

AP'S NEPALESE PARTNER COORDINATES HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING AS POLICE INJURE HUNDREDS IN PRO-DEMOCRACY PROTESTS

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Washington, DC: The Collective Campaign for Peace in Nepal (COCAP), a partner of The Advocacy Project, has taken the lead in organizing human rights monitors to deter police violence against demonstrators demanding the restoration of democracy in Nepal.

The demonstrations began on April 2, 2004 at the calling of five political parties, after King Gyanendra elected monarchist politicians to replace the elected government that was dissolved in October 2002.

COCAP hurriedly organized an ad hoc Human Rights Monitoring Network, which now comprises over 80 journalists, intellectuals, lawyers and students. Most were positioned at two Kathmandu hospitals and other flash-points during the protests.

An April 8 COCAP press release states that at least 150 demonstrators were injured by the security forces on April 4 alone. They included five COCAP monitors, who were beaten up while trying to take injured demonstrators to the hospital. According to the COCAP release, some police were heard to shout "beat up these human rights people!" while other police intervened on behalf of the monitors.

COCAP has appealed for international support. "We have been promised that such things will not be repeated," states the release. "We request all of the concerned people to appeal to the government and the security personnel to respect the human rights of human rights defenders."

The COCAP monitors attempted to mediate in the middle of the violence. At one point, they convinced protestors not to beat up a policeman who was trapped in a bathroom stall. The monitors also facilitated a discussion between the protestors and police near a hospital. According to COCAP, no relief agencies were present at the demonstrations.

The COCAP press release makes several specific demands of the security forces: (a) use force only when absolutely necessary; (b) provide clear warnings repeatedly before resorting to force; (c) stop using bullets and other devices "banned internationally"; (d) follow the existing laws of the country to the letter when applying force; (e) conduct immediate and transparent investigations into excesses by the security forces, and prosecute those found guilty.

The unrest in Nepal has been further complicated by the re-emergence of Maoist rebels, who took advantage of the pro-democracy demonstrations and launched a three-day national strike on April 5. Maoists exploded two bombs in Kathmandu and overran a rural police post. COCAP is one of many human rights groups that have criticized disappearances and other abuses by the Maoists.

COCAP's Human Rights Monitoring Network plans to issue regular press releases and is operating a hotline to collect, process and disseminate information on human rights during the protests.

- For more information, call 977-1- 4265143 / 4260498 or [e-mail](#).
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