



PRESS RELEASE

BANGLADESH: Guarantee personal integrity and release Acting Editor of *Amar Desh*, Mr. Mahmudur Rahman

Geneva-Paris, December 5, 2013 - The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) express their concern following the remand of Mr. Mahmudur Rahman, Acting Editor of the Bangladeshi daily newspaper *Amar Desh*.

On December 4, 2013, at around 11am, Mr. **Mahmudur Rahman** was taken to remand by the Detective Branch Police from Kashimpur Jail-2. His wife was only informed that Mr. Rahman would be taken to the Cantonment Police Station, the Tejgaon Police Station or the Detective Branch headquarters in Mintoo Road, although the police officers did not indicate the concrete location. Mr. Rahman was taken out of the centre where he was being held in a microbus with no number plates.

Despite the fact that the wife and other people close to the editor contacted the three facilities mentioned above to find Mr. Rahman's whereabouts, they were told at the police stations that they had not received any information regarding this case. At around 7pm on December 4, it was confirmed that Mr. Rahman had been taken to Tejgaon Police Station from Kashimpur Jail-2.

Mr. Mahmudur Rahman was arrested on April 11, 2013 without being informed of the charges under which he was being detained and further remanded into police custody for 13 days, when he was subjected to torture.¹

Mr. Rahman was eventually charged under provisions of the Cyber Crime and ICT Act-2006 and of the Penal Code with the offences of sedition and unlawful publication of a Skype conversation between Md Nizamul Huq, an International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) judge, and an external consultant, which raised doubts on the impartiality of the tribunal. Following the eruption of the "Skype scandal" on December 9, 2012,² Judge Huq had to resign on December 11, 2012.

This is not the first time Mr. Rahman has been intimidated for peacefully exercising his right to free speech as well as his professional freedom as a journalist in Bangladesh. The latter had previously been arrested, ill-treated and unjustly convicted in relation to his human rights activities.³

OMCT and FIDH fear that Mr. Rahman is currently at risk of torture and recall that authorities have to fulfill their obligations under international human rights instruments ratified by Bangladesh to protect the right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

FIDH and OMCT strongly condemn the harassment against Mr. Rahman, which seems representative of the increasing repression of dissenting voices in the country, and call on the Bangladeshi authorities to release him as well as all journalists and activists arbitrarily detained.

In the meantime, OMCT and FIDH urge the relevant authorities to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Rahman at all times.

FIDH and OMCT have recently released a fact-finding mission report on the situation of human rights defenders in Bangladesh, which outlines the various hindrances faced by civil society in terms of freedom of expression and association. The report is available here:

http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/obs_rapportbangladeshuk-ld.pdf

http://www.omct.org/files/2013/11/22434/bangladesh_obs_mission_report.pdf

¹ See OMCT Urgent Appeal BGD 220413.

² The conversation was first published by *The Economist* and later republished in Bangladesh by *Amar Desh* and other news agencies and websites.

³ See Annual Report 2011 of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (a joint FIDH-OMCT programme).

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