

MASS ARRESTS AS NEPAL SLIPS BACK INTO REPRESSION AND VIOLENCE

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Kathmandu, Nepal: 129 human rights defenders and political activists have been arrested by the Nepalese government in a new wave of attacks against the human rights movement, according to reports reaching The Advocacy Project from Nepalese civil society.

The arrests follow a sudden deterioration in security following an attack by Maoists over the weekend that left eleven policemen dead. The government imposed a curfew on Monday, and followed this up with the mass arrests early Thursday morning. According to the Defend Human Rights Movement - Nepal, telephone communications have also been interrupted. (See below).

First reports suggested that over 400 people had been arrested, but a human rights group has submitted the names of 129 detainees, together with details of their arrest, to the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Kathmandu. This list is posted on the web site of the Advocacy Project.

The government's move is reminiscent of the state of emergency which was imposed by King Gyanendra on February 1, 2005. While the government is using the recent Maoist attack as justification, many speculate that the arrests and curfew are aimed at halting a mass anti-government rally that is planned for Friday in the capital. More than 150,000 pro-democracy activists gathered in Southwest Nepal last week, in the largest political protest since the February coup.

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The 'Defend Human Rights Movement - Nepal' has issued the following communiqué in response to the latest crisis. The movement is a coalition of 25 human rights groups. Its communiqués are also being posted on the AP site:

'The situation of human rights is further deteriorating in Nepal, while the regime has imposed an unnecessary curfew and issued prohibitive orders against holding mass assemblies, rallies and sit-in programs in Kathmandu and Lalitpur Districts.

'The curfew was first imposed in the above-mentioned districts on January 17, 2006 that started at 10.00pm and ended at 4.00am, which has been extended by one-hour every day. On January 19, 2006, the curfew was further extended to the daytime of January 20 starting from 8.00am to 6.00pm. Similar curfew and prohibitive orders are imposed throughout the country in the name of maintaining security in the country, but without sufficient or factual justification.

'On the morning of January 19, the regime shut down the telephone services, including cell phones operated by Nepal Telecom and Mero Mobile, and privately operated United Telecom.

The regime has also carried out the arrest of nearly 100 leaders and cadres of political parties, including civil society leaders and human rights defenders using the Armed Police Forces (APF) and plainclothed security forces.

'They are reportedly detained in Nepal Police Academy in Maharajgunj, No 2 Gana of APF in Maharajgunj, APF Headquarter in Halchowk, and APF Guheswari Gana in Duwakot, Bhaktapur. The regime has also carried out the search of houses of political party leaders and civil society leaders, including the General Secretary of Communist Party of Nepal (UML) Madhav Kumar Nepal.

'The curfew and prohibitive orders were issued solely aimed at disrupting the planned peaceful protest organized by the seven political parties on January 20, 2006 in Kathmandu that called for ordinary people to join the ongoing movement for the establishment of democracy and the end of Nepal's autocratic regime.

'These suppressive actions indicate the regime's authoritarian character and its intention to institutionalize autocracy by infringing on the ordinary people's right to participate in the ongoing movement to establish democracy and other universally accepted democratic rights.

'The imposition of the curfew and issuance of prohibitive orders by the regime violates the right to freedom of peaceful assembly ensured by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (1966) to which Nepal is a state party. These actions by the regime directly curtail the fundamental human rights of the people.'

- Read other communiqués by the Movement and the [Collective Campaign for Peace \(COCAP\)](#)