

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 207/92 Fear of torture/extrajudicial execution

22 June 1992

PAKISTAN: Anti-crime campaign in Sindh Province

Amnesty International has received reports that on 5 June 1992 nine people were extrajudicially executed by an army patrol at Jamshoro during an operation by the army and paramilitary forces that authorities said was intended to restore law and order in Sindh. Initially the army claimed that the victims were "saboteurs", but later admitted that they were poor farmers whom a local landlord had wanted to eliminate with the help of the army. Amnesty International fears that the present campaign to combat crime may be used to carry out further arbitrary detentions and killings in order to eliminate individuals on political or personal grounds. There is concern that suspects may be killed rather than arrested and brought to justice.

Amnesty International has also received as yet incomplete reports about three people who have died in military custody, apparently following torture. One of them is opposition politician Mohammad Yusuf Jakhrani, who was arrested in Kandhkot on suspicion of harbouring bandits. He died on 12 June in a military hospital after having been interrogated by the army. The other two who died were landlords arrested in connection with the Jamshoro killings. Amnesty International fears that during the ongoing anti-crime operation more people may be subjected to torture in military custody.

Following the reported killing on 5 June of nine people in Tando Bahawal village near Jamshoro, the army on the next day claimed that the nine victims were bandits and saboteurs trained in India. It claimed that after an exchange of fire between the army and unknown suspects, nine dead bodies and one seriously injured person were found. Army officials displayed arms, including 38 hand grenades, two kalashnikovs, 20 kilos of high grade ammunition and plastic explosives, all of Indian origin, which they said were found near the bodies. An army spokesman further claimed that one of the victims confessed on his deathbed that he had received arms and training in India.

Local villagers protested against this version of events and told visiting journalists of the Sindhi press that the dead men and the injured tenth person were innocent people caught up in a land dispute between two wealthy local landlords in which one of them had secured the assistance of army personnel to kill his rival's tenants.

Sindh Chief Minister Muzaffar Hussain Shah admitted before the Sindh Provincial Assembly on 10 June that the victims were indeed poor farmers kidnapped and gunned down by troops. "They were not from any point of view terrorists," Shah admitted. The statement of one of the victims before his death in a local hospital had pointed to the landlord's involvement and not to the men's having been trained in India as the army had claimed, Shah added. He said police had arrested six people, including the landlord who later died in custody.

On 14 June Vice Chief of General Staff, Major-General Jamshed Malik, told the press at army headquarters in Rawalpindi that the Pakistan army admitted responsibility for the death of the nine villagers and removed three senior commanders - the area's divisional commander, a brigade commander and a battalion commander - from their posts. A fourth commander was removed from his post on 15 June. The army spokesman said the killings were the act of an individual major who is now in custody and facing an inquiry. The Sindh provincial government reportedly paid compensation to the families of the nine dead villagers and promised to give each family 25 acres of land in compensation.

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Two landlords arrested in connection with the Jamshoro killing reportedly died during interrogation by the army. The date and place of their death is not at present known to Amnesty International; a preliminary post mortem report is said to have described the cause of their deaths as heart failure.

Several investigations into the killings in Jamshoro appear to have been initiated. Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif on 9 June declared he had asked for a comprehensive report, but did not specify the agency involved. The Inter Services Intelligence (the army intelligence agency) and the district administration appear to have initiated their own inquiries. The composition and frame of reference of these investigating bodies are not known to Amnesty International. No inquiries into the three reported deaths in military custody allegedly following torture appear to have been initiated.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In order to combat a wave of criminal and political violence in Sindh the federal government of Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif on 28 May ordered the army and the paramilitary Mehran Force to restore law and order in Sindh in "Operation Blue Fox", scheduled to last six months from 1 June. Several opposition groups said at the outset of the campaign they feared it would be used by politicians and other groups to intimidate, detain or eliminate political and personal opponents.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern that the present anti-crime campaign by the army in Sindh may be used to arbitrarily arrest and torture people;
- expressing concern at reported extrajudicial executions having been falsely represented as killings in armed encounters;
- seeking assurances that the investigation into the Jamshoro killings will be conducted by an impartial and independent body which is given full powers of investigation;
- requesting information on the composition and terms of reference of the inquiry which the government reportedly initiated;
- requesting to be informed of the findings of the inquiry;
- urging that any person found responsible for extrajudicial executions be brought to justice before the civil courts;
- insisting that the alleged deaths following torture in military custody of Mohammad Yussuf Jakhri and two other men also be investigated by an independent and impartial inquiry, that its results be made public promptly and those found responsible be brought to justice;
- urging the government to ensure that no further torture and extrajudicial killings take place during the army operation in Sindh and that all law-enforcement agencies are clearly instructed accordingly.

APPEALS TO

1) President Ghulam Ishaq Khan
The Presidency
Murree Brewery Road
Rawalpindi, Pakistan
Telegrams: President, Rawalpindi
President's House, Pakistan
Telexes: 54058 PSPUB PK

Salutation: Dear President

2) Mian Nawaz Sharif
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Islamabad, Pakistan
Telegrams: Prime Minister, Islamabad,
Pakistan

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

3) Mahmud A. Haroon
Governor, Governor's Office
Sindh Administration
Karachi, Pakistan
Telegrams: Governor Haroon, Karachi,
Pakistan

Salutation: Dear Governor

4) Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah
Chief Minister
Office of the Chief Minister
Sindh Administration
Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
Telegrams: Chief Minister Shah,
Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan

Salutation: Dear Chief Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO: diplomatic representatives of Pakistan in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your Section Office, if sending appeals after 3 August 1992.