

URGENT ACTION

UNLAWFULLY DETAINED HINDU FISHERMAN OUT ON BAIL

Hindu fisherman Rasraj Das was granted bail on 16 January 2017 after spending more than two months in jail for allegedly posting an “offensive” image on Facebook.

Although police have stated he was not responsible for posting the image, the charge of “hurting religious sentiment” has not been dropped. His next court date has not been set.

Rasraj Das, 25, was released from prison the day after he was granted bail by a Brahmanbaria court, in East-Central Bangladesh, on 16 January 2017. Despite the district police and the National Human Rights Commission issuing two separate reports stating that he had not posted the image, the charges against Rasraj Das have not been dropped.

Rasraj Das was arrested on 30 October 2016, and charged by police in Brahmanbaria for violating Section 57 of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Act for “hurting religious sentiment”. Under this draconian law, an individual can face up to 14 years in jail for “publishing fake, obscene or defaming information in electronic form” or information which “prejudices the image of the State or person.” The ICT Act is often used by the Bangladeshi authorities to target, harass and imprison government critics. Rasraj Das’s next trial court date has not been set.

Following his arrest on 30 October, hundreds of people gathered in Brahmanbaria district to protest the Facebook post allegedly made by Rasraj Das, a fisherman and member of the Hindu religious minority in Brahmanbaria district in eastern Bangladesh, which they claimed insulted Islam. The mob, who allegedly had links to the religious conservative groups Hefajat-e-Islam and Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, went on a rampage through Hindu villages in the area, vandalising at least 100 homes and several temples.

Amnesty International will continue to monitor the case and re-open the action if necessary. No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the first update of UA 7/17. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa13/5448/2017/en/>

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