

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 20/26/96

31 May 1996

Further information on EXTRA 75/96 (ASA 20/22/96, 21 May 1996) and follow-ups (ASA 20/24/96, 24 May and ASA 20/25/96, 29 May) - Fear for safety

INDIA Civilians in Jammu and Kashmir

new names: Javed Ahmed Mir
Shakeel Bakshi
Mohammad Shaban
Ghulam Nabi Shah

Elections in Jammu and Kashmir have now ended, but Amnesty International remains concerned for the safety of civilians in the state. During the final day of elections on 30 May, several demonstrations were broken up by police and a number of civilians, including journalists and photographers, were injured. The atmosphere remains tense.

Demonstrations were held in several areas of Srinagar. During one demonstration in Maisuma locality, Javed Ahmed Mir of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), who was leading the demonstration, was arrested. He remains in detention at Kothi Bagh Police Station. Police have said that he is being held for "security reasons". Shakeel Bakshi, also of the JKLF, was also arrested on 30 May and is reportedly being detained at the Ram Munshi Bagh Police Station. The house arrest, placed on other leaders of the All Parties Hurriyet Conference (APHC) has now been lifted.

Journalists have reportedly been prevented from entering the area surrounding *Jama Masjid* (mosque) where a large demonstration had earlier been broken up. Several journalists were beaten by members of the Border Security Forces (BSF) while covering demonstrations. A photographer, working for the Press Trust of India, received a head injury after he was hit on the head with the butt of a gun, after he protested at the beating of a woman by a BSF officer in Batamaloo. When journalists and photographers tried to protest to the Chief Election Officer of Jammu and Kashmir, Mr Jalil Khan, he reportedly refused to speak to them.

Police fired over the heads of peaceful demonstrators in an attempt to break up the demonstrations. Although no-one received bullet injuries, at least 25 people were reportedly injured due to the effects of teargas and the use of batons by police.

Allegations, made on the previous day of voting on 23 May (see ASA 20/24/96, 24 May), that security forces and members of armed groups backed by security forces (known as "renegades") had used force to ensure that civilians took part in elections, were echoed on 30 May.

In a separate incident on the morning of 30 May, members of the BSF reportedly fired indiscriminately at civilians in a street in Dalal Mohalla, Srinagar, following an attack on their security post by members of an armed opposition group. One person, Mohammad Shaban, was killed and his son, Ghulam Nabi Shah, critically injured.

Amnesty International has appealed to armed opposition groups to end human rights abuses and to abide by international humanitarian standards and on 14 May called on seven armed opposition groups to withdraw a death threat issued

to civilian electoral officials who carried out polling duties during the elections (See EXTRA 66/96, ASA 20/19/96, 14 May and follow-up, 21 May).

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

- welcoming the lifting of the house arrest of leaders of the APHC;
- expressing concern at the detention of Javed Ahmed Mir and Shakeel Bakshi, seeking assurances that they are being protected from torture or ill-treatment, and urging that they be immediately brought before a magistrate and released unless charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- calling on the government to ensure that the human rights of citizens in Jammu and Kashmir, including the right to freedom of expression, are protected from abuse by members of the security forces and so-called "renegades", and to give strict orders to all security forces to abide by international human rights standards;
- urging the government to take immediate steps to disarm and disband groups of "renegades";
- pointing out that Amnesty International continues to urge members of armed opposition groups to abide by international humanitarian standards.

APPEALS TO:

Mr H.D. Deve Gowda
Prime Minister of India
Office of the Prime Minister
South Block
New Delhi 110 001
India

Faxes: +91 11 301 9817

Telegrams: Prime Minister, New Delhi, India

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

General K.V. Krishna Rao
Governor of Jammu and Kashmir
Office of the Governor
Raj Bhavan
Srinagar
Jammu and Kashmir
India

Faxes: +91 194 452 207

Telegrams: Governor, Jammu and Kashmir, Srinagar, India

Salutation: Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

Mr K. Padmanabhaiah
Home Secretary
c/o Office of the Prime Minister
South Block
New Delhi 110 001
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 30 June 1996.