

PUBLIC

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Torture / Fear of torture

30 July 1998

BHUTAN Sangay Dorji, 20, from Bemporong village, Gomdar, Samdrup Jongkhar
Tenzin Dorji, 21, from Wangphu village, Gomdar, Samdrup
Jongkhar

There are grave fears for the safety of Sangay Dorji and Tenzin Dorji, who have reportedly been in incommunicado detention since their arrest on 24 June 1998, after reports that they have been beaten in public and tortured during interrogation.

Both men were allegedly made to strip to their underwear before being severely beaten in public by members of the Royal Bhutanese Army. They are also reported to have been subjected to *chepuwa*, a form of torture during which the thighs are squeezed between two rods.

It is believed that Sangay Dorji and Tenzin Dorji were arrested under suspicion of being affiliated to two Bhutanese political organizations in exile, the Druk National Congress (DNC) and the United Front for Democracy (UFD).

They are currently believed to be held in Gomdar, Samdrup Jongkhar, Eastern Bhutan. Neither are known to have had access to a *jabmi* (legal adviser) or to relatives, or to have been charged. To Amnesty International's knowledge they have not been brought before a judicial authority.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During late 1997 at least 150 persons were detained for taking part in peaceful protests and campaigning activities in support of the DNC and UFD, particularly in the east of the country. Many were held in incommunicado detention and tortured.

Official reports state that 129 persons arrested in this context remain in detention and are being tried in the High Court under national law and the National Security Act. Seventy five of these are reportedly from Samdrup Jongkhar district. Official reports have stated that they were attempting to "spread false religious and political propaganda".

In response to concerns raised about incidents of torture in Bhutan, the Government assured the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture that torture is prohibited by law in the country and categorically denied that any had taken place. It also stated that all detainees are given access to a lawyer and to relatives.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that Sangay Dorji and Tenzin Dorji have reportedly been tortured since their detention on 24 June 1998 at Gomdar prison, Samdrup Jongkhar district;
- urging the authorities to fully investigate reports of any form of torture or ill-treatment, and to take steps to bring the perpetrators to justice;
- urging the authorities to grant Sangay Dorji and Tenzin Dorji immediate access to a *jabmi*, to their relatives and to any medical treatment they require;
- asking for information concerning the reason for their detention, and urging that unless they are to be promptly charged with recognizably criminal offences, they be immediately and unconditionally released.

APPEALS TO:

Lyonpo Thinley Gyamtsho
Minister of Home Affairs
Ministry of Home Affairs
Royal Government of Bhutan
Tashichcho Dzong
Thimphu
Bhutan

Telegrams: Home Affairs Minister, Thimphu, Bhutan
Salutation: Dear Minister

Lyonpo Jigme Y. Thinley
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Royal Government of Bhutan
Tashichcho Dzong
Thimphu
Bhutan

Telegrams: Foreign Affairs Minister, Thimphu, Bhutan
Salutation: Dear Minister

Major-General Lam Dorji
Chief Operations Officer of
the Royal Bhutan Army
Royal Government of Bhutan
Tashichho Dzong
Thimphu
Bhutan

Telegrams: Maj General Lam Dorji
Salutation: Dear Major General Lam Dorji

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

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 September 1998.