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Nepal: Rights monitoring essential amid brutal suppression of protests

Journalists and human rights activists in Nepal have said that authorities in Kathmandu refused to provide curfew passes today. This seems to be an attempt to limit public scrutiny of the conduct of the security forces in policing demonstrations. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal also was not granted curfew passes, but two monitoring teams traveled with police escort.

Alarming, local sources said that emergency service vehicles -- including ambulances -- were not provided necessary curfew passes. The government has authorized the security forces to shoot those who violate curfew orders if necessary. At least three people were killed by security forces in Kathmandu today, and dozens injured.

With daily reports of extreme brutality by the police and army to control political demonstrations, it is absolutely essential that independent monitors are free to carry out their vital work. It may be that the security forces are increasingly aware that they will be held accountable for their actions -- in which case they should be changing their behaviour, not hiding from scrutiny.

Amnesty International has urged the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to restrict the participation of Nepalese security forces implicated in human rights violations in peacekeeping operations abroad. We welcome the statement by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour last week that her office is committed to providing the DPKO with information regarding individuals implicated in human rights violations, whether they are from the Nepal Police, Armed Police Force, or the Royal Nepalese Army.

Amnesty International is also calling for targeted sanctions to be applied to King Gyanendra, his senior political officials and top security officers.