
Memorial Day of Korunamoyee Sardar

Every November 7th, the Korunamoyee Memorial Day takes place in Harinkhola. Korunamoyee Sardar has become a symbol of the struggle for land rights and against shrimp farming among the landless people in Bangladesh. I asked some people to tell me what happened that day, ten years ago.

"On that 7th of November in 1990, a rich man, called Wazed Ali Biswash with some guards landed by boat in Horinkhola in polder 22. He had planned to clear land for shrimp cultivation. It was 10 o'clock in the morning when we heard the news. We organised ourselves and together we went to Horinkhola. When we reached Horinkhola the shrimp owners shot and hurled bombs at our procession. Korunamoyee was hit by a bullet in her head and died immediately. Another 46 of our people were seriously injured and were hospitalised in Khulna or Dhaka. The incident lasted for one hour before Wazed Ali Biswash and his men took all the boats and left. Before leaving, however, they had cut up Korunamoyee's body into pieces and thrown these into the river to clear all the evidence.

We found it hard to reach hospital because Biswash and his men took all the boats; but when we finally reached it, the musclemen had advised the doctors against helping us. After two months all of us were back in polder 22, but some of us still have disabilities as a reminder of that day. Anuaria for example lost her eye.

The case has been taken up in Paikgacha Union Parishad, the district administration office in Khulna and at the government level in Dhaka, but without results. There are yet 45 unsolved cases and Wazed Ali Biswash is still free.

The 7th of November 1991, the shrimp farm owners came to disturb the Memorial Day, but since then they have honoured her in peace. A mosaic monument and a stone have been erected in Korunamoyee's honour in Horinkhola. The script of the stone is: "life is struggle, struggle is life."

The 7 of November this year I will participate to show my respect for the landless people in Bangladesh who suffer from the violence caused by the land conflicts and the shrimp farms. We at Nijera Kori would appreciate if all of you in your own way give this strong woman a thought on this memorial day, so that international support can be felt within Bangladesh.

(Note: The landless people have built a beautiful mosaic monument in Horinkhola in respectful memory of Korunamoyee. This is really a monument to all the countless victims for their continuing struggle against the greed and the violence which has too often been a tragic associate of the shrimp aquaculture industry.)