

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: ASA 31/026/2003 (Public)
News Service No: 196
22 August 2003

Nepal: killings of 19 Maoists in Ramechhap should be investigated

Amnesty International has expressed concern over reports that 19 Maoists were deliberately killed by the army after being taken into custody.

According to human rights activists, 19 Maoists had been attending a meeting in a house in Doramba village, Ramechhap district, Central Region, on 17 August when the security forces arrived on the scene and opened fire. One Maoist, Tek Bahadur Thapa Magar, was shot dead and 18 others named individuals, including the house owner and his son were taken into custody. Human rights activists allege that the 18 were taken by the security forces to Dandakateri in Daduwa Village Development Committee, some two hours' walk away, where they were lined up and shot dead one by one.

"The authorities must establish an independent and impartial inquiry into these allegations of extrajudicial killings and make the findings public. The bodies of those killed should not be cremated until autopsies to establish the cause and manner of death are performed," Amnesty International stressed.

According to a press report army officials say that 17 Maoists were killed in two separate clashes in Doramba village in Ramechhap. According to the army's version of events, the Maoists had set an ambush in Doramba and five were killed in an ensuing gunfight. As the army patrol team were returning to barracks, twelve more Maoists were killed when they again tried to ambush the patrol. A small quantity of weapons including one 303 rifle, two local made pistols and a few socket bombs were seized.

The killings took place on the same day that a third round of peace talks between the government and representatives of the CPN (Maoist) were taking place in Dang, near Nepalgunj, Mid-western region. Newspaper reports cite this incident as instrumental in the breakdown of the talks a few days later.

"This kind of incident shows the need for the two sides to the conflict to immediately commit to signing the Human Rights Accord, drawn up by the National Human Rights Commission, which would provide for human rights monitoring in the country. Once the Human Rights Accord has been signed by both sides, it must be promptly and effectively implemented to investigate allegations of human rights violations such as this," Amnesty International concluded.

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