
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 52/94

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - AFGHANISTAN, INDIA

PLEASE NOTE: The enclosed external item on India is for response only.

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Burundi - 16 May - SEE NEWS SERVICE 36/94

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Jordan - 22 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/94

Turkey -30 March - SEE NEWS SERVICES 46/94 AND 26/94

Hong Kong - 21 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 36/94

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Saudi Arabia - 10 May - More details to follow

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AFGHANISTAN: CORRECTION

Following is a correction to the Amnesty International news service item: "Afghanistan: Six civilians killed and over 30 injured in bombardment of bread queues in Kabul", AI Index: ASA 11/Wu 02/94, News Service 50/94, referring to paragraph three.

The formulation in the earlier statement that three trucks were **confiscated** is not correct: three trucks were eventually allowed to pass on, while the other three stayed behind as per the earlier agreement.

The name of the UNICEF representative reportedly abducted by unknown persons in an area of north Kabul which is under the control of President Rabbani, is Sami Saqeb.

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INDIA: GOVERNMENT REPORTEDLY GOES BACK ON ITS PROMISE THAT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CAN VISIT JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Amnesty International has written to the Indian Government about recent reports in the Indian press which suggest that, contrary to earlier assurances given by government officials, the human rights organization will not be permitted to visit Jammu and Kashmir by the Indian authorities.

On 14 February 1994, Dinesh Singh, Minister of External Affairs, stated that Amnesty International would be allowed to visit Kashmir on a "case by case basis". On 24 February, India's Minister of State for External Affairs also informed Pierre Sané, Amnesty International's Secretary General, that the Government of India had no objection to non-governmental organisations visiting Kashmir.

However, an article in The Telegraph, a Calcutta newspaper, published on 11 March, quotes Mr Srinivasan, the Indian Foreign Secretary, a senior civil servant, as saying that "the time is not ripe to go to Kashmir". He said that the government of India has "serious differences" with Amnesty International, and that Amnesty International has been running a "propagandist campaign against India". He also reportedly said that Amnesty International members who are Indian citizens are "free to go to Kashmir as private citizens and we do not see what prevents them from getting the facts on Kashmir".

Amnesty International considers these remarks, if correctly quoted, to reveal a misunderstanding about the organization's work, which it has sought to clarify in a letter to Mr Srinivasan on 15 March.

Amnesty International informed the Foreign Secretary that "It seeks to apply the highest standards of accuracy of research as are possible in a situation where Amnesty International continues to be denied the opportunity to verify the numerous allegations of human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir on the spot." Amnesty International said that, in the absence of authorization to visit the state, it has taken every possible care to exclude any data from its reports on Jammu and Kashmir that come from sources outside India and could therefore be politically motivated and inaccurate. In Amnesty International's latest report, a substantive section was devoted to the numerous human rights abuses committed by armed opposition groups operating in Jammu and Kashmir, and the organization called on them to stop committing any further abuses of human rights. "To suggest that Amnesty International is running a "propagandist campaign" against India is simply wrong", said the organization.

In its letter, Amnesty International also expressed its disappointment at the Indian government's response to the concerns the organization has repeatedly expressed about the grave human rights violations persistently reported from Jammu and Kashmir.

In February 1994 Amnesty International published a report entitled, India: An Unnatural Fate: 'Disappearance' and impunity in the Indian states of Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, detailing 208 specific individuals listed to have "disappeared" in Jammu, Kashmir and the Punjab. Despite government promises of detailed replies, only two of these cases have since been clarified.

A visit to Jammu and Kashmir continues to be Amnesty International's priority. The organization also reiterates its call to the government to investigate the 208 reported "disappearances" through impartial and independent inquiries; to make public the findings of these inquiries and to bring those found responsible to justice.

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