

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 31/026/2005

11 March 2005

UA 60/05 Possible "disappearance" / Fear for safety

NEPAL Lok Prasad Panta (m), social worker and President of *Nagarik Samaj* - *Surkhet*,
local community group

On 10 March, Lok Prasad Panta, President of *Nagarik Samaj* – *Surkhet*, a community group in the district of Surkhet in mid-western Nepal, was re-arrested by security forces in the town of Birendranagar, in Surkhet, immediately after being released from detention. His whereabouts are unknown and there are fears for his safety.

Earlier that day, he had been released from detention on the order of the Court of Appeal in Birendranagar, after his wife filed a *habeas corpus* petition requiring him to be brought before a court or judge. He had been detained since 3 February.

As Lok Prasad Panta was returning home – accompanied by family members, his lawyer, journalists, and human rights activists – he was stopped by police officers, who took him away in a police van. When local activists spoke to the Chief District Officer of Surkhet about the arrest, he told them that he did not have any information about Lok Prasad Panta's case.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 1 February, King Gyanendra of Nepal dismissed the Government, assumed direct power, and declared a nation-wide State of Emergency (SoE). Under the SoE, fundamental rights were suspended, including freedom of expression, press and publication rights, and freedom of assembly. Within days, the security forces had arrested hundreds of people - including political leaders, trade unionists, student activists, journalists, and human rights defenders. While some people have been released, many others remain in detention, and arrests are ongoing.

The King's actions plunged the country deeper into a human rights crisis and put the Nepalese people at even greater risk of gross abuses. The routine violation of human rights was already a widespread feature of the nine-year conflict in Nepal between government forces and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN) (Maoist). Amnesty International has documented a dramatic increase in the scale of human rights abuses since the breakdown of a ceasefire between the government and the CPN (Maoist) in August 2003, including torture, detention, "disappearances", displacement, abductions, and unlawful killings. More than 400 cases of "disappearance" have been reported to Amnesty International since August 2003.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Lok Prasad Panta, who is believed to have been re-arrested by security forces personnel on 10 March 2005;
- urging that he be treated humanely while in custody and not tortured or ill-treated;
- calling on the authorities to immediately make public his whereabouts and grant him immediate access to relatives, lawyers and any medical attention he may require;
- calling for him to be released immediately and unconditionally, in compliance with the order of the Court of Appeal in Surkhet.

APPEALS TO:

Lieutenant Colonel Raju Nepali

Royal Nepal Army
Human Rights Cell
Royal Nepalese Army Headquarters
Singha Durbar
Kathmandu, Nepal

Fax: + 977 1 4 226 292
Email: humanrights@rna.mil.np
Salutation: Dear Lieutenant Colonel

Inspector General of Police Shyam Bhakta Thapa
Police Headquarters
GPO Box 407
Naxal
Kathmandu, Nepal

Fax: + 977 1 4 415 593 / 4 415 594
Email: info@nepalpolice.gov.np
Salutation: Dear Inspector General

His Majesty the King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev
C/O The Chief of Protocol Division
Protocol Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Shital Niwas, Kathmandu, Nepal

Fax: + 977 1 4 423 951
Salutation: Your Majesty

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Nepal accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 April 2005.