

Bangladeshi woman, daughter found dead in Kuwait

UNB, Dhaka

A Bangladeshi woman and her daughter were found dead in an apartment in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh of Kuwait on Friday.

The security authorities found the bodies with traces of blood in one of the rooms on the ground floor of

the building in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, reports Arab Times.

The authorities confirmed that the mother and her daughter were murdered.

A case of premeditated murder was recorded.

Truth dwells

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them, 23 are still missing, the bodies of 12 were found and the rest either returned after a certain amount of time or were arrested by different law enforcement agencies.

The second highest number was 93 in 2016. Of them, 11 are still missing and 14 were found dead.

But Mayer Daak's statistics shows that 2013 was the year when the most number of people went missing, and never turned up -- 33 people vanished into thin air and their families are still waiting for news, good or bad.

Selim Reza Pintu, who was the president of the capital's Sutrapur Chhatra Dal, was one of them.

He was abducted on December 12, at 1:30am from his brother's house in Pallabi in the capital, by men in plainclothes who barged in identifying themselves as "people from the administration".

"We went to the law enforcement office on Minto Road, but they told us that my brother was not there. We went to Pallabi Police Station to file a general diary on December 13, but they told us that we should only file a missing person's report, since the police cannot record a general diary against a law enforcer," Pintu's elder sister Rehana Banu Munni told The Daily Star yesterday.

In the following years, the grieving family visited one after another offices of law enforcement agencies, submitted applications to several quarters, including the National Human Rights Commission, but to no avail, said Munni.

"We even filed an abduction case in 2016. The final investigation report prepared by the Pallabi police mentioned they could not find any clue and so they closed the case. If they find any evidence in the future, the case will be reopened," said Munni.

"There were two cases against him with Motijheel Police Station and Sutrapur Police Station, but my question is, why make him disappear instead of bringing him to justice? We are dying everyday worrying about him."

At yesterday's webinar, eminent jurist Dr Shahdeen Malik pointed out that the use of unlawful methods to deal with those accused of crimes was unacceptable. "They think the ends justify the means, but that is not true. Breaking the law to bring stability is not a solution."

Human rights experts point out that Bangladesh is signatory to multiple legally binding international treaties, to prevent enforced disappearances.

But enforced disappearances are not even officially acknowledged as a problem in the country.

Bangladesh presented its initial state party report to the United Nations Committee Against Torture (UNCAT) at its 67th session on July 30-31 last year in Geneva, where the Committee reviewed the government's

progress in implementing the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

"The government did not define enforced disappearances in its submission -- they only limited the mention of this phenomenon in terms of what legal policy framework is in place to prosecute law enforcers engaging in this act," Tamanna Hoq Riti, coordinator of Human Rights Forum Bangladesh, told The Daily Star.

When the Bangladesh delegates were asked about enforced disappearances, they "rejected the notion that enforced disappearances happen frequently" and told the Committee that "allegations that its [Bangladesh] authorities had engaged in enforced disappearance should be presumed to be false in cases where the alleged victim had subsequently reappeared", said Riti who was present at the UNCAT session.

The committee then said, "The Committee is seriously concerned at numerous, consistent reports that the State party's officials have arbitrarily deprived persons of their liberty, subsequently killed many of them and failed to disclose their whereabouts or fate. Such conduct is defined in international human rights law as enforced disappearance, whether or not the victim is killed or reappears later."

It recommended in no uncertain terms that Bangladesh publish a list of all recognised places of detention and ensure that no one is held in secret detention and that all allegations of unacknowledged detention, disappearance are independently investigated.

"Abduction' do[es] not sufficiently communicate the serious nature of unacknowledged detention carried out by or with the complicity of State officials," noted the Committee, recommended that 'enforced disappearance' be recognised as a crime in legislation.

At yesterday's discussion, Sara Hossain said, "It is an unacceptable argument that enforced disappearances do not happen. At UNCAT, the UN Committee asked many questions to our law minister and Bangladesh was supposed to submit the answers to those questions by last year, but we are yet to receive the state's answers to those questions."

Meanwhile, the fate of people like United People's Democratic Front leader Mikel Changma, who disappeared last year, hangs in the balance. On 21 May 2019, the High Court directed the secretary of home ministry to provide information about the whereabouts of Mikel, and submit an investigation report in five weeks.

"The government replied claiming that they did not know which agency had him," said Sara Hossain.

Nothing better than beating

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"My statement only refers to those who are committing crimes by opening web portals and claiming them to be journalists," he said, adding, "I made the statement to save the honour of true journalists who are dedicated to upholding justice."

He said Mohonpur upazila was a small one with six unions, one municipality and 67 wards, but it has at least 76 journalists.

"These journalists and web portals have no office and gatekeepers. So it is not easy to register a complaint against them. Whenever police arrest them, they

come out of jail in a few days and reengage in crimes," he said.

He said he had also told the meeting that his own party Awami League has "extortionists" too. In some cases, those extortionists form syndicates with the "criminal journalists", he mentioned.

"Such syndicates have become active these days. It seems like there is a competition to become a journalist. Some extortionists of our party maintain close ties with the so-called journalists..." he said.



A comparatively slow-moving truck occupying the lane supposed to be used by faster vehicles while the bus overtakes it using the lane for slower vehicles. The sad truth is, this has become a norm on the highways. The photo was taken on Dhaka-Aricha highway in Savar.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Legal remedy never found

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to produce Ilias before it or prove that he was not detained by them.

However, eight years on, the HC is yet to start hearing on the rule as neither the petitioner nor the government has taken any initiative for the hearing.

Therefore, the matter was not settled and no verdict was delivered on it.

In May that year, five law enforcement agencies submitted separate reports to the HC in line with the rule issued by the HC on April 19, 2012.

In these reports, the law enforcement agencies claimed BNP leader Ilias Ali, then organising secretary of the Sylhet division of the party, was not in their custody since "they had not picked up or detained him", sources in the attorney general's office said.

The reports, prepared by the offices of the inspector general of police (IGP), Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Special Branch (SB), and Banani Police Station, claimed they were making all necessary efforts to find Ilias Ali's whereabouts.

Following Ilias's case, several other cases were moved before the HC seeking necessary directives on the authorities concerned over such incidents of enforced disappearance, but no order has yet come from this court as a remedy to such incidents.

AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon, the lawyer representing Ilias's wife Tahmina, told The Daily Star on Thursday that he did not take any move for hearing of the HC rule considering that no remedy can be received as the law enforcement agencies told the court that they had not detained Ilias Ali.

It is the constitutional duty of the state machinery to find out

the whereabouts of Ilias Ali and others who remain missing, but there is apparently no serious move from law enforcers to this effect, he said.

Mahbub Uddin Khokon, also a joint secretary general of BNP and former lawmaker, said law enforcers are allegedly responsible for most enforced disappearances, but instead of being held accountable, are rather given impunity.

Besides, there are also some limitations of the court and therefore, a legal remedy for incidents of enforced disappearance cannot be found, he added.

Persistent campaigning, legal fights, and the government's sincerity are required in order to stop further enforced disappearances and ensure justice for victims and their families, rights activists and lawyers told The Daily Star recently.

Explaining why no legal remedy is found over these incidents, Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) Chairperson ZI Khan Panna said on Thursday the families of victims of enforced disappearances, rights organisations and lawyers have hardly moved for legal fights against enforced disappearance.

They hold some programmes, including discussions and human chains, only on August 30 every year to observe the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances.

"We don't fight the rest of the year against incidents of enforced disappearance. This is why we do not get redress for such incidents," he said.

Also a Supreme Court lawyer and executive member of the Bangladesh Bar Council, Panna gave the example of how mass arrest and detention used to take

place on a large scale several years ago.

"But we had waged movements continuously against such inhumane incidents and now mass arrests and detentions have gone down," he added.

"We -- the lawyers, rights organisations, and victims' families -- need to enforce continuous movements and legal fights to stop incidents of enforced disappearance."

Manzill Murshid, a Supreme Court lawyer and president of Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh, told this correspondent on Friday that law enforcers are behind most incidents of enforced disappearance but they deny the allegations.

The police have reportedly refused to record cases involving enforced disappearance and as a result, cases have rarely been filed in connection with incidents of enforced disappearances. Therefore, effective orders have not come from the court, he said.

Manzill Murshid said the High Court may take these incidents seriously and may issue suo motu (voluntary) orders to stop such incidents and find out those responsible for these incidents.

The authorities concerned, including the heads of law enforcement agencies, need to issue the necessary directives so that law enforcers don't dare involve themselves in incidents of enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killings, he added.

Contacted, Law Minister Anisul Huq did not give any comment on the issue of enforced disappearances.

"I have to understand what enforced disappearance is and then I will comment," he said on Friday.

Why did they need to make him disappear?

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Liton has been a supporter of the Awami League, and that day he was on his way to the house of a local AL leader from his home in Birampur village under Kotwali Police Station, she added.

The woman alleged that five minutes before her husband went out of home, some policemen wandered around their house.

But Golam Mostafa, officer-in-charge of Kushtia Sadar Police Station, told this newspaper on Thursday that Liton was detained around 2:00am on August 25. So far, 18 cases have been found against him in Jashore and Narail.

A locally made pistol and two bullets were found in his possession, he added.

Jahanara said her husband was earlier involved in some criminal activities, but he gave it up all and was leading a normal life. He had suffered injuries to his legs in an attack by rivals and was now sick.

According to her, 42-year-old Liton runs his family with the money earned from tailoring work and fish farming in a family pond. Along with a college going daughter and school going son and

Liton's aged mother, she has been having a hard time without her husband, the lone breadwinner of the family.

Local sources said Liton had enmity with some political goons over control of drug peddling in his locality. The opponent group might have had links with his disappearance, they added.

On July 27, Jahanara said, she went to Kotwali Police Station to lodge a general diary (GD), but she was asked to contact Sub-Inspector Sekandar Abu Zafar, who was then in-charge of Upashahar Police Outpost.

The woman contacted the official accordingly. Instead of registering the GD, police asked her to continue search for her husband. Finally, a GD was registered on August 17. She, however, was not allowed to write about the involvement of men in police uniform in the GD.

Talking to this newspaper on August 20, Officer-in-Charge of Jashore Kotwali Police Station Md Moniruzzaman said they were trying to find Liton. Asked about Liton being picked up by two men in uniform, he said he was not

aware of any such incident.

SI Sekandar Abu Zafar said registering the GD was delayed as his senior officers instructed him to inquire about the matter first. He also said as he went on leave during Eid, it took some time to register the GD.

Liton's incident is one instance of enforced disappearance.

According to national and international rights groups, around 606 incidents of enforced disappearance have been documented in Bangladesh over the past decade.

Many of the victims returned to their families while bodies of some were found later. Others were shown arrested in several cases filed by the law enforcers.

Those who returned never opened up to say clearly who picked them up.

Political activists, non-partisan critical voices, intellectual figures, academics, and journalists were also among those subjected to enforced disappearance.

Thousands in Satkhira in dire straits

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Thousands of people in Satkhira's Assasuni upazila are in search of shelter, food and drinking water as their homes have been inundated by tidal surges coupled with heavy rainfall.

Many families have are yet to find a place to take refuge.

People of some villages in the upazila earlier lost their ancestral lands to river erosion and had been living in different areas in making makeshift arrangements.

But the ongoing flood and the constant fear of natural disasters have left them with no other option but to leave their villages for good.

Kamruzzaman said he used to live in his ancestral house built on a 10-katha land near Protapnagar launch terminal but he lost it to river erosion last year. He and his family then moved to a shelter centre at the launch terminal before cyclone Amphan hit the country and had been living there since.

"I dreamt of spending my entire life on my ancestral land. But that dream has been lost forever," he said.

He said he had left his village with the hope to settle elsewhere, but he was quite unsure of his next destination.

Nazrul Islam, a neighbour of Kamruzzaman, also left the village with no intention to return and took shelter at a relative's house in a neighbouring village.

Kurban Sardar, a resident of Chakla village, said, "We always have to remain anxious about natural disasters. We don't want to spend our whole life amid such uncertainty."

Like them, hundreds of villagers under Protapnagar and Sreela unions are leaving the area.

Around 38,000 people live in 18 villages of Protapnagar and around 32,000 people live in Sreela.

Houses, roads, fish enclosures and croplands have been inundated by water due to the tidal surge and rain.

"The area has become unfit for living due to high tide and rain. That is why people are compelled to leave the area," said Jakir Hossain, chairman of Protapnagar union parishad.

Abu Hena, chairman of Sreela union parishad, said, "Everyone wants a secured living place. But it has now become impossible to have one in this area."

BSF returns body of cattle trader 15 days later

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Indian Border Security Force has returned the body of a Bangladeshi cattle trader, 15 days after shooting him dead in the Indian territory.

Border Guard Bangladesh received the body of Abul Kashem at a flag meeting held in no man's land near Mahishkundi border area of Kushtia's Daulatpur upazila on Friday afternoon.

Kashem, 35, was from Challishpara border area in the same upazila.

Subedar Delwar Hossain, Mahishkundi company commander of BGB 47 Battalion, said Kashem was killed around 9:30pm on August 14 in the Indian side of the border near Ramkrishnapur union of Daulatpur.

"The BSF claimed that Kashem had entered the Indian territory illegally and its members opened fire on him in Majdiar area under Jalangi Police Station," Delwar told The Daily Star quoting Balram Singh, commander of Jalangi BSF camp in West Bengal's Murshidabad district, as saying.

Balram led the BSF team to the flag meeting. Daulatpur OC Nishikanta Roy was present.

Kashem's brother Abul Hossain Mithu said his brother was a cattle trader. He went to the border area on August 14 and was killed by the BSF.

The Daily Star could not confirm why the handover of the body was delayed for 15 days.

Khaleda seeks

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Seeking anonymity, a lawyer who prepared the documents said the letter that secured release for the BNP chairperson earlier was submitted again this time from her family members.

On Friday, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said they received a written application of Khaleda Zia and it was forwarded to the law ministry.

It was mentioned in the letter that Khaleda could not take proper treatment because she had to stay home amid the pandemic.

Khaleda was released from prison on March 25 after she served in jail for 776 days. The government through an executive order to release her for six months on conditions that she would stay at her home in the capital and not leave the country.

It suspended her sentence as per section 401 of Criminal Code of Procedure on "humanitarian grounds".

Physicians of Khaleda said the 75-year-old former prime minister was suffering from rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, and ophthalmological and dental ailments.