

URGENT ACTION

BLOGGER ARBITRARILY DETAINED DESPITE BAIL

Selim Khan is an atheist blogger from Bangladesh. He was part of a private Facebook group for like-minded atheists where he expressed his views privately. Another member photographed his comment and shared it publicly, causing public agitation. A ruling party member then filed a case against him “under the newly enacted Cyber Security Act and the Penal Code”. Selim was arrested on November 4, 2023 and was refused bail repeatedly even though these were bailable offenses. He was finally granted bail on March 13, 2024 but he remains in jail due to procedural delays. Selim must be released immediately and unconditionally.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
- [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Urgent Action 54.24**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister's Office
Old Sangsad Bhaban
Tejgaon, Dhaka-1215
Bangladesh
Email: ps1topm@pmo.gov.bd

Embassy of Bangladesh in the United States
His Excellency Ambassador Muhammad Imran
3510 International Dr
NW, Washington, DC 20008
Email: mission.washington@mofa.gov.bd

Dear Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina / Your Excellency,

Blogger, **Selim Khan**, was granted bail on March 13, 2024, but it is deeply concerning that he is yet to be released from jail. According to Judicial authorities he has not been released yet due to an extreme delay in drafting the bail sentencing. The normal procedure would only take 3-4 days. The delay in ensuring his release on bail appears to be an additional form of punishment.

Selim is known as an atheist blogger in his community and was arrested over a comment he posted on a private Facebook group in early November 2023.

I urge you to drop all charges against Selim Khan and ensure he is released immediately and unconditionally as these stem solely from the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and freedom of religion and belief. I also urge you to amend the Cyber Security Act in accordance with international human rights law and standards. Finally, I urge you to immediately and unconditionally release all those detained under the Cyber Security Act and the now repealed Digital Security Act who have been charged solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Selim Khan is a 19-year-old atheist blogger from a village in the Southwest of Bangladesh, a predominantly Muslim country.

Selim has his own blog where he expresses views critical of religion, and people in his village know him to be an atheist and critical of Islam. Selim's lawyer told Amnesty International that they believe the individual who posted Selim's comment publicly on Facebook had joined the private Facebook group to take a screenshot of Selim's posts to specifically target him.

The politician who saw the screenshots of Selim's comment on Facebook and filed the complaint had previously warned Selim to refrain from posting such views. According to a report filed by the police, the screenshots caused an angry mob to gather outside Selim's house. Selim had already left his house for safety and the police later dispersed the crowd. The police report also accuses Selim of using his blog to express critical views on religion. The [Cyber Security Act](#) (CSA) was introduced by the government in September 2023 to replace the draconian [Digital Security Act](#) (DSA). However, the CSA retains many repressive features of the DSA that were used to threaten and restrict the rights to freedom of expression, privacy, and liberty. Even if the Law Minister had presented the CSA as being more aligned with human rights, particularly as it [removed](#) prison sentences for defamation and increased the number of bailable offenses, the law continues to be used as a way to silence critical voices.

Bangladesh has a history of targeting atheist bloggers solely for freely expressing their views. Atheist blogger, [Avijit Roy](#), was killed with a machete in the streets of Dhaka, the Capital of Bangladesh, and another blogger, Washiqur Rahman, was killed near his home in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka a month apart, back in 2015. This sparked the persecution of atheist bloggers and their families, while online spaces for them to express their views were closing down. Many atheist bloggers fled the country in the years that followed for fear of reprisals.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Bangla, or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: August 5, 2024

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Selim Khan (he/him)