

PUBLIC

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Death threats

BANGLADESH

Samaresh Baidya (m), journalist
Zubair Siddiqui (m), journalist
Sumi Khan (f), journalist

The journalists named above had written death threats mailed to their offices between 10 and 12 March, which purported to be from local Islamist groups whose activities they had been reporting on. Amnesty International believes the lives of the three journalists are in danger.

All three are reporters for publications based in the city of Chittagong, in the south of the country. Samaresh Baidya works for the daily newspaper *Bhorerkagoj*; Zubair Siddiqui works for a weekly magazine, *Ajker Surjodoy*; and Sumi Khan writes for the magazine *Shaptahik 2000*. The letter to Sumi Khan told her to immediately retract all the articles that she had written on Islamist groups, and threatened grenade attacks on her home and office if she ever reported on these issues again.

Sumi Khan was stabbed and seriously injured on 27 April 2004 as she was on her way to send a report to her editor. She had written a number of investigative articles about the alleged involvement of local politicians and Islamist groups in attacks on members of minority communities, kidnapping and land-grabbing by landlords. Before the attack she had received several anonymous threatening phone calls, warning her not to "defame" people in her reports, and her attackers apparently yelled at her that she would be killed if she did not stop writing. No one has yet been arrested or charged in connection with the attack. (See UA 164/04, ASA13/006/2004, 4 May 2004).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At least four journalists have been killed in the past year in Bangladesh and dozens have been threatened or seriously injured in violent attacks. These attacks and threats relate directly to the issues that these journalists have been reporting on. No one has been brought to justice for these threats and attacks, and thus many journalists and human rights defenders live in a constant state of intimidation, unable to carry out their work without fear of attack.

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

- calling on the government to launch prompt, independent and impartial investigations into the death threats received by Samaresh Baidya, Zubair Siddiqui and Sumi Khan;
- calling for these reporters and their families to be given full protection by the state;
- calling on the government to publicly condemn these death threats, and to ensure that the state responds seriously to all threats against journalists and human rights defenders.

APPEALS TO: (please note that fax machines may be switched off outside office hours, GMT+6)

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
Email: pm@pmobd.org
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

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

Salutation: Dear Minister of State

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 25 April 2005.