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India: Amnesty International welcomes enquiry into police brutality

Amnesty International welcomes the appointment of an administrative enquiry to investigate the reported attack by Madhya Pradesh police on non-violent Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) demonstrators which took place in Badwami, Narmada Valley, on 3 September 2001.

"The Government of Madhya Pradesh must now ensure that appropriate action will be taken against those police officers found to have used excessive or arbitrary force against peaceful protestors", Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International believes that the beating of NBA protestors is a violation of Article 19 of the Constitution of India which guarantees "the right to freedom of speech and expression, to assemble peaceably and to form associations and unions". India also shouldered the international responsibility to ensure the enjoyment of these rights to all individuals within its territory when it ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The organization will continue to monitor the developments after this incident. It urges the Government of Madhya Pradesh to ensure that the enquiry will be prompt and impartial and that its findings will be made public.

Background

On 3rd September 2001, around 800 villagers and NBA activists reportedly assembled near the Narmada Valley Development Authority (NVDA) office in Badwami. They were peacefully demonstrating against

the distribution of money instead of land in compensation to the families affected by the Sardar Sarovar Project, and were waiting for a previously agreed meeting with NVDA authorities. Police, headed by the local Sub-Divisional Magistrate, allegedly lathicharged the demonstrators without any warning on three successive attacks, which left 21 activists injured.

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