



## Statement to the Press of Bangladesh

On Saturday, 21 August afternoon Mr al Islam, our Representative in Bangladesh, was arrested at his home in Cox's Bazaar at 2:30 PM, by military officers of the Rapid Action Battalion, who also seized a computer and documents during the arrest. Although both the computer and documents were returned to his family by the arresting unit, Mr. al Islam remains under remand, and his family has been given no reason for his continued detention, despite repeated requests for information.

Nonviolence International became registered under the societies act in Bangladesh last year. Our organization works broadly for both the reduction of the use of violence as a method for human beings to resolve their problems, and a reduction in the availability of the tools of violence which allow human beings to create enormous suffering too quickly. In this later regard, Nonviolence International is a member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Mr. al Islam is well known for his work on this issue within your country.

Since Bangladesh became a party to the Mine Ban Treaty, Nonviolence International has been pleased to work cooperatively with several agencies of government. Our Southeast Asia regional coordinator in Bangkok has been called upon by members of the government of Bangladesh to help in the political aspects of your destruction of the military's anti-personnel landmine stockpile.

Given our past cooperative working relationship with governmental authorities, we are puzzled and dismayed that members of the security forces came to the determination that our representative needed to be seized and held without charge, presumably for some type of information. If it is necessary to seek information regarding any investigations an entity of government is undertaking, our record suggests we are easy to contact and cooperative.

We are securing legal council for our representative. Internationally, representation to at least 13 of Bangladesh's Foreign Missions have been made on behalf of Mr. al Islam, and letters by Nobel Peace Laureates asking for intercession by the Prime Minister have been sent. So far, none have received any replies. Nonviolence International is seeking the immediate release of our Representative. If charges cannot be dropped completely, we would like them to be clarified. In our opinion it is inappropriate for Art 54 to be used against open civil society organizations working for the uplift of human beings. We also requested the authorities make inquiries into the reason for this harsh action on a cooperative humanitarian organization.

Mubarak E. Awad, Founder, Nonviolence International

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