

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: ASA 13/015/2004 (Public)  
News Service No: 211  
24 August 2004

### **Bangladesh: Government must stem growing tide of violence**

Amnesty International is seriously concerned about the safety and security of people who are taking part in demonstrations in Bangladesh this week.

The demonstrations have been called by the Awami League to protest against bomb attacks on their leadership last Saturday, which left at least 19 people dead and some 300 wounded. Following the attacks, police used excessive force against party activists at the scene.

"The Government has a clear responsibility to ensure that people attending these demonstrations are protected. A thorough and impartial investigation must also be carried out into Saturday's bomb attacks including an examination of why police personnel resorted to beating party activists at the scene of the grenade attacks, and why police officers reportedly refused to register a complaint against the attacks by survivors," Amnesty International said.

The Government has already ordered a one-person judicial inquiry but the terms of reference of the inquiry and its scope have not been made public. It has not been announced if the outcome of the inquiry will be made public and what steps will be taken against those identified as perpetrators of the attack.

"The inquiry should investigate all aspects of the incident and identify both the perpetrators of the attacks, as well as government authorities whose negligence led to a failure to provide adequate security to the opposition rally and adequate medical support to the wounded," Amnesty International said.

The organisation believes the inquiry should be extended to the investigation of previous bomb blasts to establish any pattern to the attacks, the type and make of explosive material used and its origin.

The bomb attacks have come at a time when Bangladesh is facing a number of other serious challenges to the promotion and protection of human rights.

The government's failure to prevent religious groups or criminal gangs from attacking human rights defenders or members of minority communities has only added to a heightened sense of insecurity.

Amnesty International is urging the Government of Bangladesh to ensure the safety and security of the following people it believes to be at risk of immanent attack:

Family members of the human rights defender Dr Humayun Azad, who died suddenly on 12 August

whilst visiting Germany, have been threatened with death if they go to the airport to receive his body on 27 August.

The editors and journalists at the largest Bangla daily, Prothom Alo, who have been threatened with attacks by an Islamist group for publishing investigative reports about the activities of a number of madrasas (religious schools) in rural areas.

Members of the Ahmadiyya religious community, who have been the target of a hate campaign by Islamist groups in recent months and whose headquarters has been threatened with attack on 27 August.

Amnesty International appeals to all political parties in Bangladesh to use their influence with their members and supporters to ensure that they do not take the law into their own hands and engage in mob violence.

Public Document

\*\*\*\*\*

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>