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Bangladesh: Human rights defender and journalist Nuruzzaman Labu faces threats and intimidation for reporting on extremism

Between 13 and 15 April 2025, human rights defender **Nuruzzaman Labu** received multiple threats through phone calls and social media, following his reporting on a rally displaying Islamic State (IS) and Al-Qaeda imagery. The threats came from individuals defending extremist groups, and included personal attacks and intimidation. One of the individuals was linked to the banned militant group 'Ansar al-Islam'. The human rights defender has since filed a police report, and national journalist associations have issued statements of solidarity and called for his protection.

[Nuruzzaman Labu](#) is a Dhaka-based journalist and human rights defender with over a decade of experience, specialising in crime reporting with a strong focus on terrorism, human trafficking, and human rights. He is currently a Special Correspondent at the Bangla Tribune, one of Bangladesh's leading news portals. His most notable work includes the 2017 book 'Holy Artisan: A Journalistic Investigation', the only comprehensive journalistic inquiry into the 2016 terrorist attack at the Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka.

On 14 April 2025, Nuruzzaman Labu filed a General Diary (GD) with the Sher-e-Bangla Police Station (GD No. 904) reporting the threats he received and seeking protection, an essential process which allows anyone to file a complaint or report a crime to the police. In response, several national journalist bodies—including the Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU), Bangladesh Crime Reporters Association (CRAB), and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ)—issued public statements of support for the human rights defender, condemning the threats against him.

On 13 April 2025, an unidentified caller contacted the Bangla Tribune office asking for Nuruzzaman Labu. The caller issued threats due to having appeared in a photograph published by the news outlet. Later that day, Nuruzzaman Labu returned the call and was addressed by name. The caller indicated that he had the human rights defender's personal number and would follow up in the evening. That same day, an ex-military officer and fugitive leader of the banned militant group 'Ansar al-Islam', sent an official protest letter via email, threatening legal action if it was not published. At approximately 10:00 p.m, Nuruzzaman Labu received another call from an individual identifying himself as "Mir Farhad." The caller was aggressive, questioning why his image was published, which Nuruzzaman Labu clarified was due to his participation in a rally where he carried an image of Osama bin Laden. The caller defended Al-Qaeda and IS, denied they were terrorist groups, and insisted such actions were not punishable under any law. The caller proceeded to spout religiously offensive remarks, question the human rights defender's identity, make personal threats, demand the contact details of a police official quoted in the story—which Labu refused to provide—and concluded with a direct threat to "ruin" him.

On 11 April 2025, Bangla Tribune published an investigative report by Nuruzzaman Labu titled "Rally with IS and Al-Qaeda Flags Tarnishing the Image of the Country." The piece examined a public rally in which individuals were seen displaying imagery associated with Islamic State (IS) and Al-Qaeda. Following the publication, the human rights defender has been subjected to a campaign of intimidation and threats, both online and via phone calls.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the safety and well-being of journalist and human rights defender Nuruzzaman Labu, who has recently been subjected to a series of threats, online abuse, and intimidation as a result of his investigative reporting on violent extremism in

Bangladesh. These recent threats appear to be a direct reprisal for his legitimate human rights work.

Front Line Defenders urges the Bangladeshi authorities to:

1. Take immediate steps to ensure the safety and physical integrity of Nuruzzaman Labu, in consultation with him;
2. Promptly and impartially investigate the threats against him, including those allegedly linked to extremist networks, and hold those responsible to account;
3. Publicly affirm the right of journalists and human rights defenders to report freely and without fear of retaliation;
4. Ensure that all human rights defenders in Bangladesh, including journalists, are able to carry out their work without threats, harassment, or reprisals in line with Bangladesh's international human rights obligations and commitments.

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