



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD)

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STOP PERSECUTING THE MEDIA AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN BANGLADESH!

AFAD condemns the imprisonment of two Bangladeshi journalists, Hasan Ali and Aslam Ali, due to charges under Section 57 of the repressive Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act. Both are also human rights defenders. Hasan Ali is associated with AFAD member organization, Odhikar, and has published several reports on human rights violations in Bangladesh, including extra-judicial killings, torture, rape and enforced disappearances.

The two were accused by a police informer, Hasibur Rahman Riju, of publishing an offensive post using a fake facebook ID, which was allegedly defamatory and humiliating. They were first arrested on March 30 of this year and were subsequently taken to custody after surrendering before the Magistrate at Kushtia District, after being released on a four-week ad-interim bail.

Under Section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act, a person who deliberately makes an electronic post that “causes to deteriorate law and order, prejudice the image of the state or person or hurt religious beliefs” can be sentenced to a minimum of seven years imprisonment up to a maximum of 14 years, and a maximum fine of Tk1 crore. Said law is often used to target critics such as media practitioners, student activists and human rights defenders.

AFAD reminds the Bangladesh government of its duty to respect the right of its citizens to freedom of expression as enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. AFAD likewise calls on the Bangladesh government to cease from its persecution and harassment of critics—including those who expose and condemn enforced disappearances in the country—whose voices are essential to a democratic State.

Signed by,

KHURRAM PARVEZ
Chairperson

MARY AILEEN D. BACALSO
Secretary-General