Can BSF close the gate? Can BSF forced people to starve? Can BSF close the gate? Can BSF forced people to starve?

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11 April 2022

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

Respected Sir,

I am writing this to inform you about a case of illegal restriction and livelihood violation by the BSF personnel associated with 107 Battalion, Ramchandra BSF BOP, Tent post Chrouigachi, near gate number 11 on the villagers of Choruigachi village under Bongaon block and police station area of North 24 Parganas district. The villagers are all dependent on agriculture for their livelihood and belong to the marginalized poor communities. The BSF have imposed severe restrictions on their livelihood. The lands which they own across the border gates are so fertile that the villagers are able to sow crops twice or thrice a year. However, this whole area is hedged within boundaries with the barbed-wire fences and the restrictions and humiliating treatment from the BSF is leading to the migration of these farmer villagers.

A total of 30 families used to reside including Choruigachi North and South. 180 people live a restricted life within the barbed-wire fences. With these restrictions and incidents of torture by the BSF, they are finding no other option but to leave their homes, in search of work elsewhere.

There are a total of 5 gates in this area. Out of these, 4 gates are protected with barbed-wire fences, while the gate no. 7 was a residential area. This gate was not built by the CPWD, rather made-up by the BSF using bamboo and barbed-wires of their own whims. At present, no-one resides in this area. The gates 8,9,10 remains completely closed, while the gate numbers 7 and 11, are opened sometimes.

The BSF had closed all these gates from 22.3.2022 till 25.3.2022 due to which, the farmers faced a lot of problems. The BSF have imposed restrictions on jute cultivation. If any farmer still sows jute against the will of the BSF, then the BSF brutally tortures them. They are also being restricted to go to their own fields. As a result of this, the farmers have been forced to cultivate 'Boro' paddy crops. Although it is not a profitable crop, they are not left with any other option. As the gates were closed for few days, the villagers couldn't water the 'Boro' crops; hence the crops were affected and they incurred heavy losses due to this.

Since 3 among 5 gates fencing in this village are permanently closed by the BSF, the farmers face huge issues in going to their agricultural lands, which is located outside the border fencing. Furthermore, they also face issues while transporting the harvest back to their home or the market area for selling them.

Name	Father's Name	Address
Ramesh Mondal	Neel Kamal	Dakshin Para
Surel Mondal	Subhacharan Mondal	Dakshin Para
Prabhash Mondal	Neel Kamal	Dakshin Para
Ranjan Mondal	Neel Kamal	Uttar Para
Niranjan Ray	Bijoy	Uttar Para
Palashendu Ray	Niranjan Ray	Uttar Para

Following are few names of the villagers who have suffered acute loss due to the restrictions of the BSF:

The villagers have lodged a mass petition to the Block Development Officer of the Bongaon block on 23.03.22. Following the petition, on 24.3.2022 the Joint BDO of Bongaon visited the village and spoke to the farmers. The farmers complained about how the BSF are reluctant to open the gates and they ask these villagers to perform certain chores for them and only then they are allowed to go to their fields through the fencing gates. Furthermore, the BSF forces the farmers to cut off the

plants and bamboos that they had earlier planted. If they don't do so then the BSF would not allow them to go to their fields. However, despite that no positive resolution was sought by the Joint BDO of Bongaon.

Their woes have been featured multiple times in the leading newspapers of West Bengal. This whimsical actions and arbitrary restriction imposed by the Border Security Force personnel of 107 Battalion, Ramchandra Border Outpost upon the villagers of Choruigachi is not only challenging their life and livelihood but also violating the Article 21 and Article 19 of the Constitution of India which reads as "No person shall be deprived of his life and liberty except according to procedure established by law" and "All citizens shall have the rights to move freely throughout the territory of India" respectively and Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the goal number 8 and 16 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which Government of India has taken pledge to adhere with.

We request your urgent intervention in this matter by fulfilling these demands of the villagers:

• The BSF should be posted at the zero point outside the villages through IBP

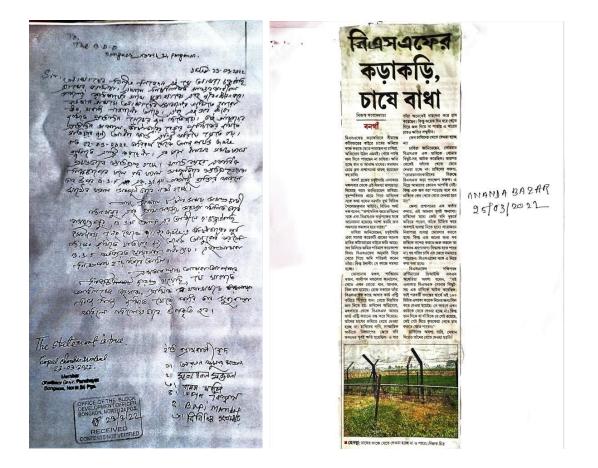
 \cdot Farmers should be allowed to go to their fields across the barbed wire fences from morning to evening and peacefully continue with their work without any obstruction

· Immediate action should be taken against the guilty BSF who are responsible for harassing and imposing restrictions on the villagers' livelihood

- · The villagers should be compensated for the loss that they incurred due to the illegal restriction of the BSF
- The farmers should be provided with agricultural support
- There should be no restriction on the cultivation of certain profitable crops.

Yours faithfully

Kirity Roy Secretary, MASUM & National Convener, PACTI





Bartaman 25[3/2022