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## Authorities must act as another secular activist hacked to death

BANGLADESH

The vicious killing of another secular activist in Bangladesh is a grave reminder that the authorities are failing to protect people exercising their right to freedom of expression, Amnesty International said.

Four masked men attacked Nazimuddin Samad, 28, with a machete in Dhaka late last night before shooting him dead. No one has claimed responsibility, but the killing fits the pattern of other similar attacks on secular activists by radical Islamist groups over the past year.

“There can be no justification for the brutal killing of Nazimuddin Samad, who has apparently paid with his life for nothing but being brave enough to speak his mind. This is not just a senseless murder, it is a blatant attack on the right to freedom of expression,” said Champa Patel, South Asia Director from Amnesty International.

Nazimuddin Samad was a student activist who had organised campaigns for secularism on social media. He was named on a “hit list” of 84 bloggers published by a group of radical Islamists in 2013.

In 2015, at least five people - four bloggers and one publisher – were killed because of their secular opinions and writings. No one has yet been held to account for these killings and the Bangladeshi authorities have failed to strongly condemn the attacks. Instead, they have instructed secular activists to stop “offending” religious sentiments through their writings. Dozens of other bloggers have been forced into hiding or exile, fearing for their lives.

“Bangladeshi authorities must categorically condemn these killings and take serious steps to end this horrific cycle of violence. Those responsible for the killings of secular activists must be held to account, anything less will send a signal that these attacks are tolerated and permitted by the government,” said Champa Patel.

*“The authorities must also ensure that those activists and writers who are under threat are effectively protected in accordance with their wishes.”*