

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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India: Jammu/Kashmir government should implement human rights program

Amnesty International today sent an open letter to Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed welcoming the decision by the new government on 27th October 2002 to implement a comprehensive human rights program (Common Minimum Program).

Under the Program the authorities will review existing security laws and cases of detainees held without trial for a long time and will not implement the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) in the state. The Common Minimum Program also promises to investigate all earlier custodial killings and punish all those responsible.

"We hope that the commitments made throughout the election campaign and in the Common Minimum Program will be fully implemented at all levels of the state," Amnesty International said.

"We have been gravely concerned for a long time about the high level of human rights violations in the state where thousands of people have been tortured and killed in custody, extrajudicially executed or 'disappeared'. Such abuses have been carried out with virtual impunity as the political will to address them has been lacking under previous governments," Amnesty International underlined in the open letter.

"The institutions designed to provide legal redress - the police and the criminal justice system - have been abused and weakened over the past decade. The commitment to turn the tide and to seriously address human rights violations is welcomed by Amnesty International," the organization said.

Amnesty International also noted the commitments of the new government of Jammu and Kashmir to restore the rule of law in the state and to guarantee to everyone the enjoyment of the full range of human rights.

"We hope that a new era of openness will begin, in which national and international human rights organizations can freely exchange views with the new administration," Amnesty International stressed.

Amnesty International calls on the newly elected members of the State Assembly to commit the legislature to a policy of protection and promotion of human rights in the state.

The organization also appeals to the militant groups operating in the state to cease committing human rights abuses, including the targeting of civilians.

The full text of the letter can be found on:
<http://www.web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/recent/asa200202002>

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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>

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