

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 13/004/2008

14 April 2008

UA 96/08

Fear for safety

BANGLADESH

Dr M A Hasan (m), human rights defender

Civil society organization leader Dr M A Hasan has received death threats after his organisation, the War Crimes Fact Finding Committee, published on 3 April a list of people they alleged had committed war crimes during the war of independence that led to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. He and his family are believed to be in serious danger of attack.

The day after the list was published, three young men tried to push their way through his front door, but were stopped by his family and their home security guard. They went away. At around noon the next day, two men went to the hospital where Dr Hasan was working and asked where he was. A man had called twice at about 11am wanting to know where he was, first calling him directly and then calling his assistant.

On 8 April, he received a call from a man who said simply, "We are coming for you".

Dr Hasan thinks the people who made the calls are linked to people named on the list, some of whom were serving in the Pakistani army in 1971, or were members of local militia groups who worked with the Pakistani army and their sympathisers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Bangladesh won independence from Pakistan in a nine-month war that ended in December 1971. None of Bangladesh's governments has ever established an official commission to provide a comprehensive account of the war crimes and crimes against humanity that were committed during the independence war, to determine responsibilities and to make recommendations for redress and reparations for the victims.

Demands have been gathering momentum in Bangladesh to address these war crimes, and a number of organizations and individuals have been collecting information for that purpose, including the list of alleged war criminals published by Dr Hasan's War Crimes Fact Finding Committee.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Dr MA Hasan and his family, who have received death threats and suffered an attempt to break in to their house after the War Crimes Fact Finding Committee published a list of alleged war criminals on 3 April;
- calling on the authorities to order a thorough and independent investigation of the threats and the attempted break-in, make its result public and bring those responsible to justice;
- calling on the authorities to provide Dr M A Hasan and his family with adequate protection, in accordance with their request;
- calling on the authorities to protect others who are engaged in gathering evidence against suspected war criminals.

APPEALS TO:

Equivalent to prime minister, in caretaker government

Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed

Chief Adviser

Office of the Chief Adviser

Bangladesh

Fax: +880 2 8113243

Email: info@pmo.gov.bd

Salutation: Dear Chief Adviser

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 26 May 2008.