



**Remarks by Richard Bennett  
Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal  
At the Launch of *INSIDE: Prison and the Rights of Detainees*  
Organised by OHCHR-Nepal to mark Human Rights Day  
and the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)  
9 December 2008, Kathmandu**

Mr Bhola Siwakoti, Director of the Prison Management Department, Government of Nepal;  
Excellencies; Colleagues; Members of the media; Friends:

Thank you all for coming for the opening of this exhibit, which is organised to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UDHR. It is also part of Dignity and Justice for Detainees Week, which has been designated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The main objectives of the week are to:

- make the public aware that detainees do not forego their human rights while in detention;
- help national authorities to improve respect for detainees' rights, including the right not to be deprived of their liberty arbitrarily or otherwise unlawfully; and
- raise the international profile of issues related to the rights of detainees.

Similarly, this exhibition aims to create greater awareness amongst stakeholders, authorities, donors and civil society in Nepal of detention conditions in prisons and of the day-to-day lives of inmates and of the personnel working in prisons. A further goal is to illuminate steps that could be taken to improve the situation, both for prisoners and for prison personnel.

Overall, the situation in Nepal's prisons has declined in recent years, due to the lack of budget allocated to the Department of Prison Management (PMD) and to the apparent indifference of authorities towards the problems faced by inmates and prison personnel.

Prison facilities range from poor to dilapidated; prisons are overcrowded and usually lack the minimum resources needed to provide inmates with medical care, food, hygiene and other basic items. Other needs such as education, rehabilitation programmes and work opportunities are rarely met.

OHCHR-Nepal would like to encourage the Government of Nepal to take the steps needed to create a prison service that is manned by well-trained professional, who work under reasonable conditions – including access to career opportunities – and which is considered an important component of the State apparatus.

My office also encourages donors and international organisations to support the Prison Management Department's efforts to address these shortcomings, based on the recommendations forwarded by OHCHR-Nepal and the ICRC, which are summarised in the brochure being distributed here today. Future initiatives could take a holistic approach or focus on selected issues, such as developing juvenile correction centres in the regions or providing specific care and treatment to detainees with mental or intellectual disabilities.

Such projects would be in the spirit of the UDHR, whose principles of equality, fairness and justice have caught the imagination of individuals in all regions of the world since it was adopted by the UN General Assembly 60 years ago tomorrow. I can think of no better way to celebrate the UDHR than to redouble our efforts to ensure that the human rights of the most vulnerable in our societies are given the same respect as is accorded to us all.

Thank you.

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