

HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
WATCH

**Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Bangladesh**  
Human Rights Watch

APRIL 2023

## Introduction

1. Since 2018, the government continued to deny well-documented allegations of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearance, and torture while authorities increased repression of those who speak out against abuses. In the months following the US government issuing Global Magnitsky human rights sanctions against Bangladesh's Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and some of its top commanders in December 2021, extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances dropped dramatically according to a leading Bangladesh human rights organization, indicating that authorities have the ability to bring security force abuses under control.<sup>1</sup> However, instead of taking steps toward reform, authorities launched a campaign of threats and intimidation against human rights defenders and families of victims of enforced disappearances under the guise of "investigations."<sup>2</sup>

## Security Force Abuses

2. Members of Bangladesh law enforcement routinely commit extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture. The Bangladesh government continues to promote and reward those who are complicit in these violations, including officers with command responsibility.
3. In August 2021, Human Rights Watch published a report based on over 115 interviews with victims, their relatives, and witnesses to enforced disappearances, finding that Bangladesh authorities consistently refuse to investigate enforced disappearances and to hold those responsible accountable. Human Rights Watch also found that the authorities use enforced disappearances—and the threat of enforced disappearances—to silence critics, chilling free speech. Victims' families repeatedly described outright refusal by the police and other security forces to file a case or conduct a legitimate investigation into alleged enforced disappearances, at times even citing "orders from above."<sup>3</sup> Government officials repeatedly deny that enforced disappearances occur in Bangladesh, claiming instead that those missing were in hiding to escape prosecution for criminal actions, to avoid debt repayments, or due to family disagreements.<sup>4</sup>
4. In the 2018 UPR, the Bangladesh Government pledged to "engage with the UN and other human rights mechanisms of the UN" and claimed that it had "responded favourably to the requests of meetings from the...Working Group on Enforced Disappearance."<sup>5</sup> However, the government has refused to invite the UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances to visit Bangladesh, despite the Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, urging Bangladesh to do so in order to "show a commitment to decisively address this issue."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Odhikar, "Bangladesh: Annual Human Rights Report, 2022," January 30, 2023, <https://odhikar.org/bangladesh-annual-human-rights-report-2022-2/> (accessed March 24, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> "Bangladesh: Stop Reprisals Against Victims, Activists," Human Rights Watch new release, April 7, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/07/bangladesh-stop-reprisals-against-victims-activists>.

<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Where No Sun Can Enter: A Decade of Enforced Disappearances in Bangladesh," August 16, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/08/16/where-no-sun-can-enter/decade-enforced-disappearances-bangladesh>.

<sup>4</sup> Rozina Islam, "People go missing in Bangladesh for three reasons," *Prothom Alo*, August 15, 2022, <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/nymbi9zfta> (accessed March 24, 2023); "No enforced disappearance in country, says Momen," *New Age*, February 5, 2022, <https://www.newagebd.net/article/161914/law-enforcers-not-involved-in-enforced-disappearance-minister> (accessed March 24, 2023); United Nations Human Rights Council, Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21, Bangladesh, A/HRC/WG.6/30/BGD/1, February 26, 2018; Meenakshi Ganguly, "Despite Overwhelming Evidence, Bangladesh Authorities Deny Enforced Disappearances," Human Rights Watch Dispatch, September 8, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/09/08/despite-overwhelming-evidence-bangladesh-authorities-deny-enforced-disappearances>.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council, Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21, Bangladesh, A/HRC/WG.6/30/BGD/1, February 26, 2018, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/050/26/PDF/G1805026.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed March 24, 2023).

<sup>6</sup> "Bangladesh: Allow UN to Assist 'Disappearance' Inquiries," Human Rights Watch news release, August 29, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/29/bangladesh-allow-un-assist-disappearance-inquiries>.

- Recent allegations of torture in police custody underscore its pervasiveness and the culture of impunity for security forces.<sup>7</sup> Only one case of torture has ever been convicted under Bangladesh's Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act since it was passed a decade ago, according to media reports.<sup>8</sup> Bangladesh has ignored repeated requests from the UN Committee Against Torture to follow up on its recommendations, as required.<sup>9</sup>

### Recommendations

- Ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.
- Promptly investigate existing allegations of enforced disappearances, locate and release those held illegally by security forces, and prosecute the perpetrators.
- Invite relevant United Nations special procedures—including the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, and the special rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment—to visit Bangladesh to investigate and make appropriate recommendations to ensure justice and accountability.
- Accept the support of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish a “specialized mechanism that works closely with victims, families and civil society to investigate allegations of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings.”<sup>10</sup>
- Carry out impartial, transparent investigations into allegations of torture and prosecute those responsible under the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act.
- Respond to the UN Committee Against Torture as required by substantively addressing its recommendations made in 2019.

### Crackdown on Civil Society, Freedom of Speech, Assembly, and Association

- During the 2018 UPR review, the government of Bangladesh supported multiple recommendations from Member States to amend the Digital Security Act (DSA) to bring it in line with international norms and standards.<sup>11</sup> In February 2021, Gowher Rizvi, the prime minister's international affairs adviser, admitted that there are problems with the DSA, saying: “Sadly, we have now learned that some of the wordings are very loose and vague, which leaves it open to its abuse.”<sup>12</sup> In March 2021, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said that “there needs to be an overhaul of the Digital Security Act” and called for the release of “all those detained under this Act for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and opinion.”<sup>13</sup> However, the government has refused to

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<sup>7</sup> Meenakshi Ganguly, “Allegations of Bangladesh Police Torture, Illegal Detentions,” Human Rights Watch Dispatch, February 3, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/03/allegations-bangladesh-police-torture-illegal-detentions>; “Cartoonist Kishore files torture complaint with Dhaka court,” *Dhaka Tribune*, March 10, 2021, <https://archive.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/court/2021/03/10/cartoonist-kishore-files-complaint-of-torture-with-dhaka-court> (accessed March 24, 2023); “Bangladesh: Writer Dies After 9 Months in Custody,” Human Rights Watch news release, February 26, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/26/bangladesh-writer-dies-after-9-months-custody> (accessed March 24, 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Ali Mashraf, “Jonny’s custodial death case: Lessons learned from the verdict,” *The Daily Star*, September 29, 2020, <https://www.thedailystar.net/law-our-rights/news/jonnys-custodial-death-case-lessons-learned-the-verdict-1969413> (accessed March 24, 2023).

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Letter from the Rapporteur for Follow-up to Concluding Observations Committee against Torture, March 3, 2022, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCAT%2FFUL%2FBGD%2F48021&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCAT%2FFUL%2FBGD%2F48021&Lang=en) (accessed March 24, 2023).

<sup>10</sup> “Bangladesh: Allow UN to Assist ‘Disappearance’ Inquiries,” Human Rights Watch news release, August 29, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/29/bangladesh-allow-un-assist-disappearance-inquiries>.

<sup>11</sup> See UPR Third Cycle Matrix of Recommendations from Australia (148.3), Norway (148.14), Sweden (148.15), France (147.70), and Estonia (147.69).

<sup>12</sup> “Bangladesh: When will authorities clean up their act?” *Deutsche Welle*, February 10, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/bangladesh-when-will-authorities-clean-up-their-act/a-56524784> (accessed March 24, 2023).

<sup>13</sup> “Bangladesh: Bachelet urges review of Digital Security Act following death in custody of writer,” Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Media Statement, March 1, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/2021/03/bangladesh-bachelet-urges-review-digital-security-act-following-death-custody-writer> (accessed March 24, 2023).

meaningfully engage in reform efforts, and authorities continued to arrest critics under the draconian law.

7. The government increasingly targeted human rights organizations. The government's Non-Governmental Organization Affairs Bureau has denied registration of Odhikar, one of the country's most prominent human rights organizations.<sup>14</sup> Odhikar's secretary, Adilur Rahman Khan, and director, ASM Nasiruddin Elan, are additionally facing ongoing trials as part of longstanding harassment to punish the organization for reporting on security force abuses.<sup>15</sup>
8. The Bangladesh authorities are increasingly targeting relatives of expatriate dissidents as a means to threaten critics into silence.<sup>16</sup>

### Recommendations

- Urgently reform the Digital Security Act to bring it in line with international standards on free expression. Release all those currently detained under the Act for exercising their right to free speech.
- End surveillance and judicial harassment of civil society organizations and allow human rights monitoring groups to operate freely without retaliation.

### Rights of Women and Girls

9. Women in Bangladesh continue to have little recourse to seek protection, services, or access justice in case of domestic violence. Bangladesh continues to have one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world.
10. In October 2020, Human Rights Watch published a report, based on 50 interviews with survivors of gender-based violence and experts in Bangladesh. The report demonstrated that despite some important advances, barriers to reporting assault or seeking legal recourse are frequently insurmountable, and services for survivors are in short supply. Human Rights Watch in particular found significant barriers to accessing justice for gender-based violence.<sup>17</sup>
11. Human Rights Watch found limited availability of safe shelter, witness protection, or other support services. Survivors described being met with disbelief and intransigence when they went to police. Women's rights lawyers say that the police often refuse to file a report or simply leave a case in open investigation for years. Survivors are often pressured to negotiate out of court for a resolution that does not adequately reflect the harm they suffered.
12. Public prosecutors are poorly trained in representing cases of gender-based violence and at times are corrupt. A lawyer who had worked as a court observer said that she observed instances in which the abuser's family handed money directly to the public prosecutor as a bribe to lose the case. "It's an open secret," she said. In Bangladesh, women seldom have proper access to information and legal counsel, leaving them particularly vulnerable to such corruption and abuse. Obtaining legal assistance is particularly hard for women who are financially dependent upon a husband – who may be her abuser.
13. In October 2020, the Bangladesh government passed an amendment to allow for the death penalty as punishment for rape after widespread protests in response to several recent gang rape cases. There is no conclusive evidence that the death penalty curbs any crime, including rape, and it could end up deterring reporting or even encouraging rapists to murder their victims to reduce the likelihood of

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<sup>14</sup> "Bangladesh: Stop Punishing Human Rights Work," Human Rights Watch news release, June 9, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/09/bangladesh-stop-punishing-human-rights-work>.

<sup>15</sup> "Bangladesh: Drop Charges, Stop Harassment of Odhikar," Human Rights Watch news release, January 14, 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/01/15/bangladesh-drop-charges-stop-harassment-odhikar> (accessed March 24, 2023).

<sup>16</sup> "Bangladesh: Violence, Repression Ahead of General Elections," Human Rights Watch news release, January 12, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/01/12/bangladesh-violence-repression-ahead-general-elections> (March 24, 2023); "CPJ, rights groups call for release of Nusrat Shahrin Raka, sister of Bangladeshi journalist Kanak Sarwar," Committee to Protect Journalists, January 27, 2022, <https://cpj.org/2022/01/cpj-rights-groups-call-for-release-of-nusrat-shahrin-raka-sister-of-journalist-kanak-sarwar/> (accessed March 24, 2023).

<sup>17</sup> Human Rights Watch, "I Sleep in my Own Deathbed:" Violence against Women and Girls in Bangladesh: Barriers to Legal Recourse and Support, October 29, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/10/29/i-sleep-my-own-deathbed/violence-against-women-and-girls-bangladesh-barriers>.

arrest.

14. In a positive move, the cabinet approved a draft amendment to section 155(4) of the Evidence Act, removing aspects that allowed the defense to denigrate the character of women if they pursue criminal charges for sexual violence.<sup>18</sup>

### Recommendations

- The law ministry should create an independent commission to appoint public prosecutors to ensure their independence and ensure that training for public prosecutors and police emphasizes working with survivors of gender-based violence.
- Pass a long-promised witness protection law, in consultation with Bangladeshi women's rights groups.
- Commit to creating at least one shelter for women and girls fleeing violence in each of Bangladesh's 67 districts by 2025.
- Replace the rape law with a law that sets out a comprehensive definition of sexual assault, recognizes all potential victims including of marital rape, and criminalizes as sexual assault any sexual act occurring without consent.

### Migrants, Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Internally Displaced Persons

15. The Bangladesh government followed through on its pledge to "continue to host the forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals until they voluntarily return to their homeland in safety, security and dignity."<sup>19</sup> However, authorities have adopted increasingly repressive measures against Rohingya as part of the government's efforts to coerce refugees to relocate to the remote island of Bhasan Char or repatriate to Myanmar.<sup>20</sup> Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh lack recognized legal status, which puts them on a precarious footing under domestic law and makes them vulnerable to rights violations.
16. Since 2021, Bangladesh authorities intensified their restrictions on Rohingya refugees' livelihoods, education, and movement. Beginning in October 2021, officials began bulldozing shops, often without notice. More than 3,000 shops were destroyed, affecting tens of thousands of refugees.
17. In December 2021, Bangladesh authorities banned informal and community-led schools, affecting about 60,000 students.<sup>21</sup> The government has allowed humanitarian actors in the camps to begin teaching the Myanmar curriculum but continues to deny refugee children any accredited education.
18. Authorities have built extensive fencing in the camps, denying refugees freedom of movement while placing them at serious risk during emergencies such as fires, which has led to preventable deaths.<sup>22</sup> New obstacles on movement within the camps include threats, frequent curfews, and harassment at checkpoints.
19. Refugees and humanitarian workers report that safety deteriorated after the Armed Police Battalion (APBn) took over camp security in July 2020, due to increased police abuses as well as criminal activity. Human Rights Watch documented indiscriminate or arbitrary arrests, extortion, harassment, threats, confiscation of IDs, and ill-treatment by APBn officers, including beatings and other assault carried out at checkpoints or in detention.<sup>23</sup>
20. Refugees have been detained on apparently fabricated grounds for drug trafficking, a common practice by Bangladesh security forces. Some refugees have been targeted for information they shared

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<sup>18</sup> "Rape victim's character not to be questioned," *New Age*, March 15, 2022, <https://www.newagebd.net/article/165441/rape-victims-character-not-to-be-questioned> (accessed March 24, 2023).

<sup>19</sup> Human Rights Council resolution 16/21, Bangladesh, A/HRC/WG.6/30/BGD/1, February 26, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> "Bangladesh: New Restrictions on Rohingya Camps," Human Rights Watch news release, April 4, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/04/bangladesh-new-restrictions-rohingya-camps>.

<sup>21</sup> "Bangladesh: Rohingya Refugee Schools Face Closure," Human Rights Watch news release, December 18, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/18/bangladesh-rohingya-refugee-schools-face-closure>.

<sup>22</sup> "Bangladesh: Halt Plans to Fence-In Rohingya Refugees," Human Rights Watch news release, September 30, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/30/bangladesh-halt-plans-fence-rohingya-refugees>; "Bangladesh: Refugee Camp Fencing Cost Lives in Blaze," Human Rights Watch news release, March 25, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/25/bangladesh-refugee-camp-fencing-cost-lives-blaze>.

<sup>23</sup> "Bangladesh: Rampant Police Abuse of Rohingya Refugees," Human Rights Watch news release, January 17, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/01/17/bangladesh-rampant-police-abuse-rohingya-refugees>.

online regarding APBn harassment. Many of the Rohingya victims work for NGOs or as teachers, and humanitarian organizations have raised concerns regarding the impact of APBn harassment on their staff and operations.

21. Authorities have moved over 30,000 refugees to Bhasan Char, a remote, flood-prone island in the Bay of Bengal. From the first relocations in December 2020 through now, refugees have consistently reported being moved without free and informed consent.<sup>24</sup> Authorities have confiscated refugees' identity cards, thereby blocking their access to essential aid and services, to coerce them to relocate. Despite the signing of the MOU with UNHCR in October 2021, thousands of Rohingya have since been forcibly relocated to the island. Refugees continue to be denied permission to return to the mainland. Hundreds have attempted to escape, some even drowning in the process, while those caught have been arrested and beaten. Refugees on the island face movement restrictions, food and medicine shortages, and abuses by security forces. Rohingya report being coerced to participate in highly orchestrated visits for diplomats, including mock classes being set up for show.
22. In March 2023, Myanmar junta officials visited the Cox's Bazar camps to reportedly restart repatriation efforts of Rohingya refugees jointly with Bangladesh authorities, despite the fact that conditions in Rakhine State are not conducive for voluntary, safe, or dignified repatriation.
23. More than 1.1 million Bangladeshis migrated for overseas work in 2022.<sup>25</sup> While Bangladesh has taken steps in better managing its labor migration system, migrant workers continue to face abuses.<sup>26</sup> The recruitment costs paid by migrant workers to Bangladesh is among the highest in the world.<sup>27</sup> With limited access to formal banking channels, workers borrow from informal sources at high interest rates, and it can take months and even years for migrant workers to recuperate these costs. Many workers become victims of forced labor, as those who fall into debt bondage are unable to leave their job, leaving them more vulnerable to abuse and subject to further penalties if they failed to work.

### Recommendations

- Ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention and recognize refugee status of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.
- Reverse restrictions on livelihoods, movement, and education, to help ensure Rohingya refugees have access to the necessary tools for rebuilding their lives. The Bangladesh government should create opportunities for Rohingya to access formal, accredited education.
- Halt relocations to Bhasan Char until freedom of movement and other rights of Rohingya refugees are protected.
- Investigate alleged abuses against Rohingya living in refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, ensure that victims have effective remedies, and develop measures to better protect refugees. Authorities should develop and carry out a rights-respecting security policy to protect the camp population, and consult refugees and humanitarian groups to improve training and monitoring of APBn units in the camps.
- Suspend plans to repatriate Rohingya refugees until returns are safe, voluntary, and informed, and conditions conducive to return in Rakhine State have been established, including freedom of movement for all Rohingya.
- Strictly monitor recruitment agencies and increase awareness among aspirant migrant workers to prevent undue exploitation by recruitment agencies.
- Increase protections for domestic workers abroad, including by raising the minimum salary for domestic workers, offering protections for workers in host countries, aiding workers in distress, and strengthening pre-departure training to ensure domestic migrant workers are well-informed about their rights and available resources.

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<sup>24</sup> "Bangladesh: Halt Forced Relocation of Rohingya Refugees," Human Rights Watch news release, November 23, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/11/24/bangladesh-halt-forced-relocation-rohingya-refugees>.

<sup>25</sup> Bangladesh Government, "Overseas Employment and Remittances (1976 to 2023)," <http://www.old.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/viewStatReport.action?reportnumber=24> (accessed March 24, 2023).

<sup>26</sup> World Bank, "Institutional Assessment of Bangladesh Migration System," <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/446181539106128109/pdf/Institutional-assessment-of-Bangladesh-migration-system.pdf> (accessed March 24, 2023).

<sup>27</sup> S. Amer Ahmed and Laurent Bossavie, "Toward Safer and More Productive Migration for South Asia," 2022, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/903161585816440273/pdf/Toward-Safer-and-More-Productive-Migration-for-South-Asia.pdf> (accessed March 24, 2023).

## **Indigenous Peoples' Rights**

24. The Bangladesh government has failed to implement the terms of the 1997 Peace Accords in the Bangladesh Hill Tracts, including military withdrawals and transfer of authority to representative Hill District Councils, including over local police, land management, and environmental protection. Instead, Indigenous rights groups in the Hill Tracts say that the military presence has increased in recent years.
25. The Bangladesh military and other branches of law enforcement commit widespread abuses against Indigenous people living in the Hill Tracts, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, sexual violence, and land-grabbing, with little redress.<sup>28</sup> Limits on access to the Hill Tracts and widespread surveillance make it difficult and dangerous to report on human rights abuses in the region.
26. Thorough investigations into abuses against Indigenous activists in the Hill Tracts are rare, and those responsible are almost never held to account. Three years after the disappearance of Michael Chakma, an Indigenous rights activist, the government has ignored appeals from his family, as well as inquiries from the High Court, the National Human Rights Commission, and the United Nations Committee against Torture. In January 2020, the police finally responded to an order from the High Court by simply stating that they “could not find anybody named Michael Chakma in any prisons in Bangladesh.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Recommendations**

- Allow unfettered access for human rights monitors to the Chittagong Hill Tracts.
- Demilitarize the Chittagong Hill Tracts and follow through on the commitments under the 1997 Peace Accords.
- Invite the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to the Hill Tracts.
- Conduct thorough, independent, and transparent investigations into alleged security force abuses in the Hill Tracts and hold those found responsible to account.

## **Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons**

27. Same-sex conduct is criminalized in Bangladesh with penalties from 10 years to life in prison. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and advocates faced violence and threats without adequate protection from the police. In 2020, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board of Bangladesh agreed to incorporate third gender issues into the secondary school curriculum. However, following pressure from Islamist groups, the Bangladesh government withdrew two textbooks and revised the curriculum, removing material on transgender identities and same-sex relationships.<sup>30</sup>

### **Recommendations**

- Repeal Section 377 of the Bangladeshi penal code.
- Create shelters in every district that are safe and accessible for people who are LGBT and hijra.
- Include transgender identities and same-sex relationships in the national curriculum.

## **Rights of Older People and People with Disabilities**

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<sup>28</sup> “Bangladesh: Indigenous Activist Dies in Military Custody,” Human Rights Watch news release, March 30, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/30/bangladesh-indigenous-activist-dies-military-custody>.

<sup>29</sup> Abdullah Alif, “Michael Chakma's disappearance: Police accused of not filing GD despite HC order,” *Dhaka Tribune*, January 15, 2020, <https://archive.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/dhaka/2020/01/16/michael-chakma-s-disappearance>.

<sup>30</sup> “Bangladesh withdraws schoolbooks after anti-LGBTQ backlash by Islamist groups,” *Agence France-Presse*, February 11, 2023, <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/south-asia/article/3209884/bangladesh-withdraws-schoolbooks-after-anti-lgbtq-backlash-islamist-groups> (accessed March 24, 2023).

28. In September 2022, Human Rights Watch conducted interviews with people with disabilities, older people, and their families in Sylhet following the flash floods in May and June 2022 that displaced almost 9 million people and killed hundreds. Older people and people with disabilities described a lack of warning systems, protection, and assistance following the flooding which is projected to increase as a result of climate change. They described how they struggled to access toilets and to obtain food, water, and medicines. Shelters were largely inaccessible to people with physical disabilities.

#### Recommendations

- Follow through on commitments under the National Plan for Disaster management 2021-25 by ensuring that people with disabilities are meaningfully included both in disaster response planning and in identifying risks and solutions to impacts of extreme weather events expected to intensify as result of climate change.
- Ensure that disaster response measures and climate change adaptation measures are accessible to people with disabilities and older people.
- Collect and disaggregate data on the impacts of disasters, including by disability, sex, and age.