



## Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL Foundation)

Registered Under Civil and Commercial Code Act of Thailand, Registration No.1690

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March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders,  
Mrs. Margaret Sekaggya  
c/o Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – Palais Wilson  
United Nations Office at Geneva  
CH 1211 Geneva 10  
Switzerland

### Re: A Call for Investigation of State Intimidation of Adilur Rahman Khan & Odhikar

The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), an organization and network of democracy and political rights promoting groups, wishes to express its concern regarding the continued harassment and intimidation of Odhikar and its staff. In particular, the harassment of its Secretary Advocate Adilur Rahman Khan gives ANFREL concern that the government is attempting to intimidate him because of his work for human rights, democracy, and social justice in Bangladesh. Odhikar is a member organization of ANFREL and Mr. Adilur Khan is one of its leaders who has been promoting democracy in Bangladesh.

On multiple occasions in the past two weeks, unknown figures apparently connected to the government have appeared outside Odhikar's office and Mr. Khan's home. They have harassed staff, followed Mr. Khan, and demanded personal information about Mr. Khan as well as the records of Odhikar. Their questioning included asking very specific questions about Mr. Khan's family, questions no doubt intended to intimidate and scare him into discontinuing his work.

Sadly, this behaviour is a resumption of similar harassment of Odhikar and Mr. Khan that occurred from October to December of 2010. ANFREL believes that this pattern is part of a plan designed to stop Odhikar by scaring one of its leaders into ceasing what is crucial work for the good of Bangladesh.

Intimidation of those working for human rights in Bangladesh cannot be accepted. To ensure that such misconduct does not continue to take place, ANFREL requests that the government of Bangladesh undertake the following steps.

- 1) End the intimidation of Odhikar and Mr. Khan, whether it is directed from above or as a result of a single NSI office, by ensuring that security personnel respect the right to privacy and the freedom of movement for all staff members.
- 2) Investigate why Odhikar and Mr. Khan were being harassed and by whom. This should include investigation and prosecution of any commander, officer, or politician that has ordered such intimidation if they are found to be in violation of the law.

In accordance with the duties of States found in the UN's Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Bangladesh must do more to protect those working to strengthen democracy and human rights in Bangladesh. The steps above will be a good start towards doing so. ANFREL is optimistic that this situation can yet be remedied and that the intimidation of Mr. Khan and Odhikar will end. We greatly appreciate your consideration of this matter and are hopeful that your response will be swift and just.

Sincerely Yours,

**Damaso Magbual**

Chairman of the Asian Network For Free Elections

CC:

*Afghanistan – FEFA; Bangladesh – FEMA, ODHIKAR; Cambodia – COMFREL, NICFEC; East Timor – Women Caucus; Indonesia – KIPP, JPPR; India – Lokniti, Japan – InterBand; Malaysia – NIEI; Mongolia – Women for Social Progress (WSP); Nepal – NEOC, NEMA; Pakistan – FAFEN; Philippines – IPER, PPCRV, NAMFREL; South Korea – PSPD; Sri Lanka – PAFFREL; Thailand – Poll Watch Foundation*



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