



The Asia Foundation



**Election Violence Education and Resolution (EVER)**



## **Final Report**

**Prepared by Odhikar and IFES  
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# Final Report on Election Violence

*Date Covered: 14-28 December 2008*

## INTRODUCTION

This report details the findings from the Election Violence Education and Resolution (EVER) program, designed by IFES and implemented by Odhikar for the December 28, 2008 parliamentary election in Bangladesh. The EVER program is designed document accurate information about incidents of election-related violence in a methodologically reliable manner, so that stakeholders in the electoral process could use this information to design and implement effective electoral interventions in a country.

This report is based primarily on Odhikar monitoring of election-related violence from December 14 to 28, 2008<sup>1</sup>. Odhikar focused its EVER monitoring activities in 40 districts under 6 divisions that have a history of election-related violence in Bangladesh. Two monitors worked in each of the 40 districts. Odhikar EVER monitors were responsible for identifying and gathering key information on incidents of election-related violence within each district, as well as tensions, potential for violence, and peace initiatives. The monitors were trained in the EVER methodology which requires multiple sources to verify incidents of election-related violence.

The Odhikar EVER project in Bangladesh provided accurate and timely data on patterns of election violence during the campaign period to the public, political parties, election and security officials, and other stakeholders in Bangladesh to help them develop strategies to mitigate such incidents.<sup>2</sup> A total of 110 incidents of election-related violence were recorded and verified by EVER monitors during this period. The following districts were monitored:

Name of the Division	Name of the District
Dhaka	Gazipur, Munshigonj, Narayangonj, Mymensingh, Rajbari, Kishoregonj, Tangail and Netrokona
Chittagong	Brahmanbaria, Comilla, Feni, Laxmipur, Noakhali, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Rangamati and Bandarban.
Rajshahi	Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha, Chapainawabganj, Naogaon, Rajshahi, Pabna and Sirajgonj.
Khulna	Khulna, Satkhira, Jessore, Jhenaidah and Kushtia.
Barisal	Barisal, Patuakhali, Jhalokati and Pirojpur.
Sylhet	Sunamgonj, Sylhet and Moulavibazar.

## Key Findings

- A total of 110 incidents of election-related violence were recorded during the period covered by the monitoring. Most of the violence took place on 19 and 25 December. There were 13 incidents that occurred on each of these dates. Most of the violence observed was political party-related, frequently involving clashes between political party supporters and activists.
- Supporters/activists of the Awami League and BNP were the most active participants in the violence that took place during monitoring period. The Awami League was directly responsible for the violence in 42 incidents and was also involved as secondary perpetrator in two incidents, while the BNP was directly

<sup>1</sup> In addition to providing an analysis of the data captured during the monitoring from December 14 to 28, this report also provides some data on the post-election violence that took place in Bangladesh. This data is based on additional non-EVER monitoring done by Odhikar in the post-election period.

<sup>2</sup> Within the EVER framework, "election-related violence" refers to any violence (harm) or threat of violence (harm) that is aimed at disrupting any part of the electoral or political process during the election period. Election violence generally involves political parties, their supporters, journalists, agents of the government, election administrators and the general population, and includes threats, assault, murder, destruction of property, and physical or psychological harm. An "incident" of election violence refers to any act that 1) has a specific victim(s) and perpetrator(s) and occurs within a limited timeframe and location; 2) meets the definition of election-related violence; and 3) has been verified by monitors using at least two different sources of information. Please contact Odhikar for methodological details, questions, or feedback.

involved in 28 incidents as the primary perpetrator group and also responsible as secondary perpetrator in 19 incidents of violence recorded during the monitoring.

- Rajshahi was the division where the highest number of incidents (29 incidents) occurred during the monitoring period while Chittagong division took second place with 24 incidents. Dhaka, Barisal, Khulna and Sylhet divisions saw a fewer number of incidents.
- In addition to clashes between supporters and activists of the two electoral alliances, violence during this reporting period also involved various levels of property damage, both to private and political party property.
- Five individual districts had the highest number of incidents which occurred during this period: Pabna (11 incidents), Kishorgonj (8 incidents), Brahmanbaria (7 incidents), Barisal and Moulavibazar (6 each). In each of these, the incidents were largely characterized by cycles of back-and-forth attack between BNP and Awami League.
- It is somewhat difficult to compare the violence that took place during this monitoring period with the violence that took place before the scheduled elections for 2006. In 2006, 45 constituencies were covered under 33 districts, while 40 districts out of 64 were covered this time. In addition, most of the monitoring in 2006 took place before the start of the official campaign period while this year the monitoring took place completely within the campaign period. Finally, the State of Emergency prior to this 2008 election helped to reduce the number of incidents of violence. Thus, there are limitations to the comparisons that can be made between the two monitoring periods. Nonetheless, it is notable that some of the same constituencies that had relatively high numbers of incidents in 2006 also were characterized by relatively high numbers of incidents during this monitoring period. Specifically, Patuakhali-1 and Cox's Bazar-1 were found to be constituencies where large number of incidents of violence took place during the monitoring period in 2008 as well as in 2006. This suggests that these constituencies should be targeted for peace-building initiatives so that the level of election-related violence in these constituencies decreases in future elections.
- In total, **336 people were wounded** in the recorded incidents during this monitoring period and there were no deaths in any reported incident (in comparison to 2006 when 20 people were recorded as killed during the monitoring period). In this monitoring period, a total of 89 persons were recorded as wounded in Chittagong division, 79 in Rajshahi, 57 in Dhaka, 47 in Barisal, 38 in Sylhet division, and 26 in Khulna division.
- It is notable that law enforcement agencies were recorded as perpetrators only in three incidents recorded during this reporting period (in comparison to 2006, while several number of incidents where law enforcement agencies were recorded as perpetrators during the monitoring period). Law enforcement agencies were found to be active and tolerant in the vast majority of the monitored areas. Police response to election-related violence seems to have improved during the State of Emergency. It shows that police behavior had been improved and they responded better while maintaining law and order situation during this reporting period.

### **Peace initiatives**

In 24 of the monitored districts<sup>3</sup>, peace initiatives were taken by the government, various non-political cultural groups, political parties and civil society. The peace initiatives that various social and cultural organisations, political parties and local administrations undertook were mostly well-ordered rallies and processions. In many of these districts, such peace initiatives had some impact on reducing the potential for violence or level of tension. One of the major peace initiatives was intended to discourage voters from voting for candidates who had been

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<sup>3</sup> Noakhali, Chapainawabgonj, Jhenaidah, Sirajgonj, Netrokona, Kurigram, Jhalokathi, Comilla, Pabna, Mymensingh, Feni, Pirozpur, Kushtia, Moulavibazar, Gaibandha, Gazipur, Khulna, Satkhira, Patuakhali, Tangail, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Barisal and Jessore

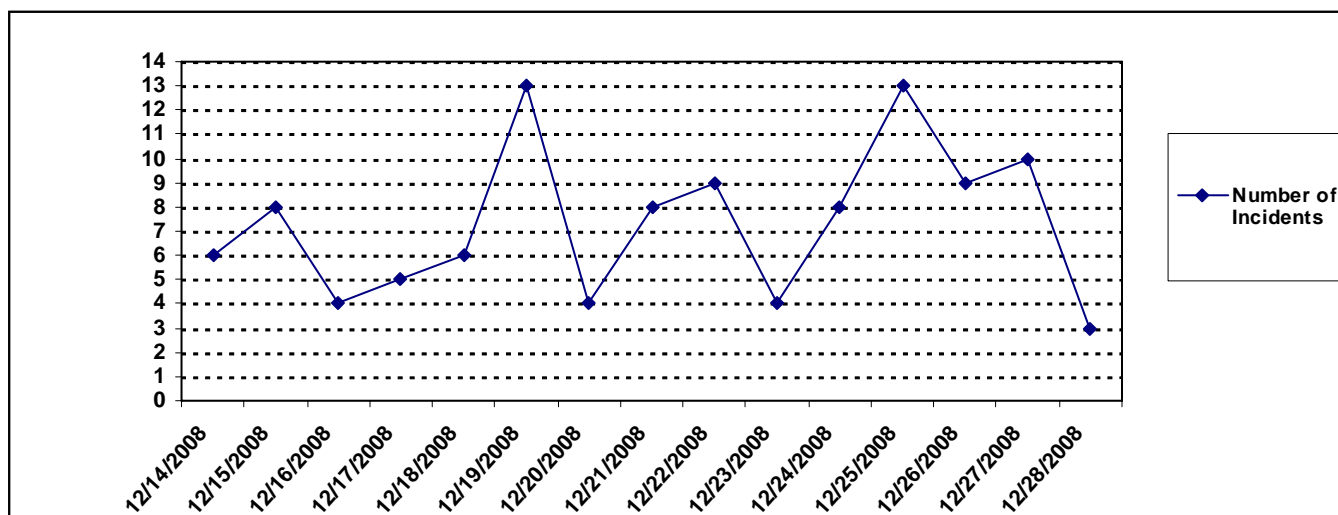
against the Liberation War of Bangladesh<sup>4</sup>. Voters were also encouraged to stamp on the ‘No’ vote if it seemed appropriate<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, various cultural fronts organised campaigns for voter education and awareness program. In the remaining 16 districts, there were no peace initiatives. It is to be mentioned that the civil society organizations, Shushasoner Jonno Nagorik (Sujon), Noakhali Rural Development Society (NRDS), Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB), Association for the Development of the Disabled (ADD) Nagorik Moitry Committee, Naripokkho, Coastal NGO Forum, Shushasoner Jonno Procharabhijan (SUPRO) were found to be active in peace initiatives.

## DETAILED FINDINGS

### Timeline

During the 14 to 28 December 2008 monitoring period, the majority of incidents recorded occurred on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> December as both BNP and Awami League activists/ supporters were involved in attacks on each other. There were a total of 110 incidents of violence recorded during this period. Figure 1 highlights the timeline of incidents during this reporting period.

Figure 1. Number of Incidents by Date



It is notable that a spike in incidents occurred starting on December 23 and continuing through December 27 in the period just prior to the election date. The number of incidents dropped dramatically on December 28. This was most likely due to the fact that all campaign activities were to stop on midnight, 27<sup>th</sup> December 2008 and the two or three days prior to the deadline saw all party workers in a frenzy of last-minute campaigning activity, which may have instigated the violence.

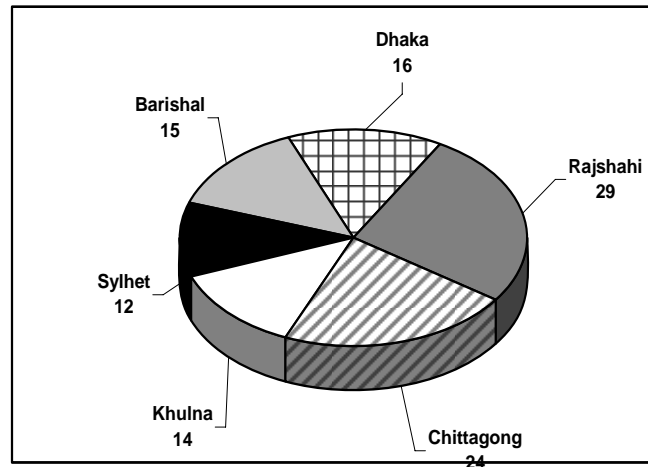
### Geographical Distribution of Incidents

- The highest number of recorded incidents of violence during the monitoring period took place in Rajshahi division with 29 incidents, while lower numbers of incidents took place in Sylhet division with 12 incidents.
- While district wise incidents of violence were monitored in 40 districts, there are several districts illustrated by a high number of incidents: Pabna (11 incidents), Kishorgonj (8 incidents), Brahminbaria (7 incidents), Barisal, Cox’s Bazar and Moulavibazar had 6 incidents each.

<sup>4</sup> Such persons include the ‘razakars’ or those who collaborated with the Pakistani Government in identifying and hunting down freedom fighters and Bangali intellectuals during the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh. Most of the razakars today are affiliated with the Jamaat-I-Islami party.

<sup>5</sup> For example, if the candidate was corrupt.

**Figure 2: Divisional Breakdown of Incidents**



- There was no incident of election related violence recorded in 9 districts out of 40, during this reporting period these were: Narayanganj, Tangail, Netrokona, Comilla, Feni, Bandarban, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha and Chapainawabganj.
- In total, thirty-one districts had some incidents of violence. In all of the districts, a majority of incidents consisted of attacks and counter attacks by supporters of the Grand Alliance and Four Party Alliance on each other's supporters and facilities. Only a minority of incidents were characterized by attacks on property by one faction group against another.

**Figure 3: Incidents by Division**

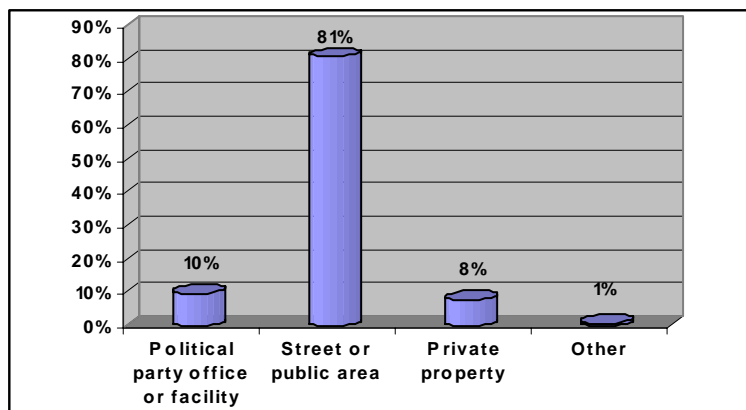
Division	Number of incidents	Number of people wounded	Number of incidents with ONLY property damage
Rajshahi	29	79	4
Chittagong	24	89	2
Dhaka	16	57	2
Barisal	15	47	2
Khulna	14	26	1
Sylhet	12	38	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>15</b>

### **Place and Patterns of Violence**

Under the EVER methodology, the place of incidents were identified as a significant indicator to measure the patterns of violence. Violence mostly happened when the electoral alliances came face to face in processions or rallies, and there were clashes over the delivering of hostile speeches against one another. Because of this pattern of violence, the vast majority of incidents of violence took place on the streets or open spaces during this period. 10% of the incidents took place in political party offices or facilities while 8% of the incidents occurred on private property.

The violence in this reporting period continues to be characterized by retaliatory clashes between supporters of the two major party alliances in the election. Intra-party violence was also reported in this monitoring period. Two of these intra-party incidents were among AL supporters, while one was among BNP supporters. Violence mostly happened when the two electoral Alliances came face to face in processions or rallies, and over the delivery of hostile speeches against one another.

**Figure 4: Place of Occurrence (% of all places identified)**



In districts that were more peaceful, monitors observed that the main factors contributing to the low levels of incidents have been:

- The proactive role taken by police, as their presence during processions and rallies in many districts.
- Non-violent political strategies followed by political parties observed in Feni, Bandarban, Panchgarh, Tangail, Munshiganj, Dinajpur, Laxmipur. In these districts the political party leaders

urged their supporters/ activists to be non-violent during processions.

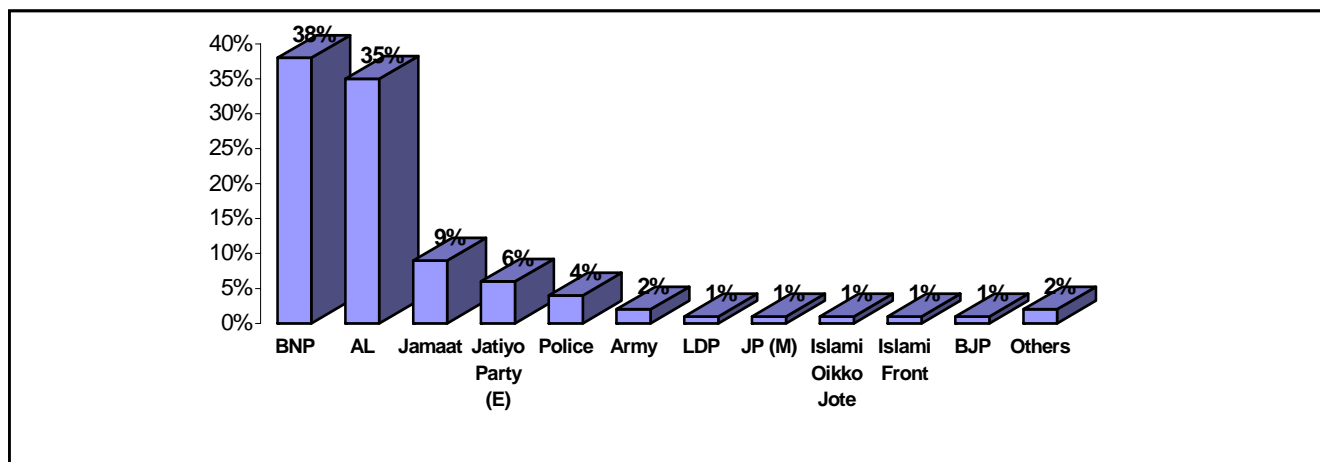
- Fear among political leaders that they will lose popularity if they resort to using violence.

These observations of more and less peaceful areas being monitored suggest that violence is lower when there is more awareness of the negative consequences of using violence, whether it is a reaction by security forces or a reaction among the public. This finding suggests that more and earlier pro-active actions on the part of electoral stakeholders for future elections may aid in reducing the levels of violence during the election process.

### Perpetrators of Election-Related Violence

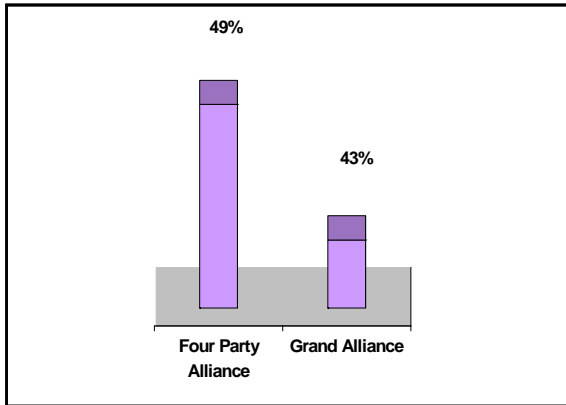
Supporters and activists of the political parties in the country perpetrated almost all of the violence recorded during this reporting period. In more than 90% of the recorded incidents, the perpetrators were supporters of the political party and in some of the incidents a local level political party leader was also a perpetrator. As for specific political groups, supporters and leaders of the BNP were more often the perpetrators of incidents than supporters and leaders of the Awami League.

**Figure 5: Perpetrators (detailed groups) of Violence (% of all perpetrators identified)**



In 38% of incidents, the recorded perpetrators were supporters of the BNP while in 35% of incidents the perpetrators were supporters of the Awami League. Supporters and activists of Jamaat-e-Islami were found to be perpetrators in 9% of incidents, while in 6% of the cases the recorded perpetrators were supporters and activists of Jatiyo Party (E). The security forces were much less likely to be perpetrators with the Police and Army found to be perpetrators, in 4% and 2% of cases respectively.

**Figure 6: Perpetrators (alliance-wise) of Violence**



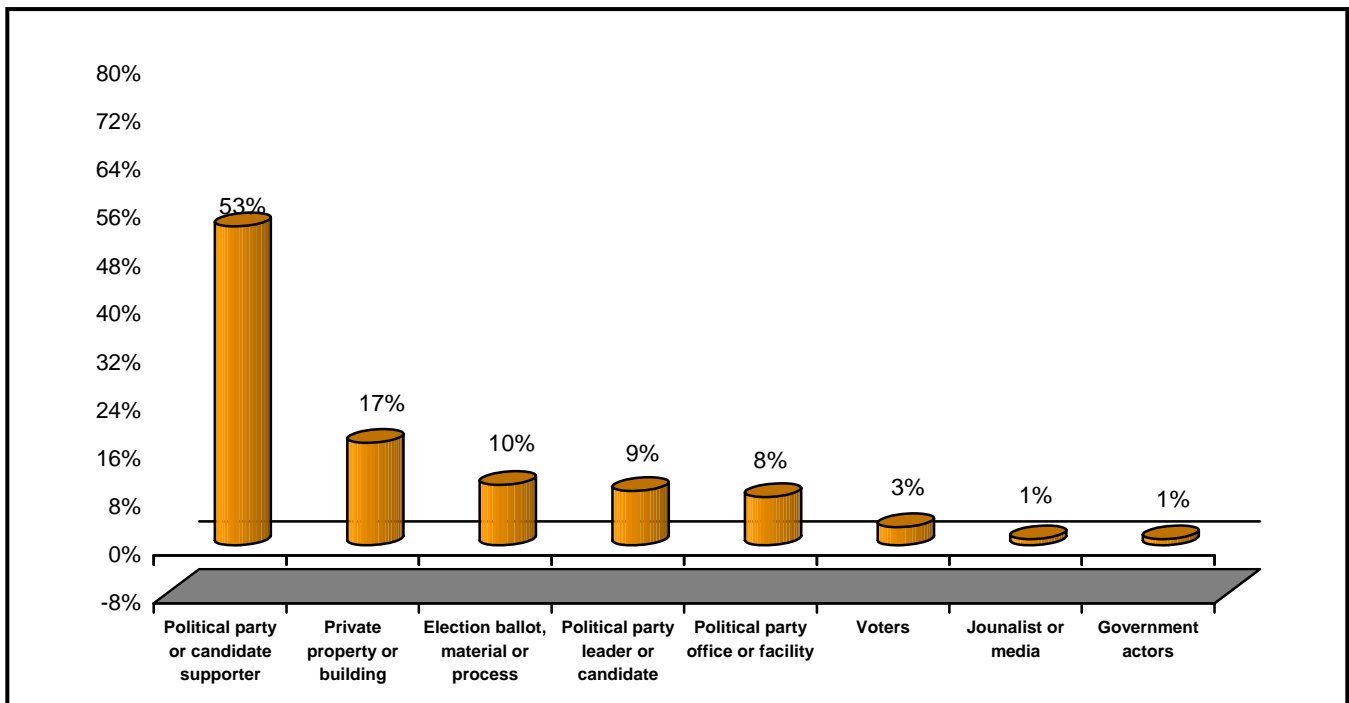
Supporters and activists of the Four Party Alliance were perpetrators in 49% of all incidents violence, while in 43% of the incidents the perpetrators were supporters and activists of the Grand Alliance. This data indicates that neither of the alliances was significantly more active in perpetrating violence than the other.

Intra-party confrontations occurred during this reporting period, generally driven by attempts to establish supremacy within the political party. It was observed that the supporters of the candidates who were denied nomination were mainly involved in intra-party clashes.

**Victims of Election-Related Violence**

The victims of electoral violence are likely to be more varied than the perpetrators of this violence. While the violence was perpetrated for the most part by the supporters or activists of a political party or candidate, victims comprised not only of political party supporters and leaders but also voters, members of the media, government actors and property. Figure 5 indicates that while political party supporters and activists were most likely to be victims, property was also frequently targeted during the violence.

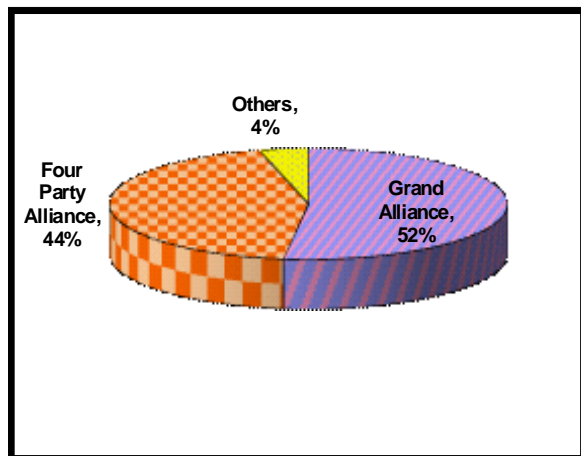
**Figure 7: Victims of Election Violence: People and Property (% of total number of victims identified)**



In a majority of recorded incidents, political party supporters were victims of the violence while leaders or candidates of political parties were victims in less. In 53% of the cases, the victims were political party or candidate’s supporters while in 9% of the cases the victims were party leaders or candidates. Destruction of different property, whether private or belonging to a political part or the state was found to be fairly consistent. Private property was victimized in 17% of the recorded cases while political party offices or facilities made up 8% of the recorded victims during this period. It is notable that in some of these cases, private property such as the residence of a party leader or supporter was deliberately targeted, but in most cases the private property that was destroyed was not deliberately targeted. In 10% of the cases, election materials were destroyed during this period.

Voters fell victim in 3% of the cases while journalists or representatives of the electronic media and government actors have been recorded as victims of violence in 1% of all recorded cases.

**Figure 8: Victims of Violence: Detail on People (% of total number of victims identified)**

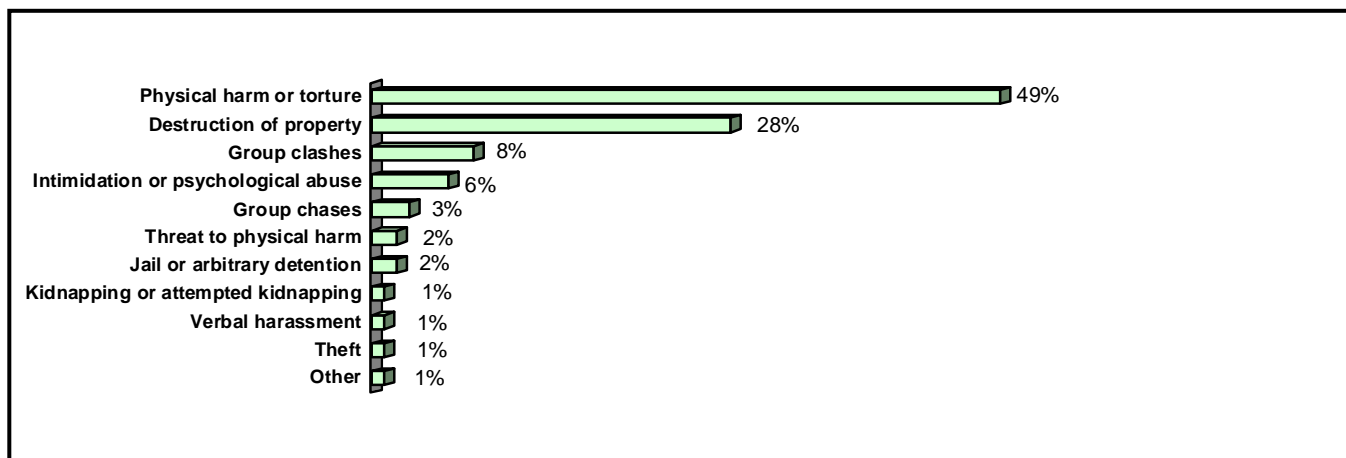


Given the fact that supporters of the Four Party Alliance were more likely to be perpetrators of violence (49%) during this monitoring period, it is not surprising that supporters of the Grand Alliance were more likely to be victims of incidents than supporters of the Four Party Alliance. In 52% of incidents the recorded victims were supporters of the Grand Alliance while supporters of the Four Party Alliance were recorded as victims in 44% of incidents. Figure 8 also includes incidents in which property of a certain political party or party supporter was damaged. However, in 4% of the cases, supporters of LDP, UPDF and Ansar were found to be victims of violence, as indicated in the 'others' category.

**Types and Methods of Violence**

The most widespread form of violence during this monitoring period were repeated clashes and physical attacks between the supporters of the two rival political party alliances, with a large number of the incidents characterized by these types of attacks. In total, 49% of incidents were characterized by physical harm or torture. The destruction of property was also a frequent feature of the violence with 28% of incidents resulting in some destruction of property. Group clashes made up 8% of the violence while 6% were recorded as intimidation or psychological abuse of the victims. There were also different types of violence observed, such as threats of physical harm, jail or arbitrary detention hounding and verbal harassment during the monitoring period.

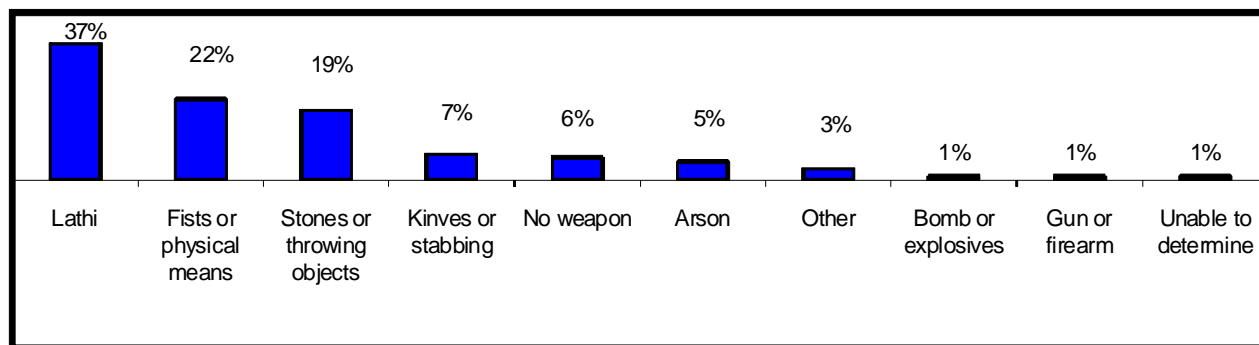
**Figure 9: Types of Violence (% of incidents)**



Given the fact that clashes and destruction of property were the most common types of violence observed during this reporting period, it is not surprising that various weapons were used by those taking part in most of the violence during this period. Figure 10 lists the methods of violence used during this reporting period.



**Figure 10: Methods of Violence (% of incidents)**

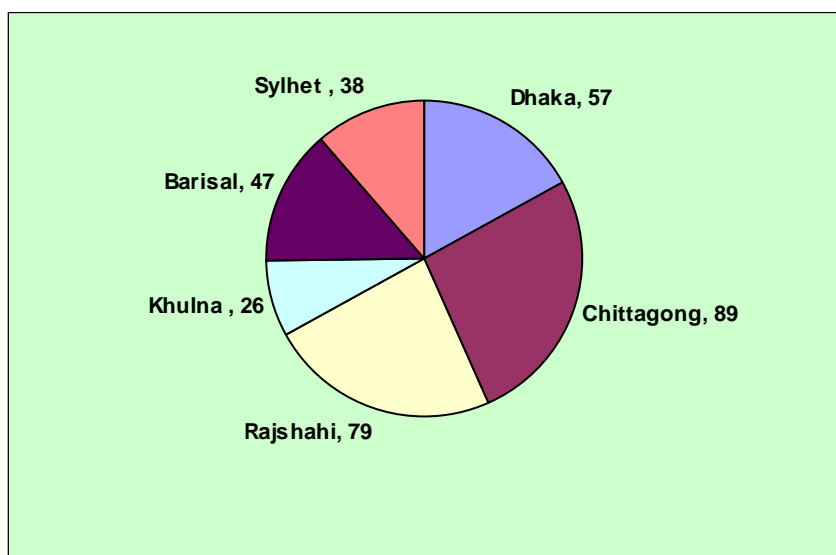


The most popular weapons used during the incidents of violence throughout the country were *lathi* (heavy sticks) with 37% of all cases documented. Bricks or stones and fists or physical means were often used during the violence. In 22% of cases, supporters of the political parties attacked their rivals with fists while in 19% of cases, the weapons used were stones or throwing objects. *Lathi*, bricks and stones were used largely during clashes between rival groups of political party supporters as well as in the destruction of property. In 7% of the cases, knives were also being used to harm people. Few incidents saw the use arson and firearms or explosives, a fact which could account for the fact that no one was killed in these incidents of violence.

### **Impact of Violence**

Impact of violence includes casualties, interference with campaigning, destruction of property, and economic loss. Sixty-seven percent of incidents resulted in people wounded. A total of 336 people were reportedly wounded in the incidents of violence during the monitoring period. As the number of incidents varied, the number of injured people were found to be scattered in the divisions. The highest number was in Chittagong division where 89 were wounded, while 79 were wounded in Rajshahi, 57 in Dhaka, 47 in Barisal and 38 in Sylhet. The lowest number of casualties was recorded in Khulna division with only 26, not surprising considering that Khulna had the lowest number of incidents recorded during the monitoring.

**Figure11: Total Number of People Wounded by Division**



Forty-six percent of the recorded incidents had direct impact on interference with campaign activities during the monitoring period while 20% resulted in economic or financial loss, such as damage to private property. In addition to the destruction of property, the incidents of violence recorded during this period were most likely to result in physical harm due to the fact that most of the incidents involved clashes between rival groups of political party supporters, and the fact that these supporters used weapons to cause the large number of injuries resulting from the violence.

## **Post-Election Violence after End of Monitoring Period**

In the period after the announcement of the election results, a significant degree of post-election violence took place throughout Bangladesh. This violence was much more serious than the violence observed during the monitoring period for this report. According to Odhikar's documentation, 17 persons were reportedly killed and over 500 persons were injured in post-election violence in different places across the country. In most cases, activists and supporters of the Awami League (AL) led Grand Alliance, and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) led Four-Party Alliance were found to be involved in such clashes. In many districts, AL activists attacked the houses and shops of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami supporters and vandalised their property.

The security forces seem not to have taken significant action to stop the post-election violence. While the police authorities reported that there were only 13 incidents of violence in the whole country, hundreds of incidents of post-election violence were reported in the media throughout the country.

In total, 17 persons (9 from BNP and 8 from AL) were reportedly killed and over 500 persons were injured due to retaliatory attacks by the supporters of the Four Party Alliance and Grand Alliance and, in particular, the Awami League and BNP. One aspect of the post-election violence was that it was highly concentrated in university and college campuses. Ignoring the instructions of the newly elected Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and concerns made by the university teachers, the situation of unrest among the students and political activists continued throughout the month.

- I. General students were found vacating residential halls to avoid conflict and a house tutor and a provost faced threats from the BCL<sup>6</sup>.
- II. Intra group clashes of the BCL: In Ziaur Rahman Hall of the University of Dhaka and Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, University of Rajshahi, Jahangir Nagar University and Jogonnath University, there were intra-group clashes reported, which left a number of injuries.
- III. Clashes with rival parties: A number of casualties were also recorded in Dinajpur Haji Danesh Science and Technology University, Netrokona Govt. College, Jagannath University's residential halls, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, Khulna Medical College, Narail Govt. Victoria College, Feni Govt. College and Dhaka Polytechnic, due to clashes between the BCL and the JCD<sup>7</sup> and Islami Chatra Shibir<sup>8</sup>.

## **Conclusions**

Odhikar monitored election-related violence in 40 districts out of a total of 64 districts in Bangladesh. Odhikar selected these 40 districts on the basis of previous records of violence during the 2001 elections and where it has a strong network of human rights defenders and the capacity to monitor election-related violence. It is also to be mentioned that Odhikar relied on its district monitors to prepare this report, as they collected information in the working areas. These incident reports were then verified from a number of sources including eyewitnesses, the media, hospitals, police reports and by election officials. It is hoped that this kind of fact-finding can be used nationally and internationally in order to mitigate election-related violence.

This report indicates that there are specific districts in which the incidents of violence exceed most other districts that were observed. The data indicates that mitigation efforts should be intensified for violence-free elections in the districts of Pabna, Kishorgonj, Cox's Bazar, Brahmanbaria, Barisal, and Moulavibazar. On the positive side, there are significantly more districts in which no violence was recorded and those working on mitigating the violence should look at strategies used in these districts, such as peace initiatives, to reduce the level of electoral violence in these districts.

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<sup>6</sup> BCL: Bangladesh Chattra League, student wing of the Awami League

<sup>7</sup> JCD: Jatiyotabadi Chattra Dal, student wing of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

<sup>8</sup> Islami Chattra Shibir, student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami

One notable fact observed in the report is that the security officers and/or police were very rarely recorded as being perpetrators or victims of the violence. While on the one hand this suggests that the security forces are not acting as agents fostering election-related violence, on the other hand this also suggests that they may not be playing a forceful role in trying to counter the violence (on the assumption that more security forces would have been recorded as victims if this was the case). This seems to suggest that the security forces should be more active in playing a constructive role in countering the violence, particularly in the case of reaction-counter-reaction types of violence observed between supporters of the two major political blocs. As noted in the report above, monitors noted that the districts in which little violence was observed were also areas in which the security forces were often present during party rallies and processions.

Analysis of trends reported in both more peaceful and more violent districts shows that actions by both political party leaders and security officials can have a positive impact on reducing violence. Findings also indicate that when political party leaders feel the pressure to reduce violence, they respond. Therefore, raising public awareness of the need to pressure party leaders on this topic could be very helpful. However, these efforts need to be maintained over a significant period of time so that the resistance to use violence can become as institutionalized in the Bangladeshi political culture as the appeal of using violence is currently. These efforts will require not only the efforts of security forces and electoral institutions, but also that of civil society to bring more attention to this issue to the public at large, and of political parties which too easily resort to violence and whose local leaders should work toward non-violent means of expressing their views.

## **Recommendations**

- All political parties should refrain from personal attacks on each other and should refrain from delivering provocative speeches. Many of the monitors reported that violence often resulted from this type of inflammatory rhetoric. Violations of the election Code of Conduct occurred more often during the second reporting period. All candidates and political parties are urged to follow the Code of Conduct and the Representation of the People Order (RPO), 1972. Allegations of violation of the Election Code of Conduct have been reported frequently from the monitoring districts. The inquiry committee of the Election Commission received evidence of violations of the Code of Conduct regarding 22 candidates from different constituencies. The inquiry committee submitted an investigation report with specific information and evidence before the Election Commission. The allegations were made and investigated under section 12 of the RPO<sup>9</sup>. Along with the Four Party Alliance and the Grand Alliance, most of the political parties were involved in violating the election Code of Conduct randomly in the monitoring areas. Almost all the political parties were involved in conducting rallies on the street, disrupting people, using megaphones the whole day for campaigning, writing political graffiti on walls, putting poster up on walls, provocative speeches etc. In Sylhet district, colored posters of the four party alliance candidate were pasted in various parts of Sylhet-1 constituency, while in Sylhet-3 constituency, a lot of wall writing was seen in favor of the Grand Alliance candidate and color posters for the Jatiyo Party candidate were found in the same constituency. Similarly, there were also violations of the election Code of Conduct found in Rajshahi, Jessore, Pirojpur, Netrokona, Brahminbaria and Chapainawabgong<sup>10</sup>.
- Different political parties are urged to avoid organizing rallies at the same time near each other. In many of the cases observed during monitoring, the violence took place as rival rallies came in close proximity to each other which in turn set off a chain of events leading to violence. Parties should stick to their promises to have non-violent campaigns.
- Local political and community leaders, and law enforcement agencies should address patterns of violence identified in this report. In particular, attention should be paid to addressing causes and patterns of violence in Pabna, Kishorgonj, Brahmanbaria, Cox's Bazar, Barisal and Moulavibazar, which have had the maximum number of incidents overall.

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<sup>9</sup> RPO: Representation of People Order, 1972 (As Amended to 2008)

<sup>10</sup> According to sections 11(a), 13, 7 of the election Code of Conduct, provocative speeches, coloured campaign posters and graffiti are illegal and the use of the loudspeaker/ megaphone is allowed only from 1400 hrs – 2000 hrs.

- Law enforcement agencies need to be proactive in handling the violent situation. Police should increase efforts to maintain law and order during rallies and meetings in the interest of preventing violence; however, they should refrain from using excessive force.
- All political parties should publicly condemn the use of violence during the campaign by their supporters, and should state their commitment to peaceful cooperation and debate as the new Parliament begins its sessions.
- Civil society, communities, religious organizations, as well as high profile citizens, should make public statements denouncing the cycles of violence and promoting peaceful resolution of differences.

### **About the Odhikar EVER Project**

Odhikar, a Bangladeshi human rights organization, implemented the monitoring program for the EVER methodology in Bangladesh. The EVER program has been designed by IFES to capture accurate information about incidents of election-related violence in a methodologically reliable manner, so that stakeholders in the electoral process can use this information to design and implement effective electoral interventions in a country. This first-of-its-kind activity in Bangladesh is intended to focus attention on the very serious issue of election violence in the country, and provide data that can be used to reduce the level of violence related to elections in Bangladesh. The Odhikar EVER project was conducted in association with IFES and supported by the Asia Foundation and DFID. Odhikar focused its EVER monitoring activities on 40 districts (spread throughout each of the 6 divisions) that have a history of election-related violence in Bangladesh. Each EVER monitor was responsible for identifying and gathering key information on incidents of election-related violence within each of these constituencies, as well as identifying tensions that exhibit the potential for violence. EVER utilizes a rigorous methodology that requires multiple sources to verify incidents of election-related violence. Thus, in any one area incidents documented by the EVER monitors may not reflect all incidents rumored to have taken place. However, the incidents reported by EVER monitors have a high degree of reliability that allow election stakeholders to identify the patterns of election-related violence in the 40 districts.

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