

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
PRESS RELEASE**

AI Index: PRE 01/440/2009
18 December 2009

Nepal: Bar human rights violators from UN peacekeeping missions

Amnesty International today called on Nepal's government to immediately fix the flawed vetting process that allowed an army major charged with murder to participate in the United Nations peace keeping mission in the Central African Republic.

Major Niranjan Basnet is charged with murdering 15-year-old Maina Sunuwar on 17 February 2004. She died in military custody after she was subjected to electrocution and drowning during interrogation. Her body was later exhumed from an army barracks where Nepali UN peacekeepers are trained.

In a letter to Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal the organization said the inclusion of Major Basnet in the peace keeping force revealed serious shortcomings in the vetting of troops from the Nepal Army to UN missions that could put civilians at risk in countries where they are deployed.

“The Nepali government has failed to provide accountability for the many atrocities committed by Nepali security forces as well as Maoist cadres during Nepal's civil war. The resulting culture of impunity undermines the rights of victims and their families, and potentially carries over to the Army's involvement in UN missions and threatens the rights of those they have been assigned by the United Nations to protect,” said Sam Zarifi, Amnesty International's Asia Pacific Director.

Amnesty International urged Nepal's government to re-assess every member of the Nepal Army currently participating in UN missions to ensure that they are not implicated in serious human rights violations.

Major Basnet was recently expelled from the United Nations Mission in Chad because of his human rights record and repatriated to Nepal, but the Army has so far refused to hand him over to the civilian authorities.

“The Nepali army is shielding Major Basnet from serious and credible allegations; he should be immediately surrendered to a civilian court for trial. The ongoing failure to address his case properly casts serious doubt on the Nepali government's commitment to international human rights standards and the fitness of Nepali forces to serve as UN peacekeepers,” said Sam Zarifi.

In a separate letter to the United Nations Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Amnesty International welcomed the United Nations decision to expel and repatriate Major Basnet and called on the United Nations to insist that the government of Nepal review the troops it contributes to UN peacekeeping.

“Nepali troops have played a very important role in UN peacekeeping around the world. The Nepali government should work closely with the UN to ensure no Nepali troops accused of human rights violations are deployed as UN peacekeepers,” said Sam Zarifi.

Amnesty International repeated its call for the government to ensure that Major Basnet is arrested without further delay and transferred to the civilian courts for trial.

The organization also called for all outstanding allegations of crimes committed by the Army, the police and Maoist forces to be investigated and, where there is sufficient admissible evidence, prosecuted by competent, independent and impartial civilian courts.