

17 MARCH 1996

ASA 31/01/96

NEPAL: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ACTIVISTS DETAINED

Amnesty International strongly protested the detention today of three members of the organization's Nepal Section. The activists were detained in connection with peaceful activities they were undertaking as part of a worldwide campaign against human rights violations in China.

Badri Khanal, Mani Ram Neupane and Pralad Basned were detained by Nepalese police in Kathmandu. They had set up a table at which they were collecting signatures and distributing material on human rights in China. Police officers took the activists into custody and confiscated a table, chairs, banners and other materials.

"Amnesty International strongly condemns the detention of its members for peaceful campaigning activities," the organization said. "This action by the Nepalese authorities is a clear violation of the right of Nepalese people to freedom of expression, and runs counter to Nepal's image as an open society."

"We call on the Nepal government to release the three immediately and unconditionally. The authorities should also ensure that Amnesty International members are allowed to continue in their peaceful campaigning activities without further harassment."

Despite this intimidation by the government, Amnesty International Nepal members plan to proceed with a demonstration tomorrow outside the Chinese Embassy to highlight the organization's concerns about the human rights situation in China. Amnesty International will be monitoring events closely, the organization said.

Amnesty International delegates in Bangkok were detained last week by the Thai police and prevented from attending a press conference to launch the campaign. Later the same day, Thai police and special forces in riot gear stopped the delegation at the entrance of the Chinese Embassy, where they wanted to deliver Amnesty International's report on China "*No one is safe*".

"The actions by regional governments to obstruct our message show the degree to which they will bow to China's enormous power and influence," Amnesty International said. "This sets a worrying pattern for the freedom of speech in the region, and sends a clear message to the people of China that the international community is not serious about protecting their human rights."

"The Chinese government is not content with silencing those who speak up in China. Their message is loud and clear: no discussion about our human rights record. Anywhere, by anyone, at any time."

"Other governments may help to shelter China from international criticism, but they will not stop us."