

15 August 2013

Arbitrary arrest and detention of human rights defender Mr Adilur Rahman Khan

On 13 August 2013, human rights defender Mr **Adilur Rahman Khan** was transferred to Kashimpur-1 jail where he remains in custody while the investigation against him continues. The human rights defender was arrested without a warrant on 10 August 2013 and later charged with “publishing false images and information” and “disrupting the law and order situation.” Adilur Rahman Khan is the Secretary of **Odhikar**, a human rights organisation founded in 1994 with the aim of spreading awareness of human rights and conduct monitoring throughout Bangladesh. The organisation has trained over 500 human rights defenders to date.

On 10 August 2013, at approximately 10:20 pm, Adilur Rahman Khan was arrested in front of his house at Gulshan – the same building which houses the Odhikar offices – by about 10 plainclothes men from the Detective Branch (DB) of the police force and taken to the DB custody facility on Mintoo Road in Dhaka. No arrest warrant was presented at that time. At 2 am, various human rights defenders attached to Odhikar made their way to the police station in Gulshan where the police on duty explicitly denied having a case on file against Adilur Rahman Khan, or having any information about his arrest. At 3 am, the human rights defender's wife attempted to lodge a General Diary at the Gulshan police station. The duty officer refused to accept this, stating that the case was 'sensitive'; this was repeated by the Officer in Charge once he had been summoned on the insistence of Adilur Rahman Khan's wife.

On 11 August, at 1:20 pm, Adilur Rahman Khan was led before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrates Court, where the charges against him were first read out. The human rights defender has been charged under clauses 1 and 2 of section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act (2006), for “publishing false images and information” and “disrupting the law and order situation” in Bangladesh. Two General Diaries had been lodged against him: number 268 dated 10 August 2013, filed by the Detective Branch of Police (North), according to which the human rights defender was arrested under section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure; and number 514 of the same date, filed by Gulshan Police Station, which had denied to Adilur Rahman Khan and Odhikar staff having any knowledge about the arrest of the human rights defender. The human rights defender's petition for bail was rejected by the court.

During the evening of 11 August, between 8:20 pm and 9:00 pm, police searched the Odhikar offices and confiscated three laptops and two desktop hard drives. Adilur Rahman Khan was finally transferred to Dhaka Central Jail at 3 pm on 13 August, and later, finally, to Kashimpur-1 Jail.

The charges against the human rights defender are reported to relate to a fact-finding report about human rights violations that occurred during the police crackdown against the Hefazate Islam rally at Motjiheel on 5-6 May 2013. Odhikar's fact-finding mission report concluded that 61 people had died at in the incident. In response to the report, the Government sent a letter on 10 July requesting that Odhikar had over a list with the full names and addresses of the deceased, which Odhikar denied unless the list would be handled by an independent commission set up for the purpose. Furthermore, in recent years Odhikar has repeatedly seen its human rights projects been frustrated by the authorities who delayed approval. Front Line Defenders issued an urgent appeal on such an event on [29 July 2011](#).

Front Line Defenders is concerned that human rights defender Adilur Rahman Khan's arrest and the charges against him are directly motivated by his human rights activities with Odhikar in the light of the organisation's report highlighting the death of 61 people due to excessive use of police force. Front Line Defenders is further concerned that this most recent incident is part of a pattern of harassment from the authorities of Bangladesh aimed to frustrate the organisations activities defending and promoting human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Bangladesh to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally drop all charges against Adilur Rahman Khan, as it is believed they are solely motivated by his peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Adilur Rahman Khan, while in detention, adheres to all those conditions set out in the '*Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment*', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Bangladesh are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

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