



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN NEPAL**



Press Release

20 September 2005

The Representative in Nepal of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Ian Martin, has conveyed to the authorities OHCHR's serious concern at reports of the excessive use of force by police in their response to recent public demonstrations and the subsequent beating and abuse by police of some of the participants, as well as increasing restrictions imposed on peaceful public gatherings.

With regard to the police response to continuing protests in Kathmandu, OHCHR has received information on incidents of police throwing stones at demonstrators leading to injuries, the use of teargas guns in close proximity to demonstrators and in the vicinity of hospitals and schools, the arrest of demonstrators on questionable legal grounds, the excessive and indiscriminate use of force by some police while taking demonstrators into custody, the failure to facilitate access to medical care for injured demonstrators, as well as threats and injuries to some human rights monitors and members of the press observing the demonstrations. OHCHR has also received information on the arrest of many demonstrators and the beatings of some arrested persons by members of the police.

OHCHR is similarly concerned that, more than four months after the end of the state of emergency, peaceful public gatherings continue to be prohibited in a number of areas in Kathmandu and that similar bans have recently been imposed in other districts, including Jhapa and Kailali districts, with the clear intention to prevent announced civil society rallies.

OHCHR deplores the violence used by some participants in some of the demonstrations. However, while acknowledging the difficult and sometimes dangerous position that the police may find themselves in while trying to control or disperse crowds at gatherings where some demonstrators are violent, OHCHR emphasizes that there can be no justification for the excessive use of force. OHCHR is concerned that a lack of restraint by the police may contribute to escalating violence and expresses its deep concern over reports of beatings and abuse of demonstrators, which constitute torture.

OHCHR considers that the response by authorities to recent demonstrations has led to violations of international human rights standards, including the right to freedom of assembly as guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and provisions of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Further, the new and continuing prohibitions on places in which public gatherings can be held go beyond the restrictions that are permitted under international human rights law as necessary for maintaining public order.

OHCHR has conveyed its concerns to the Minister for Home Affairs and to the Inspector General of Police, urging the relevant authorities to investigate human rights violations that have already

occurred and to take urgent action to prevent future violations in the context of the exercise of the right to freedom of assembly.