

SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS THIS MONTH



In this fast-paced world, people seldom have time to read the news every day. Month Human rights update is a new INSECOnline series aimed at disseminating a brief overview of National and International Human rights situation once in every two weeks. The series will be covering severe cases of Human rights violations Nationally and Internationally.

Human rights violations noted this fortnight have been enlisted below:

NATIONAL UPDATES

1. Nepal's NHRC Upholds 'A' Category Status in Global Human Rights Classification'

The recent clarification by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) affirming Nepal's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) as an 'A' category institution maintains the Commission's autonomy and adherence to the Paris Principles. This resolution underscores the necessity for Nepal's government to expedite the enactment of new legislation in line with these principles. A potential downgrade to 'B' category status would have significantly restricted the Commission's effectiveness, impacting both Nepal's human rights situation and its international standing in human rights discussions. Now, with this issue resolved, it is crucial for the NHRC to strengthen its collaboration with civil society, transcend past disputes, and maintain high standards of conduct to safeguard its credibility and fulfill its mission of protecting and promoting human rights.

2. Deadly Earthquake Strikes Nepal's Western Region

A powerful earthquake struck Nepal's Jajarkot area, claiming at least 154 lives and leaving dozens injured. The tremor, with varying magnitude estimates, caused widespread devastation, collapsing houses and shaking buildings as far as New Delhi in India. This calamity, occurring near the epicenter some 500 km west of Kathmandu, could potentially escalate the death toll, as authorities struggled to establish contact in remote hilly regions. The fear of aftershocks and difficulties accessing affected areas hindered immediate rescue efforts. Nepal faces another humanitarian crisis, prompting swift responses from officials and calls for urgent rescue and relief operations. The scenes of destruction, collapsed structures, and terrified residents fleeing their homes paint a grim picture of the catastrophe that has struck the region once again.

3. Nepal Launches USD 47 Billion Climate Resilience Plan

On November 21, Nepal unveiled its inaugural National Adaptation Plan (NAP) in Kathmandu, outlining a USD 47 billion strategy to fortify the country's resilience against climate change until 2050. This comprehensive plan emphasizes crucial sectors and 64 specific interventions, aligning with global efforts to address climate challenges at the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference.

4. Nepal Bans TikTok Amid Content Concerns

Nepal recently prohibited TikTok due to worries about its content's impact on social harmony. Implemented in November 2023, the ban follows new rules mandating social media companies to establish local offices. Minister for Communications Rekha Sharma cited the platform's dissemination of harmful content as the primary reason behind the immediate ban, although critics, including senior political figures, question the prohibition's necessity, advocating for regulation instead. Despite its popularity among the youth, Nepal's move resonates with similar bans in Pakistan and Indonesia. The ban prompted a 20% surge in internet traffic as users resorted to virtual private networks (VPNs) to bypass restrictions, despite reports suggesting 95% of TikTok's operations were blocked. Nepal's Supreme Court is slated to review the ban's legitimacy amidst ongoing debates.

5. Kathmandu Prohibition and Political Tensions

The District Administrative Office in Kathmandu has initiated a month-long prohibition, marking the area between Maitighar and Baneshwar road as off-limits. With immediate effect till December 16, this action precedes demonstrations by the UML's Sister Wings Coordination Mechanism and businessman Durga Prasai, both set for November 23. These rallies drew thousands, showcasing the growing tension between two opposing groups, with demonstrations calling for monarchy restoration and protests against government misconduct. The fear of potential clashes prompted local authorities to designate no-go areas around significant landmarks, but both protests were largely peaceful, albeit tense. The protest led by Prasai turned volatile at points, while the one organized by UML sister organizations remained relatively calm, addressing grievances about corruption and governance. Despite police intervention, Prasai vowed to continue protests, challenging the prohibitory order imposed by the government. This event underscores escalating political tensions within Nepal.

INTERNATIONAL UPDATES

1. Temporary Cease-fire: Hope Amidst Hostage Release Agreement

A temporary break in fighting between Israel and Hamas has been agreed upon to free hostages taken during a recent raid by Hamas. This agreement, delayed but now in effect, promises a four-day pause in hostilities. It's a result of negotiations involving Qatar, the U.S., and Egypt. As part of the deal, both sides will exchange Palestinian prisoners for the released hostages, bringing relief to Palestinians in Gaza and hope to captive families.

2. New York City's Stride Against Body Size Bias

New York City is stepping up to tackle bias based on body size at work, becoming a rare haven for those facing discrimination due to their weight and height. With a new law taking effect, the city opens avenues for legal recourse against body-size discrimination, allowing lawsuits and complaints through its civil rights agency. This move not only safeguards against bias in employment but also extends protections to housing and public places. Tigress Osborn, from the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance, sees this as a beacon for other cities and nations to follow suit in addressing this form of discrimination.

3. Continued International Pressure on China Over Human Rights Violations

Over a year following the UN's human rights assessment on the Uyghur region, the pressure on China from UN Member States and experts persists. A joint statement by 51 countries, led by the United Kingdom at the UN General Assembly on October 18, urged China to end human rights violations in Xinjiang, emphasizing the assessment's authoritative nature and its findings of possible crimes against humanity. However, there's regrettable absence of evidence of China taking remedial action. The statement drew support from Western and Global South governments, with Fiji retracting its endorsement later. Pressure on China mounts as UN bodies intensify documentation, highlighting concerns about forced assimilation and rights abuses in Tibet, Hong Kong, and against activists. Despite resistance from China and weak solidarity from some quarters, the global focus remains on China's forthcoming Universal Periodic Review in January 2024, marking a crucial test of its human rights record.

4. UN Treaty Bodies' Struggle for Resources and Accountability

During the 78th Session of the General Assembly, Treaty Body Chairs highlighted strides in unified working methods and improved reporting cycles. While acknowledging enhanced cooperation, frustration surfaced due to persistent challenges like delayed State reporting (some by over 25 years) and limited resources hindering their mandates. Backlogs, exacerbated by the pandemic, demanded additional staff and digital tools. Resource constraints compelled some Committees to revert to standard reporting methods. The Chairs urged State support to effectively fund and recognize the crucial role of UN Treaty Bodies in holding countries accountable for human rights commitments. The meeting concluded with anticipation for OHCHR's guidance in future resolutions, underscoring the vital role of these bodies in the international human rights system.

5. UN Resolution Affirms Rights of LGBTQ+ Individuals in Electoral Processes

The UN's resolution passing, with a focus on media freedom and freedom of expression, underscores the global dedication to safeguarding the rights and dignity of individuals, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Despite attempts to dilute language referencing "sexual orientation and gender identity," the resolution secured passage with 146 votes in favor, one against, and 25 abstentions. Intense discussions marked the session, highlighting rising anti-rights movements targeting LGBTQ+ communities. The resolution's inclusion of protections for sexual and gender minorities signifies a crucial step forward in the ongoing fight for equality. Outright International and ISHR emphasized instances of discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ individuals during electoral processes worldwide, urging states to dismantle discriminatory laws and practices for inclusive democracies. The organizations commend UN Member States that upheld these protections and call for sustained efforts to safeguard LGBTQ+ rights globally.

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