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OHCHR releases letter to PM calling for action on Maharajgunj violations

20 September, Kathmandu.

OHCHR-Nepal today released a letter to Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal raising serious conflict-related human rights violations. OHCHR-Nepal Representative Richard Bennett sent the Prime Minister the letter on 26 July calling upon the Government to take action against perpetrators of arbitrary detention, torture and disappearance that took place at the Nepal Army's Maharajgunj barracks in 2003 and 2004, as well as against perpetrators of violations occurring in Bardiya District between 2001 and 2003. No action has been taken to properly investigate these human rights violations documented by OHCHR in two public reports.¹ The letter strongly refutes Nepal Army claims that the torture and disappearances at Maharajgunj never took place, and urges the Government to make good on its promises to seek accountability for conflict-related disappearances.

In the letter, the Representative expressed particular concern about recent nominations for extension or promotion of senior Army personnel in the chain-of-command at the time that violations took place at Maharajgunj. The letter reiterated OHCHR's recommendation that any Nepal Army officers against whom there are credible allegations of direct or indirect responsibility be suspended pending an independent and impartial investigation into their involvement. Since the letter was sent, the Government has held up the promotion of Major General Toran Jung Bahadur Singh, formerly commander of the Tenth Brigade and in the direct chain-of-command over units at Maharajgunj, pending review by a Government task force. OHCHR has offered its cooperation to the task force, and hopes that it will take a strong stand in support of accountability for human rights violations.

"The rewarding, either through promotion or nomination for service with the United Nations of personnel against whom there are credible allegations of involvement in human rights violations, and denials that the torture and disappearances at Maharajgunj took place, will undermine any genuine efforts of the Government to address impunity," said Richard Bennett. "These allegations need to be taken seriously, and investigated fully."

The letter is attached to this press release as an annex and Nepali version will be available in OHCHR-Nepal website shortly.

¹ Report of investigation into arbitrary detention, torture and disappearance at Maharajgunj RNA barracks, Kathmandu, in 2003-2004 (May 2006), and Conflict Related Disappearances in Bardiya District (December 2008), available at <http://nepal.ohchr.org/en/index>