

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 31/024/2005

01 March 2005

Further Information on UA 29/05 (ASA 31/009/2005, 08 February 2005) and follow-up (ASA 31/017/2005, 16 February 2005) - Fear of torture / Fear for safety

NEPAL Bishnu Nisthuri (m), Secretary General of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ)

Bishnu Nisthuri, a prominent press freedom activist, was released on 25 February.

Bishnu Nisthuri was taken into custody on 4 February, two days after the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) issued a statement condemning the recent move by King Gyanendra of Nepal to take direct control of the government as a "coup against democracy". He was arrested from his home at around 10.30pm by security forces dressed in plain clothes. Bishnu Nisthuri said that he was "hooded" and taken to the Royal Nepal Army headquarters at Bhadrakali, Kathmandu. The next day, he was transferred to police custody at Singha Durbar in Kathmandu.

On 14 February, the Supreme Court issued a notice to government authorities, giving them three days to inform the Court of the reasons for his arrest. Responding on behalf of the government, the Chief District Officer of Kathmandu informed the Supreme Court on 21 February that Bishnu Nisthuri was in government detention under the provisions of the Public Security Act.

Bishnu Nisthuri thanked members of Amnesty International (AI) for all their support. In addition to the appeals on his behalf from members of the Urgent Action Network, an AI delegation visited him in detention, and raised his case directly with senior government officials.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 1 February, King Gyanendra dismissed the Government, assumed direct power, and declared a state of emergency. Fundamental rights were suspended, including freedom of opinion, freedom of assembly, the right to privacy, and freedom from preventive detention. Within days, the security forces had arrested hundreds of people—including political leaders, trade unionists, student activists, journalists, and human rights defenders. While some people have been released, many others remain in detention, and arrests are ongoing.

No further action is requested from the Urgent Action network. Thank you to all who sent appeals.