

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 20/045/2001

13 September 2001

Further information on UA 364/00 (ASA 20/58/00, 27 November 2000) and follow-ups (ASA 20/014/2001, 19 February 2001; ASA 20/015/2001, 20 February 2001; ASA 20/017/2001, 15 March 2001) - Fear for Safety

INDIA Human Rights Defenders in Andhra Pradesh

New names: Dr Gunti Ravi
Narra Purushotham Reddy

Police officers have reportedly threatened to kill two senior members of the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC), based in Warangal, Dr Gunti Ravi and Narra Purushotham Reddy. They and other human rights defenders in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh are reported to be in grave danger.

The APCLC claims that police have arrested and tortured dozens of activists, including APCLC members, in the last four months.

The Andhra Pradesh government and police have consistently condemned members of the APCLC and other human rights organizations in the state as acting as a "wing" of the left-wing armed group, the People's War Group (PWG).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The APCLC has investigated and publicly condemned hundreds of alleged human rights violations by police, including torture and extrajudicial executions of suspected members of armed groups. In November 2000 T Puroshottam was murdered and in February 2001 Mohammad Azam Ali was also killed: both men were executives of the APCLC. On 19 February the Andhra Pradesh government announced a judicial inquiry into the killing of Mohammad Azam Ali but although witnesses were cross-examined, to date the report of the inquiry has not been published.

Four men were arrested in connection with the death of T. Puroshottam and two more were arrested following the death of Azam Ali. All are free on bail. They are reported to be ex-members of an armed group. Human rights activists claim that they had been operating with the tacit and sometimes active support of police and were regularly seen in the company of armed police in plain clothes.

Several human rights defenders were killed in Andhra Pradesh in the 1980s and early 1990s. T. Puroshottam had spoken of the continuing dangers they faced at a December 1999 meeting in Bangalore.

The government often brands human rights defenders as members of armed groups in areas of India where there it faces armed opposition. This has stigmatised many human rights groups and has led to false charges being filed against them and often to violence. Human rights defenders in Andhra Pradesh claim that police in the state keep armed opposition groups in check by sponsoring former members of these groups who attack their former colleagues. These serious allegations have never been independently investigated.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- urging the Andhra Pradesh government to immediately do everything necessary to ensure the safety of Dr Gunti Ravi and Narra Purushottam Reddy;

- calling for the report of the inquiry into the death of Azam Ali **to** be made public as quickly as possible;
- urging that the government order an independent and impartial investigation into the killing of T Puroshottam, and into serious allegations that police have been acting in connivance with those responsible for his killing;
- urging the authorities to give a commitment that human rights defenders will be free to carry out their peaceful activities without fear of harassment, and that action will be taken against anyone interfering with those activities.

APPEALS TO:

Mr Chandrababu Naidu
Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh
Office of the Chief Minister
Secretariat Building
Hyderabad 500 022
Andhra Pradesh
India

**Telegrams: Chief Minister, Secretariat Building, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh,
India**

COPIES TO:

Justice Verma
Chair, National Human Rights Commission
Sardar Patel Bhavan
Sansad Marg
New Delhi 110 001
India

The Director General of Police, **Andhra Pradesh**
Police Headquarters
Hyderabad
Andhra Pradesh
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 24 October 2001.