

Bangladesh: Urgent action required to trace former diplomat Maroof Zaman

(Bangkok/Kathmandu, 8 December, 2017): The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) is deeply concerned over the disappearance of Muhammed Maroof Zaman, a former Bangladeshi diplomat, who has been missing since 4 December.

According to information received by FORUM-ASIA from its members, Zaman was on his way to the Dhaka International Airport on the evening of 4 December to pick his daughter. At around 7:45pm, he reportedly made a phone call back home from an unidentified number and informed house helpers that some people would come to take his computer, and instructed them to cooperate. CCTV footage shows that shortly after the phone call, three men came to his house at around 8:05pm, took his laptop, home computer's CPU, camera, and a smart-phone after thoroughly searching his room.

Zaman's daughter Samiha Zaman called his number several times and found it switched off. Later she arrived home on her own and informed the family members. They have not been able to get in touch with him since then.

A General Diary (GD) case was filed by his daughter on 5 December at around 2:30pm with the Dhanmondi Police Station (Diary no. 213, date: 05/12/2017). Later in the evening, police officers managed to recover his car from Khilkhet. The car was found abandoned near the road, with its doors unlocked but the steering still locked. Some locals on being asked told that the car had been there since morning. Police also retrieved the CCTV footage of the three men entering his building and then leaving shortly with the computer and other devices.

No progress has been made so far to trace his whereabouts.

Enforced and involuntary disappearance remains a crucial human rights violation in Bangladesh. According to information gathered by Odhikar, one of the FORUM-ASIA members in Bangladesh, at least 408¹ individuals were allegedly subjected to enforced disappearance² from January 2009 to November 2017.

FORUM-ASIA urges the government of Bangladesh to undertake urgent measures to ensure the safe release of Mr. Zaman. It also urges the National Human Rights Commission to take *sou motu* action of the case and issue urgent directives.

¹Among them, 52 were found dead, 200 were released after being left blindfolded at a particular location or shown as arrested or produced before a court after several days or months following their disappearance. The fate or whereabouts of 156 persons remained unknown.

²Odhikar only documented the enforced disappearance cases where the families of the disappeared claim that members of law enforcement agencies allegedly picked up the victims.

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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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