

**Case BGD 070208.1.CC.VAW**  
**Follow-up of Case BGD 070208.CC.VAW**  
**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN / CHILD CONCERN**  
**Acid attack / Risk of impunity / Harassment and death threats**

Geneva, 7 April 2008

The International Secretariat of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) has received new information and requests your **URGENT** intervention in the following situation in **Bangladesh**.

**New information:**

The International Secretariat of OMCT has received new information from Odhikar, a member of the SOS-Torture Network, regarding the acid attack Ms. **Rasheda Khatun**, a 40 year-old widow and her daughter Ms. **Salma Khatun**, 17 years old suffered from, in December 2007, in Ullapara Upazial, Sirajgong district.

According to the information received, on 21 January 2008, Sub-Inspector Abdus Selim, the Investigating officer of the case, submitted a charge sheet before the Court accusing Atiqul and Akter Hossain. Consequently, on 4 March 2008, the accused persons were finally presented before the Judge. They are currently in pre-trial detention. The first hearing took place on 1 April 2008.

Despite this positive development at the procedural level, OMCT is highly concerned by the threats suffered by the victims. Indeed, they are still subjected to a serious and constant harassment from the relatives of the accused persons. The victims are pressured to withdraw the case and even threatened to death. The whole family is targeted by this harassment and their movements are spied on. Ms Rasheda Khatun's son has been threatened not to come in the village. The victims are regularly verbally insulted.

To this regard, Ms Rasheda Khatun lodged a complaint (General Diary Entry Number 12) to Ullapara police station on 13 March 2008. However, there has been no development since and no action has been taken by the authorities to investigate into the threats and harassment allegations.

OMCT calls on the authorities, and especially the Police to take the adequate measures to grant protection to Ms Rasheda Khatun, Ms Salma Khatun and their family. To this regard, OMCT deplores the lack of a formal legal framework for the protection of victims and calls for the adoption of such legislation.

OMCT recalls that Bangladesh has an obligation under Article 13 of the Convention Against Torture “to ensure that the complainant and witnesses are protected against ill-treatment or intimidation as a consequence of his complaint or any evidence given”.

**Brief reminder of the situation:**

According to the information received, on the night of 4 December 2007, while Ms. Rasheda Khatun and her daughter were sleeping, Mr. Akter Hossain and Atiqul threw acid on them through the window. The two victims were severely burnt. Allegedly, the reason of the crime was to take revenge on Ms. Rasheda Khatun who had filed a complaint against them seven months earlier related to an informal settlement between the two families that had not been fulfilled. This settlement aimed at reacting after Atiqul and Salma were caught having intimate relations and consisted in their getting married and the payment of a compensation to Salma's family.

Despite various pressure, the victims managed to file a report on 8 December 2007 under section 5 (kha) of the Acid Crime Control Act 2002, but the officer-in-charge of Ullapara Thana, Syed Shahid Alam, and Sub-inspector Rejaul Islam found it to be a fabricated case. Also, at the Sirajgong Sadar

Hospital, the victims were denied medical care. They have eventually been taken care of at the Sirajganj General Hospital from 6 to 30 January 2008.

After information about their case was issued thanks to a joint action of Odhikar and some newspapers, an officer-in-charge was instructed to investigate the case which is to be tried by the District and Session Judge's court in Sirajgong.

**Requested action:**

Please write to the authorities in Bangladesh urging them to:

- i. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Ms. Rasheda Khatun, her 17 year old daughter Ms. Salma Khatun and their family;
- ii. Ensure that all those responsible are duly tried and apply the penal and/or administrative sanctions as provided by law;
- iii. Guarantee that adequate rehabilitation, including psychological and medical treatment as needed, and compensation is awarded to the victims;
- iv. Guarantee the respect of human rights and the fundamental freedoms throughout the country in accordance with national laws and international human rights standards.

**Addresses:**

- Mr. A. F. Hassan Ariff, Law Advisor, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Fax: +880 2 7168557
- Mr. Kazi Habibul Awal, Secretary, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Email: info@minlaw.gov.bd, Fax: +880 2 7171536
- Major General (retd.) M. A. Matin, Home Advisor, Ministry of Home Affairs, Bangladesh Secretariat, Building 4, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Email: mediacell@homemin-bd.org
- Mr. Abdul Karim, Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Fax no. of IGP - +880 2 9563362, 9563363
- Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, Chief Advisor of the Caretaker Government, Office of the Chief Advisor, Tejgaon, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Fax : +880 2 8113243 / 3244 / 1015 / 1490, Email: Info@pmo.gov.bd
- Mr. Mohammad Ruhul Amin, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Bangladesh, Supreme Court Building, Ranna, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh, Fax +880 2 9565058
- Barrister Fida M Kamal, Attorney General of Bangladesh, Office of the Attorney General Supreme Court Building, Ramna, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh. Fax: +880 2 9561568
- Mr. Nur Mohammad, Inspector General of Police (IGP), Bangladesh Police, Police Headquarters' Fulbaria, Dhaka-1000 Bangladesh.
- Mr. Mohammad Ibrahim Khalil, Deputy Commissioner (DC), Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Sirajganj, Bangladesh, Fax: +880 751 63901

- Mr. Md. Alamgir Rahman, Superintendent of Police (SP), Office of the Superintendent of Police, Sirajganj, Bangladesh, Fax: +880 751 62415
- Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the United Nations in Geneva, 65 rue de Lausanne, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland, Fax: +41 22 738 46 16, E-mail: [mission.bangladesh@ties.itu.int](mailto:mission.bangladesh@ties.itu.int)
- Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in Brussels, 29-31 rue J. Jordaens, 1000 Brussels, Belgium, Fax: +32 2 646 59 98; Email: [bdootbrussels@freegates.be](mailto:bdootbrussels@freegates.be)

Please also write to the embassies of Bangladesh in your respective country.

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Geneva, 7 April 2008.

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.