

Rape of a Hindu woman in Lalmonirhat - Post Elections

ASK Investigation Report

Date of the Incident	7 January 2014
Place of the Incident	Village: Dharairkhata, Thanka: Sadar, District: Lalmonirhat
Date of the Investigation	19 January 2014
Investigation Team	Abu Ahmed Foijul Kabir and Md. Mahbub Alam

Brief Description of the Incident

Aroti Rani, a 35-year-old housewife of Dharairkhata village under Lalmonirhat sadar upazila was raped by three men of the same village on 7 January 2014, two days after the 10th parliamentary election which was boycotted by the BNP-led 18 party alliance.

ASK Investigation came to know that Shamsul, a known local resident and BNP Activist ordered the local Hindus (not to cast their votes in the election. There were only two hindu families in the village, which consisted of approximately 65 families.

Aroti Rani went outside her house on the day of the elections to see whether the elections were continuing. When returning home, Shamsul asked her if she casted her vote in the election. She told Shamsul that she did not cast her vote; she just went outside to see the election. Shamsul asked her to return her house immediately.

On 7 January evening, Shamsul picked up Aroti on her way home from a shop, took her to the bank of the Ratnai river nearby and raped her there with two others local residents - Abenur and Amin. They also beat her. She was forced to make promise to send her 14-year-old daughter to them in the next evening. They threatened her not to disclose this with anyone.

Role of the Local Leaders and Law Enforcing Agencies

After returning home, she informed about the incident to her relatives as well as local political representative. The local member informed the Union Parishad chairman but the chairman advised her to take legal support as it is not under his jurisdiction.

With the support from her neighbor, Aroti went to Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station and filed a case. After a few days she was informed one of the three rapists had been arrested by the police.

Aroti was called to the police station to speak to an officer.

When she arrived at the police station, two of the unarrested perpetrators, Shamsul and Amin were present with local matobbers (village elders in decision making capacity). To her surprise, the OC (officer-in-charge) forced her to sign a settlement bond. The OC threatened Aroti that she would be arrested if she did not sign the paper.

The culprits were present at the police station at that time and were not arrested.

Aroti and her family members are living in an insecure environment. She has sent her daughters to their grandfather's house.

ASK Action

ASK filed a writ petition on this case.

After hearing the petition, on 3 March 2014, the High Court ordered the government to immediately provide security to the woman and her family.

It asked the inspector general of police and the superintendent of Lalmonihat police to investigate the incident and to submit a report in compliance to the order before the court by April 6.

The HC also issued a rule upon the officials to explain in two weeks why they should not be directed to take appropriate legal actions against the culprits.