



The Observatory
for the Protection
of Human Rights Defenders

Speaker: Nicola FIDH

(FIDH)

ORAL INTERVENTION - THE OBSERVATORY

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

24th session

Item 6: Bangladesh UPR Report consideration

Joint oral intervention delivered by the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), in the framework of their joint programme, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

September 20, 2013

Check against delivery

Mr. President,

OMCT and FIDH, within the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, welcome the pledges of the Government of Bangladesh to support most of the UPR recommendations, including those on the investigation of allegations of human rights violations by security forces and the prosecution of their perpetrators; and on the protection of human rights defenders and the guarantee that they are allowed to work without hindrance, intimidation or harassment.

However, OMCT and FIDH express their deep concern about the crackdown on critical voices in the country, including human rights defenders, who are judicially harassed, threatened or even killed, as was the case of labour leader **Aminul Islam** in April 2012, whose murderers have still not been identified.

Our organisations denounce in particular the current harassment against Odhikar, a prominent human rights NGO that has been under constant watch by the Government since its inception. Since August 10, 2013, Mr. **Adilur Rahman Khan**, Secretary of Odhikar and a member of OMCT General Assembly, is arbitrarily detained, in relation to a fact-finding report issued by Odhikar on the killing of 61 people during an operation by security forces against Hefazat-e Islam activists in Dhaka. A charge sheet was subsequently filed against Mr. Khan as well as against Odhikar's Director Mr. **Nasiruddin Elan** for "distorting images" and "publishing a fabricated report", under Section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act, in relation to Odhikar's report. An arrest warrant was issued against Mr. Elan. Mr. Khan's trial was scheduled to start yesterday with the framing of charges, but as a Prosecutor had not yet been appointed, the Tribunal reported the hearing to September 25, 2013.

The judicial harassment against Mr. Adilur Rahman Khan and Mr. Nasiruddin Elan merely aims at intimidating and silencing them, Odhikar and more generally any critics of the Government. We call upon the Government of Bangladesh to release Mr. Khan immediately and unconditionally as his detention is arbitrary, and to put an end to the harassment against Odhikar.

Mr. President,

Our organisations also regret that the Government of Bangladesh did not support the recommendation calling for an independent and impartial commission of inquiry on alleged cases of forced disappearances or extrajudicial executions.

OMCT and FIDH finally urge the Government of Bangladesh to extend an invitation to the UN Special Rapporteurs on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders and on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, who have both requested a country visit.

Thank you Mr. President.

fidh

