

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 20/33/99

15 September 1999

Further information on UA 165/99 (ASA 20/26/99, 14 July 1999) - Fear for safety

INDIAWahengbam Joykumar Singh, 28, human rights defender

Amnesty International remains concerned for the safety of human rights defender Wahengbam Joykumar Singh who is still being intimidated by the armed forces.

On 8 September 1999, the Officer in Charge of Yaripok Police Station told Joykumar he wanted to meet him urgently. Joykumar contacted the Additional Superintendent of Police at Thoubal Police Station (the district headquarters) when he returned from a work trip on 10 September and was told that the police would visit him the next morning.

At 4:30am the next day the Captain of the 7th Battalion of the Assam Rifles, responsible for detaining and threatening Joykumar in July, reportedly arrived at the compound where Joykumar lives as part of a search operation of the village. After searching his uncles' house, in the same compound, they detained his cousin, Wahengbam Nimai, on charges of keeping an illegal weapon. Wahengbam Nimai was subsequently handed to police on 13 September.

Joykumar has been in hiding, returning to his home at odd times, since 20 July. This followed a visit to his home by members of the Assam rifles who, since he was not in, left a message with his younger brother that he should come to their camp the next day.

Earlier, in June, members of the Assam rifles had stopped Joykumar and confiscated his identity card, telling him to collect it from them the next morning at their camp in Yaripok. They said that if he told the police about this they would raid his house and arrest him.

When Joykumar went to the camp the next day, 28 June, he was told by the captain that he would be killed unless two complaints against them for human rights violations, in which Joykumar was named, were dropped. He also told him that unless he stopped his human rights works they would plant evidence on him and have him charged with giving support to armed groups.

The National Human Rights Commission has reportedly expressed concern about Joykumar's safety to the Ministry of Defence. The Manipur Human Rights Commission has also asked the state police to ensure his safety.

Although local police have reportedly carried out an investigation into the threats against Joykumar they have unofficially said they are unable to protect him as they do not have authority over the Assam Rifles (who are under the command of the Ministry of Defence). A police official is also reported to have said that police officers are busy with election duties.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of human rights defender Wahengbam Joykumar Singh in Manipur, following further intimidation by the Assam Rifles;
- urging the authorities to suspend members of the Assam Rifles accused of threatening and intimidating Joykumar pending an independent investigation into these allegations.

APPEALS TO:

Mr L.K. Advani
Minister of Home Affairs
Ministry of Home Affairs
North Block
New Delhi 110 001, India
Telegrams:Home Minister, New Delhi, India
Faxes:+ 91 11 301 5750
Salutation:Dear Minister

Mr George Fernandes
Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence
South Block
New Delhi 110 001, India
Telegrams:Defence Minister, New Delhi, India
Faxes:+ 91 11 301 5403
Salutation:Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Mr Nipamacha
Chief Minister of Manipur
Office of the Chief Minister
Imphal, Manipur, India

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 27 October 1999.