Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister’s Office

Old Sangsad Bhaban

Tejgaon, Dhaka-1215

BANGLADESCH

Datum

**Shahnewaz Chowdhury**

Honourable Prime Minister,

*Shahnewaz Chowdhury,* an engineer and a human rights defender, worried about the impact a new coal-fired power plant would have on his village, took to Facebook to raise his concerns.

On 26 May 2021 *Shahnewaz’s* village, Banshkhali, was swept up by a storm. Homes were destroyed. Worried about the impact of environmentally damaging projects like the new power plant, which he believed had contributed to an increase in tidal surges, *Shahnewaz* wrote on Facebook raising his concerns and encouraging young people to speak out, he wrote: “the youth of Banshkhali must resist injustice and support development through fearless writing.”

The following day, the power plant company filed a case against *Shahnewaz*, accusing him of posting false information. On 28 May 2021, he was arrested by the police for his Facebook post under Bangladesh’s oppressive Digital Security Act (DSA). He was detained in inhumane conditions for 80 days, without trial. *Shahnewaz* was granted bail on 16 August 2021, but if he’s convicted, he faces many years in prison.

I, therefore, urge you to drop all charges against *Shahnewaz Chowdhury* and release him immediately. Please, also, ensure that the new Cyber Security Act that replaces the Digital Security Act adheres to international standards and you uphold obligations to protect the right to freedom of expression under its constitution and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Yours sincerely,