

## **39<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council**

### **Item 6: UPR**

**Date: 20th September 2018**

#### **Oral Statement delivered by Yashasvi Nain on behalf of Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB) and Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI).**

Thank you, Mr. President.

We commend the Bangladesh Government for accepting 178 out of 251 recommendations, particularly on preventing violent extremism, eliminating human trafficking, protecting media freedom and ensuring proper investigation of attacks on journalists and activists. However, we regret that GoB noted 73 recommendations, relating to revision of media laws, decriminalization of defamation, prosecution of violence against human rights defenders, and addressing impunity for rights violations by security agencies as contradictory to its national and international commitments.

Mr. President, the human rights situation in Bangladesh, particularly on the issue of political freedom, indicates shrinking of democratic spaces. State led actions include intimidation, illegal detention, torture and arbitrary restrictions of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Police have used excessive force, tear gas and rubber bullets, against student protesters and job-seekers during the quota reform and safe roads movements. We regard these as violations of basic rights and freedoms to which the government of Bangladesh is committed through its own constitution.

Recently, the police filed 51 cases against school students and arrested 99 on the grounds of provocation, vandalizing vehicles and spreading propaganda. We urge the Government to release all students and others who have been arbitrarily detained, including the well-known photographer Shahidul Alam, and drop all charges against them.

Ignoring our repeated concerns, yesterday, the government has approved digital security act. Some provisions of the act have huge possibility to curtail freedom of expression. We, urge the government to immediately review the law and to create an enabling environment wherein people can express their views without fear of intimidation.

We call upon Bangladesh to publicly set out a comprehensive, measurable and time-bound action plan for the implementation of UPR recommendations, in cooperation and consultation with civil society.