



Statement by Odhikar against Enforced Disappearance

Odhikar unequivocally condemns the practice of enforced disappearance in Bangladesh and anywhere else in the world. This grave violation not only strips individuals of their liberty and dignity, but also inflicts lasting trauma on their families and communities. Enforced disappearance constitutes a crime under international law and must be addressed through urgent, effective, and rights-based measures.

For more than a decade, victims and their families in Bangladesh have sought justice, truth, and reparations, often at great personal risk. Many have faced intimidation, fabricated criminal charges, and the continued absence of accountability from relevant authorities. This persistent impunity erodes the rule of law and undermines public trust in state institutions.

The fall of the repressive Awami League-led regime on 05 August 2024, has opened doors for reform and the first Commission created by the Interim Government was the Inquiry Commission on Enforced Disappearance. The interim government also acceded to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED) on 29 August 2024. Over 1600 cases have been recorded by the Commission to date. Now is the time for justice. Odhikar calls upon the Government of Bangladesh to take immediate and concrete steps to hold perpetrators of enforced disappearance accountable, in line with international human rights obligations.

Policy Recommendations

Odhikar urges the Government and relevant state institutions to:

1. Conduct independent, impartial, and transparent investigations into all cases of enforced disappearances reported to the Inquiry Commission, ensuring accountability for all perpetrators regardless of rank or position, including those responsible for destroying evidence or obstructing investigations, including the destruction of secret detention facilities.
2. Implement the Guiding Principles for the Search for Disappeared Persons, including adopting a national strategy for effective and timely search operations.
3. Immediately withdraw all false or fabricated cases filed against survivors of enforced disappearance and against family members of those still disappeared.
4. Criminalize the act of disappearing by force through a law that fully conforms to the ICPPED, and include legal provisions enabling families of disappeared persons to manage victims' bank accounts, assets, and properties, and ensure adequate reparations for both victims and their families.

5. Guarantee fair, transparent, and expeditious trials to end the prolonged suffering of victims and their families.
6. Enact a comprehensive victim and witness protection law to guarantee safety and security during legal proceedings.
7. Amend the Anti-Terrorism Act to bring it in line with international human rights standards and prevent its misuse in justifying enforced disappearance.
8. Disband the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), a security force repeatedly implicated in enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions.
9. Recognize the need for international accountability where domestic legal processes fail to provide justice.
10. Seek and utilize international technical assistance to implement the ICPPED and strengthen forensic, legal, and investigative capacities in line with global human rights norms.

Odhikar reaffirms its commitment to advocating for the complete eradication of enforced disappearances in Bangladesh. We stand in solidarity with the victims and their families, and will continue to work with national, regional, and international partners to demand justice, truth, and reparation.
