

Wednesday, 24 November 2010

NDC, NWC, and OHCHR urge the government to ensure access to justice to victims of caste based discrimination and gender based violence

KATHMANDU - Following a joint mission in Siraha district, the National Dalit Commission (NDC), the National Women Commission of Nepal (NWC) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal (OHCHR-Nepal) are concerned about reports of caste based discrimination and gender-based violence, as well as problems of access to justice, threats and impunity.

The mission was informed that many incidents of caste-based discrimination and gender-based violence in Siraha district are not prosecuted but are mediated locally and that sometimes the work of the Nepal Police comes under political pressure. The mission also received reports of threats directed at some lawyers and human rights defenders (HRDs) including women human rights defenders (WHRDs), or their family members, when they seek to engage on those issues. "The situation raises serious human rights concerns" emphasized a joint press statement released today, adding, "Dalit women are especially vulnerable and at risk. We urge the Government of Nepal to act immediately to ensure access to justice for all individuals, especially to victims of these serious violations, consistent with national laws and international human rights standards."

A team consisting of eight members from three organizations including the Chairperson of NDC, Bijul Kumar Bishwokarma, the Commissioner of NWC, Manju Kumari Yadav; and the Head of Biratnagar Field Office of OHCHR-Nepal, Patrick Rooney concluded the joint fact finding mission this week.

The mission team met with HRDs, WHRDs, families of victims, Nepal Bar Association, civil society, government authorities including Nepal police of Siraha district. The main objective of the mission was to understand the situation in the district, especially in relation to caste-based discrimination and gender-based violence, and to follow up on specific cases.