



A rickshaw van puller killed by the BSF at the Putkhali border under Jessore District

Fact-finding Report
Odhikar

Name of the victim : Abdul Jalil
Age : 43
Address : District: Jessore, Police Station: Benapole, Union: Benapole
Village: Shakhariputa
Border/Pillar (Bangladesh) : Putkhali Border
Border/ Pillar (India) : Angrail Border
Date of Occurrence : 24 January 2010

Abdul Jalil (43) who was a rickshaw van puller and a day-labourer also used to work for the cattle traders. According to the eye-witness, Ahmed Ali, on 23 January 2010 at night he along with Jalil, Ashadul and Nuruddin started their journey towards India by boat. They crossed the Ichamoti river and reached the Indian side at Angrail village at around 1.00 am on 24 January 2010. From Angrail they took three cows and a calf to cross the border of Putkhali. According to their plan, Nuruddin was the line man¹, and he left earlier than the rest of the outfit. Odhikar was told by Ahmed Ali that at around 2.00 am they were returning from the Indian side by crossing the Ichamoti river. Nuruddin's boat was too small to carry four cows and three people. Nuruddin crossed the river first without them and told Ahmed that the road was clear. Jalil, who was cripple at birth was slowly following Ashadul and Ahmed. When Ashadul and Ahmed reached the bank of the Ichamoti river at the Indian side, two BSF members from the Angrail camp attacked them. After seeing the BSF, Ashadul and Ahmed fled, leaving the cattle in a bamboo bush at the Indian side. However, Jalil, being slower, was caught by the BSF at the bank of the river.

Ahmed and Ashadul saw two masked BSF members equipped with batons and rifles. After catching Jalil one BSF member beat him severely with his rifle and baton onto his neck and

¹ Line man –The member of the outfit who is on the lookout and goes ahead of the team to make sure that there is not any BSF or peril waiting.

head. They heard Jalil cry out for pardon. According to Ahmed while one was beating Jalil the other called the Angrail camp. About 15 minutes later two motorbikes came to take away Jalil and the BSF members.

On 30 January 2010 at around 9.00 am Jalil's wife heard from his brother Ahmed Ali that Jalil's body had been found by the villagers of Putkhali from Ichamoti river. On 2 February 2010 at 11.30 am she had a chance to see Jalil's body (covered with a bamboo pannier) after it was returned from the police station. As per Sub-Inspector (SI) Ali Akbar, Investigating Officer, Benapole Police Station, and the inquest report, there was no gunshot wound in the body but there were a lot of injuries and bruises on his head and right ear lobe with clotted blood. SI Ali Akbar suspected that the body might have thrown to the river 7/8 days earlier. The body of Jalil was found in a decomposed state. The post mortem was conducted on 2 February 2010 at Jessore Medical College Hospital.

Odhikar conducted a fact-finding mission on 18 February, 2010 into the incident. During the fact-finding mission, Odhikar spoke with:

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

Nasima Begum (33), Victim's wife

Nasima Begum said that her husband used to work as a rickshaw van puller and day-labourer in others fields. They have lot of debt and mortgages to the villagers that have been accumulating for the last few years. She knew that her husband was working as a labourer for cattle traders, but there was no other option open to them. On 20 January 2010 at 10.00 am Jalil left his home saying that he was going to work in the fields and would be back by evening. Nasima was surprised when her husband was not back in time. At around 8.00 pm, the same day, she asked her brother Ahmed Ali whether he had seen her husband. Ahmed Ali told her that Jalil was in Putkhali village at his friend Nuruddin's house and they were planning to cross the Ichamoti river on 24 January at night to cross the Putkhali border to bring cattle.

On 24 January 2010 at 12.30 pm Nasima heard from her brother's wife Rawshan Ara Begum that Jalil had called her and said that he was staying at Putkhali border and would return on the 25th morning. The next day, Nasima asked her brother about Jalil at 9.30 am. She was told that Jalil has been caught and taken to the Angrail camp by the BSF while they were coming from Angrail village of India back with cattle. Nasima and her family neither inform the police nor the BDR about this.

On 30 January 2010 at around 9.00 am Nasima heard from her brother that Jalil's body had been found by the villagers of Putkhali at the bank of Ichamoti river. Recovering the body of Jalil, the villagers handed it over to police. Later she also heard that the body had decomposed and the police were not able to identify it due to the rate of decay. On 2 February 2010 at 11.30 am, she identified Jalil's body (covered with bamboo pannier) with the help of Ahmed, when it was returned from the police station via Jessore Medical College Hospital. On the same day at 5.00pm, the body was buried in the village graveyard.

Odhikar asked Nasima whether her husband had any enemies in the village. She stated that her husband had a very good understanding and friendship with the villagers. There was no scope for enmity. She also added that she does not know how she will manage with her three children and poverty and the debts.

Rubel (16), Son of Abdul Jalil

Rubel told Odhikar that at his age a boy is supposed to carry school books but he had to carry a plough to help his family. He also stated "No villagers are coming to help us with food and other supplies. Only you came here to know what happened to our family after my father's death." Furthermore, he asked Odhikar "Do you have the ability to provide food for our family? If not, then leave our house and never come here to learn about poor people."

Ahmed Ali (25), Victim's brother-in-law

On 23 January 2010 at around 5.00 pm, Ahmed Ali left home from Shakhariputa to Putkhali village after receiving a call from Nuruddin, a resident of Putkhali, to undertake cattle trading in India. He was a close neighbour of Jalil and he was informed by his wife Rawshan Ara Begum that Jalil was staying at Nuruddin's house. At around 7.00 pm that day, he reached Putkhali bazaar and met Jalil and Nuruddin. In the mean time Harun (villager of Putkhali) and Ashadul (villager of Shakhariputa) reached the Putkhali bazaar. After the meeting, all except Harun, went

to Nuruddin's house for dinner and at around 11.00 pm Nuruddin, Ashadul, Ahmed and Jalil went out to cross the border.

When they reached the bank of Ichamoti river at around 11.45 pm on 23 January 2010, Nuruddin's small boat was tied in the bank of river. With the help of that boat they crossed the river and reached the Angrail village in India at around 1.00 am on 24 January 2010. From Angrail they picked up three cows and a calf to pass through the border of Putkhali. Odhikar was told by Ahmed that at around 2.00 am he, Ashadul and Jalil started their return journey towards the Indian side of the Ichamoti river. Nuruddin's boat was too small to carry the four cattle and three persons. Nuruddin crossed the river without them and called out to Ahmed to let him know that the road was free to pass. Jalil was slightly behind Ashadul and Ahmed as he had difficulty in walking. When Ashadul and Ahmed reached the bank of the Ichamoti river at the Indian side, two BSF members from Angrail camp raided them. Seeing the BSF, Ashadul and Ahmed ran leaving the cattle in a bamboo grove on the Indian side and succeeded to escape. In the mean time Jalil reached the bank of the river and was caught by the BSF. When the BSF members saw Jalil, they stopped chasing Ahmed and Arshadul.

Ahmed stated that from the bamboo grove he and Ashdul saw that the two BSF members were masked, probably because of the cold and were equipped with batons and rifles. After catching Jalil the BSF beat him badly more than ten times with their rifles and batons on his neck and head. Jalil was screaming. The BSF called the Angrail camp while beating Jalil. About 15 minutes later two motorbikes came to take Jalil and the BSF members. When they were mounting the motorbikes, Jalil was unconscious and two BSF members had to drag him to the motorbike. Ahmed assumed that Jalil had perhaps died due to being beaten on his head with rifles and batons.

Odhikar asked Ahmed about Nuruddin and Arshdul and was informed that they were in India for two more days for cattle trading.

On 30 January 2010 at around 8.30 am Ahmed received a call from his friend Rahman who informed him that a body had been found on the bank of the Ichamoti river by the villagers. When he reached the bank of the river he saw the body had already been recovered by the police with the help of local people. According to Ahmed, he identified the body to look on Jalil's

ankle² and the outfit or clothes ³ and on that day at around 11.00 am police took the body to Jessore Medical College Hospital for postmortem.

On 2 February 2010 the body was returned from the morgue to Benapole police and handed over to Ahmed by the police at around 11.30 pm and around at 12.00 pm he brought the body back to the house of Jalil. The body was giving off a terrible stench and Ahmed found mark of injuries and clotted blood in the ears and head while he was washing the body. Ahmed also informed Odhikar that there was no sign of any gun shot onto Jalil's body.

Sub inspector Ali Akbar, Investigating officer, Benapole Police Station, Jessore

Odhikar spoke to Sub-Inspector (SI) Ali Akbar, the investigating officer in the Jalil's case. On 18 February 2010, Ali Akbar informed Odhikar that the investigation and inquiry was ongoing and they were waiting for a postmortem report from Jessore Medical College Hospital for further investigation. SI Ali Akbar told Odhikar that a General Diary (No. UD/2/10) was filled on 30 January 2010 following the death of Abdul Jalil. The police received a call from the Putkhali BDR camp Commander Nayek Harunur Rashid on 30 January at 9.00 am and recovered the body from Ichamoti river at 10.00 am with the help of villagers of Putkhali. The inquest report showed that there was no gunshots on the body but it had lot of injuries and bruises on the head and right lobe. He suspected that the body was thrown into the river 7/8 days earlier. On the same day at around 11.00 pm the body was sent to Jessore Medical College Hospital where a postmortem was done. However, the police did not obtain the postmortem report from the hospital yet. On the 2 February 2010 at 11.30 am the body was handed over to Jalil's family after postmortem by the Jessore Medical College Hospital.

Putkhali BDR Camp

When Odhikar went to the BDR camp to talk to the officials about the matter – they were informed that the camp commander was elsewhere. His statement was not available. Instead, Odhikar spoke to the then camp in charge; only to be informed by him that the whole battalion joined Putkhali camp on 4 February 2010. Therefore, they [the BDR] could not give or share any information about this case. At this point a BDR official was asked by Odhikar to check the documents but he refused.

-End of Report-

² The ankle was by born defected.

³ The day of the incident Jalil dressed in black Shirt, Knitted sweater and blue trouser.