



ACTIVIST FACES 14 YEARS IN JAIL FOR MEDIA INTERVIEW

Bangladesh

SHAHIDUL ALAM

Shahidul Alam, photographer and outspoken social activist, has been charged under Section 57 of Bangladesh's Information and Communication Technology Act after giving an interview to Al - Jazeera on the current wave of school student protests in Bangladesh. Detained and charged solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression, Shahidul Alam must be immediately and unconditionally released.

Shahidul Alam, a renowned Bangladeshi photographer and activist, has been charged for violating the draconian section 57(2) of Bangladesh's Information and Communication Technology (Amendment) Act, 2013 (ICT). A lower court in Dhaka on 6 August 2018 also permitted the police to take him into remand for seven days. Police remands in Bangladesh are notorious for involving unlawful force leading to torture, other cruel or inhuman treatment and custodial death. When he appeared in court, Shahidul Alam was unable to walk, raising concerns that he may have been subject to torture or other ill-treatment while in custody.

Shahidul Alam was first detained on 5 August 2018, shortly after he was interviewed on the Al -Jazeera English news channel. Discussing the ongoing student protests in Bangladesh, which he had photographed and streamed on Facebook Live, he criticised the government's heavy - handed response. Earlier that day, men in plainclothes wearing helmets and wielding machetes and iron bars attacked five photojournalists and journalists from local media who were also covering the largely peaceful protests.

Section 57 of the ICT Act carries a minimum sentence of seven years and a maximum of 14 years in jail. Falling short of international legal standards protecting the right to freedom of expression, the Act has been used to muzzle dissidents. Amnesty International considers Shahidul Alam a prisoner of conscience, detained for nothing but the legitimate use of his freedom of expression, and therefore calls for his immediate and unconditional release.

The charges against Shahidul Alam come against the backdrop of student protests calling for safer roads after two students were killed and 13 others injured by a speeding bus while they were waiting at a bus stop. The largely peaceful protests have been met by excessive police force, including the use of teargas and rubber bullets. More than two hundred students have been injured.

Please write immediately in English or Bangla or in your own language urging the authorities to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Shahidul Alam, who is a prisoner of conscience, and drop all charges as he has been detained solely for peacefully exercising his human right to freedom of expression;
- Ensure that activists, human rights defenders, journalists, academics and members of the political opposition and other members of the public are able to peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association.

SCHREIBEN SIE BITTE

E-MAILS, FAXE ODER LUFTPOSTBRIEFE BIS 18. SEPTEMBER MIT FOLGENDEN FORDERUNGEN AN:

APPELLE AN

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Salutation: Honourable

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Salutation: Dear Inspector General

KOPIEN AN

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