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**OHCHR-Nepal reiterates its call for non-violent demonstrations and political rallies**

Ahead of the SPA rally in Birgunj on Wednesday, OHCHR-Nepal Central Region Office is reiterating the call to all concerned actors to exercise restraint and take the steps necessary to ensure that violence will not recur at this critical time in the peace process.

Law enforcement officials must balance respecting the right to freedom of assembly with their duty to protect the population. In the face of aggressive or violent demonstrators, any force used should be proportional to the level of threat. Leaders of protesting groups also have a responsibility to ensure that demonstrations are peaceful and that their supporters carry no sticks, guns or other weapons and refrain from intimidation. OHCHR-Nepal calls on all actors to respect the rights of journalists and human rights defenders to carry out their activities without threat of violence. Threats, attacks and abductions of civil servants are also unacceptable.

Political actors are urged to take all necessary protection measures to avoid exposing people under 18, including young children, to violence and to manipulation for political ends, as well as to stop minors from using violence themselves, as has been witnessed in recent days.

OHCHR is also concerned at the number of explosive devices which have been planted recently, including in cities hosting SPA rallies. These incidents only serve the interests of those who wish to spoil the peace process and must be stopped.

OHCHR teams are deployed to Birgunj and will be monitoring the rally.

“I call on all political actors in Birgunj to come together in a spirit of tolerance and accommodation to ensure that the rights to freedom of assembly, opinion and association – central to any democratic process – are fully respected,” said OHCHR-Nepal Central region Head of Office, Johan Olhagen.