

RAB Alleged to Have Shot and Killed a Chhatra Dal Leader at Barisal

Fact-finding Report

Odhikar

It was learned from the witnesses and RAB sources that Md. Moshiul Alam Sentu (34) from west Kauniya Bagan Bari, Barisal was arrested by a team of RAB at the Nilkhet area in Dhaka on July 15, 2008. Sentu's family alleged that he was shot and killed by RAB following his arrest. His family also informed that after they came to know from a source that RAB had planned to kill Sentu under the excuse of 'crossfire', they gave Taka 300,000 to a senior officer of RAB-8 as bribe to stop the killing. On the other hand, RAB claimed that when a team of RAB officers along with Sentu was going to recover arms, according to Sentu's confession following his arrest, there was a gunfight between RAB and Sentu's associates at around 4.15 pm on July 16, 2008, leaving Sentu killed in 'crossfire'.

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

- The deceased's family members and relatives
- Witnesses
- Local residents
- The Doctor who conducted the post-mortem and
- The concerned police and RAB officers

Chaina Momtaz Begum (50), Sentu's Mother

Chaina Momtaz told Odhikar that her son Sentu was a Chhatra Dal¹ leader. At around 7.00 pm on July 15, 2008, Syed Monzurul Islam Mamun, a student of Political Science of Dhaka University informed her via mobile phone that Sentu had been arrested by RAB from Sir A F Rahman Hall of Dhaka University. After hearing this, Chaina telephoned RAB-8 and Major AKM Mamunur Rashid Mamun from RAB-8 confirmed that Sentu had been arrested by RAB and also assured her that nothing untoward would happen to him. At around 5.30 am on July 16, 2008, Chaina went to Major Mamun's house at T and T Colony. Major Mamun's wife told her that her husband had gone out to exercise. When Chaina telephoned Major Mamun's number at around 6.00 am, he asked her to come to the RAB-8 office at around 9.00 am. He also told her that the RAB would bring Sentu to Barisal and he would not face any problems. At around 6.30 am, Chaina heard from others that Sentu had been killed in 'crossfire' at Bilbobari, Kashipur. She rushed to Bilbobari to see three RAB cars on the road and Sentu's body laying in a paddy field beside the road. When Chaina tried to take Sentu's body from the RAB, they told her to go home. At around 2.30 pm that day, Awal Mollah, a Commissioner² of Barishal City Corporation accompanied by the RAB and the police, brought home Sentu's body under strict security. The RAB and Police left at 5.00 pm after the burial of Sentu. Chaina told Odhikar that there were no cases filed against Sentu. Despite this, after the proclamation of State of Emergency across the country, it was Major Mamun of RAB-8 who sent a message via Sultan of Rupertoli that Sentu would be killed in 'crossfire'. In order to ensure that Sentu was not killed Chaina paid Taka 300,000 as bribe to Major Mamun on June 19 or 20 via Sultan and Dolon, the acquaintances from Rupertoli. Chaina alleged that the RAB had killed her son Sentu in a planned way and demanded justice for the killing.

¹ Chhatra Dal is the student front of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), a major political party of Bangladesh.

² A Commissioner is a member of a City Corporation which is a form of local government in Bangladesh.

Syed Monzurul Islam Mamun, a Witness to the Arrest

Syed Monzurul Islam Mamun told Odhikar that on July 15, 2008, the Chhatra Dal organised a hunger strike from 9.00 am to 6.00 pm at the Dhaka University campus demanding the release of Begum Khaleda Zia, the Chairperson of BNP³ and Chhatra Dal leader Helal along with the treatment of Khaleda Zia's younger son Coco. After successfully completing a peaceful hunger strike he got onto a rickshaw to have some food at around 7.00 am. There were three rickshaws among which the first rickshaw carried Sentu and Hannan Miah, the President of Gazipur District Chhatra Dal. The second rickshaw carried Parvez Mollick, President of Jahangir Nagar University Chhatra Dal and Talat Mamun, President of Savar Chhatra Dal. Syed Monzurul Islam was aboard the third rickshaw with Md. Mithu the Information and Research Secretary of Dhaka City Unit Chhatra Dal. They were all heading for the Bashundhara City Shopping Complex from Haji Mohammad Mohsin Hall. When the three rickshaws were in front of Sir A F Rahman Hall, a micro-bus bearing a sticker of RAB-3 came from behind and signaled the rickshaw to stop. When the rickshaws stopped the RAB officers fired a round of blank shots. Sentu jumped off the rickshaw but was shot in the leg. When Sentu tried to escape, 7-8 RAB officers grabbed hold of him and threw him to the ground and began to hit him with the butts of their guns. When Sentu gave up, the RAB officers blindfolded him and tied his hands with a towel and took him in their car and left. When the RAB officers had surrounded the three rickshaws the persons on board other than Sentu escaped, but Syed Monzurul ran to the Nilkhet bend nearby and watched the whole incident from the gathering crowds. After 10-15 minutes he phoned Sentu's mother Chaina Momtaz in Barisal and informed her about the arrest. On July 16, 2008, he came to know that Sentu had been killed. He also told Odhikar that Sentu's mother had paid Major Mamun of RAB-8 Taka 300,000 as bribe in order to ensure that Sentu would not be killed.

Khadija Begum (35), Sentu's Paternal Aunt, Zia Shoroni, Matuail, Dhaka

Khadija Begum told Odhikar that Sentu had been living in her house for a long time. On July 15, 2008, Sentu left for the Dhaka University at around 7.00 am. At around 7.00 pm, Mamun telephoned her and told her that Sentu had been arrested by RAB in front of Sir A F Rahman Hall of the Dhaka University. As the night progressed, Khadija Begum inquired at RAB-3 and other RAB offices and police stations for Sentu's whereabouts but was told that the RAB or the police had not arrested Sentu. In the morning of July 16, 2008, Khadija came to know that Sentu had been killed the night before by the RAB who had left his body at a place called Bilbobari of Barishal and spread the word that Sentu was killed in 'crossfire'.

Raihan Hawlader Raju (19), Sentu's paternal cousin, Zia Shoroni, Matuail, Dhaka

Raihan Hawlader told Odhikar that on July 16, 2008, after hearing of Sentu's killing by RAB, he and his family members headed for Barisal. Describing Sentu's body he stated that there was a wound on the right side of his rib cage, two bullet wounds on his chest and one in the left leg. Raju said that he found injury on Sentu's right arm. He added that Sentu's neck was also badly bruised.

³ BNP is major political party of Bangladesh.

Morzina Begum (47), Bilbobari

Morzina Begum told Odhikar that on July 16, 2008, at around 4.00 am she woke up to see that it was raining outside. She went outside to see whether anything was getting wet. Suddenly, she saw three cars of RAB on the road beside her house and 10-15 RAB officers walking around. She went back inside to wake up her daughter Ratna. They stood outside their house again to see the RAB officers standing in different groups on various parts of the road. On one side of the road there was a paddy field while on the other side there was a canal. According to Morzina, the RAB officers blocked the road and fired two/three blank shots. After this they began to open and close the door of their car consistently. In the semi-darkness Morzina saw the RAB officers carry something out of the car and take it to the paddy field beside the road. Four/five of the officers gathered on the field. After a few minutes she heard the loud firing of bullets. Morzina was unable to go to sleep after the incident. She wanted to know what was being kept at the paddy field and why the RAB officers had fired. She took a *kolshi*⁴ and walked past the RAB officers towards neighbouring Afzal Hosain's house and came back home, using the excuse of bringing water. While she did this she saw a body on the paddy field where she saw the RAB officers keep something in the darkness. When the RAB officers asked her if she knew the identity of the body, she said she did not know because she wanted to avoid further trouble. The RAB informed her that the body was of Chhatra Dal leader Sentu. They also told her that Sentu had been killed during a 'shootout' with the RAB. Morzina said that there was no ammunition at the place of the incident but the RAB brought ammunition from their car and arranged them on the ground. At around 7.00 am, the police and a Magistrate arrived to prepare the inquest report of the body. Morzina also recalled that there was no blood on or around the place where Sentu's body was kept. There were however, two new towels.

Khaleda Begum (40), Bilbobari

Khaleda Begum (40) told Odhikar that at around 4.00 am on July 16, 2008, she came out of her house to see a significant number of RAB officers standing on the road beside her house and shooting blank shots. She did not hear anyone talk or shout. At around 5.00 am, Khaleda Begum went to the place of the incident to see Sentu's body laying on the paddy field and two new towels beside the road.

Mahtab (52), a retired officer of the Bangladesh Army, west Kauniya Bagan Bari

Mahtab told Odhikar that on the morning of July 16, 2008, he went to the place of the incident to see Sentu's body. Upon his arrival he saw several RAB officers standing around and a few guns and bullets on the road. Sentu's body was laying on the paddy field beside the road. The paddy was not damaged or trampled which was why it seemed to him that Sentu's body had been placed there by the RAB officers. From the experience he had gained through serving the Army he commented that Sentu was shot in the chest twice from the closest distance and was shot in the leg from a distance of one or one and a half feet. He reached this conclusion from seeing the nature of the wounds on Sentu. He also recalled that Sentu's neck was seemingly broken and his left hand seemed to be broken too.

⁴ a kolshi is an earthen jar which is used in rural Bangladesh to collect water

Dolon (25), Rupertoli, Barishal

Dolon told Odhikar that Sentu's mother had contacted Major Mamun so that Sentu would not be killed. It was he who had arranged for that meeting but he did not know whether any bribes were exchanged between them.

Md. Sultan (39), Rupertoli, Barishal

Md. Sultan told Odhikar that he had heard from RAB officers from before Sentu's killing that Sentu would be killed in 'crossfire'. This was why he had assisted Sentu's mother to contact Major Mamun. However, he was not aware of any exchange of money between Sentu's mother and Major Mamun.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Swapon, Kotoali Police Station, Barisal Metropolitan Police

SI Swapon told Odhikar that at around 8.00 am on July 16, 2008, Magistrate Mahbubul Karim prepared the inquest report of the body. He referred to the inquest report as saying that Sentu's body was lying on its back on the paddy field. Two bullets hit his chest and pierced out from the other side and one bullet had hit his left thigh and remained inside. There was no blood at the place where Sentu's body was lying. After completion of the inquest report, he went to the Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital for carrying out the post-mortem of the body under guard of the RAB officers. After completing the post-mortem, Sentu's body was handed over to his family at 12.00 pm.

Lt. Colonel Irshad, Commanding Officer, RAB-8, Barisal

While talking with Odhikar Lt. Colonel Irshad classified Sentu as a notorious criminal. In his written statement, he stated that on July 15, 2008, a detective team of RAB-8 was positioned in Dhaka. Through an undisclosed source the team came to know that Sentu was at the Palashi or Katabon area. On the basis of this news the detective team from RAB-8 carried out a raid at the Katabon area of Dhaka at around 7.00 pm. Sentu tried to escape when the detective team tried to arrest him. The RAB officers tried to arrest Sentu and managed to do so after chasing him down. Following questioning, it was unearthed from Sentu that he kept huge amounts of ammunition and explosives in various parts of Barisal. It was on the basis of the information given by Sentu that the RAB detective team set off for Barisal taking Sentu along for the purpose of collecting those ammunition and explosives. On July 16, 2008 at around 4.15 am when the team arrived at Bilbobari of Kashipur, Barisal, Sentu's associates attacked their microbus and opened fire in order to capture Sentu from them. For the sake of protecting the property of the State and maintaining their safety, RAB also fired back. Sentu managed to escape from the RAB microbus. Firing between the two groups continued for 10-12 minutes after which Sentu's associates stopped firing. The RAB officers cordoned the whole area. Towards dawn, the RAB officers saw Sentu's body at the place of the shootout along with the ammunition of Sentu's associates nearby. The windows of the RAB microbus were damaged and two RAB officers were injured in the incident.

Doctor Habibur Rahman, Assistant Professor, Forensic Medicine Department, Shere-e-Bangla Medical College

Doctor Habibur Rahman told Odhikar that a bullet had struck Sentu's left knee and remained inside while two bullets had entered both sides of his chest and had pierced out.

- The End of Report -