

# HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM BANGLADESH (HRFB)

## CALL ON POLICE TO RESPECT FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND RELEASE

### ‘STATUE OF JUSTICE’ REMOVAL PROTESTORS

**[Dhaka, 28 May 2017]** The Human Rights Forum of Bangladesh (HRFB) condemns the action taken by the police to arrest four persons in Dhaka on charges among others, attempted murder, for exercising their right to freedom of association and expression.

On Friday 26 May, after news broke that the statue of justice was being removed from the Supreme Court premises, following repeated demands by a group of religious extremists, the Hefazat e Islami, a group of students and activists who gathered to protest this decision. They were blocked at the Doyel Chottor, by police barricades, and by water cannons. While speaking to the media, four protestors – including Liton Nandi of the Chattro Union and Arif Noor of Udichi Shilpi Gushti - were arrested by the police. They were detained overnight in Shahbagh Police Station and taken to the Magistrate’s Court on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> but not produced in person before the Court. Bail applications were moved for them, and a hearing is expected to be held on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May.

The police have filed a case alleging among others, that the four named persons and 150 others were involved in rioting, causing grievous hurt, obstruction of the police in discharge of their official duties, and attempted murder.

We demand immediate action to release these four persons, and end to harassment of citizens for exercising their right to freedom of assembly, and an inquiry into the abuse of police powers, and action against those responsible.

We also strongly assert the importance of the state maintaining respect for secular values and protecting all citizen’s right to freedom of expression and association in compliance with constitutional guarantees and our rights under international human rights law.

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