

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 261/94 Fear of torture / fear of "disappearance"

6 July 1994

INDIA Ajit Kumar Bhuyan (39), journalist and human rights activist

In the early hours of 5 July 1994, police reportedly took Ajit Kumar Bhuyan away from his home in Guwahati, the capital city of Assam. His current whereabouts are unknown. Amnesty International fears that he is at risk of torture or "disappearance".

Reports indicate that the police forcibly entered Mr Bhuyan's home and searched it for two hours, finding nothing. The family obtained a written statement from the police stating that they had found nothing in the search. However, the police, despite having no arrest warrant, took Ajit Kumar Bhuyan to Chandmari police station, where he was reportedly held for several hours before being moved to an undisclosed location. Fellow journalists who have expressed concern to the police at his whereabouts, have apparently been told that he has been taken away for interrogation.

Ajit Kumar Bhuyan is editor of the mass circulation Assamese language weekly "Saadin". He is one of the coordinators of the Human Rights Struggle Committee and a founder member of the Assam Union of Working Journalists.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ajit Kumar Bhuyan has been picked up by police on several occasions in the past. He was detained for two months in March 1992 under the National Security Act, reportedly for writing articles about alleged human rights violations by the Indian army in Assam. The last time he was reportedly arrested was in December 1993 for his involvement in trying to convene a meeting to observe World Human Rights Day. He was released after one day.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Ajit Kumar Bhuyan following his reported arrest by police, and expressing the fear that he may "disappear" in police custody as the police are refusing to disclose his current whereabouts;
- seeking assurances that if he is in police custody he be allowed immediate access to relatives and legal counsel and be brought promptly before a magistrate;
- seeking assurances that, if in custody, he is not being tortured or ill-treated;
- urging that, if he is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence, he be released immediately.

APPEALS TO

Mr Hiteshwar Saikia
Chief Minister of Assam
Office of the Chief Minister
Guwahati
Assam, India

Telegrams: Chief Minister Saikia, Guwahati, Assam, India

Faxes: +91 361 565 455/561 515

Salutation: Dear Chief Minister

Mr S.B Chavan

Minister of Home Affairs
Office of the Minister of Home Affairs
North Block
New Delhi 110 001, India
Telegrams: Minister Home Affairs, New Delhi, India
Telexes: 3166427 REND IN
Faxes: +91 11 301 6781 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Salutation: Dear Home Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Mr S.V. Subramanian
Director General of Police
Police Headquarters
Dispur, Assam, INDIA

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 16 August 1994.