



Monjuara, a Child, Killed by BSF¹ at the Roumari Border of Kurigram
Fact-finding Report
Odhikar

Bhandorchar is a village at Roumari in the Kurigram district along the Bangladeshi border, opposite the Indian State of Assam. The residents of the village are mostly poor farmers or agricultural workers. Communication between this village and other areas such as Roumari upazila² headquarters and other villages is tough because it is separated from them by the Jinjiram river. There is no connecting bridge and boats offering a crossover are also not readily available. The children of this village do not go to school mainly because of economic hardship and a poor communication system. To add to all this, residents of this village live in constant alarm because of the killings of Bangladeshi citizens along the border by the BSF³. At around 6.00 pm⁴ on November 6, 2009, a 12-year-old girl named Monjuara Khatun, a resident of the village of Bhandorchar, was killed by bullets fired by the BSF. It was learned from eye-witnesses that when Monjuara had gone to the area adjacent to Main Pillar No. 1066 of the border to bring her goats home with her neighbours Lucky (12) and Arifa (13), the BSF of the Sahapara Camp of India shot two rounds at them, though Monjuara and her friends had been inside Bangladeshi territory the whole time. Lucky and Arifa managed to flee unscathed. After the incident, the family of Monjuara brought back her body with the help of the BDR⁵. On that very night, the BSF launched a parachute bomb into Bangladeshi territory, the flare of which caused the whole area to light up. Panic spread and the residents of the villages of Bhandorchar and adjacent localities left their homes for a safe shelter. In the light of the parachute bomb, the BSF opened fire. The BDR responded accordingly. The residents of the village of Bhandorchar and neighbouring villages are passing their days in constant fear especially after the death of Monjuara at the hands of the BSF.

Odhikar conducted a fact-finding mission into the incident. During the fact-finding mission, Odhikar spoke with:

- The family of Monjuara
- Eye-witnesses
- Local residents
- Concerned members of the BDR
- Concerned police officers

Anwar Hossain Munshi (55), Father of Monjuara

¹ BSF: Indian Border Security Force

² Upazila: An administrative unit under a district.

³ According to Odhikar Documentation Cell, 6 people have been reported killed by BSF along the India-Bangladesh border while 5 people have been reported injured in the month of November 2009.

⁴ The time of the incident was around 6pm DST – now followed in Bangladesh – but 5pm Bangladesh Standard Time.

⁵ BDR: Bangladesh Rifles – border guards of Bangladesh.

While talking to Odhikar, Anwar Hossain Munshi said that in the evening of November 6, 2009 while he was on his way back from Roumari, he learnt from others that Monjuara had been killed by the BSF and that the gunfight between the BSF and BDR had caused the residents of his village and neighbouring villages to flee their homes. He decided not to return home that night on the advice of others. At around 7.30 pm on November 7, 2009, the Roumari Police returned Monjuara's body to them after the post mortem. According to Monjuara's father, a bullet hit Monjuara on the right side of her back while another bullet hit her on her right arm. Anwar stated that the fact that his daughter's body lay inside Bangladeshi territory proved that Monjuara did not enter Indian territory. Yet the BSF had not hesitated to kill his innocent daughter. Anwar demanded that the concerned BSF members be punished.



Photo: The dead body of Monjuara Khatun

Mosammat Mitu (25), Monjuara's sister-in-law, Bhandorchar, Roumari, Kurigram

Mosammat Mitu told Odhikar that Monjuara had gone to the field adjacent to their home to gather their goats on the evening of November 6, 2009. Lucky and Arifa, neighbours of Monjuara, were also with her. Mitu went on to say that at around 6.00 pm, her neighbour Rehena Begum (30) came and informed her that Monjuara had suddenly fallen to the ground in a field near the border and that perhaps she had been shot by the BSF. Afterwards, four BDR members arrived and shot two rounds of bullets at the BSF members positioned at the Indian border across the place of the incident. The BSF members left the area after being fired upon following which the BDR members told her to bring Monjuara from the field. Mitu then took two of her neighbours to the field and saw that Monjuara had died. According to Mitu, a bullet had entered Monjuara's body through the right side of her back and had not exit. Another bullet had grazed her right arm, slightly injuring it.

Mohammad Billal (11), Eye-witness, Bhandorchar, Roumari, Kurigram

Mohammad Billal told Odhikar that he was near the border when the incident occurred. He said that when Monjuara and two other young girls had gone to the field adjacent to the border to call Monjuara's goats home, there were three BSF members standing side by side. Billal recalled that one of those three BSF members fired two rounds of bullets upon them. He continued by saying that although the two other girls were able to run for cover, Monjuara was hit and fell to the ground.

Nayek⁶ Abdul Karim, Ijamari Camp, BDR, Roumari, Kurigram

Nayek Abdul Karim said he was leading a patrol team of four on the evening of November 6, 2009. At around 6.15 pm when they were positioned near the village of Bhandorchar, they heard two successive gunshots coming from the area adjacent to the Main Pillar No. 1066 located beside Bhandorchar village along the India-Bangladesh border. He said they immediately rushed to the scene where they learned from the local residents that a young girl called Monjuara had been shot by the BSF and that her body was lying in the field. Nayek Karim said that he and his team members then noticed a BSF vehicle standing across the border with a few BSF members standing beside it. The BDR members then fired two rounds of bullets on the BSF and assisted Monjuara's family to retrieve her body. Nayek Karim went on to say that Monjuara was hit by a bullet on the right side of her back. Another bullet grazed her right arm, slightly injuring it. The BDR later handed over Monjuara's body to Roumari Police Station.

Nayek Karim stated that on the night of November 6, the BSF launched a parachute bomb inside Bangladeshi territory, lighting up the whole area. This caused the residents of the Bhandorchar border to flee from their homes out of fear. Following the parachute bombing, the BSF fired about 200 rounds of bullets in response to which the BDR fired about 100 rounds of bullets.

Nayek Karim went on to say that on the following day on November 7, 2009, flag meetings between the BSF and BDR were held at the Company Commanders level and the Battalion Commanders level.

Abul Kalam Azad, Commander, Roumari Company, BDR, Roumari, Kurigram

The Commander of Roumari Company of BDR, Abul Kalam Azad, told Odhikar that the shooting and killing of the innocent young girl Monjuara by the BSF clearly violates the border treaty of 1975 signed by India and Bangladesh.

Azad stated that in the flag meeting between the Company Commanders held between 11.40 am and 12.25 pm on November 7, 2009, Captain Brajesh and Inspector Udai Kumar represented the BSF while he himself was present on behalf of the BDR.

According to the Commander of Roumari Company, the Indian authorities expressed their apologies and pledged to take measures against the guilty BSF members subject to investigation. He continued by saying that the Indian counterparts also promised that incidents as such would never be repeated again.

The BDR official Azad said that the second flag meeting between the BDR and the BSF took place between Lieutenant Colonel Mizanur Rahman of the 6 Rifles Battalion and A K Vidyarthi, the Commander of the 162 BSF Battalion. The BSF authorities made similar pledges in the second meeting as well.

⁶ Nayek: A non-commissioned rank in the BDR.

Sub-inspector (SI) Fazlul Huq, the police officer assigned to investigate into the General Diary (GD) filed in connection with the killing of Monjuara, Roumari Police Station, Kurigram

SI Fazlul Huq stated that following Monjuara's killing at the hands of the BSF, a GD was filed at the Roumari Police Station on November 6, 2009. The GD was numbered 194. Huq said that Monjuara's body was returned to her family on November 7, 2009 after the post mortem.

-The End of Report-