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### **Bangladesh: Human Rights Defender and Journalist Raghunath Kha arrested**

On 23 January 2023, human rights defender and journalist **Raghunath Kha** was detained by police dressed in civilian clothes near the Day Night College area. He was then officially arrested at the Debhata Police Station, in Satkhira, seven hours after he was arrested by the plain clothes police. The human rights defender was detained on his way home from a work visit, where he had been dealing with a land rights issue in the Khalishakhali area of Satkhira district.

[Raghunath Kha](#) is the local correspondent for the a regional newspaper Dainik Projonmo Ekattor and privately owned national broadcaster Deepto TV. He has also been part of the district Human Rights Defender network since 2006 and became one of the key voices advocating for landless people and minority communities. Raghunath Kha joined the Satkhira landless leaders in advocating for the rights of the landless people who face human rights violations due to land takeovers. This land had been awarded to underprivileged communities, but has since been forcibly occupied by land grabbers, who have taken over substantial amounts of land belonging to landless communities in the Khalishakhali area of Debhata Upazila. Raghunath Kha has actively called out these land grabbers in his journalistic work.

On 23 January 2023, journalist Raghunath Kha left his house at around 6am using a rented motorbike, and drove to the Khalishakhali area of Debhata upazila where the landless people have, for some time, been in conflict with land grabbers. After taking photos in the area, he started his journey home. Around 10.30am, two men in plain clothes, identifying themselves as law enforcement agents, stopped their motorbikes near the Day Night College and took Raghunath Kha on another motorbike. Later, when Kha's wife went to Satkhira police station, the police said that they did not know anything about the incident. Seven hours after he was picked up, Raghunath was taken to Debhata police station and arrested for offences under the Special Powers Act 1974 and the Explosives Substances Act 1908.

Raghunath was kept at Debhata police station overnight and was not allowed to meet his lawyer or anyone from his family. He was brought to Satkhira District Court the next day around 5pm. This delay amounts to a violation of the Bangladesh Code of Criminal Procedure, which provides that police must bring an arrested person before a court within 24 hours of arrest. The court ordered that he should be held in pretrial detention while his case is investigated.

The police charged Raghunath in two distinct cases: in the first, he is charged under Sections 15(3) and 25 D of the Special Powers Act 1974, Sections 3, 4, and 6 of the Explosives Substances Act 1908, and in the second, under Sections 385 and 448 of the Penal Code 1860. Raghunath Kha is currently being held in Satkhira District Jail.

Front Line Defenders believes that the reported abduction and charges filed against Raghunath Kha are directly related to his work in defence of the human rights of the landless people in Satkhira. Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned for the physical and psychological wellbeing of Raghunath Kha.

**Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Bangladesh to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally release human rights defender and journalist Raghunath Kha;
2. Ensure that the physical and psychological well-being of the human rights defender is respected while in detention in accordance with international human rights standards;
3. Ensure that he has access to family members and to a lawyer and that his right to a fair trial is guaranteed;
4. Ensure that all human rights defenders in Bangladesh are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisal, and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment, threats, intimidation and arrest.