

SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS THIS FORTNIGHT



In this fast-paced world, people seldom have time to read the news every day. Fortnight Human rights update is a new INSECOOnline 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. DOM FAMILIES IN SAPTARI SEVERELY IMPACTED BY THE COLD

A 60 Year old, Mahendra Marik from Saptari, who is living in a small hut in an unregistered strip of land with total of five members in the family stated that he doesn't have enough clothes to protect himself and his family from cold. Marik sustains his livelihood from the craft of making bamboo-based articles. He added that his family along with him survived rainy days by igniting fire but the cold has gotten worse and making it difficult for them to survive.

Cold has hit Sitara Marik, Mahendra's neighbour even hard, not just because of her economic condition but also because she went through a stillbirth a few weeks ago. According to Sitara, they use 'hay' to get warmth. As per Yuktila Marik, Chairperson of Dom Upliftment Society in Saptari, winter comes as a worst nightmare for most of the Dom families.

2. POOR FAMILIES IN RAUTAHAT TO GET RS.10,000 GRANT

Under the federal government scheme, wards have recommended Brindawan Municipality in Rautahat to provide one time cash grant of Rs. 10,000 to around 2,000 households. Newly formed government led by Sher Bahadur Deuba had announced a cash grant of Rs. 10,000 each to 500,000 poor households that lost their employment and livelihood amid pandemic. The local government are responsible for the distribution of the grant as per the working procedure.

The working procedure prescribes that, the workers who lost their jobs from the unorganized sectors, poor street vendors, Daily wage workers, farm labourers, rickshaw pullers, public transport workers and the families that lost their sole breadwinners due to pandemic are eligible to get the grant.

According to the Chief administrative officer of the municipality, Nagendra Raya Yadav, discussion with the Health offices of ward is going on at the moment since they have received the recommendation of 2,000 households contrary to the beneficiary quota of 1,105.

3. SUGARCANE FARMERS' PROTEST TO RISE AGAIN

Since last two years, Sugarcane farmers from Southern plains have been coming to Kathmandu every year to protest against sugar mills who haven't paid them for their crops. According to Rakesh Mishra, patron of the Sugarcane Farmers Struggle Committee, he has been informed by the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies that out of Rs.650 million owed to the farmers, mills are yet to pay Rs.130 million. These farmers came to Kathmandu in the winter to organize a sit-ins, and returned their home following government's promise to pay their money back. However, a year has passed but they haven't received their money back. As per Mishra, they are planning to come to Kathmandu again to hold another protest. Since they lost one of their friends to the cold last year, they have postponed their trip till valley gets little warm.

4. CIB TO PROBE KURMI'S CASE

Group of 16 activists had been staging sit-in in Maitighar, Kathmandu since 25th November 2021 demanding justice for Nankunni Dhobi, 38, who was murdered mysteriously and Nirmala Kurmi, 52, who has been disappeared since 2010 after two days of her two teenage sons being murdered in the span of a week.

On the 42nd day of the sit-in, Government and the activists have concluded a four-point agreement agreeing to get the Central Investigation Bureau of Nepal Police to probe the case, implement Home Ministry's probe report and provide security to the protesters.

The government earlier formed a probe committee led by Hiralal Regmi which submitted a report recommending arrest and investigation of eight people for allegedly being involved in the case. The police arrested seven and released them later. Police however, didn't arrest Badshah Kurmi, a member of the first Constituent Assembly.

5. 90% OF THE EMPLOYED WOMEN IN NEPAL ARE WORKING INFORMALLY

According to Central Bureau of Statistic's report, 90.5% of the women workers in Nepal are involved in informal employment. Another report titled 'Under the Shadows of Informality: A Vulnerability Assessment of Informal Sector Workers of Nepal' published by Centre for Social Change (CSC) has noted lack of education among woman as a primary reason behind this.

The CSC report has further revealed that the informal workers are exposed to extreme and harsh weather conditions, excessive and unattainable work demands, unsanitary and discriminatory workplace which has brewed physical and mental health problems in them.

Despite all the hardships done by the agricultural workers, transportation workers, domestic workers and street vendors, inter alia, their health, safety and well-being has always been invisible to the government.

6. GUARDIANS DEMANDS ACTION AGAINST CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

The guardians and student union have demanded action against Yagbahadur Rai, 27, a teacher accused of beating and injuring Sagar Thing, 14, a student of Buddha Secondary School located at Bakaiya Rural Municipality-3. A press statement was released by All Nepal National Free Students Union on January 9, 2022 and demanded justice for the victim.

After the beating, Sagar had sustained wounds in his face and was taken to Hattisude Primary Health Post on the same day.

7. INMATES IN PRISON SUFFERS DUE TO OVERCROWDING

The inmates of the district prison of Darchula are suffering due to overcrowding. The prison has been accommodating more than its capacity and in the first week of December 2021, eight more inmates were brought to the prison which has made the situation of prison even worse. Lalit Pant, one of the inmates have revealed that they are having problem in using toilets and managing space to sleep due to overcrowding. He further stated that the female inmates' building is also being used to keep male inmates due to this situation. According to the Jailer, Birendra Singh Dhami, the number of male inmates has tripled, the roof of the prison building leaks in the rain and is very cold nowadays.

Sources: INSECOOnline, The Himalayan Times, eKantipur and The Kathmandu Post

INTERNATIONAL UPDATES

1. TOTAL OF 45 JOURNALISTS KILLED IN 2021

International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has revealed that a total of 45 journalists have been killed worldwide in the year 2021. This happens to be one of the lowest death tolls IFJ has recorded for any year. Out of 45 journalists, nine were killed in Afghanistan, highest number suffered in one country, followed by eight in Mexico, four in India and three in Pakistan. As per the IFJ, media workers are more often killed for exposing corruption, crime and abuse of power in their regions.

On the other hand, according to a report published by a non-profit Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), with the count of 293 reporters imprisoned worldwide as of 1st December 2021, the number of journalists behind the bar reached a global high last year.

2. IRAN CALLS UN TO TAKE ACTION OVER SOLEIMANI'S ASSASSINATION

The legal department of Iran's presidential office sent a letter to UN General Assembly urging them to use all legal initiatives in its power, including issuing a resolution against US government for the assassination of Qassem Soleimani, the then commander of the elite Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) who was killed on a missile attack by USA two years ago.

Donald Trump, the Former President of USA, ordered the killing of Soleimani. Following commander's death, Trump said that he was the world's top terrorist and should have been terminated long ago.

In July 2020, UN rapporteur for extrajudicial killing concluded that the Soleimani's assassination was unlawful, arbitrary and against the UN Charter. Interpol also issued a 'red notice' against dozens of US official including Trump for his assassination however, impunity still prevails.

3. FIRE IN THE ROHINGYA REFUGEE CAMP LEAVES THOUSANDS HOMELESS

According to Kamran Hossain, a spokesperson from the Armed Police Battalion, about 1,200 houses were burnt and more than 5000 people have lost their homes after a fire outbreak in the refugee camp in southeastern Bangladesh. He further added that the fire started at Camp 16 and raced through shelters made of bamboo and tarpaulin.

Around 850,000 Muslim minorities from Myanmar were living in a network camps in Bangladesh's border district of Cox's Bazar. Abdur Rashid, 22, one of the fire victims said, 'Everything in my house is burned. I saved 30,000 taka from working as a day laborers. The money is also burned in the fire. I lost my dream.' Bangladesh has often been praised for taking in refugees but hasn't yet succeed in providing them permanent homes.

4. A LANDMARK RULING BY GERMAN COURT

The German Court (Koblenz) has laid down a landmark verdict by sentencing Anwar Raslan, a former Syrian colonel, to life in prison on the charge of committing crime against humanity at Damascus jail a decayed ago. This landmark verdict marks as a first step towards justice for countless Syrian who suffered abuses at the hand of President Bashar al-Assad's government during the year-long war.

According to the Prosecutors' arguments, Raslan, the highest ranking official, supervised the 'systematic and brutal torture' of more than 4,000 people at the Al-Khatib prison in the Syrian capital between April 2011 to September 2012 which resulted in deaths of at least 58 people. Prosecutors stated that he oversaw rape, sexual abuses, electric shocks, beatings with fist and whips and sleep deprivation at the prison. The trial was initiated under Germany's universal jurisdiction law which allows courts to prosecute crime against humanity committed anywhere in the world.

5. KAZAKHSTAN UNREST: UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS URGED PEACEFUL RESOLUTION

Michelle Bachete, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights have urged all, including protesters, security forces and others to seek a peaceful resolution of the grievances.

Almatay, a police spokesperson stated that the security forces have killed dozens of protesters and injured 1,000s of them. Interior Ministry of Kazakh on the other hand revealed that, 12 law enforcement officers have died due to unrest and 317 police officers along with the members of the National Guard have been injured.

The unrest in Kazakhstan was incited by anger over surging fuel prices. The clash have reportedly prompted a Russian-led military intervene and kill dozens of anti-government demonstrators

6. COLOMBIAN MAN CHARGED OVER HAITI PRESIDENT'S MURDER

Late President of Haiti, Jovenel Moise, was shot dead by gunmen on 7 July 2021 in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince. A former Colombian military officer, Mario Antonio Palacios, 43, has been arrested and charged in the US in connection with the President's assassination.

Many arrests have been made so far in connection with President's assassination, however, Palacios is the first one to face charges.

7. UK NATIONALITY AND BORDERS BILL IS DISCRIMINATORY, SAYS OHCHR

Siobhan Mullally, Special Rapporteur on trafficking in person along with other experts from OHCHR have expressed grave concern over the UK Nationality and Border Bill and pronounces it to be contrary to the obligation under International human rights law and refugee law. According to the experts, adoption of the bill would increase the risk of arbitrary deprivation of citizenship, increase racism and discrimination, increase statelessness and undermine the protection of the human rights of trafficked persons as a whole.

Team of the Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups on trafficking in persons have sent a letter to the UK Government outlining all these issues on November 2021.

Sources: New York Times, Aljazeera, BBC and CNN

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