

PUBLIC

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02 December 2003

UA 352/03 Fear of torture or ill-treatment /Denial of medical treatment

**BANGLADESH Nuruzzaman (m), businessman**

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Nuruzzaman is currently being held without any formal charges in Moulvi Bazar prison in northern Bangladesh. On 20 November, he was allegedly tortured while held in Sri Mangal Thana police station in the town of Moulvi Bazar, and was denied the urgent medical treatment he needed for several hours. He is at risk of being returned to police custody, where he could face further torture or ill-treatment.

Nuruzzaman, a businessman, was arrested by police in the early hours of 18 November and taken to Sri Mangal police station. Several weeks earlier, he had given a press conference in which he accused a local Member of Parliament (MP) of extortion. Nuruzzaman alleged that three government road construction contracts previously awarded to his company had been cancelled because he refused to pay a bribe to the MP. Following the press conference, his fourth contract was also cancelled and the MP whom he accused of extortion filed a criminal defamation case against him. Nuruzzaman's lawyers went to the High Court and obtained his release on bail. In an apparent move to ensure his arrest, members of the MP's party filed two complaints against him in another city, Sylhet. Nuruzzaman and his lawyers were unaware of these charges, which led to his arrest.

At about 10pm on 20 November, he was reportedly beaten severely in his cell in police custody by two civilians in the presence of the police, leaving him badly injured. According to reports, the two assailants were close associates of the accused MP. At around midnight, Nuruzzaman's condition reportedly deteriorated and police took him to Osmania hospital in Sylhet. However, doctors in the hospital were allegedly told by political activists from the MP's party not to admit Nuruzzaman, who as a result was forced to wait outside the hospital entrance. When his condition became critical at about 3am, he was finally admitted to hospital and received treatment for his injuries. He was later released from hospital, although his current state of health is unknown.

Nuruzzaman is currently in custody in Moulvi Bazar prison, where he is not thought to be at risk of torture or ill-treatment. However, in an apparent attempt to ensure he remains in detention, supporters of the accused MP have so far filed five complaints against him. His lawyers have obtained bail on all but the most recent of these complaints. If Nuruzzaman does not manage to obtain bail in this case, he may be returned to police detention at any time, where he would be in grave danger of further torture or ill-treatment in reprisal for his claims against the MP.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Nuruzzaman, who is currently held Moulvi Bazar prison and who has reportedly been tortured while in police detention;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee that Nuruzzaman is not subjected to further torture or ill-treatment, and is treated humanely in detention;
- calling for an impartial investigation into both the allegations of torture and allegations that Nuruzzaman was denied the urgent medical treatment he needed for three hours; for the results to be made public and for anyone found to be responsible brought to justice without delay;
- calling on the authorities to respect the court orders for Nuruzzaman's release and to ensure that any further criminal proceedings are in line with international human rights standards including the right to fair trial;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that no action is taken against Nuruzzaman that amounts to a violation of his right to freedom of expression.

**APPEALS TO:**

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Gona Bhaban  
Sher-e Bangla Nagar  
Dhaka  
Bangladesh

**Telegrams:** Prime Minister Zia, Dhaka, Bangladesh  
**Fax:** + 880 2 811 3244/ 3243/ 1015 / 1490  
**Email:** pm@pmobd.org / psecretary@pmobd.org  
**Salutation:** Dear Prime Minister

Mr Altaf Hossain Chowdhury  
Minister of Home Affairs  
Ministry of Home Affairs  
Bangladesh Secretariat  
Building 4  
Dhaka  
Bangladesh

**Telegrams:** Minister of Home Affairs Chowdhury, Dhaka, Bangladesh  
**Fax:** + 880 2 861 9667  
**Salutation:** Dear Home Minister

**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 13 January 2004.