

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **Nepal: Human rights must be a priority!**

In response to the cease-fire announced by the government of Nepal and the leaders of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) on 29 January 2003, Amnesty International today urged both parties to make human rights an integral part of the agenda for peace negotiations, which are reportedly due to start soon.

The organization appealed to the Government and the leaders of the Maoists to ensure that practical measures to prevent further killings, "disappearances", torture and abductions carried out by both sides during the Maoist "people's war" are made part of the discussions, negotiated and promoted as soon as possible.

Amnesty International also suggested the following measures:

- the establishment of a mutually agreed human rights monitoring mechanism, including international human rights monitors with a strong human rights protection mandate;
- ensure independent investigations into all allegations of human rights abuses reported in the context of the "people's war" by a body that has the powers and capacity to ensure full accountability for these abuses, and grant compensation to the victims or their relatives;
- an independent review of the cases of all prisoners currently held under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) with a view to release all those against whom there is no evidence of involvement in criminal activities;
- return of all children recruited as soldiers by the Maoists to their homes, with adequate provisions for their rehabilitation into society.

Amnesty International also announced its intention to submit to all parties concerned a proposal to visit Nepal to discuss how the cease-fire and imminent peace talks can be used by both sides as a real opportunity to improve the human rights situation in the country.

### **Background**

In a report published on 19 December 2002, Amnesty International raised its concerns at a rapidly deteriorating human rights situation in Nepal. It urged the government to invite international assistance to provide increased human rights protection and create a law enforcement system capable of addressing reports of human rights violations with greater transparency and accountability.

Among the human rights violations by the security forces documented by Amnesty International were thousands of unlawful killings, more than 200 "disappearances", widespread torture and arbitrary arrest and detention under the TADA.

Human rights abuses by the Maoists have included deliberate killings of an estimated 900 civilians considered "enemies of the revolution", hostage-taking for ransom, torturing of people taken

captive and deliberate killings of members of the security forces after they were taken captive. The Maoists have also been responsible for the recruitment of children into their ranks.

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