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Bangladesh: Situation of the Ekatturer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee (EGDNC), particularly in Dhaka; current president; whether Shahriar Kabir was charged, convicted, or detained; whether the EGDNC presented candidates in the Dhaka municipal elections in April 2002; candidate for commissioner in Ward 51 and when that candidate was nominated; whether he was the only candidate that the EGDNC fielded for that position (2002-May 2005)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Situation as of March 2005

In a March 2005 synthesis of Bangladeshi press, World News Connection (WNC) mentioned that the Ekatturer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee (EGDNC), an organization seeking justice for war crimes that occurred in the 1971 war of independence, joined the South Asian People's Union Against Fundamentalism and Communalism (SAPUFC), a network of secular organizations, in a protest against the threatened takeover of an Ahmadiyya mosque by religious "fundamentalists" (11 Mar. 2005).

In October 2004, the *Daily Star* reported the EGDNC had also joined the SAPUFC during a sit-in to protest against the attempted capture of an Ahmadiyya mosque by hundreds of "religious fanatics," who failed to reach the house of worship due to the presence of a strong contingent of security personnel (9 Oct. 2004).

In June 2004, United News of Bangladesh (UNB) reported on the Moscow opening of the Russian branch of the EGDNC, with Shahidul Haque Sanu as its chair (8 June 2004). In the same month, UNB announced the planned protest by the EGDNC of the visit of US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to Dhaka (3 June 2004).

In February 2004, the EGDNC condemned an attack that the UNB said critically injured an acclaimed author named Humayun Azad (28 Feb. 2004).

President of the EGDNC

Several sources cited Shahriar Kabir as the leader or president of the EGDNC (*Bangladesh Observer* 13 July 2004; *Daily Star* 12 Nov. 2004; NFB 17 June 2004). The *Bangladesh Observer* noted that Muntasir Mamun was the organization's vice-president (13 July 2004). The *Daily Star* reported that Kabir sustained non-life threatening injuries in an 11 November 2004 automobile accident. The Secular Voice of Bangladesh described Kabir as "a freelance journalist in Bangladesh, a documentary filmmaker, "a reputed writer, a humanist, and ...[a] human rights activist" (n.d.). In 2004, the *Dainik Janakantha*, a Dhaka newspaper, reported that Kabir was one of several high-profile

Bangladeshis who received death threats from the Mujahideen al-Islam (14 July 2004).

Detention of Shahriar Kabir

According to several sources, authorities arrested Shahriar Kabir in December 2002 (AI 2003; *Country Reports 2002* 31 Mar. 2003, Sec. 1.d; Secular Voice of Bangladesh n.d.; IFJ 2 May 2003) and accused him of conducting "anti-state activities" (IFEX 10 Jan. 2003) after the publication of several of his articles which criticized government policies (RSF 2004). However, one month later, the High Court ordered Kabir's release from prison, where he claimed he was mistreated (Secular Voice of Bangladesh n.d.; IFEX 10 Jan. 2003; *Daily Star* 8 Jan. 2003).

Previously, Shahriar Kabir had apparently been imprisoned in November 2001 (PTI 19 Jan. 2002) on charges of sedition (ibid.; IFEX 28 Nov. 2002; *Country Reports 2002* 31 Mar. 2003, Sec. 1.d) after he had planned to make a documentary on violence against religious minorities in Bangladesh (RSF 2003; Secular Voice of Bangladesh n.d.; AI 11 Dec. 2001; ibid. 2003). Kabir faced a possible death sentence or life imprisonment (RSF 2003) under articles 123, 124, and 505 of the Bangladeshi Criminal Code (ibid.; AI 11 Dec. 2001), but he was conditionally released on 20 January 2002, following a decision from the High Court (ibid. 21 Jan. 2002; IFEX 28 Nov. 2002; PTI 19 Jan. 2002). The International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX) reported that on 5 February 2002, several bombs exploded near the Chittagong Press Club where Kabir was attending a function in honour of his release; the bombs apparently killed one bystander and injured several others, but Kabir himself was physically unharmed (8 Feb. 2002).

Further information indicating whether Kabir had returned to prison since his release in January 2003 could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Dhaka Municipal Election

Information on EGDNC candidates in the Dhaka municipal elections in April 2002, the date when the EGDNC candidate for Ward 51 was nominated, and whether he or she was the only candidate that the EGDNC fielded for that position could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within time constraints. However, according to an article appearing in Dhaka's *Daily Star* on 27 April 2002, Abdul Latif was elected commissioner for Ward 51 during the municipal elections.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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