



Supreme Court Dhaka.

Foto: Bernhard Hertlein / © Amnesty International

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## **Authorities must immediately drop ICT Charges against journalists for carrying out their work**

BANGLADESH

Responding to the charges brought against detained Ekattor Television journalists Farzana Rupa and Mozammel Haque by the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), reportedly in relation to a 'misleading' report on the deadly crackdown on protesters at the Shapla Square in May 2013, Smriti Singh, South Asia Regional Director of Amnesty International said:

“Freedom of expression extends to information which some may find offensive, shocking or disturbing. Respect for this right is essential to ensuring healthy public discourse in a rights respecting society. Journalists must not be targeted for opinions which are disagreeable, or their perceived links to political parties.”

“Farzana Rupa and Mozammel Haque, who are already in detention, now face vague new charges relating to a story that was aired more than a decade ago. Their arrest in a case related to crimes against humanity is an affront to fundamental principles of press freedom and sets a dangerous precedent that threatens the right of all journalists to report without fear of retaliation.”

“Moreover, the Tribunal has been blighted by serious fair trial and due process concerns, as well as for meting out the death penalty, which Amnesty International opposes in all cases.”

“Bangladeshi authorities must drop all charges against them related to their work as journalists and ensure the respect and protection of the right to freedom of expression including media freedom, in line with their international human rights obligations.”

## **Background**

Farzana Rupa is Ekattor Television’s chief reporter and Mozammel Haque is its managing director. According to media reports, the charges against the two, brought on 7 March, relate to their reporting of the deadly crackdown during the Saphala Square protests in May 2013 on members of Hefazat-e-Islam, a conservative religious movement in Bangladesh. Media reports stated the prosecutor alleged the TV channel aired a ‘misleading’ report, implying there were no casualties, to distract the public from the actual death toll.

On 5 May 2013, approximately 200,000 Hefazaat protesters were met with brutal repression by security forces. The Shapla Square death toll has long been contested. Both journalists were already in pretrial detention on charges relating to the 2024 July protests. Farzana Rupa has been in pretrial detention since August 2024 and faces nine murder charges. Mozammel Haque has been in pretrial detention since September 2024 and faces five charges – four for murder and one for extortion. All of the murder cases contain multiple accused named in the First Information Report (FIR), with some cases having over 200 alleged perpetrators.

## **Links**

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<https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/299018/ict-orders-production-of-babu-rupa-dipu-moni-on-may-14>