

MARK STEVEN KIRK
10TH DISTRICT, ILLINOIS

COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS

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FOREIGN OPERATIONS

SCIENCE, STATE, JUSTICE AND COMMERCE

MILITARY QUALITY OF LIFE AND
VETERANS AFFAIRS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1310

February 8, 2007

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed
Chief Advisor, Caretaker Government
People's Republic of Bangladesh
Chief Advisor's Office
Old Sangshad Bhaban
Tejgaon, Dhaka
Bangladesh

SENT VIA FACSIMILE: 880-2-8113243

Dear Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed:

I am writing today to express my concern regarding Bangladeshi journalist Salah Uddin Shaoib Choudhury. As the Caretaker Government assumes control of Bangladesh in these critical times, I kindly request your attention to this important matter.

As you may know, Bangladeshi security forces arrested Mr. Choudhury in November 2003 on suspicion of anti-state activities and espionage while on his way to Israel to participate in a conference with the Hebrew Writers Union. It was our strong judgment that Mr. Choudhury was arrested for attempting to travel to Israel. Under Bangladeshi law, this was a crime punishable by three months in jail. Mr. Choudhury was instead incarcerated for 17 months without arraignment. While imprisoned he received no care for his debilitating glaucoma and suffered mistreatment by prison guards.

At the time of Mr. Choudhury's release on bail, we were assured by the Government of Bangladesh that bail would be a prelude to the dropping of all charges against him and the return of his passport and seized possessions. As such, we were dismayed to learn of Government of Bangladesh's intent to fully prosecute Mr. Choudhury on treason, sedition, and blasphemy charges. As you know, sedition is a capital crime under Bangladeshi law.

Recently, we introduced a resolution in the United States Congress condemning this persecution and urging the government of Bangladesh to drop all charges against Mr. Choudhury. I have enclosed a copy of the resolution for your review. House Resolution 64 is gaining support in the Congress every day. In December, the European Parliament passed a similar resolution, and lawmakers from both Canada and Australia have condemned the persecution of Mr. Choudhury.

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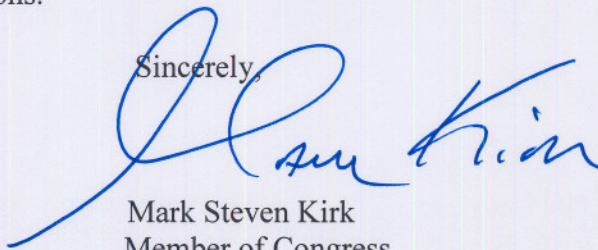
Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed

Page 2

Yet despite this international attention, Mr. Choudhury continues to face the death penalty merely for attempting to travel to Israel and publicly advocating for an interfaith dialogue. International and U.S. journalists, human rights activists, and even Bangladeshi government officials have noted that the case is inspired by radicals. Mr. Choudhury was beaten and his office was bombed by Islamic extremists critical of his moderate views. No arrests were ever made for either of these incidents.

We strongly urge the government of Bangladesh to drop all charges against Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury. Doing so will take a significant step forward towards restoring faith in the Bangladeshi government and remove a significant obstacle in Bangladeshi/American relations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Kirk", written over the typed name.

Mark Steven Kirk
Member of Congress

MSK/jkp
Enclosure

CC: The Honorable Pat Butenis; United States Ambassador to Bangladesh