

"That's because I was angry. The kind of things that both the girls had said... only a prostitute can say that. This is not an abnormal reaction from my side."

Many female protesters have been openly tagged as prostitutes. Statuses and messages have been circulating online welcoming anyone to beat up or rape the protesters, many of whom weren't even in the frontline of the protests. Several of the female protesters have also been tagged as members

The range of people attacked online because of the protest, according to Saima, has drastically increased. "There was a time when only those involved in politics were threatened. But now even

According to Umme Habiba Benojir, who studies Statistics in the University of Dhaka and is the president of the Bangladesh Chhatra Federation, online harassment is a strategy that is being used a lot more frequently against

"In the last one week, I have been threatened of being raped and being beaten up in public on Facebook. I have been asked for my 'visit' cost publicly. My Facebook ID has been pasted on different groups. Members of these groups keep on sending disgusting

"The kind of harassment that we are noticing now is a lot more organized. There are many fake IDs involved. As a result, there is a

What has made things worse for a number of these activists is that they haven't been able to confide in their guardians, both at home and at campus. "No one I know has said anything to their parents. If we do, then they will ask us to stay quiet, because they obviously want us not to get involved in any mess," says Saima. The

After all that, a brave Moriomo, who was almost in tears, hit back at her attackers through a press conference. "If they want to give me respect, they should remove the prostitute tag from my body."

The sheer number of posts dealing with harassment reflects the confidence and audacity with which these write-ups are published online. And this is happening at a time when the country has in place stringent laws to tackle online harassment, such as Section 57 of the ICT act.

Many victims have refrained from filing cases regarding sexual harassment mainly because they are afraid that complaining about these aspects might just make things worse for them. "It won't be a surprise if the officer-in-charge just laughs at us and asks us to leave," says Saima.

However, according to barrister Sara Hossain, even if complaints aren't filed against these harassers by the victims themselves, the police can take action if they are aware of such threats.

"If the police are aware of any cognizable offence that has happened, they are supposed to take action immediately. It's very clear in the law that someone doesn't have to come to the police and make a complaint. If they are aware of an offence they are supposed to register it and take action themselves," says barrister Hossain. "As far as I know, the police have not actually filed cases supporting the victims. On the contrary, they are filing cases against the victims, and this seems to be discriminatory."

"For instance, with section 57, they took the young man (Rashed Khan, protestor) in remand. Why are they not moving section 57 against people who are threatening these women? Why are they waiting for cases to be filed? In other cases the police are directly filing the FIR. They are not waiting for informants," explains Hossain.

Going by the stance of the government with regards to the quota reform movement, it's not a surprise that Saima and her friends' calls for justice are falling on deaf ears.

"There are so many of us getting harassed. Don't we matter at all? Do people not care about us?" Saima asks. Going by the current scenario, the answer to those questions seem obvious.

THE NEW WEAPON OF WAR IN DIGITAL BANGLADESH

Woman participating in the quota reform movement are being sexually harassed online and are constantly getting bombarded with inappropriate messages. The worst part of it all is that they have no one to turn to.

Naimul Karim

Kana
এই মেঘোচ
ছড়ায় এক চিনে

তফ হোসাইন মুরাদ
নকি মাগি তরে একবার পাইলে তর
প করলাম অনে

বানাইছে।

শুয়ের মাইয়া তোলা

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মাইয়া মনে রাখিস এশার সাথে এই রাতে যে
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মারি*র জন্য

Shopon Khan
হেতিরে তো আসল মাস্কের মতো

These were the violent rape threats received by the quota-reform movement protestors interviewed. They were both posted publicly on social media, as well as, sent to the inboxes of their personal profiles.