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Shahidul Alam

The Tide Will Turn

Main description

“On the night of 5 August, I did not know if I was going to live or die,” writes Shahidul Alam, one of Bangladesh’s most respected photojournalists, essayists and social activists, remembering his arrest, torture and eventual 101-day incarceration in Keraniganj Jail in 2018. Just a few hours before, he had given a television interview criticizing the government’s brutal handling of the student protests of that year which had called for improved road safety and an end to wider social injustice—in his words, “the years of misrule, the corruption, the wanton killing, the wealth amassed by the ruling coterie.” Combining Alam’s photos and texts with those of a range of collaborators, including artwork by Sofia Karim and fellow inmates, *The Tide Will Turn* documents his experiences, the global support for his release, and the ongoing fight for secularism and democracy in Bangladesh and beyond.

Described by its editor Vijay Prashad as about “the beauty and tragedy of our world, about how to photograph that dialectic, and about how to write about it,” the book comprises four parts: a record of Alam’s time in jail; a chapter each on art and politics, exploring their inevitable interconnectedness; and an exchange of letters between the imprisoned Alam and writer Arundhati Roy, proof of creativity’s endurance even when the state attempts to stifle it. Together, these form a layered critique of autocracy, one underpinned by Alam’s unyielding hope, his conviction that “the tide will turn, and the nameless, faceless people will rise...”

Biography

Born in 1955, Shahidul Alam is a Dhaka-based photographer and writer. He is the founder of the Drik Picture Library (1989), the Pathshala South Asian Media Institute (1998) and the Chobi Mela International Photography Festival (2000). Alam’s books include *Nature’s Fury* (2007), *Portraits of Commitment* (2009), *My Journey as Witness* (2011) and *Best Years of My Life* (2016). He has received many awards, among them the Shilpakala Padak from the President of Bangladesh (2014), the Humanitarian Award from the Lucie Awards (2018), and the ICP Infinity Award (2019). Alam is one of *Time Magazine*’s Persons of the Year 2018.

Bibliography

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