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Nepal: "Disappearances" must stop

A widespread and long-standing pattern of "disappearances" by security forces as part of their counter-insurgency operations against members and supporters of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (Maoist), which declared a "people's war" in February 1996, are a matter of serious concern, Amnesty International said today launching its latest report on Nepal.

"We call upon the government to investigate and clarify the fate or whereabouts of the "disappeared", pay compensation to the relatives and bring perpetrators to justice."

Amnesty International has to date recorded over 250 cases of "disappearance" throughout the country. Fourteen cases were reported in 1998 during an "intensified security mobilization", a police operation involving the transfer of armed police units from Kathmandu to districts affected by the "people's war".

As security operations intensified, additional 80 cases were reported during 1999 and 2001. Following the declaration of a state of emergency in November 2001 and the deployment of the army, over 100 cases were reported in the context of joint security forces operations in the period up to August 2002. A further 35 cases were reported between August 2002 and January 2003, when a cease-fire came into force. In the last seven weeks since the collapse of the cease-fire in August 2003, Amnesty International has recorded 20 more cases of "disappearance" and more are received daily.

"We have repeatedly called for human rights safeguards to be adopted, in particular for a Human Rights Accord to be signed by both the government and the Maoists, which would give the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) a mandate to set up five regional offices to monitor human rights with technical assistance provided by the United Nations (UN)," the organization said.

In addition to reports of more than 250 "disappearances", hundreds of alleged extrajudicial executions, thousands of arbitrary arrests and numerous reports of torture, have taken place in the context of the "people's war". Weak institutions, corruption, a lack of accountability and effective reform of the police and judiciary have helped perpetuate a climate of impunity.

The CPN (Maoist) has been responsible for scores of abductions and other human rights abuses. Amnesty International has called upon leadership to abide by the principles of international humanitarian law, in particular the provisions of Article 3, common to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949.

Prem Bahadur Rawal, a secondary school teacher from Baligun Village Development Committee, Ward 9, Achham district, was allegedly abducted by members of the CPN (Maoist) on 17 September 2003. His whereabouts remain unknown.

Amnesty International also urged the Nepalese government to invite the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) and the UN Special Rapporteur on torture to visit the country as a matter of urgency to advise the government on how to immediately end the pattern of human rights abuses, including "disappearances".

For the full text of the report, please go to:
"Nepal: Widespread "disappearances" in the context of armed conflict"
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa310452003>

For the full text of Amnesty International's 14-Point Program for the Prevention of "Disappearances", please go to:
<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/aboutai-recs-disappear-eng>

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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