



Ref.: ASA 31/2004.23

Doc: AI Index: ASA 31/107/2004

Kamal Thapa
Home Minister
Ministry of Home Affairs
Singha Durbar
Kathmandu
Nepal

23 April 2004

Dear Minister,

I am writing to express concern about the reported arrests of Laxman Raya and five political activists - Umesh Jung Rayamajhi, Santosh Bhattarai, Krishna Khadaka, Ambika Prasad Koirala and Prem Silwal. They were arrested by a group of civil and armed police on 15 April in Putali Sadak and Bagh Bazar, Kathmandu, during demonstrations by members of the main political parties and their supporters.

Laxman Raya is the Sarlahi district chairperson of the Human Rights and Peace Society (HURPES), a national human rights organization with its head office in Kathmandu. Umesh Jung Rayamajhi, Santosh Bhattarai and Krishna Khadaka are political activists from the Nepali Congress Party. Ambika Prasad Koralala belongs to a trade union organization affiliated to the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), and Prem Silwal is a political activist from the Democratic National Youth Organization, which is also affiliated to the CPN-UML.

According to reports, the six people are being detained at the Armed Police Force (APF) camp at Duwakot in Bhaktapur, Kathmandu valley, on an order by the Home Ministry. They have been allowed visits from their family members but have not been given access to lawyers. They are reported to be held under the Public Security Act (PSA) 1989, under a preventive detention order. It appears they are being detained with the apparent aim of stopping them from continuing their political campaign.

The six were reportedly protesting peacefully at the time of their arrest. Amnesty International believes that such arrests of peaceful demonstrators are an abuse of security provisions and prevent legitimate political expression, as well as violate relevant international human rights standards, including those contained in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Nepal is a state party.

Amnesty International believes that the six people are prisoners of conscience, detained for the peaceful expression of their political views, and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release.

We look forward to receiving your response to the concerns we have raised about the individuals named above.

Yours sincerely,

Ingrid Massagé
Interim Director, Asia & Pacific Regional Program