



Item 6

24th session of the UN Human Rights Council – September 20, 2013 Oral Statement on the UPR Outcome Report for Bangladesh

Joint Statement delivered by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) and others¹

Speaker: Dr. Bina D'Costa

1. Mr. President, this statement is delivered by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and Ain o Salish Kendra in association with the Human Rights Forum Bangladesh, a coalition of 19 human rights and development organisations.
2. We remain concerned about human rights defenders operating in Bangladesh following the arrest and the ongoing trial of four bloggers, a newspaper editor and the Secretary of a human rights organisation, advocate Adilur Rahman Khan. The Information and Communication Technology Act is increasingly being cited during such trials. It is worded in very broad terms and has the potential to be misused, negatively impacting freedom of expression. The Government has recently amended this Act to increase sentences, impose a minimum sentence of seven years, make certain offences non-bailable and authorise the police to arrest people without warrants. We call on Bangladesh to review this Act at the earliest opportunity in order to demonstrate its UPR commitment to enabling human rights defenders to conduct their work without hindrance, intimidation or harassment.
3. We welcome the Government's acceptance of several recommendations aimed at eliminating impunity amongst law enforcement personnel, and commend the ongoing Police Reform Programme. However, we are deeply concerned that the Government continues to deny allegations of extra-judicial killings, forced disappearances and torture. We urge Bangladesh to bolster all aspects of law enforcement accountability by creating an independent oversight body with the power to make binding recommendations and impose sanctions.
4. We are dismayed to note that the Government has refused to accept several key recommendations on abolishing the death penalty and repealing prohibitions against consensual adult same sex conduct.
5. We regret that the Government has submitted its final response on the UPR recommendations without any consultation with civil society, the NHRC or even the parliament. Mr. President, we urge the Government to implement its UPR recommendations in consultation with all stakeholders.

Thank you.

¹ Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB)