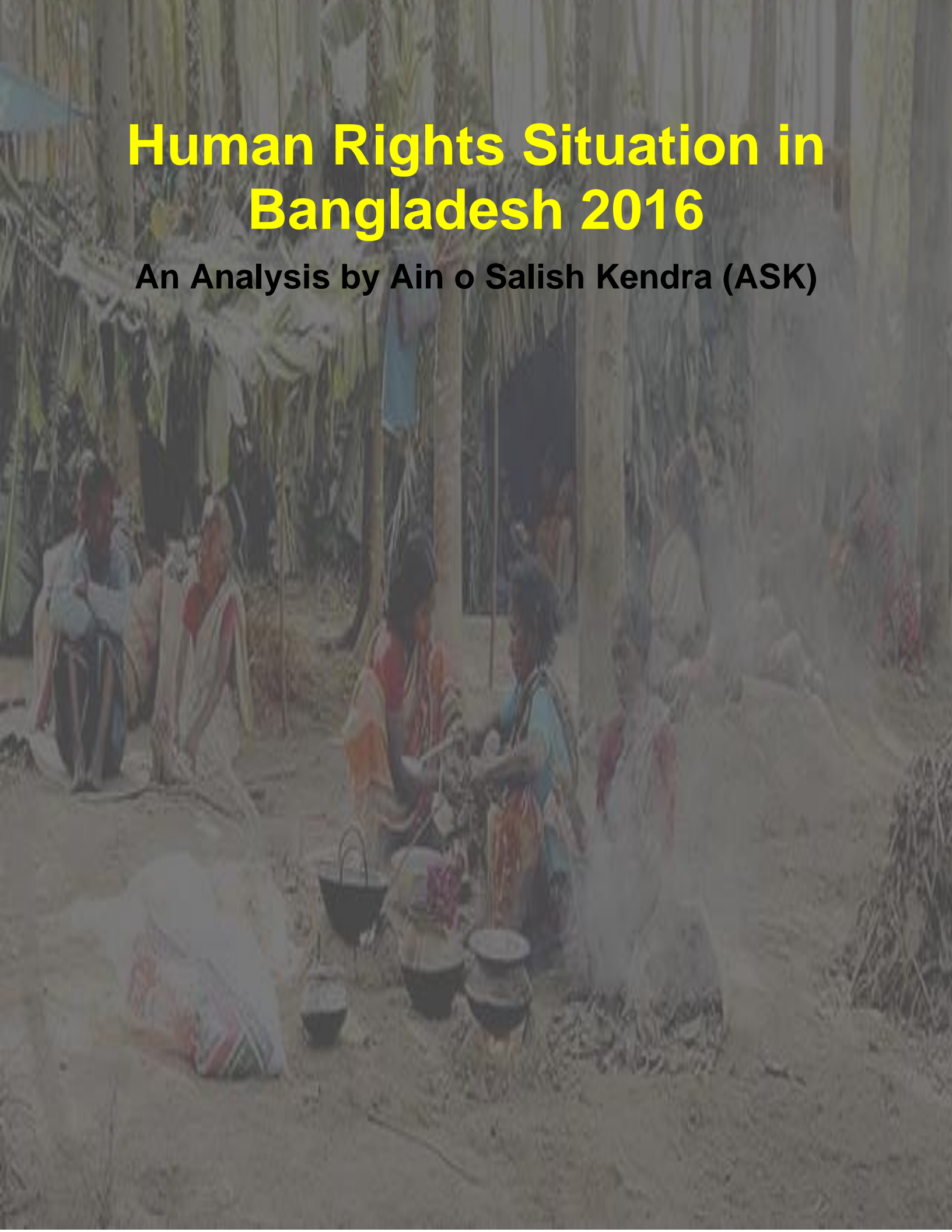


# Human Rights Situation in Bangladesh 2016

An Analysis by Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK)



Bangladesh has proved its capacity to uphold economic, social and cultural rights of its citizen over the year 2016 at greater extend. This achievement has not only been recognized at the national level but also received international acknowledgement. Particularly, the accomplishment of most of the targets under Millennium Development Goals- MDGs, specifically, out of the 21 targets of the 8 millennium development goals, 13 were achieved even before the estimated time. There has been remarkable achievement in poverty alleviation, advancement in education, lessening the death rates of mothers and children. Total scenario of achievement in safeguarding economic, social and cultural rights creates a space of relief and further journey towards more sustainable development. But, this sigh of relief goes away soon we concentrate upon the other indicator of human rights that is civil and political rights. The country performed terribly poor in protecting the civil and political rights of its citizens. It experienced gross human rights violation in diverse forms, by different individuals, groups, agencies including the law enforcers. Over the year, the country experienced unabated continuation of kidnapping, forced disappearance, secret murder along with extrajudicial killing in the name of cross-fire and gun fight. Moreover, the situations concerning unlawful and mass arrest, torture and the resultant deaths in police custody did not change as compared to those in previous years. The most unprecedented of all was the barbaric attacks on innocent people launched by religious militants. The Holey Artisan Bakery attack on 01July 2016 and the Sholakia attack 07 July 2016 made the citizens gravely worried.

The year 2016 also witnessed several brutal attacks on different ethnic and religious minorities. At different times of the year, Hindu priests, temple servers, and Christians were killed and severely injured. Also, the Hindu residences, their temples and idols were vandalized and set on fire, and they were evicted out of their houses. Beside the continued attack on people of other faiths, the indigenous people were not spared-they were attacked, tortured and evicted.

Violence against women achieved new heights not only in terms of variety, but also of atrocity in 2016. This year, the number of incidents of eve teasing, torture, killing, sexual harassment, and physical violence through local arbitration process increased compared to last year. On the other hand, state's initiatives were frustrating in ensuring both freedom of expression of its citizens and freedom of media. Besides, the continued border killing by BSF at different times of the year threatened the security of the common citizens.

Foreign Donation Regulations Act (2016) was passed in the national assembly, with the provision of state control over different Non Government Organizations (NGOs). According to this new law, if any NGO or its officials make any offensive comment about the constitution or constitutional establishments, punitive measures could be taken including cancelation of the registration of the concerned NGO. Meanwhile, the cabinet approved draft of the Digital Security Act, 2016 on principle. This draft Act revoked section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology (Amendment) Act, 2013 but proposed a similar ruling. Unfortunately, if the law gets passed with the proposed ruling, there would remain chances of misuse alike the former one.

On May 13, 2016, Shyamal Kanti Bhakta, the Principal of Piar Sattar Latif High School, Narayanganj was accused of making offensive comments about Islam and was assaulted in public in the presence of the local MP Selim Osman. The country exploded in condemnation against such humiliation. Consequently, the Ministry of Education formed an investigation committee to inquire into the matter. The committee found the allegation completely false. In this regard, the High Court issued a show-cause notice demanding an answer as to why no actions would be taken against the people accused of causing such disgrace to an honorable teacher.

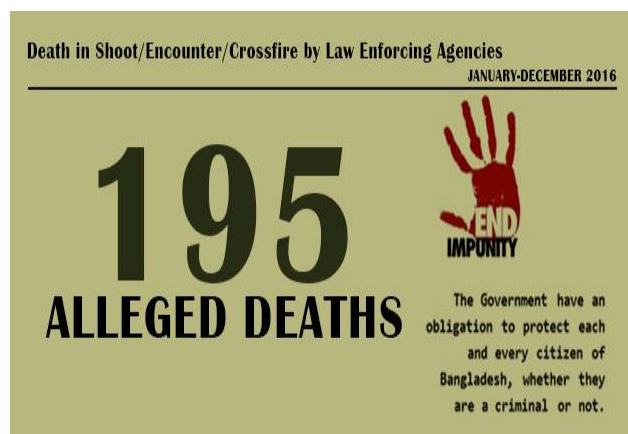
Amid all these disappointments, there are some significant achievements on the ground of civil and political rights in 2016. The High Court verdict preventing the misuse of section 54, and 167 of the penal code, and concerning the cancellations of the right of an MP to remove a judge from his/her position as validated in the 16<sup>th</sup> amendment of the constitution can be referred as examples. Moreover, the trial for the crimes against humanity committed in 1971 continued uninterrupted this year. The International Crime Tribunal passed six verdicts concerning war crimes, and two verdicts that gave death sentences to the criminals were executed.

## Brief report on specific Human Rights Violations

### *Extra-judicial killing, torture and death in police custody*

Despite the continuous protests of various human rights organizations, extra-judicial killing has not stopped. In addition, the government continued to deny even the existence of any extra-judicial killing as always. Compared to 2014 and 2015, the rate of such killings increased in 2016 in many different forms, for example, ‘crossfire’, ‘gunfight’, ‘exchange of bullets’, ‘encounter between police and the convict(s) etc. Added to this list were deaths in police custody where many were ruthlessly tortured, and died in consequence. However, there were instances of justice as well: in 2007, the then in-charge of the Islamic University Police Station, Kushtia accompanied with three other police officers went to a farmer’s house. They persuaded the farmer to go with them and eventually they killed him. In November, 2016, the court of Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Kushtia ordered the accused to be arrested, that can be considered as an exemplary measure taken against extra-judicial killing in the year.

In 2016, a total number of 195 people were killed in ‘crossfire’, ‘gunfight, bullet-exchange, and also in the custody of law enforcement authorities while the figure was 192 and 128 respectively in the year 2015 and 2014. Among these people, 159 died in ‘crossfire’, ‘gunfight’,



and ‘bullet-exchange’, 10 were tortured to death in the custody of law enforcement authorities, and 18 died during shootouts, 2 committed suicide after being arrested and 5 died of illness.

In an investigative report of ASK, it came to light that on 03 January 2016, at around 9:30 pm, in Kingshuk Residential area next to the embankment in Mirpur, 2-3 policemen, accompanied by 2 police informers came to a tea-stall owned by Babul Matbar and demanded bribe. As Babul refused to give them any bribe money, the policemen and their associates started vandalizing the shop and at one point kicked a burning stove that fell on Babul, and he immediately caught fire. The following day, on January 04, Babul died in the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College. On 09 January 2016 at around 11 pm, Golam Rabbi, a high official of Bangladesh Bank, was stopped by police on his way home. They falsely accused him of carrying yaba (mad drugs), and forced him into their van. They demanded tk 10 lacs from Rabbi and as he refused to pay any money, they inflicted inhuman torture on him.

A female student of ASA University reported to the ASK investigation reporter that on 31 January 2016, while returning home upon finishing her classes at the university, she was stopped by SI Ratan of Adabar Police Station, who was accompanied by a number of constables, at the end of Ring Road next to Shia Masjid. They also accused her of carrying yaba forcing her to get off of the rickshaw. They forcefully took her to an electronic shop near Japan Garden City, and ordered everyone to go out from the shop. Afterwards, SI Ratan harassed the girl sexually.

Furthermore, 51 died as a consequence of extrajudicial mass beating. A total of 78 people died in jail-custody out of which only 32 were prisoners, and 46 were simply in the lockup. It is to be noted here that in 2016, a total of 10 people including 2 war criminals were hanged.

### ***Enforced Disappearance***

Though the High Court has made it illegal for law enforcement agencies to arrest or pick up a person in civil dress, a good number of such incidents, which is more in number this year compared to the previous ones, took place. According to the statistics of ASK Documentation Unit<sup>1</sup>, a total of 97 people were forced to disappear, kidnapped and killed by the law enforcement agencies in 2016. Out of 97, 11 dead bodies were found, 26 were shown arrested, 3 returned to their families, and the rest could not yet been traced so far. In this regard, it is to be noted that the number of victims of the



<sup>1</sup> Information collected by ASK Documentation Unit from ASK investigation and 08 daily newspapers – Prothom Alo, Samakal, Ittefaq, Sangbad, Naya Diganta, Daily Star, New Age and Dhaka Tribune .

aforementioned categories of crimes was 55 in 2015. According to the family members of the victims, the victims were picked up by people who introduced themselves as members of law enforcement authority, and since the time the victims were gone, their families had never heard from them. Upon being inquired about these people, initially, the law enforcement authorities denied of any such pick-up of any of the victims. However, on different occasions, they produced the victims in public, handed them over to a police station or sometimes the dead bodies of the victims were found. The three officials of RAB, who were accused of committing 7 murders, became the talk of the town in 2014. They were not spared as all of them had to go through all different phases of trial. Evidences in support of their crimes were produced, which were examined and cross-examined. The final verdict is due to be given by Narayanganj Sessions Judge Court on January 16, 2017.

In an investigation of ASK, it came to light that Moazzem Hossain Topu, a Chattra League (Bangladesh Students' League, student wing of Awami League) Leader was picked up from Basundhara Residential area at around 11 pm on 26 January 2016 by a group of people who introduced themselves as DB Police officers. After this incident, the family members of Topu looked for him in different police stations, RAB offices, and also DB offices, but failed to trace him. They also did a general diary in Badda Police Station. However, Topu was still missing till date. On May 12, Abdullah Al Saim Turjo (25) from an area next to a mosque in Chhoto Boira, Monirul Islam (28) from Baikali Bazar, and Md. Soaib from the same area were arrested by DB Police Officers between 6:30 to 9:30 pm. One of the two families of the two victims filed a case and the other did a general diary entry with the concerned police station. Upon an investigation by ASK, it came to light that those three persons were shown arrested in Jatrabari Police Station, and produced before court for trial. Meanwhile, on 15 June 2016, three unidentified bodies were found under a Banyan tree in Bangabandhu Park, which was near the river Kapatakkha in a place called Katakhalī of the village Krishnanagar under Jhikargachha Police Station of Jessore district. Jhikargachha Police Station claimed that these three people whose dead bodies were found were suspected as robbers and beaten to death by the local mobs. However, people of neighboring areas informed the ASK investigation team that there had not been any incident of beating in the place in question. As for the family members of the three victims, they said that the victims had been missing for a few days before their death. As per the news published on different dailies, in the night of 03 December 2016, three young men namely Abudullah Akand (28), Redowan Sabbir (26), and Sohel Rana (27) were picked up on a microbus from a tea-stall in an intersection called Tokia Mor of Natore district by 10-12 people who introduced themselves as RAB Officers. Their dead bodies were found on 05 December 2016 next to Kopapara Road in the sub-district of Ghoraghat of the district of Dinajpur.

## *Political Violence and the Law and Order Situation*

In 2016, the law and order situation of the country deteriorated to an alarming state as militant fundamentalist groups targeted foreign nationals, people of the minorities, and believers of other faiths killing them, taking them in hostage and launching suicidal attacks. This created a nerve-



numbing terrifying atmosphere amongst common people throughout the country. On the other hand, the ninth Union Parishad Election took place amongst wide-spread chaos and violence resulting in several deaths. A total of 147 people lost their lives in the violence triggered by the election. This is the highest-ever number of deaths on the occasion of Union Parishad Election. Furthermore, a bloody feud broke out

between members of police & ansars and local villagers in a coal-based electricity plant in Gondamara of Bashkhali, Chittagong resulted in four deaths.

A total of 907 incidents of political violence took place in 2016. Amongst these, there were incidents of clashes between various political parties, and members of the law enforcement authorities, between the supporters of the ruling party and those of the opposition. In addition, there were internal clashes within many political parties. These incidents resulted in 177 deaths and 11462 injuries. It is to be noted here that in 2015, a total of 865 incidents took place and the number of casualties was 153.

On 01 July, 2016, a total number of 35 people were taken hostage by a group of armed militants in Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan, Dhaka. The militants killed 17 foreign nationals, 2 Bangladeshi nationals, 1 Bangladeshi-born American, and 20 other people with unfathomable atrocity. In an attempt to resist the attack two police officers were killed, and several others got injured. Later, in an operation launched by the joint force of Bangladesh Police and Bangladesh Army, 5 militants, one chef of the Bakery, who was also a suspect, died. On July 08, Zakir Hossain Shaon, an assistant to the suspected chef died on in Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Barely a week passed since the Gulshan attack as on 07 July, on the Eid day, a fresh attack was launched on the members of police on duty as bombs were exploded in the biggest Eid congregation in Sholakia in the district of Kishoreganj. Afterwards there was a gunfight between police and the militants. Two police constables were killed in this incident. During the gunfight, a member of the militant group named Abir Rahman, and a local inhabitant named Jharna Rani Bhowmik were killed.

Following the Gulshan and Sholakia attack, members of the law enforcement authorities raided possible militant hideouts in Kalyanpur, Mirpur, and Azimpurn of Dhaka, Paikpara of Narayanganj, Harinal, Poshchimpara, Lebu Bagan, Noagaon, and Patartek of Gajipur, kagmara, and Mirjamath of Tangail, and Ashkona, Uttara. These raids lead to a number of casualties, the news of which was published in public media.

### ***Attack on the Religious Minorities***

The year also witnessed an increased number of incidents of inhuman torture, and killing of the minorities. Among others, Hindu priests, temple servers, Christians, and Buddhists were targeted, injured, and killed. On many occasions, Islamic State (IS), the international terrorist organization, accepted the responsibility of many of the attacks. People who were hacked, and slit to death in 2016 were (the day of the killing is given next to the victims' names): (a) an 82-year old Samir Ali (07January), who had converted himself from Islam to Christianity, (b) a Jogeshhor Roy (21 Feb.), the Principal of the Gauri Temple in Deviganj of Panchagar (c) a 70-year old priest named Paramananada (24 April), a resident of Tungipara, Gopalganj. (d) a tailor named Nikhil Joarder (30 April). He was made to come out of his shop, and hacked to death. (e) a Christian businessman namely Suneel Gomez, (05 June), a resident in the Borai village of Natore. (f) Ananda Gopal Ganguly, (07 June), a Hindu priest in an area called Mohisherbhar under Naldanga union of the district of Jhinaida. (g) Shyamananda Das (01 July), a Hindu temple server,. He was collecting flowers for his temple when three miscreants came on a motorcycle, and left him critically injured by hacking him mercilessly. As the local people took him to the city hospital, the duty doctor declared him dead. (h) Nittyaranjan Pandey (10 June), a server in the Sri Sri Anukul Chandra Shatshongo temple of the village Hemayetpur of the district of Pabna was hacked to death. (i) Ripon Ckarabarty (15 June) a Lecturer of Mathematics of Govt. Najimuddin College of the district of Madaripur was hacked and left critically injured. (j) the miscreants slit the throat of Narasundar Haridas (03 September) in Bogra.



According to the ASK Documentation Unit, in 2016, 7 Hindus, and 2 Christians from different parts of the country were killed. Moreover, 194 houses, and shops, and 197 temples and idols were vandalized.

On 30 October, in the Harinber village under Nasirnagar town of the district of Brahmanbaria, a huge outcry broke out over some pictures posted on facebook, which intended to insult Islam. Following the commotion, 15 temples were vandalized, 50 houses were attacked, destroyed,

looted and set fire on. Afterwards, even in the presence of police, temples and houses were set on fire three times. In order to protect the minorities of the whole country, ASK wrote a writ petition to the High Court requesting necessary instructions from the court to deal with such situations.

Meanwhile, one of the rivals to the winning candidate of Bangladesh Awami League, who himself was a candidate of Alwami League, started terrorizing people as to why they had voted for Nouka (boat), a symbol for Bangladesh Awami League, and as a result 100 families in 4 different villages of Ashashuni under the district of Satkhira were evicted out of their houses. On May 29, in the Khuruskul Union Parisad Election, the supporters of the defeated candidate vandalized more than hundred houses of the Hindus, their temples, and beat up 30 men and women. Furthermore, there were newspaper reports on similar attacks, torture and destructive activities that had taken place in Barisal, Jhalokathi, Pirojpur, Tangail, Sirajganj, Thakurgaon, Bagerhat, Jessore, Mymensing, Netrokona, Habiganj, among other parts of the country.

### ***Violence against Women***

Despite several initiatives taken by both government and non-government organizations, violence against women did not stop. Like previous years, 2016 also witnessed many different forms of violence against women, for example, eve teasing, torture for dowry, torture through extra-judicial village court, fatwa that punishes women unlawfully, rape, hurling of acid, torture within family, torture on domestic helps etc. It is to be noted here that though cases were filed against the accused on various occasions of torture, the victims and their families were forced to reconcile due to procrastination of trials. On the other hand, amongst huge protests of various organizations for women empowerment, and human rights, “Child Marriage Act, 2016” was passed in the cabinet. According to this law, though the minimum marriageable age for girls was kept 18, the age factor could be relaxed with the consent of High Court, and that of the parents of the child for the “best interest of the people concerned”.

On 20 March, the dead body of a college student called Tonu was discovered from a jungle in Moynamoti Cantonment. The incident created a huge furor and triggered vehement public protests on media and also on various social networking sites. Even after the second autopsy, it was not known whether Tonu was raped before she was murdered. This is still an unresolved issue as the killers have not yet been identified.

### ***Stalking, Sexual Harassment and Torture***

In 2016, there were several incidents of sexual harassment by local goons in various educational institutions, and workplaces. A total of 244 women became victims of different forms of sexual harassment followed by brutal violence. Out of the 244 victims, 6 women committed suicide, 14 people, 7 men and 7 women, were murdered for their protest against harassment of women. A total of 138 women were insulted for their protest, and 5 girls had to stop going to school to



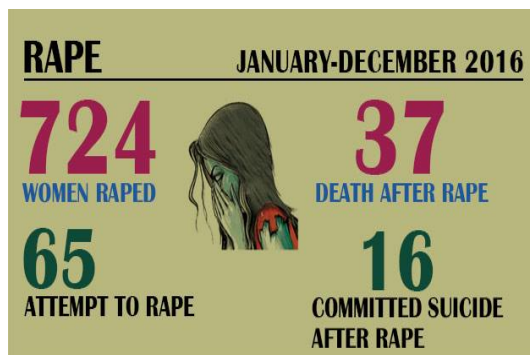
avoid sexual harassment. To be mentioned here, in the year 2015 a total of 224 women were sexually molested at different times and places.

On 03 October, a student of Sylhet MC College, namely Khadija, was returning home upon finishing her B.A. exam when a terrorist leader of the student wing of Awami League named Badrul started hacking Khadija mercilessly, and left her severely injured. She was hospitalized for 57 days in Square Hospital, Dhaka. She is free from danger now. The Prime Minister took special initiative for Khadija's treatment. The accused terrorist Badrul was arrested. Meanwhile, a student of Wills Little Flower School, Dhaka, named Suraiya Aktar Risha, was stabbed by a derailed youth named Obaidul Khan for not accepting his love proposal. Risha was taken to Dhaka Medical College, and battled death for 4 days before breathing her last. People were outraged all over the country, later police arrested Obaidul Khan.

In the intervening time, the local goons used to eve-tease a 7-th grader female student called Shahnaz, the daughter of a day laborer, in the village Nolbhanga under the sub-district of Kaliganj of the district of Jhinaidah. Her father, Shahnoor, protested against the teasing of his daughter. On 16 October 2016, the goons beat up Shahnoor and left him seriously wounded. Later, Shahnoor was admitted into National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopedic Rehabilitation, Dhaka, and at one point of his treatment, both his legs had to be amputated. Shahnoor family filed a case against the perpetrators.

### ***Rape***

In 2016, 724 women were raped, 37 were killed after rape, and 08 committed suicide due to rape. On 18 October 2016, a five-year old female child went missing from her house. Next day, on October 19, the child was found unconscious in a turmeric field next to her house. She was immediately taken to a local hospital. As her condition was not improving, the local doctors made arrangement to send her to Dhaka Medical College. The child was so atrociously abused that the doctors were utterly shocked to see her condition.



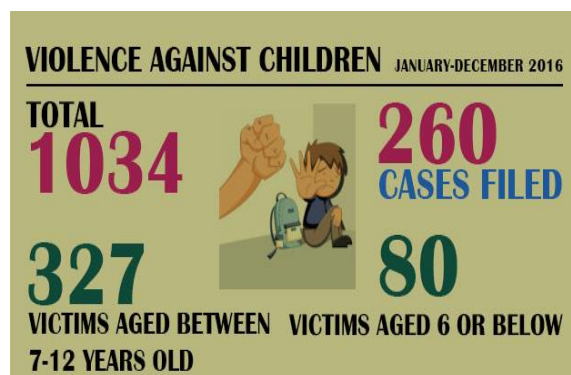
### ***Fatwa and Salish***

According to the Documentation Unit of ASK, 12 women were tortured in the name of fatwa and salish. In 4 of these cases, women were evicted out of their houses, and ostracized socially, and in 5 of these cases, they became victims of physical torture. However, among all these 12 incidents only three cases were filed in police stations.

On 26 October 2016, in the village Kamalprotap under Bashgram union in the sub-district of the city of Norail, rumors were spread about a housewife that she had been involved in immoral activities, and was brought under salish (arbitration) by the members of the Union, and the locally influential people. The salish ordered the victim's hair to be hacked off, and the victim to be tortured and imposed a fine of 50, 000 taka. Meanwhile, on October 29, in the village of Mahmudpur under Mathura Union of the sub-district of Badalgachhi of the district of Nawgaon, a woman called Champa Parveen and her mother named Shonabhan were brutally beaten up by the Chairman of the local Union Parisad and his associates, and were tied up to a tree. In a similar incident on October 16, in the village Charshavikalri under the sub-district of Shonagaji of the district of Feni, the Chairman of the Union Charnashi hacked off the Vhair of the wife of an expatriate in the presence of thousands of people. Moreover, she was forced to wear shoes around her neck and walk around the village.

***Acid violence, Dowry, Torture within family and torture of the domestic helps***

In 2016, the number of incidents pertaining to acid throwing was less compared to that of previous years. In this year, a total of 34 women became victims of acid throwing, and one died as a result. However, only 12 cases were filed in this regard. As for dowry, 239 women were tortured, and only 95 cases were filed. 394 women were the victims of torture within family, but only 187 cases were filed. In 2016, 64 housemaids were tortured, but only 32 cases were filed.

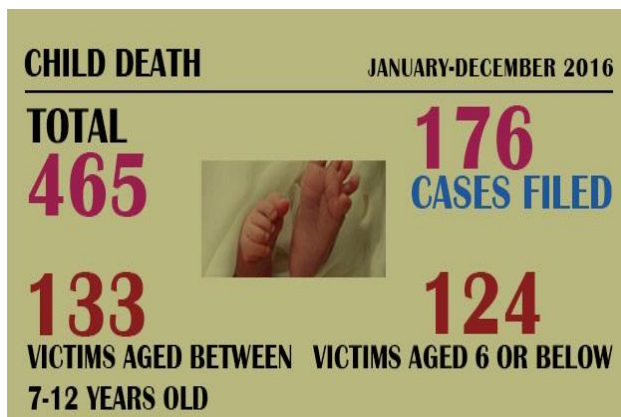


***Child Abuse***

The degree and atrocity of child abuse did not change much this year compared to those of the previous years. According to the Documentation Unit of ASK, in 2016, 415 children were murdered, 22 committed suicide, and 28 children died mysteriously. However, only a total of 176 cases were filed in this regard. As for mental and physical torture, rape, sexual harassment, and eve-teasing, 1034 incidents took place, but only 260 cases were filed.

On 24 July, Shagar, a child laborer of Ekhlas Spinning Mill of Rupganj under Narayanganj, was rescued unconscious with an inflated belly. He was taken to Dhaka Medical College, but was declared dead by the doctors there. The family of the deceased child complained that air was pumped into the boy's rectum, and he died as a result. The father of Sagar, named Ratan Barman, filed a murder case in Rupganj police station.

On 31 August, a child named Saddam Arun who used to work as helper in Meghna Automobile Workshop near Laltola Bazar, Katasur, Mohammedpur was beaten mercilessly by younger brother of the Workshop owner. The person being accompanied with other workers of the workshop pressed compressor machine pipe into Arun's rectum. At last, after being brutally tortured and consequently senseless Arun was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.



On 02 October 2015, in Shundarganj of Gaibandha, a ruling party MP named Manzuurul Islam shot a fourth grader boy, and case was filed. The associates of the concerned MP put pressure on Saurav's family to dismiss the case. On 10 February 2016, Father of Saurav, Saju Mia, demanded justice for his son, and complained that the associates of Manzuorul Islam took him, to a house, and forced him to sign on a non-judicial stamp, before letting him go.

### ***Rights to Freedom of Speech***

Right to freedom of speech is a constitutional right. However, like previous years, this constitutional right was grossly violated this year too. There were allegations of government surveillance on different social networking sites, which seriously impeded the exercise of freedom of speech. Moreover, different repressive measures of the government, and various heinous activities of different fundamentalist groups further deteriorated the situation.

In the night of 06 April 2016, in Laxmibazar of the Old Town, miscreants hacked Nazimuddin, a student of Jagannath University, to death. The family of the victim said that he was murdered for his writing on extreme religious views on his facebook page. Meanwhile, on 23 April, miscreants slit the throat of AFM Rezaul Karim Siddiqui, a teacher of the University of Rajshahi, and killed him. While fleeing the crime scene, Faizullah Fahim, one of the attackers, was nabbed by the local mob. Later, he was produced in court, and police took him to a remand of 10 days. In less than 24 hours into the interrogation in remand, he was shown dead in a 'shootout' with police. On April 25, in East Dhanmodi, which was under Kalabagan Police Station, unidentified miscreants entered the flat of Xulhaz and his friend Mahbub Rabbi Tonoy, and hacked both to death. Xulhaz was involved in editorial assistance of a magazine called "Rupban", which advocated for equal rights of the homosexuals. Furthermore, at different times of the year, there were attacks on progressive political thinkers, renowned intellectuals, and writers, and some of them were also murdered. Prof Anu Muhammad, member secretary of the National Committee

to Protect Oil, Gas and Mineral Resources, Power and Ports, writer Moinul Ahsan Sabir, and poet Imtiaz Mahmud received death threats through mobile messages sent to their numbers.

### ***Torture on Journalists***

According to the Documentation Unit of ASK, in 2016, a total of 117 journalists were tortured physically, sued against, attacked, received death threats, and suffered various other forms of harassments committed by the law enforcement authorities.

In 2016, from 11 February to 22 February, 79 cases were filed against the Editor of The Daily Star, one of the top dailies of the country Bangladesh on the ground of treason and defamation in the courts of different districts of Bangladesh including Dhaka. Different humanitarian organizations at home and abroad, leading journalists, and renowned individuals of the civil society criticized the legal actions against Mahfuz Anam saying that such actions reflect the misuse of power for mean political gains.

On 16 April, under the guise of journalists from Baishakhi TV, members of DB (Detective Branch) Police entered senior journalist Shafiq Rehman's house in Eskaton, and arrested him. Initially, DB had denied the act of arrest, but later admitted it. The allegation against Mr Rehman was that he planned to kidnap, and kill Shajib Wajed Joy, the son of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

On 31 March, a local representative of NTV, Afzal Hossain, prepared a report on various irregularities of the election center of No. 02 Rajapur Govt. Primary School under the Union of Rajapur of the district of Bhola. At one point, a police constable shot Afzal Hossain under his left knee at a distance of 2-3 feet. On 23 December, In Ashulia, Police arrested Nazmul Hooda, a local representative of News24 Channel on the ground of provoking garment workers to demand pay raise. Police filed a case against him under information technology law in Asulia Police Station.

On 18 December, Neerob Chowdhury, a photojournalist of the Daily Prothom Alo working in Khagrachhari, was taking pictures of illegal sand lifting in the Rjyamuni area next to the Chengiriver when Didar, an associate of the local City Mayor Rafiqul Alam, abducted Neerob on a motor bike, and took him to the City Office. The City Mayor falsely accused Neerob of extortion, and beat him up. Finally, they forced him to write a commitment note, and let him go.

### ***Restrictions on Freedom of Association and Assembly***

Though it is a constitutional right of people to be able to conduct meetings peacefully, government's attempts to prevent people from exercising their rights was observed at various times of the year in 2016. On 28 July, the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas and Mineral Resources, Power and Ports brought out a procession marching towards the Prime Minister's

Office demanding the cancellation of the contract between the government of Bangladesh and India for establishing a power plant in Rampal, and seven other points. As the procession neared Bangla Motor, Police sprayed tear gas, and baton charged the procession to disperse it. This incident left 50 people wounded. Besides, the main opposition BNP did not get permission to hold meetings on 7 November and also at different other times of the year.

### ***Border Killing and Torture***

In 2016, violation of human rights in the border continued as before. The border guard of India, BSF, killed many people in this year. Though India ensured Bangladesh that they would not allow even a single person to be killed in their border, the reality was very different as the killing never stopped. If anyone tried to cross the Indian border, BSF used to nab them, and either inflicted inhuman torture on them or shot them dead. Furthermore, the BSF members entered Bangladesh unlawfully, and tortured and killed people and also looted their valuables, which was a complete violation of international law. What was extremely disturbing was that during a meeting between the Directors of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), and Indian Border Security Force (ISF) (that took place in Dhaka from 11 to 16 May), a school student in Chuadanga was shot dead by BSF. According to the statistics of ASK, and news published in different media, 23 people were shot dead, 7 underwent corporal torture, 39 wounded. Moreover, 24 Bangladeshi citizens were abducted from the border.



### ***Labor Rights***

In 2016, many laborers died due to unsafe and risky working condition. The factories caught fire, and got collapsed that led to many deaths, and severe injury of the laborers. Moreover, dissatisfaction broke out over increasing the minimum wages of the laborers and their other demands. According to the statistics of a report of Bangladesh Occupational Safety Environment (OSE), 1240 laborers died at work in 2016.

The biggest of all incidents in 2016 took place in plastic and packaging factory called Tampaco Foils Limited, Tongi, BSCIC area, Gazipur. On 10 September 2016, a total of 39 people including the laborers, and security guards of the factory as well as passers by received serious injury as a result of a big explosion inside the factory followed by it catching fire. Meanwhile, on 22 November, in the Jirabo area of Ashulia, an unlawfully established factory that manufactured gas lighter named Color BD Match caught fire too. A total number of 26 laborers got burnt, and received serious injuries. Five of the injured died in the Burn Unit of Dhaka Medical College during treatment.

Meanwhile, at different times of the year, news were published on expatriate laborers suffering harassment, torture, and in many cases, they were deprived of their due salaries. On many occasions, it was observed that laborers died due to various accidents or torture inflicted on them. Meanwhile, with the slogan “Immigration for all for sustainable development”, the 9<sup>th</sup> international convention of Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) took place in Dhaka from 10 to 12 December 2016.

### ***Rights of the Indigenous People***

In 2016, there were a lot of complaints of attack on indigenous people, vandalization of properties and setting fire on their houses, harassment, overtaking their land, and uprooting them from their places. On 06 November, in Shahibganj-Bagdafarm of the district of Gaibandha, 3 Santal, an indigenous group of people, died during a conflict. Their houses were set on fire, and they were being attacked and forced to evacuate. According to an ASK investigation, it came to light that on 10 December, a violent conflict erupted between the police and the sugar mill workers & the Santals in a sugarcane field. At one point, the sugar mill workers, and the police drove out the Santals, took over their houses and set fire on them. During the time of the conflict, a few members of police, and 10-15 Santals were wounded. Many of the wounded Santals were shot, and later 3 of them died. Police filed a case as a complainant. In the case 42 Santals were accused by name and 300/400 were accused anonymously. Police arrested four of the injured Santals from the hospital they had been admitted for treatment. Moreover, police established camps around the sugarcane field, and prevented the Santals from entering it. The following day, on 7 November, a group of miscreants launched an attack on the Santals of the neighboring villages namely Madarpur and Jaipur, and looted their cows, goats, chickens, ducks and husbandries. ASK, ALRD, and Broti, these three human rights organizations filed a petition to the High Court.

2106 has added another volume to the statistical data of gross human rights violation in Bangladesh. It did not simply followed the steps of prior years rather emerged as source to incidences of extreme human rights violation with more variety and atrocity. Most particularly, forms of child abuse, violence against women, attacks on different religious and ethnic minority along with insolently nonprofessional attitudes of different law enforcement authorities have been enough to question the democratic status of the country. If the situation continues to be like this then the desire to be a peaceful, democratic country with inclusive human development will remain as day dream. To attain the status and reality of a truly democratic nation with required respect for humanity, citizens of Bangladesh desires for specific concentration upon the aforementioned issues of human rights violation. State needs take specific measures to develop a humanitarian culture ensuing equal rights for all irrespective of nationality, ethnicity, religion, sex, or opinion of people. Moreover, the government has to be more generously concerned to ensure justice and human rights in all sectors of state.

*The report was compiled based on information gathered through ASK investigation and different national daily's reports pertaining to human rights violation.*