



An Awami League Leader Killed by Police at Mirpur, Kushtia

Fact-finding Report

Odhikar

It has been alleged that Anwar Hossain (25), a resident of the village of Katdohochor of Mirpur in Kushtia was shot and killed by the police of Mirpur Police Station in a brick field in the village of Housepur at around 12.25 am on June 28, 2008. It was unearthed through fact-finding that at around 3.00 am on June 26, 2008, Anwar, a tenant of Hurun-Or-Rashid's house in the village of Boro Deura of Tongi, Gazipur, was arrested by two police officers and 8-10 men in civilian clothing. The family members of the deceased said that after being arrested on June 26, the police shot and killed Anwar in a brick field at Housepur, at around 12.25 am on June 28 and passed off the incident as 'crossfire'. The Mirpur Police Station stated that Anwar was killed in 'crossfire' during a gunfight between the police and the 'extremists'. The Officer-in-Charge of the Tongi Police Station refused to make any comments on the arrest of Anwar. However, an officer of the Station confirmed that he was arrested by a team from Tongi Police Station.

On the basis of the allegation made by the family members, Odhikar conducted a fact-finding mission into the incident. During the fact-finding, Odhikar spoke with:

- Relatives of the deceased
- Witnesses to the incident
- The doctor and the morgue assistant who had performed the post-mortem of the body
- Concerned law enforcement agencies.

Asma Akond (25), wife of Anwar Hossain, Haruner Bari, Boro Deura, Tongi, Gazipur

Asma Akond told Odhikar that her husband was the Organising Secretary of the Jubo League¹ of Ward No. 9 of the Kursha Union Parishad² of Mirpur, Kushtia. She said that her husband was a contractor and that during the last BNP regime, Shahidul, an ex BNP MP, filed false cases against Anwar by making defendants out of various people. Anwar lived in the village of Boro Deura at Tongi in Gazipur district as a tenant of Harun-Or-Rashid house as a tenant in order to avoid arrest. At around 3.00 am on June 26, 2008, 8-10 people standing outside their residence asked them to open the gate. Asma stated that amongst the group of people one man was in police uniform while the rest were dressed in civilian clothing. When Asma asked them about their identities, they introduced themselves as police officers. Four or five of them carried arms. Asma recalled that her sister-in-law lived in another room in that house. When Asma's sister-in-law opened the gate, the police officers entered and asked them to open the door to the room where Anwar and she were residing. When Anwar opened the door to his room, the police officers barged inside and grabbed hold of Anwar and tied his wrists with rope. Asma stated that her husband was punched and kicked. She alleged that the police officers left one of their own arms near the door of their house and asked Anwar, 'Where did you get this?' When Asma wanted to know why they were arresting Anwar, they grabbed her by her hair and shook her. When

¹ Jubo League is the youth front of Bangladesh Awami League, a major political party of Bangladesh.

² Union Parishad is the lowest level of local government in Bangladesh.

Asma began to scream, one of the police officers shoved a gun at her throat threatening to kill her and also slapped her. When the police officers were taking Anwar away, she tried to give him a shirt but was kicked to the ground by the police. Although many people had come forward during the incident, the police did not allow anyone to say anything. Asma informed her relatives at Kushtia of Anwar's arrest over the telephone.

At around 7.00 am when Asma inquired at the Tongi Police Station, she was told that Anwar had not been arrested by the Tongi Police. She then left for Kushtia and asked for Anwar's whereabouts at the Kushtia Police Station but could not find him there either. Asma informed the Superintendent of Police (SP³) of Kushtia district of the matter.

On June 28, 2008, Asma was at her sister-in-law's house in the village of Tetul Tala in Mirpur. At around 12.25 am, she heard four or five gunshots coming from the brick field in the village of Hausepur which was beside the Tetul Tala village. A while later, a nephew of Asma's telephoned her and gave her the news that Anwar had been shot and killed by police at Sattar Munshi's brick field at Housepur and that the police had taken Anwar's body away. At around 3.00 pm, after completion of the post-mortem, Anwar's body was brought home. Asma recalled that there was one bullet wound on Anwar's head and three on his chest. There were also signs of beating on his arms and legs.

Golapful Begum (45), mother of Anwar Hossain, Katdohochor village, Mirpur, Kushtia

Golapful Begum recalled that at around 3.00 am on June 26, 2008, after learning of Anwar's arrest from Anwar's wife, they began to search for Anwar at the Tongi Police Station of Gazipur and various police stations of Kushtia, but were told by the police there that they had not arrested Anwar. She said that on June 28, 2008, she and her husband were at her daughter's house at Tetul Tala. At around 12.25 am, she heard 10/12 gunshots being fired from the area of Sattar Munshi's brick field at the village of Housepur. A few minutes later, her grandchild telephoned and informed her that Anwar had been shot and killed by the police at Sattar Munshi's brick field. After completion of the post-mortem, Anwar's body was returned by the police. Golapful stated that a bullet had entered Anwar's head through the left side and had exited through the right side. There were three more bullet wounds on Anwar's chest. There were also signs of injury on Anwar's arms and legs. Golapful believed that her son had been killed for political reasons.

Asan Ali (58), father of Anwar Hossain, Katdohochor, Mirpur, Kushtia

Asan Ali told Odhikar that since his son was an active member of the Awami Jubo League, three false cases had been filed against him during the last BNP regime. Asan Ali alleged that the followers of BNP had joined hands with the police and killed his son. He demanded justice for the untimely death of his son.

Isiron (22), Anwar's neighbor, Boro Deura village, Tongi, Gazipur

Isiron said that at around 3.00 am on June 28, 2008, she went out of her house to run a particular errand. Hearing people speak on the road just behind her house, she stood near the door of her house and saw two police officers in uniform and 8-10 other persons in

³ SP is the head of a district police administration in Bangladesh.

civilian clothing beating the handcuffed Anwar and taking him away. The residents from the surrounding houses also saw the incident. Isiron found out from others that police from Tongi Police Station had taken Anwar away.

Shahanaz (28) a witness to the arrest, Boro Deura village, Tongi, Gazipur

Shahanaz told Odhikar that Anwar Hossain was a tenant of her house for the last one year. When several men came to her house at around 3.00 am on June 26, 2008, and banged on her gate, Anwar's cousin sister, who was a resident of the room next to hers, opened the gate. When Shahanaz went to open her door, she realized that it had been bolted from outside. Through her window, Shahanaz saw a man in police uniform along with several other men in civilian clothing beating Anwar and taking him away. She also saw them verbally abusing Anwar's wife and dragging her around by her hair. She heard them shout to Anwar and his wife about where they had 'kept the arms' and threatened to shoot and kill them. Later on, the group of men handcuffed Anwar and took him in their vehicle and left. Shahanaz learnt from others that the men who had taken Anwar away were police officers from the Tongi Police Station. She stated that on June 28, 2008, she learnt from a newspaper that Anwar had been killed in 'crossfire'.

Alkach (49), former Commissioner, Tongi Pouroshabha⁴, Gazipur

Alkach, a former Commissioner of Tongi Pouroshabha, told Odhikar that Anwar rented a room from him for his laundry business. On the morning of June 26, 2008, he found out from others that the police of Tongi Police Station had taken Anwar away. He came to know of Anwar's death in 'crossfire' from the newspaper on June 28, 2008.

Abdus Salam, Officer-in-Charge (OC), Tongi Police Station, Gazipur

Abdus Salam, the OC, refused to speak about the incident regarding the death of Anwar and was offensive to the fact-finder of Odhikar.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Maleka, Second Officer, Tongi Police Station, Gazipur

SI Maleka said a few police officers had arrested a man called Anwar from the Boro Deura area on June 26, 2008, but did not know where he had been kept.

Rabiul Islam (38), Convener, Awami Jubo League, Mirpur Upazila, Kushtia

Rabiul Islam told Odhikar that Anwar was an influential member of the Awami Jubo League. On the morning of June 26, 2008, he came to know from a source that Humayun, the President of the Chhatra Dal⁵ of Kursha Union Parishad, had gone to Gazipur with several police officers from the Mirpur Police Station and those police officers had arrested Anwar from Gazipur and brought him to Kushtia. At around 9.00 am, he went to the Mirpur Police Station and requested the OC not to kill Anwar with the excuse of 'crossfire'. Rabiul then went to the SP of Kushtia district along with his party members. The SP initially stated that Anwar had not been arrested by the police but later on said that he would inquire whether the police had arrested Anwar. He also assured Rabiul and the others that Anwar would not be killed in 'crossfire'. Rabiul told Odhikar that despite the assurance of the SP, the police of the Mirpur Police Station killed Anwar in 'crossfire' on June 28, 2008.

⁴ Pourashobha is a form of local government in Bangladesh. a Commissioner is a member of Pourashobha. Recently, the Bangladesh government has officially changed the title 'Commissioner' into 'Councilor'.

⁵ Chhatra Dal is the student wing of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), a major political party in Bangladesh.

Ketab Ali (60), guard of Sattar Munshi's brick field at Housepur and witness to the incident, Housepur, Mirpur, Kushtia

Ketab Ali said that at around 12.25 am on the morning of June 28, 2008, he awoke from sleep hearing the conversation of men outside his door. This was followed by four to five gunshots. It was at that time that Ketab heard someone say, "Catch! Catch! Escaping! Shoot! Shoot!" He looked out of his window to see 10/15 police officers standing outside. As per the order of the police, he came out of his house to see the body of his acquaintance, Anwar from Katdohochor. He observed that a bullet had entered Anwar's head from the left side and had exited through the right side. There were also three bullet wounds on Anwar's chest. Ketab stated that the police had shown the body to a few other people and then left with the body, somewhat in haste.

Rafiqul Islam, witness and Member of the Community Policing Committee, Housepur, Mirpur, Kushtia

Rafiqul Islam said that on the night of June 28, 2008, he was on duty at Housepur village. At around 12.25 he heard the firing of 8-10 gunshots from the area of Sattar Munshi's brick field. Hearing this, Rafiqul and others gathered sticks, spears and knives and headed for the brick field. When they arrived there they saw a good number of police officers and two police vehicles parked on the adjacent road. When the police heard that Rafiqul and his men were from the Community Police, they called him and asked him to identify the dead body. Rafiqul identified the body as that of Anwar from the Awami Jubo League. Then the police left with the body.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Atiyar Rahman, Second Officer, Mirpur Police Station, Kushtia

SI Atiyar Rahman told Odhikar that he came to know from a 'secret source' on June 28, 2008 that a group of 'extremists' will gather at the brick field of Sattar Munshi at Housepur. On the basis of this news he went to the brick field with a group of police officers and cordoned the whole area. Atiyar Rahman stated that after cordoning the area, the police officers were fired upon by the 'extremists' as they headed down towards the field. The police officers fired back which led to a gun fight between them and the 'extremists'. According to him, after about 15 minutes the 'extremists' left leaving behind a dead body. The local residents identified the dead body as that of Anwar Hossain from the village of Katdohochor. Atiyar also stated that there were a total of 10 cases filed against Anwar at the Mirpur Police Station, relating to murder and other crimes.

Mosleh Uddin Ahmed, the SP, Kushtia

Mosleh Uddin Ahmed told Odhikar that on June 28, 2008, OC SM Kamruzzaman of the Mirpur Police Station told him that Anwar from the village of Katdohochor, a man against whom here were various cases, had been killed in 'crossfire' at Housepur. Moslehuddin stated that after gaining information regarding the news he ordered an Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) of Kushtia to go to the place of the incident after which he returned and submitted his report. Moslehuddin denied the allegation that Anwar had been arrested by the police two days before his death from Tongi, Gazipur, as was seen by various witnesses and Anwar's family.

Abdus Samad, Doctor who had performed Anwar's post-mortem, Kushtia General Hospital, Kushtia

Doctor Abdus Samad refused to make any comment about the results of the post-mortem of Anwar's body.

Lakshman Lal (37), morgue sssistant, Kushtia General Hospital, Kushtia

Laxman Lal told Odhikar that there was one bullet wound on the left side of Anwar's head and two on his chest. Seeing the status of Anwar's body it seemed to him that his wrists had been tied up. Lakshman stated further that there were signs of Anwar having been kept in blindfold. Anwar's tongue was protruding. According to him, there was also a boot print on Anwar's chest.

Odhikar demands that justice be brought regarding this and all other extra-judicial killings subject to investigation.

-The End of Report-