



Press Release

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OHCHR-Nepal and World Food Programme welcome Supreme Court's order to ensure food supply

Two of the United Nations' leading agencies have welcomed an order from the Supreme Court of Nepal calling on the Government to supply food to 12 food-scarce districts in the Mid- and Far-Western regions. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepal and the World Food Programme (WFP) welcome the Court's order of 25 September recognizing the "right to food sovereignty" in the Interim Constitution (article 18).

OHCHR and WFP acknowledge the Government is taking seriously the pressing issues of food shortages and rising food prices in these regions. And both agencies recognize the Government has recently raised its budget allocation to the Nepal Food Corporation (NFC), a national body mandated to provide subsidized food to needy districts.

In response to both natural and man-made disasters over the last two years, WFP—in collaboration with the Government and its partners—has fed approximately two million people in the Mid- and Far-West. Only with the support of the Government and other partners can WFP address the needs of vulnerable communities in these regions. While the NFC supplies food to larger population centres, WFP focuses its efforts on the more remote, rural areas. Nationwide, 2.5 million people in rural areas require immediate support as a consequence of rising food prices.

The enjoyment of the right to adequate food and freedom from hunger is of paramount importance for the enjoyment of all other rights, including the right to life, and it is crucial that national judicial organs regularly recognize this principle. Nepal is a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which recognizes "the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions" (article 11). Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) also recognizes the right to food.

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has also underlined that States should "take the necessary action to mitigate and alleviate hunger...even in times of natural and other disasters", and that this implies "availability of food in a quantity and quality sufficient to satisfy the dietary needs of individuals, free from adverse substances, and acceptable within a given culture", and "accessibility of such food in ways that are sustainable and that do not interfere with the enjoyment of other human rights".

For further information contact:

OHCHR-Nepal: Marty Logan, tel. 4280164 (ext.321), mobile 98510-16922, mlogan@ohchr.org
WFP – Nepal: David Orr. Tel. 5542607 (ext. 2104), mobile 9851105249, david.orr@wfp.org