



# राष्ट्रिय मानव अधिकार आयोग

National Human Rights Commission, Nepal

केन्द्रिय कार्यालय Central Office

हरिहर भवन, पुल्चोक, ललितपुर, HariharBhawan, Pulchowk, Lalitpur, Nepal



**International Conference on  
"Identifying Challenges, Assessing Progress, Moving Forward: Addressing Impunity and  
Realizing Human Rights in South Asia"**

*Joint Press Release*

11<sup>th</sup> April, 2018

International conference on "Identifying Challenges, Assessing Progress, Moving Forward: Addressing Impunity and Realizing Human Rights in South Asia" hosted by the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal (NHRC) in Kathmandu concluded today. The seven NHRIs representing South Asia reached to an understanding over a number of key issues, which is also included in the Kathmandu Declaration.

The conference witnessed the participation of the representatives of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in the South Asian region including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal as well as the National Women's Commission of Bhutan. The human rights institutions of Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines and Jordan, attended along with the leading human rights activists and civil society members from the region.

During the conference, the discussions were held on the issues of national security and human rights, migration and livelihood, rights of women and indigenous and marginalized communities. The discussion on the Rule of Law reiterated that all citizens (including women, children, minority groups and marginalized communities) are protected by the justice system equally and without discrimination.

In the session on Transitional Justice (TJ), a consensus emerged to entirely prioritize the participation of victims' groups in the process from the start and the need to see that all four pillars of TJ (truth, reparations, justice and reforms) ensure that crises are not repeated. Also, the conference stood in firm support for the vetting of all security forces seeking promotions or intending to take part in UN peacekeeping missions and to exclude those under investigation.

The declaration issued after the end of the conference called on all South Asian states to review national security and counter-terrorism laws relating to the issue of impunity to ensure that they meet international norms and standards.

While the declaration recognizes the inalienable right of the states to call a state of emergency when national security is genuinely in peril, but reiterates categorically that under no circumstances the use of torture or attacks on the right to life and the protection of civilians can be justified. All the signatories to the Kathmandu declaration committed to remain vigilant to any attempts to improperly use national security as a justification for illegitimate restrictions of rights that in no circumstances can be suspended.



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The conference discussed at length the issue of migration and stressed the importance of the right of freedom of movement, including in search of employment. While recognizing the economic benefits to migrant labor and the contribution of remittances to the economies of the region, it is increasingly clear that those who migrate for employment, particularly women, are frequently subject to serious abuses including under the *kafala* system. The signatories therefore called on governments to bring about necessary legal and administration measures to protect migrant rights, in both countries of origin and countries of destination.

Hon. Chairperson of National Human Rights Commission of Nepal Anup Raj Sharma said, “Several themes recurred during the three consecutive days such as the need to reach out to civil society and improve the understanding of our work and how it can improve peoples’ lives practically.”

The Conference expressed deep concern at continuing gross violation of Human Rights in the region, such as the expulsion of Rohingya from Myanmar.

Expressing her satisfaction at the successful outcome of the meeting, Hon. Member of National Human Rights Commission of Nepal Mohna Ansari said, “Perhaps the most important outcome of the conference is the common understanding that only justice and respect for human rights can strengthen the political stability, which is required for prosperity. We also want to promote measures to defend the judiciary and police from political influence to maintain their independence.”

The conference was inaugurated on 9<sup>th</sup> April by Rt. Hon. President Bidya Devi Bhandari, who stressed on the responsibility of the Nepal government is to endow justice to victims of human rights violations.