

Statement

Bangladesh: Rezaul Karim Siddique, University professor hacked to death

Sunday 24 April 2016, by [PEN International](#) (Date first published: 23 April 2016).

Statement by PEN International on the murder of Professor Rezaul Karim Siddique in Bangladesh

Bangladesh: University professor hacked to death

23 April 2016 - The tragic and brutal murder of university professor Rezaul Karim Siddique this morning in the northern Bangladesh district of Rajshahi, must be investigated immediately and thoroughly all perpetrators brought to justice, PEN International said today.

The killing is the latest in a series of lethal attacks on intellectuals and activists in the country. Police said unknown assailants with machetes attacked English professor Rezaul Karim Siddique, 58, as he walked to the bus station from his home, on his way to the city's public university where he taught.

'Once again, machete-wielding extremists have killed an academic in Bangladesh. Rezaul Karim Siddique was a poet and writer who played music, edited a journal and kept his religious beliefs - he had none - to himself. The authorities admit there is a pattern to the killings of free thinkers in Bangladesh, and the toll keeps rising. The government response has been shocking - at a speech to mark the Bangla New Year, while calling for tolerance, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed chose to criticise the vulnerable bloggers, saying it was not acceptable to write against religion, instead of warning the emboldened killers, who continue to act with impunity. The Government should live up to its basic obligations of protecting people from physical harm and respect the right to speak, and not give credibility, nor rationalise those who seek to intimidate. The government must, as a priority, investigate all the killings and prosecute those responsible for the crimes.' Said Salil Tripathi, Chair of PEN International Writers in Prison Committee.

There has been a rise in murders of secular bloggers and thinkers in Bangladesh in the last year. Earlier this month Nazimuddin Samad, a Bangladeshi law student who had expressed secular views online, died when he was hacked with machetes and then shot in the capital, Dhaka. In 2015, four prominent secular bloggers were killed with machetes.

PEN International calls on Bangladeshi authorities to do everything in their power to protect secular, bloggers, writers, thinkers and others.

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