

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **India: Many *adivasi* victims of Special Task Force (STF) operations yet to get justice and compensation in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu**

Amnesty International is concerned that several *adivasi* (indigenous and marginalized communities) victims of the decade-long Special Task Force (STF) operations against Veerappan, who was killed by the STF after being outlawed for sandalwood smuggling, are yet to receive justice and compensation for the human rights violations perpetrated against them. Human rights violations perpetrated in the course of operations against Veerappan included unlawful killings; arbitrary detention; and torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (ill-treatment), including sexual violence.

Amnesty International has learnt that, one year after an official panel of inquiry led by Justice A. J. Sadashiva ordering the Government of Karnataka to pay compensation to 51 victims, 13 of them have yet to receive it. The Government of Tamil Nadu has paid compensation amounts to 38 victims as directed in the order. In January 2007, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) had directed the two governments to pay compensation to 89 victims as per the recommendations of the panel of inquiry.

Notwithstanding the above order, during the past year, human rights organizations in the two states have been campaigning to ensure justice for 104 other victims whose complaints of human rights violations including arbitrary and indefinite detention, torture, including to death, other ill-treatment and sexual assault were reportedly ignored by the panel. The panel also failed to initiate charges against any of the 39 STF officials named as perpetrators by the victims during the proceedings, though it concluded that the STF had perpetrated torture. However, Amnesty International has learnt that a number of complaints against 39 STF officials have nevertheless been filed by the victims in several police stations in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

In spite of the filed complaints, a number of STF personnel named as perpetrators in the victims' complaints were given awards and promotions; furthermore, some of the officials named by the victims were reportedly present in an official function held to distribute compensation amounts in Karnataka in March 2007, leading to protests from the victims.

As a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, India is obliged to "ensure that any person whose rights or freedoms .. are violated shall have an effective remedy"; to "ensure that any person claiming such a remedy shall have his right thereto determined by competent judicial, administrative or legislative authorities, or by any other competent authority provided for by the legal system of the State, and to develop the possibilities of judicial remedy"; and to "ensure that the competent authorities shall enforce such remedies when granted."

Amnesty International, therefore, urges

- the Government of Karnataka to immediately distribute compensation amounts to the 13 remaining victims as per the January 2007 order;

- the authorities of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu to thoroughly investigate the pending human rights complaints against the 39 STF officials and bring those suspected of perpetrating violations to justice, in proceedings which meet international standards of fairness and without the imposition of the death penalty;
- immediately suspend the officials named in the complaints from active duty pending completion of investigations;

and

- the NHRC to participate in the above cases to help to ensure that there is justice for the victims.
- the NHRC to re-examine victims' complaints ignored by the official panel.

## **Background**

In 1993, the Governments of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu had created the STF to catch Veerappan and his associates who had remained outlawed for more than seven years. On 21 October 2004, Veerappan and two of his associates were killed during the STF operations. In all, 36 persons lost their lives during the STF operations.

In June 1999, the NHRC appointed the official panel, consisting of Justice Sadashiva and a former Director-General of India's premier investigating agency, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The panel submitted its recommendations in December 2003.

Public Document

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