

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/bangladesh-online-newspaper-editor-detained-05-08-2011,40760.html>

Asia - Bangladesh

Released and re-arrested

Newspaper editor freed after three months, immediately re-arrested

4 November 2011

Reporters Without Borders is appalled to learn that **Mohammad Ekramul Haque**, the owner and editor of the [Sheershanews.com](http://www.sheershanews.com) news website and the weekly [Sheersha Kagoj](#), was re-arrested on 1 November immediately after being released on bail by order of the Dacca high court.

"We are outraged by Haque's new arrest on the very day of his release after three months in prison on trumped-up charges," Reporters Without Borders said. "How could the judicial authorities allow a journalist to be held for 90 days on the basis of clearly fabricated accusations and then allow him to be re-arrested on the basis of a similar complaint filed on the day he was freed?"

"The high court should show some perceptiveness and not participate in this clearly orchestrated judicial harassment of Haque. We caution the judicial authorities against any attempt to prolong his detention indefinitely."

Haque was arrested at his Dhaka home on 31 July on a charge of extortion that was entirely fabricated, as both the identity and address of the plaintiff turned out to be false. While held, two other extortion complaints were brought against him which were nothing more than further attempts to silence him, local journalists say.

The Dhaka high court's 25 October order for Haque to be released on bail was carried out on 1 November. However, he was immediately re-arrested on the basis of a new complaint against him filed earlier that day at the Ramna police station. Taken into custody for an initial period of at least two days, he is reportedly being held at the Dhaka metropolitan police "Detective Branch," which has been implicated in cases of torture and intimidation.

The new complaint was filed by tax inspector Habibur Rahman, who has accused Haque of going to his office on 12 June and demanding monthly payments of 100,000 taka (955 euros) in return for not publishing articles accusing him of corruption. In his complaint, Rahman said that, because he was scared, he paid him 5,000 taka (46 euros) on the spot.

Neither Sheershanews.com news nor Sheersha Kagoj is currently operational. Local journalists report that the authorities ordered them closed down.

Online newspaper editor detained on trumped-up charges

08-05-2011

Reporters Without Borders firmly condemns the detention of **Mohammad Ekramul Haque**, the owner and editor of the online newspaper, [Sheershanews.com](http://www.sheershanews.com) and the weekly [Sheersha Kagoj](#), on apparently trumped-up charges of extortion. Arrested at his Dhaka home at 4 a.m. on 31 July by plain-clothes police who showed no warrant, he was transferred to a prison on 3 August.

Everything about the case is strange, including the fact that the original plaintiff's identity is false. A certain Gias Uddin Talukder, claiming to be the owner of the Balaka travel agency, accused Haque of threatening to publish a negative report about the agency if Talukder refused to pay 26,000 dollars.

But the *Sheershanews.com* staff reported in a 1 August press release that there is no travel agency of that name and accused to government of trying silence Haque because of his articles about corruption.

Two other extortion complaints that have been brought against Haque are also regarded by local journalists as attempts to silence him. One of the complaints was filed on 1 August by Emdadul Haque, the secretary of a government employees' association. The third complaint, filed by Mohammad Shahidul Islam, accuses Mohammad Ekramul Haque, his wife and the editor of another newspaper of blackmail.

"We firmly condemn Mohammad Ekramul Haque's indictment and imprisonment on false accusations," Reporters Without Borders said. *"His arrest is indicative of the lengths to which the authorities will go to eliminate a troublesome whistleblower on Bangladesh's corruption problems."*

Haque was blindfolded when he was taken on 31 July to Kalabagan police station by police officers, who also manhandled members of his family. After two days in police custody, he was taken before a Dakha court, which refused his request for release on bail. After two more days in police custody, he was transferred to prison on 3 August without any information being given about the length of time he is supposed to spend there.

A charge of sexual harassment was brought against Haque last month but it was dropped after the alleged plaintiff did not turn up in court and later proved to be fictitious.

The authorities rescinded the accreditation of *Sheershanews.com* and *Sheersha Kagoj* two weeks ago, while Haque was on a list of 10 journalists whose accreditation was suspended in a letter issued by the government's Press Information Department on 14 July. Both *Sheersha Kagoj*, launched in 2003, and *Sheershanews.com*, launched in 2009, covered corruption.
