

1 October 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joint Statement by the Capital Punishment Justice Project, the South Asian Policy Initiative, the Sydney Policy and Analysis Centre and the Global Voice for Humanity

BANGLADESH: Daily Amar Desh Editor Mahmudur Rahman Must be Released from Prison and Sentence Quashed

The Capital Punishment Justice Project (CPJP), the South Asian Policy Initiative (SAPI), the Sydney Policy and Analysis Centre (SPAC) and the Global Voice for Humanity (GVH) express grave concern over the imprisonment of Dr. Mahmudur Rahman, a renowned journalist, human rights defender, and founding president of SAPI.

It has come to our attention that Dr. Rahman, who has consistently spoken truth to power in Bangladesh, was sent to jail on 29 September 2024, having voluntarily surrendered after returning to the country to visit his critically ill mother. The Interim Government of Bangladesh must immediately release Dr. Rahman, former Acting Editor of the *Daily Amar Desh*, and overturn the unjust 7-year prison sentence, which was given to him in absentia on 17 August 2023.

This sentence stems from a politically motivated case, under which Dr. Rahman was convicted for allegedly conspiring to abduct and kill the former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's USA-based son, Sajeeb Ahmed Wazed Joy in 2015.

This case is one of approximately 130 politically motivated charges filed against Dr. Rahman during Sheikh Hasina's regime. On Sunday, Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Md Mahbubul Haque denied a bail request and ordered Dr. Rahman be sent to jail to serve a 7-year sentence for the alleged conspiracy case, which is among one of the most controversial cases in Bangladesh's political history.

Dr. Rahman's defence lawyer, Syed Zainul Abedin Mejbah, was [quoted in the media](#) stating that the CMM Court could only grant bail for sentences of up to one year, leaving the imprisoned journalist and editor with no choice but to petition higher courts for bail.

Dr. Rahman, who previously edited the *Daily Amar Desh*, has long faced persecution for his fearless journalism. In 2013, the newspaper was forcibly shut down by the Sheikh Hasina regime.

The Supreme Court of Bangladesh sentenced Dr. Rahman to six months in prison and fined him BDT 100,000 in a 2010 '[contempt of court](#)' case for reporting that court decisions were biased in denying remedies in politically motivated cases against dissidents from the 1971 War of Independence. He remained in prison for seven months at that time.

The government again [arrested](#) and [arbitrarily detained](#) Mr. Rahman in April 2013 in a [sedition case](#) for publishing reports on [a leaked Skype conversation](#) involving the presiding judge of Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal and an expat pro-Awami League legal scholar. The leaked conversations revealed that the judge appeared to have sought the scholar's assistance to draft court documents in a case prosecuting opposition leaders for alleged war crimes committed in 1971. Dr. Rahman's detention under that sedition charge was also allegedly an additional excuse to punish him in [retaliation](#) for publishing a [report](#) in December 2010 on a [corruption scam](#) involving the then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's son Sajeeb Ahmed Wazed and her Adviser to Energy Affairs Dr. Tawfiq-E-Elahi Chowdhury.

The deposed regime of Sheikh Hasina previously [imprisoned](#) Dr. Rahman for 3 and a half years for not submitting his wealth statement in response to a summons issued by the Anti-Corruption Commission while he was already in jail. Dr. Rahman was [released](#) in 2016 on bail. In July 2018, the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of the Sheikh Hasina-led party Bangladesh Awami League, [attempted to assassinate](#) Dr. Rahman at the court premises in Kushtia district after he appeared before the Court in one of the dozens of cases filed against him. He was severely injured in the brutal attack.

With Bangladesh having become extremely unsafe for dissidents, Mahmudur Rahman left the country in 2018 to pursue a PhD in Malaysia and later to live in exile in Turkey. He returned to Bangladesh on 27September2024 to visit his critically ill mother, who had been hospitalised.

It appears that the Bangladeshi government has failed to demonstrate its commitment to uphold the spirit of the Bangladeshi people's uprising against the deposed despot Sheikh Hasina, who fled the country to India. The imprisonment of Mahmudur Rahman clearly indicates that the Muhammad Yunus government has not yet prioritised the urgent need to protect the right to liberty of all of those who have been the victims of politically motivated trumped-up cases and convictions unleashed by the judiciary subjugated under the Sheikh Hasina regime.

Signed:



Stephen Keim SC

President

Capital Punishment Justice Project (CPJP)



Shibly Sohail

Executive Director

South Asian Policy Initiative (SAPI)



Mubashar Hasan, PhD

Executive Director

Sydney Policy and Analysis Centre (SPAC)



Faroque Amin, PhD

Director

Global Voice for Humanity (GVH)