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Bangladesh: Arbitrary Arrest of Human Rights Defender Condemned Adilur Rahman Khan Must be Released Immediately

(Bangkok, 11 August 2013) - The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), a regional human rights group with 47 member organisations from 16 countries across Asia, strongly condemned the arrest and harassment of Adilur Rahman Khan, Secretary of Odhikar, a local human rights organization at the forefront of fighting torture, extrajudicial killings and abuses by law enforcement officials. As the Executive Committee member of FORUM-ASIA and the partner of various other international NGOs, he is a renowned human rights defender in international human rights circles.

According to reports provided by Odhikar, Adilur Rahman Khan was picked up at his house on 10 August 2013 at 10:20pm by 8 to 9 men in plain clothes who arrived in a civilian vehicle and identified themselves as belonging to the Detective Branch of Police. He was taken into custody with no warrant of arrest and was refused any information. Despite repeated requests and visits to the different police stations in the area, Adilur Rahman Khan's family, colleagues and lawyers have been denied any information regarding his whereabouts. Meanwhile, the media has reported at around 12pm midnight that Adilur Rahman Khan has been held under the Information Technology Act for the publication of an investigation report on the 61 people allegedly killed by Bangladeshi security forces on 5 May 2013.

"The arbitrary and unwarranted arrest of Adilur Rahman Khan is an attack on the sense of security of all human rights defenders in Bangladesh. We strongly condemn the clandestine manner in which the arrest has been carried out and implore the authorities to immediately release him," urged Sultana Kamal, Executive Director of Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), FORUM-ASIA member in Bangladesh.

Adilur Rahman Khan has been the subject of harassment and intimidation by the State authorities on numerous occasions for his work on human rights and democracy issues in Bangladesh. FORUM-ASIA issued an [open letter on the increased surveillance of Adilur Rahman Khan](#)'s activities and disturbing inquiries made by unknown persons in 2010 and 2011.

"The government of Bangladesh expressed its recognition of the valuable work of human rights defenders during its Universal Periodic Review in May 2013. We remind the government that the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders prohibits the arbitrary arrest and harassment of human rights defenders for their work. We urge the government to end this smear campaign against Adilur Rahman Khan and ensure that due process is followed hereon," stated Henri Tiphagne, Chairperson of FORUM-ASIA.

"We were informed today that Adilur Rahman Khan was produced in court and was remanded to five days in custody. We remain deeply concerned about the physical security and psychological integrity of Adilur Rahman Khan as he faces particular vulnerability and risk of further harassment in this extended period of custody. The systematic crack down of human rights defenders, bloggers and journalists over the last few months in Bangladesh is deplorable. The government must swiftly remedy the situation and provide an enabling and safe environment for the legitimate work of human rights defenders in the country," stressed Giyouon Kim, Acting Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA. (ENDS)

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