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Fear for safety/  
Prisoner of Conscience

27 June 2002

INDIA            B. N. Jagdish (m), Human rights defender

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On 25 June, B. N. Jagdish, an activist working with the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (NBA) Movement to Save the Narmada, was picked up by police at a bus stop in Khedi Balwadie, Dhar district, in the state of Madhya Pradesh. He has not been seen since.

Amnesty International fears that he is being kept in illegal detention and that he may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment. The organization considers B.N. Jagdish a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his legitimate activities for the NBA.

Several villagers witnessed B. N. Jagdish being picked up by the police. Colleagues and friends have contacted the police stations and the control room at Dhar, Madhya Pradesh. The police authorities however denied that his arrest ever took place and stated that they have no record of it.

B. N. Jagdish is a graduate from Bangalore. During the last year, he has been working with the NBA in Dhar district. The NBA have been opposing the construction of dams on the river Narmada since 1985.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Those living along the Narmada river have been protesting for several years at the construction of 30 dams along the river, as this would lead to the submergence of their villages. Protesters have often been arrested, detained, ill-treated and harassed as they exercised their rights to freedom of expression. Women, indigenous people and human rights defenders have often been the target of these violations.

The NBA calls for a fair rehabilitation and resettlement process, including the granting of land, for those displaced by the construction of the dams. On 21 May four activists went on hunger strike seeking intervention from the Madhya Pradesh government over the issue. They were protesting over the rehabilitation of 17 villages which would be submerged following the construction of the Man dam, as a part of the Narmada project. The hunger strike lasted 29 days, and led to the opening of negotiations with the government on the rehabilitation of the villagers. However, since the end of the hunger strike the police have reportedly been targeting the leaders of the protest, conducting search operations in the villages and illegally detaining some of the activists.

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

- urging the authorities to make known immediately the whereabouts of B.N. Jagdish;

- calling for him to be released immediately and unconditionally, unless he is to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence and brought before a court of law;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee his safety, and grant him immediate access to a legal representative, his family, and any medical treatment he may require;
- urging the authorities to give a commitment that human rights defenders will be free to carry out their peaceful activities without fear of harassment.

**APPEALS TO:**

Mr. Sanjay Dube  
District Collector, Dhar  
District Collectorate  
Dhar  
Madhya Pradesh  
India

**Telegrams: District Collector, Dhar, Madhya Pradesh, India**

**Fax: + 91 7292 34711 (it may be difficult to get through to this number, but please keep trying)**

**Salutation: Dear District Collector**

**COPIES TO:**

Mr. Digvijay Singh  
Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh  
Office of the Chief Minister  
Vallabh Bhavan  
Bhopal  
Madhya Pradesh  
India

**Fax: + 91 755 540 501/ 551 781**

**Salutation: Dear Chief Minister**

and to diplomatic representatives of India accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 August 2002.