



Abu Reza Roni Meradona and Habibur Rahman Habib were allegedly tortured in police custody

*Fact finding Report
Odhikar*

Mohammad Abu Reza Roni Meradona (25) is the son of Mohammad Golam Mostafa and Mosammat Farida Yasmin from Shrimontopur village. Mohammad Habibur Rahman Habib (21) is the son of Mohammad Abdul Hoque Molla and Hosne Ara Begum of the same village. At around 11 pm on February 29, 2012, police from Magura Sadar Police Station arrested Meradona and Habib. On March 1, 2012, they were tortured in the room of Sub Inspector (SI) Nurujjaman Bishwas.

Odhikar conducted a fact finding mission into the matter. During this they interviewed:

- Mohammad Abu Reza Roni Meradona and Mohammad Habibur Rahman Habib
- Relatives of the victims
- Jailer and Jail Superintendent of Magura District Jail
- Members of law enforcement agencies.



Photograph: Meradona and Habib at Magura Sadar Police Station.

Mohammad Abu Reza Roni Meradona (25), victim

Mohammad Abu Reza Roni Meradona told Odhikar that he ran a business called “Auto Mobile Servicing” at the Press Club market at Chourongi crossing. He said that Habib and Shorif Hossain, who were his neighbours in the village, used to come to his shop as they were studying in the city. He came to know that from January 7, 2012, Shorif Hossain was missing. One day Sub Inspector (SI) Nurujjaman Bishwas came to him and asked about Shorif. Meradona told him that he had no contact with Shorif, but he was taken to the Magura Sadar Police Station and

tortured for two days. He was interrogated for the whereabouts of Shorif. After two days, he gave 5000 (Five thousand taka) as bribe to SI Nurujjaman and signed a bond to get released.

At around 11 pm on February 29, 2012, SI Nurujjaman Bishwas knocked on his door and asked him to come out. Then Meradona woke up his parents and brother and came out. SI Nurujjaman dragged him towards the police van. The van went to Habib's residence and picked him up too. At around 12 am, the van stopped at a fair where SI Nurujjaman took bribes from some gamblers. Then they were taken to the Magura Police Station and kept there the whole night.

At around 8 am on March 1, 2012, Meradona was blindfolded and taken to another room by SI Nurujjaman. He was then handcuffed and hung from the window grille. The SI beat him with a stick on different parts of his body, including legs, back and both arms. At that time, SI Nurujjaman continuously asked about Shorif's whereabouts. Someone came in and asked to release him. Meradona still blindfolded, recognized his father's voice. However, SI Nurujjaman denied his request and asked him to leave the police station. When Meradona refused to give a false confession the SI threatened him saying that he might die in crossfire. At around 1.00 pm on March 1, 2012, he was sent to Magura District Jail.

Mohammad Golam Mostafa (70), Meradona's father

Mohammad Golam Mostafa told Odhikar that Meradona woke him up at around 11 pm on February 29, 2012. He saw two policemen in their yard and one of them identified himself as SI Nurujjaman Bishwas. Then Nurujjaman handcuffed Meradona and dragged him towards the nearby road where he saw a police van. There were a few more police in that van. To save Meradona from torture he gave 5000 taka bribe to the SI. SI Nurujjaman asked him to go to the Magura Sadar Police Station. He said the police also arrested Habib.

At around 9 am on March 1, 2012, Golam Mostafa went to Magura Police Station to see Meradona. He saw Meradona was handcuffed and hanging from the window grille and was being beaten by SI Nurujjaman Bishwas. He could not control himself and cried out. Hearing his voice, Meradona also cried out loudly. At that time, SI Nurujjaman called the sentry and ordered him to send Golam Mostafa out of the police station. Later on, he again went to the SI and gave him 2,500 taka and requested him to release Meradona. Then a man who identified himself as a journalist, took pictures of Meradona and Habib. Then he was moved away from there. He demanded a proper investigation and justice of the torture on his son.

Mohammad Habibur Rahman Habib (21), victim

Mohammad Habibur Rahman Habib told Odhikar that at around 11.30 pm on February 29, 2012, police from the Magura Sadar Police Station came with Meradona and then brought both of them to the police station. He said that police tortured both of them the same way.

Mohammad Monowar Hossain (36), Habib's elder brother

Mohammad Monowar Hossain told Odhikar that at around 11.30 pm on February 29, 2012, a police van came in front of his house. A police officer identified himself as Sub Inspector (SI) Nurujjaman Bishwas and called Habib. He woke Habib up. When Habib came out of the house the SI put handcuffs on him and informed him that Habib was being arrested as a suspect in the missing case of his neighbour Shorif Hossain. He approached the van and saw Meradona in there. Then Habib was also taken into the van and they left. Before leaving, SI Nurujjaman asked him to go to the police station in the morning.

At around 9 am on March 1, 2012, Monowar went to the police station and saw Habib and Meradona being beaten. They were being asked about the whereabouts of Shorif Hossain. SI Nurujjaman asked him to go away from there. Soon after, a man with a camera came and started taking photos of Habib and Meradona. Then police stop beating them. Monowar came home as the SI did not allow him to stay there. On March 2, 2012, he went to the District Jail to meet Habib. Monowar found him ill. Then he bought some medicine and gave them to Habib. Habib did not talk about the torture as the police had threatened him not to. Monowar also informed that Habib is a 3rd year student of the Accounting Department at Government Hossain Shohid Sohorawardi College, Magura.

The fact finder again contacted Monowar on May 28, 2012. He said that Habib and Meradona got bail on March 28, 2012 and the case was in the Chief Judicial Magistrate Court. He also informed Odhikar that the next date of hearing was June 12, 2012.

Mohammad Masudur Rahman, Jailer of Magura District Jail

Mohammad Masudur Rahman told Odhikar that at around 4.55 pm of March 1, 2012, police of the District Police Station brought two accused persons named Meradona and Habib with warrants to the jail. He asked the accused whether they were being tortured or not. They replied that they were not tortured.

On March 2, 2012, at the time visiting prisoners, he came to know that both of them were ill. Then he informed the jail doctor and ensured their treatment. He said that none of the prisoners were ever tortured in the jail, rather the jail always keeps updates of their condition.

Sub Inspector (SI) Nurujjaman Bishwas, Magura District Police Station, Magura

SI Nurujjaman Bishwas told Odhikar that one day Rahia Begum, wife of Hafizar Munshi from Hridoypur village came to the police station. She informed that her son Shorif Hossain was a 3rd year student of Accounting Department at Government Hossain Shohid Sohorawardi College, Magura. He used to live in a hostel at Bhayna of Magura with Habib. On January 7, 2012, Habib came to their house in Hridoypur and Shorif left with him for the city.

SI Nurujjaman also informed that he contacted Habib and interrogated Habib and his friend Meradona about Shorif. During the investigation he also got a clue from Shorif's father's mobile phone. He got a number of a girl named Shanjida Islam Mou (20), daughter of Rakib Uddin of Bashbaria of Kotwali Police Station of Jessore. He arrested Mou as a suspect and Mou informed them that Habib and Meradona had kidnapped Shorif.

On February 29, 2012, Rahia Begum again came to the police station. The SI suggested that she file a case. Rahia Begum filed a case as a plaintiff against seven people under section 364/34 of the Penal Code 1860.¹ The case is numbered: 58 and dated: 29/2/2012.

He was the investigating officer of the case. At around 8.05 pm of February 29, he went to arrest the accused Meradona and Habib from Srimontopur village. At around 9 am the next morning, he ordered a sentry to bring both of them in his room for sending them to the Court. The sentry brought them and handcuffed them to the window grilles. However, SI Nurujjaman denied torturing them. He further mentioned that they handcuffed them to the grille to scare them as a way of interrogation. At around 12.45 pm they were sent to the Court. The Court sent them to the Magura District Jail then.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Asadujjaman Munshi, Magura District Police Station, Magura

On February 29, 2012 OC Asadujjaman Munshi requested the fact finder to talk to the Police Superintendent Sajjadur Rahman about the torture and about SI Nurujjaman.

Sajjadur Rahman, Police Superintendent, Magura

Police Superintendent Sajjadur Rahman told Odhikar that he heard about the complaint regarding the torturing of two youths in custody. He formed an investigating team consisting of three members. He assured that he would take steps soon after getting the investigation report. Then he suggested Odhikar meet Assistant Police Superintendent Shamsul Huq for any further queries.

Shamsul Huq, Assistant Police Superintendent, Magura

Shamsul Huq told Odhikar that Police Superintendent Sajjadur Rahman informed him that SI Nurujjaman tortured two accused persons after hanging them from the grille on March 1, 2012. This news was also published in the daily newspapers. That is why the Police Superintendent formed an inquiry committee, including Detective Branch (DB) Inspector Mohammad Robiul Hossain, Court Inspector Monirul Islam and himself for proper investigation into the matter. The Committee was still investigating.

¹ Section 364 talks about the punishment of kidnapping or abducting in order to murder and section 34 deals with the liability of all the persons involved in a criminal act in furtherance of common intention.

On May 28, 2012, the fact finder again contacted Shamsul Huq. He informed that they submitted their report to the Police Superintendent and based on the report a case had been filed against SI Nurujjaman. The investigation was going on and Nurujjaman had been suspended temporarily.

Statement of Odhikar

Odhikar demands a proper investigation into the matter and proper steps to be taken by the Government in this regard. It also urged the government to take measures to curtail all acts amounting to torture, as per its mandate of 'Zero tolerance' towards torture.