

## **Interview 27: BANGLADESH: Mahfuza Akter**

Mrs. Mahfuza Akter, is a widow at the age of 23 with two children, aged 4 years and 10 months respectively. She is the wife of Mr. Mohiuddin Arif, who was illegally arrested and arbitrarily detained by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) in January 2010. Arif was brutally tortured while in detention in the custody of the RAB-4 and the Pallabi Police of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police. At one stage, Arif was taken to his home and tortured in front of his family, including his wife and parents. He succumbed to his injuries while in detention on February 3, 2010. Mahfuza expressed her views regarding the law-enforcement system of Bangladesh in an interview with the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC).

### **What do you think about the policing system in your country?**

In Bangladesh, the word 'police' is a synonym for lawlessness and brutality. The police are the most dangerous of people. They can and will do anything for money.

### **What do you think of the use of torture?**

My husband, Mohiuddin Arif, was arrested by the RAB and brutally tortured in our home in front of me. We had faith in the law up to the level that law-enforcers cannot do anything beyond the law and they will return him to us. But instead, the RAB tortured my husband badly and handed over him to the police. The police did not take any initiative in providing medical treatment to save my husband's life. Even in jail, he was not afforded any care. When he was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, proper medical treatment was denied to him. All of the officials who work in the RAB, the police department and the hospital, are responsible for killing my husband. Only the Asian Human Rights Commission stood beside our family after the torture and death of my husband. Now, the government has set up an enquiry committee. It is comprised of three people; an officer from the Ministry of Home Affairs, a police officer and a lawyer. But in fear of the RAB, witnesses who have been regularly intimidated by them do not want to speak out and disclose the real truth. The truth is that the RAB tortured and killed my husband. They are murderers, not protectors of the law at all!

### **What are your views on public relations with the police?**

Ordinary people do not have good relations with the police. Only criminals have good relations with the police. If you do not give them bribe money, they will torture people or even kill people in the name of crossfire.

### **If you have a problem these days would you go to the police station?**

Because of the brutal actions of the RAB and the police, I am finished. I have lost my husband and that is the great harm that the RAB and police did to me and my family. I am a widow. Now what will I do with my two children? How will I feed them? Every day my mental suffering is compounded. I do not see any hope for justice anywhere in this country. There is no law that protects poor people like me. We will not get justice while the RAB enjoys impunity. Their actions are above the law of the land. If I speak out anymore, they will kill me like they killed my husband.