

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 31/035/2003

19 September 2003

Further Information on UA 264/03 (ASA 31/030/2003, 10 September 2003) Fear for safety/possible "disappearance"

NEPAL

Shanta Shrestha (f), aged 68, women's activist - released

**Sobhit Yadav (m), member of the Madheshi Liberation Front
Balaram Sharma (m), (also known as Poorna Biram), writer and poet
Ram Hari Chaulagain (m), journalist**

Shanta Shrestha was reportedly released from army custody on 18 September. She had allegedly been held blindfold in incommunicado detention at the Chhauni army barracks in Kathmandu, where she had been interrogated on several occasions.

Shanta Shrestha, a feminist leader and activist, was arrested from her home at Ward No 10, Purano Baneshwor, Kathmandu, on 31 August. She was not charged with any offence, but it is believed that she may have been arrested because the authorities may suspect her of being an active member or supporter of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (Maoist). On her release, she was allegedly taken in a military vehicle from the Chhauni barracks to Gausala police station in Kathmandu, before police escorted her to her home.

The whereabouts of Sobhit Yadav, Balaram Sharma and Ram Hari Chaulagain remain unknown and there are continuing concerns for their safety. It is believed that Sobhit Yadav's reported arrest may be because the authorities suspect him of being an active member or supporter of the CPN (Maoist). The reasons for the arrest of Ram Hari Chaulagain and Balaram Sharma (also known as Poorna Biram) are not known. The arrests have been reported to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

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

- welcoming the release of Shanta Shrestha, who had reportedly been held at the Chhauni army barracks in Kathmandu;
- expressing concern at reports that Shanta Shrestha was held blindfold in incommunicado detention at the barracks;
- expressing continued concern for the safety of the Sobhit Yadav, Balaram Sharma (also known as Poorna Biram) and Ram Hari Chaulagain, who were reportedly arrested by plain clothes security forces personnel in Kathmandu and Dhanusha districts on 29 August;
- urging the authorities to make public their whereabouts, grant them immediate access to their relatives, lawyers and any medical attention they may require;
- calling upon the authorities to guarantee that they are not subjected to torture or ill-treatment while in custody;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release, unless they are to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence.

APPEALS TO:

General Pyar Jung Thapa
Chief of Army Staff (COAS)

Army Headquarters
Kathmandu, Nepal
Telegram: Commander-in-Chief, Kathmandu, Nepal
Fax: + 977 1 4 242 168
Salutation: Dear Commander-in-Chief

Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa
Prime Minister's Office
Singha Durbar
Kathmandu, Nepal
Telegram: Prime Minister, Kathmandu, Nepal
Fax: + 977 1 4 227 286 (fax may be switched off outside office hours, 5 ½ hours
ahead of GMT)
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Brigadier General B A K Sharma
Head, Army Human Rights Cell
Army Headquarters
Kathmandu, Nepal
Telegram: Brigadier General, Kathmandu, Nepal
Fax: + 977 1 4 226 292 / 229 451
Salutation: Dear Brigadier General

Shyam Bhakta Thapa
Inspector General of Police
Police Headquarters
Naxal
Kathmandu, Nepal
Telegram: Inspector General of Police, Kathmandu, Nepal
Fax: + 977 1 4 415 593 / 415 594
Salutation: Dear Inspector General

COPIES 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 31 October 2003.