

**PUBLIC**

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**Fear for Safety**

**17 February 2005**

**NEPAL**

**Gauri Pradhan (m), founding president of Child Workers in Nepal Concern Centre (CWIN)**

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Gauri Pradhan, one of Nepal's most prominent advocates for children's rights, was arrested by police at Kathmandu Airport on the afternoon of 17 February following his return from a visit to Europe. He is reportedly being held at the police headquarters in Naxal, Kathmandu.

The reason for his arrest is not known. However, human rights defenders have been among those targeted in the mass arrests of political leaders, student activists, and trade unionists following King Gyanendra's declaration of a state of emergency on 1 February. Colleagues who met Gauri Pradhan in Geneva, Switzerland, where he was attending a working group meeting of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, said that he had expressed the fear that he might be arrested when he returned home to Nepal.

CWIN is a leading child rights organisation in Nepal that raises controversial issues including child labour, trafficking, and the impact of conflict on children.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

On 1 February, King Gyanendra of Nepal dismissed the Government, assumed direct power, and declared a nation-wide state of emergency. Following the emergency declaration, Nepal's state media reported the suspension of several provisions of the Constitution that protect fundamental human rights and freedoms, including the right to privacy and freedoms of expression, press, assembly and association. The King's actions plunged the country deeper into a human rights crisis and put the Nepalese people at even greater risk of gross abuses. The routine violation of human rights was already a widespread feature of the nine-year conflict in Nepal between government forces and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M).

Many of the political leaders, students, human rights activists, journalists, and trade unionists arrested in the immediate aftermath of the emergency declaration remain in detention more than two weeks later. While some leaders have been released, more are being arrested every day particularly in the districts outside Kathmandu. The army is enforcing strict media censorship, and there is a total clamp-down on political dissent. A number of leading human rights activists, journalists, and trade union leaders are in hiding or have fled the country.

Amnesty International has documented a dramatic increase in the scale of human rights abuses since the breakdown of a ceasefire between the government and the CPN-M in August 2003, including torture, detention, "disappearances", displacement, abductions, and unlawful killings. Abuses are committed by the security forces and by the CPN-M.

The state of emergency has strengthened the hand of the security forces, reduced the prospect of a political process toward peace, and increased the likelihood of escalating the conflict all of which could lead to even greater human suffering and abuse.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Gauri Pradhan, founding president of the Child Workers in Nepal Concern Centre (CWIN), who was arrested from Kathmandu Airport on 17 February 2005;
- urging the authorities to grant him immediate access to his relatives, lawyers and any medical attention he may require;

-urging that he be treated humanely while in detention and not tortured or ill-treated;  
-calling for him to be released immediately and unconditionally, unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;  
- calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of human rights activists, journalists, lawyers and other members of civil society, and to ensure that they are able to carry out their work without fear of arrest or harassment by the security forces.  
-calling on authorities to urgently restore fundamental human rights suspended during the state of emergency, and to open a political process for resolving the conflict that is based on justice and respect for human rights.

**APPEALS TO: (Faxes may be switched off outside office hours, 5 ½ hours ahead of GMT. If someone answers the telephone please ask them in English to switch on the fax machine, and resend the fax).**

Inspector General of Police Shyam Bhakta Thapa  
Police Headquarters  
GPO Box 407  
Naxal  
Kathmandu, Nepal  
**Fax:** + 977 1 4 415 593 / 4 415 594  
**Email:** info@nepalpolice.gov.np  
**Salutation:** Dear Inspector General

His Majesty the King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev  
C/O The Chief of Protocol Division  
Protocol Division  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Chital Newas, Kathmandu, Nepal  
**Fax:** + 977 1 4 4423 951  
**Salutation:** Your Majesty

**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 31 March 2005.