

# URGENT ACTION

## WOMAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER AT SERIOUS RISK

**On 23 October, woman human rights defender Shampa Goswami was threatened by a gang of men in Satkhira town, in Bangladesh's south western Satkhira district, after providing support to a female survivor of gang rape.**

In May, **Shampa Goswami**, a 32-year-old teacher and human rights defender working for Odhikar, a well-known Bangladeshi human rights organisation, learnt of the gang rape of an elderly woman. She visited her in hospital several times to check on her and she also advised the woman to go to the police, but she refused.

Police eventually came to know about the incident and arrested four men accused of gang rape. In September a man who lives in Shampa Goswami's neighbourhood made a threatening phone call to her, saying that since she works for human rights she should intervene to get the men released. He also approached her in person but she told him that there was nothing she could do and ignored all subsequent phone calls from him.

These threats have since escalated. On 23 October, Shampa Goswami and a close family friend were sitting in a local shop when four unknown men approached and harassed them, making suggestive sexual remarks. Shampa Goswami left the shop and was followed by a group of 10-12 men, including the man who had been calling her. The men surrounded her, demanding she go with them. She tried to call the police but the men snatched her phone and took her to the roof of a nearby building, where the family friend had already been taken. They made the two sit together and began taking pictures of them on a cell phone, whilst verbally intimidating them. The men tried to blackmail Shampa Goswami for money, threatening to send the pictures to the press. Eventually, a stranger who had been passing came up to the roof and managed to convince the men to let them go.

Shampa Goswami informed Odhikar of the incident the next morning and on 25 October, she went to Satkhira Police Station to inform the police. Shampa Goswami is scared that the men might attack her again. The police have so far failed to provide adequate protection to her to ensure her safety.

### **Please write immediately in Bangla, English or your own language:**

- Call on the authorities to ensure that Shampa Goswami receives protection from further harassment in strict accordance with her wishes;
- Call on the authorities to ensure that a thorough investigation into the harassment of Shampa Goswami is launched immediately;
- Call on the authorities to ensure that human rights defenders in Bangladesh, including those supporting survivors of sexual violence, are able to conduct their legitimate human rights work without fear of reprisals or harassment.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 DECEMBER 2011 TO:**

Inspector General of Police  
Mr Hassan Mahmood Khandker  
Police Headquarters  
Phoenix Road  
Dhaka 1000  
Bangladesh  
Fax: +88 02 712 5840  
Email: [ig@police.gov.bd](mailto:ig@police.gov.bd)  
Salutation: Dear Inspector General

Satkhira Superintendent of Police  
And Aslam Khan  
Officer in Charge  
Satkhira Police Station  
Email: [spsatkhira@police.gov.bd](mailto:spsatkhira@police.gov.bd)  
Salutation: Dear Superintendent of Police

State Minister for Women and Children's Affairs  
Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury  
Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs  
Bangladesh Secretariat  
Dhaka  
Bangladesh  
Fax: +8802-7162892.  
Email: [sminowca@gmail.com](mailto:sminowca@gmail.com)  
[lamisa@bol-online.com](mailto:lamisa@bol-online.com)  
Salutation: Dear Minister

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Violence against women in Bangladesh is widespread and a growing human rights concern. This includes sexual violence. Incidents of rape are frequently reported in the media but victims rarely go to the police for fear of reprisal. In the absence of adequate support from government authorities and institutions, survivors turn to human rights defenders and NGOs working with women for support. These defenders are themselves frequently at risk of attack and intimidation, often with no support from the authorities.

Name: Shampa Goswami

Gender: F

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