

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/ possible "disappearance"

20 February 2004

NEPAL

Maina Sunuwar (f), aged 15, school student

15-year-old Maina Sunuwar was reportedly arrested on 17 February by security forces personnel in plain clothes. Her whereabouts are unknown and Amnesty International is concerned that she may have "disappeared".

Maina Sunuwar lives in Ward No.6, Kharelthok Village Development Committee (VDC), Kavre district. Fifteen men arrived at her house at 6am, and identified themselves as security forces personnel from the Lamidada Santi Gate Army Camp. They were looking for one of Maina Sunuwar's relatives, who had been present when two women from a nearby village were shot dead by security forces personnel on 13 February in an alleged extrajudicial execution. They could not find the relative, so they took Maina Sunuwar instead. They told her family that they would release her if the family brought the relative to the army camp. The next day, two of Maina's relatives went to the Lamidada Santi Gate army camp, accompanied by a group of some 28 people from their village, including the VDC Chairman, to make inquiries. The army authorities at the camp denied she been arrested and said that she was not being held at the camp.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Two other young women living in the area have recently been shot dead by security forces personnel in apparent extrajudicial executions.

Maina Sunwar's relatives were staying in Ward No. 4, Pokhari Chaur VDC, Kavre district on 13 February, when 18-year-old school student Reena Rasaili was reportedly arrested by security forces personnel there. Witnesses said that about 20 men in plain clothes arrived at Reena Rasaili's home at midnight. They broke down the door before it could be opened and about 10 men went in. They questioned the family, searched the house, and took Reena outside. They interrogated her about activities of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (Maoist) in the village. An officer then ordered five of his men to take her to a cowshed near the house. At 5am, she was brought out of the cowshed and taken to a spot some 100 metres from the house. Three shots were heard. Villagers found her naked body after the security forces left the village. There were bloodstains on her discarded clothes and underwear, and they think she might have been raped before she was killed.

Another school student, 17-year-old Subhadra Chaulagain, was asleep at home in Ward No.3 of Pokhari Chauri VDC in the early hours of 13 February when security forces personnel came into the house and forced her outside. Witnesses report that she was crying and pleading with her attackers to let her go to the district headquarters to "surrender". She was then reportedly interrogated before being taken to a spot further away from the house. At around 4am nine shots were heard. Her body was discovered two hours later, about ten metres from the house. There were gunshot wounds to her face and stomach. A relative was beaten by the security forces personnel and sustained serious injuries during the incident.

According to a statement released by the Ministry of Defence and reported in the *Kathmandu Post* on 13 February, Reena Rasaili, Subhadra Chaulagain and a third person, Tasi Lama, were members of the CPN (Maoist) shot dead at Pokhari Chauri VDC during a search operation by security forces mobilised from Dolakha district. Subhadra Chaulagain was alleged to be a Maoist "area commander".

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Maina Sunuwar, who was reportedly arrested on 17 February 2004 and whose whereabouts are unknown;

- calling on the authorities to make public her whereabouts and to grant her immediate access to her relatives, lawyers and any medical attention she may require;
- urging that she be treated humanely in custody and not tortured or ill-treated;
- calling for her to be released immediately and unconditionally, unless she is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence.
- expressing concern at the reports of the alleged extrajudicial executions of Reena Rasaili and Subhadra Chaulagain on 13 February, and calling for an immediate independent and impartial investigation into the incident;
- calling for those found responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for full protection to be accorded to the witnesses of the incident.

APPEALS TO: Faxes may be switched off outside office hours, 5 ½ hours ahead of GMT

General Pyar Jung Thapa
Chief of Army Staff (COAS)
Army Headquarters
Kathmandu, Nepal

Telegram: Commander-in-Chief, Army Headquarters, Kathmandu, Nepal

Fax: + 977 1 4 242 168

Salutation: Dear Commander-in-Chief

Colonel Nilendra Prasad Aryal
Head of Army Human Rights Cell
Army Headquarters
Singha Durbar, Kathmandu, Nepal

Telegram: Colonel NP Aryal, Army Headquarters, Singha Durbar, Kathmandu, Nepal

Fax: + 977 1 4 226 292/ 229 451 (If someone answers the telephone please ask them in English to switch on the fax machine, and resend the fax).

Salutation: Dear Colonel

Shyam Bhakta Thapa
Inspector General of Police
Police Headquarters
GPO Box 407
Naxal
Kathmandu, Nepal

Telegram: Inspector General of Police

Fax: + 977 1 4 415 593 / 4 415 594

Salutation: Dear Inspector General

COPIES TO:

Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa
Prime Minister's Office
Singha Durbar
Kathmandu, Nepal

Fax: + 977 1 4 227 286

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

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 1 April 2004.