

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### India: Maoist armed group should immediately release Italian hostages

The Communist Party of India (Maoist), an armed opposition group, must immediately stop holding two Italian tourists as hostages and ensure their well being as long as they are held, Amnesty International said.

Adventure tour operator Paolo Bosusco and tourist Claudio Colangelo were abducted on 14 March along with two Indian nationals by armed Maoist guerrillas while they were trekking in the southern part of Kandhamal district, an area predominantly populated by *Adivasis* (indigenous communities) in the eastern state of Orissa. The abducted Indian nationals, Santosh Moharana and Kartik Parida, both residents of Puri town in Orissa, were released after three days.

Armed Maoists operating across several states in central and eastern India have often engaged in abduction of police officers and other officials in recent years, but it appears that this is the first time that foreign nationals travelling in these states have been targeted for abduction.

- In March 2011, Maoists released Vineel Krishna, a local official of Malkangiri district of south-western Orissa and Pabitra Majhi, a junior engineer, after holding them hostage for nearly two weeks.
- In February 2011, Maoists operating in Chhattisgarh state released five members of the state armed police force after holding them hostage for nearly two weeks.
- In September 2010 Maoists abducted eight members of the state police force in central Chhattisgarh state; they killed three of the officers and later released the others.
- In September 2010, the Maoists released three of the four police officers they had taken hostage in Lakhisarai district in the eastern Bihar state; the bullet-ridden body of the fourth abducted police officer, Lucas Tete, had been found the day before.

Amnesty International points out that hostage-taking is prohibited by international law. It is contrary to fundamental principles of humanity, as reflected in international humanitarian law, to seize or detain anyone and threaten to kill or harm them if the authorities do not comply with the hostage-takers' demands. The organization urges the Maoists to stop threatening to kill or harm these civilians and guarantee their lives and safety.

According to the latest reports, the Maoists and the Indian authorities have begun negotiations after appointing mediators. The Maoists have issued a list of 13 demands including an immediate halt of paramilitary operations against them, investigations into several unlawful killings and the release of Maoists from prisons.

The long-running confrontation between the Maoists and security forces in several states has seen civilians routinely targeted for killings and abductions by both the security forces and the Maoists who operate in a general climate of impunity.

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