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FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN NEPAL



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OHCHR urges CPN-M to cooperate with reintegration of minors associated with armed forces and armed groups

OHCHR-Nepal is concerned about the growing number of reports from various districts that the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) and associated organizations have coerced or forced persons who were under 18 years old at the time of their recruitment to return to cantonment sites of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) after they had voluntarily left the camps.

Forcing or pressuring young people under 18 to return to cantonment sites violates the rights of children, as well as the commitment made by the CPN-M, and the Government of Nepal, in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) to immediately release minors who had been associated with a fighting force, and to provide "necessary and proper cooperation" for their rehabilitation and reintegration.

In one of the cases documented by OHCHR-Nepal, two minors who left a cantonment site in Chitwan in May and returned to their homes in Makwanpur District were pursued by CPN-M cadres in order to force them to return. As a result of intervention by local NGOs and OHCHR, the girls were not returned to the cantonment. However on 19 November, CPN-M cadres returned to the girls' home and abducted one of them, while the other escaped. Police officers were unable or unwilling to prevent her abduction when informed by CPN-M cadres that she would be taken to the cantonment site in Chitwan for the verification process, which is due to start within one week.

In other cases reported to OHCHR-Nepal, pressure on minors to return to cantonments has also coincided with verification exercises.

OHCHR-Nepal is also concerned that CPN-M cadres have threatened human rights defenders and others working to reintegrate into society minors formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups.

The Nepal Police have displayed an unwillingness to compel the CPN-M to respect the law, despite OHCHR's intervention with officers at the district and regional levels.

"OHCHR-Nepal calls on the CPN-M to abide by its CPA commitments, respect the rights of minors who have voluntarily started the reintegration process and not force them to return to cantonments. The CPN-M must also speed up the process of formally releasing all minors still inside the cantonments so they can return to their families and civilian life," said OHCHR-Nepal Representative Richard Bennett. "It is also essential that the Nepal Police fulfil its obligation to protect minors who have voluntarily started the process of reintegrating into society, and to ensure security for organizations and persons working to assist the reintegration of these minors."