

Presseerklärung

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End illegal detentions immediately

BANGLADESH

Bangladeshi authorities should immediately end the illegal detentions of Mir Ahmed Bin Qasem and Hummam Qader Chowdhury, arrested respectively on 9 August and 4 August, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch said today.

Both men were arrested without warrants or charges, have not been produced before a magistrate, and have not been allowed access to family or lawyers. "There is no question that Bin Qasem and Chowdhury are subject to an enforced disappearance in the custody of the security forces. Yet the government continues to deny having them. Both men have been refused access to lawyers and their families, and production before a magistrate," said Champa Patel, South Asia Director at Amnesty International. "This is a practice which has unfortunately become completely routine in Bangladesh, and has to end."

Chowdhury, a senior member of the opposition Bangladesh National Party, was arrested from inside his car as he was travelling with his mother to a courthouse to attend a hearing around 11am on 4 August. According to his mother, several men in plainclothes – some of whom were armed – forced Chowdhury to leave the car and come with them.

Mir Ahmed Bin Qasem, a Supreme Court lawyer, was arrested from his home around 11pm on 9 August by several men, also in plainclothes. The men did not identify themselves as being with any security forces. His wife and cousin were present during the arrest.

Authorities have denied having either of the men in custody, although multiple credible sources have said that both men were at the headquarters of the Rapid Action Battalion in Dhaka on the morning of 12 August. Mir Ahmed Bin Qasem's wife has filed a general diary complaint, the standard first report of transgressions filed with the police. Chowdhury's family attempted to file a general diary but the police refused to accept it. Bin Qasem's family has subsequently learned, but has not been able to confirm, that he has been moved to the headquarters of the Detective Branch. This is where [two other detainees were also held](#) illegally from 2 July [until their production in court last week](#). Chowdhury's family has also been told that he has since been moved from Detective Branch to a different agency, but they have not been able to confirm which one.

Bangladesh has been reeling from a spree of seemingly militant inspired killings and attacks, including a horrific attack on the Holey Artisan Bakery Café in Dhaka on 1 July, and another the subsequent week on an Eid gathering. In a much-delayed response, [Bangladeshi authorities arrested nearly 15,000 people](#) following the spate of attacks on bloggers, atheists, foreigners and LGBTI activists.

Following the attack on the café, [the authorities arrested two hostages](#), Hasnat Karim and Tahmid Khan, and then [proceeded to issue contradictory statements](#) about whether the men were in their custody. More than a month later, they finally admitted the men were in their custody, although they created a false cover story to avoid allegations of illegal detention.

Both Chowdhury and Bin Qasem are the sons of two senior opposition politicians convicted of war crimes during Bangladesh's 1971 Independence War. Chowdhury's father, [Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury, was executed in November 2015](#). Bin Qasem's father is currently facing execution on war crimes charges having nearly exhausted his appeals. Bin Qasem had feared that he would be arbitrarily abducted by the authorities shortly after the attack on the café when the government started claiming that the attack was the work of those seeking to free convicted war criminals.

"The Bangladeshi authorities have an obligation to pursue those responsible for the heinous crimes which have plagued Bangladesh for years, including of course the horrific attack on the café," said [Brad Adams](#), Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "But time and time again, we have to call on the government to not give in to its knee-jerk response of arbitrary and secret detentions. The illegal detentions of Chowdhury and Bin Qasem need to end immediately."

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch both note that Bangladeshi security forces have an extensive and well-documented history of custodial abuse, including torture and other ill-treatment. Given this history, there is a real risk of harm during detention and interrogation. Bangladeshi authorities need to immediately end the illegal detention of Mir Ahmed Bin Qasem and Hummam Qader Chowdhury.