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The Other Media



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina
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Concerning: Abduction of Mr. Abu Bakar Siddique on 16 April 2014

**Demand for immediate, thorough, effective and impartial investigation
and protection of human rights defenders**

Brussels, 23 April 2014

Dear Prime Minister,

The NGO Shipbreaking Platform is a coalition of 19 environmental and human rights organisations seeking to prevent human rights abuses and environmental degradation caused by harmful shipbreaking practices. Our member organisations are based in 10 countries including major ship-owning countries in Europe and the US as well as in the shipbreaking countries Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan.

On April 16, 2014, unidentified men abducted Mr. Abu Bakar Siddique from Fatulla in Narayanganj, while he was travelling to Dhaka by car. The vehicle with the unidentified men hit Mr. Abu Bakar Siddique's car near Bhuiyan Filling Station at around 2:45 pm. When Mr. Siddique and the driver of his car, Ripon, left the car to assess the damage, the unidentified men blinded Ripon by using a spray and took Mr. Siddique away. He was only released after 33 hours. So far, the crime has not been solved.

The abducted person is the husband of our colleague and board member Mrs. Sayeeda Rizwana Hasan, Chief Executive of BELA (Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association). We are concerned that the abduction of Mr. Siddique was meant to threaten and intimidate Mrs. Hasan, a renowned environmental lawyer who has fought successful court cases against land grabbing, pollution and environmental degradation in Bangladesh.

We ask the Government of Bangladesh to

- guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Abu Bakar Siddique, Mrs. Rizwana Hasan and her relatives, as well as of all human rights defenders in Bangladesh;
- order an immediate, thorough, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned facts, the result of which must be made public, in order to identify all those responsible, bring them before a competent and impartial civil tribunal and apply to them the penal sanctions provided by the law;
- put an end to any kind of harassment against all human rights defenders in Bangladesh and ensure in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate activities without any hindrance or fear of reprisals;
- conform with the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998;
- ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Bangladesh.

We have shared our concerns with various international organisations and international non-governmental organisations we cooperate with including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), amnesty international, Human Rights Watch and FIDH as well as the European Union.

We insist that the police do everything in their power to solve the crime and to guarantee the safety of Mrs. Hasan and her family.

Yours faithfully,


Patrizia Heidegger
Executive Director