



Nepal – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 3 November 2011

Information on the treatment of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal including treatment of unregistered Bhutanese who have not applied for asylum.

The 2011 *US Department of State* country report on Nepal, in a section titled “Protection of Refugees”, states:

“The government officially restricted freedom of movement and work for the approximately 75,000 Bhutanese refugees living in the country during the year, but those restrictions were largely unenforced for this population. In 2007 the government agreed to permit third-country resettlement for Bhutanese refugees. Since resettlement began, more than 40,000 Bhutanese refugees have been resettled.” (US Department of State (8 April 2011) *2010 Human Rights Report: Nepal*)

An *IRIN News* report states:

“Nearly half of the roughly 108,000 Bhutanese of Nepalese origin who fled to Nepal in the early 1990s have been resettled in third countries, according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and the seven camps they were living in are in the process of being consolidated into two. Since late 2007, when a third-country resettlement programme was introduced, UNHCR has resettled 50,996 of the refugees, also known as Lhotsampas; 43,056 have been resettled in the USA alone. They fled Bhutan after the government stripped them of citizenship.” (IRIN News (24 August 2011) *Nepal: Bhutanese refugee numbers nearly halved*)

A report published by *Human Rights Watch* in 2007, in a section titled “Unregistered Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal”, states:

“The government of Nepal estimates that between 10,000 and 15,000 Bhutanese have settled in Nepal outside the camps. They fall in a number of different categories. Some Bhutanese, wanting to avoid the dependency of life in the camps, never registered as refugees in Nepal. Instead, they settled amongst the Nepalese and tried to make their own living.” (Human Rights Watch (17 May 2007) *Last Hope: The Need for Durable Solutions for Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal and India*, p.73)

A *Bhutan News Service* report states:

“Dozens of exiled Bhutanese without refugee status and facilities in camps displayed empty plates Monday in camps of Morang and Jhapa districts. They have asked the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to provide them with ration to sustain their survival. Around 60 Bhutanese started relay hunger strike in Beldangi-I camp from today. They also urged the Government of Nepal to provide refugee status to them immediately so that they become qualified for resettlement and donors’ aid basket, like their

fellow-countrymen.” (Bhutan News Service (26 July 2010) *Non-registered Bhutanese ask UNHCR to fill their empty plates*)

A report from *EKantipur.com* states:

“Bhutanese refugees, who claim they have been deprived of relief materials and refugee status, are on a hunger strike at the Shanishchare camp in Morang district for the past two days. About 40 refugees have been staging fast-unto-death demanding refugee status and relief materials at the earliest. The agitating refugees also submitted a memorandum to the Refugee Coordination Unit to take immediate steps to address their demands. According to Indu Poudel, the coordinator of the ‘relief-deprived’ refugees, there are about 4,000 refugees who have not been recognised by the government and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).” (EKantipur.com (11 January 2011) *Bhutanese refugees on hunger strike*)

A report from *The Himalayan Times* refers to the situation for unregistered Bhutanese as follows:

“Miserable is the condition of around 3,000 undocumented Bhutanese refugees, who have been living in various camps. Sudesh Timsina of the refugee camp in Belgangi-2 is a case in point. As he does not figure in the Home Ministry-prepared refugees’ list, Timsina cannot avail himself of foodstuffs and other goods and services that donor agencies, including the UNHCR, provide to the camped refugees. Responding to a query, Kishor Adhikari of Beldangi-2 says undocumented refugees like him have been living at the mercy of neighbours with a faint hope that their hardships will end once the country gets a stable government. According to him, the Home Ministry has promised to include their names on the refugees’ list after a new government takes shape.” (The Himalayan Times (11 December 2010) *Unregistered Bhutanese refugees’ woes*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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