

# **Afsar Uddin alias Afsu Allegedly Tortured to Death by RAB in Munshiganj**

## **Fact-finding Report**

### **Odhikar**

It was learnt from eyewitnesses that between 11.00 am and 12.30 pm on October 19, 2008, several officers from RAB 11 arrested Afsar Uddin alias Afsu (37) and Shumon (19) residents of Noyagaon, Munshiganj from Noyagaon. The RAB officers held them in custody at the place of the incident till 4.00 pm and severely beat them several times. According to witnesses, at around 4.00 pm, the RAB officers blindfolded them and took them away on a car. The following day, i.e. on October 20, the relatives of Afsu came to know that Afsu had died in RAB custody. Afsu's family members alleged that Afsu was tortured and killed by RAB. On the other hand, the RAB 11 claims that they arrested Afsar Uddin alias Afsu and Shumon with phensidyl<sup>[1]</sup> and when they went on an operation to arrest other accomplices of Afsu and Shumon, Afsu fell sick on the way. According to RAB 11, the RAB officers then took him to the Sreenagar Upazila Health and Family Planning Complex where he died while under treatment.

On the basis of the allegations made by the victim's family, Odhikar conducted a fact-finding mission into the incident. During the fact finding, Odhikar spoke with:

- The family members and relatives of Afsu
- The other person who was arrested with Afsu
- Eyewitnesses to the arrest
- Persons who had seen the body of the deceased
- The concerned doctors and the morgue assistant
- The concerned police and RAB officers

### **Mohammad Shahabuddin (40), Brother of the Deceased, Noyagaon, Munshiganj**

Mohammad Shahabuddin told Odhikar that at around 12.00 pm on October 19, 2008, two people informed him that Afsu was being beaten by RAB officers at the front yard of the house of one Aziz Sarkar from Noyagaon. Hearing the news, Shahabuddin went to Aziz Sarkar's house to see 4/5 RAB officers making Afsu and Shumon stand wearing handcuffs. Shahabuddin saw various marks of beatings on both the bodies of Afsu and Shumon. When he and others tried to ask the RAB officers why Afsu and Shumon had been arrested and beaten, the RAB officers reprimanded them and told them to go away. When Shahabuddin tried to inform Habibur Rahman, the Chairman of Panchasar Union Parishad<sup>[2]</sup> of what was happening over the phone, the RAB officers prevented him from doing so. After that Shahabuddin returned home.

Some time after reaching home, Shahabuddin came to know that the RAB officers were beating Afsu and Shumon again. Hearing the news Shahabuddin rushed to the place of the incident and saw that the 4/5 RAB officers were beating Afsu and

Shumon with sticks on the street in front of Jummon's house. He was unable to help them because he was stopped by the RAB officers. At around 4.00 pm, the RAB officers blindfolded Afsu and Shumon and took them to the RAB camp at Sreenagar.

Shahabuddin stated that the following day at around 4.00 pm, he got the news that Afsu had died while in RAB custody. He alleged that Afsu had died because of the torture on him by RAB.

### **Farida Begum (45), the Mother-in-law of the Deceased**

Farida Begum said that on October 19, 2008, at around 12.00 pm, she heard from a neighbour that the RAB officers had arrested Afsu and took him to the front yard of Aziz Sarkar's house. When she arrived there, she saw 4/5 RAB officers beating Afsu and Shumon. Later on, according to Farida, 8 more RAB officers came to the scene. They arrived and kicked Afsu and Shumon with their boots. She added that the RAB officers beat Afsu and Shumon in groups' one coming in after the other before they blindfolded them and took them to the camp of RAB 11 at Sreenagar at around 4.00 pm. The following day at around 4.00 pm, Farida got the news that Afsu had passed away at Sreenagar Upazila Health and Family Planning Complex. She alleged that Afsu had in fact died out of being tortured by RAB. She demanded justice for what had happened.

### **Shumon (19), the Person Who had been Arrested along with Afsu**

Odhikar tried to speak with Shumon who was detained inside the Munshiganj District Jail but was unable to properly do so because of the lacking of a proper atmosphere. This prevented Odhikar from gaining knowledge on the details of the incident. In short, the following was learnt from Shumon: On the morning of October 19, 2008, an unknown person came to him asking him from whom he could buy phensidyl. When Shumon said that he knew no such person, the person told him that Shumon himself was a phensidyl dealer. This led to an argument between the two and also a fist fight. Three/four other companions of the person who had approached Shumon then took out their arms and RAB vests from underneath the seat of a rickshaw. That was when Shumon realised that he was dealing with RAB officers. Hearing the noise of the commotion, Afsu came forward. The RAB officers then beat up both Shumon and Afsu and said, 'Scoundrel! You sell phensidyl. You were supposed to supply 20 bottles of Phensidyl. Here's 20,000 Taka...now give us 20 bottles of Phensidyl'. Shumon went on to say that before being blindfolded and taken to the RAB 11 camp in Munshiganj at around 4.00 pm, the RAB officers beat them up on several occasions.

Shumon stated that at the camp he and Afsu were kept in separate places. From inside the jail, Shumon showed the fact-finding team of Odhikar his bandaged right leg, the leg that the RAB officers had beaten and broken. In addition to this, he said, the RAB officers had also twisted all the fingers of his left hand backwards and broke them.

During the night, Shumon heard the screams of Afsu from the room beside his one at the camp. He heard Afsu scream, "Either you kill me...or let me live". At around 2.00 am on October 20, Shumon and Afsu were both taken to the Munshiganj General Hospital and on their way back after receiving treatment they were taken in separate vehicles. That was the last time Shumon saw Afsu. On the evening of October 20, 2008, he heard that Afsu had died.

-

### **Abdur Rouf (60), the Person Who Washed the Deceased's Body**

Abdur Rouf stated that Afsu's hands and feet bore bruises. There were also signs of beating on his palms and at the bottom of his feet. Abdur Rouf said that through washing many bodies over the years he had learned that those who died normal deaths had stiff necks. Yet in the case of Afsu, his neck was absolutely stiffness-free. It seemed to Abdur Rouf that Afsu's neck had probably broken due to beating.

### **Upazilla Health and Family Planning Complex, Sreenagar, Munshiganj, the Place Where Afsu was Taken for Treatment**

It was learnt from the Sreenagar Upazila Health and Family Planning Complex that when the RAB brought Afsu to the Complex, the doctor on duty was Anisur Rahman. Doctor Anisur Rahman stated that the RAB officers brought Afsu to the hospital at 5.20 am on October 20, 2008 and 15 minutes after Afsu's arrival he died. The doctor also said that when Afsu was admitted to the hospital, his condition was critical and it initially seemed to him that Afsu probably died of a heart attack. As per rule, Afsu's body was sent to the Munshiganj General Hospital for the post-mortem. Doctor Anisur concluded his talk by saying that the real reason behind Afsu's death could be found out from the post-mortem report.

### **General Hospital, Munshiganj**

Doctor Ehsanul Karim, the Residential Medical Officer (RMO) from the Munshiganj General Hospital, who had carried out the post-mortem of Afsu's body, stated that due to restrictions in his business rules, he could not make public known about the results of the post-mortem.

### **Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Hafizur Rahman, the Investigation Officer of the Unnatural Death Case Filed in Connection with the Death of Afsu, Sreenagar Police Station, Munshiganj**

While talking with Odhikar, ASI Hafizur Rahman said he did not yet receive the post-mortem report. He added that he would prepare the investigation report of the case based on the post-mortem report.

### **Captain Rajib Hossain Khan, Camp Commander, Munshiganj Camp, Crime Prevention Special Company, RAB 11**

During a conversation with Odhikar, Captain Rajib Hossain Khan said that a team from the Munshiganj Camp of RAB 11 arrested Afsar Uddin alias Afsu and Shumon with phensidyl towards the evening on October 19, 2008. He said that following their

confession, the RAB officers went to the Munshiganj town to arrest their cohorts. The RAB officer said that when the RAB officers were preparing for an operation in a bid to arrest their accomplices, Afsu and Shumon tried to escape and received minor injuries. According to the RAB officer, the two were then taken to Munshiganj General Hospital and given first aid. Captain Rajib said the RAB officers then left for the Bagra area of Munshiganj with Afsu and Shumon in their custody to arrest their accomplices. He said that on the way to the Bagra area, Afsu told the RAB officers that he was feeling pain at the chest. He continued by saying that the RAB officers then took him to the Sreenagar Upazila Health and Family Planning Complex where he died some time after his admission.

He denied allegations of torture on Afsu in the custody as alleged by his family.

-The End of Report-

---

[1] Phensidyl is an intoxicating cough syrup, which is smuggled into Bangladesh from India. It is banned in Bangladesh

[2] Union Parishad is the lowest level of the local government, which is headed by a Chairman