

February 1, 2006

**Nepal under Royal Regime
One year of dictatorial rule deepening the national crisis**

We, the undersigned members of NGOs, civil society organizations and trade unions around the world are deeply concerned over the Royal crackdown on democracy and gross violations of human rights, as well as continued conflict with the Maoists (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist) in Nepal. Despite the lifting of the state of emergency on April 29, 2005, King Gyanendra has continuously curtailed civil society. More than 6,500 political activists, human rights defenders including journalists, lawyers, trade unionists, women rights activists and students were arrested and detained, since February 1, 2005.

On January 16, 2006, curfew in the capital city was imposed and was extended on January 18. On January 19, Nepal faces another severe phase of total crisis in the country. Latest attacks by the autocratic government on civil society include massive arrests of political and human rights activists, crack down on peaceful assembly and association, restriction on movement, cutting-off communications including telephone services and television channels.

The Maoists have cancelled the extension of a four-month unilateral cease-fire on January 2, 2006 even after an understanding on various issues with seven political parties on November 22, 2005. During the cease-fire, the King's government did not reciprocate with any appropriate conflict settlement with the Maoists.

The extreme measures adopted by the present regime have failed to resolve the violence and armed conflict. The daily death toll has doubled since the royal takeover. From February 1, 2005 to January 22, 2006, at least 1,478 people were killed in 65 out of 75 districts of Nepal, allegedly due to the people's war waged by the Maoists. The government security forces have unrelentingly cracked down on peaceful demonstrations during the year. Those arrested were held in unofficial detention centers in extremely bad conditions. Escalating armed conflict has resulted in increased public insecurity, displacement, destruction of infrastructures and lack of access to emergency social services.

Without democracy, peace, and the rule of law, the fundamental rights of all people in Nepal cannot be guaranteed. The present regime led by the King denies basic rights and fundamental freedoms, including labor and women rights in Nepal, which are guaranteed under the Nepalese Constitution and various international human rights and humanitarian treaties. Such Royal crackdowns on democracy and the rule of law in Nepal is also clearly based on the fact that at least 35 ordinances have been issued without due process, of which more than half were introduced after the lifting of the State of Emergency.

These ordinances are aimed at safeguarding the autocratic regime, curtailing freedom of expression, association and assembly, especially those of media and NGOs, restricting activities of NGOs, harassing civil administration, weakening national human rights institution, threatening innocent civilians and curtailing trade union rights. Of the last, the latest in a series of cutting off trade union rights is the latest amendment in the Labor Act, approved by the labor bill drafting committee under the Office of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers, in January 2006. This amendment greatly threatens the jobs of employees, curtails the right to assembly and aims at dismantling the thrust of the trade union movement.

Against this backdrop, Nepal and international community must be afforded to restore multi-party democracy, peace and human rights in Nepal. The autocratic government and the Maoists must respect the internationally-recognized human rights and humanitarian treaties, which Nepal is a party to.

Therefore, we strongly appeal to King Gyanendra to:

1. Repeal the unconstitutional Royal proclamation of February 2005, and immediately restore multi-party democracy;
2. Guarantee all the rights of the people, including freedom of expression and opinion, peaceful assembly, association and movement;
3. Release all human rights defenders including journalists and lawyers, trade unionists, women rights activists, students, professionals and political activists arrested in connection with the movement for human rights and democracy in the country;
4. Stop harassing human rights defenders including journalists and lawyers, trade unionists, women rights activists, students, professionals and political activists;
5. Lift all measures passed without due process, including the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance, Social Welfare Council (First Amendment) Ordinance, Ordinance Relating to Amend in Some Nepal Acts Related to Communication, National Human Rights Commission (First Amendment) Ordinance, Code of Conduct for Social Organizations, and the proposed Labor Act (Second Amendment) Ordinance.
6. Declare a cease-fire to stop further violation of human rights and for peaceful resolution of the armed conflict.

We also strongly appeal to the Maoists (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist) to:

1. Respect and commit to international human rights and humanitarian standards, and not violate the basic rights and fundamental freedoms of all people in Nepal;
2. Follow the 12-point understanding with the seven political parties on November 22, 2005;
3. Declare a cease-fire to stop further violence and for peaceful resolution of the armed conflict.

SN / Representative / Position / Organization

1. Abi Sharma, Coordinator, Canadian Network for Democratic Nepal (CNDN), Canada
2. Adilur Rahman Khan, Secretary, Odhikar, Bangladesh
3. Ang Kaljang Lama, Chairperson, Nepalese Democratic Forum, UK
4. Anselmo Lee, Executive Director, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
5. Bhakta Gurung, Regional Secretariat Member, Asian Students Association (ASA)
6. B. M. Kutty, Secretary General, Pakistan Peace Coalition (PPC), Pakistan
7. Camilo Tovar, Deputy Director, Europe External Policy Advisors (EEPA), Brussels
8. Deepak Prakash Bhatt, Chairperson, All India Nepalese Free Students Union (AINFSU), India
9. Farhat Perveen, Coordinator, Women Workers Centre, Pakistan
10. Girish Pokhrel, President, America Nepal Journalist Association, USA
11. Govinda Bandi, Member, Hong Kong Support Group for Democracy and Human Right in Nepal, Hong Kong
12. Iman Rahmana, Sedane Institute for Labour Information (LIPS), Indonesia
13. Irene Xavier, Coordinator, Trans-nationals Information Exchange-Asia (TIE-Asia)
14. Junya Yimprasert, Coordinator, Thai Labour Campaign (TLC), Thailand
15. Karamat Ali, Executive Director, Pakistan Institute of Labour Education & Research (PILER), Pakistan
16. Kiran Sitoula, Editor, Nepalipost.com, USA
17. Krishna Upadhyaya, Coordinator, Solidarity Nepal UK (Solidarity for Democracy, Human Rights and Peace in Nepal)
18. Lekhnath Bhandari, Coordinator, Alternative Group, Virginia, USA
19. Lita Anggraini, Chairperson, RUMPUM, Jogjakarta, Indonesia

20. Lucia Victor Jayaseelan, Coordinating Officer, Committee for Asian Women (CAW)
21. Nongluck Parnthong, Coordinator, Slum's Women Network (SWON), Thailand
22. P. Razeek, Managing Trustee, Community Trust Fund (CTF), Sri Lanka
23. Parat Nanakhorn, Coordinator, Asia Pacific Workers Solidarity Link (APWSL)
24. Pramod Dhakal, Member of Coordination Committee, Canada Forum for Nepal, Canada
25. Prathueng Chuaykliang, Coordinator, Women's Rights and Development Centre (WORD), Thailand
26. Premchandra Rai, Coordinator, Far East Overseas Nepalese Association (FEONA), Hong Kong
27. Purushottam Poudel, Chairperson, Nepalese People's Coordination Committee, UK
28. Rajan Treepathi, Coordinator, Nepal Human Rights Organization, Baltimor, USA
29. Ram Lal Kafle, Chairperson, Migrant Nepalese Association, India
30. Ramesh Pandey, Coordinator, Nepalese Forum for Human Rights and People's Democracy (NEHURIPD), Australia
31. Rawai Phupaga, Chairperson, International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM), Thailand Council
32. Samydorai Sinapan, President, Think Centre, Singapore
33. Shobhakar Budhathoki, Secretariat Member, Defend Human Rights Movement in Nepal (DHRM-N), Nepal
34. Somchai Chuaykliang, Director, Training Centre for Urban Poor (TCUP), Thailand
35. Somyot Pruksakasemsuk, President, Alliance of Democratic Trade Unions (ADTU), Thailand
36. Subodh Raj Pyakurel, Chairperson, Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC), Nepal
37. Suhas Chakma, Director, Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR)
38. Sujita Shakya, Chairperson, Women's Welfare Society (WWS), Nepal
39. Sukanta Sukpaita, Chairperson, Women Workers Unity Group (WWUG), Thailand
40. Sultana Kamal, Executive Director, Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), Bangladesh
41. Sunila Abeysekera, Executive Director, Information Monitor (INFORM), Sri Lanka
42. Supawadee Petrat, Coordinator for Mekong Region, 1000 Women for Nobel Peace Prize 2005
43. Sushil Pyakurel, Former Member of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Nepal
44. Tapan Bose, Secretary-General, South Asian Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR)
45. Wasun Reesomwong, Coordinator, Institute for Social Research and Action (ISRA), Thailand
46. Wilaiwan Cheatia, Chairperson, Thai Labour Solidarity Committee, Thailand
47. Yadu Nath Pandey, Chairman, Nepali Jana Samparka Samiti, India
48. Yagya Raj Thapa, Executive Officer, Nepal Advocacy Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (NAC), India

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