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INDIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS KILLING OF HOSTAGE AND CALLS FOR THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF REMAINING HOSTAGES

Amnesty International is appalled at the killing in Jammu and Kashmir yesterday of a Norwegian, Hans Christian Ostro, by the armed opposition group Al-Faran. The organization condemns all such killings unequivocally.

"Political killings and hostage-taking by political armed groups are unacceptable regardless of circumstances," Amnesty International said today. "They are instruments of terror and intimidation whose main victims are the ordinary citizen."

Hans Christian Ostro was abducted by the group on 8 July along with German Dirk Hasert. British tourists Paul Wells and Keith Mangan and American Donald Hutchings had been abducted on 4 July. The group has reportedly said that they would kill the remaining four hostages by Tuesday if the Indian government did not meet their demands for the release of 15 members of armed opposition groups currently held in custody.

Amnesty International is once again calling on the armed group to release the remaining four hostages immediately.

The organization is also calling on both sides to the conflict to respect minimum international standards of humane behaviour in armed conflict which prohibit torture, political killings and hostage-taking and which both governments and armed opposition groups are bound to observe. Amnesty International believes that the human rights standards which it promotes should be applied universally whenever a political group resorts to arms.

The organization is appealing to all those responsible for holding hostages in Jammu and Kashmir to release them immediately.

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