

AI INDEX: ASA 31/02/96

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - 17 MARCH 1996**

NEPAL: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS DETENTION OF PEACEFUL  
DEMONSTRATORS

Amnesty International strongly protested the action taken by Nepalese authorities today to break up a peaceful demonstration against human rights violations in China. Police detained scores of people, including members of Amnesty International's Nepal Section and the Tibetan community.

The demonstration had been organized by Amnesty International's Nepal members as part of a worldwide campaign on the human rights situation in China. The authorities had been notified in advance of the demonstration in accordance with local procedures. Police detained the activists as they assembled in central Kathmandu before marching to the Chinese Embassy.

"Amnesty International strongly condemns this action by the Nepalese authorities. It is a clear violation of the right to freedom of expression in Nepal," the organization said. "We call on the Nepal government to release those detained immediately and unconditionally."

"These detentions run counter to Nepal's image as an open society. The authorities should ensure that non-governmental organizations including Amnesty International are allowed to continue in their peaceful campaigning activities without further harassment."

This action followed the detention overnight of three Amnesty International members in Kathmandu on 17 March. The three were detained by Nepalese police while they were sitting at a table collecting signatures and distributing material on human rights in China. Police officers confiscated banners and other materials.

A fourth Amnesty International member was held by police on the morning of 18 March when he visited the police station at which the members were being detained.

Amnesty International delegates in Bangkok were detained last week by the Thai police and prevented from attending a press conference to launch the campaign. Later the same day, Thai police and special forces in riot gear stopped the delegation at the entrance of the Chinese Embassy, where they wanted to deliver Amnesty International's report on China "*No one is safe*".

"The actions by regional governments to obstruct our message show the degree to which they will bow to China's enormous power and influence," Amnesty International said. "This sets a worrying pattern for the freedom of speech in the region, and sends a clear message to the people of China that the international community is not serious about protecting their human rights."

"The Chinese government is not content with silencing those who speak up in China. Their message is loud and clear: no discussion about our human rights record. Anywhere, by anyone, at any time."

"Other governments may help to shelter China from international criticism, but they will not stop us."

Amnesty International expressed particular concern about local Tibetan people detained in connection with the demonstration.

“Those Tibetans without papers may be at risk of deportation to China,” the organization said. “Amnesty International calls on the Nepal government not to deport any Tibetans to China where they may be at risk of further human rights violations.”

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