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PRESS RELEASE

BLAST Concerns on Criminal Defamation Case against Female Paralegal in Cox's Bazar

We are concerned to learn from press reports that a case of criminal defamation has been filed by a BGB officer in Cox's Bazar, against a young female member of our staff.

We have yet to see the case documents.

In the meantime, we are concerned that press reports include inaccurate statements about allegations being made of "rape" and "gang rape" "against BGB members". We have not received any allegations from any staff member of "rape or gang rape against BGB members" nor to our knowledge, have such allegations been made to the police or any hospital.

We have earlier been informed of allegations of alleged sexual abuse (NOT rape) at check posts and have raised our concerns about the need to inquire into such allegations.

We believe that the concerned authorities at the highest level would wish to inquire into any such allegations and take necessary action, and ensure protocols are in place for security of all individuals at check posts in accordance with law. We are ready to cooperate with any process in this regard.

A woman who raises concerns about safety and abuse should not face her character being questioned, or being intimidated by use of the criminal defamation against her. This is a colonial-era law and has no place in our country, where the Government at the highest level has affirmed its commitment to ensuring accountability for violence against women.

Reporting rates in cases of violence against women are already low in our country and using the criminal law in this way will only serve to intimidate and inhibit victims from raising any concerns.

For further information please contact:

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