

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 31/075/2005

20 September 2005

Further Information on UA 60/05 (ASA 31/026/2005, 11 March 2005) Possible "disappearance" / Fear for safety

NEPAL Lok Prasad Panta (m), social worker and community activist

After more than seven months in detention, Lok Prasad Panta was released from Surkhet Jail in the mid-western town of Birendranagar on 17 September. He is now recovering at home with his family, and is in fair health. His relatives thanked Amnesty International and local human rights defenders for working to secure his release.

Though he was released unconditionally, Lok Prasad Panta was asked to sign a statement that he was not involved with the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), and would not join the Maoists in the future. Police also warned Lok Prasad Panta, who is a member of Amnesty International Nepal and well-known locally as a community activist, that he should not participate in political gatherings nor travel outside Surkhet district without official permission.

Lok Prasad Panta was first arrested on 3 February, amid a crackdown on political leaders and human rights defenders that followed King Gyanendra's seizure of power on 1 February. On 10 March, the Court of Appeal in Birendranagar determined that his detention was illegal and ordered his immediate release. However, as Lok Prasad Panta was returning home – accompanied by a crowd that included family members, his lawyer, journalists, and human rights defenders – he was seized by police officers and taken away in a police van.

Police in Birendranagar initially denied he was in their custody, and waited several days before informing family members of his detention. After about one week, police transferred him to Surkhet Jail, where he was held for six months in preventive detention under the provisions of the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance.

Many thanks to all who sent appeals. No further action is requested from the Urgent Action network.