

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 20/18/96

7 May 1996

Further information on EXTRA 43/96 (ASA 20/12/96, 21 March 1996) - Fear of ill-treatment / Arbitrary arrest / Medical concern

INDIA188 Bhutanese people from refugee camps in eastern Nepal

On 22 April 1996, 15 Bhutanese people from a group of 285 detained at Jalpaiguri District Jail, West Bengal, were allegedly beaten by jail guards with *lathis* (canes). Three of them were injured; Tara Gautam sustained head injuries and two others had injuries to the leg and arm, respectively. It is not known whether they have received any medical treatment. The detainees had been protesting about inadequate provision of food in the jail. It is reported that regular visits to the detainees by members of support groups are no longer being allowed by the jail authorities.

On 17 April there was a hearing for 188 Bhutanese people, arrested on 19 March, in the Jalpaiguri District Court at which the presiding magistrate declared they should be released after signing a "personal release bond". It is reported that since the detainees refused to sign the bond, the hearing was adjourned until 21 May. Amnesty International has been calling for their immediate and unconditional release, unless they are to be charged immediately with a recognizable criminal offence.

In total, 792 Bhutanese people from the refugee camps in eastern Nepal remain detained in three jails in India: Jalpaiguri, Siliguri and Berhampur. The majority have now been held for nearly two months without being charged.

Amnesty International continues to be concerned that they are being held in contravention of their right to freedom of expression and their right to peaceful assembly.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or in your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that 15 Bhutanese people were beaten with *lathis* by guards at Jalpaiguri Jail, West Bengal, and calling for an immediate independent and impartial investigation into the incident;
- requesting immediate medical treatment for the detainees who suffered injuries;
- urging that visits to the Jalpaiguri Jail be restored to allow visitors immediate access to the detainees;
- seeking assurances that the 285 Bhutanese people detained at Jalpaiguri Jail will not be subjected to further ill-treatment;

if possible also:

- urge that their conditions of detention be implemented in accordance with the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment;
- urge that the 792 Bhutanese people detained at jails in India be immediately and unconditionally released unless charged immediately with a recognizable criminal offence.

APPEALS TO:

Mr P V Narasimha Rao
Prime Minister of India
Office of the Prime Minister

South Block, Gate No.6
New Delhi 110 011, India
Telegrams: Prime Minister, New Delhi, India
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Mr Jyoti Basu
Chief Minister of West Bengal
Office of the Chief Minister
Writers Building
Calcutta 600 001
West Bengal, India
Faxes: + 91 33 266 444
Telegrams: Chief Minister, West Bengal, India
Salutation: Dear Chief Minister

COPIES TO:

Mr S B Chavan
Minister of Home Affairs
Ministry of Home Affairs
North Block
New Delhi 110 001
India

Mr Pranab Mukherjee
Minister of External Affairs
Ministry of External Affairs
South Block
New Delhi 110 011
India

and to diplomatic representatives of India accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 June 1996.