

PUBLIC

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UA 287/04 Possible "disappearance" / fear for safety

NEPAL Ram Bahadur Parajuli (m), aged 50, street vendor
Govinda Raj Rai (m), aged 37, managing director of a magazine

Ram Bahadur Parajuli and Govinda Raj Rai were reportedly arrested by security forces personnel on 1 and 7 October respectively. Their whereabouts are now unknown, and Amnesty International is concerned for their safety.

Ram Bahadur Parajuli was selling cigarettes on the street at Ason Tole, Kathmandu on 1 October. At 9.15pm he was seen being arrested by four security force personnel in civilian clothes. He was then driven away in a white van. The reasons for his arrest are unknown.

Govinda Raj Rai is the managing director of the monthly current affairs magazine *Asian Star*, written in both Nepali and English. At 6am, he was sleeping when five plainclothes security personnel came to his rented room in Dhobighat, Lalitpur district. According to his family, the security forces personnel said that they needed to ask Govinda Raj Rai some questions and would bring him back in a couple of hours. They then took him away. His family do not know why he was arrested. However, there is a pattern of media workers being targeted by security forces in Nepal.

Both of these arrests have been reported to the National Human Rights Commission but the security forces have not made their whereabouts public.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (Maoist) declared a "people's war" in February 1996, Nepal has been in the grip of nationwide conflict and human rights crisis. Human rights abuses by both the security forces and members of the CPN (Maoist) have escalated since a seven month ceasefire broke down in August 2003.

In both 2002 and 2003, Nepal recorded the highest number of "disappearances" of any country in the world. People detained by the security forces are often held in army barracks with no access to their families, lawyers or medical treatment. They also face a high risk of torture, including beatings, and are sometimes held in solitary confinement or kept blindfolded for the entire time they are in custody. The CPN (Maoist) are also reported to have abducted hundreds of people, including large numbers of teachers and schoolchildren, for the purpose of "political education".

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Ram Bahadur Parajuli and Govinda Raj Rai, who were reportedly arrested by security forces personnel on 1 and 7 October respectively.
- calling on the authorities to make public their whereabouts and to grant them immediate access to their families, lawyers of their choice, and any medical attention they may require.
- urging that they be treated humanely while in custody and not tortured or ill-treated;
- calling for both detainees to be released immediately and unconditionally, unless they are to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence.

APPEALS TO: (faxes may be switched off outside office hours, GMT+5½)

Lieutenant Colonel Raju Nepali
Head Royal Nepal Army Human Rights Cell
Royal Nepalese Army Headquarters
Singha Durbar
Kathmandu, Nepal

Fax: + 977 1 4 226 292 / 245 020 (If someone answers the telephone please ask them in English to switch on the fax machine, and resend the fax).

Salutation: Dear Lieutenant Colonel

Appeals on behalf of Ram Bahadur Parajuli:
Chief District Officer, Kathmandu district
Baman Prasad Neupane
Office of the Chief District Officer,
Kathmandu District, Nepal

Salutation: Dear Chief District Officer

Appeals on behalf of Govinda Raj Rai:
Chief District Officer, Lalitpur district
Sthaneshwar Devkota
Office of the Chief District Officer,
Lalitpur District, Nepal

Salutation: Dear Chief District Officer

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Nepal accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 November 2004.