



Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development
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**39th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 6: Universal Periodic Review of Bangladesh
Oral Statement Delivered by Ahmed Adam on behalf of
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

Thursday, 20 September, 2018

We note that Bangladesh has fully accepted 178 out of 251 recommendations. We appreciate that the government has accepted several general recommendations on protection of freedom of expression, assembly, and association, as well as on human rights defenders.

However, we regret that the government has not shown genuine commitment to meaningfully address long-standing concerns related to these issues. Despite the government's decision to repeal Section 57 of Information Communication Technology (ICT) Act 2006, the provision continues to be used to criminalise legitimate dissent and prosecute human rights defenders, civil society, and journalists. These include the detention of prominent activist Shahidul Alam in August, and the arrest of 23 people in connection with recent road safety protests. We call on the government to unconditionally release and drop criminal charges against Shahidul Alam, and others detained under section 57 of ICT Act.

Furthermore, we are concerned that Digital Security Bill approved on 19 September 2018 to replace the Section 57 of ICT Act falls short of international standards and threatens the right to freedom of expression and independent journalism. The government must repeal or review the law in accordance with international standards.

We are concerned that the government did not accept a number of recommendations on enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, denying frequent reports of these crimes. Over 400 people have been reportedly disappeared in Bangladesh since 2009, including at least 27 people allegedly disappeared by state agencies. Over 350 cases of extrajudicial killings have been recorded this year alone, while an additional 220 people have been allegedly killed extra-judicially since May in the context of a so-called 'war on drugs'. We call on the government to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and conduct transparent and impartial investigations into all allegations of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings in line with UPR recommendations.

We further regret that the government refuses to protect rights of sexual minorities, and criminalise all forms of violence against women including marital rape.

We urge the government to develop a concrete and time-bound plan in consultation with civil society and other stakeholders to implement UPR recommendations.

Thank you.