

**PUBLIC**

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**13 September 2005**

**UA 234/05**      **Medical concern**

**BANGLADESH**   **Suresh Chandra Halder (m), former General Secretary of the Association for Village Advancement**

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There are growing concerns for the health of Suresh Chandra Halder, former General Secretary of the Association for Village Advancement, a non-governmental organization promoting socio-economic development and alleviating poverty in Faridpur District, central Bangladesh. He is currently held in Faridpur jail, where he is being denied access to the medical treatment he needs.

Suresh Chandra Halder requires regular medication and medical attention, both for diabetes and for the treatment of an eye condition. He is also reportedly suffering from severe back pain. His family have reportedly tried to bring medicine to the jail to ease his back pain, but the authorities at the jail have refused to accept the medicine. According to his family who visited him recently, his health is deteriorating and he is losing weight.

Suresh Chandra Halder was arrested on 9 August in Faridpur, by police who reportedly did not have a warrant for his arrest. He is currently in Faridpur jail awaiting a bail hearing on charges which are apparently politically motivated. It is alleged that the charges he faces and the denial of his access to medical treatment are part of an ongoing campaign by some members of the Association for Village Advancement with close links to local politicians, to prevent Suresh Chandra Halder tackling corruption within the organization.

Senior officials of non-governmental organizations seeking to remain independent of the ruling parties in Bangladesh are frequently targets for harassment and intimidation. The harassment of Suresh Chandra Halder is allegedly because of his stand against corruption in the Association for Village Advancement. His approach is believed to have infuriated some members of the organization linked to politicians in the coalition government, which comprises four political parties including two Islamic parties. He was removed from his post through an order issued by the Director General of Social Services Department but the High Court, hearing an appeal by Suresh Chandra Halder against his removal from office, found the order for his removal to have been unlawful. His opponents then reportedly filed a series of unsubstantiated complaints against him, his wife and his daughters with the police, implicating them in a variety of criminal activities. Most of these allegations have been dismissed by the court for lack of evidence, but new charges are continually being filed against him. This has effectively allowed his opponents to obtain his continued detention with the aim of breaking his resolve to be actively involved with the organization.

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

- expressing concern about the deteriorating health of Suresh Chandra Halder;
- urging the authorities to grant him immediate access to the regular medical care he needs;
- urging the authorities to ensure that courts dealing with a series of apparently false and politically motivated accusations against him and his family remain independent of any pressures or influences by the politicians of the coalition government.

**APPEALS TO:**

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Gona Bhaban

Old Sangsad Bhaban, Tejgaon,  
Dhaka, Bangladesh

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**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

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

**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 25 October 2005.