



# DRIK PICTURE LIBRARY LIMITED

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

**31 March 2010**

### **GOVERNMENT CONFIRMS WITHDRAWAL OF POLICE FROM DRIK'S EXHIBITION ON 'CROSSFIRE'**

Government lawyers confirmed to the Vacation Bench of the High Court today that the police deployed in front of the DRIK Gallery had been withdrawn and that there would be no obstruction to the exhibition from now on.

Dr. Alam's lawyer submitted that police had continued to block visitors even upto 4.30pm on 30 March and sought an assurance from the Government that there would be no further interference with visitors attending the Gallery.

Additional Attorney General MK Rahman referred to information received from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner and the Ministry of Home Affairs, that there was no need for a police presence.

In view of these statements, the Court observed that it would not pass any order at this time but that if further obstruction to the exhibition took place before the re-opening of the High Court on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, the petitioner would be at liberty to seek necessary orders from the Vacation Bench.

#### **Background:**

The Vacation Bench of the High Court for the second day heard a writ petition challenging the continuing police action preventing the entry of viewers to the exhibition by Dr. Shahidul Alam at the DRIK Gallery entitled 'Cross-fire', which consists of interpretive photographs and an interactive google map which shows locations where the bodies of persons allegedly killed in 'cross-fire' by security forces were reportedly found.

Dr. Alam challenged the actions of the police, including Special Branch and RAB in directing him to close down the exhibition hours prior to its scheduled inauguration on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, and then the continuing police deployment in front of the DRIK Gallery in Dhanmondi from the afternoon of 22<sup>nd</sup> March onwards. As widely reported in the media, the police had prevented noted author Mahasweta Devi and other invited guests from entering the exhibition for the inauguration, and subsequently prevented other visitors to the exhibition from entering the premises. The police stated that DRIK needed 'prior permission' to hold the exhibition and that going ahead with it would 'cause unrest'.

The writ was filed by Dr. Shahidul Alam, photojournalist and MD of DRIK. The respondents to the writ petition were the Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, the IG of Police, the DG of RAB, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner and the Officer in Charge of Dhanmondi Police Station.