

HRFB demands comprehensive and time bound action plan to implement concluding observations of UN Human Rights Committee

Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB), a coalition for 19 human rights and development organizations, urged the government to come up with a binding and comprehensive action plan to implement the United Nations Human Rights Committee's observations on civil and political rights of people in Bangladesh. The demand came from a press conference organized by the Forum on April 10, 2017 at National Press Club, Dhaka.

Many Forum members including Sheepa Hafiza, Executive Director, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), Barrister Sara Hossain, Honorary Executive Director, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Zakir Hossain, Chief Executive, Nagorik Uddyog, Ranjan Karmakar, Executive Director, Steps Towards Development were present at the press conference.

The UN Human Rights Committee reviewed the progress of Bangladesh in implementing International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) on 06 & 07 March 2017 in Geneva based on the reports submitted by the government, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). A high level delegation of the government, leading by the Minister, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs participated in the review session. Representatives from NHRC and CSOs were also present there. Five representatives of CSOs got opportunity to deliver their remarks during the dialogue. HRFB submitted report under the process in 2015 and one of the members of the Forum was also present during the review session.

This is the first review session held under the committee. Bangladesh ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 2000 but the initial report was submitted by the government to the committee in June 2015, although it was supposed to be submitted in one year of ratification.

The committee has included their concerns as well as recommendations to overcome the existing challenges in their concluding observations which have been published on 28 March 2017.

Sheepa Hafiza, Executive Director of ASK moderated the conference. In the beginning she said that the purpose of the press conference is to inform people about the concluding observations of the UN Human Rights Committee as well as to demand immediate implementation of the concluding observations.

ASK staff and Forum Coordinator, Tamanna Hoq Hoq Riti presented the written statement on behalf of the Forum. In the written statement, the Forum welcomed the government for

participating in the review process. The Forum also hoped that the government will continue this engagement in future in a productive way through implementing the recommendations at the national level. Moreover, the Forum asked the government to stop denying the incidents of human rights violations again and again; rather they should focus on ending these violations. Further, the Forum also called upon the government to discuss with the civil society for the formulation and implementation of the work plan.

Zakir Hossain, Chief Executive, Nagorik Uddyog, shared his experiences of the discussion since he represented the forum during the review in Geneva. He stated that the government did not defy these observations which mean they have accepted and agreed to implement these at national level.

Ranjan Karmaker, Executive Director, Steps Towards Development, mentioned that, civil society and UN Human Rights mechanisms have been showing their concerns time and again on various human rights violations. If we follow UN reports in last few years we will see that they have placed similar kind of recommendations to address the ongoing human rights violations. The government needs to realize the urgency of implementing the recommendations, there is no option to keep it unturned over and over. Otherwise, these violations of human rights will continue to exist and get intensified. Being a member of civil society, we sincerely want to assist the government to overcome these challenges. The government should not think that we are only here to criticize them.

Barrister Sara Hossain, Honorary Executive Director, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), emphasized on the fact that the government has the responsibility to implement all the recommendations as the key duty bearer. We, as civil society will observe the implementation process and comment if necessary. She also added that it is not just a matter to be addressed at UN forums and CSOs duties do not end only submitting reports. Rather, we need to be very active at national level and do regular monitoring of the implementation process. She also focused on another important aspect and said that we all should realize that it is not the matter of State's image or pride, the protection of citizen's human rights should be the prime concern.

She mentioned that Bangladesh has enacted some progressive laws since 2000 but unfortunately the government has failed to incorporate all those in their report. Moreover, she expressed anguish and disappointment at government's continuous denial of the existence of the indigenous communities.

In conclusion, Sheepa Hafiza said the forum will monitor the implementation of the recommendations in a systematic process and will share the updates with the media in regular basis.

The members of Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB) are Ain o Shalish Kendra (ASK) | Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF) | Bandhu Social Welfare Society (BSWS)| Bangladesh Adivasi Forum | Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movements (BDERM) | Bangladesh Institute of Labor Studies (BILS) | Bangladesh Legal Aid & Services Trust (BLAST) | Bangladesh Mohila Parishad (BMP) | Boys of Bangladesh (BOB) | FAIR | Karmojibi Nari (KN) | Kapaeeng Foundation | Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) | National Alliance of Disabled Peoples' Organizations (NADPO) | Nagorik Uddyog| Nari Pokkho | Nijera Kori | Steps Towards Development (Steps) | Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).

ASK is the Secretariat of the Forum.