Honourable Minister,

I write to you with grave concern about Shahnewaz Chowdhury, an engineer and environmental activist, who is being prosecuted, solely for sharing his opinion on Facebook.

In the Facebook post, Shahnewaz Chowdhury expressed his opinion that a coal-fired power plant in Banshkhali was environmentally destructive and criticized the incidents that allegedly led to the killing of 12 people during protests in the plant. Believing that the power plant has not contributed to the development that people expected, he encouraged the youth to resist injustice and support development through fearless writing.

As a result of his Facebook post, Shahnewaz Chodhury was arrested on 28 May 2021, kept in custody for 80 days and charged with posting “false and offensive information”, “tarnishing the reputation of the power plant” and “creating animosity, instability and chaos” under sections 25, 29 and 31 of the draconian Digital Security Act (DSA). He could face up to 10 years in prison, if convicted.

I am deeply concerned that Shahnewaz Chowdhury risks being punished simply for sharing his personal opinion online, which would be a clear violation of his right to freedom of expression under international human rights law.

I appeal to the government of Bangladesh to immediately and unconditionally drop all charges against Shahnewaz Chowdhury.