



Human Rights Situation Monitoring Report September 2023 manabdhikar shongskriti foundation (msf) September 30, 2023

According to information published in various media and collected by msf in September 2023, a review of the country's human rights situation showed that the country's human rights situation was as problematic as ever. Gunfights by law enforcement agencies, kidnappings under their identities, and deaths due to police chase from arrest, torture, and overactions have not stopped in the country. Arrests of political leaders, disappearances, and police use of excess force continued unabated. There are instances of misuse of digital security laws, investigative journalism, and the exercise of the constitutional right to freedom of expression. Incidents of violence against women and children, including rape, are also continuing, which is worrisome. The recovery of unidentified bodies is increasing abnormally. Besides, there have been increased cases of taking laws into hand, like public beatings. Manabdhikar Shongskriti Foundation (msf) expresses deep anger and concern over the continuous increase in these incidents of human rights violations. Strongly condemns the inaction of the government to prevent these incidents. At the same time, it demands that justice be ensured, including an impartial investigation into each incident.

Victims of political violence, prosecutions and barred from attending rallies

The activities of the ruling Awami League, the opposition party BNP, and its associate organizations have increased in the streets ahead of the upcoming National Parliament elections. Every day, there are counter programs. As a result, attacks, cases, and conflicts are occurring around these political programs. Violence and political harassment cases have also increased. Many persons are being accused anonymously in the Ghost case, the primary purpose of which seems to be to keep the opposition party leaders and organizers in a state of fear and panic so that they cannot hold meetings by threatening arrest. Whenever there is violence, law enforcement agencies file political harassment cases wholesale against opposition leaders and activists and make a significant number of unnamed accused. Again, there are instances of harassing the affected leaders and activists by putting the names of the vulnerable activists in the place of those anonymous names. As a result, people are deprived of the right to do proper politics, and trust in law enforcement agencies is constantly decreasing. On September 1, 2023, on its 45th founding anniversary, BNP announced a nationwide program. BNP leaders claimed that the police and Awami League leaders and activists prevented them from celebrating the party's founding anniversary. Through these activities, the constitutional right of the people to do politics is being restricted, and an atmosphere of fear is being created, constantly endangering the politics and political arena.

According to information published in various media and collected by the msf, there were 21 political harassment cases in September 2023. The police have filed 18 cases as plaintiffs and 3 cases filed by leaders and activists of the ruling party. Of 21 political lawsuits, 16 are against BNP, 5 are against Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh. A total of 6,971 BNP leaders have been accused in 16 cases of harassment. Of these, 821 activists have been named, and 6,150 have been unnamed accused. Of these cases, the media could not find complete information about 4 lawsuits filed against Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh and 1 against BNP.

In addition, according to media sources, in September, 428 people were victims of violence in 34 incidents of political violence and obstruction of meetings. Of them, 425 were injured, and three were killed. Of the wounded, 17 were shot. One teenage boy (tea stall worker) was killed in the AL-BNP clash in Chattogram, and two Awami League activists were killed in infights.

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Violation of the right to journalism and expression

Journalists are being threatened, harassed, harassed, and tortured in their professional duties, undermining the constitutional right to free expression. The fact that they are being physically attacked, harassed, threatened, and assaulted is undesirable and hinders the publication of objective news by silencing the voice of honest journalism. This month, the picture of human rights violations in journalism is also worrisome.

According to information published in various media in the country and collected by msf, in September, 15 journalists were tortured in multiple ways while performing their professional duties. One of them was arrested, while Mosharraf, a journalist of Prothom Alo, was brutally tortured by BCL leaders and activists on the campus of Chittagong University. 2 were harassed, and 1 journalist was rescued after he was missing. Besides, Prothom Alo journalist Rozina Islam (passport in judicial custody in a case under the Penal Code and Official Secrets Act) has not been able to attend the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIGN) conference to be held in Sweden as her passport has not been returned.

In September, 2 journalists were killed and 11 others injured in road accidents in Lalmonirhat and Netrokona. In Burimari, a journalist was injured in a clash between workers and police. In most of these cases, the involvement of the ruling Party Awami League and the police is seen. How journalists are obstructed in their professional duties and physically assaulted, harassed, threatened, and humiliated is undesirable and stifles the voice of objective and honest journalism.

Use/misuse of Digital Security Act/Cyber Security Act.

The Digital Security Act was an utterly repressive law. Although the government has spoken about curbing crime in digital devices, it has been used more against journalists, human rights activists, and opposition leaders. Ignoring the discussions and demands of all professional organizations, the government has passed the Cyber Security Act 2023 in parliament on the pattern of the Digital Security Act by changing the name of the controversial Digital Security Act and amending some sections. While many sections reduce the duration and degree of sentences, arresting an accused person without a warrant and searching his home or establishment have been kept the same. Only a police officer has the authority to decide. It gives the police magisterial authority. If civil harassment increases in the name of security and the rights and working environment of the press are violated, then the cyber security law will set a negative example. All in all, the law is intended to curtail citizens' freedom of speech.

According to media reports and collected by msf, two cases were filed under the Digital Security Act in September. One is in Lalmonirhat, and one is in Sylhet for derogatory comments about the Prime Minister and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on Facebook. Advocate Rakibul Hasan Khan, former legal affairs secretary of Lalmonirhat Municipal Awami League, and Mostafizur Rahman, joint general secretary of Bangladesh Liberation War Mancha Sylhet district unit, filed those cases.

Two Chhatra Dal leaders were arrested this month for posting derogatory remarks against the prime minister on Facebook.

On September 12, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leader Kaifi Sikder posted a derogatory post about the prime minister on her personal Facebook ID. Gournadi Upazila Chhatra League President Zubair Islam filed a case with Model Police Station against Kaifi Sikder and his father, Abul Kalam Sikder(60), joint convener of Gournadi Municipality BNP, and 20-25 unidentified leaders and activists of BNP and its associate organizations. After the case, police arrested Abul Kalam Sikder, father of Chhatra Dal leader Kaifi. Later, Kaifi Sikder was arrested from the capital with the help of Dhaka Metropolitan Police. Kaifi posted, but his father was arrested.

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On September 19, in Bogura, police arrested Swechchhasebak Dal joint convener Hossain Islam Hossain, 26, under sections 153 and 500 of the Penal Code for posting derogatory posts using the prime minister's picture on Facebook. Earlier, a BCL leader filed a case against him with Sadar Police Station.

Alleged gunfights by law enforcement

Collected by msf and as per information published in various media, there were two incidents of shootings in September 2023. Of the two incidents, the army was involved in one incident and the police in another. In both cases, no casualties were reported in the media, but one person was arrested by the army and one by the police with gunshot wounds.

On September 18, a group of armed militants of KNF opened fire on a patrol member of the army in the Jaeongpara hill area of Ruma upazila of Bandarban. The army's patrol team fired back in self-defense. The injured KNF member Boyram Bom (22) was rescued from the spot and handed over to the police.

On September 16, in the Demra Staff Quarter Della Bamail area of the capital, the alleged robbers attacked the police after realizing the presence of the police during an operation to arrest the robbers. A young man named Minhajun Abedin Fahim (27) was shot and injured in the shooting incident. The police claim that the injured youth is a member of a gang of robbers.

Abducted/missing under the identifying of law enforcement

According to information published in various media outlets and collected by msf, in September 2023, an engineer was picked up by law enforcement.

On September 24, an engineer named Kamrul Hasan was abducted in a car at Banani in the capital. On his way back from work, he was picked up in a car posing as an administration man when he arrived on Highway 8. At that time, the people identifying themselves as admin officials told Kamrul's colleague that Kamrul would be released at night. He has not been found since.

Allegation of death, torture, and over-action after being chased by police to avoid arrest by law enforcement

According to information published in various media outlets and collected by msf, in September 2023, one person died after diving into the water to escape arrest by law enforcement. In addition, some members of the police have been accused of engaging in several crimes of false cases, indecent behavior, and torture, in addition to the unethical activities of some members of the police.

Death after being chased by the police

On September 1, at Teknaf in Cox's Bazar, while chatting with friends after seeing police patrol Chhatra League leader Kamrul Hasan Qayyum (20), office secretary of Hoikang Union Committee of Chhatra League, died while trying to escape jumping from the bridge.

Allegations of torture and over-action

On September 27, at a press conference at Jessore Press Club auditorium, Assistant Sub-Inspector Ashish of Jessore Police Lines started torturing a businessman named Ujjal Biswas (32) for refusing to transact illegal money through a bank account. They vandalized the shop and snatched the hard disk of the CCTV camera, password, and two bank cards. Besides, the police also forced him to sign a cheque of Rs 5 lakh and a blank stamp. Later, Ashish claimed that he would get Tk 25 lakh from Ujjal. If he doesn't pay, Ujjal Biswas will be arrested and disappeared.

On September 4, in the Sonapur area of Sonargaon upazila of Narayanganj, after arresting Kamal from his house, police called him a drug dealer. After capturing and handcuffing him, by stopping

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the car at Panam Nagar on the way to Sonargaon police station, threatening Kamal Hossain beating and of crossfire, sub-inspector Motalib demanded Tk 2 lakh. Kamal Hossain was released when his wife gave Tk 1 lakh to the police.

On September 8, Jubo League activist Parvez(25) and his cousin Md. Abul Kalam Azad clashed over a duck in a paddy field in Noakhali's Subarnachar upazila. Selim was detained at the police station and tortured by Char Jabbar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Debapriya Das. As a result of the torture, black spots were seen in different parts of the body.

On September 24, at a press conference at Jessore Press Club auditorium, Bilkis Khatun, wife of a cattle trader, alleged Rab members picked up her husband Nasir Uddin (40), from Bagachhara Satmile area of Sharsha upazila of Jessore and framed him with weapons and bullets. Rab claims Nasir Uddin is a smuggler.

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Death in Jail custody

According to data collected by msf, 10 people died in prison custody in September 2023. Last month, the number was 21. Five prisoners, including a woman and an Indian national, have died this month.

Besides, Junayed (26) was injured in a fight between two prisoners inside the Dhaka Central Jail (Keraniganj). He was hit with a sharp object and severely injured. He is currently being treated at Dhaka Medical College Hospital under the guard of jail guards.

Three inmates died in Keraniganj Central Jail, two in Kashimpur Central Jail, one in Rajshahi Central Jail, and one in Madaripur, Kishoreganj, Patuakhali and Sherpur District Jails. It is to be noted that all the prisoners were taken to an outside hospital, where the doctors declared them dead. msf believes that in addition to improving the medical system inside the prison, it is possible to control such crimes if the cause of death in custody is properly investigated and those responsible are brought to justice.

Casualties and Situations at the Border

Border killings and torture are not stopped but continue to happen due to the non-action of the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) to stop border killings and tortures.

According to data collected by the msf, four people were killed in firing by the BSF along the border this month, and one person was killed in the mass beating of Indian nationals.

On September 2. at the Behula Char international border area of Shaulmari union of Roumari upazila of Kurigram, Manik Mia (32), a cattle trader, was killed in a shooting by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF), Manik Mia was shot on the right side of the chest and died on the spot.

On The night of September 6, at Ghaghra Mominpara border of Haribhasa union of Panchagarh Sadar upazila.a BSF patrol team fired several rounds. The body of a cattle trader named Nur Islam was recovered from the main pillar 752 area border in the morning.

On September 14, BSF members opened fire on Mizanur Rahman alias Koyra Mizan(50), a Bangladeshi cattle trader, inside India at the Jiwannagar border in Chuadanga. Mizanur died on the spot. On September 20, BSF handed over the body to the police.

On September 27, on the Indian side of the Thakurpur border area of Chuadanga, Rabiul Islam (42), a Bangladeshi cattle trader, was shot dead by the Border Security Force.

On the night of September 3, through the Sonatila border area of Goinghat upazila of Sylhet, a Bangladeshi national named Jalal Uddin illegally entered India. According to the Indians, he was lynched by local people when he was caught stealing there. He died on the spot. The Border Security Force (BSF) handed over his body to the BGB on September 6. msf believes there has been no visible response from the government to prevent untoward incidents on the border so

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far. It was supposed that the Border Patrol would use rubber bullets if necessary. Here, this law is violated. Such incidents at the border can never be desirable.

Persecution of minorities

According to media sources and msf statistics, there were eight incidents of religious and ethnic minority abuse at different levels during the month. Of these, 3 incidents of vandalism of idols of Hindu worshipers and temples took place. In Boalkhali of Chattogram, idols, donation boxes, and other puja items were stolen, and idols were vandalized at Hinganagar Kamanna Sarkarpara Sarvajanik Kali and Durga temples of Atia union of Delduar upazila of Faridpur and Tangail.

In three incidents, an attempt was made to occupy the pond of Dhanuka Mansabari temple in the Dhanuka area of Shariatpur district, and the house of a minority led by the UP chairman was attacked and beaten up over land-related issues at Devidwar in Comilla. Eight families of the Hari (Dalit) community of Dhonipara Darwani village in Nilphamari's Sonaroy are harassed by threatening eviction from their ancestral land.

The main accused of the kidnapping and murder of college student Sibley Sadiq in Raujan of Chittagong, Umongching Marma, was snatched from the police van and beaten up and killed. After that, Panchpara of Kaldpur Union and some surrounding villages have become manless due to fear of arrest.

Garo Hills is on the northern border of Jamalpur district on the border of the Indian state of Meghalaya. Only a handful of tribal families live there. They risked their lives to earn a living by cultivating Jhum on hill land and selling wood. But thousands of people are making houses illegally in Garo Hills and throwing Garo people from their habitations.

Recovery of the unidentified dead body

In September 2023, recovery of unidentified bodies has been a great concern. According to the information published in the media and collected by the msf in September 2023, the bodies of 41 people, including two teenagers, 1 teenage girl, and 3 young girls, 5 women and 29 men, were recovered from different parts of the country, which is very alarming and worrisome and a major cause of insecurity in civic life. Last month, the number was 24. Except for two or four cases, the identity of all the bodies remains unknown. It is important to identify those involved in these incidents and ensure punishment. Questions have been raised in the public mind about who is responsible for these killings and about the government's will, efficiency, and ability to provide security to citizens, as law enforcement agencies are entirely clueless about this. Most of these unidentified bodies were found floating in rivers or streams, along highways or roads, under bridges, and in abandoned areas, hands and feet tied, sacked, wrapped around their necks, with injury marks. Among the deceased were two 15-year-old boys, one girl, three young women, two young women, 23 youths, five aged 40-50, and five above 50.

The msf believes that responsibility does not end simply by reporting the recovery of an unidentified body. No matter how powerful those involved in these incidents are, the state needs to ensure the punishment of all the criminals, but the police are not showing much interest in that matter.

Mass Beatings

Mass beating, violating the existing law, can be considered extrajudicial killings. According to msf figures available to the media, deaths caused by mass beatings have been alarmingly high in September 2023. There have been at least 11 incidents of mass beatings this month, according to media reports and msf statistics. 7 youths were killed, and 5 were seriously injured. Among the injured, three have been handed over to the police. Last month, 6 people, including a teenager, were killed, and 8 others, including 1 child, were seriously injured. These mass beatings have

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been committed due to suspected theft, robbery, hostility, and provocation. msf believes that mass beating in defiance of the law must be a criminal offense. The law enforcement agencies are responsible for taking legal action against those involved in the mass beating.

Sources: Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, NewAge, Kaler Kantho, Jugantor, Sangbad, Janakantha, Amader Samay, Bangladesh Pratidin, Daily Manabzamin, Samakal, Ittefaq, Ajker Patrika, Dhaka Tribune, BD News 24, Bangladesh Journal, Jayjay Din, Jago News, and other national dailies.. In addition, almost every case has been verified by local human rights defenders. It is to be noted here that this report has been prepared based on the events that took place from September 1, 2023, to September 30, 2023.

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