

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Extrajudicial Executions

10 May 1991

~~INDIA — Farooq Ahmed and 13 others~~

On 8 May 1991 Indian paramilitary police forces reportedly opened fire on mourners in Srinagar, Kashmir, killing at least 14 people and injuring 48 others. Amnesty International is concerned that a number of them may be victims of extrajudicial executions killed without provocation.

Hundreds of people had gathered in a childrens' park on 8 May after a procession through the city, held in mourning for 68 Kashmiris killed in an armed encounter with Indian soldiers who intercepted them trying to enter the Kashmir valley from Pakistan-held Kashmir on 5 May. According to police an armed man in the crowd of mourners opened fire at the paramilitary police first.

Eye-witness accounts dispute this, saying they heard one shot followed by many security forces bullets and did not know who shot first. The exact circumstances of the initial shooting incident remain unclear. However, about 10 minutes later the paramilitary police reportedly opened fire without provocation on a group of about 200 people near a shrine, killing at least three people. In all, hospitals reported that 14 people were killed, including a student named Farooq Ahmed, an elderly woman and a young girl, and that many more were injured.

Amnesty International welcomes the announcement on 9 May by the Jammu and Kashmir Governor, Girish Saxena, that an investigation would be held into the killing by the paramilitary police of 14 civilians. He reportedly stated that "It's a bad case and a major incident ...We will do everything possible to tackle the situation and I am personally looking into the matter". Amnesty International is urging that a fully impartial and independent investigation be held into the killings and that the findings of the investigation should be published promptly and in full. It is also urging that if any security force personnel are found to be responsible for the extrajudicial execution of unarmed civilians they should be brought to justice, and that the victims' families receive prompt and adequate compensation. It is not known whether those potentially implicated in the incident have been removed from positions of authority over Kashmiri civilians.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since early 1990 there has been an increasingly violent campaign for independence in Kashmir. Armed separatists have kidnapped and killed officials, members of the paramilitary forces and civilians in their campaign. Amnesty International has repeatedly expressed concern to the Indian government about reports of deliberate killings of unarmed civilians by members of the security forces, about widespread allegations of torture and rape by members of the security forces and about arbitrary arrests of suspected separatists or their relatives. In September 1990, the government announced that a screening committee would be set up to examine complaints of excesses by the security

forces. Jammu and Kashmir Governor, Girish Saxena, has ordered several investigations of such abuses, in one case

leading to charges of murder being brought against the Director of the Border Security Force (BSF). But such investigations have usually been conducted by police or other officials rather than by an independent and impartial body. Amnesty International does not know of any cases in which officials allegedly responsible for such human rights violations have been brought to justice and convicted.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/faxes/airmail letters:

- expressing concern at reports that members of the paramilitary police deliberately shot 14 civilians, and wounded many more in Srinagar, Kashmir, on 8 May 1991, and that a number of them may have been extrajudicially executed;
- welcoming the announcement by Governor Saxena on 9 May of an investigation into the incident and urging that the findings of the investigation be quickly made public, and that any people found responsible for the killings be brought to justice;
- urging that immediate steps are taken to ensure that those potentially implicated are removed from positions of control or power over complainants, witnesses and their relatives as well as those conducting the investigation;
- urging that the families of the victims be granted adequate compensation.

APPEALS TO

His Excellency
Mr Girish Saxena
Governor of Jammu and Kashmir
Srinagar
Jammu and Kashmir, India
Telegrams: Governor Jammu and Kashmir, Srinagar, India

His Excellency
Prime Minister Chendra Shekhar
Office of the Prime Minister
South Block, Gate No 6
New Delhi, 110011, India
Telegrams: Prime Minister Shekhar, New Delhi, India.
Faxes: + 91 11 301 6781 (via Ministry of Foreign
Affairs

COPIES TO:

Mr Subodh Kant Sahay
Minister of State for Home Affairs
Ministry of Home Affairs
North Block
New Delhi 110 001, India

and to diplomatic representatives of India in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 June 1991.