

PRESS STATEMENT



Thursday 5 May 2011,

UN concerned over appointment of Cabinet Minister alleged to have committed human rights violations

KATHMANDU – The United Nations Human Rights Office in Nepal is concerned over the appointment of Agni Sapkota as the new Minister of Information and Communication. Mr. Sapkota is named as a suspect in a First Information Report (FIR) registered by the police in 2008 regarding the alleged abduction and killing of Arjun Lama in 2005. The police registered the FIR in response to a March 2008 order of the Supreme Court requiring it to do so and to carry out a full investigation in accordance with Nepali law. More than 3 years later the Court's order is yet to be implemented. Nor has any action been taken to date on a recommendation by the National Human Rights Commission issued to the Government in June 2008 stating that the case should be investigated and the alleged perpetrators prosecuted.

The United Nations Human Rights Office reiterates that the State has a responsibility to ensure that the name of a person is fully cleared following a thorough investigation before any appointment to a high public office is announced. This decision contradicts Nepal's commitments, as expressed during the Universal Periodic Review process, towards accountability for serious human rights violations and abuses committed during the conflict, and reinforces the culture of impunity in Nepal.

"My Office has consistently maintained that all allegations of human rights and humanitarian law violations by all parties are promptly and thoroughly investigated", emphasised Jyoti Sanghera, the Head of UN Human Rights Office in Nepal. "Lack of accountability in cases of alleged human rights violations not only sends a message that there are no consequences for the perpetrators of such violations, but further adds to the suffering of the victims and their families who have been awaiting justice for many years."

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