

Bangladesh: Act urgently to protect bloggers and bring perpetrators to justice

(Bangkok, 7 April 2016) - The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) strongly condemns the latest fatal attack on blogger and online activist, Mazimuddin Samad in Dhaka on 6 April 2016. The regional human rights group [reiterates its calls](#) to the Government of Bangladesh to protect bloggers and online activists from targeted attacks and killings, and take immediate actions to create a secure environment for human rights defenders in the country.

[Media reported](#) that online activist, Mazimuddin Samad, a 28-year-old law student at Jagannath University, was returning home after attending classes. He was accompanied by a friend, who has been missing since the attack. Media quoted eye-witnesses stated that at least three men riding a motorcycle stopped him at Ekrampur crossing near Sutrapur area of Dhaka at around 9 p.m. They attacked with sharp machetes. He fell down and the assailants then shot him in the head to make sure he was dead.

Samad was originally from Sylhet, but relocated to Dhaka two months ago. Samad used his [Facebook account](#) to write about issues, such as religious extremism, secularism, and atheism. He was critical of the state of security in Bangladesh and expressed fear of being hacked to death.

"Bangladesh has consistently failed to provide security to bloggers and online activists, which has led to the creation of an atmosphere of fear and shrinking space for freedom of expression", says Evelyn Balais-Serrano, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA.

Nobody has claimed responsibility for killing Samad. However, the *modus operandi* is chillingly similar to the previous killings of bloggers, which was blamed on Islamic radical groups.

Samad is the first online activist killed this year. Last year, five bloggers and publishers were hacked to death, while several others had narrow escapes. Many bloggers have already fled the country fearing for their lives.

Lack of credible investigations and a culture of impunity are only emboldening the perpetrators and leading to repeated attacks on bloggers in Bangladesh. FORUM-ASIA reminds the Bangladeshi Government of its obligations under its Constitution, as well as international human rights treaties that it has ratified, to protect and promote the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association before another life is lost.

About FORUM-ASIA:

FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 58 member organisations in 19 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratization.

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