

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 20/30/96

20 June 1996

Further information (3) on EXTRA 43/96 (ASA 20/12/96, 21 March 1996) and follow-up (ASA 20/18/96, 7 May 1996 and ASA 20/23/96, 22 May 1996) - Fear of Ill-treatment / Arbitrary Arrest / Medical Concern

INDIA 188 Bhutanese people from refugee camps in eastern Nepal
new incident: Over 100 Bhutanese people beaten during funeral procession

Amnesty International is concerned at reports that, on 19 June 1996, over 100 Bhutanese people taking part in a funeral procession were injured after having been beaten with *lathis* (weighted bamboo canes) by a group of approximately 30 police officers of the West Bengal Police. Five people were reported seriously injured and were admitted to hospital for treatment. Ram Bahadur Rai was hit on the head, Gyanu Kumari Koirala (f) suffered a dislocated shoulder and Tek Bir Chhetri, Ram Bhandari and Chandra Bahadur Chuwan have suspected internal injuries and shock.

The funeral procession of about 300 people had set off from Panchanadi, Siliguri District, accompanying the body of Baburam Shengden towards the Indo-Bhutan border. It was reportedly heading towards Bhutan in order to fulfil the dead man's last wishes that his funeral rites be conducted in Bhutan. When the procession reached the bridge at Mahananda, on the border between Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling Districts, it was stopped by a police barricade across the road. Police reportedly refused requests from the leaders of the procession to be allowed to continue and when the marchers moved forward onto the bridge, police officers armed with *lathis* began to beat them.

Baburam Shengden was a Buddhist, originally from Bhutan, who had been living in the refugee camps in eastern Nepal since 1992. The 50-year-old refugee died in Behrampur Central Jail, West Bengal on 13 June. He had been in prison since 28 March 1996, when he was arrested together with 189 others by the West Bengal police while participating in a peaceful march.

In total, 945 Bhutanese people are currently detained at four jails in West Bengal for participating in a series of marches organized since early 1996. Amnesty International continues to call for their immediate and unconditional release unless they are to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence.

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

- expressing concern that approximately 100 Bhutanese people were injured, two of them seriously, after being beaten with *lathis* by the West Bengal police while participating in a funeral procession on the Mahananda Bridge on the border of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling Districts on 19 June 1996;
- calling for an immediate independent and impartial investigation into the incident;
- seeking assurances that all Bhutanese people detained at Behrampur, Siliguri, Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar jails in West Bengal be given urgent and appropriate medical treatment where necessary;

if possible also:

- urging that the conditions of detention at jails in India are implemented in accordance with the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment;

- urging that the 945 Bhutanese people detained in Indian jails be immediately and unconditionally released unless promptly charged with a recognizable criminal offence.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister

Mr H D Deve Gowda
Prime Minister of India and Minister
of Home Affairs
Office of the Prime Minister
Gate No 6, 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

Mr 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 External Affairs

Mr I K Gujral
Minister of External Affairs
South Block
New Delhi 110 001, 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 18 July 1996.