

# HUMAN RIGHTS CHALLENGES IN BANGLADESH



30 August 2023,  
Geneva

UPR Info Pre-sessions

# Situation in Bangladesh – Issue 1: Enforced Disappearances

## Implementation of previous recommendations:

More than 15 countries made recommendations on enforced disappearances.

- ❑ *Promptly and thoroughly investigate all allegations of enforced disappearance and ensure the perpetrators are brought to justice. (Norway, Sweden, USA, France, Italy, Switzerland and Republic of Korea)*
- ❑ *Ratify/Accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED). (Japan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Senegal, Togo, Ukraine, Peru and Greece)*

## New developments:

- Acts of enforced disappearance in Bangladesh have become an institutionalised practice of repression. Such crimes continue to occur with complete impunity.
- **According to Odhikar, a total of 223 persons were subjected to enforced disappearance from 2018 to June 2023.** Most of the victims are political activists of the opposition and dissidents.

# Situation in Bangladesh – Issue 1: Enforced Disappearances

## Examples:

- An ethnic community leader disappeared on the way to Dhaka from Kanchpur in Narayanganj District on 9 April 2019. He has been vocal against abuses committed by the security forces in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region. His whereabouts still remain unknown.
- On 6 November 2021, a fish trader from Mymensingh, was forcibly picked up in a microbus by a group of plain-clothed RAB members. The last location of his phone, as was seen with iCloud, was next to the RAB-1 office in Uttara, Dhaka. His whereabouts remained unknown until he was released on 29 August 2022 after being disappeared for nine months.
- In recent times, 'short-term' disappearances have been taking place where law enforcement officers later show the disappeared persons as arrested on criminal charges, including under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009.

# Situation in Bangladesh – Issue 1: Enforced Disappearances

## Recommendations:

- ❖ Establish an independent inquiry commission to investigate all cases of enforced disappearance, hold perpetrators accountable and ensure justice to the victims and their families;
- ❖ Accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances;
- ❖ Allow the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) to officially visit Bangladesh.

# Situation in Bangladesh – Issue 2: Extrajudicial Killings

## Implementation of previous recommendations:

During the third UPR cycle, five countries made recommendations on extrajudicial killings to strengthen measures to prevent extrajudicial killings, and conduct prompt and thorough investigations into all allegations of extrajudicial killings and bring those responsible to justice. **(France, Switzerland, Republic of Korea, Norway and Sweden)**

## New developments:

- Extrajudicial killings continue to take place in the country in various forms. This has increased since the government embarked on a nationwide “war on drugs” in May 2018.
- **Between 2018 and June 2023, Odhikar documented 1,228 cases of extrajudicial killings by security forces.**

# Situation in Bangladesh – Issue 2: Extrajudicial Killings

## Examples:

- A [Retired Army officer](#) was killed by the police at the Shamlapur checkpoint on Marine Drive Road in Teknaf under Cox's Bazar District on 31 July 2020. On 5 August 2020, His sister filed a case accusing nine policemen, including ex-OC Pradeep Kumar Das with Cox's Bazar Court.
- It is to be noted that a [total of 205 people](#) were extrajudicially killed by Pradeep Kumar Das while he was the OC of Teknaf Police Station. Pradeep has only been tried for the murder of Sinha, as this was a highly sensitive case that sparked tension between the army and police.
- Law enforcement agencies have regularly tried to cover up such killings by falsely describing them as deaths due to 'gunfights', 'crossfire', or 'shootouts'.
- However, the US sanctions on RAB in December 2021 caused cases of extrajudicial killings to [decrease](#), which indicates that extrajudicial killings do exist in Bangladesh, despite being continuously denied by the government.

# Situation in Bangladesh – Issue 2: Extrajudicial Killings

## Recommendations:

- ❖ Conduct independent and impartial investigations into all the allegations of extrajudicial killings and bring the perpetrators to justice;
- ❖ Issue an invitation to the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions for a country visit.

# Situation in Bangladesh – Issue 3: Torture and Death in Custody

## Implementation of previous recommendations:

More than 10 countries made recommendations to prohibit torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and to ratify the OPCAT. (Italy, France, Norway, Republic of Korea, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Denmark, Poland, Ghana, Sri Lanka, Czechia)

## New developments:

- Torture and other forms of degrading treatment have become **institutionalised practices** in Bangladesh, despite the enactment of the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013.
- Members of law enforcement agencies continue to use torture and ill treatment, taking advantage of Bangladesh's entrenched [culture of impunity](#) maintained by successive governments.
- [Deaths in custody](#) as a result of torture by law enforcement agencies have continued to occur. Custodial deaths due to torture have been regularly labelled as 'suicide' or 'unnatural death'.

# Situation in Bangladesh – Issue 3: Torture and Death in Custody

## Examples:

- A [journalist](#) was allegedly blindfolded, tortured, and electrocuted in the custody of the Detective Branch of Police on 23 January 2023, after being arrested by the police in Satkhira District.
- The case of a [yarn trader](#) from Gazipur, who died due to torture in police custody on 18 January 2023, not only shed light on custodial torture leading to the death of the victim, but also revealed how the police fabricate stories to cover up their misdeeds.

# Situation in Bangladesh – Issue 3: Torture and Death in Custody

## Recommendations:

- ❖ Put an end to torture and impunity; ensure the security of torture victims and their families; and take punitive action against perpetrators;
- ❖ Ratify the [OPCAT](#), and recognise the competence of the Committee against Torture to receive and consider individual complaints of torture;
- ❖ Issue an invitation to the Special Rapporteur on Torture to visit Bangladesh.