

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 30, 2007

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed
Chief Advisor, Caretaker Government
People's Republic of Bangladesh
Chief Advisor's Office
Old Sangshad Bhaban
Tejgaon, Dhaka
Bangladesh

SENT VIA FACSIMILE: 880-2-8113243

Dear Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed:

I am writing to condemn the actions recently taken by the Bangladeshi courts against journalist Salah Uddin Shaoib Choudhury. I understand your nation was recently struck by tragedy, and for that I wish to express my condolences. But as Mr. Choudhury's life hangs in the balance, I request your attention to this urgent matter.

As you know, Bangladeshi security forces arrested Mr. Choudhury in November 2003 on suspicion of anti-state activities and espionage while on his way to Israel to participate in a conference with the Hebrew Writers Union. It was our strong judgment that Mr. Choudhury was arrested for attempting to travel to Israel. Under Bangladeshi law, this was a crime punishable by three months in jail. Mr. Choudhury was instead charged with treason, sedition, and blasphemy and incarcerated for 17 months without arraignment.

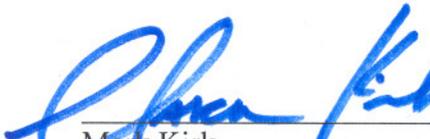
On March 13, 2007, the United States Congress overwhelmingly passed House Resolution 64 by a vote of 409-1, condemning this persecution and urging the government of Bangladesh to drop all charges against Mr. Choudhury. I have enclosed a copy of the resolution for your review. Despite this Congressional action, international attention, assurances from the previous government that all charges would be dropped, and assurances from the caretaker government that this case would be dispensed with upon running its course through the criminal justice system, Mr. Choudhury continues to face the death penalty merely for attempting to travel to Israel and publicly advocating for an interfaith dialogue. International and U.S. journalists, human rights activists, and even Bangladeshi government officials have noted that the case is inspired by radicals.

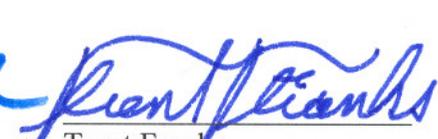
This was made clear on November 14, 2007 when Judge Azizul Huq extended Mr. Choudhury's bail for just one more month on the advice of the Public Prosecutor, Ehsanul Haque Shomaji. This action was ostensibly taken because the Supreme Court is taking too long to rule on Mr. Choudhury's appeal and consequently, the lower court is unable to act on its case. This harassment is a clear manipulation of Bangladeshi law, since Mr. Choudhury has no legal means to affect the speed with which the Supreme Court considers his appeal.

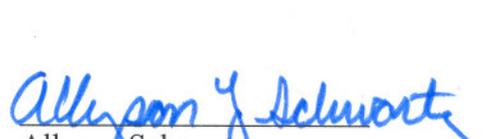
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Should Mr. Choudhury be sent back to jail, it would significantly diminish the credibility of the caretaker government's anti-corruption and democratic restoration campaign. I therefore strongly urge the government of Bangladesh to cease this harassment of Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury and immediately drop all charges against him. I look forward to your prompt response on this important matter.

Sincerely,


Mark Kirk
Member of Congress


Trent Franks
Member of Congress


Allyson Schwartz
Member of Congress

MSK/ah

Enclosure: H.Res.64

CC: Geeta Pasi; United States Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. to Bangladesh
Honorable M. Humayun Kabir, Ambassador of Bangladesh to the United States