



A Man Allegedly Tortured to Death by Police at Narayanganj

Fact-Finding Report **Odhikar**

A man named Fakir Chan (35) from the village of Mijimiji of Siddhirganj Upazila (Sub-district) in Narayanganj district was arrested from Maulvibazar by the police on April 13, 2008. The police authorities urged that while Fakir Chan was in police remand, he fell ill and was taken to the hospital on April 19, 2008 when he was declared dead by the doctors present. However, the family members of Fakir Chan alleged that he was tortured to death by the police.

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

- 1) The family members and relatives of the deceased
- 2) The concerned police and detective police personnel
- 3) The hospital authorities and the person who assisted in the post-mortem.

Golenur Begum (60), the late Fakir Chan's mother

When Odhikar tried to speak to late Fakir Chan's mother she could not speak at all. She was overwhelmed with grief and sorrow over her son's death and demanded that justice be done.

Rahela Khatun (30), late Fakir Chan's wife

Rahela Khatun told Odhikar that she had two daughters and a son. Fakir Chan was employed as a Lineman of the Mitali Transport along the Dhaka-Sylhet route. Sub-Inspector (SI) Babul of the Siddhirganj Police Station arrested Fakir Chan two months ago and then released him for Taka 30,000. At 2.30 pm on April 13, 2008, Fakir Chan informed her over cell phone that he had been arrested from Maulvibazar. He had also told her to quickly arrange for his release or he would be tortured to death by the police. When Rahela asked him where he was being kept, Fakir could not say. Rahela immediately went to the Siddhirganj Police Station. However, the Officer-in-Charge (OC) of the police station, Shakhawat Hossain told her that they had not arrested Fakir Chan.

Rahela recalled that she went to the Narayanganj Police Station in the evening and saw SI Babul Akhtar and police source Noufen in front of the Police Station. On her query about her husband, he said that they had not

arrested Fakir Chan. Rahela asked two to three other police officers but all of them said that they knew nothing about Fakir Chan's arrest. However, when Rahela came out of the Police Station and stood on the road in front of it, she saw Fakir Chan through a window in a room on the first floor of the Police Station. Then she went back to the Police Station and informed police that she had seen Fakir Chan. Police told her to bring food for Fakir Chan. Rahela returned with food but was told to go home and come back the following day. The following morning, i.e. April 14, 2008, Rahela went again to the Narayanganj Police Station with her mother. She spent the whole day there but was not granted permission to see her husband. They were told by the Police Station authorities that Fakir Chan would be sent to the Court the following day. Rahela went to the Police Station again the following morning on April 15, 2008, but was denied of the opportunity to meet Fakir Chan. Rahela further stated that when she went to the Police Station again on April 16, 2008, a few police officers told her that Fakir Chan was not in the custody of the police. Rahela went to the office of the Detective Branch of Police (DB Police) of Narayanganj district towards the noon and found out there that her husband was in the custody of the DB Police of Narayanganj and was under interrogation. She went to the DB Police office the following day on April 17, 2008 but was not allowed to meet her husband despite waiting all day. Rahela then formally applied in writing to the Superintendent of Police (SP) of Narayanganj to meet Fakir Chan but was still denied of any opportunity to meet him. She said that on April 18, 2008 at around 8 am, she went to the office of the DB Police again but was not given permission to meet her husband. Rahela told Odhikar that she saw SI Babul Akhtar, OC Shakhawat Hossain, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Jannatul Hasan and police source Noufen of the Siddhirganj Police Station at the DB Police office in the same evening. Fakir Chan's wife said that between 9.30-10.00 pm, she heard the sudden scream of Fakir Chan. When Rahela asked a DB Police officer standing in front of the gate as to why her husband was screaming, he replied that Fakir Chan was being interrogated. Then the DB Police officer told her to go home and she did so.

In the meantime, SI Babul Akhtar conveyed over the telephone that if Taka 50,000 was given as bribe, Fakir Chan would be released.

Rahela said that at around 4.00 am on April 19, 2008, she came to know from a local reporter of RTV (a satellite TV station) that her husband Fakir Chan had died and that his body was kept at the Narayanganj 200-Bed Hospital. On hearing this, she rushed to the hospital to see her husband's dead body. After the post-mortem was conducted, her husband's body was buried under the police guard on April 20, 2008. Rahela alleged that the police were still threatening her not to file any case. She had left home and was residing elsewhere because of the intimidation from the police. She

alleged that her husband had been tortured to death by the police and she demanded justice.

Md. Abul Hossain (28), brother-in-law of the Fakir Chan

Abul Hossain informed Odhikar that he saw signs of torture on Fakir Chan's body. He had the impression that Fakir Chan had been given electric shocks because all the nails of his fingers had been taken off and his hands and legs had turned blue. There were marks of his hands being tied up with a rope. Abul alleged that the police were still threatening them and that plain clothes policemen were making their presence felt so that they would not file any case.

Doctor Choudhury Iqbal Bahar, Narayanganj 200-Bed Hospital

Doctor Choudhury Iqbal Bahar told Odhikar that at around 12.10 am on April 19, 2008, a private car belonging to Far East Insurance Limited stopped in front of the Emergency division of the hospital and several plain clothes persons brought out an unconscious person from the car and tried to leave in haste after leaving the unconscious person on a stretcher. Doctor Bahar said that he asked for their identities and was told by the plain clothes men that they were DB Police officers. After giving their identities they tried to escape but the Doctor stopped them. The Doctor checked the blood pressure and pulse of the person on the stretcher and realised that he was dead. When the Doctor asked them the identity of the dead person, they said that the OC of Siddhirganj Police Station would come later and give the name and address of the dead person. This is why the Doctor initially registered the body as an unknown person. Doctor Bahar said that the plain clothes men asked him to speak with the Deputy Commissioner (DC)¹ or the SP over the mobile phone. The Doctor replied that if the DC or the SP telephoned him through a Government phone, then he would be willing to speak to them. He told Odhikar that the plain clothes men quickly left when several journalists arrived at the scene. The Doctor continued by saying that when he informed a higher official of what had happened, he told him to take the 'Dead Person's Register' on a Government ambulance and have it received from the Narayanganj Police Station. The Register was sent on a Government ambulance in order to prevent it from being mugged. The Duty Officer at the Narayanganj Police Station refused to receive the Register and sent it back to the hospital. At 3.25 am, OC Md. Eshan Uddin Choudhury of the DB Police along with several police officers arrived at the hospital and told the Doctor to write down the name and identity of the dead person. The OC told him to cut out the portion where the Doctor had already written that the identity of the dead person was unknown. Doctor Bahar refused to cut out that portion. He again arranged for the Register to be sent to the Police Station and this time the Duty Officer of the Narayanganj Police Station received it and sent it

¹ Deputy Commissioner (DC) is the head of the civil administration of a district in Bangladesh.

back. The Doctor stated that the body was later taken by the Narayanganj Police to the Narayanganj General Hospital for post-mortem. Doctor Bahar informed that there were signs of torture in various parts of Fakir Chan's body. The body's wrists bore marks which indicated that he was probably hung by the wrists and beaten. There were signs of beatings from the knees to the feet.

Doctor Md. Nazim Khan, the Doctor who performed the post-mortem of Fakir Chan's body

Doctor Md. Nazim Khan told Odhikar that at around 12.00 pm on April 20, 2008, he performed the post-mortem of Fakir Chan's body. He was not able to say what had caused Fakir Chan's death before the arrival of the viscera test report. He finished his talks with Odhikar by saying that an Unnatural Death Case regarding the incident had been filed at the Narayanganj Police Station.

Darpan (27), the person who assisted the doctors in the post-mortem

Darpan told Odhikar that the late Fakir Chan's body bore many marks of torture. He stated that seeing the wounds on his wrists, it seemed to him that Fakir Chan had been hung by his wrists and beaten. He added that there were signs of torture from the knees to the feet of the body.

Anwarul Islam, the Magistrate who prepared the Inquest Report of the body

Magistrate Anwarul Islam refused to make any comments regarding the Inquest Report.

Siddhirganj Police Station, Narayanganj

During the fact-finding, Odhikar tried several times to meet OC Shakhawat Hossain and SI Babul Akhtar but could not find them at the Police Station. The officer who was on duty at the Police Station during the fact-finding informed Odhikar that he knew nothing about the incident. Neither OC Shakhawat nor SI Babul could be contacted over the mobile phone. When SI Babul Akhtar was called, either he did not receive the call or someone else received it and said that SI Babul Akhtar had left the phone in their shop.

Md. Ehsan Uddin Choudhury, Officer-in-Charge (OC), DB Police, Narayanganj district

Md. Ehsan Uddin Choudhury told Odhikar that he was not at his office when the incident took place on April 19, 2008. He stated that he would not be able to say anything about the incident because it was still under investigation. The OC stated that the viscera report and the post-Mortem report would prove whether Fakir Chan had been tortured to death or had died due to cardiac failure.

Jannatul Hasan, Assistant Police Super (ASP), Narayanganj

ASP Jannatul Hasan told Odhikar that Fakir Chan was a mugger. He said that Fakir Chan was accused in 6 cases. The ASP continued by saying that towards the evening on April 19, 2008, he along with SI Babul and a force of the DB Police took Fakir Chan with them in an operation to retrieve arms. When they were returning following the operation, Fakir Chan tried to escape and fell and injured himself. At around 9.00 pm, Fakir Chan was taken to the DB Police office for interrogation where he fell ill and was moved to the hospital at around 12.00 am. When asked why Fakir Chan was taken from the Siddhirganj Police Station to the DB Police office for interrogation, he said that an accused can be taken anywhere for interrogation. He commented that the account given in the newspapers as to what had happened was totally false and fabricated.

The update

SI Saiful Islam and SI Mamunur Rashid of the Narayanganj DB Police and SI Babul Akhtar of the Siddhirganj Police Station, who were all the investigation officers of the case filed against Fakir Chan for mugging, have been withdrawn from their duty stations. On April 24, 2008, ASP Jannatul Hasan of Circle² 'Ka' of Narayanganj was also withdrawn.

- End of Report-

² A Police Circle is formed of a number of police stations in Bangladesh.