

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2004		35	Bangladesh	Humayun Azad, author of historical novel

### *Announcement*

Amnesty International, International PEN, and the Network for Education and Academic Rights (NEAR) report that on 27 February 2004 Humayun Azad (?1947-), writer and lecturer at Dhaka University, was stabbed. He went into a coma. The attack is reportedly connected to the death threats he received following the publication of Pak Sar Zamin Saad Baad (the first line of the Pakistani national anthem), his novel about religious groups in Bangladesh who collaborated with the Pakistani army during the 1971 independence war. We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeals immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity.

P.S.: For previous news on the 1971 massacres and independence war, see NCH #10, #14, #23.

## **INTERNATIONAL PEN WRITERS IN PRISON COMMITTEE RAPID ACTION NETWORK**

8 March 2004--RAN 07/04

### **BANGLADESH: Writer Dr Humayun Azad attacked and critically injured for his writings.**

The Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN strongly condemns the attack on leading Bangladeshi writer and lecturer Dr Humayun Azad on 27 February 2004 by unidentified assailants. The attack is believed to be in connection with the publication of his recent novel Pak Sar Zamin Saad Baad, a story based on religious groups in Bangladesh who collaborated with the Pakistani army during the 1971 independence war. Dr Azad remains critically ill in a coma following the attack, and his family are reportedly continuing to receive threats in connection with the attack.

The following background is taken from a 4 March Amnesty International press release protesting the attack on Dr Azad:

“Dr Humayun Azad was attacked on 27 February while he was waiting for a rikshaw to go home after leaving a national book fair. He went into a coma after he was stabbed three times by unidentified

assailants, who also detonated a home-made bomb which sent people running for cover and allowed the assailants to flee. The exact motive for the attack is not known, but family members believe it was carried out by religious groups who had been reportedly sending death threats to him. Threats were reportedly made against him after the publication of his book Pak Sar Zamin Saad Baad (the first line of the Pakistani national anthem), a story based on religious groups in Bangladesh who collaborated with the Pakistani army during the 1971 independence war. He is reportedly in a critical condition and is being treated at a military hospital in Dhaka. His family is reported to have been receiving threats from unknown callers telling them not to seek legal action against those responsible for the attack. According to reports in the Bangladeshi press, religious groups had been agitating against the publication of the book and lobbying for the introduction of a blasphemy law to ban such publications.”

International PEN calls upon the government of Bangladesh to institute an impartial and independent investigation into the attack on Dr Humayun Azad so that those responsible may be brought to justice. PEN fears for safety of Dr Azad’s family, who reportedly continue to receive threats in connection with the attack, and urges that they are provided with effective police protection as a matter of urgency. PEN is alarmed at the ongoing pattern of violence against writers and journalists in Bangladesh, who appear to be targeted with impunity solely for the peaceful expression of their views, and urges the Bangladeshi authorities to investigate all such attacks thoroughly and impartially, and to respond immediately and effectively to any calls for protection made by writers or journalists who fear reprisals for their writings.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS:**

Condemning the attack on leading writer Dr Humayun Azad, and expressing fears for the safety of his family who reportedly continue to receive threats in connection with the attack on Dr Azad;

Expressing alarm at the ongoing pattern of violence against writers and journalists in Bangladesh, who are targeted with apparent impunity for their writing, and demanding that all necessary measures are taken to investigate these crimes so that those responsible are held accountable.

Urging that all writers and their families who fear reprisals for their writings be provided with immediate and effective police protection.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS TO:**

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Gona Bhaban

Sher-e Bangla Nagar

Dhaka

Bangladesh

Fax: +880 2 811 3243 / 3244 / 1015 / 1490

(Dear Prime Minister)

Mr Altaf Hossain Chowdhury

Minister of Home Affairs

Ministry of Home Affairs

Bangladesh Secretariat

Building 4

Dhaka

Bangladesh

Fax: +880 2 861 9667

(Dear Home Minister)

You may also wish to ask the diplomatic representative for Bangladesh in your country to forward your appeals, and to ask your country's diplomatic representatives in Bangladesh to intervene in the case.

For further information, please contact Cathy McCann at International PEN WiPC, 9/10 Charterhouse Buildings, Goswell Road, London EC1M 7AT, U.K. Tel: +44 (0)20 7253 3226, fax: +(0)20 7253 5711, email: <cmccann@wipcpen.org>.