



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



Press Release – 7 February 2007

**The High Commissioner for Human Rights
calls for an end to violence in the Terai**

The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour today expressed her deep concern about the continued violence in the Terai region of Nepal which has taken at least 23 lives, caused countless injuries and the destruction of both public and private properties.

“Our human rights officers who have been monitoring events in the Terai have observed violence by protestors, as well as incidents of excessive use of force by the Armed Police Force and the Nepal Police,” she said. “Lessons have not been learnt from the security forces’ handling of the April 2006 protests. The Government must abide by its international human rights obligations in dealing with the demonstrations, including holding police accountable for their actions. While I recognize the challenges that police are facing – including attacks on themselves - the security forces must employ force only in proportion to the actual threat faced.”

The High Commissioner further stressed that it was essential for the organisers of the demonstrations and their followers to employ only peaceful means of protest.

Expressing her particular alarm over reports of human rights defenders and journalists being threatened or obstructed from doing their work, the High Commissioner said that “clear instructions should be given by police officials and by demonstration leaders that the work of human rights defenders and journalists are not to be impeded in any way. Medical personnel must also be able to function without hindrance.”

“I am also calling on the leaders and their cadres to allow free access and freedom of movement to all UN staff to enable them to carry out their work in all locations and under any circumstances”, she said.

“During my recent visit to Nepal I was encouraged by progress that had been made in human rights since April 2006. The current deterioration in the situation is deeply disturbing. It is imperative that all parties do all they can to stop the violence as well as to address the issue of discrimination and representation. Ending discrimination and ensuring appropriate representation of excluded groups at all levels of decision-making during this critical time will be essential to the success of Nepal’s political transition.

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I welcome the recent initiatives to start engaging all parties in dialogue to resolve the current situation in the Terai and hope that talks will immediately replace violence as the way forward for Nepal.”