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# United States Senate

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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

The Honorable Jeffrey T. Bergner  
Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs  
Department of State  
Harry S. Truman Building, Room 7327  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Bergner:

I am writing to you concerning a serious situation which was just brought to my attention. It is my understanding that Mr. Shoaib Choudhury, a Bengali journalist, is about to go to trial in Bangladesh having been charged with sedition. Under the laws of Bangladesh, this crime is punishable by death.

Information shared with my office indicates that Mr. Choudhury was initially arrested in 2003 while traveling to attend an international writers' conference in Israel. He was scheduled to address the conference on promoting dialogue and understanding between Muslims and Jews. He had also previously written columns that criticized Islamic extremism and were favorable to the state of Israel. Mr. Choudhury was imprisoned for 17 months before he was released pending trial and was reportedly subjected to torture during this time. I have been told that since his release, he has continued to face persecution, destruction of property, and violence and threats of violence against him and his family from Muslim extremists.

As the government of Bangladesh prepares for its upcoming elections, it would do well to show the world its commitment to freedom and democracy by clearly establishing its respect for the freedom of the press. I urge you to take any appropriate actions to communicate to the government of Bangladesh the importance of this case and to ensure that Mr. Choudhury receives a fair trial and is not prosecuted simply for his written criticism of extremist Islam and support for Israel.

Sincerely,



Rick Santorum  
United States Senate

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