

UA 81/99

Fear for**INDIAY. Mani, human rights defender**

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On 16 April 1999, human rights defender Y. Mani was taken into army custody where he was badly beaten and threatened with death. Although released the next day, Amnesty International is concerned for his continued safety.

Mr Mani is Vice President of the All Manipur United Clubs Organization (AMUCO), which has recently protested about human rights violations in the state.

Security forces from the 32 Rashtirya Rifles [a unit of the armed forces] searched his home first before leaving an arrest document with his father and taking him to the local army camp.

Once at the camp they accused him of belonging to the Revolutionary Peoples Front (RPF - an armed opposition group operating in Manipur). They also accused his and several other non-governmental organizations in Manipur of having links to armed opposition groups.

They reportedly then beat him about his body, including his head and face, with a wooden stick and on his back with an iron chain and threatened to shoot him and dump his body.

It appears that Y. Mani was only handed over to the Superintendent of Police in Bishenpur District the next day as a result of appeals by AMUCO and the intervention of the Governor of Manipur. He was handed over to police as "white", which indicates that he is not a suspect.

The Rashtirya Rifles have reportedly admitted arresting Y. Mani but have denied torturing him and claim that they released him as soon as they discovered he was Vice President of AMUCO.

Y. Mani needed to be hospitalized for two days as a result of his injuries. Human rights activists visiting him there said that he was bruised and swollen and that one of his toes had been crushed. Although now out of hospital he is not staying at his home for reasons of safety.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Manipur, a north-eastern state of India, has been riven by internal conflict for decades. Its troubled political history has been perpetuated by a multitude of factors including economic under-development, drug-smuggling and corruption. Armed opposition groups have emerged, organized on the basis of community affiliations, making conflicting demands for greater autonomy and self-determination.

Human rights violations by security forces, in the context of the conflict, are widespread. For some years Amnesty International has expressed concern about illegal detention, torture, including rape, death in custody and an official policy which appears to sanction killings by security forces. Special legislation introduced into Manipur decades ago in the form of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act allows for virtual impunity for the armed forces.

This climate makes the work of human rights defenders extremely difficult. In response to human rights violations, local people have come together to protest at the activities of security forces - most commonly forming Joint

Action Committees (JACs) to campaign for redress for victims. In recent weeks, local people in Bishenpur District had joined together in protest at army and police operations around Loktak lake which have caused economic hardship for many. As a result, a memorandum on the subject was submitted to the Manipur State Human Rights Commission and Y. Mani appointed as Vice-President of the Bishenpur Joint Action Committee. Two female activists, *Meira Paibeas* [literally "Torch bearers" -- communities of women whose traditional form of protest is torch-light processions] were recently injured after being shot by security forces. Y Mani had been active in protesting against this shooting.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:**

- urging the authorities to guarantee the safety of Y. Mani, recently arrested and beaten by security forces in Manipur;
- urging the authorities to immediately order an independent judicial inquiry into reports that Y. Mani was tortured and threatened with death in army custody;
- urging the authorities to give a commitment that human rights defenders are free to carry out their peaceful activities without fear or harassment.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Home Affairs  
 Ministry of Home Affairs  
 North Block  
 New Delhi 110 001  
 India

**Telegrams:Home Minister, New Delhi, India**

**Faxes:+ 91 11 301 5750**

**Salutation: Dear Home Minister**

Minister of Defence  
 Ministry of Defence  
 South Block  
 New Delhi 110 001

**Telegrams:Defence Minister, New Delhi, India**

**Faxes:+ 91 11 301 5403 (this number can be difficult to reach at certain times)**

**Salutation:Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

Mr Nipamacha  
 Chief Minister of Manipur  
 Office of the Chief Minister  
 Imphal, Manipur, India

Corps Commander (in charge of Nagaland and Manipur sectors of armed forces operations)

3<sup>rd</sup> Indian Army Corps  
 Rangapahar, Nagaland, India  
 c/o 99 A.P.O.

and to diplomatic representatives of India accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 June 1999.