

# PRESSEERLÄRUNG

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## Release photographer and end violent crackdown on student protests BANGLADESH

The Bangladeshi authorities must immediately and unconditionally release Shahidul Alam, a well-known photographer and activist, who was detained by plainclothes policemen on 5 August 2018 after giving an interview to Al-Jazeera English on the current wave of student protests in Dhaka, Amnesty International said today. At least 115 students were injured over the weekend as the police resorted to grossly excessive force, including firing rubber bullets and tear gas at thousands of overwhelmingly peaceful student protestors. The students also came under attack from pro-government counter-demonstrators.

“Shahidul Alam must be immediately and unconditionally released. There is no justification whatsoever for detaining anyone for solely peacefully expressing their views. His arrest marks a dangerous escalation of a crackdown by the government that has seen the police and vigilantes unleash violence against student protestors,” said Omar Waraich, Amnesty International’s Deputy South Asia Director.

“The Bangladeshi government must end the crackdown on the student protestors and people speaking out against it. The students have a right to peaceful assembly and physical security. These rights should be respected and protected, and there should be an immediate and effective investigation into the use of force by police, the violent actions of pro-government vigilantes who also attacked the students, and why the police did nothing to stop them.” Thousands of Bangladeshi students have taken to the streets of Dhaka to demand safer roads after two teenagers were killed and 13 others injured while waiting at a bus stop outside a college when a speeding bus hit them.

Shahidul Alam, the photographer who was detained by the Detective Branch of the Bangladesh police, has not thus far been charged with any offence. There are fears that he could be charged under Section 57 of Bangladesh’s draconian Information Communication Technology Act, which is inconsistent with international legal standards for the protection of the right to freedom of expression. Under international human rights law and standards, law enforcement officials must as far as possible apply non-violent means before resorting to the use of force and firearms. They can only resort to the use of force and firearms when other means have proved ineffective, and must then still exercise restraint.

As Bangladesh heads towards elections later this year, it is crucial that the government adheres to its international obligations, including the protection of the rights to freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly and security of persons,” said Omar Waraich.