



Mohammad Rafiqul Islam allegedly disappeared after being picked up by RAB

Fact-finding Report

Odhikar

At around 4.30pm on February 15, 2011, Mohammad Rafiqul Islam (41), a salesman of 'Islam Departmental Store', located at 620, North Shahjahanpur in Dhaka Metropolitan City, was detained by RAB members. It was alleged by the family members of Rafiqul that after being detained, he was not to be found anywhere.

The family members of Rafiqul stated that on February 15, 2011, RAB members came to the workplace of Rafiqul in 3 pickup vans and took him away in front of local residents.

Odhikar conducted a fact-finding mission into the incident and spoke with:

- Family members of Rafiqul Islam
- Eye-witnesses
- Members of Law Enforcement Agencies



Mohammad Rafiqul Islam

Mohammad Helal Uddin (16), son of Rafiqul

Mohammad Helal Uddin told Odhikar that they are originally from Mouza Malibari village under Gaibandha District. His father was an employee of the 'Islam Departmental Store',

located at 620, North Shahajadpur. At around 4.30pm, on February 15, 2011, Helal was working as a salesman in the 'Bhai Bhai Store', located at 285/1 in the same area. A salesman, known to him from the Teer Company, came and informed him that his father had been picked up by RAB members. Helal then went to the 'Islam Departmental Store' and was informed by the local residents that RAB members had taken his father away. He started looking for his father in a number of places, but to no avail.

On February 22, 2011, Shada Mia, Helal's brother-in-law, filed a General Diary (GD) at Motijheel Police Station. GD number: 1574. Helal further stated that his father was also Imam of a mosque in Gaibandha. In 2004, Jubed Ali, Secretary of Barmotot Jama Mosque, located at Mouza Malibari in Gaibandha, had alleged that Rafiqul was a member of an organisation called 'Allah-r Dol'. Jubed Ali, being complainant, filed a case under section 385/295(Ka)/506/427 of the Penal Code, against 28 persons, including Rafiqul, for alleged involvement in a militant organisation, hurting sentiment, intimidation and for extortion. The case was numbered 10; dated: 12/4/2004. After being imprisoned for 21 days under this case, his father obtained bail from the Court. His father used to appear at Court hearing regularly. Apart from this, during the regime of the 'Caretaker Government' in 2007-2008, police of Gaibandha Police Station alleged that his father was an extortionist and arrested him without any warrant. His father was released from jail after being imprisoned for 11 months, as no case filed against him was proved.

Mohammad Shada Mia (28), son-in-law of Rafiqul

Mohammad Shada Mia told Odhikar that he is the owner of the 'Bhai Bhai Store', located at 285/1, North Shahjahanpur. At around 4.30pm, on February 15, 2011, he received a supply of goods from a pickup of the Teer Company for his shop. A few minutes later, one man came to notify him that RAB members had arrested 'Islam Departmental Store's employee Rafiqul, who is also his father-in-law and taken him away. Immediately, he went to the 'Islam Departmental Store', but it was closed.

He then went to ‘Ujjal King Tailors’ adjacent to the ‘Islam Departmental Store’. Mohammad Anwar, the owner of the shop, informed him that RAB members wearing civilian dress had come and taken Rafiqul away. Gopal, a fellow shopkeeper told him that RAB members came with three pickup vans and stopped in front of ‘Utshob International’, a mobile phone shop. Two men wearing civilian dress came out from those pickup vans went to ‘Ujjal King Tailors’. The men caught Rafiqul in front of ‘Ujjal King Tailors’ and put him into the pickup in front of local people. Gopal said that there were 4 plain clothed men and 6 or 7 men wearing RAB uniforms in the pickup. At around 8.00pm, Mohammad Shada Mia with ASM Sayem, the owner of ‘Islam Departmental Store’, went to the RAB-3 office in order to find his father-in-law. After failing, he went to the Motijheel Police Station to file a General Diary (GD). But police refused to register the GD and asked him to keep searching. As Rafiqul was not found anywhere, Mohammad Shada Mia went again to Motijheel Police Station on February 22, 2011 and filed a GD. It was numbered 1574; dated 22/02/2011. But to date, his father-in-law remains missing.

ASM Sayem, owner of the ‘Islam Departmental Store’

ASM Sayem told Odhikar that he is the owner of the ‘Islam Departmental Store’ at, 620, North Shahajanpur. He had asked Mohammad Shada Mia to look for an employee for his Departmental store. Accordingly Mohammad Shada Mia brought Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, his father-in-law as a prospective employee. Rafiqul Islam joined as an employee of the ‘Islam Departmental Store’ on July 5, 2008. He stated that Rafiqul had been working in his shop for three years and that he was of good behaviour. Later, he came to know that a case had been filed against Rafiqul Islam at Gaibandha Judges’ Court and that he was out on bail. He used to go to the Court regularly for appearances.

At around 4.45pm, on February 15, 2011, Mohammad Shada Mia, through the mobile phone, informed ASM Sayem that his father-in-law had been taken away by RAB members from the shop. He came to the ‘Islam Departmental Store’ at 5.00pm. He was then informed by the employees of the adjacent shop – Utshob International, Ujjal King Tailors and Papy Tailors – that armed RAB members in uniform along with some members wearing civilian dress, had

come by three pickup vans and taken Rafiqul away. At 8.00pm he, accompanied by Mohammad Shada Mia, went to the RAB-3 office in order to find Rafiqul. After failing, they went to the Motijheel Police Station to file a General Diary (GD). But police refused to accept the GD and suggested that they continue to search for him.

Mohammad Anwar Hossain (28), Eye-witness

Mohammad Anwar Hossain told Odhikar that at around 3.30pm, on February 15, 2011, he opened his shop 'Ujjal King Tailors' and Rafiqul, his neighbouring shopkeeper, came to his shop. At 4.30 pm, two unknown persons wearing civilian dress came to his tailor shop and asked the cost of making a shirt. Later on, they caught Rafiqul and he was handcuffed. Anwar asked them about their identity and the reason why Rafiqul had been arrested. But they did not pay any heed to Anwar and took Rafiqul away. He followed the men to the road crossing. There, he saw that some armed men wearing RAB dress and civilian dress had come by three pickup vans. They picked up Rafiqul and put him into one of the vans and went away.

Mohammad Shawkat Ali, owner of Utshob International

Mohammad Shawkat Ali told Odhikar that at around 4.00pm, on February 15, 2011, three pickup vans of RAB stopped before his shop. Some men in civilian dress and 6/7 men in RAB uniform with arms came out of the pickup vans. Later on, two men in civilian dress caught Rafiqul Islam from the adjacent shop and took him into a van. Then, RAB members left the place after 30 minutes. He said that he saw the pickup vans marked RAB, but he could not recall any other marks on them.

Lieutenant Colonel Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, Commanding Officer, RAB-3, Tikatuli, Dhaka

Lieutenant Colonel Mohammad Rafiqul Islam told Odhikar that on February 15, 2011, RAB members did not arrest anybody named Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, a shopkeeper, from 620 North Shahajanpur.

Commander M. Sohayer, Director, Legal Media Wing, RAB Forces Headquarters, Dhaka

Commander M. Sohayer told Odhikar that on February 15, 2011, RAB members did not arrest anyone named Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, shopkeeper, from 620 North Shahajanpur.

SI Mokaram Hossain, Motijheel Police Station, Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Dhaka

SI Mokaram Hossain told Odhikar that on February 22, 2011, Mohammad Shada Mia, owner of 'Bhai Bhai Store', located at 285/1, North Shahajanpur, filed a General Diary (GD) in the police station. The GD was numbered 1574; Date-22/02/2011. Shada Mia mentioned in the GD that at around 4.30pm, on February 15, 2011, a group of people, introducing themselves as RAB members, picked up his father-in-law Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, an employee of the 'Islam Departmental Store', located at 620, North Shahajanpur. Mokaram, as the investigating officer of the said GD, sent a message to all police stations to find Rafiqul.

Odhikar noticed discrepancies in the statements of RAB, police and eye-witnesses during the fact-finding mission. RAB members argued that on 15 February 2011, they had not arrested anybody named Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, a shopkeeper, from 620 North Shahajanpur. But eye-witnesses opined that on 15 February 2011, RAB members had picked up shopkeeper Mohammad Rafiqul Islam from 620, North Shahajanpur, in front of many people and in broad daylight.

SI Mokaram Hossain stated that he had sent messages to all police stations about the disappearance of Rafiqul after a General Diary being filed in the police station. It is important to note that police earlier refused to accept a GD. They are still unable to locate Rafiqul, at the time of the writing of this report.

Odhikar urges the government to take appropriate steps to find out the whereabouts of Rafiqul and punish the perpetrators through a proper and unbiased investigation.

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