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NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Annual Report - 0600 hrs gmt, 8 July - SEE WEEKLY UPDATE 76/93

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Indonesia (Aceh) - 28 July - SEE WEEKLY UPDATE 76/93 and 79/93

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Nepal - item enclosed

The item on Nepal enclosed will be sent today to BBC World Service and targeted Asia media by IS Press Office.

AI INDEX: ASA 31/WU 01/93

15 JULY 1993

NEPAL: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR INVESTIGATION INTO POLICE SHOOTINGS

Amnesty International has called upon Nepal's Prime Minister, Girija Prasad Koirala, to establish an independent and impartial inquiry into the killing of at least 16 people and injuries of 50 others when police fired on demonstrators in Kathmandu and neighbouring towns between 25 and 28 June.

The demonstrations followed nationwide strikes called by the main opposition party - Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) and other opposition groups.

Amnesty International believes the enquiry should establish the full circumstances in which the killings occurred, their lawfulness and whether any of the police officers responsible for shooting demonstrators should be held to account. It should take information from all appropriate sources, including eye-witnesses, and its report should be made publicly available.

The organization also urged that police be clearly instructed not to use lethal force other than in strictly limited circumstances as set out in the UN's Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.

Amnesty International is also concerned that hundreds of people were arbitrarily detained by police during and after the demonstrations, who eye-witnesses report were severely beaten in custody and some deprived of food. The organization called for reports of beatings and other ill-treatment to be thoroughly investigated, and action taken against the police officers responsible.

Many prisoners have reportedly now been released, but some have not yet been traced by their relatives and it appears to be difficult for them to get information about prisoners. Amnesty International believes it is essential for the government to publish immediately a list of all remaining prisoners detained in connection with the demonstrations and strikes, as well as all of those who have already been released.

A further essential safeguard is for all prisoners to have prompt and regular access to their relatives, a lawyer and a doctor. Should some prisoners remain untraced even after these steps have been taken, the government should ensure that any "disappearances" are fully investigated by an independent body to clarify the whereabouts of the victims. Detainees who are not to be charged with recognizably criminal offences should be released.

The first nationwide strike was called by the CPN-UML on 25 June 1993 to urge the government to appoint a Commission of Investigation into the deaths in May of party leader, Madan Bhandari, and party member, Jeev Raj Ashrit, in a road accident. A judicial inquiry conducted last month had returned a verdict of accidental death but CPN-UML members believe that Madan Bhandari may have been the victim of a political killing.

Left-wing opposition parties have combined in calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Koirala and have pledged to continue their program of strikes and demonstrations. A three-day general strike has been called to start on 9 August.

Amnesty International has also received reports that in the second week of June police from the Ilaka police-post opened fire on a group of some 60 Tibetans who had crossed the border into Nepal - and that one man, Jamyang Kelsand, died after he was shot in the head. The attack reportedly took place at a village restaurant some 12 miles south of Kodar, where the Tibetans were sitting eating. A government spokesman has said that the Tibetans were fired on only after they attacked the police. However, reports received by Amnesty International suggest the police fired on the group when two children, aged 10 and 12, accompanying the Tibetans, threw stones at the police. If so, the action taken by the police, including lethal fire, appears to have been out of all proportion to the threat posed and unjustifiable. Seven of the Tibetans were said to have been caught by the police, who beat them severely.

Amnesty International has learned that the Home Ministry is holding an inquiry into the incident and has asked to be informed of its findings. Another incident in which a Tibetan was shot dead by police in Solukhumbu district occurred on 3 January 1992, but has not been properly investigated by the Nepalese authorities. Amnesty International is also concerned that all Tibetans who enter Nepal wishing to do so should have the opportunity to apply for asylum, and that police actions which may have the effect of deterring refugees from seeking protection should be immediately halted.

In June 1992 Amnesty International published a comprehensive report: Nepal: A summary of human rights concerns (AI Index:ASA 31/02/92) on its continuing concerns in Nepal - including possible extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrests and torture. The organization called upon the government of Nepal to implement a series of recommendations for human rights safeguards to ensure that violations of this kind would not be repeated. Amnesty International regrets that these recommendations have yet to be implemented.

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