

December 1999 Worldwide Appeals

Bhutan

Life imprisonment for speaking out against discrimination

Tek Nath Rizal has now been detained for 10 years; two of them spent in solitary confinement and wearing shackles. In an interview with AI delegates who visited Bhutan in December 1998, Tek Nath Rizal showed signs of mental illness; he was clearly disturbed and reported that he was hearing voices.

Tek Nath Rizal, a prisoner of conscience, was first arrested in Bhutan in mid-1988 after campaigning against unfair practices adopted during the 1988 census. He believed these would bar from citizenship many Nepali-speaking people who had been living in southern Bhutan for generations.

He was released after three days and soon after left for Nepal, where he continued to campaign against unfair practices adopted during the census and the Bhutanese government's policy requiring ethnic Nepalese people to adopt northern Bhutanese traditions and culture.

The following year he was arrested in Nepal and handed over to the Bhutanese authorities. After four years in prison he was finally tried and, in November 1993, he was sentenced to life imprisonment for "treasonable acts".

He was granted a pardon by King Jigme Singye Wangchuck three days after sentence was passed, but the pardon was made conditional on the governments of Nepal and Bhutan reaching an agreement on the plight of tens of thousands of Nepali-speaking people from southern Bhutan living in refugee camps in Nepal. No such agreement has been reached.

+Please send appeals, calling for Tek Nath Rizal to be immediately and unconditionally released on humanitarian grounds, to: His Majesty, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Taschichchodzong, Thimphu, Bhutan.

Peru

Hundreds falsely accused of "terrorism" remain in jail

Efraín Isidro Tarazona Tinoco was detained by plainclothes policemen in a street in Lima, the capital, in April 1993. He had been talking to a university colleague who was under police surveillance. He was taken to the headquarters of the Dirección Contra el Terrorismo (DINCOTE), the anti-terrorism branch of the police. His colleague later admitted being a member of Sendero Luminoso, Shining Path, an armed opposition group, but, although he denounced a number of other people, he stated that Efraín Tarazona had no links with the organization.

During his detention at DINCOTE, a search was carried out at Efraín Tarazona's home; the police claimed to have found a leaflet issued by Sendero Luminoso. The charges against Efraín Tarazona are based on this leaflet – he says it was planted by the police. In November 1993 he was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment.

Efraín Tarazona's story is a familiar one in Peru. Despite the establishment of a special Commission charged with reviewing cases of prisoners falsely charged with terrorism-related offences, there are still hundreds of these prisoners languishing in jail. Since November 1998, the Commission has sent the President over 80 cases to be pardoned, but only 43 prisoners have been released.

+Please write, photocopy or cut out the following list of prisoners of conscience – all of whom are unjustly accused of offences relating to "terrorism" – and attach it to your letter or card, appealing for their immediate and unconditional release.

Send appeals to: Sr. Ing. Alberto Fujimori, Presidente de la República del Peru, Palacio de Gobierno, Plaza Mayor, Lima 1, Peru (fax: 511 426 6770).

José Victoriano Acevedo Orbegoso
Marco Antonio Ambrosio Concha
Raúl Enrique Ayala Torres
Mirtha Ira Bueno Hidalgo
Juan Wilfredo Ccarhuas Pedraza
Leoncio Contreras Quinto
Mariá Teresa de la Cruz Flores
Mercedes Guzmán Ccañihua
Florencio Hurtado Luna
Carlos Florentino Molero Coca
Mariá Montenegro Montenegro
Carlos Ortega López
Violeta Robles Palomino
Jesús Rondinel Cano
Jesús Salas Ancco
César Tiberio Sanabria Casanova
Marco Antonio Sánchez Narváez
José Mercedes Sánchez Torres
Yehude Simon Munaro
Bonifacio Oswaldo Solsol Castillo
Efraín Isidro Tarazona Tinoco
Donato Alejandro Tolentino Argandoña
Hernán Atilio Vásquez Vásquez
Felipe Juvenal Zarate Avalos
Eleuterio Zarate Lujan

Uzbekistan

Human rights defender jailed for five years

Human rights defender Makhbuba Kasymova was not at home when a group of plainclothes police officers entered and searched her flat in May 1999. The officers questioned her husband, two of her daughters, and Ravshan Khamidov who was staying in the flat. Ravshan Khamidov was detained after a hand grenade and a small quantity of drugs were allegedly planted on him by the officers. The officers did not produce a warrant or state who they were.

Makhbuba Kasymova is now serving a five-year prison sentence imposed after a grossly unfair trial for “concealing, or failing to report a crime”, even though Ravshan Khamidov has not yet been tried for the crime Makhbuba Kasymova is alleged to have concealed.

Makhbuba Kasymova, a mother of six and a former teacher, is a member of a small group of independent human rights defenders – the unregistered Independent Human Rights Organization of Uzbekistan (NOPCHU). The group has been monitoring the wave of arrests and trials which began following the murder of officials in the Fergana valley in late 1997 and intensified after bomb explosions in the capital Tashkent in February 1999. She is also a member of the democratic opposition movement Birlik, and was among the many opposition activists who were harassed in the early 1990s in connection with their activities. They, along with members of the NOPCHU, have been accused by the authorities of involvement in the February explosions.

+Please write, expressing concern that the real reason for Makhbuba Kasymova’s conviction may be her peaceful, legitimate activity as a member of the NOPCHU and her links with the democratic opposition. Ask for her immediate and unconditional release as a prisoner of conscience. Send appeals

to: President of Uzbekistan, Islam Abduganievich Karimov, 700000 g. Tashkent, pr. Uzbekistansky,
Rezidentsiya Prezidenta, Prezidentu, Karimov I.A., Uzbekistan(fax: + 998 71 139 5315).