

BANGLADESHBahauddin Nasim (m)
Dr Mohiuddin Alamgir (m)

Two senior members of Bangladesh's main opposition party, the Awami League, have reportedly been severely tortured in police and army custody. They appear to have been arrested on politically motivated grounds. There are strong fears that they may be at risk of further torture. Dr Mohiuddin Alamgir has reportedly been denied medication for his diabetes, without which he may become gravely ill and eventually go into a coma.

Bahauddin Nasim is a private secretary to the leader of the Awami League, Sheikh Hasina. The Awami League was in power from July 1996 until October 2001, when it was defeated by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), under Begum Khaleda Zia.

Bahauddin Nasim was detained at the Dhaka Zia International Airport on 28 February, when he was due to fly on a visit to New York. He was told that he was being detained on suspicion that he had organized an attack against a motorcade rally of opposition leader (now Prime Minister) Begum Khaleda Zia in June 2001. The next day, 1 March, a court remanded him in police custody. His lawyers warned the court that he might be tortured, and the court specifically told the police that he should not be mistreated in custody.

While he was in police and army custody in the capital, Dhaka, Bahauddin Nasim says security forces tied his hands and feet and covered his head with a bag, hung him upside down from what felt like a ceiling fan, and spun him round while beating him severely with glass bottles filled with water on his buttocks, knees, elbows, hips and genitals. He also says he was given electric shocks. He was reportedly tortured for five days, in the joint interrogation cell used by army and police for interrogation.

Following a court order of 1 March, he was allowed visits by his lawyers and family, and he told them how he had been tortured. When he complained that he was in severe pain, the Bangladesh authorities appointed a medical board to examine him. The board delivered a brief note to the Court stating simply that Bahauddin Nassim had "mild ache at dorsal spine". They made no mention of his complaint that he had been tortured, and there are grounds to believe that the medical board may not have recorded or disclosed the details of the alleged torture in this note. His family have asked for Bahauddin Nasim to be allowed to receive medical attention from an independent medical authority, so far without success.

Dr Mohiuddin Alamgir was arrested at Dhaka Zia International Airport on 15 March, for investigation of allegations that he had instigated government officials and employees to join a rally against the then BNP government of Begum Khaleda Zia, in early 1996. The current BNP government has started disciplinary proceedings against more than 180 civil servants who joined the rally.

On 24 March, Dr Alamgir was brought to court following an application on his behalf for the police to produce him before the court. He testified that while he was in police custody three masked men had beaten him with *lathi* (bamboo sticks) and glass bottles filled with water. He said he was beaten severely on his buttocks, feet and other muscular parts of his body, and was not allowed

his medicine for diabetes. He asked the magistrate to record his statement, but the magistrate reportedly simply noted that he had been tortured and did not order an investigation.

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

- expressing concern at reports that Bahauddin Nasim and Dr Mohiuddin Alamgir have been tortured in custody;
- urging the government to ensure that the prisoners' statements that they have been tortured are properly investigated by an independent body;
- urging the authorities to bring to justice any police officers or members of the security forces found to have used torture;
- urging the authorities to allow the prisoners to be examined by an independent and impartial medical body.

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

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 8619667

Salutation: Dear Home Minister

Mr Nurul Huda
Inspector General of Police
Police Headquarters
Fulbaria
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Telegrams: Inspector General Huda, Fulbaria, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Fax: +880 2 956 3362

Salutation: Dear Sir

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 6 May 2002.