



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



Press Release - 3 February 2006

OHCHR-Nepal calls for releases of detainees

OHCHR-Nepal today called for the release of all detainees held under the Public Security Act (PSA) for peacefully expressing their political opinion. In a letter to Home Minister Kamal Thapa, the Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal, Ian Martin wrote:

"The great majority of these persons appear to have been arrested for exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly or expressing their political opinion. I urge that your Ministry undertake an urgent review of all PSA detention cases with a view to ensuring the immediate and unconditional release of those against whom there is no evidence of involvement in violence. "

OHCHR-Nepal is aware of more than 800 people who have been detained under the PSA around the country in the context of protest activities by the alliance of seven political parties and civil society organisations. It requested the Home Ministry to make available the complete list of those currently detained under the PSA and their places of detention. OHCHR-Nepal also asked what instructions have been given to Chief District Officers regarding the use of their power to order detention under the PSA in the current context, and how such instructions conform to Nepal's obligations to respect the internationally-guaranteed rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

OHCHR-Nepal has also written to the leadership of the CPN (Maoist) to call for the immediate release of the Chief District Officer of Palpa District, Laxman Kumar Thapa, and of all other civilians taken captive in the attack on Tansen, at the same time urging that captured members of the security forces be treated fully in accordance with international humanitarian law. It also welcomed the statement by the Spokesperson of the CPN (Maoist) stating that his Party has no general policy to take physical action targetting any innocent person, political worker or election candidate; and that the Party is investigating incidents of this nature. OHCHR-Nepal calls for the findings of such investigations and action taken to be made public.

As the date of the municipal elections approaches, OHCHR-Nepal calls once again on the authorities to respect the right of freedom of peaceful assembly and expression. OHCHR-Nepal also calls on those advocating boycott of the elections to do so peacefully and with respect for the rights of others, and urges that no coercion should be applied to force people to participate in bandhs or other protest actions.

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