

PUBLIC

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12 October 2004

UA 286/04 **Possible "disappearance" / Fear for safety**

NEPAL **Prakash Bahadur Bhandari, (m) aged 29**
Jeevan Rai (m), aged 25

Prakash Bahadur Bhandari and Jeevan Rai were arrested on 26 September by security forces personnel. Their whereabouts are now unknown, and Amnesty International is concerned for their safety.

Prakash Bahadur Bhandari lives in Chaughari Village Development Committee (VDC), Bajhang district. He was witnessed being taken away from his home by seven security force personnel in civilian dress at 9am. He is an activist in the peaceful, pro-monarchy Rastriya Prajatantra Party, a member of the ruling coalition. It is not known why he was arrested.

Jeevan Rai lives in Chyasmitar VDC, Khotang district. At noon he was having lunch at a friend's house in nearby Bhadahare VDC. According to witnesses, 65 armed security forces personnel in civilian dress came to the house and took Jeevan Rai away. The reasons for his arrest are unknown.

Both arrests have been reported to the National Human Rights Commission, relevant government ministries and the security forces, but the authorities have not made the men's whereabouts public.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (Maoist) declared a "people's war" in February 1996, Nepal has been in the grip of nationwide conflict and human rights crisis. Human rights abuses by both the security forces and members of the CPN (Maoist) have escalated since a seven month ceasefire broke down in August 2003.

In both 2002 and 2003, Nepal recorded the highest number of "disappearances" of any country in the world. People detained by the security forces are often held in army barracks with no access to their families, lawyers or medical treatment. They also face a high risk of torture, including beatings, and are sometimes held in solitary confinement or kept blindfolded for the entire time they are in custody. The CPN (Maoist) are also reported to have abducted hundreds of people, including large numbers of teachers and schoolchildren, for the purpose of "political education".

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Prakash Bahadur Bhandari and Jeevan Rai, who were reportedly arrested by security forces personnel on 26 September;
- calling on the authorities to make public their whereabouts and to grant them immediate access to their families, lawyers of their choice, and any medical attention they may require;
- urging that they be treated humanely while in custody and not tortured or ill-treated;
- calling for both men to be released immediately and unconditionally, unless they are to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence.

APPEALS TO: (faxes may be switched off outside office hours, GMT + 5½)

Lieutenant Colonel Raju Nepali

Head Royal Nepal Army Human Rights Cell
Royal Nepalese Army Headquarters
Singha Durbar
Kathmandu, Nepal

Fax: + 977 1 4 226 292 / 245 020 (If someone answers the telephone please ask them in English to switch on the fax machine, and resend the fax).

Salutation: Dear Lieutenant Colonel

Appeals on behalf of Prakash Bahadur Bhandari:
Chief District Officer
Trilok Prasad Shrestha
Office of the Chief District Officer,
Bajhang District, Nepal

Salutation: Dear Chief District Officer

Appeals on behalf of Jeevan Rai:
Chief District Officer
Mohona Krishna Sapkota
Office of the Chief District Officer,
Khotang District, Nepal

Salutation: Dear Chief District Officer

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Nepal accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 November 2004.