

## HUMAN RIGHTS MONITOR BEATEN AND DISABLED PEOPLE DETAINED AS NEPALESE REGIME SEEKS TO SUPPRESS DEMOCRACY PROTESTS

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April 7, 2006, Kathmandu, Nepal, and Washington DC: Yagya Aryal, a human rights monitor with the Collective Campaign for Peace (COCAP), was badly beaten by police Thursday on the opening day of the 4-day national mobilization and general strike by Nepal's seven political parties.

Aryal was assaulted as he was trying to protect other demonstrators in the Kathmandu neighborhood of Banseshwor. COCAP's monitors – who include teenagers - have been following pro-democracy protests since the February 1 2005 coup by King Gyanendra. Several have been injured.

Meanwhile COCAP reports that the general strike has “paralyzed” life in the Kathmandu valley, and also been widely observed outside the capital. (See below).

The current protests, which are entirely legal under Nepal's constitution, represent the most coordinated action by Nepal's political parties in many months and the authorities went to extreme lengths to prevent them from taking place.

According to COCAP – a partner of the Advocacy Project (AP) – over 400 leading politicians, student leaders and human rights activists were arrested on Wednesday. Pro-government vigilante groups have been particularly violent – a new and alarming feature of the government's response.

In a blog that is posted on the AP website, COCAP also reports that those arrested included five disabled people and 24 journalists. The President and General Secretary of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists have also been arrested.

\* The following is extracted from the COCAP bulletin:

The peaceful protest by the activists, leaders and supporters of seven political parties have been arrested, beaten and brutally misbehaved with corporal torture. Human Rights activists' attempt to protect the innocent public from being arrested and beaten has been forcefully ignored by the police personnel. Human Rights activists have been charged with abusive words with casual physical force by the police personnel.

As reported by Nepali Congress, Meena Pandey, Sujata Koirala, Dinbandhu Shrestha, Shashank Koirala and other leaders and activists have been arrested. CPN -UML reports

that Bidhya Bhandari, Rajendra Shrestha, Prem Dangal, Teeka Pokhrel, and others have been arrested. Dr Kedar Narsing KC's leg has been factured during scuffle this morning. Likewise, the central office of ANNFSU, Dillibazar, has been captured by police force since the mid day.

Large numbers of army and police forces have been deployed inside the ring road areas to prevent political activities. Activists of the seven political parties gathered in masses in different parts of the valley and demonstrated against the government move.

Life in the valley has been completely paralyzed by the strike. Shops, commercial centers, academic institutions and other business sectors remained completely halted. The roads by and large remained deserted. Very few vehicles belonging to I/NGO's, Ambulances, press, medias etc. were seen on the street. Some vehicles plying in the roads have the number plated being kept obscure. Meanwhile, few private vehicles defying the strike were vandalized by the mob. Vehicles in many number have been reported to be burnt by the protesters in different places of valley. However, large numbers of people are seen riding bicycles. Few pedestrians can be seen walking leisurely on empty roads.

As reported by COCAP's Eastern Focal Point, NESPEC, Udayapur, the first day of nationwide strike by seven party alliance is observed successful. The lives of the major areas of the region remained to a standstill. Vehicles, both public and private, were off the roads. Most of the offices, academic intuitions and other businesses remained closed. It is reported that majority of the employees at Udayapur Cement Factory and other supporters gathered outside the factory. They stopped their work and barred the General Manager of the factory from entering his office.

As reported by COCAP's Far Western and Mid Western Focal Points, SWEET Nepal and SAC Nepal respectively, the general strike have been observed fully in the area. Most of the shops, offices, academic institutions and other businesses remained closed. Public as well private vehicles were off the road. Protesting political activists and supporters were seen at times in the street of the major cities of those parts.

As reported by Dalit Empowerment Centre, Western Focal Point Baglung, there is no influence of general strike in the near by areas of Baglung, since first two days of strike has been withdrawn by the parties in the wake if Chaite Dashain festival.

- For COCAP's reports on the crisis, visit <http://www.cocap.org.np/>
- For a comprehensive coverage of the crisis in Nepal, and first-hand accounts, visit the International Dalit Solidarity Network <http://idsn.org/country-information/nepal/>