

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 20/24/96

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Further information on EXTRA 75/96 (ASA 20/22/96, 21 May 1996) - Fear for safety

INDIA Civilians in Jammu and Kashmir

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Amnesty International continues to fear for the safety of civilians in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. On 23 May, the day of elections in Anantnag and Baramulla districts of Jammu and Kashmir, there were widespread reports that security forces had forced people out of their houses to vote and threatened them with physical violence.

Despite official denials that people had been forced to vote, residents told journalists that security forces had dragged them from their homes at dawn. One resident is reported to have said "They [security forces] told us 'if you don't go vote you will be beaten'".

Several peaceful demonstrations were held in opposition to the elections. In the town of Baramulla, the demonstration was broken up by police and security forces who used tear gas and batons and fired over the heads of demonstrators. A journalist and a photographer working for *Agence France Presse* were beaten and the photographer's camera destroyed.

While Amnesty International recognizes that excessive force does not appear to have been used against civilians, it continues to be concerned that threats of physical violence have been used against civilians by security forces. It also remains concerned for the safety of civilians in the Udamphur and Srinagar districts of Jammu and Kashmir where voting will take place on 30 May.

**THIS IS ADDITIONAL INFORMATION. PLEASE CONTINUE TO SEND APPEALS AS OUTLINED IN THE ORIGINAL ACTION.**