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### **Relatives Refuse to Close the Book on Disappearances in Nepal**

The Advocacy Project (AP) has joined relatives of the disappeared in Nepal in rejecting a decision by a Nepal government commission to declare 430 victims dead without consulting their family members or holding any investigations.

In a strongly-worded letter to the Commission, Ram Kumar Bhandari, the founder of the National Network of Families of the Disappeared (NEFAD), described the decision to drop the cases as "unjustified, unfair and insulting" and warned that family members will stop cooperating with the Commission unless the decision is reversed.



**Ram Kumar Bhandari, seen here with wives of the disappeared, lost his father during the conflict**

The Commission was set up on February 10, 2015 to investigate the fate of Nepalis who disappeared during the conflict (1996-2006). It has identified 1,475 individual victims and was extended on January 20 for a third year.

The decision to drop the 430 cases was taken on the grounds that wives of the missing men had declared their husbands dead in order to secure compensation. But NEFAD has insisted that the wives were

acting under duress and that such a wrenching decision can only be taken after a thorough investigation, when the relatives have come to terms with their loss.

An open feud with family members could prove devastating to the Commission's credibility after two years during which it has been boycotted by human rights groups, Western donors and the UN. [A recent communique from Human Rights Watch](#) complained that the law establishing the Commission provided an amnesty for human rights abusers and violates international human rights standards.

NEFAD strongly disagrees with the NGO boycott, which it feels has deprived the Commission of badly-needed expertise and support. Instead, taking its lead from family members, NEFAD has maintained a relationship of "critical engagement" with the Commission.

But this high-handed action by the Commission - and the furious response from families - certainly makes it harder to defend the Commission. AP joins with NEFAD in calling on the commissioners to reverse its decision and launch credible investigations.

Meanwhile, AP continues to raise funds for 25 family members in Bardiya, who have formed a cooperative to produce and sell bags (photo below). AP is [recruiting a Peace Fellow](#) to work with the family members this summer.



**Betrayed again? Alina, left, lost her father to the disappearances. Sarita, right, also lost her father. She now trains family-members to make embroidery and runs their cooperative.**

***Feedback? Contact us at [dcoffice@advocacynet.org](mailto:dcoffice@advocacynet.org). This bulletin was drafted by Iain Guest [iain@advocacynet.org](mailto:iain@advocacynet.org).***

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