

23 August 2004

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia  
Prime Minister's Office  
Old Airport Road, Tejgaon  
Dhaka, Dhaka Division  
Bangladesh

Dear Prime Minister Khaleda Zia,

This letter is written to ask for your urgent assistance in seeking information from your capital as to the reason for the arrest and continued detention of Mr. Rafique al Islam in Cox' 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 has also been 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. His family has been given no reason for his detention, despite repeated requests for information. Disturbingly, as of Sunday, his family had been informed that he was to be moved to an interrogation facility in the capital. Nonviolence International is a non-governmental organization which is registered with the government of Bangladesh.

Mr. al Islam 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.



1997 Nobel Peace Prize Co-Laureate

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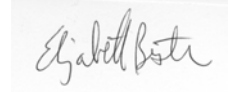
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News of his arrest and detention is very disturbing and we are concerned for the well being of our colleague. We are therefore seeking your assistance to inquire into why Mr. Al Islam was arrested and is being detained. We also request that his family 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 for your assistance in this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Elizabeth Bernstein", is enclosed within a light gray rectangular box.

Elizabeth Bernstein  
Coordinator, ICBL

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