

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 31/182/2004

11 November 2004

UA 305/04 **Fear of "disappearance" / fear for safety**

NEPAL **Prakash Thapa (m), aged 36, member of Amnesty International**

Security forces personnel reportedly arrested Prakash Thapa, a construction worker and member of Amnesty International, at 11.30pm on 10 November. His whereabouts are now unknown, and he may be at risk of torture or "disappearance".

Prakash Thapa and his family were asleep in their home in Kapan Village Development Committee (VDC), Kathmandu district, when six security forces personnel came to their house and called out for them to open the door. Three of the men, wearing civilian clothes, entered the house, while the other three wearing army uniforms, waited outside.

Once inside the security forces personnel searched the house and took away a computer and Prakash Thapa's mobile phone. Prakash Thapa's wife asked them who they were and where they were from but they just told her to keep quiet. They said that they were taking Prakash Thapa away for "investigation" and that the family would be informed when the process was complete, in about two to three days. Witnesses report that Prakash Thapa was then taken away in a pick-up truck with number plate Ba 1 Cha 3923. This same truck is thought to have also been used by the security forces to arrest other people.

Prakash Thapa's family members have visited local army barracks but have been unable to locate him. The family have also tried to ring his mobile phone but no-one answers it.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (Maoist) declared a "people's war" in February 1996 Nepal has been in the grip of nationwide conflict and human rights crisis. Human rights abuses by both the security forces and members of the CPN (Maoist) have escalated since a ceasefire, that had lasted seven months, broke down in August 2003.

In both 2002 and 2003, Nepal recorded the highest number of "disappearances" of any country in the world. People detained by the security forces are often held in army barracks with no access to their families, lawyers or medical treatment. They also face a high risk of torture, including beatings, and are sometimes held in solitary confinement or kept blindfolded for the entire time they are in custody. The CPN (Maoist) are also reported to have abducted hundreds of people, including large numbers of teachers and schoolchildren, for the purpose of "political education".

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

- expressing concern at the arrest of Prakash Thapa by security forces on 10 November, in Kathmandu district;
- calling on the authorities to immediately make public his whereabouts and grant him immediate access to his relatives, lawyers and any medical attention he may require;
- urging that he be treated humanely while in custody and not tortured or ill-treated;
- calling for him to be released immediately and unconditionally, unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence.

APPEALS TO: (faxes may be switched off outside office hours, GMT + 5½)

Lieutenant Colonel Raju Nepali
Head Royal Nepal Army Human Rights Cell
Royal Nepalese Army Headquarters
Singha Durbar
Kathmandu
Nepal

Fax: + 977 1 4 226 292 / 245 020 (If someone answers the telephone please ask them in English to switch on the fax machine, and resend the fax).

Salutation: Dear Lieutenant Colonel

Chief District Officer
Baman Prasad Neupane
Office of the Chief District Officer,
Kathmandu District, Nepal

Fax: + 97714267691

Salutation: Dear Chief District Officer

COPIES TO:

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

Fax: + 977 1 4 416007

Salutation: Your Majesty

and 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 23 December 2004.