



## **Alleged Death of a BDR member in custody**

### **Fact-finding Reports Odhikar**

Md. Monir Hossain, a member of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) died on 17 March 2009 at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. He was a resident of Noapara village of Arai Hazar Upazila of Narayanganj district. To find the circumstances leading to Monir's death, Odhikar carried out a fact finding mission and talked to the deceased's parents, wife and relatives.

#### **Jalal Uddin Munshi**

Jalal Uddin Munshi, father of Monir, said that Md. Habibur Rahman, Chairman of Arai Hazar Upazila, came to him and told him that news about Monir had come from Dhaka via mobile phone. Later he learnt about Monir's ill health by calling the same mobile phone number. "Monir is a little unwell. Please come to Dhaka Medical College Hospital", were allegedly the words said to Monir's father from the other side of the phone. Then the line was disconnected.

#### **Md. Habibur Rahman**

Regarding this matter, the Chairman of Arai Hazar Union Parishad informed Odhikar that he received a call on his mobile phone on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March. Someone asked him "Are you the Chairman of Hazar union?" He answered in the affirmative and the caller then instructed him to take the mobile phone to Monir's father. He did so and told the Odhikar fact finder that he had nothing else to do with the matter.

#### **Marium (Mother), Helena Akhtar (Wife)**

Monir's mother Marium was too overcome to speak. All she could do was shed tears. On the other hand, Helena Akhtar, Monir's wife, informed Odhikar that she had talked to her husband on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March during the Zuhur prayer time. Monir told her that he was fine. Helena said that Monir told her: "*Do not worry at all. Ask mother and father to pray for me*", said Monir. "*I talked to a completely healthy person and then all of a sudden came the news of illness and death. The matter seems rather suspicious,*" said Helena.

#### **Roop Miyah, Osman Gani (Maternal Uncle's)**

"I talked to a completely healthy person in the afternoon. Suddenly what happen in the evening that caused his death?", said Roop Miyah, Monir's maternal uncle. The family is at a mystery as to what could have occurred to cause Monir's sudden death. Osman Gani, the other maternal uncle informed Odhikar that he was present when the body of Monir was being bathed<sup>1</sup>, and the only scar that his body had was that from the post mortem.

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<sup>1</sup> As part of the funeral rites

### **Mr. Al Amin, Magistrate**

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2009, Magistrate Al-Amin conducted an on-spot investigation of the deceased BDR Sepahi<sup>2</sup> Md. Monir Hossain. As per the Magistrate, the on-spot investigation report was prepared by the Sub Inspector (SI) of Lalbagh Police Station Md. Delwar Hossain. Mentionable issues in the report were that the palm and the nails of the body were blackish and the back of the right palm was swollen. On the right side of the deceased's face was a little swollen scar. After the on-spot investigation was done, the body of Monir Hossain was sent to the Forensic Medical Department, Dhaka Medical College, through constable Md. Zakir Hossain along with all the necessary documents.

### **Involvement of RAB**

BDR members who were suspected of being involved in the Pilkhana BDR mutiny<sup>3</sup> were arrested and kept at different RAB lockups. There have been some complaints of torture, causing Odhikar to focus on this matter. In the meanwhile, three members of the BDR and an Imam<sup>4</sup> died inside the BDR Headquarters. Apart from this, a BDR member of Jaipurhat Rifle-3 also died. Odhikar has also learnt that due to illness a few BDR members have been admitted to Dhaka Medical College hospital. Meanwhile Lance-Nayak Mobarak Hossain died on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March in RAB<sup>5</sup> custody. According to Odhikar, the tactics of gaining a confession through torture is an extreme violation of human rights. On the 5<sup>th</sup> October 1998, Bangladesh ratified the International Convention against Torture. As per this convention, no individual can be tortured, physically or mentally. Odhikar has expressed deep concern in the allegation of death and torture of BDR members.

### **Odhikar visits Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH)**

Odhikar fact finders went to Dhaka Medical College Hospital to know about the ailing BDR members.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, BDR member Kamrul Haque, who was lying on the floor of ward no.-32 of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, could not talk properly. The fact finders asked him if he had been tortured. He merely lifted up his lungi<sup>6</sup> to show his scar marks. Scar marks were also visible under both his knees.

Injured BDR Subedar Abdul Malek was sleeping on the bed no.-16 of ward no.-32 at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March. Odhikar talked to Malek's wife, Firoza Begum, who was beside him. She told Odhikar that Malek had been admitted on 28th February. She also said that her husband did not take part in the BDR mutiny at Pilkhana. He was already on leave when the massacre took place. After his leave duration

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<sup>2</sup> Sepahi: Lower ranking officer

<sup>3</sup> On the morning of 25 February 2009, members of the Bangladesh Rifles turned against higher ranking army officers at a ceremony inside the BDR compound. This resulted in the killing of several Army officers, including the Director General of the BDR, and his wife and the holding of hostages. The mutiny lasted for 2 days. The BDR members had demanded several items, including independence from Army control, better facilities and pay, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Leader of prayers in a mosque.

<sup>5</sup> RAB: Rapid Action Battalion

<sup>6</sup> Lungi is an ankle-length piece of cloth knotted around the waist. Common in Bangladesh, Bengal and places in South India (where it is called a *mundu*)

was over, he came down from Barisal to Dhaka along with his family to join the ‘BDR Week’ on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February and was residing in his quarters. He was supposed to join up in the evening of 25<sup>th</sup> February, but due to the mutiny in the BDR Headquarter that morning, he was unable to.

Subedar Malek and his wife were too frightened to come out of their quarters. Firoza Begum came out on the evening of 26<sup>th</sup> February along with all the other family members of the BDR, who were stuck inside but Subedar Malek stayed back at his quarters. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of February, a few Army men broke into his quarter and started beating Malek. Malek told them that he was on leave and also showed them the leave documents. That did not stop them from hitting him. He suffered injuries to both his legs. Later he was sent to the BDR hospital to get his legs bandaged and then sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with three Army men. At present, he is undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

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