The Last Embrace

Time picked Taslima Akhter's celebrated photograph "A Final Embrace" as one of the year's top 10 images and termed it as the "single most haunting photo" taken in 2013. She has spent months trying to learn the names of the victims in the picture. Sadly, Akhter has been unable to identify them. This week *the Star* sheds some light on the journey of a photographer and activist, who works more on the subaltern life of garment workers.

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In a feature published in May last year, the *Time* magazine said that the image "A Final Embrace" captures Bangladesh's united grief of the Rana Plaza disaster in a single shot. No one knows who these two people are. The relation between them remains unidentified. Perhaps at the last minute of life they were trying to save each other in the deathtrap of Rana Plaza or maybe they were lovers united at last in death.

After the deadliest structural disaster at Savar on April 24 last year, like thousands of other volunteers, Taslima Akhter, a faculty member of Pathshala South Asian Media Academy, rushed to the site. She spent the entire day helping the rescuers working on the site, "At that time, my only intention was to help the rescuers. I was not ready to take photos."

When she reached the disaster site, Akhter saw residents and neighbours trying to move the debris and break walls, a feverish panic engulfing the atmosphere. After working the entire day, she was exhausted- mentally and physically. The frightened eyes of relatives of the victims, injured garment workers being rescued from the rubble and dead bodies – it was overwhelming. Around 2am, Akther decided to enter the destroyed building. When she walked in, she found numerous muddy dead bodies with flies hovering around,

