

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 31/31/00

UA 347/00

Fear of t

NEPAL Geeta Shahi (f), aged 23

A woman political activist is believed to have been arrested by plainclothes police. The police have denied having her in custody, and Amnesty International is concerned for her safety.

Geeta Shahi was seen being taken away by two men in civilian clothes on 31 October, at around 4pm. The arrest took place at Bar Vanjyang, Ward No. 4, Bari Phant, Bhany Marg, Tanahu district.

Geeta Shahi is the chairwoman of the All Nepal Women's Organisation (Revolutionary) in Tanahun district. This organization is known to be affiliated to the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (Maoist).

When her relatives made inquiries at the nearby Nareswor police station the next day the police denied having her in custody. The family made further inquiries on 2 November at the district police office in Damauli, but the police there also denied arresting her.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has received reports of increasing numbers of "disappearances" and unacknowledged detentions over the last three years, linked to the CPN (Maoist) "people's war". Amnesty has recorded 24 "disappearances" in 1998, 18 in 1999 and 12 so far this year.

After sustained pressure on the authorities, including mass appeals by Urgent Action appeal writers, some people who had been reported "disappeared" have been released. Some of them have since testified that they were taken away by police officers in plain clothes, in unmarked vehicles with covered number plates, and that they were held incommunicado in unofficial places of detention, including the Maharajgunj Police Training Centre, Kathmandu, and the Armed Police Battalion Headquarters in Pokhara, Kaski district.

Amnesty International welcomes the fact that the government has taken some steps which could help resolve or prevent "disappearances", including the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). The Commission's members were finally appointed at the end of May 2000, nearly four years after the Act establishing it was passed in Parliament. Amnesty International is urging the government to ensure the Commission is able to function independently, is well resourced and receives full cooperation from the police and other institutions.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Geeta Shahi, who has "disappeared" after she was seen being taken away by two men thought to be plainclothes police officers, at Bhany Marg, Tanahu district;
- calling on the authorities to establish an independent and impartial investigation into her fate and whereabouts and to make the findings public;
- calling on the authorities to allow her, if she is found to be in detention, immediate access to her relatives, lawyers and any medical treatment she may need;

- urging that, if she is detained, she be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence, or else immediately released, and that steps be taken in the meantime to guarantee her safety;
- expressing grave concern at the deteriorating human rights situation in Nepal and appealing for an immediate halt to human rights violations, including "disappearances".

APPEALS TO:

Rt Hon Prime Minister Giriji Prasad Koirala
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Singha Durbar
Kathmandu
Nepal

Telegrams: Prime Minister, Kathmandu, Nepal

Faxes: + 977 1 227 286 or 428 570

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Hon Ram Chandra Poudel
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs
Ministry of Home Affairs
Singha Durbar
Kathmandu
Nepal

Telegrams: Home Affairs Minister, Kathmandu, Nepal

Faxes: + 977 1 241 942

Salutation: Dear Minister

Mr Pradeep Shamsheer J B Rana
Inspector General of Police
Police Headquarters
GPO Box 407
Naxal
Kathmandu
Nepal

Telegrams: Inspector General Police, Kathmandu, Nepal

Faxes: + 977 1 415 593/415 594

Salutation: Dear Inspector General

COPIES OF YOUR LETTERS TO THE PRIME MINISTER TO:

Nayan Bahadur Khatri
Chairperson
National Human Rights Commission
Harihar Bhawan
Pulchowk
Lalitpur
Nepal

Faxes: + 977 1 525 842

Salutation: Dear Chairperson

and to diplomatic representatives of Nepal accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 December 2000.