

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/Death Threats

03 October 2006

BANGLADESH

Professor Hasan Azizul Huq (m)  
His family

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On 24 August, death threats were made against Hasan Azizul Huq, a retired Professor from Rajshahi University. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety and that of his family, who are at risk of further threats and harassment following his criticism of religious based politics in Bangladesh.

Professor Hasan Azizul Huq was threatened by a group allegedly linked to the *Bangladesh Islami Chhatrashibir*, the student wing of the political party, *Jamaat-e-Islami*. The threat followed a seminar in the city of Rajshahi on 21 August 2006 entitled "secularism, the state and education" where Professor Huq spoke in defence of secularism and the separation of religion from politics. The day after the seminar, an article in a pro-Jamaat-e-Islami newspaper, *Naya Diganta* (New Horizon) vilified Professor Huq's speech as an attack against Islam. Copies of the newspaper article were then widely distributed amongst students.

On 24 August, a group calling themselves *Shacheton Chhatrasangram Parishad* (Protesting Students' organization) staged a rally where several speakers declared Professor Huq as "an enemy of Islam" and threatened him with death. The group is alleged to be an extension of the above-mentioned *Bangladesh Islami Chhatrashibir*. The threats have been followed by anonymous telephone calls to Professor Huq's residence warning him that he would be killed.

Professor Hasan Azizul Huq has notified the police of the threat against him and his family, but so far they have not been provided with any protection and those known to have issued the death threats have yet to be brought to justice.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Writers, journalists and academicians expressing secular views and advocating the separation of religion from politics are at risk of attack from Islamist groups. Amnesty International is aware of several such cases in Rajshahi where academicians have been the targets of attacks. At least two professors of Rajshahi University known for their secular views have been attacked and killed in recent years. The assailants are believed to be linked to Islamist groups. No one has been brought to justice for these attacks.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English/Bangla or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Professor Hasan Azizul Huq and that of his family following death threats made against him on 24 August 2006 by a group allegedly linked to the *Bangladesh Islami Chhatrashibir*, the student wing of the political party, *Jamaat-e-Islami*;
- calling on the authorities to condemn the threats, conduct an immediate and thorough investigation into the incident, for the results to be made public and those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling on the authorities to provide Professor Huq and his family with adequate security protection in accordance with their wishes;
- calling on the authorities to protect others who express secular views and who advocate the separation of religion from politics.

#### APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Gona Bhaban

**Old Sangsad Bhaban, Tejgaon,  
Dhaka, Bangladesh  
Fax: + 880 2 8113243  
Email: Info@pmo.gov.bd  
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

**Md. Lutfuzzaman Babar  
State Minister for Home Affairs  
Ministry of Home Affairs  
Bangladesh Secretariat  
Building 4  
Dhaka, Bangladesh  
Email: mediacell@homemin-bd.org  
Salutation: Dear Minister of State**

**Barrister Moudud Ahmed  
Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs  
Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs  
Bangladesh Secretariat  
Dhaka, Bangladesh  
Email: Info@minlaw.gov.bd  
Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Bangladesh accredited to your country.**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 14 November 2006.**