

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED EDITOR ALLEGES TORTURE

Detained Bangladeshi newspaper editor Mahmudur Rahman was hospitalised on 18 April. His lawyers say he was tortured in police custody.

On 18 April, **Mahmudur Rahman** was transferred to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University hospital, after his condition deteriorated following a two day hunger strike. He had been on hunger strike to protest against a ban on the publication of his newspaper and the harassment and detention of some members of its staff. His family say that he has a heart condition. Mahmudur Rahman's lawyers say that he was tortured whilst in police custody and that they have seen signs of torture on his body. If he is returned to police custody, he will be at risk of further torture.

Mahmudur Rahman was arrested at his office on 11 April after the newspaper he works for, *Amar Desh*, published articles that criticised the government and some bloggers whose comments were perceived to be blasphemous. On 12 April he was remanded into police custody for 13 days. On 17 April, after 5 days in police custody, during which time his lawyers say he was tortured, he was produced before a magistrate who ordered that he be transferred from police to jail custody. The following day he was sent to hospital. Mahmudur Rahman has been previously detained and tortured for publishing articles critical of the current Awami League government.

Blogger **Asif Mohiudeen**, arrested on 3 April for allegedly posted blasphemous comments online remains in detention and at risk of torture.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Calling on the Bangladesh authorities to ensure that Mahmudur Rahman is not transferred to any place of detention in which he would be at risk of further torture, and that Asif Mohiudeen is not subjected to torture or any other ill-treatment;
- Calling on the authorities to release Mahmudur Rahman and Asif Mohiudeen or charge them with a recognizably criminal offence and try them promptly in accordance with internationally recognized safeguards;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure that attacks against journalists and bloggers are thoroughly investigated and those responsible brought to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31 MAY 2013 TO:

Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister
Prime Minister's Office
Old Sangsad Bhaban
Tejgaon
Dhaka-1215
Bangladesh
Fax: +880 2 811 3244
Email: pm@pmo.gov.bd;
ps1topm@pmo.gov.bd;
psecy@pmo.gov.bd
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir
Home Minister
Ministry of Home Affairs
H-16, R-25, B-A, Banani
Dhaka-1213
Bangladesh
Fax: +880 2 7164788
Email: mkalamgir@yahoo.com /
minister@mha.gov.bd
Salutation: Dear Home Minister

And copies to:

Inspector General of Police
Mr Hassan Mahmud Khandker
Bangladesh Police HQ
Dhaka-1000
Bangladesh
Fax: +880 2 7125840
Email: ig@police.gov.bd
Salutation: Dear Inspector General

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 95/13. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA13/006/2013/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The arrest of Mahmudur Rahman and Asif Mohiudeen are the latest in a recent crackdown on journalists and bloggers.

Political tension has escalated in Bangladesh including over the trials of those accused of war crimes during Bangladesh's 1971 war of independence. The Shahbag neighbourhood of Dhaka has seen mass protests calling for the maximum punishment, which amounts to the death penalty, for those accused of crimes under international law. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all circumstances.

While the Shahbagh demonstrators have been calling for the harsher sentences for the accused, counter rallies by Islamic parties have been calling for the release of the accused and introduction of more restrictive Islamic policies in the country.

Opposition protesters have clashed with police and ruling party supporters, with scores of people killed including police officers. Some people have died from beatings and other attacks from opposition protesters. Others were believed to have been shot by the police.

On 15 February, blogger Ahmed Rajib Haidar was brutally beaten and stabbed to death in his home in Dhaka. No one is known to have been brought to justice for these attacks.

Mahmudur Rahman was previously detained and tortured in 2010 after publishing articles critical of the current Awami League government. Since December 2012 he has been threatened with prosecution for publishing a Skype conversation between the then chairman of the Bangladeshi court, the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) and a Bangladeshi legal expert. Following the publication of the conversation, the chairman of the court resigned.

Name: Mahmudur Rahman and Asif Mohiudeen

Gender m/f: Both male.

Further information on UA: 95/13 Index: ASA 13/007/2013 Issue Date: 17 April 2013