



A man was allegedly tortured to death by the Police of Kushtia

Fact Finding Report

Odhikar

The family members of Akhtar Hossain (35) alleged that at 2 am on March 10, 2008, Akhtar Hossain was physically tortured to death by the Police of the Kushtia Sadar Police Station. However, the Police commented that he was killed by a mob as he went to collect extortion money behind Bismillah Fish Hatchery at Lahini Bot-tola of the Dhaka–Kushtia highway.

Odhikar undertook a fact finding assignment of the incident. During the fact finding,

Odhikar spoke with:

- The family members and relatives of the deceased
- The Eyewitnesses of the incident
- The law enforcement authorities
- The person who did autopsy of the dead body at the hospital

Bijli Akhtar (38), the Aunt of the deceased Akhtar

Bijli Akhtar told Odhikar that she was also a resident of the house from which Akhtar was arrested. At around 12.10 am on March 8, 2008, 9/10 white civil dressed people suddenly entered through the gate and climbed the stairs of the building 33/East Goran, Dhaka. When asked for their identity they introduced themselves as RAB officers and asked them to keep quiet. 10/15 minutes later, blind folded Akhtar who was in a *lungi* (a piece of clothing for men, usually worn wrapped around the hips, reaching the ankles) and a vest was arrested and taken away. When they left they said that they were taking Akhtar to the RAB-3 camp at Khilgaon. Bijli Akhtar informed her sister Shopna of the arrest of Akhtar. She along with Shopna went to the RAB-3 camp at Khilgaon at 1 am. When they knocked at the gate of the RAB-3 camp, somebody asked for their identities from inside. They were then asked to contact again in the morning.

Bijli Akhtar said that she contacted with various relatives in the meantime. At one point, one of her relatives named Nur Alam (Nur Alam was employed as a source of RAB) informed that Akhtar had been kept at the camp of RAB-3. Nur Alam further informed that if the RAB found out nothing from Akhtar after interrogation, he would be released.

Shopna Khatun (30), the sister of the deceased Akhtar

Shopna said at around 12.20 am on March 8, 2008, she was informed by her Aunt Bijli Akhtar via mobile phone that Akhtar had been arrested. She along with her Aunt went to the RAB-3 camp at Khilgaon in Dhaka at around 1 am. When they knocked the gate of the RAB camp, they were asked of their identities from inside and after that they were asked to come in the morning. They arrived at the RAB camp again at 9.30 am where they were asked to wait. At around 12 pm, they suddenly saw a pick-up taking Akhtar away, who was blindfolded by a blue cloth. Akhtar was accompanied by two RAB officers. When they inquired the RAB

officers as to where the pick-up was going, they were told that it was on its way to the RAB-3 office. They then went to the RAB-3 office. There they asked about the whereabouts of Akhtar, RAB officers there claimed to have known nothing about him. Later on, they found out through their relative Nur Alam that Akhtar would be transferred to the Kushtia Sadar Police Station. They were later informed by Akhtar's wife from Kushtia that at 2 am on March 10, 2008, Akhtar was killed in a mob beating as he was trying to collect extortion money. She questioned as to how a person who was in custody could have been involved in collecting extortion money.

Odhikar's fact finding team tried to talk with Nur Alam but failed.

Munna (28), the son of the house-owner in whose house the deceased Akhtar used to stay

Munna informed Odhikar that at around 12.15 am on March 8, 2008, 9/10 civil dressed men introduced themselves as officers of RAB-3 and asked to open the gate. After the gate was opened, they directly went to the 5th floor and after a while they took Akhtar with them.

Hasna Khatun (30), the wife of the deceased Akhtar

Hasna Khatun told Odhikar that she used to live in Kushtia with her three children. Her husband used to stay in Dhaka for the past five years for running his rod-cement supplying business. Hasna Khatun was informed at around 1 am on March 8, 2008, by her sister-in-law via mobile phone that Akhtar had been picked up by 10/11 officers of RAB-3, all of whom were in plain clothes, at around 12.15 am of March 8, 2008, from the 5th floor of his house at 33, East Goran, Dhaka. On hearing the news of Akhtar being picked up, she contacted various people. She found out from her relative Nur Alam (who was a source of RAB) that Akhtar had been kept at the Khilgaon Camp of RAB-3. An officer from the Khilgaon camp of RAB-3 called her on mobile phone and asked her in detail about Akhtar Hossain. She informed the RAB officer that Akhtar was not in any way involved in any crimes. Akhtar had been conducting business in Dhaka for the past five years. Out of fear of some influential people in Kushtia, he had not gone to Kushtia in the past five years. She requested the officer to release her husband. Hasna said that in reply to her request, the officer informed her that Akhtar would be handed over to the Kushtia Sadar Police Station. She said that hearing this she took her three children and her mother-in-law to the office of the Superintendent of Police (SP) of Kushtia at around 11.30 am on March 8, 2008. She said that the SP, Moslehuddin Ahmed told her that Akhtar had been arrested by RAB and that if RAB handed him over to the Police, the Police would send him to the Court. He told her to go home. She added that her father-in-law saw in the afternoon on March 9, 2008, that Akhtar was transferred from Dhaka to Kushtia in a Police car. At around 3 am on March 10, 2008, she was informed by her neighbour, Nur Ali, that her husband had died due to mob beating behind the Bismillah Fish Hatchery at Lahini Bot-tola. When commenting on the Police claiming that Akhtar died of mob beating while trying to collect extortion money, she questioned as to how Akhtar could be involved in collecting extortion money and how he could have been subject to a mob beating when he was in the custody of the RAB and the Police for two days. Hasna told that the Police had beaten Akhtar to death and was propagating that he had been killed in a mob beating. She demanded justice for the incident through proper investigation.

Dilshad Begum (60), the mother of the deceased Akhtar

Dilshad Begum told Odhikar that she along with her daughter-in-law Hasna Khatun went to the SP Moslehuddin Ahmed's office. The SP told them that if the RAB handed Akhtar over to the Police they would send him to the Court. She alleged that being abetted by Akhtar's rivals the Police had beaten Akhtar to death and was propagating a false story of mob beating.

Ali Nawab (68), the father of the deceased Akhtar

Ali Nawab told Odhikar that between 4.30 pm and 5 pm on March 9, 2008, he saw Akhtar being taken away in a white old microbus towards Kushtia town while he was standing on the slope of the Mollateghoriya Bridge on the Dhaka-Kushtia highway. He said that he Akhtar was blindfolded by a black cloth, had a vest on and was sitting in between two police officers while two other officers were sitting behind. After this, they were unable to find out where Akhtar was kept by the Police. Later on at 3 am on March 10, he was informed by his neighbour Nur Ali that Akhtar was killed in a mob beating. He also came to know that Akhtar's body was kept in the morgue of the Kushtia General Hospital. When he reached the hospital in the early hours, he saw Akhtar's body lying on the ground. He informed that his son was arrested by RAB on March 8, 2008 at around 12.15 am and was brought to Kushtia in the afternoon on March 9, 2008. The deceased's father said that, according to the Police statement, his son died of mob beating at 2 am on March 10, 2008. He questioned as how could he collect extortion money and become a victim of mob killing while he was in custody. He believed that the Police was propagating a false story of mob killing after beating Akhtar to death. He demanded justice for the killing of his son through proper investigation.

Icharul Islam, owner of the Bismillah Fish Hatchery

When Odhikar's fact finding team first approached Icharul Islam he did not agree to speak with them. Later on, he contacted Hafizur Rahman Khokon, the Secretary of the local Community Policing Committee and in Khokon's presence he said that at around 12 am on March 8, 2008, Akhtar demanded money as extortion from him through his accomplices Tapan and Azim who told him that they would come to collect the money on March 9, 2008. Icharul said that Akhtar, Tapan and Azim along with four others came to collect the money on March 10, 2008. Seeing Akhtar and his gang, he began to shout and soon people gathered and began to beat Akhtar. He said that though all others managed to flee, Akhtar was killed by mob beating. He continued by saying that realizing the intensity of the incident Khokon contacted the Police. The Police took Akhtar's body in their custody and took him to the Kushtia General Hospital. When Odhikar asked Icharul Islam as to why he did not contact the Police when Akhtar sent men to collect the money, he failed to give any reply.

Hafizur Rahman Khokon (46), Secretary of the Community Policing Commity for Ward No. 7 of the Kushtia Pourashabha (Municipality)

Hafizur Rahman Khokon told Odhikar that Icharul Islam had informed him earlier that Akhtar would come to collect the money he had demanded as extortion. He said that was he prepared with his men to capture Akhtar and his gang. He continued by saying that Akhtar's group members managed to escape. However, Akhtar was caught by the public and was beaten to death. He failed to answer Odhikar's question as to how Akhtar had gone to collect money when he was in the Police custody.

Mofizul Islam (45), a man residing near the Bismillah Fish Hatchery

Mofizul Islam told Odhikar that he was asleep on the night of the incident in his residence and was suddenly awakened after hearing sound of screams at around 2.30 am on March 10, 2008. He came out of his house and saw a group of people with sticks and hockey-sticks standing behind it. Mofizul went closer and saw under the light of a torch the dead body of Akhtar, wearing a vest and a *lungi*.

Sazzad Hossain, Second Officer, Kushtia Sadar Police Station

Sazzad Hossain, told Odhikar that he came to know of the incident from Hafizur Rahman Khokon, the Secretary of the Community Policing Committee of Ward No. 7 and after that he went to the place of the

incident with his force including Sub-Inspector (SI) Aziz of the Sadar Police Station. He informed that there were several cases filed against Akhtar and that he was an alleged criminal.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Aziz, Kushtia Sadar Police Station

SI Aziz told Odhikar that he along with the Second Officer Sazzad Hossain of the Kushtia Sadar Police Station reached the place of the incident at 2.25 am on March 10, 2008. He said that upon their arrival they saw a group of men with sticks and hockey-sticks standing in an area behind the Bismillah Hatchery near the Lahini Bot-tola of the Dhaka-Kushtia highway. The Police entered into the midst of the group of people and found the body of a person lying on the ground. SI Aziz said that they immediately took him to the hospital where he was declared dead by the duty doctor. He further stated that there were three cases filed against Akhtar at the Kushtia Sadar Police Station and that he himself filed another case for extortion against Akhtar that night.

Doctor Motaharul Islam, the doctor who conducted the post-mortem into Akhtar's body

Doctor Motaharul Islam refused to make any comments on the post-mortem of Akhtar's body.

Lakshmanlal, the person who did autopsy of Akhtar's body

Lakshmanlal told Odhikar that there were marks of beating all over Akhtar's body, which gave him the impression that he was physically tortured to death.

-The END of Report-