BANGLADESH: Arbitrary detention and torture of Dr. Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir

Forwarded Urgent Appeal | Bangladesh | April 10, 2002

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Dear Friends,

We are forwarding you an appeal from the South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR) based in Nepal regarding the arbitrary detention and torture of Dr. Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir.

According to SAFHR, Dr. Alamgir has been in detention for one month without any formal charge and has been continuously subjected to torture. Please send your letter to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to intervene in this case and to release him immediately.

Thank you.

Urgent Appeals Desk
Asian Human Rights Commission

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Urgent Appeal on Arbitrary Arrest and Torture of Dr. Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir

The South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR) appeals to the prime minister of Bangladesh, the Hon. Khaleda Zia, to urgently intervene in the matter of the arbitrary detention and torture in custody of Dr. Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, who was arrested in Dhaka on March 15, 2002.

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According to the information we have received, Dr. Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, the former state minister for planning, was arrested at the Zia International Airport on March 15, 2002, and taken to the Special Branch of the police office. Dr. Alamgir, who was returning from abroad, was detained under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) for "instigating" government officials and employees in Dhaka in 1996 to join the Janatar Mancha (People's Platform) demonstration that eventually led to the removal of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party's (BNP) government from power. We have been told that on its return to power in 2001, the BNP government has initiated disciplinary proceedings against 180 civil servants involved in the demonstration. On March 15, Dr. Alamgir, an outspoken critic of the BNP's policies, was arrested.

On March 16, 2002, Dr. Alamgir was produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court in Dhaka who ordered his detention for two days and extended it for another two days. On its expiry, Dr. Alamgir was reportedly not taken to court but was instead taken to the central jail in Dhaka. On March 21, 2002, Dr. Alamgir's defence lawyers submitted a petition for a bail hearing to the CMM; and at the hearing on March 24, 2002, Dr. Alamgir reportedly complained about the torture and ill-treatment to which he had reportedly been subjected while in detention.

According to the information we have received, Dr. Alamgir reported that he had been taken to an unknown detention facility where he was brutally tortured. He was allegedly beaten with bamboo sticks by three masked men, and a bottle was pushed into his rectum. Furthermore, during the two-day extension period of detention, he was reportedly subjected to electric shocks on his genitals. Although Dr. Alamgir suffers from diabetes, he was not allowed to take his medicine, which was reportedly kept in a briefcase in police custody. While in detention, he was deprived of food, water and sleep and was not given a mosquito net.

Following Dr. Alamgir's complaints on March 24, 2002, the magistrate reportedly recorded that Dr. Alamgir had been tortured but did not order an investigation.

According to several human rights activists of Bangladesh, Dr. Alamgir's detention is arbitrary and politically motivated. The police reportedly failed to bring any charges against Dr. Alamgir until March 19, 2002. However, they have now submitted a petition for his continued detention in connection with a murder case, the report of which was filed with Kochua Thana in Chandpur (case No. 26(9) 2001, Sec. 143, 326, 307). Apparently the name of the murdered person has not been disclosed at the present time.

Dr. Alamgir has been placed in detention for one month under the Special Powers Act (SPA), which allows the government to imprison an individual for up to 90 days without a formal charge. After Dr. Alamgir's brother challenged the legality of the detention, the High Court on March 30 requested the government to submit within two weeks the reason for detaining Dr. Alamgir under the SPA. Dr. Alamgir was due to attend a court hearing at the CMM Court in Dhaka on March 31, 2002, but reportedly was not allowed to attend due to "security reasons." A custody warrant was allegedly sent by the prison authorities to set a new date. Magistrate Kazi Meraj Hossain has set the next court hearing to take place on April 15, 2002.

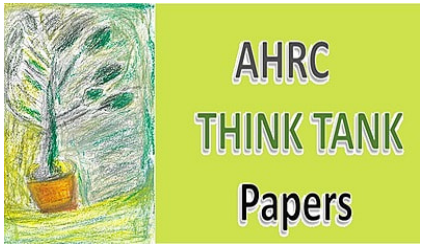


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SAFHR is gravely concerned for Dr. Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir's physical and psychological integrity, given that he has reportedly been subjected to torture while in detention and continues to be at risk of further abuses. In addition, the wilful denial of his diabetic medicine has placed Dr. Alamgir in a life-threatening situation. SAFHR appeals for Dr. Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir to be provided with immediate and appropriate medical care.

Madam prime minister, we request that you immediately intervene in this matter and save the life of Dr. Alamgir. We are sure that you will do everything to fulfil the obligations of the government of Bangladesh to respect international standards of human rights. Furthermore, we request you to look into the allegations of the use of arbitrary arrest, torture and violations of procedural rights as a means of repressing the democratic political opposition.

SEND LETTER TO:

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– Please sends SAFHR a copy of your letter at <south@safhr.org>.

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