



# Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances

A world without *desaparecidos*



[afad.asia@protonmail.com](mailto:afad.asia@protonmail.com)



[disappeared-asia.org](https://disappeared-asia.org)



(+63) 922 727 6877

## **AFAD Supports Odhikar's Call for Vigilance on Electoral Violence: Bangladesh's Continued Democratic Journey**

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As Bangladesh approaches its historic February 12 election, the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) stands in solidarity with the people of Bangladesh in their pursuit of a peaceful, transparent, and inclusive democratic process. This election, the first since the “Monsoon Revolution” of July 2024, represents a critical turning point for a nation transitioning from authoritarian rule.

AFAD, in support of Odhikar and its monitoring partners, affirms the necessity of a credible electoral environment. With 127,711,793 registered voters and the introduction of technology-supported postal voting for 15 million overseas workers, the procedural complexity of this vote is unprecedented. We support Odhikar's vigilance across constituencies where it has already documented pre-election incidents, and we urge the Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC) to use its expanded powers to annul results or order re-polls where irregularities occur.

Odhikar closely monitors electoral violence across 50 constituencies in 22 districts, and has, to date, documented 30 incidents across 14 districts. The organisation also urged the leading political parties to make public commitments to discipline their leaders, activists, and supporters who were engaged in intimidation or clashes ahead of the national polls.

The courage of the Gen Z generation, who comprise 44% of the electorate, must be honored by an election process free from information warfare, including deepfakes and bot-generated disinformation, which currently threaten the political landscape. The sacrifices made in the July 2024 mass protests, which led to the ouster of Hasina and the downfall of the authoritarian Awami League Regime, deserve to be honored by an electoral process that is as brave and non-violent as the young citizens themselves.

AFAD Chairperson Dr. Saira R. Khan says that: the people of Bangladesh were unable to cast their votes for the last 15 years while the country was controlled by a fascist regime. Two votes will be cast on 12 February - one that will determine the course of Bangladesh for the coming decades, through a referendum, and the other that will decide who will lead the country in the post-July uprising. Through the elections, the young generation will determine the political future of the country.



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This 2026 election is a significant step forward in Bangladesh's democratic struggle after it won independence from Pakistan in 1971. The success of this election will regain public trust in democracy and its process. Crucially, this election is not only about parliamentary representation but also includes a national referendum on the July National Charter 2025. This referendum is a vital mechanism for voters to directly endorse institutional reforms that safeguard future democratic integrity. In a landscape where the Awami League is banned, and new alliances have emerged, we call upon the 939,000 security personnel deployed to maintain neutrality and protect the rights of all citizens to cast their votes safely.

**A successful and peaceful transition to democracy should also ensure that the repression of the people of Bangladesh will never happen again.**

Sources:

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