

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 254/04 (ASA 13/016/2004, 26 August 2004) Fear for safety

BANGLADESH

Ahmadiyya community headquarters

The siege of the Ahmadiyya headquarters by Islamist groups planned for 27 August did not take place, with police protection, local pressure, and swift international action combining to help protect the members of the religious community.

On 25 August, members of the Urgent Action network called on Bangladeshi authorities to take action to protect the Ahmadiyya headquarters in the capital, Dhaka, from an attack by Islamist groups reportedly planned for 27 August.

The threatened siege, in which Islamist groups said they would stop worship and confiscate prayer books, was seen as part of an attempt by these groups to have the government of Bangladesh declare the Ahmadis non-Muslims, in an effort to pave the way toward the introduction of aspects of Islamic law in Bangladesh. In the past year, Amnesty International has documented abuses by anti-Ahmadi groups including the killing of an Ahmadi preacher, the "excommunication" and illegal house arrest of Ahmadi villagers, a ban on Ahmadiyya publications, street processions against Ahmadis and the rising wave of hate speech in public rallies which incite acts of violence against the Ahmadis.

No attacks, however, took place on 27 August. Riot police had been stationed outside the Ahmadiyya headquarters to stop possible violence. A local non-government organization, the South Asian People's Union against Fundamentalism and Communalism (SAPUFC) had also mobilised public opinion against the siege and organised a massive gathering in front of the Ahmadiyya complex.

"The Ahmadiyya community has asked me to pass on to members of the Urgent Action network their thanks for all your hard work, and your quick response to the threat," says Amnesty International's researcher on Bangladesh. "The threats against Ahmadis are continuing, but at least on this occasion, they received sufficient protection."

Thank you for all your appeals. No further action from the Urgent Action network on this case is necessary.