



## **Richard Bennett, OHCHR-Nepal Representative**

Talking points  
Maina Sunuwar death anniversary  
17 Feb 2008, UN House, Pulchowk

I would first like to acknowledge that today's event is more than a press conference; it is a commemoration of the death of Maina Sunuwar, who was 15 when she was killed in the custody of the then Royal Nepalese Army on Feb 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004. On behalf of OHCHR-Nepal I would like to offer my condolences to her parents who are here today, to her other family members, and to her friends.

I will now read a statement from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour ...

...

That ends the High Commissioner's statement, but I would like to make two additional points. First, Devi Sunuwar has informed my Office that she is feeling vulnerable now that that charge sheet has been filed at the District Court and Summons have been issued for the four alleged perpetrators. She will say more about this later. However, I would like to point out that the Government has a responsibility to protect all human rights defenders, who often put themselves at risk while protecting the human rights of others. OHCHR-Nepal also has a responsibility to do what it can to protect human rights defenders, and the European Union has recently pledged to do the same, using guidelines it has developed to help human rights defenders worldwide. It is equally important that witnesses in this case and others are protected.

My Office welcomes the Army's commitment to human rights, recently reiterated by the Chief of Army Staff to the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, who visited Nepal two weeks ago. OHCHR-Nepal believes that a good way to begin to demonstrate that commitment would be to cooperate fully in the case of Maina Sunuwar. Finally, I have noted that 1,100 Nepali soldiers serving as UN peacekeepers in Haiti were awarded peacekeeping medals last week. It would be regrettable if the positive image earned by the Army through such service abroad were to be tarnished by resistance to accountability at home.