



JODY WILLIAMS

NOBEL LAUREATE FOR PEACE, 1997

Campaign Ambassador—International Campaign to Ban Landmines

23 August 2004

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia
Prime Minister's Office
Old Airport Road, Tejgaon
Dhaka, Dhaka Division
Bangladesh
Tel. +880-815-100
Email pm@pmo.bdonline.com

Re: Rafique Al Islam, ICBL/Landmine Monitor Bangladesh Researcher

Dear Prime Minister Khaleda Zia,

I am writing in my capacity as Campaign Ambassador of the ICBL to ask for your urgent assistance in seeking information as to the reason for the arrest and continued detention of Mr. Rafique al Islam in Cox's Bazaar on Saturday, 21 August. Mr. al Islam is the Coordinator of the Treaty Implementation and Victim Assistance Working Group for Bangladesh, a member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), 1997 Nobel Peace Prize Co-Laureate. Members of the Treaty Implementation and Victim Assistance Working Group for Bangladesh include SHED (Society for Health Extension and Development)-Cox's Bazaar, Proshika: (A Centre for Human Development)-Dhaka, Non-violence International and Aponjan-Dhaka. Mr. Al Islam is also a researcher for our annual publication, the Landmine Monitor Report, and has been in regular contact with the government over the years. The ICBL urges his immediate release.

Information received by the ICBL on Saturday afternoon from Nonviolence International, the organization for which Mr. al Islam is the Bangladesh Representative, indicates that he was arrested at his home in Cox's Bazaar at 2:30 PM on Saturday, 21 August, by military officers of the newly formed Rapid Action Battalion, who also seized equipment and documents during the arrest. Disturbingly, as of Sunday, his family had been informed that he was to be moved to an interrogation facility in the capital. Today we were informed that at an arraignment hearing today, a district judge remanded Rafique into the custody of the Cox's Bazar jail, and that a hearing of the charges against him will take place on Thurs 26 August. His family still has been given no reason for his detention, despite repeated requests for information. Nonviolence International is a non-governmental organization which is registered with the government of Bangladesh.

I know Mr. al Islam as a dedicated and detailed researcher. He has been an active member of the ICBL, a coalition of 1400 non-governmental organizations in 90 countries, and as such has been present at many international meetings of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and On Their Destruction. As you know, Bangladesh is currently the Co-Rapporteur of the Convention's Standing Committee on

Stockpile Destruction. Mr. al Islam has been in positive engagement with representatives of the Government of Bangladesh during the course of his research for Landmine Monitor over the years, as well as efforts on behalf of the ICBL.

News of his arrest and detention is very disturbing to me personally, and to all my colleagues in the ICBL. We are extremely concerned for the well being of Mr. Al Islam. We are therefore seeking your assistance to inquire into why Mr. Al Islam was arrested and is being detained. We also request that his family be informed on the reason for the arrest, any charges against him, reasons for his continued detention, in addition to being kept informed on where he is being detained and for how long the authorities intend to detain him. The ICBL urges his immediate release.

Thank you very much in advance for any information you are able to provide.

Sincerely,



Jody Williams
Campaign Ambassador
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

CC: Hon. M. Morshed Khan, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Hon. Lutfozzaman Babor, Minister of Home Affairs