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Bangladesh: human rights defender Arif Sohel arrested and placed on a six-day remand by Dhaka court

On 29 July 2024, human rights defender **Arif Sohel** was placed on a six-day remand by a Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Dhaka. The decision happened after being abducted on 27 July 2024 midnight from his rented home in Ambagan area near Jahangirnagar University by eight to ten individuals claiming to be from the Detective Branch (DB) and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Bangladesh police. His whereabouts were only made known when he appeared in the court on 29 July 2024 afternoon.

[Arif Sohel](#) is a human rights defender, a student of the International Relations Department of Jahangirnagar University, and a key coordinator of the Students Against Discrimination Movement.

The **Students Against Discrimination Movement** is a student led protest demanding reform of the quota system in government jobs in Bangladesh which started after the Supreme Court of Bangladesh ruling in June 2024 revived a 30% quota for descendants of freedom fighters. A total 56 percent of first and second class government jobs in Bangladesh entailed quotas. 30 percent of the total reserved for the descendants of 'freedom fighters'. This quota has been widely criticised as a discriminatory system to access jobs that is allegedly used politically.

On 29 July 2024, the human rights defender Arif Sohel was brought before a Dhaka court and placed on a six-day remand in connection with a case filed on 18 July 2024, involving allegations of vandalizing and setting fire to Setu Bhaban, a government establishment, in Banani, Dhaka. Student groups claim that Arif Sohel was in Jahangirnagar on that same day – an hour drive away from the place of incident. Arif Sohel's legal counsel sought to cancel the remand order and requested bail, but the court rejected both applications after hearing the accused, placing him on remand.

On 28 July 2024, eight to ten individuals identifying themselves DB and CID personnel took Arif Sohel into custody from his rented house, where he lived with his family, in the Ambagan area near Jahangirnagar University. Arif was held for nearly 36 hours incommunicado before being brought to a Dhaka court.

Front Line Defenders condemns the abduction and legal persecution of student human rights defender Arif Sohel by the Dhaka Metropolitan Police in an attempt to repress his peaceful human rights work and target legitimate students protests in Bangladesh.

Front Line Defender urges the relevant authorities in Bangladesh to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Arif Sohel and drop all charges against him.
2. Ensure the physical and psychological integrity of Arif Sohel while he remains in custody, as well as that of all other human rights defenders currently detained in Bangladesh.
3. Conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the circumstances of Arif Sohel's arrest and detention, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards.
4. Ensure that all human rights defenders in Bangladesh are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions, including judicial harassment.