

URGENT ACTION

IMPROVED CONDITIONS FOR DETAINED JOURNALIST

Shafik Rehman, an 81-year-old Bangladeshi journalist has been moved out of solitary confinement but concerns remain that he is still not being granted adequate medical care. He has been moved to Dhaka Central Jail and he has regular access to his family and legal team.

Shafik Rehman is a well-respected journalist who is currently the editor of the monthly *Mouchake Dhil* magazine. He is a known supporter of the main opposition party, the Bangladesh National Party, and has been targeted by the authorities for his journalistic work several times in the past.

Shafik Rehman was arrested on 16 April, suspected of being involved in a plot to kidnap and assassinate Sajib Wazed Joy, the son of Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. After a period on remand, Shafik Rehman was sent to Kashimpur Central Jail on 27 April, where he was kept in solitary confinement and denied adequate medical care, despite suffering from diabetes and a heart condition.

On 22 May Shafik Rehman was moved to Dhaka Central Jail and is no longer in solitary confinement. He is being allowed to eat food his family brings from home, and has regular access to his family and legal team. He is being granted medical care in the jail hospital, but his family are concerned that this is not up to the required standard and that he needs specialised care only available outside the prison. His family is deeply concerned about his deteriorating health.

Please write immediately in English, Bengali or your own language:

- Calling on the Bangladeshi authorities to ensure Shafik Rehman is provided with the appropriate medical care that he requires; and if it is not possible for this to be provided in the prison, he should be transferred to a hospital;
- Urging them to continue to allow him regular access to his lawyer and visits from his family; and
- Calling on them to ensure his procedural rights are guaranteed in accordance with international law and standards on fair trial.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 8 JULY 2016 TO:

President

Md. Abdul Hamid
President's Office
Bangabhaban, Dhaka
Bangladesh
Fax: +880 2 9585502

Salutation: Honourable President

And copies to:

State Minister

Ministry of Home Affairs
Bangladesh Secretariat, Building-8 (1st
& 3rd Floor),
Dhaka, Bangladesh
Fax: +880 2 9573711

Email: secretary@mha.gov.bd

Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR MD. ABDUL HANNAN , 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. This is the first update of UA 120/16. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa13/4073/2016/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Police said Shafik Rehman was first arrested in relation to a pending criminal case registered in August 2015 for “conspiring to abduct and assassinate” Sajib Wazed Joy, the son of Bangladesh’s Prime Minister who is living in the United States and serves as Information and Technology Adviser. This plot was allegedly concocted in the USA and relates to a US court case in March 2015 when three men were convicted of bribery offenses. Credible media reports have since, however, raised serious questions about the Bangladeshi authorities’ claims that US court documents implicate Shafik Rehman in a plot to “kidnap and kill” Sajib Wazed, or that such a plot even existed.

After his arrest on 16 April, Shafik Rehman was initially remanded, but was on 28 April placed in Kashimpur Central Jail awaiting trial, for which a date has not been set. Requests for him to be released on bail have been denied twice by separate courts in Dhaka without explanation, according to his legal team. His latest bail hearing was meant to take place on 26 May but was postponed due to the judge falling ill.

The conditions of Shafik Rehman’s detention violate Bangladesh’s obligation under international law to ensure that all people deprived of their liberty are treated humanely and are not subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Law enforcement officials and prison authorities are responsible for protecting the health of people in their custody, and provide health care free of charge that matches what is available to the outside community.

The arrest of Shafik Rehman comes amidst a wider backdrop of restrictions on freedom of expression in Bangladesh. The Awami League government has since 2014 intensified a clampdown on independent media. Just in 2016, at least three other high-profile editors have been charged with sedition or defamation – Mahfuz Anam of *The Daily Star*, Mahmudur Rahman of *Amar Desh* and Matiur Rahman of *Prothom Alo*.

Further Information on UA: 120/16 Index: ASA 13/4113/2016 Issue Date: 27 May 2016