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First UA: 54/24 Index: ASA 13/8137/2024 Bangladesh of June 10, 2024

BANGLADESH

DETAINED BLOGGER YET TO BE RELEASED DESPITE BAIL

Selim Khan is a 19-year-old atheist blogger from Bangladesh. He joined a private Facebook group for like-minded individuals to express his views privately. Unfortunately, another member photographed one of his comments and shared it publicly, leading to public agitation. Consequently, a ruling party member filed a case against Selim under the newly enacted Cyber Security Act and the Penal Code.

Selim was arrested on November 4, 2023, and repeatedly denied bail, despite these being bailable offenses. Although he was finally granted bail on March 13, 2024, he remains in jail due to procedural delays. Selim must be released immediately and unconditionally.

Write to the Prime Minister urging him to:

- Drop all charges against Selim Khan and release him immediately and unconditionally. His charges stem solely from his peaceful exercise of freedom of expression and belief.
- Amend the Cyber Security Act to align with international human rights laws and standards.
- Immediately and unconditionally release all individuals detained under the Cyber Security Act and the repealed Digital Security Act for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Write to:

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister's Office
Old Sangsad Bhaban
Tejgaon, Dhaka-1215
Bangladesh

Email: ps1topm@pmo.gov.bd

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina,

And copy:

Mr. Hossne Ayub Dewan
Deputy High Commissioner/Acting High Commissioner
High Commission for the People's Republic of Bangladesh
350 Sparks Street, Suite 1100
Ottawa, ON K1R 7S8
Tel: (613) 236-0138 / 236-0139 Fax: (613) 567-3213
Email: mission.ottawa@mofa.gov.bd

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Selim Khan, a 19-year-old atheist blogger from a village in southwest Bangladesh, lives in a predominantly Muslim country. He uses his blog to express critical views on religion, and people in his village know him as an atheist critical of Islam. According to Selim's lawyer, someone joined Selim's private Facebook group specifically to take screenshots of his posts and target him. A politician who had previously warned Selim against posting such views saw the screenshots and filed a complaint. This led to an angry mob gathering outside Selim's house, but he had already left for safety, and the police later dispersed the crowd. The police also accused Selim of using his blog to express critical views on religion.

The [Cyber Security Act \(CSA\)](#), introduced by the government in September 2023 to replace the draconian [Digital Security Act \(DSA\)](#), retains many repressive features of its predecessor. Despite claims that the CSA aligns more closely with human rights—[removing](#) prison sentences for defamation and increasing the number of bailable offenses—it continues to silence critical voices. Bangladesh has a history of targeting atheist bloggers for freely expressing their views. In 2015, atheist bloggers [Avijit Roy](#) and Washiqur Rahman were killed in Dhaka, sparking persecution of atheist bloggers and their families. This led many to flee the country to avoid reprisals.

Please take action as soon as possible until August 5, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.