



## South Asia Democratic Forum

**Ex.mo Senhor**

Presidente do Conselho Europeu

António Costa

Rue de la Loi 175

1048 Bruxelles Belgique

**Subject:** Immediate EU Action Needed: UN Declares Shahriar Kabir's Detention Arbitrary

**Dear Mr. President,**

I am writing on behalf of the South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF) to urgently draw your attention to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention's formal Opinion<sup>1</sup> of **23 November 2025 on the arbitrary detention of Shahriar Kabir**, a 74-year-old journalist, author, and internationally respected human-rights defender, who for over five decades, has championed secular democracy, minority rights, and freedom of expression in Bangladesh. Amnesty International previously recognized him as a Prisoner of Conscience.

The Working Group concluded in the Opinion that Shahriar Kabir's detention is **arbitrary**, violating multiple provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It falls under categories I (**Deprivation of liberty without any legal basis, para 49 – 65**), II (**Detention resulted from his exercise of his right to freedom of opinion and expression, contrary to article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 19 of the ICCPR, para 66 – 73**), III (**Violations of the right to a fair trial and due process, para 74 – 81**) and V (**Discriminatory nature of detention, para 82 – 85**) of arbitrary deprivation of liberty. The Working Group calls on Bangladesh to remedy the situation without delay, including **immediate release** and an **enforceable right to compensation and other reparations**. It further urges a **full and independent investigation** into the circumstances of his detention and accountability for those responsible. The case has been referred to the Special Rapporteurs on torture, health, and the rights of older persons for appropriate action. The Government is requested to translate, publish, and disseminate the opinion widely. However, till today, the government has not acted upon any of these depositions.

Mr. Kabir was arrested on **17 September 2024** at his home in Dhaka and is currently held in Keraniganj Central Prison under fabricated charges of “murder by

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inducement” and even “genocide”—allegations reversing the reality of his activism. His detention is politically motivated and retaliatory, accompanied by grave due-process violations: denial of legal counsel, violent arrest, mob assault under police supervision, and refusal of medical care despite his age and chronic illnesses. His health is deteriorating rapidly, and he has been denied court-ordered special care.

This case is emblematic of Bangladesh’s broader crackdown on civil society since the 2024 political crisis, marked by mass arrests, weaponisation of anti-terror laws, and suppression of press freedom. Silence now would legitimize these abuses.

We therefore urge the European Union and its Member States to publicly call for Mr. Kabir’s immediate release, raise the case with Bangladeshi authorities through the European Union Embassy in Dhaka, seek access to him in detention to assess his health and conditions, and incorporate his situation into ongoing human-rights dialogues. The broader deterioration of civic space—particularly the mass inventions of murder allegations—must also be addressed in all forms of EU political engagement.

Mr. Kabir’s release is not only a matter of justice for one man—it is a test of Bangladesh’s commitment to the rule of law and of the EU’s commitment to defending human-rights defenders. SADF remains at your disposal for any further information.

**Sincerely,**

Paulo Casaca, Director

South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF)

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