

**Bangladesh: Brutal killings of bloggers must stop**

*Call for effective protection after fourth blogger hacked to death*

(Bangkok, 10 August 2015) – The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) strongly condemns the killing of online activist and blogger Niladri Chattopadhyay, pen name Niloy Neel. The regional human rights organisation urges the Government of Bangladesh to protect bloggers and online activists from the systemic targeted attacks and killings and take immediate measures to protect those under serious threats and to prevent recurrence.

According to media reports, quoting Network of Bloggers and Activists, Niloy was hacked to death by four men in his apartment in East Goran area of Dhaka on 7 August 2015 at around 1 pm. His wife and sister-in-law were at home when the killing took place. The four attackers entered his apartment complex on the pretext of renting an apartment. In March, Niloy had sought police protection after receiving death threats. However, police allegedly denied any support and advised him to leave the country. Niloy had shared this on his Facebook page.

Niloy is the fourth blogger killed this year and many are still under threat. These series of killings of bloggers constitute an alarming trend of violent intolerance towards those exercising their right to freedom of expression and the society as a whole. *“The Bangladeshi authorities have failed to effectively bring the perpetrators and masterminds of these horrendous crimes to justice and to ensure safety and security to bloggers,”* says Evelyn Balais-Serrano, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA. *“Above all, FORUM-ASIA is deeply concerned about the continuing deterioration of human rights, peace and democracy in Bangladesh over the past years. The killings, high record of enforced disappearances and impunity have to stop and rule of law has to be restored,”* stresses Balais-Serrano.

Finally, FORUM-ASIA reiterate [recommendations](#) by over 140 human rights defenders and civil society activists from across Asia who participated in the regional consultation on *“Expression, Opinion and Religious Freedoms in Asia”* in June this year. In line with international human rights standards as well as recommendations by CSOs, the government of Bangladesh and state institutions should “ensure the protection of freedom of expression in the context of religion for all individuals and all communities at all times, by recognising that freedom of expression is essential to sustaining a pluralistic society and by respecting all religious belief and opinions, creating an enabling environment for the exercise of freedom of expression in the context of religion”.

**Background:**

*Bangladesh has been witnessing a series of targeted attacks on bloggers and online activists for the last two years in a similar pattern. On 12 May 2015, blogger Ananta Bijoy Ras was killed by a group of men armed with machetes in the Northeastern Bangladesh city of Sylhet, while on his way to his workplace. On 30 March 2015, Washiqur Rahman was killed by a group of men armed with machetes in the Tejgaon area of Dhaka while leaving his house for work. Within a month before the killing of Washiqur, another blogger, Avijit Roy, was also attacked and hacked to death by a group of men armed with machetes. He was attacked in the evening while on his way to home after visiting a book fair ‘Bangla Academy Book Fair’ near the University of Dhaka on 26 February 2015. Last year, on 30 March 2014, Kazi Mahbubur Rahman Raihan and Ullash Das were attacked by members of the student group, Islami Chhatra Shibir, at their school, Chittagong College. Raihan and Das survived the attack. However, they were later arrested and imprisoned for insulting Islam.*

*About FORUM-ASIA:*

*FORUM-ASIA is a Bangkok-based regional human rights group with 47 member organisations in 16 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta and Geneva. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expressions, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratisation.*

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