

## [The Maoist Threat](#)

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## The Maoist Threat

The worlds last Hindu kingdom struggles with protests, civil unrest and terrorism as communists seek to overthrow the government

Amnesty International regularly reports on human rights issues in Nepal resulting from the antagonism between the ruling Nepali Congress Party and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). "Maoism" is a revolutionary communist ideology and methodology based upon Marxism-Leninism, but which calls upon the collective power of a nation's peasants. The following Amnesty news release for February 14, 2000, is titled, "Sri Lanka, Kashmir, Karachi--Nepal must not go the same way."

By Amnesty International

The Himalayan state of Nepal is courting a human rights disaster, as the face-off between the government and an armed Maoist movement hardens into patterns recalling other regional conflicts. In a new report, Amnesty International lists a chilling catalogue of violations, by both the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (Maoist) and security forces since the CPN launched its "people's war" four years ago.

The report says that the CPN has deliberately killed at least 200 people since the start of its "people's war." Many of them were civilians branded "enemies of the people" for their links

with the ruling Nepali Congress Party (NCP). Of these 200, at least 80 were killed in just the last 14 months. The lives of two 15-year-old boys were not spared. The Maoist group has also handed out summary justice, including cruel forms of punishment, through kangaroo courts.

Police, for their part, executed hundreds of people in disputed circumstances, including those they could instead have arrested and others who had already surrendered. Courts lack the teeth to prosecute such crimes. At least 400 out of nearly 800 killed by police in these four years may have been deliberately executed. Forty-four others have "disappeared," including students and lawyers. Helpless relatives run from courtroom to police station trying to discover their fate.

Reports of political and other prisoners being tortured are common, Amnesty International has found over several field trips. A 21-one-year-old man died last summer after six days of torture. A government letter admitted he was a victim of "heavy handed treatment." Police officials have been arrested and charged with murder in this case, but other complaints are ignored. "It is tragic that such crimes should be taking place at a time when Nepal is celebrating its first decade of multi-party democracy after the end of panchayat rule," Amnesty International said.

"The Nepal government looks set to follow the mistakes of its neighbors by pushing through laws giving the police and administration sweeping powers," the human rights organisation said. "Amnesty International recognises the security threat posed by the 'people's war' and is aware of the

other challenges facing this six-month-old government, in one of the world's poorest countries. But draconian laws lacking human rights safeguards are neither a just nor an effective way of meeting them. As experience elsewhere has shown, they further brutalize opponents and lead to a spiral of violence; they are also liable to be misused against civilians and to erode the rule of law. Ministers and ruling party leaders who spent years in prison for their opposition to panchayat rule should know this only too well."

Amnesty International appeals to the government to back up recent political initiatives for dealing with the conflict with a clear signal that human rights violations will not be tolerated, whether they are committed by the CPN or the police. It also urges the government to set up new mechanisms to ensure that all allegations will be independently investigated and to speed up its long-delayed moves to set up a human rights commission.

Amnesty International Secretary General Pierre Sanjivan delivered these appeals in person on February 24, in talks with government ministers in Kathmandu. Over four days, the delegation led by Mr Sanjivan also met NGOs, students, academics, refugees and other groups to discuss a range of human rights challenges facing Nepal.

The human rights organization also urges the international community to pay attention to this problem. It welcomes, in this context, the current visit to Nepal by the UN's Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, Asma Jehangir. "It is vital that the Nepal government takes

these warnings seriously and acts to ensure that Nepal does not turn into another South Asian war zone--and human rights disaster zone," Amnesty International said.

Background: Until 1990, Nepal was under the panchayat system. Panchayat rule ended that year, after more than three decades of political struggle. After the introduction of multi-party democracy, a constitution was put into place providing increased protection for human rights. However, the optimism of human rights organizations at the start of this new era has gradually been replaced by disappointment as police went unpunished for human rights violations committed during the panchayat era, and new allegations began to surface. The human rights situation has deteriorated more sharply, as the Amnesty International report points out, after the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (Maoist) launched its armed "people's war" on February 13, 1996, to overthrow the government and set up a republic in Nepal.

In his February 24 public statement, Sanjiv Shrestha concludes, "The Maoist problem should not be allowed to eclipse other longstanding human rights issues rooted in discrimination and poverty such as violence against women and dalits. They in turn feed the conflict and underline the need for a holistic strategy founded on human rights to solve the 'people's war.' Once again, Amnesty International strongly condemns the human rights abuses that have been committed by both sides to this conflict. We urge Nepal's leaders to learn from the mistakes of Nepal's neighbors and not to repeat them--and to ensure respect for the human rights of all Nepalese people."

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## US Travel Advisory

The US State Department's Travel Warnings and Consular Information Sheets reads as follows:

"Since February 1996, a rural Maoist insurgency in Nepal has resulted in the deaths of at least 1,000 people. Because of the potential for violence, the US Embassy in Kathmandu forbids US Government employees [and cautions American citizens] from traveling to or through Jajarkot, Kalikot, Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan, and Sindhuli districts. These districts have been most seriously affected by the insurgency. In addition, the Embassy restricts US Government employee travel to or through Dolakha, Gorkha, Kabhre, Dang, Dolpa, Pyuthan, Ramechaap, Sindupalchok, and Surkhet districts. American citizens traveling in these districts are advised to exercise extreme caution. Maoist incidents have also occurred in other districts, including in the Kathmandu Valley. Security problems may occur anywhere in Nepal. Maoist groups have threatened to take actions against non-governmental organizations (NGO's) they perceive to have an American affiliation.

American NGO's working in Nepal have been attacked by Maoists, in at least one case explicitly because of the organization's association with the United States. The US Embassy recommends that road travel outside the Kathmandu Valley be undertaken only during daylight. American citizens are strongly urged to check with the US Embassy upon arrival in Nepal to receive the latest security information, since the potential for violence now extends to areas that have in the past been relatively free of such activity." For the complete and latest advisory, visit [http://travel.state.gov/travel\\_warnings.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html)