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Prachanda
Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
Nepal

15 November 2005

Dear Prachanda

Universal Children's Day – 20 November 2005

Open Letter - Continuing Attacks on Schools by the CPN (Maoist)

Amnesty International is writing to you on the occasion of Universal Children's Day to call for the CPN (Maoist) declaration of a unilateral ceasefire on 3 September 2005 to be followed by an end to the pattern of violence and intimidation by the CPN (Maoist) which continues to affect the lives of many children in Nepal.

The continuing violence by the CPN (Maoist) reflects a total lack of commitment to the ceasefire and is a worrying trend in a country where the decade-long conflict has already resulted in widespread and serious human rights abuses and violations by both sides, including against children. School children are being denied their right to education, many have been abducted, recruited into the CPN (Maoist) and forcibly displaced. In addition, the ongoing conflict has left children traumatised and vulnerable.

During the first four weeks of the ceasefire, it was reported that a total of 8,057 people had been abducted by the CPN (Maoist) from at least nine districts in rural areas. Many of these were children and teachers. Schools are still reportedly being forced to close. On 16 October, it was reported that over 600 students were forced to leave private schools from the Arghakhanchi district following intervention by the CPN (Maoist)-affiliated All Nepal National Independent Students' Union (Revolutionary) [ANNISU-R]. Reports also indicate that the recruitment of children by the CPN (Maoist) continues.

As you know, over the years Amnesty International has addressed both sides of this internal armed conflict highlighting the human rights violations and abuses, as well as violations of international humanitarian law, committed by both sides.

In the light of the declaration of a unilateral ceasefire and on the occasion of Universal Children's Day, Amnesty International calls upon you to bring about an end to attacks

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targeting civilians and civilian objects, indiscriminate attacks, killings, abductions and recruitment of child soldiers which have impacted so greatly on children's lives and their basic human rights.

Since July, Amnesty International has received hundreds of messages and some remarkable artwork done by children, teachers and others from around the world in solidarity for those schools affected by the conflict in Nepal. The organization has also collected over 1,000 letters and online messages calling on the CPN (Maoist) to end its attacks on children and schools.

The online messages are attached and include:

"I am a child victim of war. Today I am 24. The wounds still bleed. Please help the children. Do not let them grow up terrified and molested. Love them. Please do not let the children suffer! (Croatia) "You are struggling for liberty against an autocratic system while you are practicing repression but in a different direct. Give kids a better life" (Jordan). "Children are the strength of the future of Nepal. If their dreams are shattered, the whole country will perish... Children have a right to live a life of freedom and joy, and the right to a proper education" (Thailand) – "Please release all the children immediately. Don't let the children suffer from this war that was started by adults." (Finland), "If it was your child how would you feel, your child being hunted and abducted ... and victimised, your children being forced to take part in a war that they don't even know the ins' and out's of, your children missing out on an education, your child that is psychologically damaged for life, your child who doesn't come home one day – please stop this now and give children a better future" (UK)

Amnesty International urges you to: instruct all CPN (Maoist) cadres to abide by international humanitarian law; end the targeting of schools, abduction of children and teachers and ensure that all CPN (Maoist) cadres respect and protect children's rights during their operations and in areas under their control. This letter will be made public on Universal Children's Day.

Yours sincerely,

Purna Sen

Director

Asia - Pacific Regional Programme