

PUBLIC

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Fear of torture

06 September 2004

BANGLADESH

Rafique al Islam, aged 44, anti-landmines campaigner

Anti-landmines campaigner Rafique al Islam was arrested on 21 August in Cox's Bazaar, in the south of the country, and is now in custody in the capital, Dhaka. He is in danger of being tortured during interrogation.

He was arrested without warrant by the Rapid Action Battalion, a force under joint police and army command, and is being held beyond the legal period for arrest without warrant. He was hospitalized after arrest in Cox's Bazaar Jail Hospital for high blood pressure and general poor health. He was transferred to a police and intelligence service interrogation centre, the Joint Interrogation Cell, in Dhaka, on 5 September, where he is at risk of torture. He has not been charged with any offence.

Rafique al Islam is the Bangladesh representative of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, an international coalition of non-governmental organizations. He is also the country director of Nonviolence International, which campaigns to educate people about non-violent action and to reduce the use of violence generally.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Torture is endemic in Bangladesh, at the hands of both the army and the police, and has led to deaths in custody. Methods of torture have included beating with rifle butts, iron rods, bamboo sticks, or bottles filled with hot water; hanging by the hands; rape; "water treatment", in which hose pipes are fixed into each nostril and taps turned on full; the use of pliers to crush fingers, and electric shocks.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Rafique al Islam, now in custody at the Joint Interrogation Cell;
- urging authorities to ensure that he is not subjected to torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment;
- asking them to ensure that Rafique al Islam has access to his family, legal counsel and medical assistance, at all times during his detention;
- calling on the authorities to either charge him with a recognizably criminal offence, or release him immediately and unconditionally.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia
Office of the Prime Minister
Gona Bhaban
Old Sangsad Bhaban, Tejgaon,
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Fax: + 880 2 8113244
+ 880 2 8113243
+ 880 2 9133722

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

State Minister for Home Affairs

Md. Lutfuzzaman Babar
State Minister for Home Affairs
Ministry of Home Affairs
Bangladesh Secretariat
Building 4
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Fax: + 880 2 8619667

Salutation: Dear Minister of State

Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs

Barrister Moudud Ahmed
Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs
Bangladesh Secretariat
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Fax: + 880 2 7168577

Salutation: Dear 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 18 October 2004.