

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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Amnesty International Secretary General arrives in Nepal Initial picture of uncertainty, insecurity and fear

(Kathmandu) Amnesty International said today that the initial picture of the situation in Nepal is one of heightened uncertainty, insecurity and fear, in the aftermath of the declaration of the state of emergency and an upcoming nationwide *bandh* (strike).

"Preliminary meetings with human rights defenders have highlighted a picture of insecurity, deepened by uncertainty in the wake of the state of emergency, and fear -- particularly for those who remain inaccessible in remote parts of the country," said Ms Khan. "We are here to express our solidarity and support to them, and to explore practical means of ensuring their protection and that of other groups at risk."

Amnesty International delegates are visiting Nepalgunj and Biratnagar to gauge the impact of the state of emergency, and of the Maoist nationwide *bandh*, outside Kathmandu.

Next week, the delegation will meet with the Commander of the Army, Chief Justice, Ministers, senior officials, the National Human Rights Commission and members of the international community.

Amnesty International has sought an audience with His Majesty King Gyanendra.

This is the first time, since the declaration of the state of emergency, that an international human rights organization has sought meetings with the new government.

"We would like to seek assurances from the King that his Government will take immediate, urgent and concrete action to protect human rights," stated Ms Khan.

Background

An Amnesty International delegation, led by Secretary General Irene Khan, arrived yesterday in Kathmandu.

Amnesty International's mission will assess the impact of the declaration of the state of emergency on fundamental human rights, particularly the threat to human rights defenders, the clampdown on the media, and the arrest of political leaders, students and activists. The visit will also focus on the massive human rights abuses arising from the conflict between the Maoists and the security forces, which has been characterized by a pattern of killings, detentions, torture, "disappearances" and impunity.

The organization is concerned about possible widespread human rights abuses, including the killing of civilians, committed by the Maoists during the *bandh*.

The delegation will also meet with human rights defenders, journalists and political leaders in Kathmandu.

Amnesty International is seeking permission to visit political leaders under house arrest, and detainees, including human rights activist Krishna Pahadi who was arrested on 9 February.

The delegation will present its findings to the media in Kathmandu, and then in Bangkok. Broadcast media: please note a B-roll will be available in Bangkok.

For more information, or to arrange an interview with Ms Khan or another member of the delegation, please contact:

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