

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 13/003/2003

**Further Information on UA 354/02 (ASA 13/019/2002, 9 December 2002)
Possible prisoners of conscience/Fear of torture/Incommunicado detention**

09 January 2003

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| BANGLADESH | Saber Hossain Chowdhury (m) |] |
| | Mukul Bose (m) |] politicians |
| | Sheikh Bazlur Rahman (m) |] |
| | Tofael Ahmed (m) |] |
| | Muntasir Mamun (m) |] journalist |

Released: **Shafi Ahmed (m) - politician**
Shahriar Kabir (m) - journalist

On 6 January 2003, the High Court declared Saber Hossain Chowdhury's illegal and ordered his immediate release. Despite this, he remains in detention and the authorities have implicated him in yet another criminal case. His current whereabouts are unknown and there are concerns for his safety.

The police have obtained a further seven day remand period in which to interrogate Saber Hossain Chowdhury about the new case. It is believed that he may have been transferred to police custody, where detainees are regularly tortured on remand.

Shahriar Kabir and Shafi Ahmed, who were arrested at the same time as Saber Hossain Chowdhury, were released on 7 January after the High Court declared their detentions illegal. Both had earlier been granted bail, but were kept in prison after being issued with one month preventive detention orders under the Special Powers Act.

The High Court ordered the release of Mukul Bose and Muntasir Mamun on 6 and 4 January respectively. However as of 8 December neither had been released as the jail authorities claimed they had not received the correct paperwork from the court. It is believed Sheikh Bazlur Rahman and Tofael Ahmed remain in detention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saber Hossain Chowdhury was arrested at the same time as several other politicians and two journalists in December 2002. These arrests fit a pattern of ongoing politically motivated detentions that serve to remove the government's critics from public life. Amnesty International has serious concerns about the legal processes which all of these detainees have undergone, as the authorities have regularly ignored and undermined High Court rulings. For example, often once the High Court has granted bail in a particular case, the authorities will simply file another case against the detainee preventing the detainees' release. In addition when the High Court has ordered a detainee's immediate release, the prison authorities claim that they have not received the correct paperwork from the court. It can sometimes take several days for the paperwork to reach the prison further delaying release of a detainee, even though the High Court has recently been instructing that this paperwork is sent by special courier. This problem is further exacerbated by the fact that the authorities seem to be making a habit of transferring high profile prisoners such as those named above to jails around the country. This makes it extremely difficult and expensive for families and lawyers to visit the detainees, and can further delay the legal process.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Saber Hossain Chowdhury whose whereabouts are unknown and who is at risk of torture;
- urging the authorities to release Saber Hossain Chowdhury immediately in compliance with the order of the High Court;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that Saber Hossain Chowdhury has full and unrestricted access to lawyers, family visits and medical attention;
- urging the authorities to release Mukul Bose, Muntasir Mamun and any other individuals whose release has been ordered by the High Court immediately;
- urging the authorities to ensure the safety of other opposition politicians and respect their fundamental human rights.

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 / 3244 / 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
Fax: + 880 2 861 9667
Salutation: Dear Home Minister

Mr Muddabir Hossain Chowdhury
Inspector General of Police
Police Headquarters
Fulbaria
Dhaka
Bangladesh

Telegrams: Inspector General Chowdhury, 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 20 February 2003.