰ Rohingyas in the first phase and on 29 December, 1804²¹ in the second phase to Bhasanchar from Kutupalong camp in Cox's Bazar. The United Nations and human rights organisations have long been opposed to the relocation of Rohingyas to Bhasanchar, saying that the Rohingya should not be sent there without considering necessary safety precautions if a cyclone occurs and the adequacy of the island's facilities.²² In addition, there is a shortage of medical facilities in Bhasanchar, according to Human Rights Watch.²³ During this period 49 Rohingyas have been the victims of extrajudicial killings as well.

17. The state repression on *Odhikar*, which began in 2013, continued in 2020. In 2014, *Odhikar* applied to the Bureau of NGO Affairs under the Prime Minister's Office for renewal of its registration²⁴. It is yet to be renewed. The case filed against *Odhikar*'s Secretary and Director under the Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (amended 2009) is still pending. In the face of such adversity, human rights defenders associated with *Odhikar* continue to work as volunteers because of their unwavering commitment to the protection of human rights. While collecting information about torture in police custody, Hasan Ali, a human rights defender associated with *Odhikar* in Kushtia, was threatened with abduction by the Superintendent of Police over a cell phone call.

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, 9 July 2020; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/09/bangladesh-move-rohingya-dangerous-silt-island> ; The Guardian, 22 September 2020; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/22/rohingya-refugees-allege-sexual-assault-on-bangladeshi-island>

²⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 5 December 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?pagedate=2020-12-5&edcode=71&subcode=71&mod=1&pgnum=1&type=a>

²¹ The Daily Star, 29 December 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/news/1772-rohingyas-leave-ctg-bhasan-char-2018993>

²² BBC, 25 January 2020; <https://www.bbc.com/bengali/news-47003349>

²³ Human Rights watch, 3 December 2020; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/03/bangladesh-halt-rohingya-relocations-remote-island>

²⁴ 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. The NGO Affairs Bureau has not taken any step regarding renewal of *Odhikar*'s registration.

Statistics: January-December 2020*														
Type of Human Rights Violation		January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
Extrajudicial killings	Crossfire	21	24	28	12	27	28	48	2	0	3	1	2	196
	Torture to death	1	2	3	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	0	2	19
	Shot to death	1	0	5	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	8
	Beaten to death	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	Total	23	26	38	14	29	29	51	3	2	5	1	4	225
Enforced Disappearances		6	3	2	1	0	3	5	5	3	0	3	0	31
Death in Jail		4	6	7	2	5	9	6	4	9	5	9	10	76
Death Penalty	Sentenced to death	33	28	18	0	0	0	0	5	48	15	23	48	218
	Execution of death sentence	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Human rights violations by Indian BSF	Bangladeshis Killed	13	3	0	2	1	6	3	4	4	5	2	8	51
	Bangladeshis Injured	4	2	0	7	0	4	1	1	0	6	0	2	27
	Bangladeshis Abducted	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	7
	Total	18	5	2	9	1	10	4	7	5	11	3	10	85
Attack on journalists	Injured	1	6	6	21	5	1	4	9	4	3	7	7	74
	Assaulted	3	5	1	2	5	2	3	0	6	0	1	3	31
	Attacked	0	2	0	5	0	5	0	1	3	3	4	5	28
	Threatened	0	0	4	3	1	0	2	1	1	1	1	3	17
	Total	4	13	11	31	11	8	9	11	14	7	13	18	150
Political violence	Killed	0	5	6	6	7	7	10	7	2	10	9	4	73
	Injured	209	132	146	173	247	129	204	301	275	359	200	508	2883
Dowry related violence against women		16	8	12	8	11	21	22	9	23	32	23	14	199
Rape	Girl under the age of 18	68	78	59	55	48	80	70	69	94	200	47	51	919
	Women	27	39	28	29	41	44	41	51	52	158	27	40	577
	Age could not be determined	0	2	0	0	5	3	3	10	2	11	5	1	42
	Total	95	119	87	84	94	127	114	130	148	369	79	92	1538
Sexual harassment /Stalking of females		11	15	13	8	12	15	10	12	14	24	11	12	157
Acid violence		0	3	1	0	3	5	3	3	3	3	7	2	33
Public lynching		6	2	4	3	2	6	4	3	3	1	5	1	40
Arrest under Digital Security Act 2018 **		5	4	5	37	27	18	8	2	8	4	17	7	142
Arrest under ICT Act		0	0	1	2	2	1	3	0	0	1	2	1	13

* Statistics of some issues have been updated

** The cases of arrests under the Digital Security Act 2018 that are documented are those where the presentations/statements in question are considered critical against high officials of the government and their families. Besides some people were arrested under this Act as they have critical religious views

A. Constitutional and State Institutions

1. The Awami League government has almost blocked the way for the victims to get justice, by systematically transforming various important state institutions of the country into their subservient institutions through politicization. The government has used various important state institutions such as the Election Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the National Human Rights Commission to implement its political plans. There are even allegations that the government is controlling the judiciary.²⁵

Independence of the Judiciary

2. Ever since the Awami League came to power in 2009, the Awami League led government has begun to wield considerable influence over the judiciary. There are allegations that the government established full authority over the Judiciary after retaining power through the two highly controversial elections of 2014 and 2018. In 2017, the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs published a gazette of the Judicial Service (Disciplinary) Rules for the employment of judges of lower courts and Magistrates. The Service Rules states that matters relating to the discipline of subordinate judicial officers shall be regulated by the appropriate authority. Disciplinary Rules for the employment of judges of the lower courts were made by keeping the control of the lower judiciary in the hands of the government.²⁶ As a result, the government has put pressure on the Judiciary, both to protect its party leaders and activists, and also to create obstacles for the leaders and activists of the opposition to get justice. Below is an example of government pressure on the Judiciary from 2020 :

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed three cases in 2019 against Pirojpur Awami League president and former parliamentarian AKMA Awal, for allegedly occupying government property. In one of the cases, both Awal and his wife and District chief of the Mahila Awami League²⁷, Laila Parvin, were accused. In the case, Awal and his wife were granted an eight-week interim bail by the High Court Division of the Supreme Court. When the bail expired, on 3 March 2020, they appeared in the court of Pirojpur District and Sessions Judge Abdul Mannan and sought bail. After the hearing, the court rejected their bail

²⁵ The 16th amendment was passed on 17 September 2014 – empowered parliament to dismiss Supreme Court judges if allegations of incapability or misconduct made against them were found true. However, the apex court's own mechanism for removing judges has been initiated, and Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) and clauses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 of Article 96 of the Constitution restored, with the amendment being scrapped. Dhaka Tribune, 1 August 2017; <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/court/2017/08/01/full-text-16th-amendment-released/>

²⁶ Former Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha wanted to bring Article 116 of the Constitution of 1972 back into the present Constitution. Article 116 of the 1972 Constitution stated that transfer of Judges and Magistrates, selection of workplace, leave and disciplinary matters of the subordinate courts would be laid before the Supreme Court. The government submitted a draft Service Rules for the subordinate courts, to the Supreme Court, but former Chief Justice sent this draft back to the government with his objections. On 14 March 2017, while hearing this matter, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court commented that the Judiciary is being made reliant. Due to such reasons, the government became annoyed with the Chief Justice, which allegedly put in motion events that forced him to leave the country and resign. After the resignation of Justice S K Sinha the government easily published a gazette notification of this Rules, on 11 December 2017, through the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. It is mentioned in the Service Rules that disciplinary and related matters of the lower court Judges/officials will be controlled by the "concerned authority", meaning the Ministry or Department responsible for service administration, authorised by the President or Rules of Business prepared in accordance with Article 55(6) of the Constitution.

²⁷ The Women's Wing of the Awami League.

and ordered that they be sent to jail. After passing this Order, the Law Ministry withdrew the District and Sessions Judge Abdul Mannan from Pirojpur and ordered him to be attached as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) in Dhaka. In the afternoon, Abdul Mannan was replaced by Acting District and Sessions Judge Nahid Nasrin. She granted bail to Awal and his wife.²⁸

Election Commission and Electoral system

3. The Awami League government and the Election Commission have completely destroyed the electoral system by depriving the people of their right to vote in all elections held during their tenure, including the 10th Parliamentary elections on 5 January 2014 and the 11th Parliamentary elections on 30 December 2018. The people have lost confidence in the government and the electoral system as government party supporters voted on the eve of the election and government party leaders and activists at many polling centres prevented the people from voting on election day. As a result, most of the people abstained from voting and the polling stations were found to be empty. Bangladesh is a party²⁹ to the United Nations Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Article 25(b) of the ICCPR states it is everyone's right: "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." This has been grossly violated by ignoring a free and fair electoral system. Apart from destroying the electoral system, there are also allegations of massive financial irregularities, corruption and misconduct against the current Election Commission.³⁰
4. In 2020, several by-elections to the Jatiya Sangsad (National Parliament) and local government elections, including the two city corporations in Dhaka, were held amid various irregularities, including unilateral control of polling centres by the ruling party leaders and activists, 'capturing' of the polling stations and expulsion of opposition candidates' polling agents. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh since March 2020 and the debilitating floods in the country since the beginning of July, the Election Commission has conducted several by-elections on the pretext of 'following the Constitution'. Although most of the voters abstained from voting, the ruling party Awami League won by exerting unlawful influence on the elections.³¹ During the elections, most of the polling stations were empty of voters. However, the Returning Officers under the government's subservient Election Commission overstated the turnout to make such voter less elections acceptable.³²
5. On 13 January 2020, during the Jatiya Sangsad by-election of Chittagong-8 constituency³³, the polling stations were occupied and controlled from

²⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 4 March 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1642925>

²⁹ Bangladesh acceded to the ICCPR in 2000.

³⁰ The Daily Star, 19 December 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/news/42-eminant-citizens-urge-president-constitute-supreme-judicial-council-probe-corruption-allegations-2013881>

³¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 27 February 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1637653>

³² The daily Naya Diganta, 16 July 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/515558/আজও>

³³ This by-election was held due to the death of Moinuddin Khan Badal, of the JSD, one of the government's affiliated political parties.

morning, by the ruling party leaders and activists.³⁴ In this election, the Awami League candidate won through various irregularities, including intimidation of general voters by exploding crude bombs outside the polling centers and by preventing entry or forcibly ousting polling agents of the BNP-nominated candidate from the center.³⁵

6. On 1 February 2020, the Dhaka North and Dhaka South City Corporation elections were held under the control of the ruling party leaders and activists. On polling day, the ruling party activists wearing badges of the government party (Awami League) symbol 'boat,' unilaterally took control of the polling booths and outside the centres, by ousting polling agents of the BNP nominated candidates from almost all polling centres.³⁶ Awami League and Chhatra League leaders-activists threatened voters to leave after some voters gathered outside the Manipur High School polling centre at 8:00 am.³⁷ The ruling party activists stayed inside the Narinda Mahila Samiti Government Primary School polling centre at 11:00 am, closing the door of the men's polling booth. Voters alleged that they had to vote openly as per their directions. Humayun Kabir, the presiding officer of this polling center, said that he was helpless and there was nothing he could do. The Awami League activists beat a voter who was with his disabled child, dragging him away from the polling center as he voted for 'sheaf of paddy' (BNP candidate) in Naznin School and College polling centre.³⁸
7. By-elections were held in Bogura-1³⁹ and Jashore-6⁴⁰ parliamentary constituencies on 13 July 2020. The BNP boycotted the polls in Bogura. Voter turnout was very low in Bogura-1 constituency. No polling agents other than that of the Awami League nominated candidate were seen at every polling station.⁴¹ The Returning Officer said that 46 percent votes were cast in this constituency even though the centers were vacant.⁴² Apart from polling agents of Awami League nominated candidate Shahin Chakladar, no other candidate's agents were seen in the polling stations of Jashore-6 constituency either. Despite the low voter turnout, the returning officer said that 63 percent votes were cast in Jashore-6 constituency.⁴³

³⁴ New Age, 14 January 2020; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/96531/al-wins-ctg-by-polls-amid-intimidation-rigging>

³⁵ The daily Naya Diganta, 14 February 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/472056>

³⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 2 February 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1637653>

³⁷ The daily Manabzamin, 2 February 2020; <https://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=211191>

³⁸ The daily Manabzamin, 2 February 2020; <https://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=211158>

³⁹ The seat became vacant when the Member of Parliament from this constituency, Adul Mannan died on 18 January 2020.

⁴⁰ The seat became vacant when the Member of Parliament from this constituency, Ismat Ara Sadeq died on 21 January 2020.

⁴¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 14 July 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1668894/>

⁴² The daily Naya Diganta, 16 July 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/515558/>

⁴³ The daily Naya Diganta, 16 July 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/515558/আজ>



A voter-less polling station in a by-election for Bogura-1 constituency. Photo: Manabzamin, 14 July 2020



A voter-less polling station at Hatphulbari in Sariakandi, Bogura. Photo: Inquilab, 14 July 2020



A young man is casting a vote in the open in the by-election of Bogura-1 constituency at Dhap Government Primary School polling centre in Sariakandi Upazila. Photo: Prothom Alo, 15 July 2020

8. On 17 October 2020, soon after the beginning of by-elections of Dhaka-5 constituency, Awami League supporters allegedly removed the polling agents of the BNP nominated candidates from Sanarpar Rustam Ali High School and Phulkoli Primary School, Vamuil Ideal School, Haji Adarsha Moazzem Ali High School, number 146 and 149 polling centres in Ward No. 66 and number 185 polling centre in Ward number 70 (Amulia Government Primary School) and Della, Sarulia Dagair Darus Sunnat Fazil Madrasa polling centres, in front of the police.⁴⁴ During the voting, the police did not allow journalists to enter the Donia University College polling Centre at 11 am.⁴⁵ In the by-election of Naogaon-6 constituency held on 17 October, the polling centres and the adjacent areas were also occupied by the leaders and activists of the ruling party.⁴⁶



In the by-election of Dhaka-5 constituency, two persons are voting inside one booth in front of the Assistant Presiding Officer of Matuail Girls High School. Photo: Prothom Alo, 18 October 2020

9. In the by-election of Dhaka-18 constituency⁴⁷ held on November 12, the polling centres were seen surrounded by Awami League activists and supporters in the presence of members of law enforcement agencies. Voter turnout was very low in these centres. Police prevented journalists from entering the women's polling station at Kishalay Academy School in Turag. Members of the police on duty said they were instructed not to allow journalists to enter the polling centres. Police and Awami League leaders and activists also blocked journalists from entering the male polling centre of Sher-e-Bangla Model School in Turag.⁴⁸ BNP candidate Mohammad Selim Reza, in the by-election of Sirajganj-1 constituency, alleged that the leaders and activists of the ruling Awami League had expelled his agents from the polling stations.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 17 October 2020; <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=247102>

⁴⁵ The daily Naya Diganta, 17 October 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/politics/535927/>

⁴⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 18 October 2020;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=16&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-10-18>

⁴⁷ The seat became vacant when the Member of Parliament from this constituency, Sahara Khatun died on 9 July 2020.

⁴⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 12 November 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/বাইরে-ভিড়-ভেতরে-ফাঁকা>

⁴⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 12 November 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/সিরাজগঞ্জ-১-উপনির্বাচন-প্রথম-১৫-মিনিটে-ভোট-পড়েছে-১০টি>



*A view of the IES School polling centre at Sector 5 in Uttara during the by-election of Dhaka-18 constituency.
Photo: Prothom Alo, 12 November 2020*

10. Elections in 10 Zila Parishads, 4 Upazila Parishads, 7 Municipalities and 71 Union Parishads were held on 10 December. During the election clashes, vandalism and attacks on journalists at various places occurred. On 9 December, the day before the election, a young man named Khaledur Rahman Tito was killed when supporters of the Awami League's 'rebel candidate' attacked supporters of the Awami League nominated candidate for the post of chairman of the Bagharpara Upazila Parishad in Jashore.⁵⁰
11. The Election Commission also decided to hold municipality elections in five phases across the country. On 22 November, the Election Commission announced the schedule for the first phase of the municipality elections to 25 municipalities to be held on 28 December.⁵¹ Awami League leaders and activists have been accused of attacks and obstructing the campaign of the opposition BNP and independent candidates before the election. Members of law enforcement agencies also harassed BNP leaders and activists, and their polling agents were intimidated and arrested. In this situation, the opposition BNP and independent mayoral candidates were not able to campaign although the Awami League-nominated candidates were able to do so.⁵² In the first phase of elections in 24 municipalities⁵³ held on 28 December with numerous irregularities, including ousting polling agents of the opposition parties and independent candidates from the polling centres, fingerprints on the electronic voting machine (EVM) not matching voter ID's, preventing journalists from collecting information, 'capturing' the polling centres and forcefully casting votes for Awami League candidates. Panic was created in

⁵⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 11 December 2020;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=4&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-12-11>

⁵¹ Election Commission, <http://www.ecs.gov.bd/category/municipality-election?page=1> Dhaka Tribune, 22 November 2020; <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/election/2020/11/22/first-phase-of-municipality-election-on-dec-28>

⁵² The daily Prothom Alo, 24 December 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?pagedate=2020-12-24&edcode=71&subcode=71&mod=1&pgnum=1&type=a>

and Prothom Alo, 29 December 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?pagedate=2020-12-29&edcode=71&subcode=71&mod=1&pgnum=1&type=a>

⁵³ The election at Sreepur Municipality of Gazipur was rescheduled to 16 January after the death of the BNP mayoral candidate for the municipality. Dhaka Tribune, 28 December 2020;

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2020/12/28/first-phase-of-municipality-election-begins>

many municipal areas before the voting. Many voters did not go to the polling stations out of fear and candidates could not stay in the election field.⁵⁴ Awami League leaders and activists occupied all the polling centres in Dhamrai Municipality of Dhaka district within two to three hours of the beginning of polling. In all these centres, the voters could cast their votes for the councilors only by secret ballot, but not for the mayor. The Awami League leaders and activists ousted voters and cast votes for the mayor. Zaheer Raihan, a staff reporter of the daily Prothom Alo, was stopped from taking pictures of irregularities and fraud in Hujuritola Collegiate School polling centre under Dhamrai Municipality. The presiding officer of this centre, Azizul Haque, snatched away his cell phone and handed it over to an Awami League activist.⁵⁵



Two people peeking into a booth when a voter was casting his vote in Dhamrai Government College polling centre in Savar. Photo: Prothom Alo, 29 December 2020

Corruption and the Anti Corruption Commission

18. Corruption is rampant in the country and 2020 was no exception. During the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders and activists of the ruling party embezzled⁵⁶ relief allocated for the extremely poor people of the country and allegations of massive looting and corruption in the health sector have also been found.⁵⁷ Lack of accountability has led to allegations of looting, illegal trade, tender bidding, extortion, money laundering and stock market manipulation by members of the ruling party leaders-activists, persons with various professions affiliated with the government and government officials, in the name of 'development'. All this illegally earned wealth is believed to have been smuggled abroad. There are allegations that the government has patronised leaders and activists of the ruling party and pro-government business persons and officials involved in these looting corruption and money

⁵⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 29 December 2020; <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=256402>; The Daily Star, 29 December 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/scattered-violence-irregularities-mar-municipality-polls-2018717>

⁵⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 29 December 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=2&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-12-29> New Age, 29 December 2020; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/125571/al-bags-most-mayoral-posts-irregularities-mark-municipal-polls>

⁵⁶ The daily Manabzamin 3, April 2020; <https://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=220308>; Naya diganta, 1 May 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/499177/>

⁵⁷ Bangladesh Protidin, 29 April 2020; <https://www.bd-pratidin.com/last-page/2020/04/30/525616>

laundering activities.⁵⁸ According to a report by the US-based international company Global Financial Integrity (GFI), about 4 lac crore taka (5 thousand and 270 crores dollars) has been laundered abroad from Bangladesh in the last seven years, with an average of 64 thousand crore taka every year.⁵⁹

12. As per the law, the Anti-Corruption Commission⁶⁰ (ACC) is supposed to work as an independent and impartial body to curb corruption, but in reality, the ACC has not been able to take any effective action. Under the pressure of the ruling party, the ACC has become a subservient institution, which is reflected in its various activities. Although the ACC has investigated the corruption of Members of Parliament belonged to the ruling party, local government representatives belonging to Awami League, influential politicians, government officials and even bureaucrats in some cases, it is alleged that most of the accused in these cases have since been acquitted. For example, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed a case against Thakurgaon Sadar Upazila Project Implementation Officer Golam Kibria, Sadar Upazila Food Controller Biplob Kumar Singh Roy, Officer-in-Charge of Sadar Food Warehouse Sahab Uddin, Officer-in-Charge of Gareyahat Food Warehouse Maidul Islam, Shibganj Food Warehouse officer-in-charge SM Golam Mostafa and Dholarhat Union Parishad chairman and Awami League leader Simanta Kumar Barman, for allegations of embezzlement of rice under government project (Thakurgaon Deputy Commissioner allotted 217 metric tons of rice for Waz Mahfil in mosques, worship in temples and food for orphans in Madrasa orphanages). However, the ACC recommended withdrawing the case on the pretext that the amount embezzled was 'little' and the accused were 'respected' persons.⁶¹ On the other hand, the Commission has continued the legal processes, including investigation and filing of cases, against leaders of the (out of parliament) opposition party BNP. Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB) reported in a research report on 25 February 2020 that the Anti-Corruption Commission had a sword against the opposition, but was

⁵⁸ On 19 May 2020, the EXIM Bank authority filed a case with Gulshan Police Station in Dhaka against Rono Haque Sikder, Managing Director of Sikder Group, and his brother Dipu Haque Sikder, alleging that they had harassed and attempted to shoot and kill two officials, including the bank's Managing Director Mohammad Haider Ali Mia, over a loan of BDT 5 billion. Despite the case pending against them, Rono Haque Sikder and Dipu Haque Sikder left Dhaka for Bangkok on 25 May by their own air ambulance, with the help of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is to be noted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the air traffic was closed at that time. The Director of Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka, Group Captain AHM Touhid UI Ahsan said that no aircraft operates now without the approval of the Foreign Ministry. The Sikder family has huge assets in major cities around the world, including in Las Vegas and has reportedly invested large amounts of money illegally in various countries. According to the policy of Bangladesh Bank, there is no opportunity to take money abroad for investment without the approval of the Central Bank. Sikder Group is known to be close to the ruling Awami League government. Parvin Haque Sikder, daughter of the Chairman of Sikder Group, Zainul Haque Sikder, is a Member of Parliament belonging to Awami League in the reserved seat for women. The Sikder Group's business began to flourish in 2009. Since then, the condition of the National Bank owned by them has been deteriorating and their assets begun to increase abroad after the National Bank came under their full control. (The daily Prothom Alo, 9 June 2020) <https://www.prothomalo.com/economy/article/1661561/>

⁵⁹ The daily Jugantor, 5 March 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/editorial/285382>

⁶⁰ Section 3(2) of the Anti Corruption Commission Act, 2004 (amended in 2016) states that this Commission shall be an independent and impartial commission.

⁶¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 29 December 2020;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=2&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-12-29>

flexible in the case of those in power. The Commission is being used politically as a whole.⁶²

National Human Rights Commission

13. Despite widespread human rights violations in the country in 2020, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)⁶³ has not been seen to take any action in this regard. As in the past, the NHRC has been accused of various controversial activities and of being subservient to the government. Citizens of different walks of life in the country are being sued and arrested under the Digital Security Act 2018, for publishing information criticizing the government and ruling party elites and for criticizing the failure of the government to control the COVID-19 pandemic, flaws in the health system and massive irregularities in the distribution of relief, on social media. At the same time, various human rights violations, including disappearances, extrajudicial killings and torture took place in the country, but the National Human Rights Commission has remained silent on these matters. This is not uncommon for the NHRC.

On 24 June 2020, a bench comprising of Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif and Justice Rajik Al Jalil of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, passed a judgment on a Writ Petition filed in 2013 regarding violence against a housemaid named Khadija in Mirpur, Dhaka.⁶⁴ The High Court commented that, "The National Human Rights Commission has shown extreme incompetence in fulfilling its responsibilities to prevent human rights violations and the Commission is sleeping with eyes wide open".⁶⁵

B. Repression of State Security Forces and Impunity

Extrajudicial killings

14. The extrajudicial killing of people by state security forces is the ultimate manifestation of state oppression. Such killings continued in the country in 2020. Extrajudicial killings have taken place due to an absence of democracy and rule of law, lack of accountability of the government and dysfunctional judiciary, impunity of members of law enforcement agencies. There are allegations that law enforcement agencies have tried to cover up the killings by calling them deaths in "gunfights" or "crossfire" or "encounters". The story that is being commonly spread by law enforcement agencies after

⁶² TIB Research Report, 2020, pg-33, https://www.ti-bangladesh.org/beta3/images/2020/report/ACC/ACC_Full_Report.pdf
The Daily Star, 26 February 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/politically-biased-hiring-deprives-acc-free-rein-1872862>

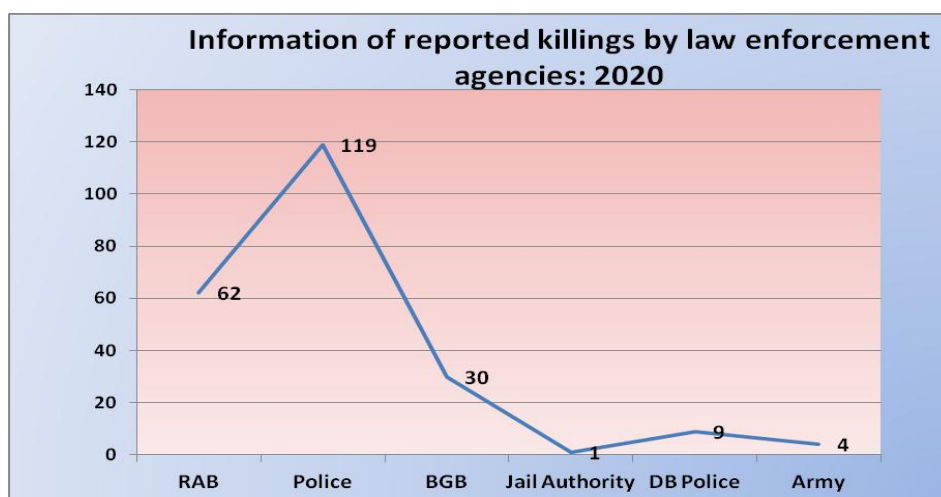
⁶³ On 22 September 2019, the government appointed five members to the National Human Rights Commission, including former senior Secretary Nasima Begum, as Chairman and former Secretary Dr. Kamal Uddin Ahmed as permanent member of the NHRC.

⁶⁴ In 2013, Khadija, a housemaid, became victim of domestic violence in Mirpur, Dhaka. The incident was reported in a national newspaper. A letter was sent to the National Human Rights Commission on behalf of the Children's Charity Foundation along with the report. On 22 December 2018, Barrister Abdul Halim, Chairman of the Children's Charity Foundation, filed a Writ Petition at the High Court, as no action was taken by the NHRC.

⁶⁵ THE BUSINESS STANDARD, 24 June 2020; <https://tbsnews.net/bangladesh/court/national-human-rights-commission-sleeping-eyes-open-high-court-97513#.XvMuoz33YM.facebook>

extrajudicial killings is, that when members of the law enforcement agency go to a specific place with the arrestee in the name of 'recovering weapons', they are shot at by 'collaborators' of the arrestee and in self-defense, members of law enforcement agencies fire back, which resulted in the killing of only the arrested person. Furthermore, law enforcement agencies were also reported to have been intimidating and harassing relatives of victims of extrajudicial killings. Although men are usually victims of extrajudicial killings, in 2020 women also became victims.⁶⁶ There are also allegations that Rohingya refugees were killed extra judicially in the name of 'gunfight'.⁶⁷

15. Extrajudicial killings continue with blatant violation of Article 32 of the Constitution⁶⁸ and Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights⁶⁹. On 18 September 2020, Amir Hossain Amu, a member of the Awami League's advisory council, in an interview with Deutsche Welle's Bangla section said, "Whatever has come out of society today, the way in which militancy has rooted itself today; the way it has taken extreme proportions; the way it has spread in the world, if 'crossfire' had not been decided, I think it would not have been possible to suppress these things. ...Militancy, including chaos, is spreading in this country and it is not going to stop even after the declaration of 'zero tolerance' ...if on-the-spot shooting is done, it is not for the state's need, it is for the national need".⁷⁰
16. **In 2020 a total of 225 persons, including 02 women were allegedly killed extra-judicially, as reported. Among the 225 persons killed, 49 were Rohingyas who were killed in Bangladesh extra-judicially during this reporting period. Persons killed in the name of 'gunfight'/'crossfire', torture and those shot and/or beaten to death have been incorporated under 'Extrajudicial Killings'.**



⁶⁶ The daily Jugantor, 6 January 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/263807>

⁶⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 23 December 2020

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=4&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-12-23>

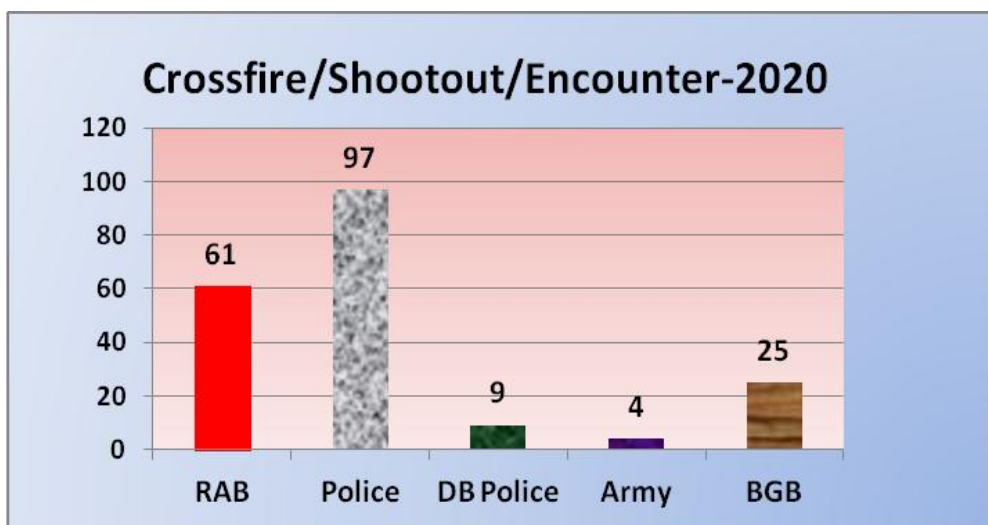
⁶⁸ No person shall be deprived of life and liberty except in accordance with the law.

⁶⁹ Every human being has an inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No person shall be deprived of life whimsically.

⁷⁰ Available at: <https://www.dw.com/bn/জাতীয়-প্রমোজনে-রুসফায়াব-আমু/a-54981993>

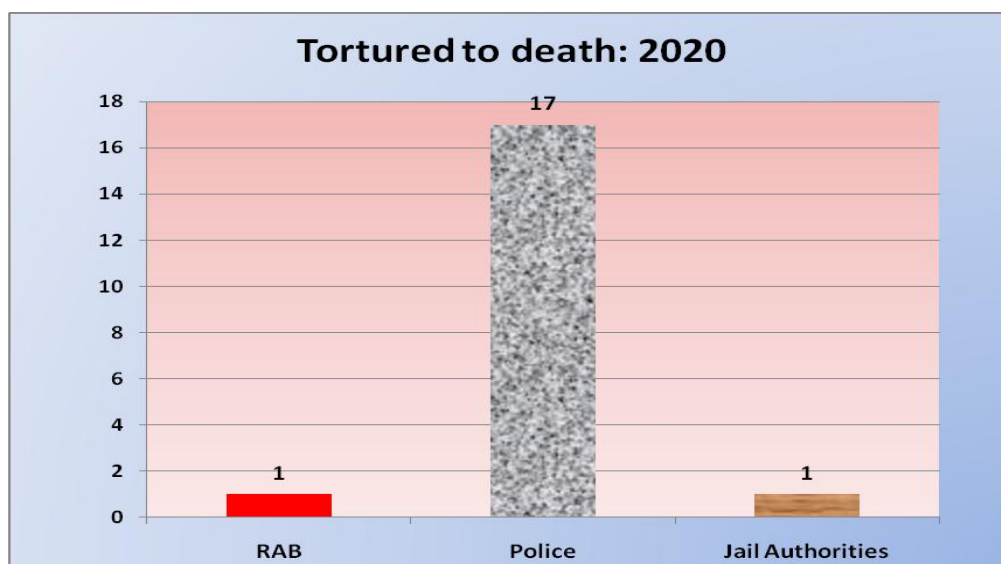
Crossfire/encounter/gunfight:

17. Among the 225 persons killed extrajudicially, 196 were killed in “crossfire/encounters/gunfights”. Of them, 61 were killed by the RAB, 97 by the police, nine by the DB Police, 25 by the BGB, and four were killed by the Army.



Tortured to death:

18. In 2020, 19 persons were allegedly tortured to death. Among them 17 were killed by the police, one by the RAB and one by Jail Authorities.



Shot to death:

19. Among the deceased, eight persons were allegedly shot and killed – five by BGB and three by police.

Beaten to death:

20. Among the deceased, two persons were beaten to death by police.

The identity of the deceased:

21. Of the 225 persons who were killed extrajudicially, one was a retired Army officer, two were Awami League activists, one was a Chhatra Shibir⁷¹ activist, four were members of the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), one was a Union Parishad Chairman, one was a housewife, one was a school student, four were youths, five were villagers, five were CNG Auto-rickshaw drivers, one was a human-hauler (transport) driver, one was a farmer, one was an agricultural worker, one was a stone mason, one was a steel mill worker, one was a ready-made garment worker, one was a hawker, one was a businessman, one was a tea seller, one was a shopkeeper, one was an FDC⁷² worker, one was a court employee, one was a prisoner, eight were accused in rape cases, 13 were accused in murder cases, 95 were alleged drug peddlers, 70 were accused in different criminal cases; and the identity of one person was not reported.

A total of 196 persons, including a woman named Samuda Begum (40) in Teknaf, under Cox's Bazar District on 4 January 2020⁷³, Anwar at Khilkhet in Dhaka City on 20 January⁷⁴, Mohammad Shahin and Nazmul Huda at Khilkhet Dumuni Abohopara in Dhaka City on 30 January⁷⁵; Shamsul Huda Nissan, Shariful Islam and Mahfuz Alam Sujan in Feni on 27 February⁷⁶, Sohel Hawlader at Khilgaon in Dhaka City on 21 March⁷⁷, Shafiqul Islam (40) in Bhola Sadar Upazila on 9 June⁷⁸, electronic businessman Rubel Hossain Dalim in Joypurhat on 15 July⁷⁹, two brothers Mohammad Faruk and Azadul in Teknaf under Cox's Bazar District on 17 July⁸⁰, Major (retd) Sinha Mohammad Rashed Khan in Teknaf under Cox's Bazar district on 31 July⁸¹, an expatriate named Mohammad Zafar and a day-labour named Mohammad Hassan in Chokoria under Cox's Bazar district on 31 July⁸², a suspected drug peddler named Abdul Mannan Munna in Sylhet on 3 August⁸³, a suspected drug peddler named Mohammad Syed Alam in Teknaf under Cox's Bazar District on 13 November⁸⁴, were all killed in 'gunfight' with members of law enforcement agencies. It is to be mentioned that many family members of the victims of extrajudicial killings alleged that the victims were killed

⁷¹ Student wing of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami

⁷² Film Development Corporation

⁷³ The daily Jugantor, 6 January 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/263807>

⁷⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 22 January 2020

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=7&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-1-22>

⁷⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 1 February 2020

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=2&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-2-1>

⁷⁶ Information sent by local human rights defender associated with *Odhikar* from Feni.

⁷⁷ The daily Manabzamin, 23 March 2020 <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=218760&cat=10/>

⁷⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 9 June 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1661631>

⁷⁹ The daily Jugantor, 16 July 2020 <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/326387/>

⁸⁰ The daily Manabzamin, 18 July 2020 <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=235645>

⁸¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 1 August 2020; The Daily Star, 05 August 2020;

<https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/killing-ex-major-sinha-cops-fir-inquest-report-contradict-each-other-1939997>

⁸² The Daily Ittefaq, 17 August 2020 <https://www.ittfaq.com.bd/wholecountry/175297/>

⁸³ New Age, 3 August 2020; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/112597/drug-peddler-killed-in-sylhet-gunfight>

⁸⁴ New Age, 14 November 2020; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/121549/one-killed-in-first-gunfight-at-teknaf-after-sinha-killing>

after being taken away. On 2 March 2020, seven Rohingya refugees⁸⁵ and on 21 December, an unidentified Rohingya refugee⁸⁶ in Teknaf under Cox's Bazar district were allegedly killed in a 'gunfight' with RAB members in Teknaf under Cox's Bazar District. On 3 March, five people were shot dead by Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) in a clash between villagers and BGB over the cutting down of trees from privately owned land in Matiranga, Khagrachhari.⁸⁷ On 25 March, a worker of Rupali Bangla Jute Mill in Dinajpur was shot dead by police while protesting for payment of arrears of wages.⁸⁸

Enforced disappearances

22. Enforced disappearance is a grave violation of Articles 9⁸⁹ and 16⁹⁰ of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Articles 31⁹¹, 32⁹² and 33⁹³ of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Enforced disappearance, which is also considered a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court⁹⁴, has created a frightening situation in Bangladesh. Ever since the Awami League-led coalition government came to power in 2009, allegations of disappearances have been made by victim-families on a regular basis. Most of the victims of enforced disappearance were identified as opposition leaders and dissidents. While government officials have repeatedly denied the cases of enforced disappearance, there were allegations of state security forces being involved in each of the incidents of disappearance and in some cases evidence has been found.⁹⁵ There are also allegations that members of law enforcement agencies

⁸⁵ ⁸⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 3 March 2020 <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?pagedate=2020-3-3&edcode=71&subcode=71&mod=1&pgnum=1&type=a>

⁸⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 23 December 2020

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=4&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-12-23>

⁸⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 4 March 2020; New Age, 4 March 2020; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/101161>

⁸⁸ The daily Manabzamin, 27 March 2020 <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=219312&cat=2/>

⁸⁹ Article 9: Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law.

⁹⁰ Article 16: Everyone shall have the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

⁹¹ Article 31: To enjoy the protection of the law, and to be treated in accordance with law, and only in accordance with law, is the inalienable right of every citizen, wherever he may be, and of every other person for the time being within Bangladesh, and in particular no action detrimental to the life, liberty, body, reputation or property of any person shall be taken except in accordance with law.

⁹² Article 32: No person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty save in accordance with law.

⁹³ Article 33 (1): No person who is arrested shall be detained in custody without being informed, as soon as may be of the grounds for such arrest, nor shall he be denied the right to consult and be defended by a legal practitioner of his choice. (Continued.....)

⁹⁴ Article 7 of the Rome Statute states that "enforced disappearance" is considered to be "crime against humanity" when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack. "Enforced disappearance of persons" means the arrest, detention or abduction of persons by, or with the authorization, support or acquiescence of, a State or a political organization, followed by a refusal to acknowledge that deprivation of freedom or to give information on the fate or whereabouts of those persons, with the intention of removing them from the protection of the law for a prolonged period of time.

⁹⁵ 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 OC Emdadul Huq Sheikh and SI Himel Hossain, were directly involved.

hid their own identities and disappeared people using the identities of other forces or agencies. On 24 August, Deepak Bhowmik, Chairman of a business company called Landmark Group, was picked up by plainclothes men claiming to be members of the Detective Branch (DB) of Police from his home in New DOHS, Dhaka. He was released in the afternoon of 25 August. When Deepak's family contacted the DB police, they found out that actually RAB-4 members had picked him up.⁹⁶

23. In 2020, a total of 31 persons were allegedly disappeared⁹⁷ after being picked up by members of law enforcement agencies. Among them, the whereabouts of three persons remain unknown, six were found dead and 22 surfaced alive.

Perpetrators of Enforced Disappearances in 2020					
Month(s)	No. of the disappeared persons	Allegedly disappeared by			
		RAB	Police	DB Police	Other law enforcement agencies
January	6	1	3	0	2
February	3	1	1	1	0
March	2	0	0	0	2
April	1	0	0	1	0
May	0	0	0	0	0
June	3	3	0	0	0
July	5	0	2	2	1
August	5	1	0	0	4
September	3	2	0	0	1
October	0	0	0	0	0
November	3	0	1	2	0
December	0	0	0	0	0
Total	31	8	7	6	10

(<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 to 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/>)

⁹⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 2 January 2021 <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/ডিবি-তদন্তে-বেরিয়ে-এল-ব্যবসায়ীকে-তুলে-নিষেধিল-র্যাব>

⁹⁷ *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.

Reported Cases of Enforced Disappearances in 2020				
Month(s)	Total number of disappeared persons	Found dead/killed	Found alive	Whereabouts of the disappeared persons still unknown
January	6	4	2	0
February	3	2	1	0
March	2	0	2	0
April	1	0	1	0
May	0	0	0	0
June	3	0	3	0
July	5	0	4	1
August	5	0	5	0
September	3	0	2	1
October	0	0	0	0
November	3	0	2	1
December	0	0	0	0
Total	31	6	22	3

24. As a result of extensive anti-disappearance campaigns, the practice of keeping victims detained in unknown places for an extensive period has reduced. Some people have been released after being disappeared for a long time. The persons who resurfaced or reappeared and their family members do not speak of the event due to fear of reprisals. Many have been handed over to the court as an accused in pending investigations, after long periods of disappearance. Furthermore, it has been alleged that some people released on bail have been picked up from the jail gate and disappeared. Bodies have also been found after disappearance. There are also allegations that some people are being identified as 'Islamic militants' by law enforcement agencies and disappeared in the name of "war on terror".⁹⁸
25. In May, during International Week of the Disappeared, the family members of the disappeared demanded their return, through video messages on social media. The children of the victims of enforced disappearances also participated in an art exhibition.⁹⁹ Furthermore, Odhikar also issued a [joint statement](#) with the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) to mark this week in solidarity with victim-families. On the occasion of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, the Human Rights Defenders Network of Odhikar and Mayer Daak (Mother's Call) – a network of families and relatives of the disappeared – on 29 August, organised rallies, human chains, press conferences and discussions with the families of the disappeared in different places of the country. Twelve regional and international human rights

⁹⁸ Odhikar, Three-month human rights report (July – September 2020). Pg. 13; http://odhikar.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Odhikar_Three-month-HRR_July-September-2020_English.pdf

⁹⁹ Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/Odhikar.HumanRights/>

organisations¹⁰⁰, including Odhikar and Mayer Daak, issued a joint statement calling for the disappeared to be returned.¹⁰¹

Torture and ill treatment and lack of accountability of law enforcement agencies

26. Members of law enforcement agencies have become reckless as a section of law enforcement agencies are used by government to suppress political opponents, critics of the government and dissidents. In 2020, allegations of shooting to death¹⁰², torturing to death in remand and forcing ‘confessional’ statement through inhumane treatment¹⁰³, torture¹⁰⁴, extorting money by threatening to kill in crossfire¹⁰⁵, filing false cases against innocent citizens by stuffing drugs in their pockets¹⁰⁶, arrests and imprisonment of innocent people instead of the main accused, harassment, accusing children¹⁰⁷ in

¹⁰⁰ The Advocates for Human Rights, Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network, Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances, Asian Human Rights Commission, Asian Network for Free Elections, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, Human Rights Watch, International Federation for Human Rights, Robert F Kennedy Human Rights, and World Organisation Against Torture.

¹⁰¹ For details, see available at: <http://odhikar.org/bangladesh-end-enforced-disappearances-hold-law-enforcement-accountable/>

¹⁰² The daily Prothom Alo, 4 March 2020

¹⁰³ Jisa Moni (14), the daughter of Jahangir, a garment factory worker, of Deobhog in Narayanganj, went missing on 4 July 2020. Jahangir filed a case with Narayanganj Sadar Police Station on 8 August. In this case, Sub Inspector Shamim Mohammad of Narayanganj Sadar Police Station arrested Khalil Majhi, Abdullah and Rakib. The men were tortured and forced to confess before the court that they had raped and killed the girl and then thrown her body in the Shitalakshya River. On 23 August, relatives of Jisa Moni brought her to the police station alive. Khalil Majhi's father Abdul Gafur said that SI Shamim took Tk. 6,000 from them saying that he would not torture him in remand. However, SI Shamim tortured his son during remand and forced him to confess in the court, under threat of crossfire. The daily Prothom Alo, 26 August 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=6&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-08-26>

¹⁰⁴ In the evening of 3 June, a youth named Imran Hossain was returning home from Sabua Bazar area of Chaugachha Upazila under Jashore District on public transport. When the vehicle reached the front of Jashore University of Science and Technology, the policemen of Sajiali Outpost stopped it and started searching the bag of a boy sitting next to Imran. Fearing the police, Imran got out and ran. Police chased him and arrested him. He was then severely beaten by police and as a result, he fell unconscious. When he regained consciousness, the police told him they found Ganja in his pocket and arrested him. Later Imran's father Neshar Ali gave Tk 6,000 to police for Imran. Imran fell seriously ill that night and was admitted to hospital in the morning of 4 June. Doctors said that the condition of Imran Hossain's kidneys was very bad. He has been undergoing dialysis. The daily Prothom Alo, 9 June 2020;

<https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1661672/> New Age, 29 June 2020; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/109760/hc-seeks-civil-surgeon-report-on-drug-test-of-torture-victim>

¹⁰⁵ On 29 January 2020, Sohail, a cloth merchant from Keraniganj under Dhaka district, was arrested by plain clothed members of the Detective Branch of Police, Sub Inspector Syed Mahmudul Islam, Assistant Sub Inspector Forhad Ali, Constables Mohammad Rajib Ahmed, Mohammad Sumon, Mohammad Abdul Jobbar, Mohammad Rashel and Mohammad Mojammel Hossain, from his shop in Kaliganj. He was taken to the Looter Char area, threatened with death in crossfire and then released after taking four hundred and fifty thousand taka from him. Sohail filed a written complaint to the Dhaka District Police Superintendent seeking remedy for the incident. The Police Superintendent ordered the Officer-in-Charge of the Detective Branch of Police, Nazrul Islam to investigate this matter. Later, according to the investigative report, the seven accused policemen were withdrawn from the DB and sent to the police line. The daily Jugantor, 31 January 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/273561>

¹⁰⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 11 August 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/সিগারেট-খাওয়ার-অপরাধে-গ্রেপ্তার-পরে-গুলিশকে-সাজে>; The daily Naya Diganta, 11 August 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/city/520731>

¹⁰⁷ Kamrul Islam Bachchu filed a case at Sadar Police Station on 24 May 2019 against Mohammad Shaon and Mohammad Shamim for allegedly beating his son Yadin Islam and robbing his money and belongings, in West Jhalokathi area. The investigating officer of the case, Sub Inspector Montu Mia of Jhalokathi Sadar Police Station, submitted a charge sheet in court against six-year-old Mohammed Shaon, after showing his age 28 years on the charge sheet. On 20 January 2020, when the child appeared in Jhalakathi District and Sessions Judge Court, the court acquitted the minor Mohammed Shaon from the case. The daily Naya Diganta, 21 January 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/473886>

criminal cases and extortion, were all made against members of law enforcement and security forces.

27. During this reporting period there were widespread incidents of torture and degrading treatment on citizens, but very few of them were made public. The victims could not file cases in the police station and thus filed cases in the court. Unfortunately in most cases, the court directed the accused law enforcement agencies to investigate the allegations. It is quite obvious that these investigations were not conducted impartially.¹⁰⁸ In some cases, incidents were covered up by intimidating the victims and forcing them to compromise. It is alleged that the leaders and activists of the ruling Awami League were also involved with the members of the law enforcement agencies in such intimidation and compromises.¹⁰⁹ During this period, the victims of torture and ill-treatment and their families were harassed and threatened by members of the law enforcement agencies after filing cases against the perpetrators. In most cases, such members of law enforcement agencies have been “transferred” or “closed” instead of being tried as criminals in a competent court of law due to impunity.¹¹⁰
28. In 2013, the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act was passed, but the law remains in force only on paper and torture victims or their families are facing harassment and threats from the police after filing complaints.¹¹¹ The first verdict after this law came into force was on 9 September 2020. On that day, Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge KM Imrul Kayesh sentenced the then Sub Inspector of Pallabi Police Station Zahidur Rahman, Assistant Sub Inspectors Rashedul Islam and Kamruzzaman to life imprisonment and fined them one hundred thousand taka each for torturing and killing a young man named Ishtiaq Hossain Johnny at Pallabi Police Station in 2014. The other two accused persons, police informers Sumon and Rasel were sentenced to seven years imprisonment and fined Tk 20,000.¹¹² Since the enactment of the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act in 2013, a total of 18 cases have been filed till 2019. In 14 of them, the police have submitted Final Report citing ‘factual errors’ in the cases.¹¹³ One of the other four cases is the case of Ishtiaq Hossain Jony.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 4 December 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/capital/আলোর-জীবনে-এখন-কেবলই-আঁধার>

¹⁰⁹ Bangladesh Pratidin, 8 June 2020; <https://www.bd-pratidin.com/last-page/2020/06/08/536847>

¹¹⁰ The Daily Star, 14 July 2019; <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/news/cop-closed-torturing-woman-1771114/> / Dhaka Tribune, 29 March 2020; <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/2020/03/29/four-policemen-closed-at-police-lines-for-assaulting-journalists>

¹¹¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 23 January 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=16&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-1-23>

¹¹² The Daily Star, 09 September 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/city/news/custodial-death-jonny-3-policemen-get-life-term-2-get-7-years-jail-1958473>

¹¹³ The daily Prothom Alo, 10 September 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?pagedate=2020-9-10&edcode=71&subcode=71&mod=1&pgnum=1&type=a>

¹¹⁴ In the evening of 08 February 2014, police informer Sumon abused women at the wedding of Mohammad Billal, a resident of the Irani Camp at B Block, Section 11 of Pallabi. Sumon had an argument with Ishtiaq Hossain Jony and his brother Imtiaz who were there at that time. After receiving Sumon's call, the police came and took Ishtiaq and Imtiaz to the police station and tortured the two brothers. Ishtiaq Hossain Jony succumbed to his injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Imtiaz filed a case in the Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court on 7 August 2014 under the Torture and

29. On 26 June, on the occasion of International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, Odhikar in collaboration with the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) issued a [joint statement](#). Furthermore, human rights defenders associated with Odhikar, along with local people, victims and their families, organised rallies and human chains in different districts of the country in solidarity with those who have been subjected to various forms of torture, cruel and inhumane treatment.



Human rights defenders associated with Odhikar organised rallies and human chains in different districts to mark the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. Photo: Odhikar

On 18 February 2020, Yasmin Begum was allegedly tortured to death by the Detective Branch of Police in Gazipur District.¹¹⁵ On 26 March, Shanu Hawladar was allegedly tortured to death by police of Amtali Police Station in Barguna District¹¹⁶. A CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver named Mannan (40) was allegedly tortured in police custody at Ghorashal under Palash Upazila in Narsingdi District. He died on 29 April 2020.¹¹⁷ Nikhil Talukder, a farmer from Ramshil Village in Kotalipara under Gopalganj District, died on 4 June 2020 in Kotalipara police custody. Nikhil was allegedly tortured to death by police.¹¹⁸ On 6 July, the police of Chapainawabganj Sadar Model Police Station

Death in Custody (Prevention) Act, 2013. The court directed a judicial inquiry into the case. Following the judicial investigation on 17 February 2015, five were accused and five were recommended for release.

¹¹⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 19 February 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1640605>

¹¹⁶ The daily Jugantor, 27 March 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/293098> and the daily Amader Shomoy; 27 March 2020; <http://www.dainikamadershomoy.com/post/248128>

¹¹⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 1 May 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1654141>

¹¹⁸ Bangladesh Protidin, 8 June 2020; <https://www.bd-pratidin.com/last-page/2020/06/08/536847>

allegedly tortured a man named Afsar Ali after taking him in remand. He died due to torture.¹¹⁹ On 29 September, a young man named Masud Rana was tortured to death in the custody of Paltan Model Police Station in Dhaka.¹²⁰ On 10 October, a young man named Raihan was arrested by a group of police led by Sub Inspector Akbar and taken to Bondorbazar outpost in Sylhet, where he was tortured to death.¹²¹

Public lynching

30. In 2020, many incidents of death occurred due to public lynching. Impunity and corruption have eroded people's confidence in state and constitutional institutions, and a culture of impunity has been created in the country due to dysfunctional justice systems. As a result, there has been a growing tendency among the common people to take the law into their own hands and people have been killed by mob beatings.

In 2020, a total of 40 persons, including Nurul Islam Nur in Madhukhali, Faridpur on 4 January¹²²; Sohail, Saikat and Johnny in Abhaynagar, Jessore on 13 January¹²³; Chhatra League leader Hadiuzzaman in Koira, Khulna on 1 March¹²⁴; Shabd Khan in Khulna on 9 March¹²⁵; Rajib in Fatulla, Narayanganj on 20 April¹²⁶; Proshanta Roy in Nababganj, Dhaka on 15 May¹²⁷; Md. Hiran and Md. Akash in Faridpur on 9 June¹²⁸; Neel Utpal in Dakop, Khulna on 9 June¹²⁹; Atar Ali in Faridpur on 10 June¹³⁰; two brothers Ksui Khowai Marma and Khowai Baong Marma in Ruma, Bandarban on 30 June¹³¹; Night guard Taslim Mia in Mithapukur, Rangpur on 8 August¹³²; Truck driver Abu Taleb in Puthia, Rajshahi on 18 September¹³³; Masum Mia in Madhabpur, Habiganj on 4 October¹³⁴; Shahidunnabi Jewel in Patgram, Lalmonirhat¹³⁵; day labour Enamul Haque in Saghata Gaibandha on 14 November¹³⁶; Sohail and an unidentified person in Shibpur Narsingdi on 24 November¹³⁷, were killed in public acts of lynching.

¹¹⁹ The daily Jugantor, 08 July 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/323744>

¹²⁰ The Daily Star, 1 October 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/man-dies-police-custody-1970301>

¹²¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 3 November 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/সিলেটে-পুলিশ-হেফাজতে-মৃত্যু-মামলার-তদন্ত-কর্মকর্তা-বদল>

¹²² The daily Jugantor, 6 January 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/263794/>

¹²³ The daily Prothom Alo, 13 January 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=5&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-1-14>

¹²⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 3 March 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=20&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-3-3>

¹²⁵ The daily Manabzamin, 12 March 2020; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=216992&cat=9/>

¹²⁶ The daily Jugantor, 21 April 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/300208/>

¹²⁷ The daily Manabzamin, 16 May 2020; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=226851>

¹²⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 9 June 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1661701/>

¹²⁹ Bangladesh Pratidin, 10 June 2020; <https://www.bd-pratidin.com/last-page/2020/06/10/537479>

¹³⁰ The daily Jugantor, 11 June 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/314734/>

¹³¹ The daily Jugantor, 2 July 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/second-edition/321896/রুমায়>

¹³² The daily Jugantor, 9 August 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/333144/>

¹³³ The daily Jugantor, 19 September 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/346380/>

¹³⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 7 October 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=6&edcode=75&pagedate=2020-10-7>

¹³⁵ The daily Jugantor, 3 November 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/361027/>

¹³⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 16 November 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=4&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-11-16>

¹³⁷ The daily Jugantor, 25 November 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/368173>

Death penalty

31. The provision of the death penalty remains in various criminal laws of Bangladesh. The accused, who are sentenced to death, become mentally and physically distressed as they are kept in a condemned cells for indefinite periods.¹³⁸ Many have been released from prisons on High Court Orders after being held in condemned cells for many years, but they are unable to return to normal life. It is to be mentioned that the government has no intention to abolish, defer or put a moratorium on the death penalty. Rather, the government has amended existing legislation and promulgating new laws that introduced new capital offences, which is contrary to the government's position in the UPR report that states it has been gradually edging out death penalty with other forms of punishments, such as life imprisonment.¹³⁹ For example, on 17 November, the National Parliament passed the 'Women and Children Repression Prevention (Amendment) Bill 2020' with the provision of death penalty as the maximum punishment for rape.¹⁴⁰
32. **As per Odhikar's documentation, 218 accused persons were sentenced to death in the lower courts and the execution of two persons were carried out in 2020.**

On 6 April 2020, Captain (Retd.) Abdul Majed was arrested from Gabtoli in Dhaka in connection with the murder of former President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members. Majed was sentenced to death and on 11 April, his execution was carried out by hanging at the Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj.¹⁴¹ On 1 November, Abdul Gafur, a resident of Ramgati upazila in Laxmipur district, was executed in Kashimpur Central Jail in Gazipur, for killing his wife and daughter.¹⁴²

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

33. In 2020, freedoms of speech, thought, conscience and expression of the citizens have been severely violated. During this period, interference of the government and the ruling party leaders and activists in citizens' freedom of expression became very visible. Journalists were subjected to various forms of harassment, including lawsuits and arrests, for their independent expression.

¹³⁸ On 25 June 2000, a Khulna court sentenced a man named Zahid Sheikh to death for killing his wife and one and a half year old daughter. Zahid Sheikh was detained in a condemned cell for 20 years. However on August 25, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court ordered Zahid Sheikh to be acquitted as the case could not be proved. On 31 August, Zahid Sheikh was released from Khulna District Jail. Zahid's brother-in-law Azizur Rahman said that when a case was filed against Zahid with Fakirhat Police Station under the Prevention of Women and Children Repression Act, the investigating officer demanded a bribe of Tk 50,000 from them. Zahid was convicted in the case because he did not pay the money and a charge sheet was filed in the court implicating him as the perpetrator. The daily Manabzamin, 02 September 2020; <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=241217>

¹³⁹ A/ HRC/39/12/Add.1, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Period Review (Bangladesh). Replies presented by the State under review. Available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/265/78/PDF/G1826578.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁴⁰ The Daily Star, *Death penalty for rape: Amended women and children repression prevention Bill passed*, 17 November 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/news/death-penalty-rape-amended-women-and-children-repression-prevention-bill-passed-1996573>

¹⁴¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 12 April 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1650240/>

¹⁴² The daily Prothom Alo, 3 November 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=16&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-11-3>

There are also allegations that many media outlets have been forced into self-censorship under government pressure. Since the media could not function independently due to government intervention, various incidents have been published on social media instead. For this reason, the government has been keeping a close eye on social media. Citizens from different walks of life were harassed, arrested and imprisoned under the repressive Digital Security Act, 2018 for publishing any information that goes against the government, including critics of high-ranking government officials or their families. University teachers have been fired for independent expression during this period; and family members, including parents and spouses of Bangladeshi bloggers, human rights activists and journalists in exile abroad, allege they have been harassed in the name of interrogation by members of law enforcement agencies. The government had imposed a ban on doctors, nurses and government employees on expressing their views, in an effort to conceal the failure of the government to take appropriate measures to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁴³

Dhaka University teacher Morshed Hasan Khan was sacked on 9 September 2020 for 'insulting former president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and distorting the history of the liberation war'.¹⁴⁴ On the same day, an Awami League-backed Chhatra League activist filed a sedition case against Professor Morshed Hasan Khan in the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court.¹⁴⁵ AKM Wahiduzzaman, an assistant professor at the National University, was sacked by a decision made at a Syndicate meeting of the National University, on 10 September 2020, for making "offensive comments" on Facebook about the Prime Minister and her family members.¹⁴⁶ On 25 October, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and Special Branch of Police went to Damla Village under Srinagar Upazila of Munshiganj district, the village home of Wahiduzzaman (who is in voluntary exile in

¹⁴³ The daily Prothom Alo, 17 April 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1651469>

¹⁴⁴ On 26 March 2018, Professor Morshed Hasan Khan wrote a column in the daily Naya Diganta about the role of the former President of Bangladesh, late Ziaur Rahman, during and after the war of liberation. On 2 April 2018, the Registrar's Office of Dhaka University suspended him on charges of insulting former President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and distorting the history of the Liberation War through this column. On 26 May 2018, the University Syndicate formed a five-member inquiry committee headed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor. On 12 February 2020, the University authorities informed Professor Morshed Khan in a letter, about the formation of the tribunal. According to Rule 56(3) of Dhaka University Order 1973, a teacher can only be dismissed on the grounds of "moral turpitude" or "inefficiency." The same rule says that "no such teacher or officer shall be dismissed unless an inquiry into the charges of moral turpitude or inefficiency is held by an inquiry committee on which the teacher or the officer may be represented by a person nominated by him". In this case, Rule 56 (3) of Dhaka University Order has been violated and Professor Morshed's right to be defended has been obstructed.

¹⁴⁵ Amnesty International, 16 September 2020. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ASA1330552020ENGLISH.pdf>

¹⁴⁶ In 2013, AB Siddique, president of Jononetri Parishad and an Awami League leader, filed a case against Wahiduzzaman with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka under section 57 of the Information Technology Act, 2006 (amended in 2009 & 2013) and sections 500 and 506 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898. When the court issued an arrest warrant against Wahiduzzaman on 8 October 2013, he was granted a four-week interim bail by the High Court Division of the Supreme Court. On 6 November 2013, he appeared in the lower court and sought bail; however, the court ordered he be sent to jail. Before he was sent to jail, Wahiduzzaman complained to Odhikar that he had been tortured in the court custody cell. On 7 November 2013, the National University authority suspended Wahiduzzaman. After Wahiduzzaman was released from jail on bail, more cases were filed against him and his family members were harassed by members of law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Due to constant harassment, on 5 May 2016, Wahiduzzaman was forced to leave the country. He is currently living in voluntary exile in Malaysia. Information gathered by Odhikar/Statement of Amnesty International, 25 September 2020. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa13/3122/2020/en/>

Malaysia) to interrogate his relatives and the police threatened them by saying that there 'may be danger'.¹⁴⁷

34. By banning free expression, the government also seeks to cover up its failure to take appropriate action to control the pandemic. The government issued a notification barring government employees, including doctors and nurses, from expressing their views. On 2 May 2020, Professor ABM Abdul Hannan, Registrar of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) issued a notification that teachers, doctors and other officials of the BSMMU could not speak to the media or participate in television talk shows without the permission of the authorities; and that they should also be careful while giving status/shares on social media, so as not to tarnish the image of the government and University authorities.¹⁴⁸ On 7 May, the government issued a circular directing government employees to refrain from uploading, commenting, liking or sharing any post, photo, audio or video that 'tarnishes' the image of the government or the state through social media. The notice states that legal action would be taken if the Order is violated.¹⁴⁹ On 15 April, the government instructed all government nurses and health workers to refrain from talking to the media and to not talk about availability or other issues related to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), without prior permission of the authority.¹⁵⁰

In April, the mother of journalist Tasneem Khalil (who took political asylum in Sweden) was questioned by members of a law enforcement agency in Sylhet about Tasneem Khalil. It is to be noted that Netra News Portal, run by Tasneem Khalil, has been blocked by the Bangladesh authorities. In July, members of the law enforcement agencies visited blogger Asad Noor's house and threatened his family members to make him stop criticizing the government and the ruling party. Human rights activist and blogger Pinaki Bhattacharya was forced to seek political asylum in France after the government harassed him for writing critical articles on social media. In October, law enforcement officers surrounded the home of exiled Pinaki Bhattacharya in Bangladesh and interrogated his parents and wife.¹⁵¹

On 24 December, Dhaka Metropolitan Detective Branch of Police arrested film director Ananya Mamun and actor Shahin Mridha in a case filed under the Pornography Act for misrepresenting the police in a film titled 'Nawab LLB'.¹⁵²

Repressive Digital Security Act, 2018

35. In 2020, people from different walks of life, including volunteers, writers, teachers, cartoonist, journalists, lawyers, opposition leaders-activists, Baul artist, imam of a mosque and even children, have been arrested and imprisoned under the repressive Digital Security Act, for criticising, on social

¹⁴⁷ Information gathered by Odhikar.

¹⁴⁸ The daily Manabzamin, 3 May 2020; <https://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=224978&cat=1>

¹⁴⁹ The Daily Ittefaq, 7 May 2020; <https://www.ittefaq.com.bd/national/150151>

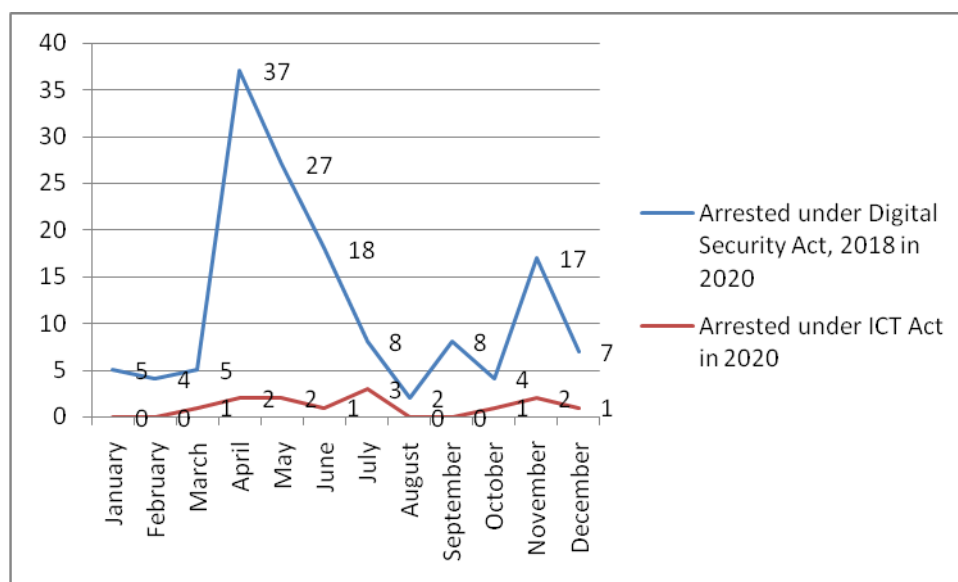
¹⁵⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 17 April 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1651469>

¹⁵¹ Statement of Human Rights Watch, 24 October 2020. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/24/bangladesh-stop-intimidating-activists-victims-families>

¹⁵² New Age, 26 December 2020; <http://www.newagebd.net/article/125368/nabab-llb-actor-director-sent-to-jail-in-pornography-case>

media, the government's failure to control COVID-19 pandemic, gross malpractices in the healthcare system and massive irregularities in the distribution of relief; and publishing critical views or comments about the government and high-ranking members of the ruling party and the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi. Many of those arrested were picked up by plainclothes men from their homes, but law enforcement officials initially denied arresting them. They were later handed over to the police station and cases were filed against them under the Digital Security Act and they were sent to jail through the court. Furthermore, several websites were shut down in Bangladesh for criticizing the government.¹⁵³ In addition, lawsuits have been filed against journalists and they have been arrested under the repressive Digital Security Act 2018 for publishing news on relief embezzlement and irregularities in the distribution of relief. In most cases, members of law enforcement agencies and leaders and activists of the ruling party have filed these cases; and courts have refused to grant bail to those arrested.

36. In 2020, 142 persons were arrested under the Digital Security Act, 2018 and 13 persons were arrested under the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, 2006 (amended 2009 and 2013) for their comments against high officials of the government and their families, and critical views on religion.



37. On 24 February 2020, a bench comprising of Justice Sheikh Hasan Arif and Justice Mohammad Mahmood Hossain Talukder of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court issued a Rule as to why Sections 25¹⁵⁴ and 31¹⁵⁵ of the

¹⁵³ Statement of Human Rights watch, 7 May 2020. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/24/bangladesh-stop-intimidating-activists-victims-families>

¹⁵⁴ This section states that disclosing information that is 'frightening', 'untrue' or 'annoying', 'offensive' will be considered a crime. Available at: <http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-1261/section-47483.html>

¹⁵⁵ This section deals with the crime of degrading law and order, punishment etc. Available at: <http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-1261/section-47489.html>

Digital Security Act 2018 shall not be unconstitutional.¹⁵⁶ Nine persons, including journalists, lawyers and university teachers, filed this Writ Petition.¹⁵⁷ It is to be noted that the government on 8 March 2020, issued the Rules of this law in order to enforce the Digital Security Act more strictly.¹⁵⁸

On 5 January 2020, MG Kibria Chowdhury, Editor and Publisher of the daily Jatiya Orthony, was arrested from his newspaper office in Paltan, Dhaka by Sub Inspector Rezaul Huq of Sonaimuri Police Station in Noakhali under the Digital Security Act, for publishing a news against vice-president of Noakhali District unit Awami League, Ataur Rahman Bhuiyan Manik.¹⁵⁹

On 9 March, Saifuzzaman Shikhar, a Member of Parliament of Awami League from Magura-1 constituency, filed a case with Dhaka's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station against the editor-in-chief of daily Manabzamin Matiur Rahman Chowdhury and reporter Al-Amin and 32 people who shared the news on social media¹⁶⁰, for a report titled "Names of 30 persons including bureaucrats, MPs and businessmen disclosed by Papia¹⁶¹" published in the daily Manabzamin, claiming that the report pointed fingers at him.

Mannan (40) was beaten to death by police on 29 April 2020 on the allegation of stealing, in Ghorashal of Narshindi. This had been reported in the online version of the local daily Grameen Darpan and in an online news portal called Narsingdi Protidin. Zahirul Islam, Officer-in-Charge of Ghorashal Police Outpost, accused Ramzan Ali Pramanik, news editor of the daily Grameen Darpan, staff reporter Shanto Banik, and publisher and editor of the online news portal Narsingdi Protidin, Shaon Khandaker Shahin and filed a case against them under the Digital Security Act, 2018 at Palash Police Station, for publishing his statement about the arrest incorrectly and without consulting him while preparing the report. On 1 May 2020, police arrested the three journalists.¹⁶²

Munsur Helal, a Chhatra Dal leader in Daulatkhan Upazila of Bhola district, on 12 March¹⁶³; Ali Azam Chowdhury, an Advocate and BNP leader in Brahmanbaria district on 6 April¹⁶⁴; a woman named Mahmuda Akhter Poly in Saturia of Manikganj district on 5 June¹⁶⁵; Mohammad Imon, a ninth grade student of Harirbari Paragaon High School in

¹⁵⁶ Dhaka Tribune, 24 February 2020; <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/court/2020/02/24/hc-issues-rule-on-sections-25-31-of-digital-security-act-2018>

¹⁵⁷ The daily Jugantor, 25 February 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/282051>

¹⁵⁸ Digital Security Rules 2020 gazette passed on 8 March 2020. As like as the Digital Security Act 2018, the Digital Security Rules 2020 is focused on safety and security of the Critical Infrastructure, not on individual person's security. Available at: https://ictd.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/ictd.portal.gov.bd/law/47feddca_af51_4995_9c28_3f451cddf9ab/%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%B0%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%AA%E0%A6%A4%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%A4%E0%A6%BE%20%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%A7%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%AE%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B2%E0%A6%BE-%20%E0%A7%A8%E0%A7%A6%E0%A7%A8%E0%A7%A6.pdf

¹⁵⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 6 January 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1633023/>

¹⁶⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 11 March 2020 ; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1644309>

¹⁶¹ For a background on Papia (Shamima Nur Papia), see <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/papia-arrested-pms-instructions-1872889>

¹⁶² The daily Prothom Alo, 1 May 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1654141>

¹⁶³ Bangla Tribune, 13 March 2020; <https://bangla.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2020/03/13/21108/বঙ্গবন্ধু-ও-প্রধানমন্ত্রীর-নিষে-ফেসবুকে-বিরুদ্ধ-মন্তব্য-ছাত্রদল-নেতা-গেণ্ডার>

¹⁶⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 7 April 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1649302>

¹⁶⁵ The daily Naya Diganta, 5 June 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/dhaka/506095/>

Bhaluka of Mymensingh district on 20 June¹⁶⁶; and a youth named Kazi Helal in Manda Upazila of Naogaon district were arrested on 18 November¹⁶⁷ under the Digital Security Act, for allegedly making 'disrespectful' comments and posting 'distorted' pictures of former president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on social media.

The police also arrested a Baul named Shariat Bayati on 11 January¹⁶⁸, Mithun Dey in Feni and Sujan Roy in Dinajpur on 30 October¹⁶⁹, and Sumna Akhter, a student of class X, in Sherpur, Bogura on 2 November¹⁷⁰ on charges of 'insulting Islam and hurting religious sentiments'.

Emdadul Haque, owner of a pharmacy in Muktagachha under Mymensingh district, was arrested on 3 March for posting 'satirical' posts on Facebook about Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Road Communications and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader.¹⁷¹

Borhanul Islam Milon (15) and his brother Babu Munna were summoned to the Darshanapara Union Parishad and handed over to the Karnahar Police Station by the Chairman of the same Union Parishad and Awami League President Kamrul Raj, for posting on Facebook that the real helpless people in Darshanapara Union under Poba Upazila in Rajshahi District, protesting against the lack of relief. Police filed a case against the three, including two brothers, on 18 April, under the Digital Security Act.¹⁷²

Writer Mushtaq Ahmed, and cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore on 4 May, and Didarul Islam Bhuiyan, one of the organisers of an organisation called Rashtrachinta, and Minhaj Mannan, a shareholder director of the Dhaka Stock Exchange, on May 5, were arrested by plain clothed members of law enforcement agency on charges of posting anti-government posts on Facebook, providing false information about the coronavirus and publishing cartoons of various leaders. A case was filed under the Digital Security Act, 2018 against 11 people in this regard. Expatriate journalist Tasneem Khalil has also been accused in the case.¹⁷³

Sirajum Munira, a Bangla teacher at Begum Rokeya University, was arrested on 13 June¹⁷⁴ and Kazi Zahidur Rahman, a Computer Science and Engineering teacher at Rajshahi University, was arrested on 17 June¹⁷⁵ under the Digital Security Act for allegedly commenting on Facebook about the late Awami League Presidium Member and former Health Minister Mohammad Nasim.

¹⁶⁶ The Daily Star, 22 June 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/bangla/শীর্ষ-খবর/ডিজিটাল-নিরাপত্তা-আইনের-মামলায়-কিশোর-সংশোধনগারে-নবম-শ্রেণির-ছাত্র-158129>

¹⁶⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 19 November 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/প্রধানমন্ত্রীর-ছবি-বিকৃতির-অভিযোগে-যুবক-গ্রেপ্তার>

¹⁶⁸ Bangla Tribune, 12 January 2020; <https://www.banglatribune.com/country/news/603515>

¹⁶⁹ The daily Naya Diganta, 30 October 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/539042/মহানবী>

¹⁷⁰ The daily Jugantor, 2 November 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/361090/>

¹⁷¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 6 March 2020

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=3&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-3-6>

¹⁷² The daily Naya Diganta, 20 April 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/city/496802>; Jugantor, 20 April 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/299806>; and report sent by local human rights defender associated with Odhikar in Rajshahi.

¹⁷³ The Daily Star, 7 May 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/news/cartoonist-writer-arrested-under-digital-security-act-1899973>; The daily Manabzamin, 7 May 2020; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=225446&cat=1>

¹⁷⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 17 June 2020; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=231162&cat=9>

¹⁷⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 18 June 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1663466>

Abdul Qayyum, Imam of a mosque in Haathajari upazila under Chittagong district was arrested on 5 July for commenting on Facebook about Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, late former health minister Mohammad Nasim and late state minister for religion Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah.¹⁷⁶

On 15 July, police arrested Enamul Haque for allegedly commenting on Facebook about Deputy Minister for Education, Mahibul Hasan Chowdhury Nawfel in Bakalia, Chittagong.¹⁷⁷

On 19 July, police arrested Jahangir Alam, Noman Siddiqui and ABM Anisur Rahman, teachers of Farakkabad Degree College, under the Digital Security Act, 2018 on charges of allegedly spreading propaganda on Facebook against some Awami League leaders, including Education Minister Dipu Moni, Chandpur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Kaniz Fatema and Farakkabad High School headmaster Mohammad Hannan Mizi.¹⁷⁸

Freedom of the media

38. In 2020, the government continued to put pressure on the media to disrupt objective and impartial news distribution, which forced many media outlets and journalists to maintain self-censorship. The media, especially the electronic media, are controlled by the government through their owners and the pro-opposition media, Amar Desh, Diganta TV and Islamic TV, have been shut down since 2013.

39. In 2020, 74 journalists were injured, 31 were assaulted, 28 were attacked, 17 were threatened, seven were arrested, one was tortured, three were abducted, four were harassed and 70 journalists were sued while carrying out their professional duty.

SA TV's Narsingdi correspondent Sajal Bhuiyan¹⁷⁹, the Daily Pratidiner Sangbad's Nabiganj correspondent Shah Sultan Ahmed¹⁸⁰, the daily Samakal's Muradnagar Upazila correspondent Shariful Alam Chowdhury¹⁸¹, Dainik Amar Habiganj's chief correspondent Tariq Habib¹⁸², and the daily Deshkal's Saturia upazila correspondent Abu Bakar¹⁸³, were seriously injured in the attack by ruling party leaders-activists, for publishing reports about the COVID-19 relief embezzlement and other news.

¹⁷⁶ The daily Manabzamin, 6 July 2020; <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=234131>

¹⁷⁷ The daily Jugantor, 16 July 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/326393/>

¹⁷⁸ The daily Manabzamin, 20 July 2020; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=236036&cat=1/□□□□□□> and New Age, 20 July 2020; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/111627/atn-news-journalist-arrested-for-harassing-female-colleague>

¹⁷⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 24 April 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1652831>

¹⁸⁰ The daily Jugantor, 2 April 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/second-edition/295058>

¹⁸¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 5 July 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/মুন্সিগঞ্জ-সংবাদিক-পেটানোর-মামলায়-ইউপি>

¹⁸² The daily Prothom Alo, 5 September 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/হবিগঞ্জ-বড-ইকিস্টিক-দিয়ে-সংবাদিককে-পিটিয়ে-আহত>

¹⁸³ The daily Prothom Alo, 4 March 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=7&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-3-4>

On 12 September, Mamunur Rashid Nomani, Chief News Editor of the daily Shahnama which is published in Barishal, was attacked by Chhatra League leaders Raiz Manna, Sajjad Serniabat, Atiqullah Munim and others, leaving him seriously injured. They later handed him over to the police. A case was filed against Nomani under the Digital Security Act, 2018 by Ward Councilor Sheikh Ahmed. Nomani was released on bail on 29 September.¹⁸⁴

Ariful Islam, Kurigram district correspondent of the online media Bangla Tribune, was picked up on 13 March after the door of his house was broken down and he was tortured for writing against the Deputy Commissioner regarding irregularities in various appointments in Kurigram District.¹⁸⁵ Later a mobile court headed by Nazim Uddin, a senior Assistant Commissioner and Rintu Chakma, Assistant Commissioner of Kurigram district, sentenced him to one year imprisonment and fined Tk 50,000 for the allegation of possessing drugs.¹⁸⁶

On 1 November 2019, Naimul Abrar, a student of Dhaka Residential Model College, died due to electrocution at a programme organised on the occasion of the anniversary of Prothom Alo's associate publication children's magazine "Kishore Alo". Abrar's father Mujibur Rahman filed a complaint case on 16 November, against Motiur Rahman, Editor of the Prothom Alo, in the court of Dhaka's Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, alleging negligence.¹⁸⁷ On 9 November 2019, a human chain programme led by Awami League-backed BCL leaders and activists of Dhaka University was held in Shahbagh and in front of Prothom Alo's office in Kawran Bazar, Dhaka demanding a trial of the persons responsible for Abrar's death via a speedy Trial Tribunal.¹⁸⁸ Although Motiur Rahman was not present on the spot of the incident, it is alleged that the case was filed against him for publishing news against the government and the administration at different times.¹⁸⁹ In this case, on 12 November 2020, Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge AKM Imrul Kayesh framed charges against nine people, including Motiur Rahman.¹⁹⁰ Anisul Haque, Editor of Kishore Alo, who was present at the event, was acquitted from the case.¹⁹¹ It is to be mentioned that Anisul Haque was involved in the politics of Jatiya Chhatra League¹⁹² in his student life.

On 10 September, Aminul Islam, president of the central committee of the Muktijuddha Mancha, filed a case at the court of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Ziaur Rahman, against Alamgir Mohiuddin, editor of the daily Naya Diganta; and Kazi Rukun Uddin Ahmed, editor of the daily JaiJaiDin, for allegations of publishing 'indecent' articles about former president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁴ Information sent by local human rights defender associated with Odhikar, from Barishal.

¹⁸⁵ The daily Manabzamin, 16 March 2020; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=217711>

¹⁸⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 15 March 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?pagedate=2020-3-15&edcode=71&subcode=71&mod=1&pgnum=1&type=a>

¹⁸⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 16 November 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/নাইমুলের-মৃত্যুতে-প্রথম-আলোর-সম্পাদকের-নামে-বাবার>

¹⁸⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 9 November 2019; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1623543>

¹⁸⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 25 February 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1641445>

¹⁹⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 12 November 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/প্রথম-আলোর-সম্পাদকসহ-৯-জনের-বিচার-শুরু-২>

¹⁹¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 13 December 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/প্রথম-আলোর-সম্পাদকসহ-৯-জনের-বিচার-শুরু-২>

¹⁹² This was the student front of the erstwhile BAKSHAL, the only political party formed after the 4th Amendment of the Constitution.

¹⁹³ The daily Prothom Alo, 11 September 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=4&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-9-11>

40. In 2020, online news portals came under heavy scrutiny of the government. During this period, the government blocked the online portals which are known to be highly critical of the government. The daily Amar Desh was shut down in 2013. Unable to be published in Bangladesh, on 30 August 2020, Amar Desh was launched as a UK-based online portal from London. However, the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) blocked this news portal on 30 August 2020.¹⁹⁴

D. Suppression and Attacks on Opposition Political Parties and Dissidents and Violation of Freedom of Assembly

41. In 2020, the government cracked down on various opposition parties and dissidents and curtailed citizens' right to freedom of assembly. During this period, cases were filed and arrests were made against leaders and activists of the opposition political parties (especially BNP leaders and activists). BNP leaders and activists have even been detained from indoor private meetings and cases were filed against them on the allegation of 'planning sabotage'. After the Awami League leaders and activists attacked and seriously injured BNP leaders and activists, they filed cases against them.¹⁹⁵ The current government has made it mandatory to seek police permission for organising rallies or processions and even indoor meetings, which is in conflict with Article 37 of the Constitution. The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) said in a press release, on 2 December, that legal action would be taken if any procession, meeting or rally was held in the Dhaka metropolitan area without the permission of the police.¹⁹⁶ Rallies and meetings of the ruling party and its allies were not obstructed by the police, but the public meetings of the opposition political parties and non-political organisations in protest with various demands from the government, were stopped due to obstacles and attacks by law enforcement agencies and Awami League-backed Chhatra League and Juba League leaders and activists.

On 1 January, police forcibly entered the residence of Jhenaidah District unit BNP Member Secretary Advocate MA Majid while he and others were commemorating the founding of the Chhatra Dal¹⁹⁷ and baton charged the BNP and Chhatra Dal leaders and activists and vandalized the house.¹⁹⁸ Police baton charged a Chhatra Dal procession in Kishoreganj and arrested 14 people.¹⁹⁹

On 31 January, police of the Ashulia Police Station arrested seven people during an indoor meeting of local leaders and activists of BNP in Dehubor area of Savar under Dhaka district. Police alleged that they were planning to commit 'destructive activities'.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁴ AHRC statement, 7 September 2020. Available at: <http://www.humanrights.asia/news/ahrc-news/AHRC-STM-018-2020/>

¹⁹⁵ The daily Jugantor, 13 November 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/364379/>

¹⁹⁶ Bangla Tribune, 2 December 2020; <https://www.banglatribune.com/c/655482/>

¹⁹⁷ Student wing of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

¹⁹⁸ The daily Manabzamin 2 January 2020; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=206412&cat=9/>

¹⁹⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 2 January 2020;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=7&edcode=76&pagedate=2020-1-2>

²⁰⁰ The daily Jugantor, 1 February 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/273772/>

Police filed a total of 13 cases in eight police stations blaming the BNP for setting fire to 11 buses in different areas of Dhaka on 12 November 2020. In the case, police accused 647 people, including BNP's standing committee member Gayeshwar Roy and BNP nominated mayoral candidate in the Dhaka South City Corporation election Ishraq Hossain. On the same day at 8:00 pm, Dhaka South City Corporation's Ward 20 unit BNP President Hazrat Ali was arrested by plainclothes police from in front of his grocery store and he was taken into three-day remand for interrogation. Police made Hazrat Ali accused no. 1 in the incident of setting fire to a bus in front of Aziz Super Market in Shahbag, Dhaka. According to the details of the case, Hazrat Ali himself set the bus on fire. However, CCTV camera footage showed that Hazrat Ali was sitting at his grocery store in Segunbagicha, Dhaka at 1:37 pm when the bus was set on fire. In another case filed at Paltan Police Station, Zakir Hossain Siddiqui, vice-president of Juba Dal's central committee, has been made the third accused. However, on 23 October, Zakir Hossain went to attend a party meeting at Nabinagar in Brahmanbaria. He was seriously injured in a police attack and was undergoing treatment at a hospital in Dhanmondi, Dhaka till 15 November.²⁰² 114 BNP leaders and activists were accused in a case filed at Dhaka's Khilkhhet Police Station over the incident of setting fire on buses. According to the case description, the accused had broken the windows by throwing petrol bombs to kill the bus staff in a premeditated manner. However, plaintiff Dulal Hawladar claimed that he did not file the case and did not know the accused. He said that Khilkhhet police were involved in filing the case and not him.²⁰³

On 8 November, students from various medical colleges formed a rally to push their four-point demand, including removal of session jam. They had gathered at Shahbagh intersection in Dhaka. Police baton-charged the protesting students and dispersed the rally.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ The daily Naya Dignata, 8 November 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/Incident-accident/540768/>



Police clash with medical students at Shahbagh intersection in Dhaka. Photo: Bangladesh Protidin, 9 November 2020.



Police baton-charged protesting medical students who gathered in the capital's Shahbagh. Photo: The Daily Star, 8 November 2020

Police arrested nine people, including Faridpur district unit Juba Dal²⁰⁷ President Rajib Hossain and General Secretary Jahangir Hossain, during a rally organised by district Juba Dal on 17 November in protest of conspiratorial and false cases against the party's central leaders and filed a case against them under the Public Safety (Special Provision) Act, 2000.²⁰⁸ Teachers of Ebtedayee Madrasa had been protesting for 22 days demanding nationalization of madrasa; and workers of Tazreen Garment Factory²⁰⁹ had been protesting in front of the National Press Club for 80 to push their three-point demands. From 1 December 2020, workers of A1 BD Garments Factory joined the programme to demand their arrears of wages. In the morning of 7 December, the police dispersed the workers and teachers who had been sleeping on the footpath outside the press club, by baton charged them.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ Youth wing of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

²⁰⁸ The daily Naya Dignata, 18 November 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/incident-accident/540768/>

²⁰⁹ In 2012, 112 garment workers were burnt to death in a devastating fire at Tazreen Garment in Ashulia, Dhaka. More than two hundred workers were injured. These workers were protesting for medical expenses and rehabilitation. The daily Prothom Alo, 26 November 2020;

²¹⁰ Dhaka Tribune, 24 November 2020; <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2020/11/23/tazreen-fire-tragedy-8-ys-on-garment-workers-refused-jobs> ; The daily Prothom Alo, 8 December 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/capital/000000-000000-000000000-000000-0000-0000000000-000000>

Political violence and criminalisation of the ruling party

42. In 2020, the criminal activities of the leaders and activists of Awami League, Chhatra League²¹¹ and Juba League²¹² continued all over the country. During this period, leaders and activists of Chhatra League have been accused of many criminal activities, including assaulting opposition leaders-activists and dissidents, beating university teachers²¹³, brutalizing students²¹⁴ and ordinary citizens²¹⁵, land grabbing²¹⁶, abduction, murder and violence against women.²¹⁷ It has been alleged that children and juveniles across the country are reportedly involved in various crimes under the auspices of the ruling party leaders.²¹⁸ Due to the dominance of Awami League-Juba League-Chhatra League and internal conflicts over their own interest, there were incidents of clashes among themselves, which caused several deaths. During the clashes they were seen using various lethal weapons, including firearms.²¹⁹ In the fight between the two groups of the ruling party, there have been hellish incidents like cutting off the leg of the opponent and rejoicing over it.²²⁰ Allegations of corruption and embezzlement in the distribution of relief allocated to the working poor have been found against them too.²²¹ They have smuggled huge sums of money abroad earned through corruption and looting.²²² The ruling party leaders and activists have not been brought to

²¹¹ Student wing of Awami League

²¹² Youth wing of Awami League

²¹³ On 5 January 2020, Associate Professor of the Anthropology Department at Dhaka University and Assistant Residential Teacher of Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall, Dr. Zobaida Nasreen, was beaten and assaulted by Awami League-backed Chhatra League leaders and activists. The daily Jugantor, 8 January 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/second-edition/264735>

²¹⁴ On 21 January 2020, Chhatra League leaders and activists, including Dhaka University's Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall unit Chhatra League Vice-President Anwar Hossain and Joint General Secretary Amir Hamja, beat Dhaka University students Mukimal Haque Chowdhury, Sanowar Hossain, Minhaj Uddin and Afsar Uddin with hammers, iron rods, cricket stumps and sticks at the Hall's guest room, suspecting them to be Chhatra Shibir activists. The daily Naya Diganta, 23 January 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/474511>

²¹⁵ On 21 August 2020, Miranul Islam, chairman of Harbang Union Parishad and president of the Union unit Awami League in Chakaria Upazila of Cox's Bazar district, tied up a mother and her daughter with ropes and beat them after taking them to the Union Parishad office over the unproven allegation of stealing a cow. He then handed them over to the police. The daily Prothom Alo, 23 August 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/□□□□-□□□□□□-□□□□-□□□□-□□-□□□□□□-□□□□-□□□□□□□□□□-□□□□>

²¹⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 27 November 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/□□□□-□□□□□□-□□□□-□□□□□□□□□□-৫৪-এক্স>

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²¹⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 15 December 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/□□□□□□□□-□□□□□□□□□□-□□□□□□□□□□>

²¹⁹ The daily Naya Diganta, 22 April 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/497245/>

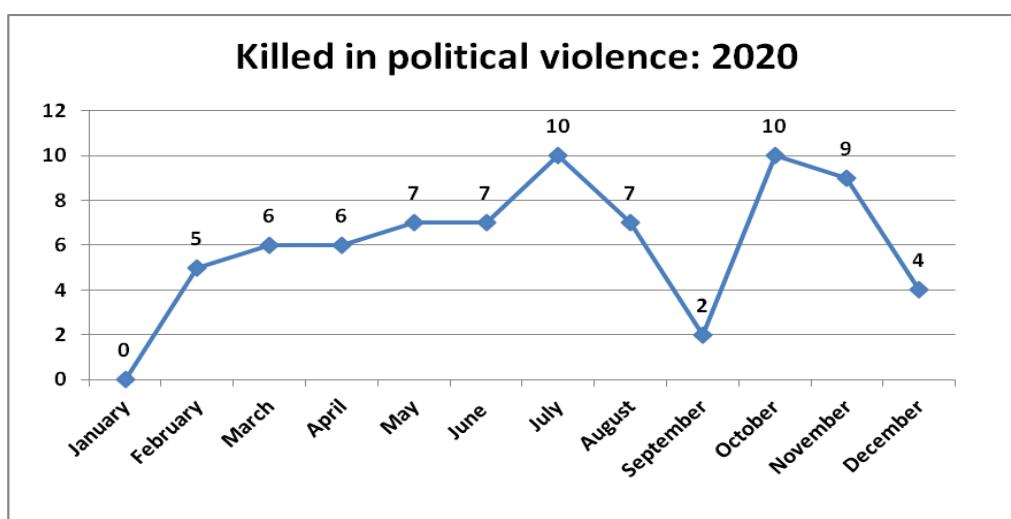
²²⁰ On 12 April 2020, clashes erupted between supporters of Zillur Rahman, Chairman of Krishnanagar Union Parishad and President of the Union unit Awami League, and Kausar Molla, a senior member of the Union unit Awami League, over establishing supremacy in the area. During the clash, supporters of Kausar Molla cut off a leg of one of Zillur Rahman's supporters, Mubarak Mia (45), and took out a joyous procession. The daily Naya Diganta, 13 April 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/chattagram/495447/>

²²¹ On 12 August 2020, RAB-4 members arrested Jadavpur Union Parishad Chairman and Awami League leader Mizanur Rahman Mizu on charges of stealing 35 sacks of rice allotted by the Prime Minister for the poor, in Dhamrai under Dhaka district. Bangla Tribune, 12 August 2020; <https://www.banglatribune.com/country/news/636871>

²²² On 26 June 2020, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Police filed a case with Kafrul Police Station in Dhaka against Faridpur city unit Awami League general secretary Sajjad Hossain Barkat and his brother Imtiaz Hasan Rubel, for smuggling BDT 20 billion. In this case, on 7 July, a large quantity of firearms, local and foreign currency, liquor and 12 sacks of relief rice were recovered from the office of the two brothers in Badarpur of Faridpur and they were arrested. Following information given by the two arrested brothers, Faridpur city unit Awami League president Nazmul Islam Levy, Faridpur district unit Sramik League finance secretary Billal Hossain, former city Juba League general secretary Asibur Rahman

justice in most cases due to impunity. After being pardoned by the President, a leader of the ruling party, who was convicted of murder, was released and re-engaged in violence and is alleged to have been involved in the killings.²²³ When these incidents were reported in the media, in some cases, operations had been launched against some leaders and activists of the ruling party, but the actual, powerful criminals remain out of reach.

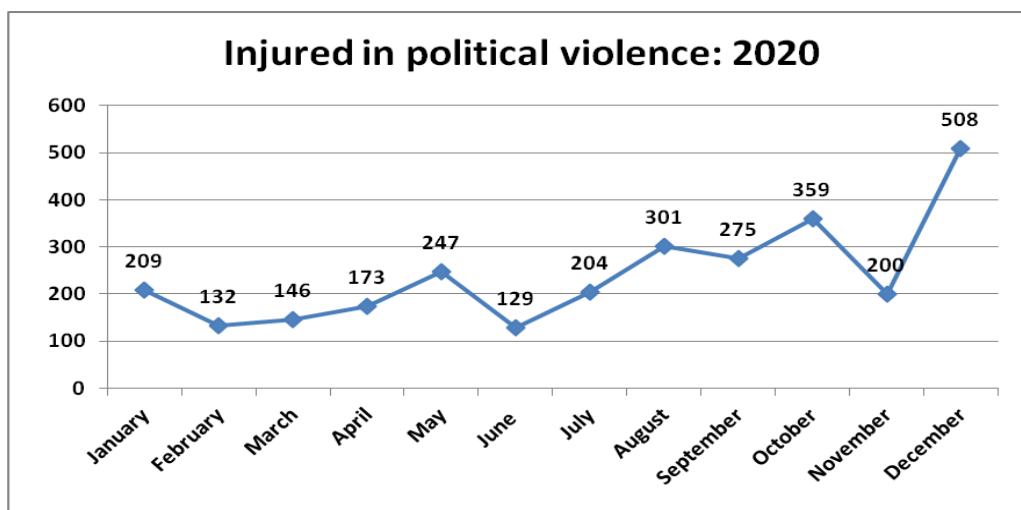
43. In 2020, at least 73 people were killed and 2,883 were injured in political violence. Furthermore, 229 incidents of internal violence within Awami League were reported, where 41 persons were killed and 2,243 were injured in internal conflicts; and eight incidents of internal violence within BNP were recorded, where 96 were injured, during this period.



Farhan and Faridpur district unit Awami League-backed Chhatra League President Nishan Mahmud Shamim were arrested by CID on charges of money laundering. The daily Manabzamin, 22 August 2020;

<https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=239840&cat=3>

²²³ On 25 September 2003, Faridpur District and Sessions Judge's Court sentenced former president of Bhanga Upazila unit Juba League, Aslam Fakir, including two other accused, Tara Mridha and Imarat Ali, to death, for killing AKM Shahed Ali Mia, Chairman of Manikdah Union Parishad under Bhanga Upazila in Faridpur. The sentence was upheld in the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court. On 19 May 2013, Aslam Fakir pleaded guilty to the murder and begged the President for his life. His plea was rejected on 13 October 2014 and his execution was scheduled for 13 November the same year. However, his execution was postponed due to "unhealthy" and "abnormal" behavior, a day before the execution. On the same day, Aslam Fakir appealed to the President again for clemency. The President granted his request for clemency and he was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment. On 26 March 2015, Independence Day, the then Awami League MP appealed for his release on the occasion of general amnesty for the prisoners. On 25 August 2017, Aslam Fakir was acquitted and released from the High Security Jail in Gazipur. After his release from prison, Aslam Fakir returned to the area and became active in violent politics again. The daily Naya Diganta, 25 April 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/497880/>; Later, on 21 April 2020, a man named Shahid Matubbar was killed in a clash between two factions of Awami League, in Laxmipur Village of Manikdaha Union under Faridpur District over establishing supremacy. The daily Prothom Alo, 21 April 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1652247/>; A case was filed with Bhanga Police Station against 54 people, including Awami League leader Aslam Fakir in this regard. The daily Naya Diganta, 25 April 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/497880/>



Human rights violations in prisons and child development centres

44. In 2020, human rights violations continued at the prisons and child development centres (juvenile detention centres) including various forms of torture. There are reported allegations that many people have been imprisoned without trial due to the dysfunctional criminal justice system in Bangladesh. Allegations of various irregularities and corruption have also been leveled against officials and employees of almost all prisons in the country.

In Chapainawabganj District Jail, there were allegations against the jail authorities for torturing inmates, taking bribes before allowing meetings with relatives, money in exchange for food and medical treatment to the inmates, and extorting money from them before releasing them on bail.²²⁴ During this period, prisoners were subjected to various forms of torture and degrading treatment. Due to the negligence of the Keraniganj Central Jail Authority, a prisoner named Afzal Hossain had to be imprisoned for an additional three and a half years even after his sentence had expired.²²⁵

45. Although perpetrators have been identified by investigating the irregularities and corruption in the prisons, there are very few cases of penalties being meted out. After reviewing the 10 investigation reports of the Ministry of Home Affairs, it was observed by the Home Ministry that the officials of the Ministry had submitted reports after conducting investigations initiated by complaints against the officials and employees of the prisons, at different times - but the reports were not taken into account. According to the multiple investigation reports, there are irregularities and corruption in all the prisons. Irregularities and corruption in prisons continue because of the involvement of 'higher authorities' into all these malpractices.²²⁶
46. In 2020, there was a humanitarian catastrophe due to overcrowding in 68 prisons of the country and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As always, most of the inmates have been deprived from proper medical treatment due to the

²²⁴ The daily Manabzamin, 19 November 2020; <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=251317>

²²⁵ The daily Naya Diganta, 16 August 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/more-news/521656>

²²⁶ The daily Prothom Alo 05 September; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/□□□□□□-□□□□□□-□□□□□□-□□□□>

shortage of doctors and lack of medical facilities in the prisons and 76 inmates died in jails.

Death in Jail 2020	
Month (s)	Numbers of death
January	4
February	6
March	7
April	2
May	5
June	9
July	6
August	4
September	9
October	5
November	9
December	10
Total	76

In the Khulna division, there were no doctors for the treatment of about 7,000 prisoners in 10 jails, including Jashore Central Jail.²²⁷ Inmates were also at high risk of COVID-19 infection due to the overcrowding and lack of proper sanitation. Although there is a 172-bed hospital inside the Dhaka Central Jail, there are not enough medical facilities.²²⁸ Relatives of former Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia (74) complained that she did not receive adequate treatment in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Hospital while in the custody of prisons. Later, due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the government decided to release Khaleda Zia through an executive order under Section 401(1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure. On 26 March 2020, she was released on condition after 25 months of imprisonment.²²⁹

47. The total capacity of prisons across the country is 42,150 inmates. The official capacity provides space for 40,221 male prisoners and 1,929 female prisoners. However, until 31 December 2020, there were 83,328 inmates in the prisons around the country. Of this number, 63,759 were male under-trial prisoners, 2,605 were female under-trial prisoners, 16,350 were male convicted prisoners, and 614 were female convicted prisoners.²³⁰
48. Furthermore, allegations of various forms of torture and ill-treatment on juvenile detainees were found in three child development centers (to hold juvenile offenders) in Gazipur, Tongi and Jashore. In addition, these centres have more residents than their actual capacity.²³¹

²²⁷ The daily Naya Dignata, 24 January 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/law-and-justice/474817>

²²⁸ The daily Jugantor, 7 May 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/304930/>

²²⁹ The Daily Star, 25 March 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/khaleda-zia-leaves-bsmmu-1885762>

²³⁰ Bangladesh Jail, Available at: <https://prison.com.bd/>

²³¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 03 September 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/>

On 13 August, 18 juvenile detainees of the Jashore Child Development Center were tortured by five officials of that centre due to a dispute over haircuts. As a result, three juveniles, named Naeem Hasan, Parvez Hasan and Rashel, died and 15 others were seriously injured. Police arrested Abdullah Al Masud, Superintendent of the Child Development Centre, Assistant Superintendent Masum Billah, Probation Officer Mushfiq Ahmed, Physical Instructor Shahanur Rahman, and Technical Instructor Faruk Hossain.²³²

E. Labour Rights

49. In 2020, the human rights of workers have been violated in various ways. Incidents of closing down of factories without informing the workers in the ready-made garment industry and other formal sectors, layoffs and non-payment of wages on time occurred amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This has resulted in worker unrest in this sector. In addition to garment factories, workers in sugar mills, textile mills, tea gardens, spinning mills, hatcheries and jute mills have staged protests in various parts of the country, demanding arrears of wages. During such protest rallies, police and criminals backed by the owners attacked the workers. During this period, police filed false cases against the workers and arrested them.

Situation of RMG factory workers

50. The ready-made garment sector is one of the largest sources of foreign revenue for Bangladesh. The contribution of workers associated with this sector is immense. In 2020, workers of Bangladesh's ready-made garment factories faced a difficult situation during the COVID-19 pandemic. When the government announced a general holiday from 26 March to 4 April to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, garment factory workers returned to their village homes. In the meantime, despite the deteriorating situation due to the pandemic and close of public transport, when the BGMEA²³³ decided to reopen the factories, the workers from all over the country started to arrive at their workplace by using alternative means of transport and even on foot.²³⁴ Women workers suffered most.²³⁵ However, the government closed the factories again after the workers were summoned to work and arrived at their factories. Although the factories were supposed to be closed as per the government's 'holiday' announcement, workers were forced to work in many factories.²³⁶ All the workers who were unable to join the work were terminated and about 10,000 workers of various garment factories in Dhaka, Ashulia, Savar, Gazipur, Narayanganj and Chittagong were laid off for not

²³² The daily Jugantor, 14 August 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/334817>; The daily Naya Diganta, 16 August 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/521885>

²³³ Bangladesh Garment Manufacturer and Exporters Association

²³⁴ The daily Jugantor, 4 April 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/covid-19/295662/>

²³⁵ The daily Jugantor, 4 April 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/covid-19/295671/>

²³⁶ DBnews24.com, 7 April 2020; <https://bangla.bdnews24.com/business/article1744163.bdnews> /The daily Prothom Alo, 10 April 2020; [গোশাক কারখানা বন্ধের দাবি | প্রথম আলো \(prothomalo.com\)](https://www.prothomalo.com)

resuming the work.²³⁷ According to the Garment Workers Trade Union Center, about 70,000 workers were terminated in the country.²³⁸

51. According to the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), 264 incidents of garment workers' unrest were recorded in 2020. During this period, 25 garment workers were killed and 48 were injured due to violence in the workplace while 37 workers were injured due to accidents inside the factories.
52. In 2020, workers in many factories were deprived from trade union rights and women workers were subjected to various forms of deprivation and physical and mental abuse in factories. In addition, workers in most garment factories are forced to work more than 10 hours a day in violation of labour laws. In some factories workers had to work more than 13 hours a day.²³⁹ During this period, women workers in the ready-made garment factories have been deprived from maternity benefits. Factory authorities also sacked pregnant women workers. Although it is illegal to dismiss pregnant workers, dozens of pregnant women workers from more than 30 factories have been dismissed.²⁴⁰ In addition, the factory authorities forced workers, who protested against the misconduct of the authorities, to resign after taking away their identification cards.²⁴¹
53. Many owners of garment factories are at the top of the money laundering game through back-to-back LCs or debentures. The Global Financial Integrity (GFI) fears that if this trend continues, money laundering from the country will exceed USD 14.13 billion by 2030.²⁴² The situation of garment workers has not changed even though the export of readymade garments has turned around a lot after the shock of the coronavirus. There is a fund of thousands of crores of taka to provide assistance to the garment workers who have lost their jobs, at the rate of Tk 9,000 for 3 months. In November, the government also formulated a policy in this regard. However, due to the indifference of the owner, not a single worker received financial assistance.²⁴³

Workers at a ready-made garment factory named SAARC Knitwear Limited in Savar, Dhaka district on 16 February²⁴⁴, workers at Dragon Sweater factory in Malibagh DIT Road, Dhaka on 22 March²⁴⁵, workers at Crown Wars (Pvt.) Ltd. in Bhaluka of Mymensingh district on 6 April²⁴⁶, workers at Meddler Apparels Limited in Ashulia, Dhaka on 30 May²⁴⁷, workers at

²³⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 13 April 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/economy/article/1650611/>

²³⁸ The daily Jugantor, 6 June 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/second-edition/313043/>

²³⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 2 March 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/economy/article/1637871>

²⁴⁰ We are on our own': Bangladesh's pregnant garment workers face the sack, The Guardian, 09 July 2020; <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jul/09/we-are-on-our-own-bangladeshs-pregnant-garment-workers-face-the-sack>

²⁴¹ Ibid

²⁴² Bangladesh Protidin, 14 June 2020; <https://www.bd-pratidin.com/first-page/2020/06/14/538657>

²⁴³ The daily Prothom Alo, 1 December 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/feature/female-stage/□□□□-□□□□□□□□□□-ওপর-□□□□>

²⁴⁴ The daily Jugantor, 17 February 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/279271>

²⁴⁵ The daily Naya Diganta, 23 March 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/490437>

²⁴⁶ The daily Jugantor, 7 April 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/296287/>

²⁴⁷ Bangladesh Protidin, 31 May 2020; <https://www.bd-pratidin.com/city/2020/05/31/534497>

Viela Tex Garment Factory in Tongi area of Gazipur and Shafi Tex Garment Factory in Chandana area of Gazipur on 25 July²⁴⁸, workers at A-One (BD) Ltd. Factory of Dhaka Export Processing Zone in Ashulia on 2 November²⁴⁹, were in protests against the closing down of factories without paying workers and lay-offs; and sit-in programmes were also organised on various demands, including payment of arrears of wages, advance salary and Eid bonus and an increase of Eid festival leave. During the protest rallies, police baton-charged the workers, shot at them with shotguns and fired sound grenades and threw tear gas shells.

Closure of the state-owned jute and sugar mills

54. The government has decided to close all state-owned jute mills due to mismanagement, irregularities and corruption which have caused huge losses in this sector for years.²⁵⁰ Textiles and Jute Minister Golam Dastagir Gazi said that the state-owned jute mills would be closed down and run under private management. The government has promised to pay all the 24,886 permanent workers of 25 jute mills through a golden handshake by September 2020, but their full dues had not been paid till December 2020. The workers are living a miserable life with their families.²⁵¹ About 50,000 workers of Star, Platinum, Crescent, Alim, Eastern, Daulatpur and Khalishpur jute mills in Khulna and JJI and Carpeting jute mills in Jashore started the fast-unto-death from 29 December to press for their 11 demands, including implementation of the Wage Commission and payment of regular wages.²⁵² Jute mill workers have been protesting throughout 2020, demanding payment of arrears and implementation of the recommendations of the 2015 Wages Commission.²⁵³

On 1 April, workers of Rajbari Jute Mill staged a protest in Rajbari²⁵⁴, and on 5 April, workers of Sonargaon Textile Mill in Barisal²⁵⁵ staged a protest demanding their arrears of wages. On 21 April, workers of Faridpur Sugar Mill staged a protest demanding three months' salary and allowance²⁵⁶ and on 26 April, workers of Shyampur in Rangpur and Mahimaganj of Gaibandha protested in demand for four months' of unpaid salary.²⁵⁷ Two persons, including a woman worker, were injured when police baton charged and threw tear gas shells at workers during a highway blockade programme in Atra industrial area in Khulna, demanding the resumption of the state-run jute mill, which was shut down on 19 October 2020.²⁵⁸

²⁴⁸ The daily Naya Diganta, 26 July 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/517811>

249 The daily Prothom Alo, 2 November 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/district/>_____

²⁵⁰ The daily Naya Diganta, 29 June 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/511676/> The daily Manabzamin, 29 June 2020; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=233200&cat=2/>

²⁵¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 28 November 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/পাটকল-উজ্জ্বল-কর্মসংস্থান-নষ্টে-উন্নয়ন>

²⁵² Dhaka Tribune, 15 September 2020; <https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/2020/09/15/govt-begins-paying-bjmc-mills-workers-their-dues> The daily Prothom Alo, 3 January 2021; <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/Jute-mill-workers-call-off-strike-as-govt-promises>

²⁵³ The Daily Star, 30 June 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/workers-protest-jute-mill-closure-1922617>

²⁵⁴ The daily Jugantor, 2 April 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/bangla-face/295012/>

²⁵⁵ The daily Manabzamin, 5 April 2020; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=220630>

²⁵⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 21 April 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1652274/>

²⁵⁷ The daily Jugantor, 27 April 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/302013/>

²⁵⁸ The daily Naya Diganta, 19 October 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/khulna/536432/>

55. Bangladesh Food and Sugar Industries Corporation has decided to close down sugar mills in Pabna, Kushtia, Setabganj, Rangpur, Shyampur and Panchagarh (out of a total of 16 sugar mills in the country) to prevent losses. Sugarcane farmers are owed about Tk. 100 million. It has been decided to close the mills without paying the arrears. In protest, on 21 November, sugarcane farmers and mill workers staged a demonstration at the Pabna Sugar Mill premises.²⁵⁹ Workers went on a half-day strike on 23 December in the Shyampur Sugar Mill area in Badarganj, Rangpur and on 24 December in Mahimaganj, Gobindganj in Gaibandha district in protest of the Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation's decision to close six sugar mills.²⁶⁰

Workers in the informal sector

56. The contribution of undocumented, low-paid construction workers in the construction of roads, bridges, houses etc. in the country is immense. However, these workers have been discriminated in various ways and deprived from their rights. Many of them work under the open sky in the scorching sun and hostile weather as there is no specific policy for workers in the informal sector. No minimum wage has been set for their work. As a result, men and women construction workers have been subjected to various forms of discrimination including poor wages. In many cases, due to the lack of safety equipment, the workers have suffered casualties in various accidents.

57. Workers in the informal sector, including construction workers, who lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, are, no doubt, suffering immense financial pressure. There are at least 3.5 million construction workers (men and women) across the country. Among them, about 1.2 million workers work in Dhaka City. According to the workers, many of them did not get any relief from the government and were starving with their families due to the pandemic.²⁶¹

58. **According to the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), 84 construction workers were killed and 49 were injured due to accidents while working, in 2020. Furthermore, eight construction workers were killed and 52 workers were injured due to violence in the construction sector during this period.**

On 26 January 2020, a clash took place between stone workers and the police when stone workers blocked the Tetulia-Dhaka National Highway in Bhajanpur under Tetulia Upazila of Panchagarh District, demanding the removal of underground rocks. A labourer named Jumar Uddin (60) was seriously injured and later died on the way to hospital.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ The daily Jugantor, 21 November 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/366901/>

²⁶⁰ The daily Prothom Alo, 24 December 2020;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=16&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-12-24>

²⁶¹ The daily Naya Diganta, 30 April 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/498953/>

²⁶² The daily Jugantor, 27 January 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/271734>

On 25 March, Surat Ali (40), a tea-vendor was killed and three workers were injured when police opened fire on workers demanding arrears of wages at the Rupali Bangla Jute Mill owned by an Awami League leader Abdul Latif, in Birol under Dinajpur District.²⁶³

On 28 September, three construction workers named Shafiqul, Insan and Osman, were killed when the sunshade of an under construction building collapsed at Road No. 32 in Dhanmondi, in Dhaka. A Deputy Director of the Fire Service and Civil Defense said that they were working on a bamboo scaffold, violating the Building Code 2006.²⁶⁴

On 3 December, a ship-breaking worker named Mahfuz (25), died while working at Sitakunda in Chittagong.²⁶⁵

Condition of migrant workers

59. Bangladeshi migrant workers have faced various adversities abroad. Among them, many women workers are being subjected to physical, mental and sexual harassment, including rape. In addition, migrant workers have been harassed at the airport after returning home and there have also been cases of migrant workers being harassed, detained and sent to jail with reports against them. On 4 July 2020, the police arrested 219 migrant workers who returned home from some countries in the Middle East and sent them to jail though court orders. These workers from the Middle East were imprisoned on various charges, but the governments of the host countries had pardoned them and released them.²⁶⁶ On 18 August, 81 migrant workers returned to the country from Vietnam after losing everything to brokers.²⁶⁷ They were kept in institutional quarantine at Uttara in Dhaka. While the migrant workers were preparing to return home after quarantine, the police of Turag Police Station arrested them under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and produced them before court. The court sent them to jail.²⁶⁸ On 12 September, the police quarantined 32 migrant workers returning from Lebanon. When the quarantine period ended, the police arrested them instead of releasing

²⁶³ The daily Naya Diganta, 27 March 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/more-news/491363/□□□□□□□□□□-□□□□□□>

The Daily Star, 27 March 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/protest-over-arrears-one-killed-jute-workers-clash-cops-dinajpur-1886530>

²⁶⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 29 September 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/capital/□□□□□□□□□□-□□□□□□□□□□-□□□□□□□□□□-□□□□□□□□□□-□□□□□□□□□□>

²⁶⁵ The Daily Star, 3 December 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/news/worker-dies-after-falling-ship-shipbreaking-yard-sitakunda-2005365>

²⁶⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 01 September 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/□□□□□□□□□□-□□□□□□□□□□-□□□□□□□□□□-□□□□□□□□□□>

²⁶⁷ The police application filed in the court, said that they were imprisoned after being convicted in the host countries, for their involvement in various criminal activities. However, the workers returned from Vietnam had not done any crime. They went to Vietnam with a clearance from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training by paying four to five hundred thousand taka to recruiting agencies, but they did not get the job they were supposed to get. After arriving in Vietnam, they did short-term work and then they all became unemployed. They came to Hanoi, about 1,677 kilometers away from Bhung Tao City and assembled in front of the Bangladeshi embassy. However, the Bangladesh embassy did not take necessary steps, the Vietnamese government decided to investigate. Later they were sent back to Bangladesh. The daily Prothom Alo, 01 September 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/ভিয়েতনামফেরত-৮১-জন-অভিবাসী-শ্রমিককে-গ্রেপ্তার-দেখাল-পুলিশ>

²⁶⁸ Ibid

them. Among them, two were women workers. All of them were sent to jail through the court.²⁶⁹ The police report submitted to the court stated that they had been convicted for being involved in criminal activities abroad and have tarnished the image of Bangladesh, thus, there is a fear of their involvement in criminal activities inside Bangladesh in future.

60. Saudi Arabia is the largest labour market of Bangladesh for both men and women. At least 10,000 women have returned from Saudi Arabia in the last four years. The Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment sent a report to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment in August 2019. According to the data concerning 110 female domestic workers who returned from Saudi Arabia, 35% of the women have returned to the country after being physically and sexually abused. 44% of women migrant workers were not paid regularly. Between January and September 2020, the bodies of at least 63 women returned from abroad. Among them, 22 bodies came from Saudi Arabia.²⁷⁰
61. According to the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), 52 migrant workers were killed and 11 were injured due to ill-treatment in 2020. Moreover, 15 migrant workers died due to accidents during this period.

Illegal migration and political asylum

62. From the previous sections of this report it has been seen that the present Awami League government is continuing its repression on political opposition and dissidents. Thousands of opposition leaders and activists have been sued and arrested.²⁷¹ Numerous opposition leaders and activists became victims of enforced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings. In such a situation, many leaders and activists have gone abroad and sought political asylum.²⁷² Although the government claims that the country's economic growth rate has increased, the disparity between rich and poor is widening. As a result, every year many people from Bangladesh migrate abroad in search of work by selling land or taking loans. Many risk their lives to migrate abroad with the help of unscrupulous 'agents' and human traffickers. The human trafficking groups in Bangladesh have been deceiving the ordinary people for many years and pushing them to death. No action has been taken against the higher level leaders of the human trafficking ring as they have close connections with the government and the ruling party.²⁷³ All those arrested for trafficking so far were brokers at the local level. Libya is the largest route for human trafficking in Europe. Many Bangladeshis use human

²⁶⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 29 September 2020;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=16&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-9-29>

²⁷⁰ The Daily Star, 1 November 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/bangla/শীর্ষ-খবর/ডিজিটাল-নিরাপত্তা-আইনের-মামলায়-কিশোর-সংশোধনগারে-নবম-গ্রেপ্তার-১৫৪১২৯>

²⁷¹ New Age, 6 June 2020; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/107795/opposition-faces-wave-of-arrests-in-fictitious-cases-fakhrul>

²⁷² According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 160,737 Bangladeshis had applied for political asylum in various countries in the last five years, which were more than double the number in the previous five years. They have shown various reasons including arrest, torture and filing cases due to their involvement in opposition politics. <https://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=180571>

²⁷³ The daily Manabzamin, 8 June 2020; <https://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=230069>

traffickers to go to Libya to seek livelihood or for political reasons. After being held hostage and collecting 7-8 hundred thousand taka from their families, they are taken to a boat or trawler to cross the Mediterranean Sea, to be sent to a European country. It is known that in Libya, incidents of torture and extortion of Bangladeshi nationals often occur by taking them hostage. Earlier, many Bangladeshi nationals have drowned while crossing the Mediterranean Sea.²⁷⁴ The Libyan government said in a statement on 28 May that family members of a human trafficker had shot dead 30 migrants in Mizda city of Libya; 26 of the dead are Bangladeshi citizens.²⁷⁵

On 6 June 2020, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Kuwait arrested Kazi Shahid Islam Papul, a Member of Parliament for Laxmipur-2 constituency, in Kuwait, on charges of human trafficking, visa fraud and laundering of billions of taka. Kazi Shahid Islam Papul is the chief patron of the Kuwait unit of the Awami League and a member of the central committee of the Bangabandhu Parishad. Papul had reportedly been involved in human trafficking and money laundering for a long time.²⁷⁶

F. Human Rights Violations on Religious and Ethnic Minority Communities

63. In 2020, there have been attacks on homes and places of worship belonging to religious minorities, and plans have been made to evict ethnic minorities and build hotels in their settlements.

Rumours had spread that ‘Quadianis²⁷⁷ beat madrassah students’ in Kandipara area under Brahmanbaria District. This caused agitation among the locals. Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Bangladesh said, in a statement on 15 January, that in the evening of 14 January locals attacked and vandalized Baitul Wahed Mosque of the Ahmadiyya (Qadiani) community and a microbus belonging to the community, parked in front of the mosque.²⁷⁸

There are allegations that criminals vandalized Hindu temples, effigies and looted goods from temples, including the Krishna temple located at Gopal Sadhu's house in Suapur Village of Dhamrai under Dhaka district on 3 March²⁷⁹, effigies of two temples of Harlal Thakur and Gorachan Gain in Jafrabad Village under Dashmina Upazila of Patuakhali District on 10 April²⁸⁰, idols of Kali temple at Kudumganj Bazar under Durgapur Upazila in Netrokona District on 4 May²⁸¹ and seven idols of Shomshan (crematorium) Kali and Shiva Temple in Bijoynagar under Araihasar Upazila in Narayanganj district on 4 August.²⁸²

²⁷⁴ The Daily Naya Dignata, 29 May 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/diplomacy/504406/>

²⁷⁵ The daily Naya Diganta, 29 May 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/middle-east/504339/>

²⁷⁶ The daily Manabzamin, 8 June 2020; <https://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=230069>

²⁷⁷ The members of the Ahmediyya community are also known as Quadianis.

²⁷⁸ New Age, 16 January 2020, <https://www.newagebd.net/article/96747/>

²⁷⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 4 March 2020;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=7&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-3-4/> BD Journal, 4 March 2020;

<https://www.bd-journal.com/bangladesh/110141>

²⁸⁰ The daily Jugantor, 11 April 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/bangla-face/297329/>

²⁸¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 6 May 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=4&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-5-6>

²⁸² The daily Prothom Alo, 6 August 2020;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=6&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-08-06>

On 31 October, Krishan Debnath, an expatriate Hindu from Muradnagar, posted on Facebook, the publication of a caricature of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) done in France and Shankar Debnath and Anil Bhowmik commented in support of his post. Following this incident, on 1 November, miscreants set fire to the houses of three members of the Hindu community, including Bonkumar Shiv, Chairman of Purbadhoir Union Parishad, and vandalized the temple.²⁸³

64. R&R Holding Limited belonging to Sikdar Group is going to build 'Marriott Hotels and Resorts' (Hotel and Amusement Park) in the area inhabited by the Mro ethnic community, along the Chimbuk-Thanachi Road in Bandarban. Due to the construction of this hotel thousands of citizens belonging to the Mro community will be evicted from their ancestral land and this will disrupt their livelihood, traditions and culture and security. It is to be noted that the Sikder Group is close to the ruling Awami League government and involved in money laundering and corruption. Parveen Haque Sikder, daughter of Sikder Group Chairman Zainul Haque Sikder, is a Member of Parliament for the Awami League in the reserved women's seat.²⁸⁴

G. Violence against Women

65. As in previous years, women have been subjected to various forms of violence, but in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, violence against women multiplied. Due to the pandemic many families became homebound and jobless. Moreover, the in-laws put pressure on women to bring money from their parents. During this period, domestic violence, dowry related violence, rape and other forms of violence became widespread. Furthermore, the rate of child marriage has also increased a lot. The impact of the 'shadow pandemic' on the women of Bangladesh has been devastating.

Domestic violence

66. Instead of being safe and secure in their own homes, in many parts of the country, women and girls are being subjected to various forms of domestic violence, which were further exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Between April and September 2020, 40,000 women had been victims of domestic violence, of which 40% or 16,000 women became victims of domestic violence for the first time. Domestic violence increased by 31% in May compared to the first two months of the lockdown between March and April.²⁸⁵

²⁸³ The daily Prothom Alo, 6 November 2020;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=2&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-11-6>, The daily Prothom Alo, 8 November 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=3&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-11-8>

²⁸⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 9 June 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/economy/article/1661561/>

²⁸⁵ Dhaka Tribune, 25 November 2020; <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/society/2020/11/25/domestic-violence-increased-31-percent-in-may-compared-to-the-first-two-months-of-the-lockdown-between-march-and-april>

Child marriage

67. The number of child marriage has increased in Bangladesh during the spread of coronavirus outbreak. In many cases, the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, the closure of educational institutions for a long time and the possibility of sexual harassment, all played a significant role in increased child marriages. Child marriage has increased by 13% in the country during the coronavirus outbreak as compared to the past. This is the highest rate in the last 25 years. According to various non-governmental organisations, child marriage increased at an alarming rate in May, June, July, August and September.²⁸⁶

Rape

68. Incidents of rape were rampant in 2020 and protests against it spread across the country. It is alleged that the Awami League leaders and activists earned money by arbitrating the rape cases²⁸⁷, prevented the rape victims from being taken to the hospital for treatment, intimidated the witnesses in the rape case or attacked the victim-families by accused during this period.²⁸⁸ There are allegations that the police were involved in many of these incidents or were aware of what had happened.²⁸⁹ Many rape victims and their families hide the incidents of rape due to fear of the culture of impunity and social stigma. Even if they expose it, they do not get justice. One of the reasons behind not getting justice of rape victims is the non-cooperation of the police. There are allegations that the police do not want to take up complaints in many cases. About half of the women and children end up being harassed at the police station while filing complaints or the police are reluctant to arrest the accused even if the case is filed.²⁹⁰ There are allegations that apart from pressuring the plaintiffs to settle the matter with the rapists with money²⁹¹, some policemen were also involved in rape.²⁹² In addition, the ruling party leaders and activists also commit rape²⁹³ and arbitrarily 'fine' the victim's family.²⁹⁴ Moreover, the documents relating to rape cases also 'disappear' from the courts.²⁹⁵ A review of the rape statistics shows that the number of child rape

²⁸⁶ BSS, 5 December 2020; <https://www.bssnews.net/>

²⁸⁷ The daily Naya Diganta, 7 January 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/more-news/470207>

²⁸⁸ The daily Jugantor, 6 July 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/323320> ; The Daily Star, 9 October 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/anti-rape-protests-roll-4-days-1974801> ; New Age, 17 October 2020; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/119201>

²⁸⁹ The Guardian, 10 January 2020; <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jan/10/police-in-bangladesh-make-arrest-in-connection-with-alleged-of-student-dhaka-university>

²⁹⁰ "I Sleep in My Own Deathbed", *Human Rights Watch*, 29 October 2020; <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/10/29/i-sleep-my-own-deathbed/violence-against-women-and-girls-bangladesh-barriers>

²⁹¹ The daily Jugantor, 20 November 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/366373/>

²⁹² The daily Jugantor, 1 July 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/321580/> - The daily Prothom Alo, 2 July 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=6&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-07-02>

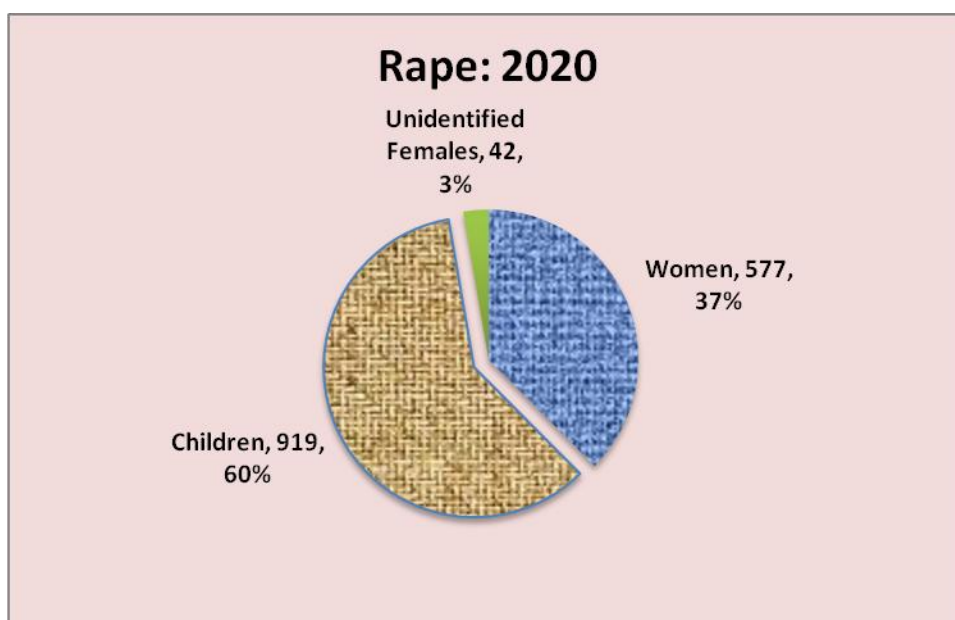
²⁹³ The daily Jugantor, 6 July 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/323320> Dhaka Tribune, 22 October 2020; <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/2020/10/22/two-more-women-raped-filmed-in-noakhali>

²⁹⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 21 July 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=16&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-7-21>

²⁹⁵ The daily Jugantor, 04 July 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/bangla-face/322515/>

cases is almost double that of adult women. It is to be noted that the rate of suicide among children after being raped have increased exponentially.

69. In 2020, *Odhikar* recorded a total of 1,538 women and children who had been victims of rape. Among them, 577 were women, 919 were girls below the age of 18 while the age of 42 female individuals were unknown. Out the number of women who were raped, 25 were killed after being raped, 182 were victims of gang rape, and one committed suicide. Out of the 919 girls, 23 were killed after being raped, 154 were victims of gang rape, and seven committed suicide. Furthermore, 281 women and girls were also victims of attempted rape.



On 9 January 2020, some criminals led by Abu Sufian, vice-president of Tarab Municipality unit Chhatra League under Rupganj Upazila in Narayanganj District, forcibly picked up a 9th grade student of Gandharbpur Multilateral High School into a microbus and raped her while confining her for two days.²⁹⁶

On 22 May, a 12-year-old domestic maid was raped by Sakawat Hossain, president of Baraigram Union's ward unit Awami League in Baraigram Union under Natore District.²⁹⁷

Early in the morning of 23 September, eight or nine miscreants attacked the family of an ethnic minority community in the suburbs of Khagrachhari District, tied up the parents and raped their mentally disable daughter. Police arrested seven people on suspicion of involvement in the incident.²⁹⁸

When a couple went to visit Murari Chand (MC) College in Sylhet on 25 September, Tarique Ahmed, Shah Mahbubur Rahman Rony, Arjun Laskar, Rabiul Islam and Mahfuzur Rahman led by Chhatra League activist Saifur Rahman, picked them up and took them inside the college dormitory. After that, the Chhatra League activists confined the husband and raped his wife.²⁹⁹

On 13 November, a garment worker was gang-raped while visiting his colleague Aduri Begum's house in Gobindaganj, Gaibandha from Narayanganj. Police arrested the main accused Sohail Mia (40) and Aduri Begum (28) on charges of involvement in the incident.³⁰⁰

Sexual harassment/stalking

70. The prevalence of sexual harassment continued unabated in 2020. Allegations of sexual harassment against women have been leveled against ruling party leaders and activists during this period.
71. **In 2020, a total of 157 females were victims of sexual violence. Of them, 12 committed suicide, one was killed, four were injured, 48 were assaulted, four were abducted, and 88 were victimised in different ways due to stalking/sexual harassment.**
72. **During this period, eight men were killed, 15 were injured and three were assaulted while three women were injured by the stalkers when they protested against such acts after they were committed against their relatives.**

On 16 February, Hossain Ahmed and Raighata Union unit Chhatra League president Shahinul Alam Mithu and his associates verbally abused a schoolgirl when she was on her way home from school in Mohanpur Upazila under Rajshahi District. When the girl protested, they physically harassed her.³⁰¹

A young woman named Beauty Mondol committed suicide in Tala Upazila of Satkhira District on 09 September after an 'offensive' picture of her was posted on Facebook. Beauty's father, Nitai Mondol, alleged that a nude photo was photo shopped and his daughters face

²⁹⁶ The daily Naya Diganta, 15 January 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/more-news/472292>

²⁹⁷ The daily Jugantor, 5 June 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/bangla-face/312621/>

²⁹⁸ The daily Prothom Alo, 29 September 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?pagedate=2020-9-27&edcode=71&subcode=71&mod=1&pgnum=1&type=a>

²⁹⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 29 September 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?pagedate=2020-9-29&edcode=71&subcode=71&mod=1&pgnum=1&type=a>

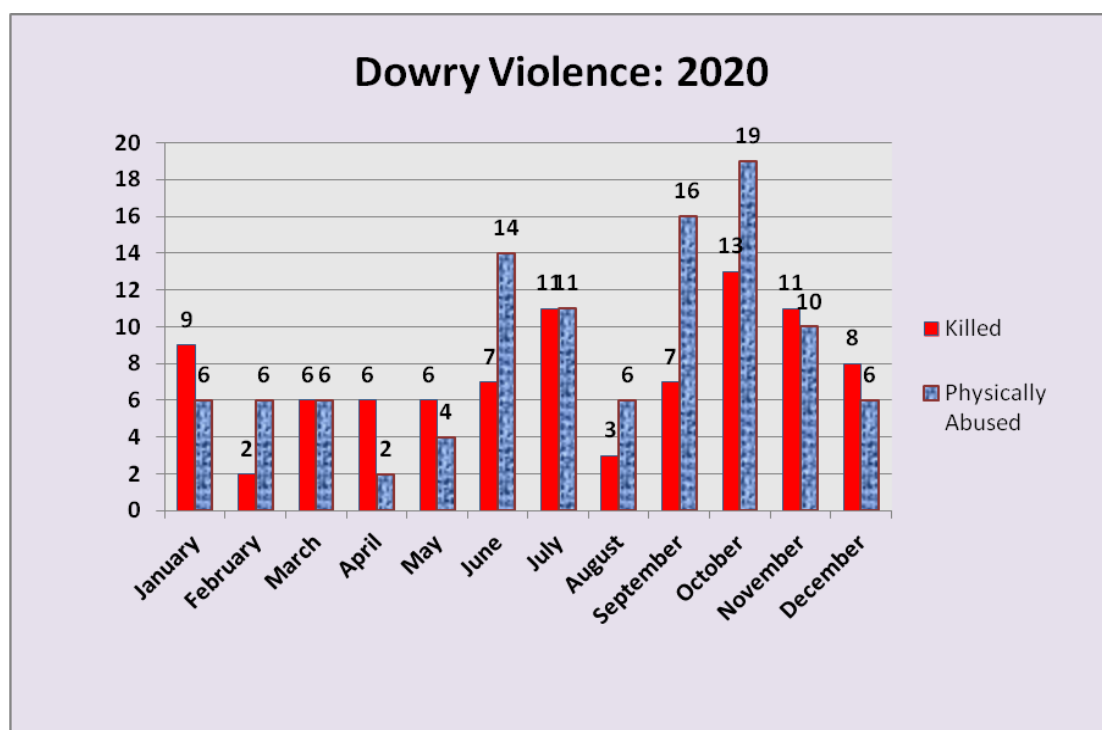
³⁰⁰ The daily Jugantor, 15 November 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/364935/□□□□□>

³⁰¹ The daily Jugantor, 17 January 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/268068>

*superimposed on it. His daughter's cell phone number was also given in the picture. He lodged a written complaint with Tala Police Station on 07 September and said that Mrityunjoy Roy, a second-year student of Shaheed Zia College, was involved in the incident. Despite the allegations, the police did not take any action in this regard. His daughter committed suicide in shame and anger.*³⁰²

Dowry-related violence

73. Violence against women over dowry demands was widespread in the year 2020. Due to non receipt of dowry, inhumane incidents against women such as burning, beating, choking and stabbing to death have taken place. Even teenagers who have been victims of child marriage were killed because of dowry and many women committed suicide. Although the giving and taking of dowry is a punishable offense under the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980 and the Prevention of Repression of Women and Children Act, 2000 (amended in 2003), such practice is still widespread in the Bangladeshi society and most victims are deprived from justice due to the lack of accountability and rule of law.
74. **In 2020, 199 women were subjected to dowry violence. Among them, 89 were killed, 106 were physically abused, and four committed suicide due to dowry demands. Among the 199 victims, one child bride was killed due to dowry violence.**



³⁰² The daily Prothom Alo, 12 September 2020;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=3&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-9-12>

On 3 January, a housewife named Asamani (18) in Gobindganj under Gaibandha District³⁰³; on 16 May, a housewife named Sharani Kant Mahanta in Phulbari Upazila under Dinajpur District³⁰⁴; on 15 July, a housewife named Khodeja Akter Sumi in Tarakanda of Mymensingh district³⁰⁵, were all allegedly killed by their husbands and in-laws for dowry demands.

A housewife named Rina Phul Parvin, in the Mugda area of Dhaka, committed suicide on 1 February as she could not bear the physical and mental abuse after failing to pay dowry money.³⁰⁶

Acid violence

75. Acid violence continued in 2020. After reviewing the causes of acid violence during this period, it was seen that in most cases acid was thrown because of the refusal of love or marriage proposal. Furthermore, acid violence also occurred as a result of domestic violence, dowry demands, land related disputes, previous enmity, divorces etc.

76. In 2020, it was reported that 33 persons became victims of acid violence. Of them, 19 were women, seven were girls and seven were men.

Reasons for Acid Violence: 2020						
Sl	Reasons for acid violence	Female		Male		Grand Total
		Adult	Child	Adult	Child	
1	Dowry related issues	2	0	0	0	2
2	Family feud	2	0	0	0	2
3	Land dispute	2	0	1	0	3
4	Loan related dispute	2	0	3	0	5
5	Refusal of love proposal	0	1	0	0	1
6	Divorcing husband	3	0	0	0	3
7	Fight with husband	1	1	0	0	2
8	Jealousy	0	1	0	0	1
9	Revenge	1	1	0	0	2
10	Betting	0	0	1	0	1
11	Unidentified reasons	6	3	2	0	11
	Total	19	7	7	0	33

Acid was thrown at 33 persons, including a housewife Ria Khatun and her mother Baby Begum on their way back home from a trade fair in Dinajpur on 1 March³⁰⁷; Anwara Begum and her two daughters, Sumaiya Akhter (27) and Sumi Akhter (18) in Raipura Upazial under Laxmipur District on 25 May³⁰⁸; a madrasa student named Suma Khatun (15) in Godagari Upazila under Rajshahi District on 11 August³⁰⁹; and Shefali Rani (55) and her granddaughter Smriti Rani (12) at Gunaihati in Baraigram under Natore District on 2 October.³¹⁰

³⁰³ The daily Jugantor, 5 January 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/263382>

³⁰⁴ The daily Naya Diganta, 18 May 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/rangpur/502788/>

³⁰⁵ The daily Jugantor, 17 July 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/326870>

³⁰⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 3 February 2020 ; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1637930>

³⁰⁷ The daily Jugantor, 3 March 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/284711>

³⁰⁸ Bangladesh Protidin, 25 May 2020; <https://www.bd-pratidin.com/last-page/2020/05/29/533939>

³⁰⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 12 August 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1674121>

³¹⁰ The daily Naya Diganta, 3 October 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/bangla-diganta/532588/>

H. Bangladesh and its Neighbouring States

India's interference with Bangladesh

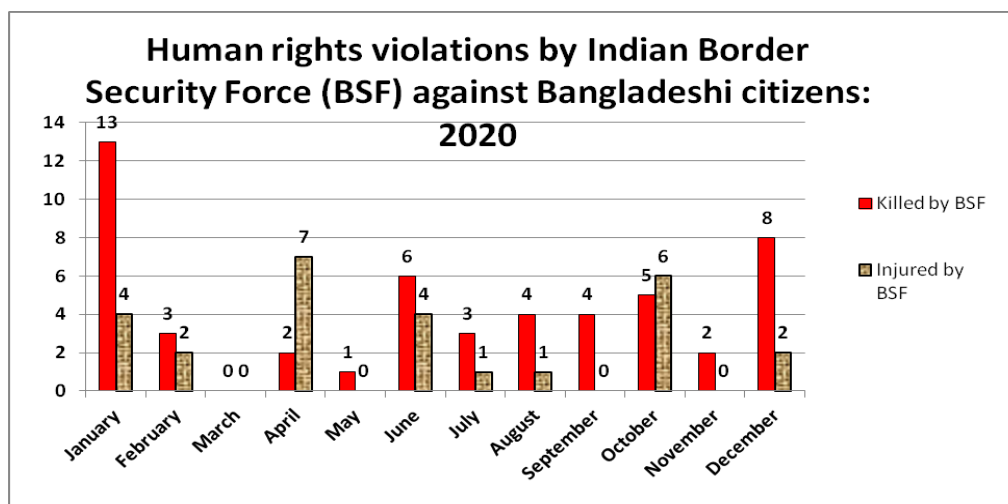
77. India's economic and political domination on Bangladesh and human rights violations continued in 2020. During this period, members of the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) continued to kill, abduct and torture Bangladeshi nationals along the border areas. BSF members shot dead farmers while they were cultivating on their land in Bangladesh and abducted Bangladeshi fishermen while they were fishing in the river. Moreover, BSF members tried to push Indian nationals inside Bangladesh. Despite repeated brutal attacks on Bangladeshi citizens, the Bangladeshi government has not taken any effective action in this regard and has not even strongly protested against it. To date, none of the killings of Bangladeshi nationals by the BSF have been prosecuted. On the contrary, the Bangladeshi authorities stood with the Indian government in justifying the indiscriminate killings and torture of Bangladeshis by the BSF. In various bilateral talks between governments of India and Bangladesh, the Indian government promised not to use lethal weapons in the border areas, but they never implement their promise. On 22 January 2020, BSF members shot dead three Bangladeshi nationals – Mofizul Islam, Kamal Hossain and Ranjit Kumar, at Porsha border under Naogaon district.³¹¹ Local Parliamentarian and Food Minister Sadhon Chandra Majumder, from Porsha area on 25 January, spoke about this incident at a programme in Rajshahi and said that, "The fault lies in the Bangladeshi citizens, so the government has nothing to do. If someone forcibly cuts a barbed wire fence to bring cows and is shot dead in India, the Bangladesh government will not take that responsibility."³¹² In an interview with the Daily Star, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said that Bangladeshi criminals attacked BSF personnel with lethal weapons and explosives at the border, and that they may even attack BSF men after entering into Indian territory. He also said that this cannot be called "border killing". This can be termed "killing inside India". Meanwhile, India is saying that they have to open fire on criminals in "self-defence".³¹³

78. In 2020, 51 Bangladeshis were killed and 27 were injured by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF). Furthermore, seven Bangladeshi nationals were abducted by BSF.

³¹¹ The daily Jugantor, 24 January 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/last-page/270520>

³¹² The daily Naya Diganta, 26 January 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/475234>

³¹³ The Daily Star, 22 December 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/top-news/news/border-killings-bsf-india-claims-they-open-fire-self-defence-says-foreign-minister-2014521>



For example, on 8 January, Bangladesh nationals Selim and Sumon at Shibganj border in Chapainawabganj District³¹⁴; on 4 February, a farmer named Solaiman at Chholimer Char border under Daulatpur Upazila in Kushtia District³¹⁵; on 2 April, Joynal Abedin at Chochpara border under Baliadangi Upazila in Thakurgaon District³¹⁶; on 19 April, an SSC examinee named Shimon Roy (16) at Shingroad-Prodhanpara border in Panchagarh District³¹⁷; on 10 June, Shariful Islam at Sharsha border in Jashore District³¹⁸; on 3 July, Riazul at Dhannokhhola border under Benapole Upazila in Jashore District³¹⁹; on 11 August, Akhirul Islam at Choritalukanda border under Roumari Upazila in Kurigram District³²⁰; on 14 August, Kashem at Daulatpur border in Kushtia District³²¹; on 16 August, Mohammad Sumon at Shingnagar border under Shibganj Upazila in Chapainababganj District³²²; on 5 September, Mohammad Badsha at Shibganj border in Chapainababganj District³²³; on 21 November, Hasinur Rahman at Roumari border in Kurigram District³²⁴; on 8 December, Naziruddin and Robiul Islam at Haripur border in Thakurgaon District³²⁵; on 10 December, Abu Taleb at Shrirampur border in Lalmonirhat District³²⁶; on 16 December, Zahidul Islam at Shrirampur border in Lalmonirhat District³²⁷; and on 22 December, Mohammad Khairul Islam at Haluaghat border in Mymensingh District³²⁸, were all shot dead by members of the Indian BSF.

³¹⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 11 January 2020;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=4&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-1-10>

³¹⁵ The daily Manabzamin 11 February 2020; <https://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=212526>

³¹⁶ The daily Jugantor, 2 April 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/295080/>; Report sent by local human rights defender associated with Odhikar, from Thakurgaon.

³¹⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 19 April 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1651868/>; Report sent by local human rights defender associated with Odhikar, from Panchagarh.

³¹⁸ The daily Jugantor, 10 June 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/314506/>

³¹⁹ The daily Jugantor, 3 July 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/322278>

³²⁰ The daily Naya Diganta, 13 August 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/521241>

³²¹ The daily Jgantor, 15 August 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/335043>

³²² The daily Jgantor, 17 August 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/country-news/335599>

³²³ The daily Prothom Alo, 7 September 2020;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=16&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-09-07>

³²⁴ The daily Jugantor, 22 November 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/news/366979/>

³²⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 9 December 2020;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=16&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-12-9>

³²⁶ The daily Prothom Alo, 17 December 2020;

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=16&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-12-17>

³²⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 17 December 2020;

³²⁸ The daily Naya Diganta, 23 December 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/mymensingh/550897/>

On 31 January, five Bangladeshi fishermen named Rajan Hossain, Sohel Rana, Kabil Hossain, Shaheen Ali and Shafiqul Islam were arrested and tortured by BSF members when they went to the Padma river to catch fish at the Khorchaka border under Godmagari Upazila in Rajshahi District. Later, BSF handed over the five fishermen to Murshidabad Police Station in India.³²⁹

On 17 September, BSF members killed Abdul by throwing stones at him near the 383/2 sub-pillar of the border at Baliadangi in Thakurgaon District.³³⁰ On 21 October, four Bangladeshi fishermen, Mohammad Alam and his sons Anwar, Sifat and Sonarul, were abducted from the Rajshahi border and tortured by BSF members. The fishermen were later released in one of the three boats and the other two boats were kept by the BSF.³³¹

The BSF is also endangering the lives of physically and mentally challenged citizens of India by pushing them mercilessly in Bangladesh. For example, on 23 April, BSF members tried to push a mentally disabled Indian citizen into Bangladesh through the Burimari Land Port border under Patgram Upazila in Lalmonirhat District. When the Bangladeshi nationals and members of the Border Guard Bangladesh jointly resisted, the BSF members fired rubber bullets at them. Four Bangladeshi nationals, including BGB member Khokon Mia, were injured in the incident.³³² It is to be noted that the Government of India, in the past, pushed Bengali-speaking Indian Muslims into Bangladesh, those who have been excluded from the National Register of Citizens (NRC) prepared for identifying illegal immigrants in India.³³³

79. It is to be noted that even though the representatives of the Bangladesh government had spoken in favor of the Indian Border Security Force at different times, according to the Memorandum of Understanding 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.³³⁴ However, the BSF has tortured or shot people to death, violating the agreement and international law, when BSF members saw anyone near the border or if someone crossed the border illegally.³³⁵ BSF members also abducted, tortured and killed Bangladeshi citizens after illegally entering Bangladesh. In addition, BSF members have also killed and tortured Bangladeshi children and adolescents at the border. For example, 15-year-old Felani was shot dead by BSF at the border in 2011 but have not been tried to date.

80. In addition to the massive human rights violations against Bangladeshi citizens along the India-Bangladesh border by the Indian government, India's economic and political dominance over Bangladesh has been established even more terribly. The Government of India played a key role in undermining Bangladesh's democratic system by widely supporting the Awami League government in holding non-transparent and controversial Parliamentary elections unilaterally on 5 January 2014, with the intention of interfering in

³²⁹ The daily Manabzamin, 2 February 2020; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=211149&cat=9>

³³⁰ The daily Naya Diganta, 1 October 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/last-page/532141/>, Report sent by local human rights defender associated with Odhikar, from Thakurgaon.

³³¹ The daily Manabzamin 22 October 2020; <https://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=247823&cat=1/>

³³² The daily Prothom Alo, 24 April 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1652684/>

³³³ The daily Manabzamin, 3 September 2020; <http://mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=188659&cat=2>

³³⁴ New Age, 24 September 2016; <http://archive.newagebd.net/253126/bsf-kills-2-bangladeshis-borders/>

³³⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2010/12/09/trigger-happy/excessive-use-force-indian-troops-bangladesh-border>

Bangladesh's internal affairs.³³⁶ Following this election, the Awami League government came back to power through another controversial and farcical, one-sided elections held on 30 December 2018; which completely destroyed the democratic and electoral system of Bangladesh. Since the 2014 parliamentary elections, the interference of the Indian government in the internal affairs of Bangladesh has gradually increased. During Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Dhaka in June 2015, a record number of agreements were signed, including a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to facilitate the use of Chittagong and Mongla ports. Following this, on 17 October 2018, a five-year bilateral agreement was signed between Bangladesh and India in relation to the transport of India's goods to its northeastern states by using Chittagong and Mongla ports of Bangladesh.³³⁷ Under the agreement, a cargo ship named MV Shenjuti arrived in Chittagong from the Indian port of Kolkata on 20 July 2020. It was through this consignment that the first experimental operation of transporting Indian goods to their northeastern states using Bangladeshi ports and roads began.³³⁸ Although India has benefited greatly from its use of Bangladesh's ports and infrastructure, the Bangladesh government has not given any clear idea of how Bangladesh could be benefitted from India. Article 4 of the agreement, 'Port and Others Facilities', states that the Chittagong Port Authority will provide the same facilities for Indian goods transported using the Chittagong Port as for the import-export products of Bangladesh. In addition, the Chittagong Port Authority will provide space for such products on a priority basis. In this regard, Chittagong Port Secretary Omar Farooq said, if a ship carrying goods of Bangladeshi traders and a ship carrying goods of Indian traders arrive at the port on the same day, Indian ships will definitely get priority as per the agreement between the two countries.³³⁹ It is to be noted that the incumbent Bangladesh government is giving priority to the interests of India by harming the interests of Bangladesh through such an agreement.

81. India has been depriving Bangladesh of its right to get a fair share of water during the dry season for a long time. Although the Teesta Treaty was very important for the realization of Bangladesh's water rights, the Indian government has not signed the Teesta Agreement with the Government of Bangladesh. Extreme catastrophic conditions are prevailing in the Padma Basin due to the Farakka barrage. The Indian government has been violating international law by artificially creating floods in Bangladesh without any remedy by opening the sluice gates of Farakka and Ghazaldoba dams during the monsoon season. Meanwhile, India is withdrawing 1.82 cusecs of water from the Feni river of Bangladesh to Tripura through a Memorandum of Understanding so that only India gets benefitted.³⁴⁰ In addition, the

³³⁶ Available at: [www.dw.com/bn/wbe@vPb-bv-n#j-#g\\$jev#i-Divb-n#e/a-17271479](http://www.dw.com/bn/wbe@vPb-bv-n#j-#g$jev#i-Divb-n#e/a-17271479)

³³⁷ The daily Naya Diganta, 18 October 2018; <http://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/350033/>

³³⁸ The Daily Star, 16 July 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/bangla/শীর্ষ-খবর/বাংলাদেশের-বন্দর-ব্যবহার-করে-আসাম-ও-ত্রিপুরা-যাচ্ছে-ভারতীয়-পণ্য-162541>

³³⁹ The Daily Star, 16 July 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/bangla/শীর্ষ-খবর/বাংলাদেশের-বন্দর-ব্যবহার-করে-আসাম-ও-ত্রিপুরা-যাচ্ছে-ভারতীয়-পণ্য-162541>

³⁴⁰ The daily Naya Dignata, 6 October 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/445893/>

Bangladesh government, in collaboration with an Indian company, is constructing the Rampal Coal Power Plant, causing the destruction of life and biodiversity in and around the Sundarbans. On the other hand, about 500,000 Indians are working in different sectors in Bangladesh. Only 10% of them have work permits. Most come on tourist visas, which means 450,000 Indians are working illegally in Bangladesh. Their salaries are sent to India in dollars.³⁴¹ As a result, Bangladeshi citizens are being deprived of employment and Bangladesh is suffering financially.

Situation of the Rohingya population

82. Myanmar's military and Buddhist extremists carried out genocide against the Rohingya population and the rate at which they are being expelled from Myanmar increased on 25 August 2017. In these operations, members of the Rohingya community have been subjected to various forms of violence, including torture, murder, enforced disappearance, gang rape and arson by Myanmar's military and Buddhist extremists. After being victims of genocide, the Rohingya people took shelter in 34 refugee camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas in Cox's Bazar District of Bangladesh.
83. On 23 January 2020, the International Court of Justice issued four interim orders³⁴² to Myanmar to protect the Rohingya people from genocide after a lawsuit against Myanmar was filed by the Gambia at the UN's highest judicial body – the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 11 November 2019.³⁴³ The investigation into whether crimes against humanity had been committed against Rohingyas, commenced on 28 January 2020, ordered by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on 14 November 2019.³⁴⁴ In Dhaka, senior consultant to the ICC's counsel, Fakiso Mochochoko, said at a press conference that the trial of the accused of Myanmar will be held in the ICC while the trial of Myanmar as a state will be held in ICJ.³⁴⁵
84. One month before the expiration of the ICJ deadline³⁴⁶ to protect the Rohingya population from genocide, the President's Office of Myanmar issued a directive on 8 April 2020 to comply with the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and to preserve evidence of all violence committed in the Rakhine State of Myanmar. The President's order instructed all ministers, state governments and local administration, military and civilian security forces to abide by Article 2 and 3

³⁴¹ The daily Inquilab, 8 February 2020; <https://www.dailyinquilab.com/article/266651>

³⁴² The daily Manabzamin, 24 January 2020; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=209747>

³⁴³ New Age, 12 November 2019; <https://www.newagebd.net/article/90354>

³⁴⁴ The daily Prothom Alo, 5 February 2020; <https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?mod=1&pgnum=1&edcode=71&pagedate=2020-2-5>

³⁴⁵ Ibid

³⁴⁶ On 23 January 2020, the International Court of Justice issued four interim orders to Myanmar to protect the Rohingya people from genocide. It was stated in the directives that Myanmar must protect the Rohingya living in the country; it must ensure that the Army or any other security forces under their control could not commit genocide against Rohingyas. No evidence relating to the genocide committed in the country can be destroyed. The report should be submitted within four months regarding implementation of the interim directives. From then until the final verdict, a report should be made at intervals of every six months. The daily Manabzamin, 24 January 2020; <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=209747>

of the Genocide Convention.³⁴⁷ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Gambia filed an application on 24 April for an extension and the Court accordingly fixed 23 October 2020 as the date for submission of documents instead of 23 July. Under the new arrangement, Myanmar will present its evidence on 23 July 2021.³⁴⁸

85. Attacks on the Rohingyas in Rakhine (Arakan) continued while the cases were under investigation in the ICC and ICJ. In 2020, the Rohingyas entered into Bangladesh after crossing the border in the wake of continued crackdown by Myanmar's security forces in Rakhine State and many Rohingyas were killed and injured in Rakhine during this period.³⁴⁹ The High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet highlighted the ongoing violence against several ethnic groups, including the Rohingya Muslims, in Myanmar's Rakhine state during the 43rd High-Level Meeting of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.³⁵⁰ The Myanmar Army and the government led by State Councillor Aung San Suu Kyi, have denied all allegations of atrocities and genocide. Two members of the Myanmar Army, Mayo Win Tun and J Naing Tun, involved in the genocide, fled Myanmar in August 2020. They were later taken to The Hague in the Netherlands and held in the custody of the International Criminal Court. The two former soldiers of the Myanmar Army acknowledged that allegations of genocide against Rohingya population, mass burials after the killings, and destruction of Rohingya villages, as well as mass rape against the Myanmar Army, were true.³⁵¹ Later two other members of the Myanmar Army, Chao Mio Aung and Par Tao Ni, testified at the International Criminal Court. There they gave details of the brutal torture and massacre of the Rohingyas.³⁵²
86. In 2020, many Rohingya refugees tried to go abroad due to frustration among the Rohingyas over the lack of progress of repatriation to their own country, via dangerous sea routes. More than 300 Rohingyas, including 33 children floating in a vessel in the sea, were rescued and sent to Bhasanchar in April 2020. The UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called for the safe evacuation of Rohingyas from Bhasanchar to Cox's Bazar, but the Bangladesh government did not respond. The families of the Rohingyas in Bhasanchar said that they are being held there like prisoners without sufficient food and health care. There are even allegations that some of the women Rohingya

³⁴⁷ The daily Prothom Alo, 9 April 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1649814/>

³⁴⁸ Bangla Tribune, 27 May 2020; <https://www.banglatribune.com/national/news/625472/>

³⁴⁹ The daily Prothom Alo, 9 April 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1649814/> ; Just one day after the International Court of Justice's directives, on 24 January 2020 at midnight, the Myanmar army bombarded a Rohingya village, Kin Taung in Rakhine state. As a result, two Rohingyas, including a pregnant woman, were killed and seven were injured. Two houses were completely destroyed due to bombardment. The daily Prothom Alo, 26 January 2020; <https://www.prothomalo.com/international/article/1636352/>; on 29 February 2020, five Rohingyas, including a 12-year-old child, were killed when the Myanmar army opened fire at Bu Ta Lone Village in Rakhine state of Myanmar. The daily Jugantor, 2 March 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/international/284467/>; on 26 May 2020, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released some new satellite pictures of Myanmar's Rakhine state. These pictures show a fire burning in Let Kar Village on 16 May. The Organisation's analysis shows that about two hundred houses were burnt down. Human Rights Watch, 26 May 2020; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/26/myanmar-imagery-shows-200-buildings-burned>

³⁵⁰ The daily Naya Diganta, 05 July 2020; <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com/first-page/513053>

³⁵¹ The daily Prothom Alo, 09 September 2020 ; <https://www.prothomalo.com/world/□□□□□□□□-□□□□□□-□□□□□□-□□□□□□-□□□□>

³⁵² The daily Jugantor, 12 September 2020; <https://www.jugantor.com/todays-paper/first-page/343815>

refugees were raped and sexually harassed.³⁵³ Furthermore, Rohingyas are suffering from acute shortage of drinking water in this remote island. Some refugees complained that they were beaten by the Bangladeshi authorities in Bhasanchar.³⁵⁴

87. In this situation, on 4 December 2020, the Bangladeshi government relocated 1,642 Rohingyas from the Kutupalong camp in Cox's Bazar to Bhasanchar in the first phase³⁵⁵ and on 29 December, 1804 in the second phase.³⁵⁶ It is to be noted that Rohingyas are being shifted to a disaster prone area without observing what kind of situation may arise in case of natural calamity such as a cyclone, in Bhasanchar. In addition, if further human rights violations against Rohingyas are perpetrated in a remote area like Bhasanchar, it is doubtful whether accurate information will reach the media or human rights activists. It has also been reported that there is also a shortage of medical facilities there. Although the government has been claiming that the relocation of Rohingyas to Bhasanchar is 'voluntary relocation'. Human Rights Watch reported that many have been forcibly relocated. They talked to 12 Rohingya families who said their names were on the list of relocation, but that they had not willingly volunteered to relocate. Rohingyas added that some of the refugees on the list had fled for fear of being forcibly relocated.³⁵⁷

Rohingya photojournalist Abul Kalam was arrested and taken to the Kutupalong camp on 28 December 2020 while taking photographs of buses departing from Kutupalong camp in Ukhiya under Cox's Bazar District, carrying Rohingya refugees for Bhasanchar. He was later detained there and allegedly beaten. According to Bangladeshi law, an arrested person has to be produced in court within 24 hours, but Abul Kalam was detained at the Kutupalong police barracks until the late afternoon of 30 December.³⁵⁸ He was charged for attending an unlawful assembly, obstructing public servants in the discharge of public functions and assaulting or using criminal force to deter a public servant from discharge of his duty. On 31

³⁵³ The Guardian, 22 September 2020; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/22/rohingya-refugees-allege-sexual-assault-on-bangladeshi-island>

³⁵⁴ HRW report, 09 July 2020; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/09/bangladesh-move-rohingya-dangerous-silt-island>; and The Guardian, 22 September 2020; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/22/rohingya-refugees-allege-sexual-assault-on-bangladeshi-island>

³⁵⁵ Dhaka Tribune, 5 December 2020; <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/2020/12/04/rohingyas-sail-for-bhasan-char-as-relocation-begins>

³⁵⁶ The Daily Star, 29 December 2020; <https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/news/1772-rohingyas-leave-ctg-bhasan-char-2018993>

³⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch, 3 December 2020; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/03/bangladesh-halt-rohingya-relocations-remote-island>; Amnesty International, 3 and 10 December 2020; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/12/bangladesh-halt-relocation-of-rohingya-refugees-to-remote-island/>; <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ASA1334462020ENGLISH.pdf>; AlJazeera, 27 December 2020; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/27/bangladesh-to-move-new-group-of-rohingya-to-remote-island>

³⁵⁸ Dhaka Tribune, 31 December 2020; https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2020/12/31/33-prominent-figures-organizations-call-for-release-of-rohingya-photographer-abul-kalam/?fbclid=IwAR1LPop5hXaI3OpX10-nwV0naCBym77WPjBIS8T_QRQxLYdAIMRCIckIj6Q

December, police produced Abul Kalam in the court under sections 143³⁵⁹, 186³⁶⁰ and 353³⁶¹ of the Penal Code, 1860 and the court sent him to Cox's Bazar District Jail. On 4 January 2021, Abul Kalam had been granted bail from a senior Judicial Magistrate Court in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar and released on 6 January from Cox's Bazar District Jail.³⁶²

I. Hindrance to Human Rights Activities

88. The government has used law enforcement agencies, the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Election Commission, and the pro-government print and electronic media (owned by supporters of the government) at different times to gag *Odhikar's* voice against human rights abuses, protest against impunity by the state forces and to release of various reports on human rights violations. The crackdown on *Odhikar* that began in 2013 has not changed in 2020. *Odhikar* applied to the NGOAB under the Prime Minister's Office for the renewal³⁶³ of its registration in 2014, but the registration is yet to be renewed. The NGOAB has completely stopped approving any projects and fund clearance to disrupt all human rights activities of *Odhikar* for the past seven years. As part of the government's crackdown, the Standard Chartered Bank has also suspended *Odhikar's* accounts and has been harassing the organisation in various ways. Furthermore, human rights defenders associated with *Odhikar* are under surveillance for being vocal about human rights violations. The case filed against the Secretary and Director of *Odhikar* under the Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 (amended 2009) is still pending. *Odhikar* has also been forced to resort to self-censorship in publishing its report due to various obstacles and curtailment of freedom of expression by the government. In the face of such adversity, human rights defenders associated with *Odhikar* continue to work as volunteers because of their unwavering commitment to the protection of human rights. During this reporting period, Hasan Ali, a human rights defenders associated with *Odhikar* in Kushtia, was threatened with abduction by District Superintendent of Police SM Tanvir Arafat over his cell phone while he was collecting information about torture in police custody.

³⁵⁹ Whoever is a member of an unlawful assembly, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine, or with both.

³⁶⁰ Whoever voluntarily obstructs any public servant in the discharge of his public functions, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three months, or with fine which may extend to five hundred taka, or with both.

³⁶¹ Whoever assaults or uses criminal force to any person being a public servant in the execution of his duty as such public servant, or with intent to prevent or deter that person from discharging his duty as such public servant, or in consequence of anything done or attempted to be done by such person in the lawful discharge of his duty as such public servant, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to [three years], or with fine, or with both.

³⁶² Dhaka Tribune, 6 January 2021; <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2021/01/06/despite-securing-bail-rohingya-photographer-in-jail-due-to-procedural-issues>

³⁶³ 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 Bureau of NGO Affairs was asked to respond to the Rule within two weeks, but the NGOAB did not take any action to renew its registration.

Recommendations

1. The international community including the United Nations must urgently cooperate in restoring (transparent, fair, and participatory) electoral democracy in Bangladesh.
2. The government must stop political interference on the constitutional and state institutions, which must remain unbiased and neutral in order to function effectively for the benefit of all citizens of Bangladesh. The government must also refrain from activities in relation to controlling the Judiciary.
3. Members of the law enforcement and intelligence agencies who are involved in extreme human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, torture and enforced disappearance and those aiding and abetting them, must be brought to justice and punished as per law.
4. 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.
5. Persons who are disappeared must be retrieved and returned to their families. The government must accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and criminalise enforced disappearance by bringing it under domestic law.
6. 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. Harassment on the leaders and activists of the opposition political parties and dissenters must be stopped.
7. 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.
8. 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 and its Rules 2020 should be repealed immediately. Cases filed under these laws should be withdrawn and those arrested should be released. Surveillance of internet based communication, including social media should also be stopped.
9. An enabling environment will have to be created for workers in the readymade garment industry and other industries, including the paying of adequate wages. Factories will have to be designed with proper infrastructure and adequate facilities and security measures. Workers' rights must be implemented in accordance with the ILO Convention, ensuring the right to form trade unions in all factories, including ready-made garment factories. Workers in informal sectors, including the construction industry, need to

create a working environment that is conducive, and also fair policies for their work including the prevention of discrimination.

10. 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.
11. Citizens belonging to the minority communities, 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.
12. 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. Shelter homes must be created in all districts for victims of domestic violence. Section 10 of the Suppression of Repression against Women and Children Act, 2000 (amended 2003) must be amended to include the definition of sexual harassment and stalking as given by court directives in the matter of BNWLA vs. Bangladesh (2010).
13. The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) must stop all human rights violations, including killing and torturing of Bangladeshi citizens along the border areas. India must respect and follow the border agreement. The Indian government must stop its interference with and aggressive attitude towards Bangladesh.
14. The safe and dignified repatriation of the Rohingya people, who are victims of genocide and crimes against humanity, to their homeland must to be ensured along with the restoration of their citizenship. The human rights of Rohingya community need to be established by ensuring justice for the crimes committed against them. Relocation of Rohingya refugees to Bhasanchar must be stopped.
15. The ongoing repression on *Odhikar* and on human rights defenders associated with *Odhikar* 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. The NGO Affairs Bureau must renew *Odhikar's* registration.

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Notes:

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

Appendix:

Statistics on Human Rights Violations between 2009 and 2020

The Awami League came to power on 6 January, 2009 and remained in power since then.

Table: 1

Extrajudicial killings: 2009 - 2020																					
Year(s)	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	Grand Total
2020	62	119	0	0	0	4	30	0	0	0	0	9	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	225
2019	101	203	0	1	0	4	56	4	0	0	1	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	391
2018	136	276	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	46	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	466
2017	33	117	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	155
2016	51	118	0	1	0	0	2	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	178
2015	53	126	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	186
2014	29	119	0	11	1	2	5	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	172
2013	38	175	1	8	0	0	11	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	64	0	0	0	0	0	329
2012	40	18	2	0	3	0	2	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	70
2011	43	31	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	84
2010	68	43	9	0	0	0	1	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	127
2009	41	75	25	0	2	3	5	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	154
Total	695	1420	41	22	6	15	120	37	15	3	7	77	2	5	64	1	4	1	1	1	2537

Table: 1.1

Crossfire/Gunfight/Encounter: 2009-2020														
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
2020	61	97	0	0	4	25	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	196
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	664	1078	40	13	12	82	5	15	3	6	77	1	4	2000

Table: 1.2

Tortured to death by LEA: 2009-2020								
Year(s)	RAB	Police	Army	BGB (Former BDR)	Coast Guard	DB Police	Jail authorities/ Police	Grand Total
2020	1	17	0	0	0	0	1	19
2019	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	6
2018	0	5	0	0	0	1	0	6
2017	1	10	1	1	0	0	0	13
2016	0	10	0	0	0	1	0	11
2015	2	6	0	0	0	0	0	8
2014	1	9	1	0	0	0	0	11
2013	1	10	0	0	0	0	0	11
2012	0	5	0	1	0	0	1	7
2011	1	14	0	0	0	0	2	17
2010	2	20	0	0	0	0	0	22
2009	3	11	0	5	1	0	1	21
Total	12	123	2	7	1	2	5	152

Table: 1.3

Beaten to death by LEA: 2009-2020					
Year (s)	RAB	Police	BGB (Former BDR)	Railway Police	Grand Total
2020	0	2	0	0	2
2019	0	1	0	0	1
2018	0	0	0	0	0
2017	0	2	0	0	2
2016	0	2	0	1	3
2015	1	2	0	0	3
2014	0	1	3	0	4
2013	1	6	0	0	7
2012	0	2	0	0	2
2011	0	1	0	0	1
2010	1	0	1	0	2
2009	0	0	0	0	0
Total	3	19	4	1	27

Table: 1.4

Shot to death by LEA: 2009-2020														
Year (s)	RAB	Police	RAB-Police	Army	Joint Force	Ansar	BGB (Former BDR)	RAB- Coast Guard	Police- BGB	Police and Armed Police Battalion, RAB, BGB	Armed Police Battalion	Forest Guard	Para Commando	Grand Total
2020	0	3	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
2019	0	4	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	8
2018	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
2017	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2016	0	11	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
2015	0	19	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	22
2014	6	25	0	1	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	38
2013	9	126	1	0	6	0	10	1	28	64	0	0	0	245
2012	0	4	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
2011	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2010	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
2009	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
Total	15	199	1	1	9	6	25	1	28	64	1	1	1	352

Table: 1.5

Suffocated to death: 2009-2020		
Years	Police	Grand Total
2020	0	0
2019	0	0
2018	0	0
2017	0	0
2016	0	0
2015	1	1
2014	0	0
2013	1	1
2012	0	0
2011	0	0
2010	0	0
2009	0	0
Total	2	2

Table: 1.6

Others: 2009-2020			
Years	Police	BGB	Grand Total
2020	0	0	0
2019	0	0	0
2018	0	0	0
2017	0	0	0
2016	0	0	0
2015	3	1	4
2014	0	0	0
2013	0	0	0
2012	0	0	0
2011	0	0	0
2010	0	0	0
2009	0	0	0
Total	3	1	4

Table: 2

Enforced Disappearances (2009 - 2020): Responsible State Agencies								
Year(s)	Total number of the disappeared persons	Allegedly disappeared by						
		RAB	Police	RAB-DB Police	DB Police	Industrial Police	Ansar-Police	Other Law Enforcement Agency
2020	31	8	7	0	6	0	0	10
2019	34	9	5	0	7	0	0	13
2018	98	10	25	0	48	0	0	15
2017	90	15	20	1	20	0	0	34
2016	93	27	15	2	22	0	0	27
2015	67	24	5	4	24	0	2	8
2014	39	25	2	3	8	0	0	1
2013	54	21	1	0	19	0	0	13
2012	27	10	1	2	6	1	0	7
2011	32	15	2	0	11	0	0	4
2010	19	14	2	0	2	0	0	1
2009	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	587	181	85	12	173	1	2	133

Table: 2.1

Enforced Disappearances 2009 - 2020: Present Status of the Victims				
Year	Still disappeared	Disappeared then found dead	Surfaced alive	Total number of disappeared persons
2020	3	6	22	31
2019	9	8	17	34
2018	20	12	66	98
2017	9	9	72	90
2016	8	14	71	93
2015	6	11	50	67
2014	8	10	21	39
2013	33	2	19	54
2012	14	1	12	27
2011	24	5	3	32
2010	13	2	4	19
2009	2	1	0	3
Total	149	81	357	587

Table: 3

Public Lynching: 2009 - 2020	
Year (s)	Total
2020	40
2019	56
2018	48
2017	47
2016	53
2015	132
2014	116
2013	125
2012	132
2011	161
2010	174
2009	127
Total	1211

Table: 4

Death in Jail: 2009-2020	
Year (s)	Jail Custody
2020	76
2019	60
2018	81
2017	58
2016	63
2015	51
2014	54
2013	59
2012	63
2011	105
2010	60
2009	50
Total	780

Table: 5

Statistics of Death Penalty: 2010-2020			
Year (s)	Death Penalty (Given)	Execution of death sentence	Seeking Clemency
2020	218	2	0
2019	327	2	0
2018	319	0	0
2017	303	3	0
2016	229	6	0
2015	173	3	0
2014	176	0	0
2013	291	2	0
2012	77	1	0
2011	97	4	2
2010	76	9	0
Total	2286	32	2

Table: 6

Freedom of the Media: 2009-2020											
Year (s)	Killed	Injured	Assaulted	Attacked	Arrested	Abducted	Threatened	Tortured	Sued	Miscellaneous	Total
2020	0	74	31	28	7	3	17	1	70	4	235
2019	0	45	5	5	4	0	12	1	30	2	104
2018	0	71	22	2	4	0	11	1	15	0	126
2017	1	24	9	1	0	0	11	0	7	0	53
2016	0	53	16	1	1	0	9	0	31	10	121
2015	1	90	10	4	10	0	34	1	18	17	185
2014	1	92	24	2	6	0	19	0	33	13	190
2013	0	146	37	7	5	0	33	1	19	27	275
2012	5	161	50	10	0	0	63	2	36	15	342
2011	0	139	43	24	1	0	53	0	23	8	291
2010	4	118	43	17	2	1	49	0	13	16	263
2009	3	84	45	16	1	2	73	0	23	19	266
Total	15	1097	335	117	41	6	384	7	318	131	2451

Table: 7

Arrest under Digital Security Act: 2018-2020	
Years	Grand Total
2020	142
2019	42
2018	15
Total	199
* The cases of arrests under the Digital Security Act 2018 that are documented are those where the presentations/statements in question are considered critical against high officials of the government and their families. Besides some people were arrested under this Act as they have critical religious views	

Table: 8

Political Violence: 2009-2020			
Year (s)	Killed	Injured	Total
2020	73	2883	2956
2019	70	3467	3537
2018	120	7051	7171
2017	77	4635	4712
2016	215	9053	9268
2015	197	8312	8509
2014	190	9429	9619
2013	504	24176	24680
2012	169	17161	17330
2011	135	11532	11667
2010	220	13999	14219
2009	251	15559	15810
Total	2221	127257	129478

Table: 8.1

Year (s)	Killed : Intra party clash		Injuries: Intra party clash			Total Incidents of Intra Party clash		
	AL	BNP	AL	BNP	Others	AL	BNP	Others
2020	41	0	2243	96	6	229	8	0
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	518	35	46124	7740	370	4355	672	33

Table: 9

Rape: 2009 - 2020																
Years (s)	Total number of victims	Total number of children	Total number of women	Total unknown age	Gang Rape			Sub-total of gang rape	Killed after being raped			Sub-total of gang rape	Committed suicide after being raped			Sub-total of gang rape
					Children	Women	Unknown age		Children	Women	Unknown age		Children	Women	Unknown age	
2020	1538	919	577	42	154	182	9	345	23	25	1	49	7	1	0	8
2019	1080	737	330	13	137	150	7	294	32	10	0	42	5	2	0	7
2018	635	457	176	2	88	89	0	177	32	15	0	47	1	1	0	2
2017	783	553	225	5	108	93	2	203	18	14	0	32	5	4	0	9
2016	757	511	232	14	99	107	6	212	12	17	2	31	2	1	0	3
2015	789	479	293	17	131	141	5	277	33	32	0	65	3	2	0	5
2014	666	393	244	29	92	118	17	227	34	31	1	66	5	7	0	12
2013	814	452	336	26	94	127	15	236	40	30	1	71	4	2	0	6
2012	805	473	299	33	84	101	12	197	39	31	5	75	10	0	0	10
2011	711	450	246	15	115	119	5	239	34	54	2	90	9	4	0	13
2010	559	311	248	0	95	119	0	214	30	61	0	91	5	2	0	7
2009	456	243	213	0	79	97	0	176	33	64	0	97	4	4	0	8
Total	9593	5978	3419	196	1276	1443	78	2797	360	384	12	756	60	30	0	90

Table: 10

Dowry related violence against (married) women: 2009-2020				
Years	Killed	Physically abused	Suicide	Total
2020	89	106	4	199
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	1873	1822	122	3817

Table: 11

Sexual Harassment / Stalking: 2011- 2020			
Year (s)	Number of victim girls	Number of protesting female relatives/ friends attacked (by stalker/s)	Number of protesting male relatives/ friends attacked (by stalker/s)
2020	157	26	3
2019	189	11	28
2018	157	8	44
2017	242	24	83
2016	271	15	84
2015	191	10	95
2014	272	16	40
2013	357	9	89
2012	479	20	122
2011	672	42	187
Total	2987	181	775

Table: 12

Acid Violence: 2009-2020					
Year (s)	Women	Men	Girls	Boys	Grand Total
2020	19	7	7	0	33
2019	15	7	6	3	31
2018	11	5	6	4	26
2017	33	9	9	1	52
2016	26	7	5	2	40
2015	29	10	7	1	47
2014	44	7	10	5	66
2013	36	10	5	2	53
2012	58	17	20	10	105
2011	57	25	10	9	101
2010	84	32	16	5	137
2009	64	20	13	4	101
Total	476	156	114	46	792

Table: 13

Human Rights Violations by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) against Bangladeshi Citizens: 2009-2020									
Years (s)	Killed	Injured	Abducted	Missing	Rape	Snatching/ Looting	Push in	Other	Grand Total
2020	51	27	7	0	0	0	0	0	85
2019	41	40	34	0	0	0	0	0	115
2018	11	24	16	0	0	0	0	0	51
2017	25	39	28	0	0	0	0	0	92
2016	29	36	22	0	0	0	0	0	87
2015	44	60	27	1	0	0	0	0	132
2014	35	68	99	2	0	0	0	5	209
2013	29	79	127	0	1	77	41	0	354
2012	38	100	74	1	0	9	0	16	238
2011	31	62	23	0	0	0	0	9	125
2010	74	72	43	2	0	1	5	0	197
2009	98	77	25	13	1	1	90	3	308
Grand Total	506	684	525	19	2	88	136	33	1993