

Mr. Asaduzzaman Khan, MP

Minister

Ministry of Home Affairs

Bangladesh Secretariat

Dhaka-1000

BANGLADESCH

Honourable Minister Khan,

I am deeply concerned to learn of the detention of Emdadul Haque Milon, who was arrested on 3 March 2020 for merely sharing his views on Facebook.

Emdadul Haque Milon used his Facebook account to express his concern about the Bangladesh government's invitation to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a State visit in March 2020. Police allege that he also shared a post with a satirical image of Bangladeshi minister Obaidul Quader.

As you are aware, the UN Human Rights Committee has observed that "all public figures, including those exercising the highest political authority such as heads of state and government, are legitimately subject to criticism and political opposition." (CCPR/C/GC/34)

Expressing dissent is a right, not a crime. Emdadul Haque Milon is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression.

I therefore call on you, to urge the Bangladesh government to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Emdadul Haque Milon and drop all charges against him, and all those implicated solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression;
2. Decriminalize defamation, and treat it as a matter of civil litigation;
3. Promptly amend the Digital Security Act in compliance with international human rights law, including the ICCPR, to which Bangladesh is a state party.

Yours sincerely,