The European Union has taken up the case of a leading Bangladeshi civil society figure who has been held without charge for several weeks and who, human rights groups fear, may be the victim of torture.

On behalf of the EU, the Dutch ambassador to Bangladesh met, last Wednesday (8 September), two officials at the Bangladeshi Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss the case of Mr. Al Islam, said Judith Maas, a spokeswoman for the Dutch presidency. "We called for a fair trial and good treatment." The ICBL, backed by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, has campaigned since Al Islam's arrest. "The ICBL believes his situation is grave and urges EU leaders, MEPs and the Dutch presidency to take whatever urgent action is in their power to secure his safe release or fair trial," said Stan Brabant of the ICBL. A growing number of MEPs are responding to the call, with one of the earliest being Raül Romeva, himself a veteran anti-landmine campaigner. The Spanish Green has rallied a group of fellow deputies to sign a letter to the Bangladeshi government. The MEP says he suspects that Bangladesh could be doing itself serious diplomatic damage. It was the first country in south Asia to sign the 1997 UN Landmine Treaty.