



8<sup>th</sup> September, 2023

**Joint statement on the meeting between Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister Hasina**

Amidst enormous preparations for the G-20 summit in New Delhi that will take place on 9 and 10 September 2023, it was reported that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will host Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at his residence on the evening of Friday, 8 September. Prime Minister Hasina will be speaking at the summit.

A year ago, on 7 September, 2022, a joint statement was released by both the Prime Ministers, where they expressed satisfaction on the matter that the number of killings along the Indo-Bangladesh border had been reduced significantly. They also praised the border guards of both the countries for their efforts to stop smuggling and trafficking across the border. However, ironically a few hours after the release of that statement, Minarul Islam, a minor Bangladeshi school student was shot dead at the Dainur border of South Dinajpur district by the Indian Border Security Force.

It has been a matter of disgrace that the number of killings perpetrated by the border guards at the Indo-Bangladesh border has drastically escalated this decade. The Monmohan Singh government in July 2011, made an effort to reduce border killings by introducing non-lethal weapons to the BSF at the Indo-Bangladesh border. However, as soon as the Modi government came into power in 2014, the decision was made to revert back to the use of lethal weapons by the BSF, which resulted in rampant killings at this border.

It is to be mentioned that an estimated population of around 60 thousand families resides in West Bengal within the Indo-Bangladesh border and border fence. This population, despite being bona fide citizens of India, are living under constant threats, physical torture and degrading treatment from the border guards. Even after the joint statement issued by both the Prime Ministers last year, we have reported many incidents of killings by the border guards, along with inhuman torture perpetrated by them, upon the residents of the Indo-Bangladesh border villages. Therefore, praising the border guards' actions by the Prime Ministers either reflected their naivety on the issue or their political intention to subdue the illegal actions of the forces of these two neighboring countries.

Now in the light of the G-20 summit, as Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visits India and meets the Indian Prime Minister at his residence; we demand that the year-old statement and its implications, made by the Prime Ministers, be reconsidered. We demand that the exact number of killings and enforced disappearances, along the Indo-Bangladesh border should come to light and the responsible border guards be tried under law for the human rights violations and crimes committed. If the true intent of the governments of both countries is to bring peace at the border, then their actions should start with ending impunity within two friendly neighboring countries by taking punitive actions against the guilty personnel.

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