



## **Habibur Rahman Haoladar of Morelganj of Bagerhat district allegedly abducted by law enforcement agencies**

Fact Finding Reports

Odhikar

Habibur Rahman Haoladar Habib (48) is a fishmonger of Gora, Katakhal area of West Betunia village under Morelganj Police Station of Bagerhat district. At around 5.30 am on 6 July 2011, the police of local Police Station, Armed Police Battalion, and District Detective Branch (DB) Police, with the help of some local people, arrested him from his house.

Morelganj police denied involvement in the arrest of Habib and said that members of the opponent party may have abducted him wearing police uniform.

Odhikar conducted a fact-finding mission in to the matter. During this, they interviewed:

- The relatives of Habibur Rahman Haolader
- Eye-witnesses
- Members of the law enforcement agency

### **Mahmuda Begum (36), Habib's wife**

Mahmuda Begum informed Odhikar that at around 5 am on 6 July 2011 she and her husband said their morning prayers and then went out to see the new engine boat in the Katakhal canal, adjacent to the road in front of their house. At that time two people, approached them. One of them had a gun and he grabbed her husband's right hand. Then Habib asked for their identity and they said that they were from the 'administration'. Then from the other side of the canal Bodhu Mollik, a local and two police wearing the uniform of the Armed Police Battalion came over. They all started to punch, kick, and beat Habib. One police tied Habib's eyes with blindfold. By this time, four people, in police uniform and carrying arms came out of a neighbour's house. With them a few more people came. The police had two bags with them. They took Habib in front of the house of another neighbour, Roshid Khan. Then Mahmuda shouted for help and asked the neighbours to save Habib.

She said that Abed Mollik, son of Arshed Mollik; Jahangir Mollik, son of Abed Mollik and Kalam Mollik, Bodhu Mollik, son of Mofiz Mollik; Rasel Mollik, son of Bodhu Mollik all gathered there. They were beating Habib with the police. The joints in his knees broke because of excessive beating and started bleeding. During the fight, the police took their badges off their uniforms. Habib's daughter Jesmine recognised one of the police officers as the ASI of Morelganj Police Station, Zohirul Islam. A few local people tried to come forward but the police threatened to shoot them. Around 20/25 local people witnessed the incident but everyone was so scared to protest.

The men then took Habib with them in the engine boat and sailed towards Morelganj and she, with her brother-in-law, Abul Hossain Haoladar, and daughter, Jesmin Akhter and a few other people followed the boat in another engine boat. Arriving at the Morelganj boat terminal, she saw that 5 men were escorting her husband down. The four police in the same engine boat and got down at the

terminal of the police station. The men escorting her husband put him in a black microbus. When she asked them where her husband would be taken, one of them said that they were members of Bagerhat Detective Branch (DB) of Police and they were taking Habib to the Bagerhat DB office. She and Jesmine went to Bagerhat DB office by bus. There, the DB police informed them that they had not arrested anyone named Habib. Then she went to the office of the Bagerhat Police Superintendent. She saw the black microbus in front of the office and the driver was cleaning the mud off. The police who were in charge of the gate did not let her enter to meet to the Police Superintendent. She, then informed the local MP, Dr. Mozammel Haque about the arrest of Habib. Dr. Mozammel Haque tried to search for Habib in different administrative offices but could not confirm the news or locate Habib. She claimed that the police had concealed her husband after arresting him. She arranged a press conference to rescue her husband and on 16 July 2011, she gave an application to the Superintendent of Police and Officer-in-Charge of Morelganj Police Station regarding this. She said that the opponents of her husband told her that the police were given eleven and a half lakh taka to arrest Habib. She said her family was threatened that if anyone interferes into the matter anymore then he would face the same consequences. She also said that the opponents of Habib are demanding 10 lakh taka.

**Manik (27), eye-witness**

Manik informed Odhikar that at around 5.30 am on 6 July 2011 he woke up hearing the scream of Habib's daughter, Jasmin. He went towards Habib's home, where he saw 8/9 men with arms surrounding Habib who was in handcuffs. The men warned him that he would be shot if he came any closer. Then he did not move. Later Habib was taken away in a boat.

**Moriam Begum (35), eye-witness**

Moriam Begum informed Odhikar that at dawn on 6 July 2011 she came out of the house hearing the screams of Habib's daughter. She saw 8/9 men with arms at the bank of the Katakhal canal. They shouted to everyone to leave otherwise they would shoot. 20/25 local people stood like a silent audience in fear of the police. Four among the men were in police uniform. At the other side of the canal, four more policemen were present and with them were Bodhu Mollik and Rasel Mollik. In the presence of the public, police and some local people beat Habib brutally. Later on, the police took Habib with them in an engine boat.

**Moazzem Hossain Jomaddar (62), Gram police, Ward no.3, Bohorbunia Union Parishad**

Moazzem Hossain Jomaddar, a village policeman told Odhikar that Habib is his neighbour. On 6 July 2011 after saying his morning prayers his daughter, Khadija Khatun told him that some people were screaming in front of Habib's house. He saw a crowd before the house of Abdur Rob Majhi. When he approached the crowd, he was threatened not to step forward otherwise they would shot him. He saw one person wearing the uniform of the Armed Police Battalion. After some time, they took Habib away with the help of some local people. He said that whenever any police operation takes place, he gets the information but he had not been informed from the police station about the move to arrest Habib.

**Dr. Mozammel Haque, MP (Morelganj-Shoronkhola), Bagerhat**

Dr. Mozammel Haque told Odhikar that Habib was a courageous and responsible man who was very vocal against crime in his locality. He had enmity with a dacoit named Nurujjaman Mollik. That dacoit group filed a false case against Habib to mar his character. He said that he heard from the police Superintendent that the members of the law enforcement agency took Habib. He, however, did not know the details.

**Mahirun (35), Habib's neighbour**

Mahirun told Odhikar that at around 6 am on 6 July 2011 she heard shouting and came out of his house. One man wearing the uniform of the Armed Police Battalion threatened her that she would be shot if she came forward. The people on the other side of the canal were also wearing the uniform of the Armed Police Battalion. At that time, three people entered into Habib's home with arms. They were wearing Lungi and blue shirt. The armed people searched through Habib's home but returned after not finding any arms. The police asked him that where Habib kept arms. Then she said that for his security Habib used to keep chopper and rope with him. After some time two men, wearing police uniform searched Habib's house again and found 35 taka only. At that time, they took his signature on the note that everything is fine in the house. They beat Habib with the branch of Gocha tree first. Then again, beat him when his eyes were tied and hands were handcuffed. Later on, they took him towards Morelganj in engine boat.

**Zahid (28), Boatman**

Zahid told Odhikar that at around 6 am on 6 July 2011 Habib's daughter, Jesmin called him and asked to bring an engine boat to their house. When he arrived there with an engine boat, he saw that police were taking Habib in an engine boat. He followed the police boat with Jesmin and 7/8 other people. After arriving at Morelganj, they saw the police take Habib down on a terminal. Then Jesmin and the others went to the police.

**Abdul Khaleque, Officer-in-Charge, Morelganj Police Station, Bagerhat**

Abdul Khaleque told Odhikar that on 6 July 2011 nobody arrested anyone called Habibur Rahman Haoladar Habib of west Betbunia village. However, Habib's family gave him a written complaint. He informed Odhikar that he is investigating the case.

He said that Habib is a listed forest dacoit and his number in District Special Branch is 255. The locals feared him. In Morelganj Police Station, there are 10 cases and 10 GD against Habib. Among these, there are four murder cases including one for the death of a boatman, Jafor Jomaddar, four of attempt to murder, one arms case, and one dacoit case. Habib had some very influential enemies. He suspected that they could have taken him wearing police uniforms.

**Sohrab Hossain Molla, Officer-in-Charge, District Detective Branch (DB), Bagerhat**

Sohrab Hossain Molla told Odhikar that he had heard of the news of Habib being arrested. However, he does not know who made the arrest.

**Khondkar Rofiqul Islam, Police Superintendent, Bagerhat**

Khondkar Rofiqul Islam told Odhikar that he heard the news of the arrest of a person from Bohorbunia named Habibur Rahman Haoladar from different sources, including Dr. Mozammel Haque and Habib's family. However, he said that the police did not arrest Habib. He also said that it was a hartal on 6 July 2011 and the whole police force was on duty to keep the law and order situation normal in the area. He heard that on that day a coastguard team set out on an expedition in the deep jungle of Sunderban in search of dacoits. No DB or local police team went to Bohorbunia on that day, he alleged.

He told Odhikar that sometimes Habib use to disguise himself and was listed dacoit. There was warrant issued against him. There are also 7/8 cases in Morelganj Police Station against him. He received a complaint from Habib's family regarding his arrest and disappearance. On 2 August 2011, he gave responsibility to the Officer-in-Charge of Morelganj Police Station, Abdul Khaleque to investigate this matter.

On 12 July 2011, Habibur's wife Mahmuda Begum organised a press conference at Bagerhat press club. She claimed her husband was an honest and responsible person and he was a victim of a conspiracy. She demanded that her husband be traced and rescued.

On 4 August 2011 Habibur's daughter, Jesmin Begum filed a General Diary (GD) in Morelganj Police Station mentioning the threats they were receiving. The GD number is 162. In the GD, she mentioned their loss of property, their insecurity and fear and threats over the phone in Habib's wife's number (01729655767). She also mentioned that the people who opposed her father keep walking around near their house and threatening them.

During the fact-finding, Odhikar interviewed the police and eye-witnesses. Police said that they did not arrest Habib but according to the statement of eye-witnesses, with the help of local people police wearing uniforms and having arms took Habib with them. Habib's family claim that some local people had him arrested because of enmity and police concealed him in exchange for money. There is no eagerness apparent from the law enforcement agencies to rescue Habib.

Odhikar demands that Habib be found as soon as possible and after a fair investigation, the criminals be brought to justice.