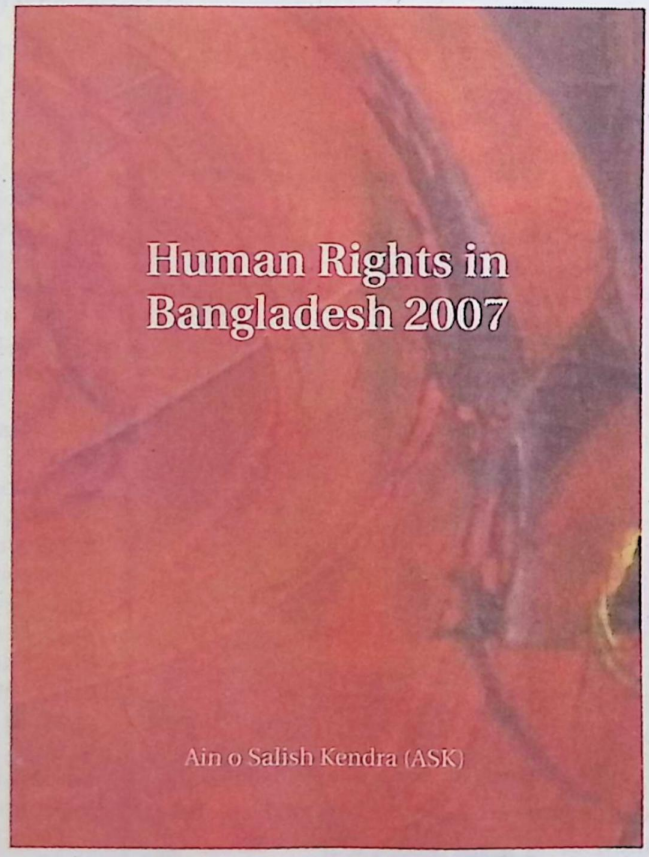
Human Rights Record

At a Glance

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THE declaration of the State of Emergency (SoE) marked another turning point in Bangladesh's political climate last year. Ain o Salish Kendra's (ASK) recently released report 'Human Rights in Bangladesh 2007' analyses human rights records right before and after the declaration of emergency. An invaluable tool for researchers, journalists, human rights activists and government policy makers, this report talks about institutional reforms and highlights some specific cases of human rights abuses throughout the year.



In each chapter, information has been collected from various national newspapers throughout the year, as well as court cases, records of PIL, etc.. There is a heavy focus on data, much of it presented in table form. In the chapter 'Right to Life and Livelihood' there are two tables with data on the number of extra judicial killings from 2004 to 2008, the number in 2007 and the nature of these deaths. The custody death of Choles Ritchil, the 40-year-old Garo activist who led the movement against the unpopular eco-park project, has been highlighted. There is also a table on deaths of prisoners in jail in 2007 in the different divisions of the country. Interestingly, there was a downturn in political violence right after the declaration of SoE. In fact, most of the incidents of political violence between rival parties occurred in less than a fortnight, right before 11 January 2007.

Reports of 229 workplace deaths were recorded in 2007 (Chapter -- 'Worker's Rights'). The vast majority of workplace deaths took place in the construction (107) and manufacturing industry (68) and the high-risk ship breaking industry (6). When about 15 workers died after a roof collapse at the Rangs Bhaban, it highlighted Rajuk's failure to act in compliance with construction safety laws. 126 persons died as a result of medical negligence. Although 18 cases were started in relation to these incidents, there were no verdicts against the medical authorities. Forcible eviction of hawkers and lay-offs of jute mill workers put the livelihoods of thousands of marginalised people on the line.

Violence against journalists continued in a similar fashion to previous years as pointed out in the chapter 'Right to Freedom of Expression'. Three journalists were murdered and 56 received work-related death threats. In general, press freedom saw further curbs due to the SoE, with management of media houses facing various pressures from the government.

There were no significant institutional developments in recognising the rights of religious minorities as pointed out in the chapter 'Right to Freedom of Religion',