

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: ASA 20/35/93

Distr: UA/SC

UA 278/93 Fear of "Disappearance"

18 August 1993

INDIA: Jaspal Singh, human rights activist

Amnesty International fears that Jaspal Singh, President of the Ropar Unit of the Punjab Human Rights Organization may have been illegally detained by the police and may face torture or death.

Jaspal Singh was last seen leaving his house in Chandigarh at 4.30 pm on 16 August 1993. His whereabouts since then are unknown and relatives fear that he has been detained by the police. A *habeas corpus* petition will be filed in Court on 19 August. As President of the Punjab Human Rights Organisation, Jaspal Singh has been involved in documenting many human rights violations in Punjab. His house was reportedly raided by police on several occasions in the last few weeks. Others members of the Punjab Human Rights Organization have been harassed and detained by the police in the past.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International regularly receives reports that supposed members or sympathizers of armed opposition groups, or their relatives, and members of human rights organizations in Punjab have been killed in police custody, often after torture. Their deaths or "disappearances" are later attributed by officials to an "encounter" between militants and the police, to an "escape" during such an "encounter" or to other improbable causes. Even though legal safeguards against unacknowledged detention exist in India's ordinary criminal law and procedural code, they are often simply not adhered to and prisoners are held in unacknowledged detention for weeks and sometimes months.

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

- expressing concern that Jaspal Singh has not be seen since he left his home on 16 August 1993 and expressing the fear that he may be being held in illegal detention;
- urging that all possible steps are taken to establish his whereabouts;
- seeking assurances that if he is in police custody he be humanely treated, allowed immediate access to lawyers and relatives and brought before a magistrate forthwith;
- urging that, if he is being held in police custody, he be immediately released if he is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought promptly to trial.

APPEALS TO

1) Beant Singh
Chief Minister of Punjab
Office of the Chief Minister
Chandigarh, Punjab
India

Salutation: Dear Chief Minister

Telegrams: Chief Minister of Punjab, Chandigarh, Punjab, India

Faxes: + 91 172 540 647

2) Mr K.P.S Gill
Director General of Police
Police Headquarters
Chandigarh, Punjab
India

Salutation: Dear Director General of Police

Telegrams: Director General Police, Chandigarh, Punjab, India

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Mr Rajesh Pilot
Minister of State for Home Affairs
Ministry of Home Affairs
North Block
New Delhi 110 001
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 29 September 1993.