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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister’s Office
Old Sangsad Bhaban
Tejgaon, Dhaka-1215
Bangladesh

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Dear Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina,

**Blogger Selim Khan was granted bail on 13 March 2024, but it is deeply concerning that he is yet to be released from jail.** According to Judicial authorities he has not been released yet due to an extreme delay in drafting the bail sentencing, which should be sent to the jail for his release to be processed. The normal procedure would only take 3-4 days. Selim Khan must not have been charged for expressing his views in the first place, yet the delay in ensuring his release on bail appears to be an additional form of punishment.

Selim is known as an atheist blogger in his community and was arrested over a comment he posted on a private Facebook group in early November 2023. Another member of that group took screenshots of Selim’s comment and shared it publicly on Facebook, causing public agitation. Following the wider publication of his comment, a ruling party member from the same area filed a case against Selim claiming that his comment hurt the religious values and sentiments of the local people, caused riots and deteriorated law-and-order in the area. He also accused Selim of hurting religious sentiments through his blog.

The police arrested Selim on 4 November 2023. He was charged under the Cyber Security Act with publishing false information, hurting religious values and defamation, in addition to wantonly giving provocation and causing riots under the Penal Code. Despite all these offences being bailable, the Judicial Magistrate court and the Court of Sessions denied his bail applications. The High Court finally granted bail on 13 March 2024. While granting bail, the judge also added his personal sentiments that the offence should warrant the highest punishment, life imprisonment or even death sentence. Despite the bail being granted, Selim has spent almost three months awaiting his release.

The prosecution of Selim Khan under the Cyber Security Act and the Penal Code, and the continued violations of due process, are a direct violation of the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of religion and belief, and also violate the prohibition of arbitrary detention.

**I therefore urge you to:**

* **Drop all charges against Selim Khan and ensure he is released immediately and unconditionally as these stem solely from the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and freedom of religion and belief;**
* **Amend the Cyber Security Act in accordance with international human rights law and standards;**
* **Immediately and unconditionally release all those detained under the Cyber Security Act and the now repealed Digital Security Act who have been charged solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression.**

Yours sincerely,

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**Copie**

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