

URGENT ACTION

HEALTH CONCERN FOR DETAINED JOURNALIST

Eighty-one-year-old Bangladeshi journalist and editor Shafik Rehman is in poor health in Kashimpur Central Jail outside of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. His health has deteriorated since his arrest and there are concerns he is not receiving adequate medical care.

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, Shaik Rehman was sent to Kashimpur Central Jail on 27 April, where he has been kept in solitary confinement ever since. He is currently in jail awaiting formal charges, and has been denied bail twice. He has had minimal access to both his family and legal team since he was arrested.

Shafik Rehman is an 81-year-old man with diabetes and a history of heart problems. His family are deeply concerned that he is not receiving adequate medical care in prison, as prison authorities have repeatedly denied requests for him to get specialist treatment. His health has deteriorated sharply since he was taken to jail and he has visibly lost weight. On 19 May, he was rushed to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University in Dhaka after a health scare related to his diabetes, but he has since been returned to jail.

Shafik Rehman's family are also concerned about how his mental health has been affected by being kept in solitary confinement for several weeks. Prison authorities have even denied his request to have a pen and paper so he would be able to write in his cell.

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

- Calling on the Bangladeshi authorities to end Shafik Rehman's solitary confinement immediately;
- Calling on them to ensure he 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 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 1 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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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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.

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.

Furthermore, solitary confinement should only be used in exceptional circumstances and for as short a time as possible. When prisoners are placed in solitary confinement, the state has an obligation to take steps to minimize its harmful effects on the individual by ensuring they have access to adequate exercise, social and mental stimulation, and that their health is regularly monitored. International human rights standards prohibit prolonged solitary confinement – that is, solitary confinement lasting longer than 15 consecutive days.

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*.

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