



28. August 2023

Authorities must immediately release university student Khadiatul Kubra

Bangladesh

Responding to the completion of one year of university student Khadijatul Kubra's pre-trial detention under the draconian Digital Security Act (DSA) in Bangladesh, Nadia Rahman, Amnesty International's Interim Deputy Regional Director for South Asia said: "The year-long incarceration and repeated denial of bail to Khadija is a travesty and flagrant violation of the right to freedom of expression in Bangladesh. She should be in university, studying for her degree and not in jail waiting for her fate to be decided under a draconian law. Her continued arbitrary detention comes against the backdrop of a rapidly shrinking space for critical voices and sets a chilling precedent for anyone whose views the authorities disagree with.

"Despite the government's decision to repeal the draconian DSA, authorities continue to use the legislation to undermine human rights and persecute critics and activists. Amnesty International calls on the Bangladeshi authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Khadija and all those who are arbitrarily detained in Bangladesh solely for peacefully exercising their human rights including to freedom of expression. "Moreover pending her release, Khadija should be provided with regular access to adequate healthcare and be held in conditions that meet international standards."

Background

Khadijatul Kubra was a 17-year-old student of political science at Jagannath University in Dhaka, Bangladesh. She had hosted a webinar on campus politics¹ for the social media page called "Humanity for Bangladesh" in November 2020. Almost two years later, on 27 August 2022, Khadijatul

Kubra was arrested under DSA and the next day was sent to Kashimpur Jail in Dhaka. Police officers had seen a recording of the webinar on YouTube uploaded by one of the guest speakers – formerly a Bangladeshi army official now based in Canada who had made comments perceived to be critical of the Bangladeshi authorities. A case under DSA was filed for attempting to 'deteriorate law and order' and for 'defaming' the prime minister, among other charges.

Since then, Khadija's bail applications have been rejected several times and despite having allegedly developed medical problems including kidney issues, as per the family and media reports² Khadija was transferred to a 'condemned cell' earlier this year which is reserved for death-row convicts. On 10 July 2023, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court adjourned her bail hearing for four months, stating she should be able to take responsibility for the views expressed on her talk show.

Amnesty International has issued an urgent action³ to mobilise support internationally for Khadija and to seek her immediate and unconditional release.

Anmerkungen

1 <https://www.newagebd.net/article/116048/humanity-for-bangladesh-holds-webinar-on-campus-politics>

2 <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/sued-under-dsa-jnu-student-moved-condemned-cell-misbehaviour-3279091>

3. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa13/7143/2023/en/>