

40A, Barabagan Lane, Serempore, Hooghly - 712 203 West Bengal, India

Phone : +91-33-2622-0843. /45, Tele Fax : +91-33-2622-0843 E-mail : masumindia@gmail.com Web : www.masum.org.in

<u>20.11.2020</u>

The Chairman National Human Rights Commission Manav Adhikar Bhawan Block-C, GPO Complex, INA New Delhi—110023

Respected Sir,

I am writing to you regarding the abduction and cross-border trafficking of a 16-year old girl to Bangladesh and the subsequent inaction of the police regarding the same. The girl belongs to a poor, Muslim household from 147 Bhotbari village, Mekhliganj Block and Police station, Cooch Behar District. She was abducted by some local touts and trafficked to Bangladesh. The Sub-Inspector of the Mekhliganj Police station was hostile to the family members of the girl and accused them of orchestrating the trafficking. He also initially refused to register a complaint of the incident but later registered it after a lot of persuasion. Even then, he did not provide the complainants with a copy of the FIR with the police station case number and other details. The details of the FIR were extracted by the complainants from the General Records Court in November.

The villagers of 147 Bhotbari allege that the Sub-Inspector of Mekhliganj Police station has ties with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and discriminates against Muslim residents.

This incident is in complete violation of Article 15 of the Constitution of India which prohibits discrimination against citizens on the basis of sex, caste, race, religion or place of birth. It also violates Section 154 of the Criminal Procedure Code which requires the police to provide the complainant with a copy of the FIR, free of charge. It should also be noted that the girl was abducted by three men and made to cross the border to Bangladesh near Arjun Border Outpost where the personnel of the Border Security Force (BSF), Battalion 45 are stationed. This abduction could have been prevented if the personnel had effectively guarded the border.

The details of the incident have been provided in the fact-finding report below. Due to the lack of investigation by the police personnel of Mekhliganj Police Station, the girl is still missing from her home. Under these circumstances, I seek your urgent intervention by taking the following actions:

- The case should be investigated by an independent team of the Commission
- Disciplinary actions must be taken against the Sub-Inspector of Mekhliganj Police Station and the on duty BSF personnel from Arjun Border Out Post, Battalion Number- 45 posted at the scene of the abduction.
- The victim and her family should be compensated for the mental harassment and agony suffered by them

• A competent and speedy investigation should be ordered by the Commission to locate the victim as soon as possible

Thank you. Yours Truly Dipyaman Adhikary Assistant Secretary, MASUM

Details of the victim: Priyanka Khatun, 16 years old, daughter of Jatkirul Haque, 147 Bhotbari village, Mekhliganj Block and Police Station, Bhotbari Panchayat, Cooch Behar District.

Details of Secondary Victims: 1. Jakirul Haque, father of the victim, 35 years old

- 2. Bulbul Bibi, mother of the victim, 3 years old
- 3. Abukalam Azad, brother of the victim, 12 years old
- 4. Ikramul Haque, brother of the victim, 10 years old

Details of the Perpetrators: 1. Bhabatosh Sarkar, Sub-Inspector of Mekhliganj Police Station

- 2. Kamal, Chairman of Dahagram Gram Panchayat, Bangladesh
- 3. Faridul Islam, son of Rohit Ali
- 4. Motiul Islam, son of Bhoga Tahidul
- 5. Bablu Islam, son of Jahir

Perpetrators 2 to 5 reside in Dahagram village, Patgram Police Station, Rangpur District, Bangladesh.

Date and Time of the incident: 10.08.2020 around 2 pm and thereafter.

Place of Incident: Jaliatari More, Arjun Border Outpost

Details of the Incident: The victim, Priyanka Khatun, is a 16-year old girl from the Muslim community and studies at Bhotebari Sitanath High School in class 10. On 10.08.2020, around 12 pm, she went to Jaliatari More to fill up some forms for the Kanyashree scheme initiated by the Government of West Bengal. Her family became concerned when she did not return home for a long time and started looking for her in the village. After a long search, they found that she had been abducted by Faridul Islam, Motiul Islam and Bablu Islam, local touts from Bangladesh, who had taken her across the border using the Arjun Border Outpost. The family members of the victim spoke to the Company Commander of the BSF, Battalion 45 whose troops are stationed at the Arjun BOP and asked him how this abduction had took place with them being on guard. The Company Commander assured the victim's family that a flag meeting shall be held to look for the girl and she shall soon be found.

On 11.08.2020, the family members of the victim went to the Mekhliganj Police Station to file an official complaint regarding their daughter's abduction. However, the Sub-Inspector of Mekhliganj Police Station, Mr. Bhabatosh Sarkar, abused and harassed the complainants saying that they must have sold their daughter to the abductors themselves. He also made discriminatory remarks on them based on the fact that they are Muslim. He refused to even register an official complaint

and asked them to find their daughter on their own. Later, he registered the complaint but did not provide the family with a copy of the FIR, as is mandated by Section 154 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

On 14.08.2020, Fatiul Mian, a cousin of the victim received a call from a number from Bangladesh (7478345708). The person on the phone identified himself as the Chairman of the Gram Panchayat of Dahagram and asked for 1 lakh rupees as ransom in exchange for the girl. In a few minutes, he received a call again from the same number and a man who identified himself as Motiul Islam asked for 3 lakhs as ransom instead of 1 lakh.

The family members of the victim went to the Mekhliganj Police Station again with this information but the Sub-Inspector again abused them and accused them of orchestrating the abduction themselves. Even though a complaint has been registered by the police, no investigation has been conducted in order to locate the girl and bring relief to the family.

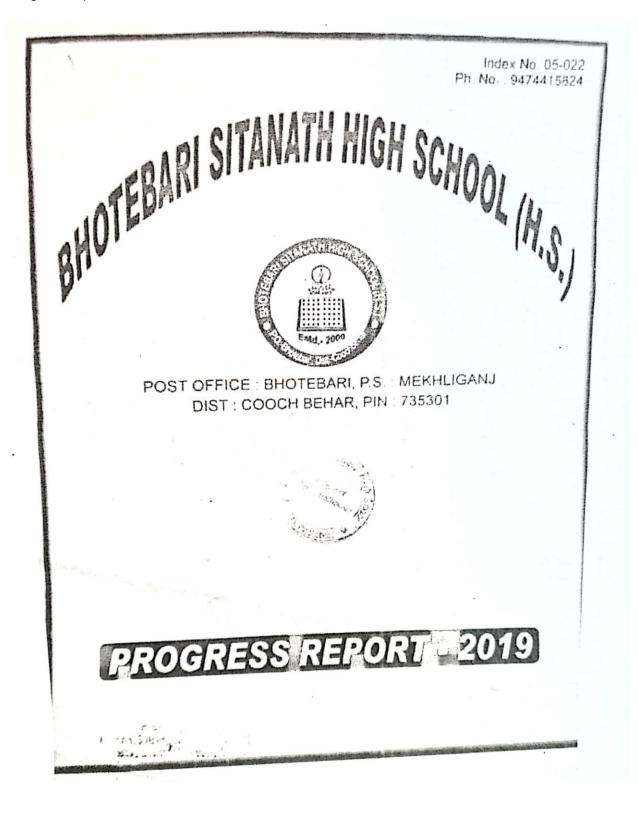
Attached Documents

Complaint to Officer in Charge of Mekhliganj Police Station

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Progress report of victim



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Adhaar Card of victim



Copy of bank pass book of victim

