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PRESS STATEMENT

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) Must Stop Killings and Violating Human Rights against Bangladeshi Citizens

The Indian Foreign Secretary, Ms. Nirupama Rao, is in Bangladesh for a 2 day official visit for preparing grounds to finalise which issues should be discussed during the Bangladeshi Prime Minister's upcoming three day visit to India from December 19, 2009. The Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Mr. Mohammed Mirajul Quayes and Indian Foreign Secretary Ms. Nirupama Rao yesterday finalised the issues to be discussed. However, the burning issue of human rights violations in the border areas, the allegations of constant indiscriminate killing, injury and abduction of Bangladeshi citizens by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) has not been included in the meeting agenda so far.

Odhikar routinely monitors reported incidents of killings, injury, abduction and other human rights violations perpetrated by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on Bangladeshi citizens. According to Odhikar's statistics, between 1 January 2000 and 15 November 2009 a total of 821 people were reported killed, 858 injured and 903 abducted by the BSF. BSF carried out 91 such killings this year till 14 November, 2009. Odhikar feels that the human rights violations perpetrated by the Indian Border Security Force on Bangladeshi nationals cannot be justified in any pretext, and that international laws have been totally ignored. Furthermore, many of the civilians who were killed were reportedly poor farmers who were working in their fields. On 06 November 2009, Monjuara Khatoon, a 12 year old girl of Kurigram, was gunned down by the BSF of Shahapara Camp under 162 Battalion, when she went near the Izzamari frontier of the Bangladesh side to search for her goat.

The deliberate and unjustified killing of civilians of another country constitutes a crime under international law and Odhikar calls upon the Foreign Secretaries of Bangladesh and India to include this issue in the agenda in order to actively take up the issue with the Government of India and put in place appropriate measures to provide security to civilians residing in border areas in Bangladesh. It also calls on the Government to adequately compensate victims of BSF violence and atrocities and/or their families and demand not only a thorough investigation and exemplary punishment of the perpetrators, but also proper compensation and reparation from the Indian Government in this regard.

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