

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **India: Maoist armed group should immediately stop holding Chhattisgarh police officers as hostages**

The Communist Party of India (Maoist), an armed opposition group, must immediately stop holding as hostage the remaining four officers of Chhattisgarh state police it had abducted on the border with neighbouring Andhra Pradesh on 19 September and must ensure their safety and well-being as long as they detain them, Amnesty International said.

The bodies of three other police officers abducted by the Maoists at that time – Obedam Tirkey, Nandlal Bhosle and Irpa Krishnan – were found in the inter-state border forests by the Chhattisgarh police on 21 September.

On 25-26 September, handwritten leaflets were found on the inter-state border roads urging the authorities to announce, within the next 48 hours, that they would halt ongoing operations against the Maoists and stop targeting of *adivasi* (Indigenous community) villagers and release those arrested on charges of having supported Maoists. Otherwise, the three police officers would be killed, the leaflets warned.

This is the second such instance in the last month. On 4 September, the Maoists released three of the four police officers whom they had taken hostage in Lakhisarai district in the eastern state of Bihar; the bullet-ridden body of the fourth abducted police officer, Lucas Tete, had been found the day before.

The taking of hostages is prohibited by international law. It is contrary to fundamental principles of humanity, as reflected in international humanitarian law, to seize or detain anyone and threaten to kill or harm them if the authorities do not comply with the hostage-takers' demands. Amnesty International urges Maoists to stop threatening to kill or harm these police officers and guarantee their lives and safety.

The deadline set by the Maoists for their release expires today, even as Chhattisgarh authorities rejected the Maoist demands. Latest reports said the authorities were trying to contact the Maoists through various intermediaries.

The long-running confrontation between the banned CPI (Maoist) and security forces in several Indian states intensified in July 2010 after the suspected extrajudicial execution by Indian security forces of Maoist spokesperson Azad alias Cherukuri Rajkumar and a freelance journalist Hemchandra Pandey, when they were travelling to initiate peace talks, in Andhra Pradesh.

Civilians in several states including Chhattisgarh have been routinely targeted for killings, abductions and other human rights abuses by the security forces and the Maoists during the confrontation.

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