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FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN NEPAL**



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OHCHR Nepal Chief urges Maoists to respect rights of lawyers and other human rights defenders

16 July, Kathmandu,

The Chief of the UN Human Rights Office in Nepal (OHCHR), Richard Bennett met on Friday with Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (UCPN-M), Chairperson Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) and stressed the importance of respecting the professional freedoms of lawyers and human rights defenders (HRDs). He told Prachanda that OHCHR-Nepal is very concerned about recent information that some lawyers and human rights defenders, directly and indirectly, have been publicly castigated by Maoists for some of the work they carry out. While any individual or party is entitled to voice their disagreement, this should not be expressed in a way that is perceived as threatening against individuals who work to provide a remedy and justice to the victims of human rights or international humanitarian law violations in Nepal. OHCHR stresses the importance of lawyers and HRDs being able to carry out their professional work without any fear or hindrance and with confidence that the rule of law will be respected.

Richard Bennett also reiterated OHCHR's strong message that the Maoists must honor the commitments made in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, fully cooperate with Nepal's justice system and not protect its members in cases like Ram Hari Shrestha, Birendra Shah, the Madi bus bombing and Arjun Lama.

“The UCPN-M must demonstrate, in a practical sense, that it respects the rule of law and keeps its commitments to put an end to impunity, bringing those responsible for abuses to justice”, said Richard Bennett after meeting Puspa Kamal Dahal.