

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/bangladesh-journalist-gets-seven-year-jail-09-01-2014,45713.html>

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Asia - Bangladesh

Seven-year term

## Journalist gets seven-year jail sentence for decade-old articles

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Reporters Without Borders condemns the seven-year jail sentence that a Dhaka court imposed today on former magazine editor **Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury** in connection with articles criticizing Islamism a decade ago, when he was arrested for trying attend a conference for writers in Israel.

Initially charged with blasphemy, sedition and treason, Choudhury was finally convicted of writing "distorting and damaging" articles.

"Imprisoning a professional journalist because of what he wrote is unacceptable," Reporters Without Borders said. "This conviction violates Bangladesh's own constitution and all international standards on media freedom.

"We urge the Bangladeshi courts to overturn this verdict and to respect the right to information. Bangladesh must not yield to pressure from radical elements who want those they wrongly brand as 'blasphemers' to be severely punished."

The judge in charge of the case, Jahurul Haque, announced: "Although he was facing sedition charges, Choudhury was awarded seven years rigorous imprisonment under section 505(A) of the penal code for intentionally distorting and damaging written statements."

The onetime editor of a magazine called the *Weekly Blitz*, Choudhury was accused of damaging the country's image in his articles critical of Islamism and of trying to attend a 2003 conference in Israel with the aim of talking about the emergence of radical Islam in Bangladesh.

He was also suspected of passing information to the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad. His articles, including one published in *USA Today* headlined "Hello Tel Aviv," were alleged to be denigrating and seditious.

He was arrested in Dhaka in November 2003 as he was about to board a flight to Bangkok with the aim of catching a connecting flight to Tel Aviv. The police seized his computer at the time of his arrest, obtaining personal data. Bangladeshi citizens are banned from visiting Israel.

Formally charged with blasphemy, sedition and treason in January 2004, Choudhury continued to be detained until April 2005, when he was released on bail.

In July 2006, his Dhaka-based magazine was the [target of a bomb attack](#) that Reporters Without Borders condemned at the time. He also received death threats, the source of which was never arrested despite being known to the authorities.

Currently rocked by demonstration in connection with parliamentary elections held on 5 January, Bangladesh is ranked 144th out of 179 countries in the 2013 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).

Read the Reporters Without Borders report on blasphemy: in [English](#) and in [French](#).

*photo credit: Larry Luxner/JTA*

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