
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 241/94

TO: PRESS OFFICERS
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE
DATE: 19 OCTOBER 1994

AI INDEX: NWS 11/241/94
DISTR: SC/PO
NO OF WORDS:728

INTERNAL

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - **INDIA** (This item is being sent to media in India by the research team)

PLEASE NOTE: CORRECTION: There was an error in the title of the Burundi item sent out in news service 240/94, the title of the item should read:

BURUNDI: ANNIVERSARY OF MASS KILLINGS SHOULD SHAME INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. The word "for" should be deleted from the original text of the title. Many thanks - Dina S.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION: At the end of AI's visit to South Korea on 25 October (see news service 233/94) the delegation may be doing some interviews with media based in South Korea – please keep this in mind as they may be picked up some of your media.

PLEASE NOTE: We are planning a news item, probably for release towards the end of next week, related to the UN Secretary General's announcement that the UN will be extending its presence in Somalia into 1995. More information to follow.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Rwanda - 20 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 234/94

Algeria - 25 October - PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE. SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

APEC - 3 November -SEE NEWS SERVICE 212/94

Iraq - 29 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 212/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Burundi - 21 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 230/94

Turkey - 24 OCTOBER - SEE NEWS SERVICE 181/94

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19 OCTOBER 1994

INDIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES RELEASE OF PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE
AND CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO CLARIFY REASONS FOR HIS DETENTION WITHOUT
TRIAL

Amnesty International welcomes last week's release of a prisoner of conscience held in detention in Jammu for five years without charge or trial.

Shabir Ahmed Shah, who was released on 14 October, was one of the longest serving prisoners of conscience in India. The Indian Government has not given any reasons for his release, beyond reportedly saying that it was to help create conditions for elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

He was first arrested in September 1989 and detained without charge or trial for two years under the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act. The grounds for his detention were stated to be that he had called publicly for strikes, that he was the author of leaflets aimed at arousing the people to seek independence from India and for boycotting Indian Independence Day celebrations.

On expiry of the maximum two year detention period under that Act he was released in September 1991 but immediately re-arrested under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, which prohibits "terrorist and disruptive acts". These are defined in extremely broad terms and include the peaceful expression of political views.

"We believe Shabir Shah was imprisoned for the peaceful expression of his political views and that none of the government's reasons for his arrest specified that he had used or advocated the use of violence," Amnesty International said.

The human rights organization is now urging the government to clarify the reasons for his prolonged imprisonment since the government has always failed to specify why it was necessary to keep him in prison for five years without trial for political activities.

Amnesty International is also urging the Indian Government to review all the cases of thousands of political prisoners now held in Jammu and Kashmir under legal provisions similar to those under which Shabir Shah was detained, and to ensure that all those held for peaceful political activities are promptly released.

Now 40, Shabir Shah has been detained repeatedly since 1968 for his political activities and has spent, intermittently, more than 18 years in detention without charge or trial. As the leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Peoples League, he was campaigning for an independent state of Jammu and Kashmir at the time of this last arrest. He has been actively involved in campaigning for the self-determination of Jammu and Kashmir -- advocating the right to self-determination and calling for a plebescite to be held in the state to determine its political future.

Shabir Shah's release follows that of Abdul Gani Lone, leader of Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Conference, and Sayeed Ali Shah Geelani, leader of Jamaat-i-Islami on 30 September -- two other men Amnesty International considered to have been prisoners of conscience. They were arrested in October 1993 after leading largely peaceful demonstrations in Jammu and Kashmir against an army siege of Kashmir's holiest Muslim Shrine which was occupied by Kashmiri militants. On 6 May this year the Supreme Court in Delhi ordered their release but they were immediately rearrested under the Public Safety Act.

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