



Victim's Letter on the Occasion of the International Day of the Disappeared 2025

Letter by Anisha Islam Insha, Daughter of disappeared

Come Back, Father — The Story of an Unfinished Wait



Ismail Hossain Baten

June 19, 2019 began like any other day. The afternoon sun was softening, the streets still warm. Our father, Ismail Hossain Baten, stepped out from his workplace to go home for lunch—something he did every day. But that day was different.

He set out for home... but never returned. His lunch remained untouched. His phone went dead.

And a figure in black took our father away from us.

Since then, our lives have been trapped in a long, unending night—a night whose morning has yet to arrive.



My mother, Nasrin Jahan Smriti, at first thought perhaps he had some work that delayed him. But as the hours passed, worry grew heavier. She searched everywhere, filed a police report, and pleaded for help from friends, strangers, and authorities alike. Every time, the answers were the same—silence, neglect, and evasion. The law offered us nothing.

Now my mother struggles to keep the household running on the small income she earns from tutoring. Day by day, the weight of worry is making her sick.

My little brother, Inam, was just one year and six months old when he began waiting for the mangoes Father had promised to bring him. That wait has never ended. He is growing up in the hollow emptiness of a fatherless childhood. When he sees other children walking hand in hand with their fathers, he just stares—silent, unblinking. I can only watch his helpless face, powerless to change it.

For three months after Father's disappearance, Inam refused to sleep. He believed that if we slept, Father might come home, but no one would be awake to open the door for him. He thought that was why Father couldn't come inside. My brother is no longer like other children his age—mentally or emotionally.



Inam holding her father's photo

My name is Anisha Islam Insha. I was just 13 when my father was taken from us—when he became a victim of enforced disappearance. Now, I've learned to smile while hiding my tears—because I must care for my mother and brother. I will keep fighting until my last breath, until I know what happened to my father.



We have received nothing of what Father left behind—not a single property document, not a penny from his bank account. Each day, our mental, physical, and financial burdens grow heavier.

I watch my mother fight an endless war—managing the household alone, working, searching for Father, joining human chains, standing at the press club, visiting ministries, law enforcement agencies, and even international organizations. There is no place left where we haven't gone in search of him. Yet, from that day in June 2019 until

today, we have no news.

Only waiting remains—for a glimpse of his face, the sound of his voice, the warmth of his embrace. My mother still waits for the salwar kameez he promised to bring her. My brother still waits for the mangoes. Perhaps we will wait until our last breath. My mother will wait for her life partner for the rest of her life.

Year after year, this uncertainty consumes us—mental anguish, financial hardship, social pressure. Yet we have not given up. We want the truth to come out. We want justice. We want our father back—or at least to know the truth of what happened to him.



Our Demands to the Government

1. Independent and Transparent Investigation — Conduct an impartial inquiry into Father's disappearance and bring those responsible to justice.
2. Access to Property and Funds — Issue certificates so families of the disappeared can access their rightful property and bank accounts.
3. International Cooperation — Work fully with the UN Working Group.
4. Family Protection — Provide financial and psychological support to affected families.
5. Truth and Accountability — If Father is alive, return him immediately; if not, tell us the truth about his death or whereabouts.

The word “*disappearance*” is small, but its pain lasts lifetimes. My mother still does not know if she is a wife or a widow. We still do not know if our father is alive or dead. Every day, our hearts bleed. Even one year after Bangladesh's return to democracy, we have not been able to walk holding Father's hand.

No one else in this world should suffer this cruelty. No one should vanish without a trace. No one should be left in the agony of not knowing if their loved one is alive or dead.

This is not only our family's fight—it is a fight for the safety, dignity, and human rights of every citizen. We will not give up. We cannot give up.

As long as there is no news of Ismail Hossain Baten, this fight will continue—for Father, for justice, and for the future generations of this country.

Written by Anisha Islam Insha, Daughter of Ismail Hossain Baten
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