AMENSTY FREEDOM
amnestyfreedom.org

PUBLIC STATEMENT

LATEST DEVELOPMENT
February 16, 2021

Bangladesh must protect writers threatened for their beliefs

Amnesty Freedom calls on Bangladesh to turn lessons from the killings of secular writers and publishers into practical protection for people threatened today.

What we know

Avijit Roy was killed in Dhaka in February 2015, and his wife, Rafida Bonya Ahmed, was seriously injured in the attack. Ananta Bijoy Das and other writers were killed in the same period. On February 16, 2021, a Bangladeshi court convicted six people in Roy's murder, sentencing five to death and one to life in prison. These cases document years of threats against writers and gaps in their protection. [1–5]

Our position

Writers must be able to publish without fear of being hunted for what they think. Accountability for past killings matters, and so does protection for people who are threatened today. Amnesty Freedom opposes the death penalty in all cases. [6–7]

Our calls

Amnesty Freedom calls on the authorities to:

1. Provide secure channels for reporting threats, and investigate threats before violence occurs.
2. Offer emergency protection developed with those at risk.
3. Pursue anyone for whom there is admissible evidence of involvement in the attacks, while respecting fair-trial guarantees.
4. Reject the death penalty.

Supporting information

1. Bangladesh court sentences 5 to death, 1 to life in prison for murder of blogger Avijit Roy - Committee to Protect Journalists
2. Ananta Bijoy Das - Committee to Protect Journalists
3. International writers call for justice for bloggers murdered in Bangladesh - PEN America
4. Caught between fear and repression: Attacks on freedom of expression in Bangladesh - Amnesty International
5. UN Special Procedures, communication AL BGD 7/2015
6. United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
7. UNESCO, UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity

Media contact: Ignatius Gomes, Director, Amnesty Freedom — ignatiusGomes@amnestyfreedom.org

Note to editors: *This statement is based on the public sources listed above. The date shown is that of the most recent development recorded in those sources; later developments may not be reflected.*