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Bangladesh: Whereabouts of three men subjected to enforced disappearance must be disclosed

The Bangladeshi authorities must immediately establish the fate and whereabouts of three individuals who were subjected to enforced disappearances several weeks ago. They have not been seen or heard from since.

The three men – Abdullahil Amaan Azmi, Mir Ahmed Bin Quasem and Hummam Qader Chowdhury – all have not just been deprived of their liberty but there is also a complete lack of information about their fate. This unacceptable situation places them outside the protection of the law. As with all people subjected to enforced disappearances they are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment, or even death, in custody.

Hummam Qader Chowdhury, a senior member of the opposition Bangladesh National Party, was arrested as he was travelling with his mother to a courthouse to attend a hearing on 4 August. Several men in plainclothes – some of whom were armed and claimed to be from the Bangladesh Detective Branch (DB) – forced Chowdhury to leave his car and come with them. Chowdhury's family tried to file a general diary complaint – the standard first report of transgression filed with the police - after his arrest, but the police in Dhaka refused to accept it.¹

Mir Ahmed Bin Quasem, a Supreme Court lawyer, was arrested from his home on 9 August by several men in plainclothes. The men did not identify themselves as being associated with any security forces. His wife and cousin were present during the arrest. Mir Ahmed Bin Qasem's wife filed a general diary complaint shortly after his arrest.

Abdullahil Amaan Azmi, a former Brigadier General in the Bangladesh army, was arrested at his family home in Dhaka on 22 August 2016. About 30 officers, some of whom claimed to be from DB, took him into custody late at night from his home and the officers also badly assaulted some staff in the apartment building, according to credible sources. As in Chowdhury's case, police in Dhaka refused to accept a general diary note when the family tried to file it.

To date, the authorities in Bangladesh have continued to deny their role in the deprivations of liberty. This is despite several witness testimonies pointing to the involvement of security forces in the arrests. Credible sources have told Amnesty International that the men have been moved between different security agencies,

¹ Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, "Bangladesh: End illegal detentions immediately", 14 August 2016, available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/08/bangladesh-end-illegal-detentions-immediately/>

including the police, the Rapid Action Battalion (a police unit widely implicated in human rights abuses), and the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (the military intelligence agency), but their current whereabouts are unknown.

All three men are sons of high-profile senior opposition politicians who were convicted by the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), a Bangladeshi court established to investigate mass scale human rights violations committed during the 1971 War of Independence. Chowdhury's father, Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury, [was executed in November 2015](#), while Bin Quasem's father, Mir Quasem Ali, [was executed in September 2016](#). Abdullahil Amaan Azmi's father, Ghulam Azam, was given a 90-year prison sentence in 2013 and died of a stroke in prison a year later. It is still unclear why the three sons have been arrested, but on 8 September 2016 the Bangladesh Law Minister Anisul Huq told media that the "children of war criminals" are "hatching conspiracies", and that the government had to "stay alert against them".²

Since 2009, enforced disappearances have become alarmingly routine in Bangladesh. Amnesty International has documented many cases where individuals have been arrested by members of the security forces and never heard from again. According to the Bangladeshi human rights organisation Odhikar, there have been at least 14 enforced disappearances so far in 2016 and at least 64 in 2015.³ Torture and other forms of ill-treatment is rife in detention in Bangladesh.

Amnesty International calls on the Bangladesh authorities to:

- Immediately disclose to the families the fate and whereabouts of Abdullahil Amaan Azmi, Mir Ahmed Bin Qasem and Hummam Qader Chowdhury;
- Charge all three individuals with an internationally recognized criminal offence or release them immediately; and
- Put an end to enforced disappearances in the country by bringing all of those suspected of criminal responsibility for that crime and other human rights violations to justice in fair trials before ordinary civilian courts without recourse to death penalty.

² "War criminals' children hatching conspiracies: Law minister", *The Daily Star*, 8 September 2016, available at <http://www.thedailystar.net/country/war-criminals-children-hatching-conspiracies-law-minister-1282780>

³ Odhikar, statistics on enforced disappearances 2009-2016, available at http://1dgy051vgyxh41o8cj16kk7s19f2.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Statistics_Disappearance_2009-2016.pdf