



Seven years since the killing of Felani by India's Border Security Force

Odhikar's Statement protesting the Indian government's political and economic aggression and human rights violations against Bangladeshi citizens along the border



Dhaka, January 6, 2018: Seven years have passed since adolescent Felani was killed. On January 7, 2011, members of the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead Felani Khatun, as she was crossing the India-Bangladesh border into Bangladesh. Her body was left hanging from the barbed wire fence of the border. To date, BSF member Amiya Ghosh, who was involved in the killing and his superior officers, have not been convicted. The adjudication of Felani's killing was held in BSF's own court, General Security Forces Court (GSFC), where the accused Amiya Ghosh was found not guilty¹.

¹ The Daily Star, 01 July 2015; <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/revision-trial-felani-murder-case-resumes-105595/> The daily Prothom Alo, 03 July 2015; <http://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/568783>

Felani's killing was a brutal example of the aggression of the Indian Government towards Bangladesh over the past decades. The indiscriminate killing and torturing of Bangladeshi nationals, regardless of age, is nothing new to the BSF. A school student, Hasnat Halsham Inu (15) was tortured to death by BSF in 2010, and another student Hasanuzzaman (16), was shot dead by BSF in 2015. In 2017, BSF members shot and killed two school students, Sohel Rana and Harun-ur Rashid². Odhikar condemns the killing and torturing of Bangladeshi citizens, including Felani, in the hands of BSF; and all incidents of human rights violations and political and economical aggression of the Indian government.

Reports show that every year many Bangladeshi citizens are killed and injured either by being shot or tortured at the hands of BSF along the Bangladesh-India border. On many occasions, BSF members have attacked and robbed Bangladeshi people by violating the sovereignty of Bangladesh and illegally trespassing onto Bangladesh territory.

According to information collected by Odhikar, from 2009 to 2017, 403 Bangladeshi citizens were killed by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF). Among them, 269 were gunned down, 109 were tortured to death and 25 were killed by other means. Furthermore, 593 Bangladeshis were injured. Among the injured, 337 were shot, 219 were tortured and 37 were injured in different ways. A further 468 persons were abducted by BSF personnel during this period.

As per international laws and regulations, the Bangladesh government's role should have been that of an independent sovereign state in terms of maintaining its own border, territorial integrity, sovereignty and the security of its citizens. It is sad but true, that the Bangladesh government has forgone the interest of the country for the vested interest of the political party in power and adopted a weak foreign policy on matters relating to India. Taking advantage of this, the Indian government is pushing its wrongdoings on Bangladesh; and in the process, is acquiring their interests. In 2010, an agreement was signed between Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, without any consultation in the Parliament. The contents of the agreement were not disclosed but after this was signed, India's aggressive policy towards Bangladesh became stronger. The Indian government had played a significant role in destroying the democratic system in Bangladesh through direct interference and unconditional support to the controversial and farcical National Parliament Elections on January 5, 2014³. As opposed to a democratically

² Dhaka Tribune, 21 June 2017

³ Before conducting the controversial and farcical January 5, 2014 National election, almost all political parties of Bangladesh decided to boycott it. At that time, the then Indian Foreign Secretary Sujata Singh visited Bangladesh and succeeded to convince Jatiya Party to join the election. Members of the Jatiya Party are now in the government (Ministers of the current

elected government, a government elected by unscrupulous means will kneel down to the interest of India, for which such controversial election was supported by India. This farcical election has created immense political crises; and taking advantage of it the Indian government has established dominance in Bangladesh in various ways. India has taken transit facility through Bangladesh at almost no cost⁴ and also decided to put up a fence along no-man's land, within 150 yards from the zero line along the border, violating international border law⁵. India is also taking advantage of other business and trade facilities from Bangladesh. As a result the Indian multinational companies are signing agreements with the Bangladesh Government, without any tender bids, to build various infrastructures⁶. Furthermore, the Indian company is continuing to build the environmentally hazardous Rampal Power Plant, near the Sundarbans despite protests from Bangladeshi citizens⁷.

On the other hand, the Indian government is depriving Bangladesh from getting adequate water during the dry season and thousands of people living along the banks of the Teesta River are in danger due to the refusal of water by India to Bangladesh, through the Gajaldoba Barrage. The Padma River basin in Bangladesh has also been ruined due to the Farakka Barrage in India. The Indian government is artificially flooding Bangladesh by opening all the sluice gates of the Farakka Barrage and the Gajaldoba Barrage, during the Monsoon (rainy) season, violating international law and human rights. Furthermore, a decision to implement an inter-river connection project, is leading Bangladesh to terrible human disaster and environmental catastrophe⁸.

Moreover, it has been reported that the State government of Assam has taken an initiative to evict Bangla-speaking Indian-Muslim citizens on the pretext of identifying

government) and at the same time are the opposition in Parliament. A peculiar type of government has been formed where the members of the opposition are also serving as ministers in the current government. www.dw.com/bn/নির্বাচন-না-হলে-মৌলবাদের-উত্থান-হবে/a-17271479

⁴ "Transit gets operational", The Daily Star, 14 June 2016; <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/transit-gets-operational-1239373>

⁵ The daily Prothom Alo, 5 October 2016; www.prothom-alo.com/international/article/994375/

⁶ "Reliance Group awarded power plant project without tender", New Age, 25 May 2017; <http://www.newagebd.net/search/Reliance%20Group%20awarded%20power%20plant%20project%20without%20tender>

⁷ On July 12, 2016, an agreement of the much debated project of the Rampal Coal-based Power Plant was signed in Dhaka. The agreement was signed by the Managing Director of Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company Limited (BIFPCL), Ujjal Kanti Bhattacharya; and the General Manager of the construction company Bharat Heavy Electric Limited (BHEL), Prem Pal Yadav. Prime Minister's Advisor Towfiq-e- Elahi Chowdhury; State Minister for Power, energy and mineral resources Nasrul Hamid; Principal Secretary of the Prime Minister Mohammad Abul Kalam Azad; Secretary of the Ministry of Power, Monwar Islam; Indian Secretary for Power, Prodeep Kumar Pujari; and Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Harsh Vardhan Shringla were present at the signing programme. Rampal Coal-based Power Plant construction work was initiated near the Sundarbans through this agreement. Environment activists and human rights defenders are protesting against the construction of this power plant. Despite that the government is strict to implement this project. www.jugantor.com/last-page/2016/07/13/44589/

⁸ UNESCO calls for shelving Rampal project", the daily Prothom Alo, 24/09/2016, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/environment/news/122299/Unesco-calls-for-shelving-Rampal-project>

illegal migrants in Assam. It is to be mentioned that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) formed the local government in Assam through provincial elections in 2016. This newly elected State government of Assam, after all these years, is trying to push the Bangla-speaking Indian-Muslim citizens towards Bangladesh, whose predecessors came to Assam region before March 24, 1971⁹.

Odhikar¹⁰ believes that an independent and sovereign state can never accept such aggression and human rights violations perpetrated on its citizens and on its soil by another state. Furthermore, the international community needs to raise concerns regarding these issues, otherwise these violative and aggressive activities may destabilise Bangladesh; and such destabilisation might spread through South Asia.

In solidarity,

The Odhikar Team

⁹ The daily Manabzamin, 30 December 2017

¹⁰ Odhikar is a human rights organization, visit the website: www.odhikar.org; www.facebook.com/Odhikar.HumanRights/