

URGENT ACTION

ARMY OFFICER SOUGHT OVER GIRL'S MURDER

Major Niranjan Basnet of the Nepal Army was charged by a civilian court in 2008 with the murder of a 15-year-old girl. He was recently found to be serving in a UN peacekeeping mission in Africa; the UN have now expelled him from the mission, and have instructed the government of Nepal to repatriate him. It is now possible to bring him to justice.

Soldiers took 15-year-old Maina Sunuwar from her home on 17 February 2004 and tortured her to death at a nearby army camp. They repeatedly held her head under water and applied electric shocks to her wet hands and feet. She died after an hour and a half of this torture. They buried her body in a secret grave.

Since then, Maina Sunuwar's mother, Devi Sunuwar, has been trying to expose the truth about what happened to her daughter, calling for those who tortured and killed her to be brought to justice. Her campaign resulted in Maina Sunuwar's body being located and exhumed at an army barracks in March 2007. It also prompted the army to conduct an internal investigation into her death. A military court convicted three men of minor offences connected with her killing in 2005, but ruled that Maina Sunuwar's death was the result of "carelessness" on the part of the soldiers, not deliberate torture. The court sentenced each of them to six months in prison, but allowed the time the men had spent confined to barracks during the investigation to count towards this, so the men spent no time in prison at all.

In 2008, the civilian authorities charged the three men who had been convicted by the military court, and also Major Niranjan Basnet, with the murder of Maina Sunuwar. The three men have not been found, but Major Basnet has continued to perform his duties for the army. Despite court orders to do so, the army has done nothing to ensure that Major Basnet is suspended from the army, arrested and handed over to the civilian authorities to face trial. Nor has the army cooperated by providing the authorities with details of its internal investigations into Maina Sunuwar's killing.

The UN discovered in the first week of December that Major Basnet was serving in the UN peacekeeping mission in the central African country of Chad. He is now in the process of being repatriated to Nepal. There is now a real opportunity to ensure that he is brought to justice.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English or your own language:

- Calling on the prime minister to ensure that Major Niranjan Basnet is returned to Nepal, arrested immediately on his arrival and transferred to the Kavre District Court for trial.
- Calling for the chief of army staff to cooperate fully with the prosecution by the civilian court.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 JANUARY 2010 TO:

Prime Minister

Madhav Kumar Nepal
Office of the Prime Minister
Singh Durbar
Kathmandu
Nepal

Email: info@opmcm.gov.np

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Chief of Army Staff

General Chhatraman Singh Gurung
Army Headquarters
Kathmandu
Nepal

Fax: +977 1 4245020

Email: na_humanrights@yahoo.com

Salutation: Dear Commander

**And copies to diplomatic
representatives accredited to your
country**

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During an internal armed conflict in Nepal between 1996 and 2006, thousands of civilians were killed, subjected to enforced disappearance, torture and other human rights abuses by the army, the police and Maoist guerrilla forces. In late 2006, the government and the Maoists signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which was intended to transform an existing ceasefire into permanent peace, but not one of those responsible for these abuses has been brought to justice.

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