

0100 hrs gmt Tuesday 7 December 1993

AI Index: ASA 33/06/93
Distr-SC/PO

**ELECTION PROMISES MUST BE FULFILLED TO STOP TORTURE, POLITICAL
KILLINGS AND "DISAPPEARANCES" IN PAKISTAN**

Amnesty International is calling on the new government of Pakistan to live up to election promises and bring an end to the human rights violations which have plagued the country for years under a succession of governments.

"Torture, including rape, in the custody of police, paramilitary and armed forces is endemic in Pakistan, often leading to death. Extrajudicial executions by, or with the approval of the authorities are rife, and some prisoners have 'disappeared' in custody. Members of these forces have been allowed to torture and kill with impunity. Victims and their families face great difficulties and danger if they try to seek redress," said Amnesty International.

Torture is used by police in Pakistan to obtain confessions, punish, humiliate, intimidate and terrorize. In fact, the majority of people held in police or military custody are exposed to some form of torture or ill-treatment. Amnesty International has spoken to dozens of victims who have been blind-folded, beaten with sticks and leather truncheons, kicked with heavy boots, had their legs pulled apart painfully, their genitals beaten or damaged by heavy metal or wooden rollers, burned with cigarettes or given electric shocks.

Many victims say they were hung upside down. Others have been stripped and dragged naked through the streets by jeep. Yet others have been deprived of food and sleep for long periods or subjected to mock execution. Female prisoners frequently have been raped, and then threatened with criminal charges if they reported the rape. On 17 October 1992, a 14-year-old girl, Lau, was allegedly raped by three police officers, including a head constable, when she was arrested along with seven other people on their way home from a festival. All eight prisoners were released after the rape, but were threatened with reprisals if they reported the incident.

"It is not just governments who have been responsible for torture; some political parties also tortured political opponents as well as dissidents within their own party. All political parties must stop the atrocities," said Amnesty International.

A month ago, Amnesty International launched a worldwide campaign to stop political killings and "disappearances" - which remain a grave human rights problem in Pakistan. At least 50 people died in 1992 some in disputed circumstances during alleged armed "encounters" with the police, 20 of them in Punjab; the evidence strongly suggests at least some of them were extrajudicially executed. The organization has documented instances in which police killed prisoners to hide the evidence of torture, when High Court hearings were imminent and would have revealed their crime, and said the killings occurred during "encounters". Army personnel are also known to have sided with rural landlords and to have killed defenceless villagers on their behalf.

Families sometimes trace their missing family members from newspaper reports which describe the finding of dead bodies. On 18 July 1993, a family in Karachi saw a news item describing a mutilated body found in the jungle near Surjani town, which turned out to be a member of the family, Imtiaz, who three days earlier had run out of petrol for his van near Jamaat Khana in New Karachi. The last that

had been heard of him was when he reached a nearby petrol station carrying a petrol can and police apprehended him on suspicion of attempted arson.

Trials of police or army personnel implicated in torture or causing deaths in custody are rare; convictions are rarer still. None of the relevant international standards prohibiting unlawful detention, torture, extrajudicial execution and "disappearance" and ensuring humane treatment in custody are ratified by Pakistan.

Among seven specific recommendations to the Pakistan Government, Amnesty International is calling on it to ratify or accede to the basic international human rights standards. It is also calling for the public condemnation of torture, the introduction of effective safeguards against torture or ill-treatment for all those in custody and for all allegations of torture, deaths in custody and political killings to be impartially and promptly investigated and for those responsible for such abuses to be brought to justice.

In its manifesto, the Pakistan People's Party, which formed the government after the elections in October, said "torture and human degradation in any form by state agencies will be effectively banned," and that the government will enforce several international human rights instruments, including the United Nations (UN) Convention against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

"Such promises are perpetually made by parties before elections all over the world and then nothing changes. We hope the new government did not just make these promises to gain votes, but has real intentions to combat Pakistan's poor human rights record," said Amnesty International.