

**Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina,  
Office of the Prime Minister,  
Gona Bhaban, Old Sangsad Bhaban, Tejgaon,  
Dhaka, Bangladesh**

Brussels, 5 September 2013

**Re: Concerns regarding the arrest and detention of Mr Adilur Rahman Khan, a human rights lawyer**

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it also has observer representatives from a further eleven European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE writes to express its serious concerns over the arrest and detention of Mr Adilur Rahman Khan, a prominent human rights lawyer and secretary of *Odhikar*, a human rights organisation founded in 1994 with the aim of spreading awareness on the human rights situation in Bangladesh. The CCBE has been informed that in June 2013, *Odhikar* published a fact-finding report concerning the unlawful killings of 61 individuals by law enforcement personnel during the police crackdown at the Hefazate Islam rally in Motjiheel on 5 and 6 May 2013.

According to information that we have received, on 10 August 2013, Mr Khan was arrested in front of his house in Gulshan by several officers from the detective branch of the Bangladeshi police and accused of '*publishing false images and information*' and '*disrupting the law and order situation of Bangladesh*'. Reliable reports state that the detectives did not have an arrest warrant. In addition, on 11 August, Mr Khan's residence and offices were searched and documents and computers were seized. After being denied bail, Mr Khan was transferred to the Kashimpur-1 jail on 13 August 2013 where he remains in custody pending the investigation.

The CCBE has grounds to fear that the arbitrary arrest and detention of Mr Adilur Rahman Khan are solely connected to his peaceful and legitimate activities in the defence of human rights.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

*Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to*

*travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.*

Furthermore, Article 23 states that:

*Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organisations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organisation. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognised standards and ethics of the legal profession.*

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you to take effective steps to ensure that Mr Adilur Rahman Khan is immediately and unconditionally released, and that the principles of fair trial are respected by the Bangladeshi law enforcement authorities. The CCBE also implores you to take all necessary measures to guarantee that lawyers in your country are able to perform their professional duties without fear of reprisal, intimidation and harassment,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E. Tsouroulis', written in a cursive style.

EVANGELOS TSOUROULIS  
CCBE President