

## **General allegation**

**118th session (13–22 May 2019)**

### **Bangladesh**

1. The Working Group received information from the source concerning alleged violations and obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in Bangladesh.
2. The sources report that enforced disappearances have continued to occur with alarming frequency in Bangladesh. According to a source, 507 cases of enforced disappearances have been documented from January 2009 to the end of 2018: 62 of the disappeared were reportedly found dead; 286 returned alive; and the whereabouts of 159 disappeared persons are reportedly still unknown. The source also reports that, in 2018 alone, at least 92 people were subjected to enforced disappearance by the authorities, and that the highest number of cases of enforced disappearances was recorded in 2016 and 2018.
3. According to the sources, the substantial rise in enforced disappearances has been accompanied by an increased pattern of targeting of political opponents and other dissidents through violations of freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. The Working Group was informed that enforced disappearances were often occurring in the framework of the government's anti-terrorism policy, and that it was suspected to be used as a political tool by the government to silence criticism and dissent.
4. The Working Group also received a report that the State is not showing either political will or a credible criminal justice system to hold personnel of law enforcement agencies to account for enforced disappearances. The sources argue that the widespread impunity of State agents has not only permitted this rise in enforced disappearances and associated crimes, but it has also greatly eroded the rule of law in Bangladesh.
5. The sources report that the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), a joint task force composed of members of the police, army, navy, air force, border guards, and Ansar ((a paramilitary auxiliary force), has been repeatedly accused of committing severe human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and enforced disappearances, and of operating under complete impunity. A source states that the RAB had led government's crackdown on illegal drugs in 2018 resulting in close to 300 suspected extra-judicial killings by the end of 2018.
6. The source also points out that, to date, Bangladesh has not passed local legislation to recognize enforced disappearances as a crime.