

25 September 1998

Further information on UA 242/98 (ASA 20/21/98, 11 September 1998) - Fear for safety / Fear of torture and ill-treatment / Medical concern

INDIA Abdul Sattar, social worker - detained
Sita Ram, social worker - detained
Satya Narain, social worker - detained

and new name: Alice Garg, social worker - in hiding

Other workers of the Bal Rashmi Society

Fears continue for the safety of the three above-named social workers who continue to be detained in judicial custody at Jaipur Jail. There are concerns in particular for Abdul Sattar who is known to have been severely tortured whilst in police custody and who is said to be in a highly traumatised state (see report below). All three continue to be denied medical treatment.

There are further concerns for other workers at the Bal Rashmi Society who fear they may be detained on false charges after allegations were reportedly made against them by other workers under interrogation using torture. Alice Garg, the founder of the society, is currently in hiding to avoid arrest. Police are reportedly continuing to conduct raids of the Society's campus in Jaipur and to question workers.

In response to the allegations of torture of Abdul Sattar, and ongoing reports of harassment of other human rights defenders, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) assembled in Jaipur on 14 September 1998 and appointed an investigative team on 16 September which completed its initial enquiries four days later.

A report by a member of the Committee on Denotified Tribes (see below) was also submitted to the NHRC on 15 September containing the following account of a meeting with Abdul Sattar in jail:

"[Abdul Sattar] appeared to be completely traumatised and broke down in front of me. He was crying like a child while narrating to me how he has been tortured in police custody for two days by [the police officer]... He was not given anything to eat for two days and was beaten constantly. He was also given electric shocks on various parts of his body, including his private parts. For all this while he was coaxed by [the police officer] to make false complaints against Alice Garg... [The police officer] promised to give him a job in the police if he agreed to turn police approver. Abdul Sattar was also made to sign on a number of white sheets and on a false medical certificate to explain away his bruises. I saw some of the bruises myself, on his wrists (that of electric shock) and on his buttocks (those of constant and merciless caning) which were present even after two weeks".

FURTHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The NHRC, established under the Protection of Human Rights Act 1993, has powers to investigate reported human rights violations. It can then make recommendations concerning prosecutions, obtain judicial orders and/or recommend compensation to victims. Its reports and recommendations are submitted to the government with a request for comments and information on action it proposes to take as a result.

The Committee on Denotified Tribes is an expert committee, appointed by the NHRC in May 1998, to look into matters concerning so-called "criminal" tribes. These tribes, labelled such prior to Indian independence in 1947, continue to exist and to be denied

certain rights. Alice Garg, founder of the Bal Rashmi Society, was active in campaigning for the rights of members of these tribal groups.

Please continue action as specified in original Urgent Action. In addition please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or in your own language:

- welcoming the recent investigation initiated by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC);
- continuing to call for Abdul Sattar, Sita Ram and Satya Narain to be given immediate access to medical treatment, and for any other necessary steps to be immediately taken to ensure their physical integrity;
- expressing concern for the safety of other workers of the Bal Rashmi Society, particularly Alice Garg, its founder, who are in fear of being arrested under false charges and tortured or ill-treated following the reported use of torture to force confession and implicate workers in crimes.

APPEALS TO:

Mr Bhairon Singh Shekhawat

Chief Minister of Rajasthan

Office of the Chief Minister, Jaipur, Rajasthan

Telegrams: Chief Minister, Rajasthan, India

Faxes: + 91 141 382 492

Salutation: Dear Chief Minister

Mr Lal Krishna 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 Home Minister

COPIES TO:

Mr Amitabh Gupta

Director General of Police, Office of the DGP

Police Headquarters, Jaipur, Rajasthan

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 6 November 1998.

" Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association "

Article

20, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Visit the Amnesty International UDHR campaign website on <http://www.amnesty.excite.com>