



राष्ट्रिय मानव अधिकार आयोग National Human Rights Commission of Nepal

केन्द्रीय कार्यालय (Central Office)
हरिहर भवन, पुल्चोक, ललितपुर (Harihar Bhawan, Pulchowk, Lalitpur, Nepal)



Identifying Challenges, Assessing Progress, Moving forward: Addressing Impunity and Realizing Human Rights in South Asia

Inauguration session of the International Conference

Press Release

9th April 2018

Rt. Hon. President of Nepal Bidya Devi Bhandari officially inaugurated the international conference on human rights hosted by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Nepal. The conference, which is scheduled to take place from 9th to 11th April, 2018 is going to shed light on impunity as one of the major human rights challenges in the South Asian region.

During the inaugural session, while referring to the constitution of Nepal, President Bhandari stated, "We should leave no stone unturned to fundamentally internalize and embrace the mechanisms established to provide justice to the victims of conflict. In my view, the government is duty-bound to resolve the problems that have emerged in attainment of transitional justice." President Bhandari further said, "Our experience has shown that the judicial system of Nepal, including the courts, is fully capable of dispensing justice in any kind of situation. As we all know, human rights, democracy and rule of law are interdependent. Protection of human rights can be achieved only through internalizing democratic values and the guarantee of due process." Moreover, she also expressed her hope that the conference will help further institutionalize human rights in the region.

Similarly, Chairperson of NHRC- Nepal Hon. Anup Raj Sharma, while welcoming the President and the guests to the conference said, "Addressing impunity is integrally linked to promoting rule of law and development. It is clear that no Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN) can be achieved without addressing impunity in this region. Freedom of expression and the voice of the voiceless and marginalized people should be heard properly to respect human rights."

Likewise, Former Chairperson of NHRC- Nepal Hon. Kedar Nath Upadhyaya expressed concern about the current culture of impunity and disrespect for the rule of law. He pointed to the fast-growing lawlessness supported by party politics across South Asia.

Also, Hon. Mohna Ansari, commissioner and spokesperson of NHRC-Nepal explained to the media that as the statutory body is all set to organize such an important event in the year that marks the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). She opined that



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“Some people still argue that human rights is a concern for foreigners but we must remember that governments in the region, over the decades, have already adopted UDHR and other human rights instruments”. Implementing Human Rights norms is the best way to avoid conflict and any threat to national integrity.” She further said, “I think we can all agree that without the presence of UNOHCHR during the *Jana Andolan II* in 2006, probably a lot more people would have been wounded and killed. While responding to the *Gorkha* earthquake of 2015, almost exactly three years ago, we meticulously paid heed to social and economic rights. We would not be further witnessing the widespread suffering of the victims of the quake as the poor and vulnerable, women, low-caste and ethnic minorities are facing a hard time in accessing government compensation plans.”

Hon. Deepika Udagama of Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka stated, “Human rights institutions have a critical role to play as oversight bodies in democracies, particularly in societies attempting democratization and emerging from conflict. One specific feature of NHRIs is their roles as compliance mechanisms and oversight bodies.” She further stated, “They also have an advisory role to play to bring legislation and policies in line with human rights standards. In South Asia, where democracy is at various levels, this conference is a unique opportunity for South Asian NHRIs to come together, exchange ideas on how we could better our contributions in respect of rule of law issues, which are so important in processes of democratization. We are used to selective application of the law and impunity is a huge issue; we have widespread custodial violence and suffering by marginalized groups such as women, disabled, migrants, political dissidents. All these are common issues in the region. The NHRC of Sri Lanka thinks that coming together like this is a unique opportunity to learn from other experiences and get ideas to improve the protection and promotion of human rights in a manner that will make a difference to people’s lives.”

In the nutshell, the NHRC-Nepal is coming together with its sister organizations throughout the region from Afghanistan to Maldives. Not merely confined to the technical discussion targeted to experts, the conference is also trying to look into ways to improve the lives of the people in the region with our main aim to ensure access to justice and the equality of all before the law. All of the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in the South Asia region are participating in the conference. NHRIs from Malaysia, Myanmar, Jordan along with leading NGOs from all these countries are participating as observers in the conference.


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Mohna Ansari
Member/Spokesperson