

**EXTERNAL (for general distribution)**

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**UA 388/92 Possible Extrajudicial Execution**

**9 December 1992**

**INDIA: H.N. Wanchoo, 65, human rights activist**

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Amnesty International is concerned at reports that H.N. Wanchoo was shot dead on 5 December 1992 in a suburb of Srinagar by unidentified gunmen. He was reportedly taken from a scooter rickshaw and shot by the roadside with three bullets. Several reports suggest Mr Wanchoo may have been the victim of an extrajudicial execution because he was one of the most vocal human rights activists in Kashmir. The government claims he was killed by militants.

Mr Wanchoo was cremated on 6 December. A strike was called on that day by two major Kashmiri opposition groups to mourn his death. These were the pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahuddin and the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, which together with the People's League, advocates the independence of Kashmir. Amnesty International believes a full independent inquiry into his death should be promptly held by a judicial authority, especially in view of the conflicting reports about the identity of his killers.

Mr Wanchoo, a retired civil servant and a former communist trade unionist, was one of the few remaining Hindu leaders in the predominantly Muslim Kashmir valley. Many other Hindus fled after the campaign for an independent Kashmir turned violent in 1990. He had become well-known for meticulously documenting many alleged incidents of torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial killing by the security forces in recent years. In recent months, he had submitted to the Jammu and Kashmir High Court details of increasing numbers of people alleged to have died in the custody of the security forces. He claimed that 155 had been so killed between early July and mid-November 1992 and that dozens of people had "disappeared". Mr Wanchoo met with the Amnesty International delegation during their recent visit to New Delhi and told them that most of his petitions to the High Court were consistently ignored.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Since early 1990 there has been an increasingly violent campaign for independence in Kashmir. Armed separatists have kidnapped and killed officials, members of paramilitary forces and civilians. Amnesty International has repeatedly expressed concern to the Indian Government about reports of deliberate killings of unarmed civilians by members of the security forces, about widespread allegations of torture and rape by members of the security forces and about arbitrary arrests of suspected separatists, an increasing number of whom are reported to have "disappeared".

The Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Girish Saxena, has ordered several investigations of such abuses, in one case this led to charges of murder being

brought against the Director of the Border Security Forces (BSF). Such investigations have usually been carried out by police or army officials rather than by an independent and impartial body. The government says that action has been taken against 230 members of the security forces in Jammu and Kashmir, although details of the punishments are not yet known.

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

- expressing grave concern at the killing of H.N. Wanchoo, a well-known human rights activist, on 5 December 1992;

- urging that the government order an independent and impartial inquiry into Mr Wanchoo's death, that its findings be published in full and that those found to be responsible are promptly brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO**

1) Mr Girish Saxena  
Governor of Jammu and Kashmir  
Office of the Governor  
Srinagar  
Jammu and Kashmir  
India

**Telegrams: Governor Jammu and Kashmir, Srinagar, India**

**Salutation: Dear Governor**

2) Mr S.B Chavan  
Minister of Home Affairs  
Ministry of Home Affairs  
North Block  
New Delhi 119 991

**Telegrams: Minister Home Affairs, New Delhi, India**

**Telexes: 3166427 REND IN**

**Faxes: + 91 11 301 6781 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

V.K. Kapoor  
Chief Secretary  
Government of Jammu and Kashmir  
Srinagar  
Jammu and Kashmir  
India

and to diplomatic representatives of India accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**