



Akash and Tikka Shot and Killed by RAB at Khoksha, Kushtia

Fact-finding Report

Odhikar

It was learned from the accounts of witnesses and the RAB that Golam Hossain Akash (35) from the village of West Bishoikhali of Jhenaidah district was arrested at around 2.00 am on June 18, 2008 by RAB-6 of Khulna and RAB 12 of Kushtia from the village of Udibari of Kushtia.

On the other hand, according to the wife of Abdur Rashid Tikka (32) from the village of Ganeshpur of Khoksha in Kushtia district, he was arrested from 317/3, Ulon Road, West Rampura at around 12.15 am on June 24, 2008, by the officers of RAB 1. Her statement was corroborated by the owner of the house where she and her husband had been living as a tenant along with their children.

According to findings, they were shot dead in the village of Ganeshpur at Khoksha during the time between around 11.30 pm of June 26 and around 3.00 am of June 27. The families of the deceased alleged that they had been intentionally shot and killed under the excuse of 'encounter' and 'crossfire'.

The RAB authorities, however, claimed that when they took Akash to the Eidgah of Ganeshpur at Khoksha Upazila¹ in Kushtia on the night to June 26, 2008 with the objective of retrieving arms, following Akash's confession in remand, Tikka and his cohorts, who were holding a secret meeting at the Eidgah, opened fire upon the RAB officers. Then the RAB officers fired back which resulted in a gunfight between RAB and Tikka and his accomplices. The RAB authorities stated that Tikka was killed in the 'encounter' with the RAB while Akash was killed in 'crossfire' as he was trying to escape during the gunfight.

Odhikar conducted a fact-finding mission into the incident. During the fact-finding, Odhikar spoke with:

- The family members and relatives of the deceased
- Witnesses
- The doctor and the morgue assistant who had performed the post-mortem on the body of the deceased.
- Members of the concerned law enforcement agencies

Mosammat Poly (24), Wife of Abdur Rashid Tikka

Mosammat Poly told Odhikar that she originally came from the village of Ganeshpur of Khoksha in Kushtia. Since there were several cases filed against her husband, she and her whole family came to Dhaka. Poly stated that she used to live at a rented flat on the fourth floor of a building owned by Abul Bashar at 317/3, Ulon Road, West Rampura, with

¹ Upazia is an administrative unit under a district in Bangladesh.

her daughters Zarin Tasnin Bitra (6) and Ainika Tasnin Shobha (4 months) and her husband. She said that Tikka used the name of Harunur Rashid at that house to avoid arrest. Poly stated that her husband would take lease on bazaars. She said that at around 12.15 am on June 24, 2008, when there was no electricity in the area, she was lying on the bed with her daughters and her husband Tikka was in the veranda. Poly said suddenly some men arrived and asked them to open the door. When Poly asked who they were, they said that they were the guards of the house and that they had come to check on the electricity problem. When her husband opened the door a group of men in RAB uniform entered and introduced themselves as RAB officers. They tied up Tikka's hands from the back and began to slap him. Later on, they blindfolded Tikka with a black cloth. Afterwards, the RAB officers took Poly and her daughters on a car and Tikka who was in blindfolds on another car. They were then taken to the office of RAB 1 at Uttara in Dhaka, where Poly and her daughters were kept in one room and Tikka in another.

Poly said she and her daughters were locked up there for three days. They were deprived of proper food and were not given anything to sleep on. There was no arrangement of milk for Poly's 4 month old daughter. When Poly would stand against the grille of the room in which she was locked up, she could see the tied up hands of her husband who was locked up in another room. However, from the evening of June 25, 2008, she could no longer see her husband's hands. She said when she asked about the whereabouts of her husband, the guards told her not to ask such questions.

At around 4.00 am on June 27, 2008, several RAB officers took her to another room and took her signature on a sheet of paper. Then the RAB officers told her to leave her house in Rampura and go back to Kushtia. When Poly inquired about her husband, the RAB officers frightened her by raising their guns and told her not to ask anything about him.

On June 27 when Poly arrived at Ganeshpur of Kushtia she learned that her husband had been killed in 'crossfire'. She alleged that after arresting her husband from Dhaka, the RAB had taken him to Kushtia where they had killed him in a planned way and then spread the fictitious story of 'gunfight'. Poly raised the question that how could it be possible for her husband to meet in a secret meeting at Kushtia if he was in fact locked up in the custody of RAB?

Abul Bashar (48), owner of the house that Tikka rented, 317/3, Ulon Road, West Rampura, Dhaka

Abul Bashar said that a man called Harunur Rashid took rent of a flat of his house on the fourth floor several months ago. That man used to live in the flat with his wife and two daughters. At around 12.15 am on June 24, 2008 when there was no electricity, a group of RAB officers conducted a raid at the flat on the fourth floor and took Harunur Rashid and his wife and children. The RAB officers left the keys of the flat with Abul Bashar so that he could hold custody of the belongings of Harunur Rashid and his family. In case of need, they also left a phone number so that Abul Bashar could contact the RAB officers. However, he was barred from telling anyone who had given him that number and who had taken Harunur Rashid away.

Bashar stated that on June 28 he read the news regarding the death of a man called Abdur Rashid Tikka in 'encounter' in a daily newspaper. Seeing the photo of the person, he recognised that the man was Harunur Rashid who used to previously live on the fourth floor of his house.

Md. Azad, Tikka's adjacent flat neighbour, 317/3, Ulon Road, West Rampura, Dhaka

Md. Azad told Odhikar that at around 12.15 am on June 24, 2008, he opened the door of his flat after hearing sounds from outside. After opening the door he saw several RAB officers taking away his neighbour.

Momena Khatun (70), Mother of Abdur Rashid Tikka, Ganeshpur, Khoksha, Kushtia

Momena Khatun told Odhikar that Abdur Rashid Tikka was her fourth child amongst six sons and three daughters. After graduating from the Khoksha Degree College in 1996, Tikka took a job at a poultry farm in Gazipur. During his college days, Tikka was again and again taken away and beaten by the activists of *Sramjibi Mukti Andolon* – a wing of Purbo Banglar Communist Party [ML-Janajuddha] in Kushtia. Tikka finding no other way began to carry arms from then on. At one point when police and RAB started coming to her house in search of Tikka, she sent her son away to Dhaka. The RAB also took Momena away so that she would be forced to produce Tikka. At around 3.00 am on June 27, 2008, she woke up from the barking of dogs and heard from her neighbours that RAB officers were in their locality. Hearing this she left for a neighbouring village with one of her sons Amzad in the dead of the night, out of fear of the RAB. She went to her daughter's house at Ganeshpur village. In the morning Momena heard that the RAB had shot and killed two men at the Eidgah² of Ganeshpur at around 3.00 am the night before. On her way home she learned that one of the two men who had been killed at the Eidgah was her son, Tikka. She also learned that the RAB had taken away the dead bodies to Kushtia. Momena stated that the RAB and police arrived at her house in the evening with Tikka's body. Tikka's body bore four bullet wounds and his skull was blown off after being struck by a bullet. Tikka's left hand was also broken. Momena alleged that her son had been killed in a planned way and demanded justice through a proper investigation into the incident.

Kanu Kumar Ghosh, Assistant Teacher, Aijol Government Primary School, Ganeshpur, Khoksha

Tikka's childhood friend, Kanu Kumar Ghosh told Odhikar that at around 11.30 pm on June 26, 2008, a man asked him to open his door. When he asked about his identity, the man said that he was Kanu's in-law. Opening the door, Kanu saw 10/12 RAB officers. The RAB officers beat him and then took him to a bamboo field on the western side of his house. When he asked why he was being beaten, the RAB officers said that he was in possession of Tikka's arms. When the RAB officers asked him to give them those arms, Kanu said that he was not in touch with Tikka for the last five years. The RAB officers kicked and slapped him and since he failed to provide any information with regard to the arms, they gave electric shocks to his left hand from time to time. While talking to Odhikar Kanu showed the injuries he had suffered due to the electric shocks. Kanu stated that at around 1.00 am on

² Eidgah is a place where the Muslim congregations say prayers on Eid days. Eid is the main Muslim festival.

June 27, 2008, the RAB officers took him to the cowshed of Tikka's brother and dug a hole with a spade. When they were digging the hole Kanu was made to stand distance. Then the RAB officers brought a sack and told him that they had discovered that sack in the hole they had just dug and that the sack was full of arms. After slapping and punching him and giving him more electric shocks, the RAB officers brought him back to his house and locked him up inside at around 2.00 am. He was ordered not to come out and was threatened that if he did he would be killed in 'crossfire'. At around 3.00 am Kanu heard a lot of gunshots coming from the Eidgah. During that time the RAB officers with their mike announced, "Do not come out of your houses. A shootout between the RAB and the criminals is taking place". Kanu said he did not come out of his house until morning. In the morning he heard from others that Tikka, his childhood friend and Akash, the brother of Tapan³, a leader of the Purbo Banglar Communist Party [ML-Janajuddha], had been killed in 'crossfire'.

Malina (27), Tikka's sister-in-law, Ganeshpur, Khoksha, Kushtia

Malina told Odhikar that on the night of June 24, 2008, she got news through the cell phone that Tikka was arrested along with his wife and two daughters from Rampura in Dhaka. After the arrest, she did not hear any news of Tikka being released from RAB custody, yet strangely enough she learned in the morning of June 28, 2008 that Tikka had been killed in 'crossfire' at around 3.00 am that day at the Eidgah of Ganeshpur. She went to the Eidgah in the morning where she saw Tikka's body. Malina stated that Tikka had been arrested in Dhaka on June 24 and brought to Kushtia on June 27 where he was killed in the name of 'encounter'.

Azmeri Ferdousi Akhi (24), Wife of Golam Hossain Akash, Udibari village

Azmeri Ferdousi Akhi told Odhikar that in advice of Akash's brother, Tapan, she and her family came to live at the village of Udibari from Jhenaidah, Kushtia. She said her husband used to rear pigeons. By selling pigeons, he used to earn for his family. At around 2.00 am on June 18, 2008, they heard loud sounds on their gate. Akash went and opened the gate which resulted in a group of RAB officers enter their house. They tied up Akash from the back and began to beat him and ask him where Tapan was and where Tapan had kept his arms and ammunition. Slowly Azmeri's whole house was filled with 60/70 RAB officers. Her husband then handed over 1,500 rounds of bullets, one pistol, roughly 500 political magazines and other political pamphlets, one computer, one fax machine and one printer. At around 4.00 am a group of RAB officers took Akash out and another group stayed behind cordoning the whole house. At around 7.00 in the morning, the RAB officer returned home with Akash. Akhi recalled that upon Akash's return she could see that his forehead and arms were severely injured from beatings. She also said that Akash's fingers were badly wounded due to the infliction of electric shocks on them. Akash's left leg was

³ Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Tapan alias Dada Tapan was the leader of Purbo Banglar Communist Party [ML-Janaduddha], who was allegedly killed in 'crossfire' on June 18, 2008. Odhikar interviewed Golam Hossain Akash, Tapan's brother, while conducting a fact-finding mission into the incident of alleged killings of Tapan and another woman called Rikta in an incident that occurred earlier. During his interview with Odhikar, Akash said, he had witnessed the incident of Tapan and Rikta being directly shot and killed by RAB, though RAB claimed the incident to be 'crossfire'.

broken and blood was falling from his right wrist. Akhi took Akash to the bathroom so that he could urinate but when he did so, blood fell from his penis. Akash screamed out loud when he urinated. He told her that the RAB officers had taken him to Tapan's house and had shot and killed Tapan and Rikta in front of him. The RAB officers seized all their belongings and left with Akash at around 11.00 am. After this incident Akhi left for her father's house at Chuadanga. She stated that there were no cases filed against her husband's name.

On the morning of June 27, 2008, Akhi got news that Akash had been killed in 'crossfire'. She alleged that he was killed because he kept Tapan's arms, bullets and political books in his house.

Kamrul (35), a resident from the eastern end of the Eidgah of Ganeshpur, Khoksha, Kushtia

Kamrul stated that at around 11.30 pm on June 26, 2008, he heard sounds of people moving about on the Eidgah. He came out of his house to see 60/70 RAB officers entering the Eidgah. One of the officers told him to go back home and he did so. Kamrul said he later on heard the firing of three to four bullets in intervals and this was followed by a lengthy period of firing. The RAB were announcing with their mike that a shootout was taking place between them and criminals and that people should not come out of their houses. Kamrul said he saw through the window of his room the RAB officers firing blank shots from various positions in around the Eidgah. While firing the RAB officers were sometimes shouting, "Shoot! Catch! Catch! Escaping!" At around 3.00 am on June 27, the firing stopped. At around 5.00 am the RAB officers summoned people of the locality and showed them the bodies of Tikka and Akash.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Nasir Uddin, Khoksha Police Station

SI Nasir Uddin told Odhikar that on the order of the Officer-in-Charge (OC), he reached the Eidgah of Ganeshpur at around 5.30 am on June 27, 2008 with his force. Upon his arrival he saw Tikka's body inside the Eidgah and Akash's body in a paddy field beside the Eidgah. He stated that after the arrival of a Magistrate he prepared the inquest reports of the bodies following the order of the OC.

SI Nasir stated that Tikka's body was in a bloody condition and his chest bore three bullet wounds. Since the bullets were fired from close range Tikka's brains came out of the skull and the skins of his legs were scraped off.

He went on to say that Akash was wearing a bullet proof jacket of the RAB and he was in handcuffs. SI Nasir stated that a bullet had entered Akash's neck which came out through the back of his head. The bullet had caused the brains and his skull to be blown off.

SI Nasir said that there were no cases filed against Akash but there were a total of 6 cases filed against Tikka at the Khoksha Police Station. In addition to this, there were four cases filed against Tikka at the Kumarkhali Police Station, one at the Harinakundu Police Station and 6 at the Pangsha Police Station.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Kashem, Jhenaidah Police Station, Jhenaidah

SI Kashem stated that two murder cases were filed against Golam Hossain Akash at the Jhenaidah Sadar Police Station.

Captain Mahmud, Kushtia Crime Prevention Company 1, RAB 12, Kushtia

Captain Mahmud said that many incidents of murder, mugging and robbery had been taking place in the name of the Purbo Banglar Communist Party. He said that after killing someone, the Purbo Banglar Communist Party [ML-Janajuddha] would spread leaflets and posters taking responsibility of the killing. Despite this, they were not able to get hold of them. The RAB eventually found out the main leader of Janajuddha. With the help of a source they discovered that a man called Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Tapan of West Bishoikhali in Jhenaidah district was the founder of the Purbo Banglar Communist Party [ML-Janajuddha]. The RAB carried out several raids in various places but failed to locate Tapan. With the objective to arrest Tapan around 60 officers of RAB-6 and RAB 12 carried out a raid at Kushtia's Udibari village on June 18, 2008. At around 2.00 am the RAB officers arrested Golam Hossain Akash, brother of Tapan. The RAB then carried out a raid on the basis of the information given by Akash at the neighbouring Baradi village. Akash was with them during that time. Captain Mahmud went on to say that at around 3.45 am, when the RAB officers tried to enter Tapan's house, Tapan opened fire from inside his house. The RAB officers fired back and entered the house. When they were about to arrest Tapan they saw that he had been shot and killed. There was a girl called Nasima Akhtar Rikta with Tapan. She too was shot and killed.

The RAB officer stated that after Akash was brought before the court, they prayed for 8 days of remand which was granted. Based on the information derived from Akash during the remand, RAB 12 officers, taking Akash along, went to the Eidgah of Ganeshpur at Khoksha on the night of June 26, 2008. At that time, Captain Mahmud said, Tikka, a leader of the leftist political party *Sramjibi Mukti Andolon* and a murderer and an extortionist was holding a meeting with his cohorts. Realising the presence of RAB they began to open fire on the RAB officers. The RAB fired back which resulted in a shootout between the RAB officers and Tikka and his associates. Captain Mahmud stated that Akash tried to escape during the shootout and was killed in 'crossfire'. Afterwards the RAB officers conducted a search of the area and found arms, ammunition and two dead bodies one of which was Akash. Later on local people came and identified the other body as that of Tikka.

Jahangir Alam , the doctor who had performed the post-mortem on the bodies of Tikka and Akash, Kushtia General Hospital, Kushtia

Doctor Jahangir Alam refused to make any comment about the results of the post-mortem.

-The End of Report-