



INDIA/BANGLADESH

# “Trigger Happy”

Excessive Use of Force by Indian Troops  
at the Bangladesh Border

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## “Trigger Happy”

### Excessive Use of Force by Indian Troops at the Bangladesh Border

Over the past decade, hundreds of Bangladeshi and Indian nationals have been killed by India’s Border Security Force (BSF), but despite numerous complaints no member of the BSF has been arrested, much less held to account in civilian courts.

The porous 2,000 kilometer border between the Indian state of West Bengal and Bangladesh is densely populated by farmers and landless peasants. Poor irrigation and continuous river erosion has destroyed farms and livelihoods and entrenched poverty. As a result, smuggling of cattle, narcotics, and human trafficking is on the rise.

Both Bangladesh and India have deployed border guards to prevent these activities. Abuses by the BSF and the Bangladeshi border force, the Bangladesh Rifles, are common. However, the BSF is more regularly responsible for serious violations of international law, including torture and the indiscriminate use of lethal force.

*“Trigger Happy”*: *Excessive Use of Force by Indian Troops at the Bangladesh Border* is based on interviews with over 100 victims, witnesses, human rights defenders, journalists, law enforcement officials, and BSF and BDR members. In addition to impunity for killings, there are frequent and uninvestigated allegations of torture, intimidation and verbal abuse of civilians living near or crossing the border.

The Indian government should immediately revoke shoot on sight orders in the border areas and take strong steps to end legally sanctioned immunity for perpetrators of human rights violations. Police should be instructed to register all complaints against the BSF, and amendments should be made to the Human Rights Protection Act to allow national and state human rights commissions to independently investigate allegations of abuse by the BSF.

The Bangladesh government should vigorously protect the right to life of its citizens, including those who may be involved in illegal trade, and call upon the Indian government to exercise restraint.

*A Border Security Force (BSF) soldier at the Indian-made fence near the Indo-Bangladesh border in West Bengal, November 2006. There have been numerous allegations against the BSF of killings, beatings, and ill-treatment of border residents.*

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