

# Families of missing clash with police during vigil

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that those who are missing have not been officially declared dead.

While the committee has struggled to keep the issue alive, it was only in October 1999 that it sprang into action. Whether it was the government of Salim Hoss or the committee's new strategy, or both, there was finally progress last January.

Weekly vigils outside the Cabinet headquarters since the committee launched its campaign in October have prompted Hoss to appoint an official commission of five army intelli-

gence officers. It was given three months to submit an official report to the government.

Hoss' action met one of the committee's three demands. The others are providing the families with social services and recognizing April 13 as a day of remembrance for all those missing.

"My heart is with each family member," Hoss told The Daily Star. "I sincerely hope that the commission will achieve results that would comfort the families - or at least some of them."

He declined to say, however,

what the government's next step would be. "The findings will impose themselves and direct our action," he said. "It is certain that the government will follow this issue up. Everything will take place in due time."

Brigadier Salim Abu Ismail, who heads the commission, explained the procedures adopted since the investigative body was set up on Jan. 21. The body has received just under 2,000 applications, prompting Abu Ismail to consider Amnesty International's estimate of 17,000 an exaggeration.

During his meeting with Hoss on Thursday, Abu Ismail intends to suggest an extension on the deadline set for the official report.

"I believe we need at least two more months to complete the report," he said in a telephone interview.

The official report will include a final estimate of the number of missing or kidnapped, as well as details of where the missing are believed to be, if they are still alive, and a suggestion to provide the families with social services.