Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina  
Prime Minister’s Office  
Old Sangsad Bhaban  
Tejgaon, Dhaka-1215  
BANGLADESCH

Honourable Prime Minister,

Shahnewaz Chowdhury, an engineer and a human rights defender, worried about the impact a new coal-fired power plant would have on his village, took to Facebook to raise his concerns and to encourage young people to speak out.

The following day, the power plant company filed a case against Shahnewaz Chowdhury, accusing him of posting false information. On 28 May 2021, he was arrested by the police for his Facebook post under Bangladesh’s oppressive Digital Security Act (DSA). He was detained in inhumane conditions for 80 days, without trial. Shahnewaz was granted bail on 16 August 2021, but if he’s convicted, he faces many years in prison.

I, therefore, urge you to drop all charges against Shahnewaz Chowdhury. Kindly also ensure that the new Cyber Security Act that replaces the Digital Security Act adheres to international standards and you uphold obligations to protect the right to freedom of expression under its constitution and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Yours sincerely,