

AI INDEX: ASA 20/47/96
25 OCTOBER 1996

INDIA: NEW GOVERNMENT IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR THREATENS ARMED
OPPOSITION WITH EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTION

Amnesty International today warned that a new wave of unlawful killings could be imminent in Jammu and Kashmir following an ultimatum issued by Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah to armed opposition groups.

Chief Minister Abdullah was reported to have told journalists on 19 October that: *“those who surrender will be welcomed into the mainstream and those who don't will have to die”*.

“Provocative statements of this kind will do nothing to break the cycle of violence in Jammu and Kashmir and run completely counter to the new state government's public commitments on human rights,” Amnesty International said today.

The Government of India apparently intends to put Chief Minister Abdullah's words into practice. General S. Padmanabhan said that the Ministry of Defence had issued orders to troops posted in Jammu and Kashmir to shoot on sight any of the 300 *“infiltrators”* it believed to be currently fighting in Jammu and Kashmir. Referring to some 1,000 Kashmiri as *“hard core guerrillas”*, he said that if they renewed their subversive activities, *“we will eliminate them, too”*.

Amnesty International has written to the authorities in Jammu and Kashmir and New Delhi urging them to publicly distance themselves from any statement that could incite law enforcement personnel to commit unlawful killings.

“The Government of Jammu and Kashmir should publicly issue orders making it clear that the security forces are prohibited from operating a shoot-to-kill policy and that anyone doing so would be subject to criminal prosecution,” Amnesty International said.

The human rights organization is also urging the government to ensure that law enforcement personnel only use force when strictly necessary and only to the minimum extent required under the circumstances. Lethal force should not be used except when strictly unavoidable in order to save life.

The Chief Minister's comments are at odds with earlier public commitments to strengthen human rights protection in the state. The National Conference government which assumed office on 9 October 1996, released political opponents who had been detained during the elections, announced the establishment of a human rights commission in the state and a committee to take stock of detainees held inside and outside the state. Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah also previously stated that the so-called *“renegades”*, former militants who now side with the government, *“cannot be let loose, threatening and killing people, raping women and looting”*.

ENDS\