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FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN NEPAL**



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OHCHR calls for comprehensive human rights vetting as part of peace process

28 August, Kathmandu

The Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal, Richard Bennett, met with the acting Chief of Army Staff Chhatra Man Singh Gurung at the latter's Office Thursday. The Representative congratulated General Gurung on his appointment and noted the important contribution that the Nepal Army (NA) has made to UN peacekeeping missions.

The Representative, in the meeting reiterated OHCHR's concern about the lack of progress on accountability for serious human rights and international humanitarian law violations committed by the NA during the conflict.

General Gurung and the Representative discussed the concerns raised in a recent letter from OHCHR to the Prime Minister about the Government's failure to properly investigate cases of arbitrary detention, torture and disappearances occurring at the Army's Maharajgunj Barracks in 2003 and 2004. The Representative also raised other allegations of serious human rights violations involving NA personnel including disappearances in Bardiya district and the murder of Maina Sunuwar.

The Representative expressed concern that in the recent past NA personnel in positions of command responsibility during the time that human rights violations were being committed at the Maharajgunj barracks have been recommended for promotion or extension, including Major General Toran Jung Bahadur Singh and Brigadier General Victor Rana. He suggested that a comprehensive vetting of both NA personnel and Maoist cadres be conducted as part of the peace process to avoid such controversies in the future.

General Gurung made a commitment that the NA would punish military personnel proven guilty of human rights violations, and would cooperate with a properly constituted impartial and independent body, such as a Commission of Inquiry on Disappearances, set up to investigate human rights violations which occurred during the conflict.

"OHCHR once again calls upon the Government to investigate the human rights violations which occurred at Maharajgunj barracks, including the responsibility of those within the chain of command at the time", said Richard Bennett. "Until such time as an independent and impartial vetting mechanism is put into place, the promotion, extension, or nomination for UN service of individuals against whom there are credible allegations of involvement in human rights violations should be suspended.."