

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: ASA 20/016/2002 (Public)
News Service No: 132
30 July 2002

India: Amnesty International urges inquiry into reports of police brutality in the Maan valley, Madhya Pradesh

Amnesty International has written to the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Digvijay Singh, asking for an inquiry into an incident in the *adivasi* village of Khedi Balwadi, district Dhar, on 20 July 2002.

The organization received disturbing reports that about 400 police officers from Amjera police station resorted to beating villagers who resisted their efforts to forcibly evict them from their houses and properties. Amnesty International believes that Madhya Pradesh police may have used a disproportionate use of force during the operation. The village is to be submerged by the waters of the Maan dam.

On the evening of 20 July, about 400 police officers reportedly entered Khedi Balwadi and started pulling and dragging people into vans, without any provocation from the villagers and without any warning. Those resisting the action were severely beaten and male policemen are reported to have used abusive language and mishandled a large number of women, separating some of them from their infant children. Police also entered the houses without showing any search warrants. The villagers reported that some of their property, including jewellery and cattle, is now missing, and asserted that it might have been illegally appropriated by police during the operation. The villagers were subsequently taken to Kesur resettlement site, 75 kilometres away, where no medical assistance was provided to those who had been beaten. Some of their belongings were also transferred there by police. The villagers were not officially arrested or charged with any offence but remained under arbitrary police guard for about 24 hours, before being allowed to leave the site.

Amnesty International pointed out to the Chief Minister that the police operation as reported amounts to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment as defined in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment, which India has signed. The operation also appears to be in violation of Article 3 of the "Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials" (1979), stating that "Law enforcement officials may use force only when strictly necessary and to the extent required for the performance of their duty".

In the letter, Amnesty International urged the Government of Madhya Pradesh to take action against any police officers found to have used excessive force against the villagers. It called on the state executive to set up a prompt and impartial judicial enquiry into the incident and to make public and fully implement the findings of this enquiry. The organization will continue to monitor the developments after this incident.

The letter was copied to; Mr Ayodhyanathi Pathak, Director General of Police, Madhya Pradesh; Justice JS Verma, Chairperson, National Human Rights Commission; Justice Gulab Gupta, Chairperson, Madhya Pradesh State Human Rights Commission; Mr. Jual Oram, Minister for Tribal Affairs and to the Chairperson of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>