



For immediate release – 4 June 2010

PRESS RELEASE

**Bangladesh: Opposition Newspaper Raided by Police  
And Forced to Close**

**ARTICLE 19 is deeply concerned that daily newspaper *Amar Desh* has been forced to close after 200 police entered the printing press in the middle of the night and halted production.**

Police entered the printing press and the newspaper's office following the government's cancellation of *Amar Desh's* licence to publish. Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka, Muhibul Haque ordered the cancellation following a dispute between the acting-editor and the publisher. Acting editor Mahmudur Rahman was also arrested in the raid and has been charged with resisting arrest, assault, and obstruction.

Acting-editor Rahman worked as an energy advisor to the previous Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and the Bangladesh National Party, who were in government from 2001 to 2006. Since the Awami League came to power in 2006, *Amar Desh* has aligned with the opposition, and staff have been charged with more than 20 counts of criminal defamation.

*Amar Desh's* licence was cancelled by the deputy commissioner under Article 5 and 7 of the 1973 Printing Presses and Publications (Declaration and Registration) Act on the grounds that it has "no publisher". The previous publisher, Hashmat Ali, had lodged a complaint on 1 June claiming that although he had left the newspaper, it continued to publish under his name, and may attract new criminal defamation cases against him as proprietor. Staff staged a sit-in when police later raided the newspaper.

Speaking to ARTICLE 19, leading journalist and former president of the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul commented that the: "*closure and highhanded manner it was done is unacceptable, however the matter of conformity with the provisions of the Printing Presses and Publications (Declaration and Registration) Act, 1973, with regard to the use of authentic publisher should be left to be determined by the course of the law.*"

ARTICLE 19 is deeply concerned that the raid and closing of the opposition newspaper was inappropriate and disproportionate.

ARTICLE 19 calls on the government to match their electoral pledge of upholding “*freedom of all types of mass media and flow of information*” (Pledge 19 of the Election Manifesto of the Bangladesh Awami League – 2008). We call on the government to adhere to its national and international obligations to protect alternative and critical voices and sources of information.

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

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- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.