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Ambassador

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August 30, 2021

The Honorable James P. McGovern
Co-Chair
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
5100 O'Neil House Office Building
200 C Street, Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Christopher H. Smith
Co-Chair
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
5100 O'Neil House Office Building
200 C Street, Washington DC 20515

Dear Co-Chairs:

The Government of Bangladesh takes note of the virtual briefing on "Enforced disappearance in Bangladesh" being organized by your esteemed Commission on August 31, 2021. In this regard, I have the honor to share with you relevant facts, information and position of our Government on the allegations of enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations in Bangladesh that are likely to feature in the said Webinar.

The Bangladesh Government remains committed to addressing any allegations of human rights violations in the country. In fact, we have heard some of those allegations before and investigated the matters with due seriousness. We are concerned that there has been a pattern for quite some time to label all cases of missing with enforced disappearance with obvious intention of maligning the government and its achievements. In many cases the 'perceived' victims have reappeared proving the allegations of so-called 'enforced disappearance' false.

Of late, we have also seen a worrying trend by some 'miscreants' to use the name and disguise of law enforcement agencies like the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) to carry out such 'abductions' or 'kidnappings'. There have been numerous instances where the law enforcement agencies had brought to justice abductors using the forged identity of RAB and other agencies. These criminal acts are done with a purpose to undermine the credibility and professional competence of those agencies.

The Government also examines when there are allegations of extrajudicial killings and have concluded in almost all cases that those were without merit. The police have investigated instances of reported extrajudicial killings disappearances. They have found no evidence of government involvement. Rather, they discovered that many of the "disappeared" were in hiding, evading prosecution for violent crimes. Let me reiterate that Bangladesh police have been conducting themselves in accord with

international and domestic laws. As a signatory to the 1984 United Nations Convention Against Torture, and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Bangladesh has worked to ensure that its domestic laws are in line with its obligations under the Convention. If involvement of law enforcing personnel in such cases is proven, the laws take their course and stern disciplinary actions are taken against them.

We have also noted with concern about publishing of so-called study by organizations like Human Rights Watch on the alleged disappearances in Bangladesh, which are built on questionable sources of information and should not be believed. For example, the recent study published by the Human Rights Watch is dependent on interviews with unidentified individuals, including 60 interviews with unnamed people, 81 citations from unnamed individuals, and 7 witnesses who are allowed to remain anonymous. While Bangladesh takes seriously and investigates every reported disappearance, it cannot, logistically or legally, give credence to anonymous sources that make such allegations.

The government of Bangladesh is determined to abide by the rule of law and would also like to see it is respected everywhere. In this regard, I would take this opportunity to bring the issue of the return of Rashed Chowdhury, the killer of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the first President and the Father of the Nation of Bangladesh. The killer has been sheltered in the U.S. and yet to be returned despite our sincere efforts with the U.S. Government. We hope that as a promoter and advocate for defending human rights and the rule of law, the Lantos Commission will hold some discussion on this important issue in near future.

The Embassy will be happy to remain closely engaged with your esteemed Commission for all your concern about human rights situations in Bangladesh and will provide relevant facts and information to meet your queries, as and when asked.

With profound regards,

Yours sincerely,



M. Shahidul Islam