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INDIA: REACTION TO GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO REPORT ON TORTURE AND DEATHS IN CUSTODY
IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Despite filling 40-pages with its response to an Amnesty International report, the Indian government still dodges the central call for impartial investigations into past human rights violations and concrete action to prevent torture and deaths in custody in future.

"If the government has nothing to hide, why does it always sweep calls for impartial investigations under the carpet and drag its feet on effective steps to prevent human rights violations," Amnesty International said.

The response also repeats the governments claim that it has a policy of openness on human rights issues, yet it has still not responded to requests by the United Nation's experts on torture and extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions to visit the state. Amnesty International is also denied access to the state.

In its response, which deals only briefly with the Amnesty International report released today on torture and deaths in custody in Jammu and Kashmir, the government does not respond to the eight key recommendations made by the organization.

The government does, however, state that it has compiled information on 434 of the 715 cases detailed in the report, and dismisses the deaths in more than half those cases to people being killed in "encounters and cross firing".

The government has provided no evidence to back up this claim, while Amnesty International has documented many of the allegations of torture and deaths in custody through testimony from victims, signed statements from eye witnesses, legal affidavits and medical reports.

The human rights organization welcomes the government's statement that it is considering becoming a party to the UN's Convention Against Torture and its assurances that anyone found guilty of torture or death in custody will be "appropriately punished". However, not a single member of the security forces is known to date to have been brought to justice for torturing and killing anyone in custody.

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