



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN NEPAL**



Press Release

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High Commissioner for Human Rights Urges Ceasefire and Respect for Freedom of Expression and Peaceful Assembly

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights today expressed serious concern about the possible resumption of full-scale armed conflict in Nepal, as well as about increasing violations of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

“A mutual ceasefire between the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the Government of King Gyanendra and steps towards lasting peace are crucial to bring to an end a period of grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by both the Maoists and the State”, High Commissioner Louise Arbour said. “Secretary-General Kofi Annan has encouraged the CPN (M) to extend its unilateral ceasefire which ends this week, and has urged the declaration of a reciprocal ceasefire by the Government. I add my voice to his call, as I am seriously concerned about the very real possibility that full-scale armed conflict could resume. I also urge the CPN (M) to work with my Office in Nepal to ensure that its cadres respect the welcome commitments to respect for human rights and the rule of law made in the letter of understanding they have signed with the political parties.”

The High Commissioner added that her Office in Nepal had reported its growing concern over measures by the Government that restrict rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association and peaceful assembly and affect the media, non-governmental organizations, political parties and civil society in general.

“Following the promulgation of a Media Ordinance which is in breach of international human rights standards and remains under challenge in Nepal’s Supreme Court, radio stations have been raided, equipment seized and persons arrested with no apparent legal basis”, she said. “Local administration and the security forces have extended banned areas and obstructed freedom of movement in order to inhibit peaceful demonstrations”.

“I call upon the judiciary to act independently in upholding Nepal’s international human rights obligations, and upon the Government and the security forces to respect the rights to freedom of expression and of peaceful assembly”, the High Commissioner said.
