

16 September 2014

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



PRESS STATEMENT

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Nepal: Human Rights Commission now left debilitated for a year

The Nepali government's failure to appoint new commissioners to the Nepal Human Rights Commission (NHRC) for a year, leaving the body leaderless and unable to carry out its mandate, shows a deeply disappointing lack of commitment to human rights and transitional justice, Amnesty International said.

The terms of all previous NHRC commissioners expired on 16 September 2013. Despite repeated reminders from human rights groups and former commissioners to fill the vacant slots, the government has neglected to do so.

"In the past, the Nepal Human Rights Commission played a crucial role in the country, in investigating complaints and reporting on human rights violations as well as in calling on the government to prosecute all perpetrators of gross human rights violations. The fact that the government has simply neglected filling the commissioner slots shows a deplorable lack of respect for its own national institution and thereby a disregard for human rights," said Richard Bennett, Amnesty International's Asia Director.

"The authorities must take this issue seriously and immediately appoint new commissioners to the NHRC."

The leadership vacuum means that within the UN system the commission could be downgraded from "A" to "B" status, according to the Paris Principles which form standards for national human rights institutions approved by the UN General Assembly. The downgrade would diminish the NHRC's reputation and its legitimacy to engage directly on the international level with the UN Human Rights Council, for instance by being able to make an oral statement under any substantive agenda item of the Human Rights Council.

"Especially given the incomplete political transition in Nepal, it is very unfortunate that NHRC, the only official body solely dedicated to addressing human rights issues, has been left debilitated for such a long time," said Richard Bennett.

"Although NHRC has staff who have continued to monitor human rights violations, without commissioners it does not have the authority to carry take decisions or make vital recommendations to the government. It raises serious questions about the government's will to sustain an infrastructure to effectively protect and promote human rights."

Rameshwar Nepal
Director

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