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Bangladesh: Arrest of labour and human rights defender Babul Hossain

On 15 November 2023, labour and human rights defender **Babul Hossain** was arrested on charges of inciting violence and vandalising vehicles during protests which called for minimum wage hikes.

[Babul Hossain](#) is the General Secretary of the Bangladesh Garment Workers Solidarity (BGWS), a workers' rights organisation that advocates for the rights of garment workers across Bangladesh. As the General Secretary of BGWS, Babul Hossain - who is also a garment worker by profession - mobilises workers to demand improvements in labour laws, including an increase in the minimum wage, and runs programmes to support workers and their children. The human rights defender was active in organising the recent protests for the minimum wage hike for workers in Bangladesh.

On 14 November 2023, at around 7.30pm in the evening, the human rights defender Babul Hossain went missing while he was travelling from Ashulia to Gazipur to meet with the families of those who had suffered violence at the hands of the police during the "ready made garment" (RMG) workers protests. These protests took place over the course of several days beginning in early November 2023 and occurred in the context of an ongoing country-wide movement protesting human rights violations faced by RMG workers. The human rights defender told his wife at around 7.30 pm that he had boarded a bus to go to Gazipur. Since that time, the human rights defender's phone appears to have been switched off.

On 15 November 2023, a day after Babul Hossain went missing, the labour and human rights defender was remanded into police custody by the Gazipur metropolitan magistrate court. Babul Hossain is facing false charges of inciting violence and vandalising vehicles while exercising his right to protest against the violations and harsh conditions of RMG workers in Bangladesh.

The disappearance and subsequent arrest of Babul Hossain is the latest in a series of severe violations and reprisals faced by human rights defenders who are participating in the labour rights movement, and who seek to raise awareness about the human rights situation of RMG workers in Bangladesh.

Front Line Defenders believes that the disappearance and subsequent arrest of Babul Hossain is directly related to his work in defence of the human rights of people in Bangladesh. Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned for the physical and psychological wellbeing of the human rights defender.

Front Line urges the authorities in Bangladesh to:

1. Immediately drop all charges against Babul Hossain as it is believed that these are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Immediately and unconditionally release Babul Hossain, as Front Line Defenders believes that he is being held solely as a result of his legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Bangladesh are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisal and free from all restrictions.