

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 300/92 Illegal detention/unacknowledged detention/ 25 September 1992
fear of torture

INDIA: Amarjit Singh Bittu

Amnesty International is concerned that Amarjit Singh Bittu (son of Haviladar Jagir Singh), a member of the Border Security Force, is reportedly being held in unacknowledged detention in Punjab, India and it is feared that he is at risk of being tortured or killed.

Amarjit Singh Bittu was reportedly taken away from his village, Sehsra, Amritsar district, by Arjinder Singh, an inspector of the Criminal Intelligence Agency, Amritsar on 20 September 1992. His detention has not been acknowledged by the security forces.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International regularly receives reports of "disappearance" and unacknowledged detention of people arrested in Punjab on suspicion of being members or sympathizers of one of the Sikh opposition groups advocating a separate Sikh state, "Khalistan". In some cases the detainees are eventually found to have died in custody, while others are believed to have been deliberately killed in custody although official reports say they died in "encounters" with the police, or that they "escaped". Even though legal safeguards against unacknowledged detention exist in India's ordinary criminal law and procedural code, they are often simply not adhered to and prisoners are held in unacknowledged detention for weeks and sometimes months.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/airmail letters preferably in English, Punjabi or your own language:

- expressing concern about reports that Amarjit Singh Bittu is being illegally held and that he may be ill-treated;
- urging that he be brought before a magistrate immediately, as required by Section 57 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, and be granted immediate access to lawyers and relatives;
- urging that he be released if he is not to be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to trial under ordinary procedures of criminal law;
- seeking assurances that he will be humanely treated while in custody.

APPEALS TO

1) Mr Beant Singh
Chief Minister of Punjab
Office of the Chief Minister
Chandigarh
Punjab
India

Telegrams: Chief Minister of Punjab, Chandigarh, Punjab, India

Salutation: Dear Chief Minister

Page 2 of UA 300/92

2) Mr K P S Gill
Director General of Police
Police Headquarters
Chandigarh
Punjab
India

Telegrams: Director General Police, Chandigarh, Punjab, India

Salutation: Dear Director General

3) Arjinder Singh
Inspector of CIA
Criminal Intelligence Agency
Amritsar
Punjab
India

Telegrams: Inspector Arjinder Singh, CIA, Amritsar, Punjab, India

Salutation: Dear Inspector

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO: diplomatic representatives of India accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 November 1992.