

**PUBLIC**

**AI Index: ASA 13/016/2003**

**UA 176/03**

**Fear for safety / Death threats**

**18 June 2003**

**BANGLADESH**

**Tipu Sultan (m), journalist  
Members of his family  
Bakhtiar Islam Munna (m), journalist with the *Daily Ittefaq* newspaper**

---

In January 2001, journalist Tipu Sultan was brutally attacked in his home town of Feni after he published an article criticising a local politician. Tipu Sultan, members of his family and Bakhtiar Islam Munna, who saw the beating, have all been warned that they will be killed if the case against those who carried out the attack is not withdrawn.

In the attack, Tipu Sultan's legs and hands were broken which resulted in him having to undergo numerous operations in order to regain the use of his limbs. This provoked an outcry internationally and in Bangladesh. However for about seven months, the police were reportedly prevented by the local politician involved from registering Tipu Sultan's complaint against the attackers. It was only following the change of government that the police on 17 September 2001 filed a case before a court in Feni against 13 people accused of the attack. Two of the accused are in detention, three have been released on bail, and the rest are absconding.

Preparation for a hearing including notification in the official gazette for absconders to surrender is underway. However, in June 2003, when Tipu Sultan returned to visit his family in Feni, they and Bakhtiar Islam Munna were reportedly threatened by those allegedly responsible for the attack on him. He has since returned to Dhaka where he works for one of the major Bangladeshi daily newspapers.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Despite pledges by authorities to uphold the freedom of the press, journalists are frequently targets of attacks, intimidation and harassment. Dozens of journalists have been assaulted with impunity either by the police when covering demonstrations or by armed gangs affiliated to various political parties. In addition, several journalists have been arrested and accused of a range of politically motivated charges including sedition. They have been taken into custody for weeks or sometimes months and many of them have been tortured or ill-treated whilst being held.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Tipu Sultan and his family who have reportedly received threats from those allegedly responsible for the attack on Tipu Sultan;
- expressing concern that Bakhtiar Islam Munna who is a witness in Tipu Sultan's case may be subjected to intimidation by those allegedly responsible for the attack;
- urging the authorities to immediately take appropriate measures to provide protection to Tipu Sultan, his family, and Bakhtiar Islam Munna;
- calling for the an investigation into the alleged threats to Tipu Sultan, his family, and Bakhtiar Islam Munna, for the results to be made public and those responsible to be brought to justice.

## **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 3244/ 3243/ 1015 / 1490  
**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  
**Salutation:** Dear Home Minister

**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 30 July 2003.