

URGENT ACTION

ESTABLISH WHEREABOUTS OF OPPOSITION POLITICIAN

The whereabouts of a leading Bangladeshi opposition politician have remained unknown since 10 March. According to his wife he was arrested by the Detective Branch of police. The police have denied arresting him and have refused to accept and investigate his wife's complaint.

Salahuddin Ahmed, Joint-Secretary General and spokesperson for the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was reportedly arrested on 10 March at 10.15pm from a flat in Uttara, in the north of Dhaka, the capital. According to the building's security guard on duty at the time, four or five armed men in plain clothes entered the building and when he asked why they had come, they beat him. The men proceeded to the first floor of the three storey building and left 20 minutes later with Salahuddin Ahmed, who was blindfolded. Two other witnesses, who later went into hiding for fear of arrest, have told the family that the men coming to take Salahuddin Ahmed said they were from the Detective Branch of Police.

The next day, Salahuddin Ahmed's wife went to the police in Dhaka to file a complaint, but the police refused to accept it and begin a search for Salahuddin Ahmed. This refusal by the police fits the pattern of almost all cases of enforced disappearance in Bangladesh.

The family has petitioned the High Court to order the authorities to allow access to Salahuddin Ahmed. On 12 March the High Court asked the government to produce him before them on 15 March, or else explain why he could not be produced. The police and governmental security agencies reportedly told the court that they were trying to locate Salahuddin Ahmed and denied that he was taken by any government agency. The court has delayed proceedings until 8 April.

Salahuddin Ahmed's disappearance may be connected to his activities as the spokesperson for the BNP and his statements urging BNP supporters to continue with their activities in opposition to the government.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Expressing concern that Salahuddin Ahmed has been subjected to enforced disappearance, and urging the authorities to establish his fate and whereabouts immediately and inform his family;
- Urging the authorities to carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into his alleged enforced disappearance;
- If he is in custody, urging them to charge him with an internationally recognizable criminal offense and present him immediately before a court or else release him immediately;
- If he is in custody, urging them to ensure that he has immediate access to his family and to any medical attention he may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 APRIL 2015 TO:

Prime Minister
Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister's Office
Old Sangshad Bhaban, Tejgaon
1215 Dhaka, Bangladesh
Fax: +880 2 9133722
Email: info@pmo.gov.bd
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Inspector General of Police
A K M Shahidul Hoque
Police Headquarters
6 Phoenix Road, Fulbaria
1000 Dhaka, Bangladesh
Fax: +880-2-9563362
Email: ig@police.gov.bd
Salutation: Dear Inspector General

And copies to:
State Minister
Ministry of Home Affairs
Bangladesh Secretariat, Building-8 (1st
& 3rd Floor)
Dhaka, Bangladesh
Fax: +880 2 9573711
Email: stateminister@mha.gov.bd

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

ESTABLISH WHEREABOUTS OF OPPOSITION POLITICIAN

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

There has been a disturbing rise in enforced disappearances in Bangladesh over the past two years with the number of disappeared estimated to be more than 40. In some cases, the security forces have targeted opposition members. In some other cases, the enforced disappearances have been linked to allegations of corruption. In almost all cases, the police has failed to carry out prompt and thorough investigations.

The enforced disappearance of Salahuddin Ahmed matches the pattern of dozens of other enforced disappearances in Bangladesh in recent years, where police initially deny having arrested the individuals. In some cases, police have later admitted keeping them in detention, while in other cases, either the victim's body has been discovered or their whereabouts remain unknown.

Bangladesh has been in political turmoil since early January this year as the opposition has declared a transport shutdown and general strikes to force the government to resign and for elections to take place. The latest general elections on 5 January 2014 were boycotted by the opposition BNP and its allies, leaving the ruling Awami League party to win the majority of seats, including more than 150 uncontested.

The transport blockade and general strikes have been accompanied by a series of petrol bomb attacks against passengers travelling in buses and other vehicles, leaving more than 50 people dead from burn injuries since early January 2015, with both the opposition and the government blaming each other for the petrol bomb attacks on members of the public.

Name: Salahuddin Ahmed

Gender m/f: m

UA: 60/15 Index: ASA 13/1208/2015 Issue Date: 17 March 2015