Allegation of the killing of Shahid Al Mahmud by police 16 days after his disappearance

Fact finding report

Odhikar

Shahid Al Mahmud (22) was the son of Rajab Ali and Josna Begum, residents of Badanpur of Kalicharanpur Union under Jhenaidah Sadar upazila. He was a student of Jhenaidah Siddikiya Aliya Madrassa and an activist of the Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir[1]. On June 14 at around 12:15am, Shahid was taken away by a group of uniformed policemen and some plain clothed men from Jhenaidah Sadar Police Station, led by Sub-Inspector (SI) Aminul. Shahid's family alleged that after 16 days of Shahid's disappearance, Police killed him in the name of 'crossfire/gunfight' at Tetulbaria field in Jhenaidah Sadar Upazila on July 1, 2016 at around 2:30am.
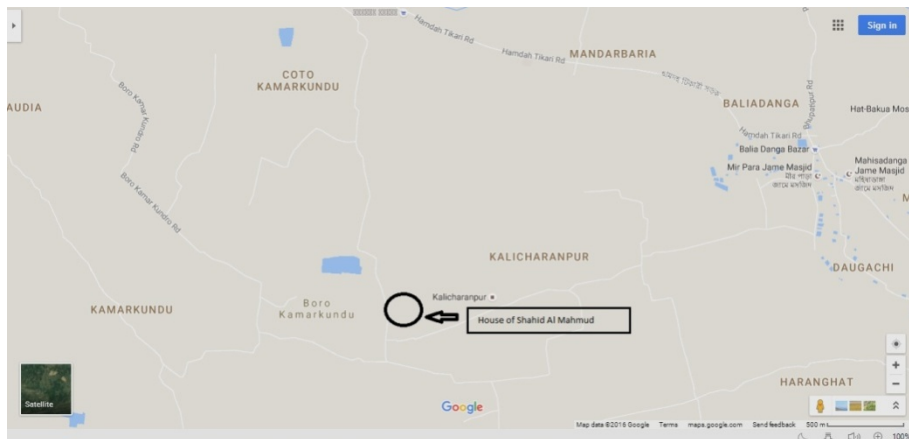

Photo: Google Map

A fact finding mission has found that on June 14, 2016 at around 12:15 am, two unknown men entered Shahid's house by breaking the back boundary wall which was made of bamboo. Then, they called out to Shahid by name. Shahid's parents came out of the house and the men pointed guns at them and forced them to open the main entrance of the house. Another 4/5 plain clothed armed men entered the house and went to Shahid's room where he was sleeping. The armed men dragged Shahid out of the house and took him away. Shahid's parents followed SI Aminul and the others to the road. They saw three motorbikes and a black color microbus there. They also saw, 6/7 uniformed policemen standing beside the microbus. The policemen dragged Shahid into the microbus and headed towards Jhenaidah. Khabir Uddin (a neighbour) and Shahid's nephew Shakib Al Hasan tried to stop the vehicle. But SI Aminul threatened them to get off the road. While taking Shahid away, the police men also detained two Awami League supporters, Laltu and Sujon, who were residents of Kalicharanpur Bazaar, from the road some 100 yards of the Kalicharanpur Bazaar area. On that night and later in the morning, local Awami League

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[1] Student wing of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami

leaders contacted Jhenaidah Sadar Police Station and met police officials and senior leaders of Awami League regarding Laltu and Sujon's arrest. On June 15 at around 11:30pm, Laltu and Sujon were found blindfolded on the roadside in Baratala, area but Shahid was not found. Shahid's family searched for him in many places, including police station, DB office and Jhenaidah RAB camp from June 14 to July 1, 2016 till before Shahid was found dead. But they could not found his whereabouts. On June 15, Shahid's brother, Abdur Rahim went Jhenaidah Sadar Police Station to file a General Diary (GD) but the duty officer of the police station did not accept the GD because Rahim stated in it that members of law enforcement agencies took Shahid away. On June 16, Rahim went RAB- 6 camp in Jhenaidah but they denied the arrest of Shahid. They also suggested that he file a case. However, Rahim did not file case because he was afraid of police harassment. On June 18, Shahid's family organised a press conference at Jhenaidah Press Club and demanded information of the whereabouts of Shahid.

N.B. It was not possible to interview Laltu and Sujon because their family did not allow Odhikar to meet them. Odhikar could not contact any local leader of Islami Chhatra Shibir or Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami. All of them were hiding because of government's continuous persecution. Their mobile phones were also switched off. However, Odhikar could indirectly contact some of Jamaat-e-Islami leaders of Jhenaidah district through a Jamaat-e-Islami leader of Kaliganj Upazila, but they refused to comment on Shahid.

Odhikar conducted a fact finding mission into the incident. During fact finding, Odhikar interviewed-

- Victim's family
- Eyewitness and
- Members of law enforcing agencies

Photo: Shahid Al Mahmud (Collected from family)

Rajab Ali, Father of Shahid Al Mahmud:
Rajab Ali told Odhikar that his son Shahid Al Mahmud was a student of a local madrassa and was also preparing to make a cattle farm after being trained by the Department of Youth Development of the Government of Bangladesh. He was also an activist of Islami Chhatra Shibir. On June 13, 2016 at around 10:00 pm, Shahid Al Mahmud was asleep in his room. In the

next room, Rajab Ali and his wife were sleeping too. On June 14 at around 12:15am, Rajab woke up after hearing some noises and voices. Some people were calling Shahid by name. He woke his wife and they went outside. He saw two armed youth standing at the veranda in front of Shahid's room. They had entered the yard of the house from the back by breaking the bamboo mat boundary wall. The men pointed 'pistol' at their head and forced them to open the main gate of the house. They also threatened to shot if Rajab screamed or spoke. When Rajab opened the gate, 4/5 more armed men entered his house and went to Shahid's room and dragged him out. When the armed men were taking Shahid away, Rajab and his wife followed them to the road. They saw three motorbikes and a black microbus. The people who entered the house, were plain clothed but 6/7 more people standing beside the vehicles were in police uniform. The armed men put Shahid into the microbus and headed toward Jhenaidah town.

Two plain clothed policemen entered the house through this place (circled) and this is the main gate of the house (right), Photo: Odhikar

Rajab informed the matter to his elder son, Abdur Rahim over mobile phone. Abdur Rahim was staying in Jhenaidah town and he took his brother-in-law (Former army officer) to Jhenaidah Sadar Police Station that night. The police denied Shahid's arrest. They searched for Shahid in many places including police stations, DB office, Jhenaidah RAB camp from June 14 to July 1, 2016 till before Shahid was found dead. On June 18, Rajab Ali arranged a press conference at Jhenaidah Press Club. He told Odhikar that, there was no case filed against Shahid and he could not understand why police took his son away and killed him in the name of 'crossfire'.

Body of Shahid Al Mahmud, Photo: Odhikar

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Josna Begum, Mother of Shahid Al Mahmud:

Josna Begum told Odhikar that on June 13, 2016 she went to sleep without locking the door from inside. On June 14, 2016 at around 12:15am her son Shahid was taken away. She found a piece of cloth in front of the house. She assumed that a police source left the piece of cloth to identify the house before the operation. The pattern and material was similar to that used for prison uniforms. The plain clothed men dragged Shahid from the veranda to the yard. Then she started howling. Shahid told her to stop howling and went with them. The plain clothed men also detained two Awami League supporters, Laltu and Sujon (residents of Kalicharanpur Bazaar) from Kalicharanpur Bazaar area while taking Shahid away. On that night and later in the morning, local Awami League leaders contacted Jhenaidah Sadar Police Station and met higher police officials and also met senior leaders of Awami League. On June 15 at around 11:30 pm, Laltu and Sujon were found blindfolded on the roadside of Baratala area. She went to talk with Laltu and Sujon about Shahid but they did not want to talk to her regarding Shahid. Josna did not know the names of the Awami League leaders who went to release Laltu and Sujon. On July 1, 2016 after having 'Seheri', her brother Mohammad Farid (former army officer), called her over mobile phone and told that two person had died in a 'crossfire' at Tetulbaria field and police had brought those bodies to the morgue. Hearing the news, she and her elder son Abdur Rahim and other relatives went to the morgue and identified Shahid's body. On July 1, 2016 at around 12:00pm, Shahid's body was brought to home after post mortem and buried in the family graveyard in the afternoon.

Photo: The piece of cloth found outside Shahid's house

Abdur Rahim, elder brother of Shahid Al Mahmud:

Abdur Rahim told Odhikar that he used to live in a rented house in Jhenaidah town for business purposes. His younger brother, Shahid Al Mahmud used to stay with his parents at their house. On June 14, 2016 few members of police of Jhenaidah Police Station, led by SI Aminul, took his brother away from his house. After 16 days of Shahid's disappearance, they killed Shahid on the night of July 1, 2016 after staging a drama of 'crossfire'. When Shahid was being arrested, Rahim's son Shakib Al Hassan was in the house. Shakib could identify SI Aminul. Hearing the news of Shahid's arrest, he went Jhenaidah Police Station where police denied the arrest of Shahid. On June 14, he searched for Shahid at Jhenaidah RAB- 6 camp, DB office, Jhenaidah Sadar Police Station and many other places. On June 15, 2016 at around 4.00 pm he wrote the

details of the incident in a paper and went Jhenaidah Police Station to file a GD. He mentioned in the GD that SI Aminul took Shaid away from his house. The duty officer (a female officer) of the police station refused the GD. She suggested that he submit a GD with a photo mentioning that Shahid was lost. After that, Rahim returned home without filing a GD. On June 16, 2016 he went RAB-6 camp again, but he did not submit any written complain to them. One of the officers of the RAB- 6 camp told him that RAB did not arrest Shahid. The officer also said Shahid was in police custody and suggested Rahim file a case. Rahim thought that if he filed any case against the police, his family could be harassed by police. That is why he did not do so. On June 18, 2016 Rahim arranged a press conference at the Jhenaidah Press Club on behalf of his family. On June 19, 2016 an activist of Awami League, known as a police informant of the village police, told Rahim that Shahid went Afghanistan and brought some books from there. Police would not release him until he gave up the books. However, Rahim did not want to state the name of that Awami League activist. Rahim said that Shahid had never been abroad. On July 1, 2016 he got to know from the police at the hospital morgue and also from some locals, that police killed Shahid Al Mahmud and one Anisur Rahman in the name of 'crossfire', beside the main road at Tetulbaria of Jhenaidah Sadar Upazila. After that, police brought the bodies to the morgue. On that day, at around 12.00 pm, Rahim brought Shahid's body home after post mortem.
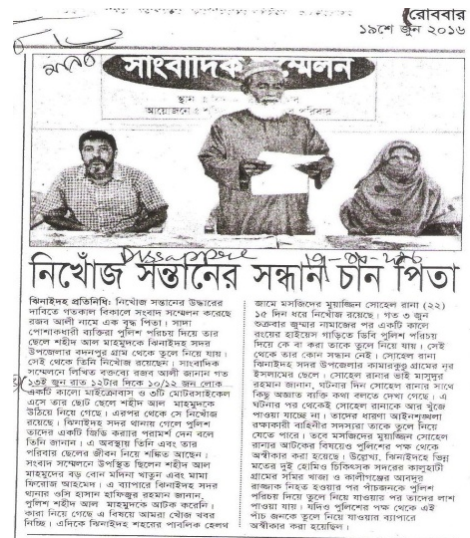

Photo: Grave of Shahid Al Mahmud.

Khabir Uddin, Neighbor and Eyewitness:
Khabir Uddin told Odhikar that his house is next to Rajab Ali's house. On the night of June 13, 2016 he was asleep at his house. Shahid's nephew Shakib Al Hassan was also sleeping there. At around 12:30am, he woke up hearing the cries of Shahid's mother. He woke Shakib up and they both got out of the house. He saw Shahid's mother standing beside the road. She told him that some police were taking Shahid away. He ran towards the road and saw some motorbikes and a microbus parked there. Police put Shahid into the microbus and started the vehicle. He along with Shakib tried to stop the vehicle. Then the policemen shone torches into their eyes and SI Aminul of Jhenaidah Sadar Police Station shouted at him and told to get off the road. He became afraid and got off the road with Shakib. When Khabir Uddin was asked that how he knew SI Aminul, he said that he had a decorator's shop at Hamdah Mor of Jhenaidah town. Sometimes SI Aminul would come there for seizing motorbikes that had no registration. He had seen and

heard SI Aminul many times. Although the torchlight in his eyes did not allow him to see the police that night, he recognised the voice of SI Aminul as it was familiar to him.

Photo: Shahid Al Mahmud's parents (left) and news about press conference published on the Daily Manab Zamin on June 19, 2016

Mohammad Farid, Shahid Al Mahmud's maternal uncle:

Mohammad Farid told Odhikar that his house is beside the morgue of Jhenaidah Sadar Hospital. After the disappearance of Shahid on June 14, 2016, he went many places including Jhenaidah Police Station, along with Abdur Rahim, searching for Shahid. On July 1, 2016 he saw crowd in front of the morgue and some police vehicles. There were many people with the policemen. He approached the crowd and got to know that police had brought two dead victims of 'crossfire'. Then he approached the bodies which were kept in a police patrol van, but he could not identify the body of Shahid because Shahid had been very healthy when he was taken away. After 16 days of disappearance he looked very thin and had a beard. Besides, three bullet wounds were in the body; one on the upper side of the left eye and two in the chest. Farid could not identify Shahid because of those wounds and the beard. He called Shahid's family as he knew they were looking for him. At around 5:30am, Shahid's brother came and identified the body.

Shahid Al Mahmud's house, Photo: Odhikar

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Aminul Islam, Sub Inspector of Jhenaidah Police Station:

Aminul Islam told Odhikar that he did not know Shahid Al Mahmud and that did not go on any operation to arrest him. He said that no Sub Inspector can do such operation without informing a higher authority and must also mention the operation in the record book of the police station. He said he had read the news of Shahidul in the papers and was astonished. He had spoken to higher police officials regarding the matter.

Horendranath Sarkar, Acting Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Jhenaidah Sadar Police Station:

Horendranath Sarkar told Odhikar that he took over the responsibility of the police station after the incident, and could not give any information about the matter. However, on July 2, 2016 the comments of former OC Hasan Hafizur Rahman, regarding the incident had been published in different media. He said that police got some secret information about the preparation of some disruptive activities by some miscreants at Tetulbaria north field under Jhenaidah Sadar Upazila. After receiving such information, a patrolling team of police went to that area. When police reached the place, the miscreants opened fire at police. Police retaliated by firing back. Three policemen, including SI Prabir Kumar, were injured. The miscreants fled and police recovered two dead bodies with the help of locals and sent them to the morgue of Jhenaidah Sadar Hospital. Police also recovered a local firearm, two bullets, six 'Hasua'[2] and five bombs.

Odhikar's comment:

Odhikar conducted a fact finding mission into the incident of the killing of Shahid Al Mahmud in the name of 'crossfire' after he had been disappeared for 16 days. During the fact finding mission, Odhikar interviewed the victim's relatives, eyewitness and members of the law enforcement agency. Relatives of the victim and eyewitness alleged that on June 14, 2016 at around 12:15am, some policemen of Jhenaidah Sadar Police Station, led by SI Aminul took Shahid away from his house. Shahid's family members were searching him for 16 days in many places, including the local RAB camp but did not find him. On the night of July 1, 2016 he was killed in a so called 'gunfight' with police at Tetulbaria field. Odhikar demands fair investigation and justice for the killing of Shahid Al Mahmud in the name of 'crossfire' after disappearing him.

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[2] Local weapon