



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



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**OHCHR-Nepal discusses human rights concerns
in the Terai with political parties and civil society**

OHCHR-Nepal today conveyed once more its deep concerns regarding the on-going violence in the Central and Eastern Terai and the increasing number of deaths and injuries. The concerns were raised at a meeting called by OHCHR-Nepal with representatives of the Government, SPA, CPN-M, MJAF, Madheshi civil society and Human Rights Defenders. Ian Martin, Personal Representative of the Secretary General, also attended at the invitation of OHCHR-Nepal.

During the meeting, the Representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Lena Sundh, noted that at least 19 people – 18 civilians and one police officer – had been killed since 19 January, in addition to a demonstrator killed in Nepalgunj in December 2006. Most of the victims were Madheshi. At least thirteen had been allegedly shot dead or fatally hit over the head by police. Many others have also been injured in the violence. OHCHR-Nepal is seeking to clarify the circumstances of the three latest deaths reported in Malangwa, Sarlahi District.

Mobile teams of OHCHR-Nepal staff have been present in the regions monitoring protests and investigating killings and other violence in Lahan, Siraha, Sukhipor, Inaruwa, Biratnagar, Gaur, Janakpur, Chandranigahapur, Birgunj, Kalaiya and Nepalgunj. The teams have also been attempting to defuse tensions and prevent abuses and violence through dialogue and advocacy with local authorities, police and protest organizers. They have been gathering information from many sources – including government authorities, human rights defenders, journalists, Madheshi groups and other organisations, victims, witnesses and political parties.

OHCHR-Nepal deplores the violence on the part of some protestors which has left several dead, many injured, and government buildings, homes and businesses, police posts, ambulances and other vehicles damaged or destroyed. It has been particularly concerned about threats to human rights defenders and journalists, including five who were allegedly beaten up by Madheshi demonstrators armed with iron rods and *lathis* near Biratnagar this weekend. Lena Sundh urged all individuals and organizations involved to allow these very important actors to fulfill their tasks. The Government of Nepal also has an obligation to ensure that media and human rights workers are able to carry out their professional activities without obstacles.

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While OHCHR-Nepal teams themselves have for the most part been well received, Lena Sundh also emphasized that they must be respected and allowed to move freely at all times. She was assured during the meeting by the Nepalese leaders present that they would instruct their representatives, organizers of protests and sympathizers in the Terai to respect the UN teams on the ground.

At the same time, OHCHR-Nepal repeated its concerns about the at times excessive use of force by police against protestors which has resulted in a number of deaths and injuries and which has served to increase the anger amongst the population. “OHCHR-Nepal understands the challenges facing the security forces in maintaining law and order but local authorities and police must uphold the law in a manner which fully respects human rights. Clear orders must be given to police that broad curfew orders cannot be interpreted in such a way that basic principles for the use of firearms are suspended. OHCHR-Nepal teams have gathered information about inappropriate use of live and rubber bullets by Nepal Police and the Armed Police Force, including indiscriminately firing into crowds. Police must exercise restraint and as far as possible employ a range of non-lethal means to maintain public order, preserve human life and protect physical integrity.

In her conclusions, Lena Sundh welcomed the recent initiatives to enter into a dialogue as a means to resolve the unrest and to prevent further killings and injuries. “I urge all those concerned to do so immediately. Only by engaging in dialogue can solutions be identified to restore peace and respect for human rights.”