



Missing of a Bangladeshi farmer from the Nitpur border area under Naogaon District

Fact-finding Report Odhikar

Name of the Victim : Abdur Rashid
Father's Name : Belal Hossain
Age : 38
Address : District: Naogaon, Police Station: Porsha, Union: Porsha
Village: Duarpaar
Border/Pillar (Bangladesh) : Nitpur Border/ Pillar No: 232
Border/ Pillar (India) : Between Tikapara and Pannapara Border/ Pillar No: 232
Date of Occurrence : 10 January 2010

Abdur Rashid, a poor farmer, who also worked for cattle traders to make ends meet, has been missing since 10 January 2010. According to a witness who accompanied Abdur Rashid, on 10 January, ten of them were bringing cows from India through the crossing between Tikapara and Pannapara border. Everyone tried to escape when the BSF marked them and opened fire. Abdur Rashid, instead of running, hid in the mustard field. There was speculation that he had been captured by the BSF while in hiding. However, the BSF neither confirmed nor denied this suspicion. Instead they kept silent on the issue of the missing of Abdur Rashid even after repeated inquiries by the BDR.

Abdur Rasid lived with his wife, three children (two sons, and a daughter) and parents, who were unaware until now about his being involved in cattle trading. His father Belal Hossain (70) has tried to find his son with the help of one of their relatives Akku Mia (32) who has been living in Malda, India. Depending upon Akku's information it appears that Abdur Rashid was being kept in Malda jail, but no charge sheet has yet been brought until 26 February 2010.

The family of Abdur Rashid is in absolute misery. With the sole bread earner missing, there was hardly any means for them to carry on the daily life. The devastated father and daughter of Abdur Rashid urged the authority to bring him back as soon as possible.

Odhikar conducted a fact-finding mission into the incident on 3 March, 2010. During the fact-finding mission, Odhikar spoke with:

- The Abdur Rashid's family
- Local residents
- Eye witness
- Members of the BDR
- Police officers

Belal Hossain (70), father of Abdur Rashid

Belal Hossain (70), father of Abdur Rashid was interviewed by Odhikar. He informed Odhikar that Rashid is the third of his 8 children. Belal Hossain alleged that he had no prior knowledge of Rashid being a cattle trader. At the night of 9 January 2010 Rashid left home without saying anything and he has been missing since. Belal Hossain contacted his son-in-law who lives in Malda, India, regarding the whereabouts of Rashid. Rashid's his son-in-law Akku Mia (32) went to the Malda Jail to inquire about Rashid. Belal Hossain came to know that Rashid is currently being held at Malda Jail. No charge sheet has yet been prepared. He pleaded tearfully to Odhikar to bring back his son – "*Babara, amar chele re aina den*"¹

Merina Khatun (16), Daughter of Abdur Rashid

Odhikar also talked with Merina Khatun (16), daughter of Abdur Rashid. She was distressed and broke down crying several times during her interview. She said that one of her brothers was a candidate for the Secondary School Certificate Examination, but they have not enough money to support the family let alone the cost of his education. She told Odhikar that when her grandfather's son-in-law met her father in jail, he expressed his concern about her brother's approaching exam. He asked his son to prepare for the exam well and try to do his best in it. Merina asked Odhikar if they could bring her father back.

Md. Rabbani Tulu (27), witness

Odhikar spoke with Md. Rabbani Tulu (27), an inhabitant of Duarpur village. Apart from being a colleague of Rashid, Md. Rabbani is also witness to the incident. Rabbani told Odhikar that although he and Rashid worked as day-labourers, they also engaged in cattle trading for extra

¹ 'Please bring my son back to me'

money. A cattle trading is commonly practiced by many day-labourers in the villages close to the border. The villagers found that the money earned from working as a day-labourer is inadequate to support their families.

On the night of 9 January 2010, Rabbani and Rashid, along with ten others [though he named eight of them – Bokul, Mamun, Khairul, Babul, Khalek, Shamsu, Kalam, Ahsan – all of them are from Duarpur village] went to Malda (at the Indian side of the border) to pick up cattle. On 10 January at around 1 am, they tried to enter Bangladesh through the Tikapara border. During that time, 3 BSF soldiers spotted them and asked them to enter Bangladesh through Pannapara border instead. After that they rushed towards Pannapara border. The patrolling BSF members in the area shot a couple of rounds of bullets at them at around 4.00 am while they were trying to enter Bangladesh through the Pannapara and Tikapara border. Due to firing by the BSF, all of them started running to escape, except Rashid. Rashid sat down and tried to hide in the mustard field. This was the last time Rabbani saw Rashid. He crossed the Purnaboho river and was able to escape. He has no information of what happened to Rashid after that. But he guessed that Rashid may have been caught by the BSF.

Jahedur Rahman Chowdhury, Officer-in-Charge, Porsha Police Station, Naogaon

Odhikar talked with Officer In-Charge Jahedur Rahman Chowdhury of Porsha Police Station. He told Odhikar that the police did not have any information of this case, but the investigation and inquiry is on going. He also stated that no investigating officer was appointed as of 3 March 2010. No General Dairy has been lodged on the matter either, but a message has been sent to the superior officials i.e.; SP and DSP on 12 January, 2010 through message number: 3.

Camp Commander, Nitpur Border Camp, Naogaon

Odhikar spoke to the BDR officials in the Nitpur Camp at Naogaon. The official interviewed wished to remain anonymous. He informed Odhikar that two letters were sent to the BSF camp on 11 January and 12 January 2010, inquiring about the whereabouts of Abdur Rashid. However, there was no response what so ever from the BSF camp about this matter.

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