

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **Death sentences, prisoners of conscience and clamp down on freedom of expression – Bangladesh must take action to increase respect for human rights**

### ***Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Bangladesh***

In the course of its Universal Periodic Review, Bangladesh has accepted recommendations to ensure that human rights defenders are protected and allowed to conduct their work without hindrance, intimidation or harassment.<sup>1</sup> Yet Adilur Rahman Khan, secretary of the non-governmental human rights organisation, *Odhikar*, is currently detained for reporting alleged human rights violations committed by the security forces during opposition protests on 5 and 6 May 2013.

Amnesty International considers Adilur Rahman Khan to be a prisoner of conscience and calls for his immediate and unconditional release.

The organization urges Bangladesh to immediately commute all death sentences, including that of Abdul Quader Mollah, a senior member of Jamaat-e-Islami who was initially sentenced to life imprisonment for crimes committed during Bangladesh's 1971 independence war. The Supreme Court then increased his sentence to death following an appeal by the government

This is the first known case of a prisoner sentenced to death directly by the highest court in Bangladesh. It is also the first known death sentence in Bangladesh with no right of appeal.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned that at least four bloggers, Subrata Adhikari Shuvo, Mashiur Rahman Biplob, Russel Parvez and Asif Mohiuddin, have been charged under Section 57 of the Information and Communications Technology Act and face up to 10 years' imprisonment. The broad limitations on the right to freedom of expression contained in Section 57 are incompatible with Bangladesh's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

During the review, Bangladesh accepted a recommendation to ensure freedom of expression and a safe enabling environment for social media.<sup>2</sup> The organization calls on the government to drop all charges against the bloggers which breach Bangladesh's human rights obligations, and to protect their right to freedom of expression.

### **Background**

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Bangladesh on 20 September 2013 during its 24<sup>th</sup> session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above.

Amnesty International had earlier submitted information on the situation of human rights in Bangladesh: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA13/002/2013/en/518ef946-99b8-4c19-b6ff-6f2478343079/asa130022013en.pdf>

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/24/12, recommendations 129.103-104 (Canada and Norway). Both enjoy the support of Bangladesh.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, recommendation 129.101 (Norway)