

**BANGLADESH**

**Saber Hossain Chowdhury (m)] Opposition politicians  
Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim (m)]**

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the two Bangladeshi opposition politicians named above. They are currently held in police custody and are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

On 20 October, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Political Secretary to the leader Sheikh Hasina of the opposition Awami League, was detained at Dhaka airport as he and his wife were boarding a flight to London. Their luggage including three suitcases, a handbag and a laptop were confiscated by the army. The next day, at about 3am, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Member of Parliament and former Health Minister, was arrested by the army at his residence in Dhaka.

Both men were reportedly arrested under section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. This allows the police to detain people without a warrant for arrest. Previous detainees have frequently been tortured while in custody.

The men were held incommunicado in an undisclosed location until the evening of 21 October when they were produced before a court in Dhaka, as a result of efforts by a group of lawyers. They were then sent to police custody for further interrogation and have not since been allowed to see a lawyer or their families.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

On 17 October, the Bangladeshi army was called out in response to recent international and domestic criticism of the level of crime in the country. As part of a crackdown on law and order codenamed AOperation Clean Heart@, approximately 2000 people were arrested. Some have since been released, though several hundred are thought to remain in detention. There have been reports of detainees being tortured and five people, including members of the ruling and opposition parties, are alleged to have died in army custody.

Under AOperation Clean Heart@, people from all political parties, including the ruling party have been arrested. There are however concerns that the government may have detained opposition activists for political reasons. Many Awami League leaders have been targeted, their homes reportedly searched and documents confiscated. Some leaders have gone into hiding fearing arrest and torture.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim;
- seeking guarantees that they will not be subjected to torture or ill-treatment;
- urging the authorities to ensure that they have access to lawyers, family members and adequate medical attention;
- calling on the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally, if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- acknowledging that the government of Bangladesh needs to take urgent steps to improve the law and order situation in the country, but stressing that this must be done within the law and with the upmost respect for human rights;

-expressing serious concerns at the widespread reports of torture and the five deaths in custody since the beginning of AOperation Clean Heart@ which began on 17 October.

**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 3243**

**Email:pm@pmobd.org or 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**

Mr Muddabir Hossain Chowdhury  
Inspector General of Police  
Police Headquarters  
Fulbaria  
Dhaka  
Bangladesh

**Telegrams: Inspector General Chowdhury, Fulbaria, Dhaka, Bangladesh**

**Fax:+ 880 2 956 3362**

**Salutation:Dear Sir**

Lieutenant General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury  
Chief of Army Staff  
Army Headquarters  
Dhaka  
Bangladesh

**Telegrams:Chief of Army Staff, Dhaka, Bangladesh**

**Salutation: Dear Lieutenant General**

**COPIES TO:** and 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 4 December 2002.