

URGENT ACTION

BANGLADESHI ACADEMIC WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN

Mubashar Hasan, a prominent Bangladeshi academic, has not been seen or heard from since 7 November and may have been subject to an enforced disappearance.

Mubashar Hasan, a professor at Bangladesh's North-South University, has been missing for the past three days, raising fears that he may have been subject to an enforced disappearance. Mubashar Hasan is a well-known and highly regarded researcher on religious groups in Bangladesh, who has worked with UN agencies and universities internationally.

Friends of Mubashar Hasan fear that he may have been subject to an enforced disappearance for his work as an academic researcher. Mubashar Hasan has not been seen since he attended a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) meeting in Dhaka, which is part of a project under the Bangladeshi Prime Minister's Office. Mubashar Hasan left the meeting at around 6:30 pm. Soon after, according to a journalist who obtained his phone records, his phone was no longer working.

At 7pm, Mubashar Hasan's family began to worry that he had not returned home. Earlier in the day, he had told his father that he would be home immediately after the UNDP meeting. At 10pm, his family went to the Khilgaon Thana police station to lodge a "general diary", a police complaint, detailing their concerns that Mubashar Hasan had gone missing. The family also lodged a report with the Rapid Action Battalion 3, an elite unit of the Bangladesh police.

During the past three years, hundreds of people – mainly opposition activists - have been illegally detained and held in secret detention. Over the past fortnight, however, there have been credible reports of other activists going missing, raising fears of a wider crackdown. Victims of enforced disappearance in Bangladesh are at high risk of suffering torture and other ill-treatment.

Please write immediately in English or Bengali:

- Urging the Bangladeshi authorities to order an immediate investigation into Mubashar Hasan's fate and whereabouts, keeping his family fully informed and updated at all times;
- Urging them to order an immediate, impartial, independent and efficient investigation into this and all other enforced disappearances, publicly disclose the findings and bring those suspected of criminal responsibility to justice in fair trials without recourse to the death penalty;
- Urging the authorities to end the practice of enforced disappearances and ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;
- Calling on them to ensure that activists, human rights defenders, journalists, academics and members of the political opposition are able to peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 DEC TO:

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister's Office, Old Sangshad
Bhaban, Teigaon, Dhaka 1215
Bangladesh
Fax: +88 02 9133722
Email: info@pmo.gov.bd
Salutation: Honourable Prime Minister

Inspector General of Police A.K.M. Shahidul Hoque
6 Phoenix Road, Fulbaria Office of the
Inspector General 1000 Dhaka,
Bangladesh Fax: +88 02 7125840
Email: ig@police.gov.bd
Salutation: Dear Inspector General

And copies to:
Minister of Foreign Affairs
H.E Mr Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, M.P.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Segunbagicha, Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh
Fax: +88 02 9562188

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR MOHAMMED NAZMUL QUAUNINE, High Commission for the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 28 Queen's Gate London SW7 5JA, 020 7584 0081, Fax 020 7581 7477, info@bhclondon.org.uk, www.bhclondon.org.uk

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Enforced disappearances continue at an alarming rate in Bangladesh, often of supporters of opposition parties Bangladesh National Party and Jamaat-e-Islami. According to Human Rights Watch, Bangladeshi authorities have illegally detained hundreds of people and held them in secret detention. Odhikar, the Bangladeshi human rights organization, reported that in 2016 at least 90 people were arrested by security forces and not heard from again. The authorities continue to deny responsibility and the victims' families were not informed of their whereabouts.

The disappearances are often carried out by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), or the Detective branch of the police (DB), or other unidentified security forces. RAB, the elite anti-crime faction of Bangladesh's police force, has a specific mandate to "defeat terrorism". Rights groups, including Amnesty International, have documented a catalogue of human rights violations committed by RAB since it was formed in 2004. These include enforced disappearances, unlawful detention, extrajudicial killings and torture. RAB has denied all allegations of abuse. These abuses continue with almost complete impunity, as the Bangladeshi government has largely refused to investigate the allegations against RAB, even when official police complaints have been made.

In February 2017, The UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances raised concerns about the growing number of enforced disappearances in Bangladesh.

The ruling Awami League came to power in 2009, vowing to show "zero tolerance" for human rights violations, but the use of enforced disappearances has been used against a range of people, including those suspected of criminal activities, links with armed groups, and membership of political opposition parties.

According to Article 2 of International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance the, an enforced disappearance is where a person is arrested, detained, abducted or otherwise deprived of their liberty by agents of the state, or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support, or acquiescence of the state. This is followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which places them outside the protection of the law.

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