

**Advocate Sahara Khatun**

Honorable Minister  
Ministry of Home Affairs  
Bangladesh Secretariat  
Building: 8 (1st - 3rd Floor)  
Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh

10 June 2010

**Re: Bangladesh – Fear of torture for detained human rights journalist Mr Mahmudur Rahman**

Dear Advocate Sahara Khatun,

Human rights defender and Acting Editor of the recently closed *Amar Desh* newspaper, Mr **Mahmudur Rahman**, has been placed on 12-day remand on charges of terrorism and sedition, after his arrest on 2 June 2010. *Amar Desh* is a major daily newspaper in Bangladesh which has been critical of the government, regularly reported on repression of the media, torture and extra-judicial killings, and last year published an article accusing the son of Prime Minister Shiekh Hasina of financial irregularities. Front Line fears for the physical integrity of Mahmudur Rahman while in detention.

On 2 June 2010, at approximately 04:00, Mahmudur Rahman was arrested at the offices of *Amar Desh*, hours after the authorities cancelled the newspaper's publication rights. The closure of the newspaper resulted from an issue concerning the resignation of the publisher. Article 5 of the Press and Publication Act, 1973, states that any newspaper must have a publisher. However, on 10 June 2010, the High Court granted a stay of three months on the Government's order that had stopped publication of the newspaper.

On 6 June 2010 Case No.5 (6) 2010 was filed against Mahmudur Rahman at the Kotwali Police Station for allegedly obstructing government officials in their function whilst he was already in custody.

On 7 June 2010, Mahmudur Rahman was placed on remand for four days by two Metropolitan Magistrates in two separate cases: 3-day remand in the Tejgaon Police Station Case No. 2(6)2010 dated 02.06.2010 under sections 143, 342, 332, 353, 186, 506, 114 of the Penal Code, 1-day remand in Kotwali Police Station Case No. 5(6)2010 dated 02.06.2010.

On 8 June 2010 Mahmudur Rahman was placed on remand for another four days by the Metropolitan Magistrate Ismail Hossain relating to an anti-terrorism case that had been filed at Uttara Model Police Station (Case No. 43 dated 19.04.2010 under section 6(1) of the Anti-Terrorism Act 2009). He was placed on a further four-day remand in a sedition case that had been lodged at the Airport Police Station (Case No. 21(6)2010 dated 07.06.2010 under sections 121A, 124A and 114 of the Bangladesh Penal Code).

Front Line believes that the arrest and detention of Mahmudur Rahman are directly related to his work with *Amar Desh* and his reports on human rights violations. Front Line is gravely concerned for the physical and psychological integrity of the aforementioned human rights defender. Given

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the fact that Bangladesh continues to record many cases of alleged torture and ill-treatment of prisoners Front Line calls for immediate access to be granted to Mahmudur Rahman's independent attorney.

**Front Line calls on the relevant authorities in Bangladesh to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally release human rights journalist Mahmudur Rahman as Front Line believes that he is being held solely as a result of his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Mahmudur Rahman, and ensure that he has access to independent legal representation and that his treatment in detention adheres to all those conditions set out in the '*Basic Principles for Treatment of Prisoners*', adopted by General Assembly resolution 45/111 of 14 December 1990;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that human rights defenders in Bangladesh are able to carry out their legitimate and peaceful human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

Front Line respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw your attention to Article 6 (a and b): "*Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: (a) To know, seek, obtain, receive and hold information about all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including having access to information as to how those rights and freedoms are given effect in domestic legislative, judicial or administrative systems; (b) As provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms*", and Article 12 (2) "*The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.*"

Yours sincerely,

*Mary Lawlor*

Mary Lawlor  
Director