



Soldier Al Masum allegedly tortured after the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR)¹ mutiny

Fact finding Report

Odhikar

Al Masum is the eldest of five children of Motahar Hossain and Razia Begum of Dohorpara village, Kotalipara Thana of Gopalganj district. He was a soldier of the 24 Battalion of BDR. His family alleged that he was arrested in March 2009 and subsequently tortured due to the incident of BDR mutiny at Pilkhana, Dhaka. At present, Al Mamun is in the Dhaka Central Jail.

Odhikar conducted a fact-finding mission into the matter. During this, they interviewed

- Relatives of the victim
- Neighbours
- Members of law-enforcement agency

Razia Begum (40), Masum's mother, Gopalganj

Razia Begum told Odhikar that after finishing his training in Chittagong, her son stayed in the BDR Pilkhana headquarters for 7/8 days. On 8 January 2009, he came home on vacation. On 8 February 2009, after one month of vacation he again joined his duty. At around 10 pm on 26 February, her son Ali Akbar informed her that a gunfight was going on in Pilkhana and Masum somehow ran out and returned to his mess in Tolarbag of Mirpur, Dhaka. Ali Akbar said

¹ After the BDR mutiny the name Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) has been changed to Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB)

that after the chaos is over, Masum would again join his duty. Razia Begum also talked to Masum over the phone. Masum informed her that a large-scale operation was going on in the BDR Headquarters; and he would return to Pilkhana after the situation became normal. Then she made preparations to come to Dhaka to visit her son from Gopalganj. Once there, she asked Masum whether he was involved in the BDR mutiny. Masum denied any involvement. On 1 March 2009, the Government, through a circulation, ordered all BDR members to join duty. Razia Begum said Masum joined that very day and she accompanied him to the Pilkhana BDR Headquarters. However, Masum could not join duty that day. On 2 March, she again went to Pilkhana with Masum. Nevertheless, even that day Masum could not join duty. On 3 March she sent Ali Akbar to Pilkhana with Masum. That day Masum joined his duty. On 7 March 2009, while watching the evening news, she saw Masum in a prison van and came to know that her son had been arrested. She learnt that her son had been taken to Malibag CID office for interrogation. On 8 March, Masum was taken into remand for 5 days. She alleged that at the time of his interrogation, along with CID and police, the army and people from different government agencies tortured him inhumanly. She said that the army officers tortured her son more than the others.

She informed that after the first interrogation session, Masum was taken into remand for 3 more days. She said that the Crime Investigating Department (CID) of Police tortured her son. Moreover, RAB and army officers tortured him. He was beaten all over after being hung from the ceiling. They kept torturing him because he would not sign a false confession. Masum lost consciousness after the torture. They again beat him after he became conscious. He was being tortured in the morning and afternoon alternately. Masum's mother came to know all this when she went to visit Masum in the Central Jail. She said that Masum was forced to confess about his involvement in the Pilkhana incident while in remand.

On 17 March 2009, while at the Dhaka Central Jail, she saw Masum crawl down from the police prison van. He was not able to stand up or walk that time. She could not recognize her son in the Dhaka Central Jail. Signs of torture were apparent all over his body. She came to know from Masum that they gave him saline whenever he got ill and then again tortured him. Moreover, his voice had changed because of torture. She said that Masum was accused of being involved in the mutiny because they found a baton belonging to the BDR Director in his trunk. However, the investigating officer of this case, the Special Police Super of CID, Abdul Kahar Akhond informed that the baton was found beside the Darbar Hall, where the massacre commenced. She claimed that Masum had been accused in a false case. He was tortured to make a false confession and then Soldier Md. Fazlul Hoque was brought as a fake witness and Masum was imprisoned for 7 years.

Md. Motaher Hossain Shorder (60), Neighbour, Gopalganj

Md. Motaher Hossain Shorder told Odhikar that Masum's involvement in the Pilkhana incident is unbelievable to the villagers. According to Motaher Hossain, Masum never misbehaved with anyone in his locality. He is known as a gentle man. Motaher Hossain said that there was financial crisis in Masum's family, which is why he left his studies to join the BDR and support his family.

Abdul Kahar Akhond, Special Police Superintendent, CID

Abdul Kahar Akhond told Odhikar that Al Masum was punished under the BDR Court and another case is under trial in the Criminal Court. He could not comment on the issue of the recovery of the baton in Masum's trunk. He said that it would be difficult to recover any information of this case.

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