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UN Human Rights Office in Nepal condemns attack on journalists

Kathmandu - The Office the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal (OHCHR-Nepal) is seriously concerned over reports of attack and intimidation faced by journalists in the eastern Terai districts of Nepal.

On the evening of 5 June a journalist working for the Nagarik Daily, Khilanath Dhakal was attacked in Biratnagar by a group of youths allegedly affiliated to the Youth Force. The victim was seriously injured and admitted to hospital. The assault appears to be directly triggered by a report filed by the journalist regarding an attack by Youth Force cadres in Biratnagar on 1 June.

Subsequent to this incident, a number of media persons associated with the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) who filed complaints regarding the attack on Dhakal, have received intimidating phone calls to withdraw the First Information Report (FIR). On 6 June the FNJ had registered a FIR with the Morang district police office and also filed an application at the District Administration Office for protection of the personal security of these jouranalists.

OHCHR-Nepal condemns these acts that are clearly aimed at restricting the exercise by journalists of their right to freedom of expression and opinion and urges the authorities to carry out prompt investigation into the serious assault on Khilanath Dhakal and to prosecute as well as punish the perpetrators in accordance with national and international law. Furthermore, it is a duty of the State under international human rights law to provide adequate protection to all media persons.

“This incident represents the continuation of a disturbing trend: last year the Office, received at least nine reports of similar incidents in which journalists in Sunsari, a neighboring district of Morang, were allegedly threatened and intimidated. I urge the authorities to take all the necessary steps to protect the right to life of media persons and secure the right to freedom of opinion and expression, in accordance with articles 6 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights”, stated Jyoti Sanghera, Head of OHCHR-Nepal.