

PRESS RELEASE

Ambassadors and Heads of Mission visit Bardiya to support victims of conflict-related disappearances

Nepalgunj, 9 December 2009

One year after the publication of the report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on Conflict-Related Disappearances in Bardiya District, 9 foreign envoys representing Australia, Denmark, Finland, the European Union Delegation, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States, and the Representative of OHCHR-Nepal, visited the district where at least 170 people were disappeared between 2001 and 2004, in an effort to advocate for a determined resolution of conflict-related disappearances.

Victims of disappearances in Bardiya were arrested and held without due process of law, physically and psychologically tortured, and many presumed executed, in clear contravention of Nepali and international law. Although the cases have been well documented by OHCHR and the National Human Rights Commission, and despite a ruling of the Nepal Supreme Court in 2007, no official investigation has taken place into these serious human rights violations.

In Bardiya the Ambassadors and Heads of Mission met with the Conflict Victims Committee and with families of victims of enforced disappearance by the Army, police and CPN-M, who expressed their pain and anguish after long years of searching for truth and justice for their loved ones. The Ambassadors and Heads of Mission visited the notorious Bhada Bridge in Bhadapur, where, one night in May 2002, it is alleged that nine people were summarily executed by Royal Nepal Army, and their bodies buried in a sandbank.

The Ambassadors and Heads of Mission made the following statement:

“It is extremely moving to hear directly from victims away from the politics of Kathmandu. It is clear that their desire for truth and justice cannot go unfulfilled. This month the world marks International Human Rights Day. It is also one year since OHCHR made recommendations to the Government to investigate the Bardiya disappearances, yet no official response has been received. Now is the time to act to account for the crimes of the past and to end impunity for those soldiers, police and Maoists implicated in these horrific crimes.

The long refusal of the Army, police and Maoists to cooperate has prolonged the pain of the relatives, and delayed justice. We call on the Unified CPN-Maoist to make known the fate of individuals abducted by Maoist cadres during the conflict, and to cooperate with investigations into these cases. Those cadres against whom there are charges of involvement should be made available to the authorities. Similarly, we call on the Government to ensure that members of the Nepal Army and other state personnel involved in disappearances are brought to justice, and that measures are taken to protect victims and witnesses of the crimes.

The parties are also urged to accelerate the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry on Disappearances, with legislation that fully meets international standards and complies with the Supreme Court’s June 2007 ruling. Effectively dealing with the legacy of the conflict will allow Nepal's transition to peace, democracy and development to continue on the basis of trust, truth and reconciliation.”

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