

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 13/013/2004

UA 231/04 Fear for safety/Death threat

26 July 2004

BANGLADESH Dr Humayun Azad (m), writer and lecturer  
Anannyo Azad (m) aged 16  
Other family members

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of writer and lecturer Dr Humayun Azad, his 16 year-old son Anannyo Azad and other members of their family. This follows an attack against Dr Humayun Azad in February 2004, the abduction of his son on 24 July and a series of death threats against the family.

Anannyo Azad was abducted by three unknown men at about 4:15pm on 24 July in a street near his home in the capital Dhaka. He was forced into a nearby alley and, according to a press report in the *Daily Star* newspaper was questioned about his father's movements: "They asked me about my father's next visit abroad but I refused to tell them anything. They got furious and one of them slapped me and broke my glasses, saying they would not release me unless I tell them everything about the visit." After about two hours he managed to escape by jumping over a wall.

The next day an anonymous telephone call was made to the family home. Dr Humayun Azad was told: "There is a bomb blasting right now, run away, run away". Concern for the safety of the family is heightened by an earlier attack on Dr Humayun Azad. On 27 February, unknown individuals stabbed him three times causing serious injuries for which he needed extensive medical treatment in Bangladesh and Bangkok. Dr Humayun Azad returned to Dhaka in early May and his health is reportedly improving. Police officers have been guarding his home since the attack, but have yet to identify his attackers or those threatening the family.

Dr Humayun Azad and his family have been threatened since the publication of his book "*Pak Sar Zamin Saad Baad*", (the first line of the Pakistani national anthem). The book is based on religious groups in Bangladesh who collaborated with the Pakistani army during the 1971 independence war. Islamist groups reportedly took exception to comments made in the book which they felt were allegorical and derogatory references to their own activities. They began to agitate against the publication of the book and lobbied, unsuccessfully, for the introduction of a blasphemy law to ban such publications. (See Public Statement, AI Index: ASA 13/002/2004, News Service number 052, 4 March 2004.) On 25 July, Dr Humayun Azad read a newspaper report in which an Islamic leader and member of parliament reportedly told a public meeting that he faced "dire consequences" for his writing.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:**

- expressing serious concern about the safety of Anannyo Azad, his father Dr Humayun Azad and the rest of their family;
- urging the authorities to provide adequate and effective protection to all members of the family;
- urging the authorities to carry out an independent and impartial investigation of the abduction of Anannyo Azad, the death threats made against the family and the 27 February attack against Dr Humayun Azad;
- urging the authorities to bring those involved in the abduction, the attack and death threats to justice;
- urging the authorities to prevent attacks and deaths threats against individuals engaged in the peaceful expression of their views in Bangladesh;

**APPEALS TO: (Faxes may be switched off outside office hours, five hours ahead of GMT)**

Prime Minister

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia

Office of the Prime Minister

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Dhaka, Bangladesh

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**Salutation:** Dear Prime Minister

State Minister for Home Affairs

Md. Lutfuzzaman Babar

State Minister for Home Affairs

Ministry of Home Affairs

Bangladesh Secretariat

Building 4

Dhaka, Bangladesh

**Fax:** + 880 2 8619667

**Salutation:** Dear Minister of State

**COPIES TO:** diplomatic representatives of Bangladesh accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 September 2004.