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**NEPAL: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES NEW GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO STOP HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS**

Amnesty International today welcomed Nepal's new coalition government's public commitment to stop human rights violations, including those that have been occurring over the last year in the context of a Maoist "people's war" declared by the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (Maoist).

Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand's stated in the *Rising Nepal* on 13 March that "the government is ready to initiate dialogue with the Maoists open-heartedly" and that "any kind of human rights violations would be stopped".

"If talks are initiated with the CPN (Maoist), we urge both parties to put human rights firmly on the agenda and to address key issues such as accountability for past abuses by both sides, the prevention of torture and deliberate and arbitrary killings, and adequate redress for victims and their relatives," Amnesty International said.

"The government must seize the opportunity now to take prompt and effective measures to prevent human rights violations continuing and ensure that those responsible are promptly brought to justice."

Amnesty International also called on the leadership of the CPN (Maoist) to give clear orders to their members prohibiting the killing or torture of people not actively taking part in the conflict.

Amnesty International today released the Nepali translation of its report *Nepal: Human Rights Violations in the context of a Maoist "people's war"* which was first made public on 11 March 1997, the day the new government came to power.

The report resulted from a visit by an Amnesty International delegation to the country in late 1996 and details the organization's concern that at least 50 people have been killed in disputed circumstances during so-called "encounters" with police. The evidence collected by Amnesty International suggests that police have repeatedly resorted to the use of lethal force in situations where it was clearly unjustified, or as an alternative to arrest.

Nepal's human rights record improved tremendously after the establishment of multi-party democracy in 1990, but Amnesty International is particularly concerned at the deteriorating human rights situation in the country since February 1996.

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The report is available from the Nepal Section of Amnesty International, but any queries should be addressed to the International Secretariat of Amnesty International in London.

