



UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN NEPAL



Press Release – 15 October 2007

OHCHR Representative raises human rights concerns with CPN-M leaders

Mr. Richard Bennett, Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal, had his first meeting with Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) Chairman Prachanda and Dr Baburam Bhattarai on Sunday, 14 October. During the meeting they discussed the importance of respect for the full range of human rights – political, civil, social, economic, and cultural – for the success of the peace process and for development in Nepal.

Mr. Bennett raised some specific issues, such as concerns about the rights to physical integrity, liberty and security, pointing to the use of violence and intimidation by some cadres of the CPN-M and affiliated organizations, as well as acts of abduction, including allegations of cadres' involvement in the case of the missing journalist Birendra Sah. The Representative expressed concern about acts of public humiliation and threats by CPN-M, including those directed against alleged 'criminals' or 'corrupt' people. He also noted reports of intimidation when asking for 'donations'.

Mr. Bennett also expressed concerns about respect for the right to freedom of expression and opinion.

OHCHR has been monitoring the development of the United Revolutionary People's Councils (URPC) in parts of Nepal, following CPN-M's decision to activate them as "a mechanism to resolve people's problems and help provide justice to the people". The OHCHR Representative sought clarification on the role the Councils play, particularly in relation to governance and justice. Chairman Prachanda stated that they will not function as a parallel authority and that the CPN-M remains committed to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

OHCHR-Nepal has previously noted that the weaknesses of law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system remain a challenge to addressing human rights violations and abuses. However, the Office considers that public confidence in the CPN-M's commitment to human rights is undermined by human rights abuses committed by some of its cadres. OHCHR reiterates the comment made in its June 2007 report into allegations of abuses of human rights by the CPN-M and Young Communist League (YCL): while there are legitimate concerns in relation to weaknesses of law enforcement agencies and other state institutions, as well as delays in implementing the CPA, these arguments cannot be used to justify people taking the law into their own hands, or any actions that amount to human rights abuses.