



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



Press Release – 24 April 2007

OHCHR-Nepal marks *Jana Andolan* achievements, challenges, one year on

Last April, tens of thousands of people took to the streets to demand a return to democracy and respect for human rights. The subsequent ending of hostilities, the signing of the peace agreement, the drafting of an interim constitution and the formation of the Interim Government are all major political achievements which have had an impact on human rights.

There are many challenges remaining. One of the most pressing needs is to address accountability and the right to justice of the many who have suffered violations or abuses at the hands of the State or the CPN-M, both during and after hostilities. Probe commission reports such as that of the Rayamajhi Commission have never been made public or their recommendations implemented. No meaningful steps have yet been taken to determine the whereabouts and fate of the “disappeared”; and the perpetrators of serious human rights violations continue to enjoy total impunity.

Establishing the rule of law is essential to ending impunity, as well as to ensuring respect for a broader range of human rights. By starting a process of change, the Government and political leaders have demonstrated courage and a willingness to address certain critical human rights issues. Bringing about deep and meaningful change to strengthen human rights protection in the long term takes time and requires the collaborative efforts of all sectors of Nepalese society. With political will, there is much that can be done in the short term to satisfy the human rights aspirations of the Nepalese people. Creating an environment for the elections with adequate security, and without fear, intimidation or violence must be a priority. This is the responsibility of all political leaders, but especially the Government. Law enforcement agencies have a special role in ensuring these conditions.

OHCHR-Nepal would like to pay tribute to the role played by human rights defenders both during and after the *Jana Andolan*. They continue to be vital partners for the Office in its daily work. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) remains one of the most important human rights bodies in Nepal. OHCHR-Nepal again urges the Government to act quickly to appoint new Commissioners so that the NHRC can fully play the key role that it should in promoting and protecting human rights throughout the peace and electoral process.

“The progress that has been made in human rights must not be taken for granted. There is much more which needs to be done, with many challenges lying ahead. OHCHR-Nepal reiterates its commitment to do all it can to assist in strengthening the protection of human rights in support of the peace and electoral process,” said Lena Sundh, Representative of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal.

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