

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Torture

14 February 1991

PAKISTAN: Rahila Tiwana

Rahila Tiwana was reportedly arrested on 15 December 1990. She is a member of the People's Student Federation (Girls Wing) (PSF), which is affiliated to the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). She was held at the Criminal Investigation Agency (CIA) Centre in Karachi, together with her brother and a friend, where she says she was tortured. In an interview published in The News, a Pakistani newspaper, on 11 February 1991, she said: "'At the CIA Centre Policemen tortured me and caused injuries to my hands and feet. Now I am unable to walk properly or carry any weight.... They strung me up by my hands at 11pm and left me there for the next five hours till four in the morning.'" She said she was starved for three days, and that police threatened to torture her brother also if she did not give the statement they wanted. The police then allegedly lowered her to the floor after she fell unconscious.

Rahila Tiwana says that despite the alleged threats and torture, she refused to give the police a statement implicating former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, her husband Asif Ali Zardari and former minister in the Sind government Manzoor Hussain Wassan in a murder case. Nevertheless, she continued, "The CIA personnel forcibly got my signatures on three blank papers, after abusing me badly and telling me that if I didn't sign the papers they would secure them after drugging me, so I had no option."

According to the report, the torture was carried out by a sub-inspector of police and five other police officers after they had asked a policewoman to leave the room.

Amnesty International understands that Rahila Tiwana has been charged with two offences: possession of illegal weapons, and involvement in murder. The first case was reportedly registered by the police on 7 January 1991, nearly two weeks after she had been arrested. The second case reportedly relates to an incident which occurred in 1987, and she had apparently not been named in the report of the incident registered by the police at the time (the First Information Report).

Rahila Tiwana was in hospital when she was interviewed, where she had been sent under court orders to determine whether she had been tortured. Amnesty International understands that she had been unwilling to speak out about her experiences until recently. The organization has received reports from several sources about her arrest and torture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The PPP government under Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was dismissed by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan in August 1990. Following elections in October, the Islamic Democratic Alliance (IDA) came to power in November, under Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Shortly after the dismissal of the PPP government, investigations began into allegations of corruption against former ministers.

Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and several former ministers were charged with corruption. The corruption trials - which are taking place before a court which is empowered to disqualify them from public office but not to imprison them - have not yet been completed. Benazir Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari,

was arrested in October and has since been charged with several criminal offences, including involvement in a kidnapping case and conspiracy to murder.

During December and January, the Sind provincial authorities were alleged to have arrested hundreds of members of the PPP and PSF under the cover of a campaign against crime in the province. Political and criminal violence continues at a high rate in Sind. Of those arrested, some are released unconditionally or on bail after being charged with a criminal offence. In some cases, however, people have been charged with offences which could not be substantiated, and then placed under 30 day detention orders under the Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance. Some of those arrested recently have been charged with offences which were committed several years ago, where no particular suspect had been named in the registration of the incident by the police at the time.

There have been allegations that several people arrested in connection with investigations into corruption and crime in the province have been tortured. Indeed, in December it was reported that five people had died in the custody of the CIA in Karachi in the previous few weeks, apparently as a result of torture. Until the recent report describing Rahila Tiwana's torture, however, detailed information was not available to Amnesty International to substantiate this claim.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the reported torture of Rahila Tiwana when she was in the custody of the Criminal Investigation Agency (CIA), Karachi;
- noting that there have also been recent reports of prisoners having died in custody following torture at the CIA, Karachi;
- urging that the alleged torture of Rahila Tiwana be immediately and impartially investigated, and that those responsible be identified and brought to justice;
- urging that, if it is found that Rahila Tiwana was indeed tortured by police officers, she be given compensation and medical rehabilitation;
- urging the government to publicly condemn the torture of prisoners, and to take urgent steps to ensure that it does not continue.

APPEALS TO:

Jam Sadiq Ali
 Chief Minister
 Office of the Chief Minister
 Sind Administration
 Karachi, Pakistan

Telegrams: Chief Minister, Karachi, Pakistan

Khawar Zaman
 Inspector General of Police, Sind
 Office of the Inspector General of Police
 Karachi, Pakistan

Telegrams: Inspector General Police, Karachi, Pakistan

COPIES TO:

Mian Nawaz Sharif
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Islamabad

and to diplomatic representatives of Pakistan in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 28 March 1991.