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<http://www.rsf.org/bangladesh-special-unit-interrogates-six-year-16-11-2012,43685.html>

Asia - Bangladesh

Trauma repeated

Special unit "interrogates" six-year-old son of murdered journalists

16 November 2012

Reporters Without Borders deplores the lack of progress in the investigation into the murders of husband-and-wife TV journalists **Sagar Sarowar** and **Meherun Runi** in their Dhaka apartment on 11 February.

It also deplores the fact that the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), the special crime unit handling the investigation since April, has concentrated for the past few weeks on interrogating their six-year-old son, Megh, who was in the apartment at the time and discovered their bodies.

Reporters Without Borders calls for an immediate end to these interrogations by Bangladesh's most violent police unit, which are being seen by the family as an additional punishment.

"Repeatedly interrogating a six-year-old child who is already traumatized by his parents' murder is an illegal and inhuman act that defies all rational logic," Reporters Without Borders said.

"We urge home minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir to intervene and stop this aberration without delay. The Rapid Action Battalion should not even be in charge of the case. A special commission of enquiry should have been set up right from the outset."

Addressing Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed, Reporters Without Borders added: "You rightly said that the government cannot mount a guard outside every bedroom but you have a duty to protect your citizens and, above all, to end the almost systematic impunity enjoyed by those responsible for crimes of violence against journalists."

The journalist and blogger Abu Sufian told Reporters Without Borders in an email today: "Using a traumatized kid as an investigating tool at RAB headquarter has astonished the entire nation. His being quizzed in front of TV cameras by RAB personnel dressed in black and used as a tool for investigating the brutal killings is a gross violation of the rights of the child."

Sufian added: "According to family members, Megh is already a traumatized kid. This nonsensical and unprecedented process is just making him relive the nightmare again and again, leading him into a more deeply traumatized and complicated mental state."

The interrogations of Megh began on 31 October when, according to his uncle, he was questioned for nearly three hours at RAB headquarters in the northern suburb of Uttara without being able to answer any of the questions. Megh's doctors have warned the authorities that these repeated interrogation sessions could cause him psychological and physical harm.

The RAB's spokesman refuses to describe these sessions as "interrogations," arguing that Megh had already been to RAB headquarters and that his uncle was present on 31 October. His uncle nonetheless said Megh was disturbed by the questions and expressed anger several times while at RAB headquarters.

Stalled investigation

When Sarowar, *Maasranga Television's* news editor, and Runi, the senior reporter for *ATN Bangla*, were murdered on the night of 11 February, the then home minister Shahara Khatun said the killers would be captured within 48 hours but they still at large nine months later.

In the immediate aftermath of the double murder, the country's journalists [staged demonstrations](#) to demand the arrest of those responsible. Since then, they have steadily lost confidence in the ability of the authorities to conduct an effective investigation and continue to express their discontent.

New home minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir's announcement of the arrest of seven suspects on 9 October was greeted with disbelief from the media and the victims' families, who think the arrests were just a diversion designed to protect the real killer.

Journalists also criticized the fact that the RAB sent DNA samples found at the murder scene to a US laboratory on 12 June and 17 July because the Bangladeshi police have no DNA database to search for matches to the samples.

The threats to journalists are becoming more and more alarming in Bangladesh, which is ranked 129th out of 179 countries in the [2011-2012 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).
