

Captions :

THE WALL AND THE FEAR

India – Bangladesh

Photographic essay by

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Photo 01 - Bangladesh, Dinajpur.

The small city of Dinajpur is one of the border landports between India and Bangladesh. The city is divided by a six meters high concrete wall. Both Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) and Bangladesh Guards Border (BGB) are watching over the wall. Many Indians and Bangladeshis take the risk to pass over the wall with Indian goods (clothes, toys, medicines, sun glasses, spices...) and to sale them in Bangladesh. A train line goes along the border for a few kms and stops at Dinajpur station. Many women travel here to buy indian goods and will then sale it in villages and cities a little further from the border.



Photo 02 - India, West Bengal Province, Hili.

The border town of Hili is highly guarded by the Indian Border security Force (BSF) because it's an official point of passage for the trucks. Bangladeshi women carrying bags full of goods are walking along the border wall that runs along the city. They just bought Indian goods (spices, jewels, make-up...) that they will sell in Bangladesh. They prefer to travel as a group in order to escape easier if a BSF soldier is coming.



Photo 03 - India, West Bengal Province, Hilli.

The border town of Hilli is highly guarded by the Indian Border security Force (BSF) because it's an official point of passage for the trucks. A soldier of the BSF is watching over the border. Through holes in the wall, he is looking to see if Bangladeshi people are trying to cross illegally.



Photo 04 - India, West Bengal Province, Hilli.

A boy is working as a delivery-boy for Bangladeshi shopkeepers. For a few euros a day, these kids walk long distances to supply their employer with goods. But since the soldiers of the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) are guarding the border, this is very risky.



Photo 05 - India, West Bengal Province

A soldier of the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) questions a taxi driver on his passengers. The border guards are tracking down Bangladeshi people who try to enter India illegally.



Photo 06 - India, West Bengal Province.

In the region of Balurghat, a woman and her two children are visiting relatives who lives in a village located close to the border.



Photo 07 - India, West Bengal Province.

In the backyard of a hut near the border fence, in the Krishnaganj Region. A young girl is doing her grandmother's hairs. Because the village is next to the border, Indian Border Security Force soldiers accuse the inhabitants to help Bangladeshi people to cross illegally the border. This family lived here before the fence was built...



Photo 08 - Bangladesh, Sathkira region, Roshia.

Habibur Rahman, 23, lives in Roshia village, in Sathkira region. He used to sell plastic toys in the street of Sathkira but didn't get enough money from this job. He then decided to try cow smuggling. A group of smugglers took him one night to see how he can manage such a dangerous trip. The Indian Border Security Force brought him to the BSF compound and on the next day, tortured him. He was undressed, beaten with a wood stick until he lost conscious. One of the BSF soldier shot a video and posted it on youtube and has been broadcasted by many Bangladesh TV channels. Seven BSF soldiers were momentarily suspended and then transferred to another border area. Today, Habibur is sometimes going for fishing with his father but can't do any kind of tiring job. He refuses to go back to Sathkira city to work in the market or in the streets because of the video. "I was naked and humiliated, tortured...I can't assume that, BSF has broken my life. I know I will never get married because of them. No one Father will allow his daughter to be married with me now, and even, how could I afford the minimum as I can't work anymore".



Photo 09 - Bangladesh, Boalia.

Folilatunnesa lives in the village of Boalia and is the mother of Ajharul, killed by the Indian Border Security Force. Her son died but she was never told what had happened exactly. Some villagers found him in a rice field close to the barbwire fence with two bullets in his body: one in his right arm and another one in the chest. She then supposed he was first wounded and then shot dead. In this village, three different families have lost a relative, all killed by the BSF...



Photo 10 - Bangladesh.

Nour Islan, 45, father of Fellani, 14, who was shot on the border wall, is showing and describing some pictures taken the day after his daughter was killed. Fellani was carried like an animal by the Indian Border Security Force to their compound. The story goes as follow : 20 years ago Nour Islan moved with his wife to the Indian State of Assam. Their three children were born there. When their daughter, Fellani, turned 14, they settled a wedding with a young man who used to live in their home village in Bangladesh. Fellani and her father had to cross the border to meet the man and arrange the wedding ceremony. One night, as they were crossing over the double barbed wire fence with a ladder, Fellani was shot and fell her legs and clothes getting caught on the fence. The Indian Border Security Force soldiers ordered Nour not to move, neither to escape or to help his wounded daughter. Fellani was screaming and crying. They forced him to look at his daughter die. It lasted 20 minutes. A journalist got the news that something happened. He took some pictures with no permission and those pictures were published in India and in Bangladesh. That "Fellani's case" forced the Bangladesh Government to ask the Indian government to set up an investigation. Indian soldiers were removed to another region and still work as BSF.



Photo 11 - India, West Bengal Province, Gede.

In the frontier village of Gede, a Bangladeshi couple is returning to Bangladesh while their Indian cousin is saying goodbye.



Photo 12 - Bangladesh.

All of the 700 rivers and affluents in Bangladesh come from India. Many of them define borders, and are divided in the middle between the two countries.

Despite the watch of the Indian Border Security Force over the bordering rivers, many Bangladeshi take their chance to cross them to reach India. In this region, the river level changes continuously because of the heavy rains and severe dry seasons. The erosion is slowly reducing the lands.



Photo 13 - India, West Bengal Province.

A Bangladeshi fisherman enters the Indian part of the Ichamati river, 375 kilometres long. He's scared to be a target for the Indian soldiers of the Border Security Force if he stays in the Bangladeshi part of the river. Since he looks like an Indian from Bengal Region, he could pass as Indian if he gets controlled by the BSF.



Photo 14 - India, West Bengal Province.

Hindu Bangladeshi have settled, with the permission of the Indian authorities, in a village near the city of Balurghat. Bangladeshi people have been emigrating in India since the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. Without any legal status, they have no rights, except the one to work for derisory salary. Poverty is important here.



Photo 15 - India, West Bengal Province.

Most of the workers of the brick factories are Bangladeshi. Their daily wage is around 4€, the double of what they would get in Bangladesh for the same work.



Photo 16 - Bangladesh, Begompur.

A Hindu wedding ceremony takes place in the village of Begompur. The procession is crossing railway tracks that are no longer in use because of the border's wall. The Hindu community constitutes about 8 % of the Bangladeshi population and most of them live in the regions around the border, close to the Indian Hindu nation.



Photo 17 - Bangladesh, Dinajpur.

Rainy Season Celebration Day in Dinajpur bordering city. The city is divided by a 6 meters high concrete wall. The Indian part is named Hili and the Bangladeshi part is called Dinajpur. On this occasion, both authorities have allowed their official delegation to gather and celebrate together. The civil activist groups have done a lot to make it happen, saying that they want to keep this Rainy Season Celebration out of the political issues. The rainy season represents Life, the period of time when Earth gives all to men and when Men have the power of life. But at the last minute, following some suspicions of the Indian Border Security Forces that this Celebration puts their import / export business on hold for the whole day (the only road across the border had to be blocked for the day), it has been cancelled. The Bangladeshi delegation returned to Bangladesh and continued the celebration over there. Dozens of Indian trucks were stuck in Bangladesh because of the celebration. That was the response of the Bangladeshi to the Indian accusations.



Photo 18 - Bangladesh, Dhaka.

This woman and her family come from the border region of Lalmonihhat, where the social tension is quite high. Many villagers are suffering from the repression of the Indian Border Security Force and the Bangladesh Guards Border. They leave their home to come to Dhaka city. Most of them hope to have a better life here. This family is working for a private company that has contracts with the municipality to maintain roads in Old Dhaka neighborhood.



Photo 19 - Bangladesh, Dhaka.

A Madrasah in Greenroad neighborhood, Dhaka, welcomes orphans, poor children and some "volunteers" sent by the parents. Children will stay here a few years and then will join other religious infrastructures. India government considers Bangladesh and some of its religious schools to be a logistic base and a human resource pool for the Islamist groups raging in a very few Muslim regions within the Indian territory.



Photo 20 - Bangladesh, Boalia.

Roksana, 18, lives in Boalia village and is the sister of Moklesur, 17, who was shot by the Indian Border Security Force. He was the only boy on five children and responsible of them because the father died a long time ago and her mother can't manage five children on her own. Moklesur used to import Indian spices to Bangladesh and put them on sale in another village's market. He was the only one who was killed when the Indian Border Security Force landed and shot them. Roksana just came back to her home village to live with her mother and one sister because her husband was too violent. She is from a poor family and already has a child, it is going to be difficult for her to be remarried. Only in this village, three different families have lost one relative, all killed by the BSF.