



## **BSF detains Bangladeshi female agricultural labour Sreemoti Sharoti without charges at Gorakmondop border of Kurigram**

*Fact Finding Report*

*Odhikar*

Sreemoti Sharoti (39) is a poor female agricultural labour and the wife of Sree Atul Kumar of Gorakmondop village under Phulbari police station of Kurigram district. Sharoti worked at Dinesh Chandra Burman's field near the border to earn a living and help Atul bear the family expenses. On November 20, 2012 at around 8:30am, Sharoti left her house to work at the field near border pillar 929 of the Bangladesh – India border in Gorakmondop. When Sharoti arrived near the field, members of battalion 124 of Indian Border Security Force (BSF) trespassed into Bangladesh and forcibly took her to Kharida Haridash BSF camp under Dinhatata police station in Kuchbihar district in West Bengal, India.

She was returned to Bangladesh at around 4:00pm after a Company Commander level flag meeting was held between Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB)'s Gorakmondop camp and India's Kharida Haridash BSF camp.

Sharoti's husband is a fisherman. Apart from fishing he also works as a agricultural labour in other people's fields. Sharoti, her husband and children live at the Gorakmondop Housing project. They do not have a house or property of their own. She has a son and two daughters. To catch fishes her husband rents fishing net from others. The income remaining after deducting the rent of the fishing net is not enough for a family of five. That is why Sreemoti Sharoti took up her job.

Odhikar carried out a fact finding mission into this incident. During the fact finding mission Odhikar interviewed:

- Sreemoti Sharoti and her relatives
- Eye-witness and
- Members of law enforcement agencies

### **Sreemoti Sharoti (39), person who detained:**

Sreemoti Sharoti informed Odhikar that she is a agricultural labour and her husband is a fisherman. She works in the crop lands near the borders to earn a living. On November 20, 2012 at around 8:30am she left her house to work at Dinesh Chandra Burman's field near the

border. When she came near the border pillar 929, few BSF members trespassed into Bangladesh and tried to catch her. She ran towards her house but the BSF members caught her up. The BSF members asked her whether she entered Bangladesh with illegal substances from India the previous night. She told the BSF members that she did not go to India. The BSF members did not listen to her and took her to India's Kharida Haridash BSF camp. Once there, they made her sit on the floor and kept on questioning her about smuggling illegal substances from India to Bangladesh. At one point the BSF members took all her fingerprints. At around 4:00pm, she returned to Bangladesh after the BSF released her following the flag meeting between BGB and BSF.



Photo: The area circled in the photo shows BSF's Kharida Haridash camp where Sreemoti Sharoti was held captive. (Photo: Odhikar; date: December 23, 2012)

**Sree Atul Kumar, Sreemoti Sharoti's husband and eye witness:**

Sree Atul Kumar told Odhikar that on November 20, 2012, Dinesh, he and a few others were working at Dinesh Chandra Burman's field near border pillar 929 since 6:00am. At around 8:30am, when his wife Sharoti was coming towards the same field to work, a few BSF members from India trespassed into Bangladesh and chased her. Although she ran to escape the BSF members caught her. They took her to Kharida Haridash BSF camp. Immediately, he ran to Gorakmondop BGB camp. He told two BGB men standing at the main gate that at around 8:30am, BSF members took his wife away from near border pillar 929. The BGB officials assured him that they would take quick action. His wife was released at around 4:00pm following a flag meeting held between BGB and BSF.



Photo: The circled area shows that since there is no border pillar, a bamboo stick has been used to determine the Bangladesh-India border at that point. (Photo courtesy: Odhikar; date: December 23, 2012)

**Dinesh Chandra Burman, eye-witness and owner of the field:**

Dinesh Chandra Burman informed Odhikar that on November 20, 2012, he was working at his field near the border since 6:00am. At that time Sree Atul Kumar and a few others were with him. At around 8:30am, when Sreemoti Sharoti was coming towards his field to work, BSF members took her away. At around 4:00pm, BSF released Sharoti after a camp level flag meeting was held between BGB and BSF.

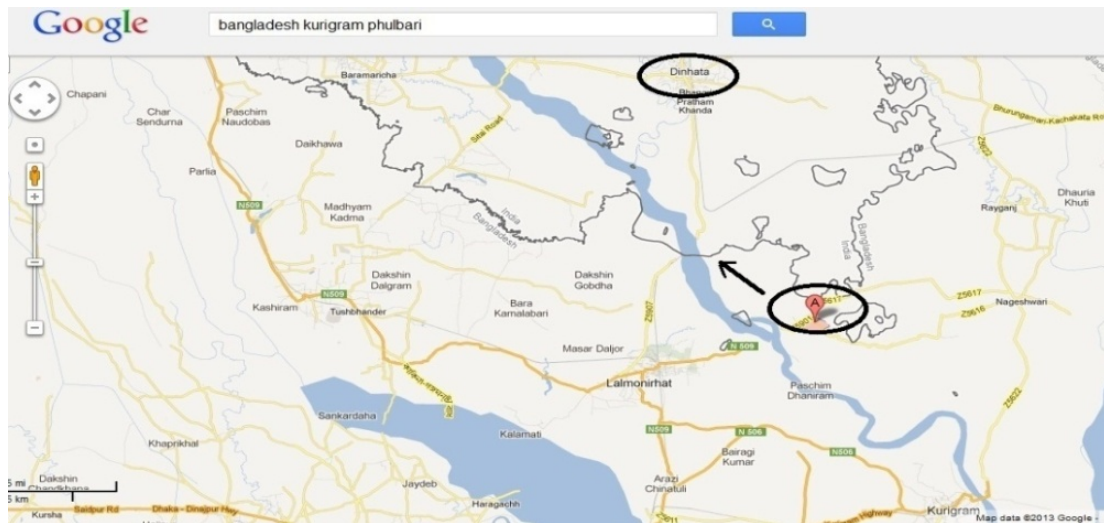


Photo: The circled area on top is Dinhat police station of Coochbehar district in India while the circled area at the bottom is Phulbari police station of Kurigram district in Bangladesh. The area indicated by the arrow is the place from which the BSF members took Sreemoti Sharoti away.

**Ziaul Haque Khaled, Commander, 45 Border Guard Bangladesh, Kurigram:**

Ziaul Haque Khaled told Odhikar that on November 20, 2012, information was sent from Gorakmondop camp that BSF members have taken a woman away from near border pillar 929. He requested a flag meeting to be arranged regarding her release. The flag meeting was held at around 1:00pm at the no-man's land near border pillar 929. Shimulbari BOP camp Commander Subedar Mokbul Hossain represented BGB while the Kharida Haridash camp commander of 124 BSF Battalion (name could not be known) represented the Indian BSF at the meeting. In the flag meeting the BSF camp commander told Subedar Mokbul Hossain that Sreemoti Sharoti was trespassing into India violating the border rules and that is why Sharoti has to be taken back through the court following the protocol. Subedar Mokbul strongly protested the action and told BSF representative that the BSF members illegally entered Bangladesh and violated the border rules by picking up a Bangladeshi citizen. He asked them to release her without further ado. Later, at around 4:00pm the BSF members returned Sharoti through another flag meeting held near border pillar 929.

**Odhikar's view:**

The members of Indian Border Security Force (BSF) are frequently trespassing into Bangladesh and violating human rights of the people of Bangladesh. BSF members are regularly killing, torturing and abducting innocent and unarmed Bangladeshi citizens living near the border. They do not even leave out women and children. In the past there have been incidents where Bangladeshi women were raped by BSF members. Odhikar expresses discontent and anger regarding the abduction of Sreemoti Sharoti from within Bangladeshi territory and her detention in India. Odhikar feels that it is due to the weak foreign policies of Bangladesh that BSF members enter Bangladesh, kill, torture and abduct innocent Bangladeshis living near the border. The Bangladesh government should remedy this situation as soon as possible.

-End of Report-