



Two Bangladeshis tortured by the BSF at the Putkhali border, Benapole under Jessore District

Fact-finding Report
Odhikar

Name of the victim : Kamrul Islam

Father's Name : Anisuddin Islam

Age : 38

Address : District: Jessore, Upazila: Sharsha, Police Station: Benapole,
Union: Putkhali, Village: Shibnathpur Baroputa

Name of the victim : Aktarul

Father's Name : Kodor Ali

Age : 17

Address : District: Jessore, Upazila: Sharsha, Police Station: Benapole,
Union: Putkhali, Village: Putkhali

Border (Bangladesh) : Putkhali Border

Border (India) : Angrail Border

Date of Occurrence : 23 January 2010



Kamrul Islam (38), a fisherman, from Shibnathpur Boroputa village and Aktarul (17), from Putkhali village in Benapole were tortured by the BSF while returning from India on 23 January 2010. They were returning to Bangladesh from India with cows at 4.30 am through the Putkhali border in a group of four. Every one in the group started to run when they noticed three BSF members from Angrail camp sitting in the 'no mans land' thereby. Kamrul came face to face with one who started to beat him with his rifle. Kamrul broke away from the grip of the BSF but another member of his outfit Aktarul was caught. Aktarul was hit on the head with rifles and his arms were stabbed with a curved knife.

Kamrul seemed to be quite forgiving about the whole incident while talking to Odhikar about the experience. People who work in the cattle trade are paid around 1000-2000 taka which is a considerable amount of money for a poor fisherman like Kamrul. He was very embarrassed about the fact that he had to engage in cattle trading because of his poverty. But at the same time he sympathized with the BSF saying that the cows were brought through crop fields of Indian civilians, which damaged the crops. Meanwhile, the reaction of Aktarul was totally different. He seemed to hold a deep resentment against the BSF and India as a whole.

Odhikar conducted a fact-finding mission into the incident on 14 and 15 February 2010. During the fact-finding mission, Odhikar spoke with:

- Kamrul Islam, Aktarul and their family members
- Concerned members of the BDR
- Eyewitness
- A local Doctor

Kamrul Islam (38), victim of torture

Kamrul Islam (38), a fisherman and resident of Shibnathpur Baroputa village under Benapol Police Station in Jessore was apprehended and tortured by the BSF on 23 January 2010 at 4.30 am while returning to Bangladesh from India with cattle.

Kamrul with 3 people named Aktarul, Jafor and Monir went to India on the night of 22 January. When they were returning at 4.30 am on 23 January, with cows, they noticed that 3 BSF members were sitting in a field which fell under the 'no man's land'. Seeing the BSF, every one scattered but Kamrul and Aktarul were caught. Later Kamrul managed to escape from the

hands of the BSF. Aktarul was, however, caught by BSF soldiers of Angrail Camp. Kamrul told Odhikar that the BSF started to beat him with rifles around his neck and head. After a while he broke out from the hands of the BSF and started to run away. He was afraid that the BSF would shoot him. He stated that *“Ami allahr naam nitesilam, Allah amake azrailer hat theke rokkha korse”*¹.

Kamrul seemed to be very distraught while being interviewed by Odhikar. He kept saying that no body wants to be a cattle trader. There are some poor villagers who are engaged in this business. If they can bring one cow to Bangladesh they get 1000-2000 taka. Even the BSF knows that they only do this out of compulsion. He also stated that some of the BSF told them that they can carry on with trading but only once a week. Because, bringing cows into Bangladesh through crop fields destroy the crops of the Indian people.

Kamrul claims he has stopped taking part in cattle trading operations. Now he works in a farm and is trying to build a hatchery on his own capital.

Hasina Begum, (29) wife of Kamrul

Hasina Begum (29) told Odhikar that her husband left the house at 11.00 pm on 22 January 2010. Kamrul did not tell her where he was going. According to her, when he came back at around 5.00 pm on 23 January 2010, he seemed to be distressed. She asked him where he had been. Kamrul told her that he went to India to bring cows to Bangladesh but on their way back the BSF chased them. He was almost caught but ran away. Hasina also informed that Kamrul had a pain in his neck that lasted two weeks after he came back from the cattle trading incident.

Aktarul (17), victim of torture

Aktarul (17), an inhabitant of the Putkhali village was a member of the same group that went to India on 23 January 2010 at night. Unlike Kamrul, Aktarul was caught by the BSF and was subjected to torture. According to Aktarul's account, on the night of 23 January, he went to India with Kamrul, Jafor and Monirul to bring some cows. At around 4.30 am when they were returning with four cows through the Putkhali border they noticed that 3 BSF members from Angrail camp was lying in wait in the field in 'no man's land'. The BSF started to chase them. They also started to run leaving the cows behind but Aktarul was caught.

After capturing him in no mans land, the BSF asked him what he was doing there. Aktarul said that he was cutting grass and showed his *kaste* (curved knife, a traditional grass cutter used in farming) as a proof.

¹ I was remembering the name of Allah. Allah saved me from the clutches of death that day.

Hearing the explanation, 3 BSF soldiers started to hit him on his head with rifles. He was bleeding. The BSF took his knife and asked him if he would ever come back to India. When Aktarul assured that he would not, one BSF member wanted to make sure and made cuts on his arms with his own knife. Furthermore, he was repeatedly hit more than four times on his head with the rifles of the BSF. This went on for about 15 minutes till one of the BSF men said that as he was only a young boy, they should let him go. Later the BSF members left Aktarul and he crossed the border alone Monir. A friend of Aktarul and also a member of the cattle trading group, was waiting for him in the field at the Bangladesh side. Aktarul reached the Bangladesh side and fell to the ground. Aktarul could not remember what happened after he collapsed on the field but when he awoke he found himself in his own house with dressing on his arms and head. Aktarul was vengeful about the treatment of the BSF. *“Ami oder ghrina kori, ar ami ekdin er protishodh niboi”*²

Ishrat Jahan (38), Mother of Aktarul

Ishrat Jahan told Odhikar that her son left home after dinner at around 10.30 pm on 22 January 2010 without saying anything. She thought he had gone to stay with some of his friends. At around 5.00 in the morning Monir, a friend of Aktarul, brought him home almost unconscious and covered in blood.

Monir Hasan (19), friend of Aktarul and also a worker of a cattle trader

Monir Hasan (19) is a resident of Putkhali, who was an eye-witness of the whole incident. Monir informed Odhikar that very often they used to cross the border to bring cows from the Indian villagers with the help of Bangladesh cattle traders as well as Indian cattle traders. In many cases, the BSF allow them to bring cattle from India. On the day of the occurrence they were not able to pass the cattle across with the help of known BSF due to the shift duty among the soldiers of the BSF. When Odhikar asked Monir why the BSF members helped them to bring cows, he replied that Indian cattle traders provided money to the BSF soldiers to let cattle through into Bangladesh.

On 23 January 2010 at around 12.30 am, they entered Angrail village in India and at around 3.30 am they took four cows from there and started their journey back. According to Monir, while they were crossing Angrail camp (which is too close to the Indian border line) and entered into the ‘no man’s land’, Kamrul saw three BSF soldiers sitting in the field with the guns. After seeing that, all started running. Unfortunately Kamrul and Aktarul were caught and he and Jafor

² I hate them and one day I will take my revenge

were able to flee. After 10 to 15 minutes when he reached the Putkhali border of Bangladesh he saw Kamrul break free and start to run from the other side. He said that it was an open field and he was able to see how Aktarul was subjected to torture by the BSF. He mentioned that 3 BSF soldiers started to hit Aktarul on his head with their rifles and slashed his arms with his knife. Later the BSF let Aktarul free and he crossed the 'no man's land' by himself. According to Monir, when Aktarul reached the Bangladesh side, he collapsed in the field. After seeing that he immediately ran to Aktarul's house and brought the rickshaw van of Aktarul's father without informing him. He also said when he reached the field with rickshaw van; the BSF had already left the area. He brought Aktarul back to the house. At around 7.30 am Monir also called a doctor from a local clinic.

Bishwajit Sarkar (45), local Doctor, Rajani Clinic, Benapole

The person in charge of the clinic works both as a salesman and a doctor. It seemed that he was not actually trained in a medical school and was not willing to give his name. However, he did agree to the interview. Bishwajit Sarkar told Odhikar that Monir came to him in the morning at 7.00 on 23 January 2010 saying that Aktarul had been beaten and slashed by the BSF. He had to go to Aktarul's house to treat him. According to him, Aktarul was bleeding from his arms and head. He bandaged the wounds and prescribed some medicine. Three stitches were needed to stop the bleeding from his head.

BDR Camp, Putkhali, Benapole

When Odhikar went to the Putkhali BDR camp to inquire about the incident of Kamrul and Aktarul, it was found that the whole company of the camp was changed. The company that was in charge at the time of the incident had been replaced by a new one. The newly placed officials had no information that could be of any help. They informed Odhikar that the camp commander was somewhere else. Odhikar was also informed by the BDR that the whole battalion joined Putkhali camp on 4 February 2010. They could not give any information. The BDR members refused to check the documents when Odhikar requested them to do so.

Benapole Police Station

Odhikar contacted the Benapole Police Station in this matter but was told that they had no information about the incident involving Kamrul and Aktarul.

-End of Report-