

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 20/23/96

22 May 1996

Further information (2) on EXTRA 43/96 (ASA 20/12/96, 21 March 1996) and follow-up (ASA 20/18/96, 7 May 1996) - Fear of Ill-treatment / Arbitrary Arrest / Medical concern

INDIA            188 Bhutanese people from refugee camps in eastern Nepal  
                  new incident: 90 Bhutanese detainees beaten at Berhampur  
                  Central Jail

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Amnesty International is concerned at reports that on 3 May 1996, approximately 90 Bhutanese people detained at Berhampur Central Jail, West Bengal, were beaten with *lathis* (weighted bamboo canes) by jail guards. At least 50 people were reported injured, 12 of them seriously. Two detainees had to be hospitalized; Ahok Bharati suffered a serious head injury and Durga Bahadur Chhetri a fractured leg.

The incident apparently happened when the detainees tried to lodge a complaint with the Jail Superintendent about the beating of two detainees the previous day. When the detainees approached the jail warden to pass on the complaint, he reportedly raised the alarm resulting in several jail guards arriving on the scene with *lathis*. The beatings stopped only when the Jail Superintendent himself arrived and intervened.

Most of the 792 Bhutanese people from refugee camps in eastern Nepal detained at three jails - Jalpaiguri, Siliguri and Berhampur - in West Bengal, India, have been held for over two months without charge or trial. Amnesty International continues to be concerned that they are being held in violation of their right to freedom of expression and their right to peaceful assembly and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release, unless they are to be charged immediately with a recognizable criminal offence.

Following appeals to the authorities in India in early May after detainees at Jalpaiguri Jail complaining about inadequate provision of food were beaten by jail guards, conditions at the jail are reported to have improved.

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

- welcoming reports that conditions at Jalpaiguri Jail have improved;
- expressing concern at reports that approximately 90 Bhutanese people were beaten with *lathis* by guards at Behrampur Jail, West Bengal, on 3 May, and calling for an immediate independent and impartial investigation into the incident;
- requesting immediate medical treatment for all the detainees who suffered injuries, if this has not already been provided;
- seeking assurances that Bhutanese people detained at Behrampur Jail will not be subjected to further ill-treatment;

**if possible also:**

- urging that the conditions of detention of Bhutanese people held at Behrampur Jail remain in accordance with the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment;

- urging that the 792 Bhutanese people detained in Indian jails be immediately and unconditionally released unless charged immediately with a recognizable criminal offence.

**APPEALS TO:**

Prime Minister

Atal Bihari Vajpayee  
Prime Minister of India  
Office of the Prime Minister  
South Block  
New Delhi 110001, India  
**Faxes: +91 11 301 9817**  
**Telegrams: Prime Minister, New Delhi, India**  
**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

Chief Minister of West Bengal

Jyoti Basu  
Office of the Chief Minister  
Writers Building  
Calcutta 600 001  
West Bengal, India  
**Faxes: +91 33 266 444**  
**Telegrams: Chief Minister, West Bengal, India**  
**Salutation: Dear Chief Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

Minister of Home Affairs

Manohar Joshi  
Ministry of Home Affairs  
North Block  
New Delhi 110001, India

Minister of External Affairs

Sikander Bakht  
Ministry of External Affairs  
South Block  
New Delhi 110001, India

and 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 19 June 1996.