



Nine year old Belal Hossain, allegedly tortured by Khulna City Metropolitan Police

**Fact-finding Report
Odhikar**

On April 12, 2011, Belal Hossain (9), son of Golam Sarwar and Shahinur Begum, residents of Khalpar road, Mistripara, compelled by hunger, allegedly stole 5/6 pieces of metal rod from the Nirala Alkatra (tar) Mill of Khulna city, in order to be able to buy food. The members of the Metropolitan Police arrested him on this allegation. The police then blindfolded and handcuffed him and later subjected him to electric shocks, as alleged by Belal and his mother.

The police returned Belal to his mother at around 1:00pm on April 13, 2011.

Odhikar conducted a fact-finding into the occurrence. During the fact-finding Odhikar interviewed:

- **Victim of the torture- Belal Hossain**
- **Belal's Mother**
- **Members of the affiliated law enforcement agency**



Picture: Belal Hossain

Belal Hossain (9), Tortured Child

Belal Hossain informed Odhikar that he had studied till grade 3 in Fulbari Gate Madrassa. Due to his family's impoverished condition and their inability to provide for his education, he stopped studying. At around 11:00 am on the morning of April 12, 2011, Belal took his neighbour Milon Miah and went to the Nirala Alkatra Mill area of the city. There they scavenged 5/6 pieces of metal rods and were returning home with them to sell for money to buy food. After a while a few men called out -'Thief, thief!' and Milon ran away. At that point the locals gathered around him, accusing him of attempting to steal the rods, and he told them that he was not a thief. They disregarded his claim and called the police. At approximately 11:30 am that morning, members of the Khulna Police Station arrived, put him in handcuffs and arrested him. Belal said that the policemen took him there and made him wait on a veranda in front of the Police Station. Later that afternoon a policeman blindfolded him and took him to another place. Belal presumes that he was transferred to another room. The policeman questioned him about various things and applied electric shocks on all ten of his fingers. The discomfort felt as the shocks passed through his body made him cry out. The policemen paid no heed to his pleas and threatened to kill him unless he kept quite. After inflicting both physical and psychological torture on him, the men brought him out of the room and took off his blindfold. At around dusk the policeman took him to the Khulna Railway Station. He questioned him about whether he had accomplices and took him to various locations. He was then brought back to the Police Station and later transferred to a shelter home from there. On the morning of the next day, April 13, 2011, he was brought back from the shelter home to the Police Station where he was released to his mother.

On April 30, 2011, Belal informed Odhikar that he has been in ill-health since the infliction of torture upon him. He often experiences pain, discomfort and a tingling sensation in the fingers of his right hand. He cannot work properly. Belal has taken up a job at the welding workshop of a man named A. Kaiyum, for a wage of Tk150 per month in Moilapota, to help make ends meet.

Shahinur Begum (40), Belal's Mother

Shahinur Begum informed Odhikar that in the afternoon of April 12, 2011, she had come to know that members of the police had taken her son, Belal. She contacted the police that evening for the release of her son. The Police Station informed her that Belal had been sent to a shelter home of the organisation 'Aporajeyo Bangladesh'. On the morning of April 13, 2011, the Child Development Manager of 'Aporajeyo Bangladesh', Mahbub Alam Prince, came to their home and informed

her that Belal was in their care. She then went to the 'Aparajeyo Bangladesh' office. The policemen had also gone there. They took Belal to the Police Station with them. The Officer-in-Charge asked her to sign a piece of paper at the station. She signed on the paper and got Belal released from their custody. Belal informed her that the policemen had handcuffed and blindfolded him and then electrocuted him. They verbally abused him too. Shahinur Begum informed Odhikar that the police had inflicted torture on her child. Being impoverished she is unable to afford treatment for her son, Belal. Since the incident of torture, Belal remains in a constant state of fear. He behaves like a person with a psychological disorder and does not talk much.

Mahbub Alam Prince, Child Development Manager, Aparajeyo Bangladesh

Mahbub Alam Prince informed Odhikar that on April 12, 2011 he came to know that the police had arrested a child named Belal. Having received this information he went to the police station where he found Belal in handcuffs and took him into his custody. He said that Belal looked physically well and unharmed on the exterior, but he found the child to be terrified and psychologically shaken. On April 13, 2011, he went to the police station and handed Belal over to the police authorities. He informed that a writ petition had been filed at the High Court Division against such torture inflicted by the police authorities and as a result the police officers had been 'show-caused'. The police have answered to that show-cause, Mahbub Alam finally added.

Nasir Uddin (60), the Land Lord of Belal's house, Mistripara Khalpar road, Khulna

Nasir Uddin identified himself as a former member of the Bangladesh Rifles and told Odhikar not to make a report about Belal and the incident that occurred. In the presence of Odhikar's reporter he sternly warned Belal's mother, Shahinur, to refrain from telling anyone about the torture on Belal in Police custody. Nasir Uddin noted down the name and address of Odhikar's fact-finder, who was interviewing him, and asked a lot of unnecessary questions. He seemed very suspicious.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Fakhrul Islam, Khulna Sadar Police Station, Khulna Metropolitan Police

SI Fakhrul Alam told Odhikar that, on April 12, 2011, he was on mobile duty. Having received information from the Officer-in-Charge of the police station, he had gone to the Alkatra (tar) Mill in Nirala. There he found Belal surrounded by the locals. He arrested Belal and brought him back to the police station along

with the stolen goods. There he questioned Belal regarding the issue. He also said that there were two other people who accompanied Belal during the incident. He said he could not confirm whether the two others were involved with the theft. He denied any allegation of having tortured Belal.

SI Maniruzzaman Khan, Sadar Police Station, Khulna Metropolitan Police

SI Maniruzzaman Khan told Odhikar that, on April 12, 2011, he along with SI Farhad Hossain and Constable Sufiyan went on special duty to the station area. Having received certain information from the Officer-in-Charge at approximately 2:15pm on the day, he went to the police station. There the OC placed in his custody a child offender named Belal. SI Maniruzzaman informed that during questioning Belal had told him the names of two other persons. To arrest those two individuals he had taken Belal to the Khulna railway station. After finding none of the offenders at the railway station, he gave Belal food and brought him back to the police station. He also denied all allegations of having tortured Belal.

SI Jelhaj Uddin, Duty Officer, Sadar Police Station, Khulna Metropolitan Police

SI Jelhaj Uddin told Odhikar that, on April 12, 2011, SI Fakhru Alam brought Belal to the police station, and he put him in the station lockup as per SI Fakhru's instruction. Since Belal was a minor child, his name was not entered into the station register. Later, as per instructions from the OC, SI Maniruzzaman questioned Belal. He said that the police officers did not torture Belal.

SM Kamrujjaman, Officer-in-charge, Sadar Police Station, Khulna Metropolitan Police

SM Kamruzzaman told Odhikar that, at around 10:00 am on the morning of April 12, 2011, he received information from an unidentified man that a child named Belal had been apprehended while stealing metal rods at the Nirala Alkatra (tar) Mill. He then contacted SI Fakhru Alam who was on mobile duty, and instructed him to take Belal from the custody of the locals and bring him to the police station. SI Fakhru Alam brought the child to the police station and handed him over to the duty officer. He questioned Belal and learnt that Belal had been involved with various other thefts in the area. He further said that since Belal was a child he was sent to a shelter home of the NGO 'Aparajeyo Bangladesh'. In the afternoon of April 13, 2011, Belal was brought to the Police Station and his statement was recorded. He was then handed over to his mother, Shahinur Begum. He further informed Odhikar that SI Maniruzzaman has been transferred

to Sonadanga Model Police Station on April 18, 2011, after the allegations of torture made against him.

Alimuzzaman, Assistant Police Commissioner, Khulna Metropolitan Police

Alimuzzaman told Odhikar that, after receiving news of Belal having been tortured in police custody, he was told to investigate the matter as a one-man investigation committee. He informed that legal action will be taken against the perpetrators if evidence is found as to any one of the policemen having tortured Belal.

Analysis of the facts found

During the fact-finding mission- members of the police, eye-witnesses to the incident and other associated persons were interviewed. Belal informed that the police had tortured him while the police deny such allegations. Belal also claims that he experiences pain and discomfort in this right hand due to the electric shocks. Belal's mother informed that Belal is now behaving like a person who is psychologically ill. She could not afford treatment for her child due to their impoverished condition. Due to such poverty, a significantly large number of children are deprived of their basic necessities like food, clothing and shelter.

Odhikar demands that a fair and neutral investigation be carried out into the matter, that the perpetrators be brought to justice and that Belal be provided proper medical treatment and financial assistance. Torture in any form must be made a criminal act, and the perpetrator of torture on a child must not be spared.

-End of Report-