



Home Office

Nepal

Country Report

APRIL 2004

**Country Information & Policy Unit
IMMIGRATION & NATIONALITY DIRECTORATE
HOME OFFICE, UNITED KINGDOM**

Nepal, April 2004

Contents	
1. Scope of Document	1.1. - 1.7
2. Geography	2.1. - 2.6
3. Economy	3.1. - 3.8
4. History 1959 - 2001 State of Emergency , November 2001 State of Emergency lifted, 29 August 2002 October 2002 - Present Day	4.1. - 4.40 4.1 - 4.2 4.3 - 4.13 4.14 - 4.16 4.17 - 4.40
5. State Structures The Constitution - Citizenship and Nationality - The Monarchy Political System Judiciary Legal Rights/Detention - Death penalty Internal Security Prisons and Prison Conditions Military Conscientious Objectors and Deserters Medical Services Educational System	5.1. - 5.41 5.1 - 5.3 5.4 5.5 - 5.10 5.11 - 5.21 5.22 5.23 - 5.24 5.25 5.26 - 5.30 5.31 - 5.32 5.33 - 5.34 5.35 - 5.36 5.37 - 5.40 5.41
6. Human Rights	6.1 - 6.89
6.A. Human Rights Issues Overview Freedom of Speech and the Media - Journalists Freedom of Religion - Religious Groups Freedom of Assembly & Association - Political Activists (Maoist Groups) Employment Rights - Nepali Prostitutes in India - Gurkha Soldiers in Foreign Armies People Trafficking Freedom of Movement - Asylum and Immigration issues - Belgian Fact Finding Mission, January-June 2002	6.1 - 6.65 6.1 - 6.6 6.7 - 6.10 6.11 - 6.15 6.16 - 6.18 6.19 6.20 - 6.23 6.24 - 6.33 6.34 - 6.37 6.38 - 6.40 6.41 - 6.42 6.43 - 6.44 6.45 - 6.48 6.49 - 6.54 6.55 - 6.65
6.B. Human Rights - Specific Groups Ethnic Groups Women Children - Child Care Arrangements Homosexuals	6.66 - 6.84 6.66 - 6.72 6.73 - 6.78 6.79 - 6.82 6.83 6.84
6.C Human Rights Other Issues The Caste System	6.85- 6.89 6.85 - 6.89
Chronology of Events	Annex A
Political Organisations	Annex B
Prominent People	Annex C
Glossary	Annex D
References to Source Material (with external links)	Annex E

1. Scope of the Document

1.1 This Country Report has been produced by the Country Information and Policy Unit, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, for use by Home Office officials involved in the asylum / human rights determination process. The Report provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum / human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. It is not a detailed or comprehensive survey.

1.2 The Report is compiled from a wide range of recognised sources and does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy. All information in the Report is attributed, throughout the text, to original source material, which has been made available to those working in the asylum / human rights determination process. The Report aims to provide only a brief summary of the source material quoted. For a more detailed account, the relevant source documents should be examined directly.

1.3 The information contained in this Country Report is, by its nature, limited to information that we have been able to identify from various well-recognised sources. The contents of this Report are not exhaustive and the absence of information under any particular heading does not imply that any analysis or judgement has been exercised to exclude that information, but simply that relevant information on the subject has not been identified from the sources that have been consulted. Equally, the information included in the Reports should not be taken to imply anything beyond what is actually stated.

1.4 The great majority of the source material is readily available in the public domain. Copies of other source documents, such as those provided by Government offices, may be provided upon request.

1.5 All sources have been checked for currency and, as far as can be ascertained, contain information which remained relevant at the time this Report was issued. Some source documents have been included because they contain relevant information not available in more recent documents.

1.6 This Country Report and the accompanying source material are publicly disclosable. Where sources identified in this Report are available in electronic form the relevant link has been included. The date that the relevant link was accessed in preparing the report is also included. Paper copies of the source documents have been distributed to nominated officers within IND.

1.7 It is intended to revise this Report on a six-monthly basis while the country remains within the top 35 asylum producing countries in the United Kingdom. Information contained in Country Reports is inevitably overtaken by events that occur between the 6 monthly publications. Caseworkers are informed of such changes in country conditions by means of Country Information Bulletins.

2. Geography

2.1 The Kingdom of Nepal (Nepal) is situated in East Asia between China (PRC) and India. It has no coastline. The national capital is Kathmandu, (population 1.1 million); other main cities are Biratnagar, Patan, Pokhara, Birganj, Dharan, and Nepalganj. [1b][4p is a map] The country is subdivided for administrative purposes into 5 development regions, 14 zones and 75 districts. [1b][4p]

2.2 Nepal has a total population of 25 million (2003, UN). [9a]

2.3 The official/main language of the country is Nepali, which is spoken by about 90% of the population. [1b](p3) As reported in the ethnologue website there are 119 other living languages, [4c] 12 of which are in common use. [1b](p1) In addition to these, English is used as a common language amongst some sections of the population, particularly in government and business. [1b](p3)

2.4 Nepal has a separate (Rajan) calendar. Under it, the year has twelve months based on the movement of the sun, though the festivals are set according to the lunar year. The New Year begins in mid-April. [10c] There is an internet link to convert the Rajan calendar to/from the Western (Gregorian) calendar. [4ac]

2.5 The years (*Bikram Sambat*) are dated from 56 years previous to AD/CE 1, so year April 2003 to April 2004 is Bikram Sambat 2060; April 2004 to April 2005 is Bikram Sambat 2061. [10c]

2.6 For further information on Geography, refer to Europa publications, Regional Surveys of the World, The Far East and Australasia 2003. [2a]

3. Economy

3.1 Nepal is one of the world's poorest countries with 40 per cent of the population estimated to be living below the poverty line. Foreign aid is important to the economy, and tourism is the main foreign currency generator. [9a] However, since 2002 this has been badly affected by the Maoist uprising. [9am][9as] (See below – [Dissolution of Parliament](#))

3.2 To help counter this, Nepal's Tourism Council launched 'Destination Nepal Year 2002' (subsequently renamed 'Destination Nepal Campaign 2002-2003' (DNC). [4t][10m] This has succeeded in increasing visitor numbers, especially from India. [4u][10n] India is Nepal's main trading partner. [9a] In addition, on 23 April 2004, it was reported that Nepal had become a member of the World Trade Organisation, becoming that body's 147th member. [9c]

Currency

3.3 The unit of currency is the Nepalese rupee (NPR). One rupee = 100 paisa. [9a] The exchange rate (as at 1 March 2004) is 136.32 NPR to the pound (£), [4r] and 73.00 NPR to the US dollar (\$). [4s]

3.4 In late March 2002, the government announced that expenditure on security would be 15 billion rupees (NPR) for that year; the original figure set aside for that year had been 10.31 billion rupees. [6an]

3.5 Further security spending, of the order of a 30% increase, was announced in July 2002. [9s] This particular news report put security spending in 2002 at a projected 97 billion rupees, with a promise of 8 -10 billion rupees from aid partners. [9s] The aid will be dependent upon the Nepalese Government stopping corruption and the misappropriation of development funds. [9s]

Corruption

3.6 According to a news report in the Kathmandu post, tax evasion is held to be endemic. [6o] The Inland Revenue Department (IRD) launched a campaign, the Voluntary Disclosure of Income Scheme (VDIS) to encourage declarations of earnings. The scheme ended on 13 January 2002, and yielded \$4.5 million, ie declarations of a third of estimated revenue owing. [6o][9h] During the VDIS, defaulters were able to settle tax bills at a discount ten percent income tax; after 13 January, defaulters would have to pay the full standard 25% plus fines. [9h] The government has promised a stringent crackdown on tax defaulters, but commentators say that people are sceptical as to the ability of the government to effect such moves. [6o][9h]

3.7 On 18 August 2002, the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) raided the homes of more than 20 Government officials in one of their largest investigations into official corruption to date. [9ab] The detention of 16 of those arrested was extended on 5 September 2002, as inquiries continued. [6cg] A similar report published in March 2003, by the Judicial Property Investigation Commission, claimed 2,000 senior officials were under suspicion of amassing property exceeding their known sources of income, and recommended further investigation. [9b]

3.8 More recently, in December 2003, the Department of Revenue Investigation (DRI) began an in-depth investigation into misappropriation of foreign currency by exporting companies, [10k] and it was reported that the Biratnager Customs Office had stopped the practise of collecting additional charges ('dastur') on imported and exported goods. [10j]

[Return to contents](#)

4. History

1959-1990

4.1 In 1959, after a brief experiment with multi-party politics King Mahendra suspended parliament and took personal charge of running the country, which had been ruled under a form of hereditary system for most of its history (See below, [The Monarchy](#)). [9c](p1)[1b](p3)

1990 - Nov 2001

4.2 In 1990 popular protests (orchestrated by the Nepali Congress Party, NCP) forced the King to introduce a new constitution which paved the way for elections in 1991. The NCP won the 1991 elections but lost the 1994 elections to the Communist Party (United Marxist and Leninist Party - UML). [9c](p2) In 1996 the Communist Party split, and from it emerged the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) who began a violent uprising aimed at overthrowing the King. [2a](p905-906)

The State of Emergency, November 2001

4.3 On 26 November 2001 the current King, Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, declared a state of emergency (Terrorism Control Ordinance) exercising power given to him under Article 115 of the Constitution (1990). [10a] This was in response to an escalation of violence in late November after the breakdown of a four-month truce with Maoist rebels. [10a](p7) In the six-year war with the Maoists, over 2,000 people had been killed, but it was the massacre of 40 (or 27- figures conflict in sources) policemen, 7 soldiers and 70 (200) rebels at Salleri (Solu district) that prompted the government action. [10a (p6-8) In addition the Government launched a military offensive, later claiming that 6,000 Maoists had surrendered by the end of December 2001. [9e]

4.4 Amnesty International (AI) expressed concerns about the Ordinance (state of emergency), particularly the suspension of Article 23 of the Constitution (1990) which would deny people access to judicial remedy. [5c]

4.5 In January 2002 the Government began freezing bank accounts suspected of being linked to terrorist groups. The government maintained these accounts contain the profits from frauds and extortion perpetrated by the Maoists. [6m][9f] The Government also suspended the Integrated Security and Development Plan (ISDP) for six of the seven districts most hit by Maoist activity, but promised to resume the ISDP once the state of emergency was lifted. [6i]

4.6 On 22 February 2002, Parliament agreed to extend the state of emergency; initially expected to last for three months for a further 3 months. [6z]

4.7 In order to obtain the necessary two-thirds agreement for the motion, the Government agreed to opposition party demands for the development of social and economic development schemes for poor rural areas. [6z]

4.8 Leading up to the announcement, there was continuing violence; for example, over the weekend of 16/17 February 2002, over 130 security

Nepal, April 2004

personnel and civilians were killed in a Maoist attack in Accham district (to the far West of Nepal). [6z]

4.9 In March 2002, the Terrorist and Destructive Activities (Control and Punishment) Bill was introduced making the provisions of the November 2001 state of emergency permanent; due to pressure from opposition members and some ruling party members, the bill was validated for a duration of two years only. [6ao]

4.10 On 22 May 2002, the King dissolved Parliament after it became clear that the Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba of the NCP, no longer commanded sufficient support within his own party to carry a motion in support of extending the state of emergency for six months. [6br][6bm] Deuba was installed as caretaker Prime Minister until elections in November 2002. [6bm]

4.11 On 24 May 2002, the state of emergency was extended by another three months by Royal Decree. [6bp] By June 2002, the official death-toll since the beginning of the state of emergency was of 991 security personnel, and 1,862 Maoists (though other estimates raise Maoist deaths to 2,652). [6br] The official figures stated that 1,313 security personnel had been injured, but only 198 (or alternatively, 271) Maoists were injured. [6br] A further 29 rebels were allegedly killed in clashes in early August 2002. [9v]

4.12 On 6 August 2002, the Supreme Court ruled that the dissolution of Parliament had been constitutional, thereby clearing the way for elections in November 2002. [9w]

4.13 Prachandra, the CPN (Maoist) leader renewed an offer to enter peace talks on 11 August 2002. [9z]

[Return to contents](#)

State of Emergency lifted, 29 August 2002

4.14 The state of emergency was lifted by Prime Minister Deuba on 29 August 2002, [6bx][6bz][6ca] reportedly in response to the criticism that the forthcoming November elections would not be regarded as free and fair so long as the state of emergency remained in place. [6bx]

4.15 The Maoists continued their offensive: their first major strike after the lifting of the state of emergency occurred on 8 September 2002, when 1000 Maoists attacked a police post in Sindhuli district (Eastern Nepal) resulting in 40 policemen being killed and a further 19 being injured. [6cj] On the same day, another mass attack was launched on government offices and police and army posts at Sandhikharka, Arghakhanchi district (Southern Nepal). [6ck] Nearly 100 Government personnel went missing, though the rebels later released 60 who had been held hostage. [6cl]

4.16 Following this latest show of force, the CPN (Maoist) leader Prachandra offered to declare a cease-fire and participate in peace talks with the Government. [6cm] All of the main political parties - both of the Nepali Congress factions, led by Koirala and Deuba respectively; the CPN-UML; the CPN-Marxist (Restructured); CPN-Marxist; CPN-MLM; CPN-Unified; Socialist Revolution, Nepal and the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) - were of the opinion that the offer lacked credibility. [6cn] However, many of these mainstream parties signed a statement asking the Government not to discount the Maoists' offer entirely and to give up its anti-talk stance. [6cq]

[Return to contents](#)

October 2002 - Present Day

4.17 On the 5 October 2002, the King announced the dismissal of the Prime Minister, Deuba, and said that he would assume full control of the Government. [9av] He also announced that he was ignoring his former Prime Minister's advice to postpone elections until November 2003, and that the elections scheduled for 13 November 2002 had been postponed until further notice. [9av] Deuba and the rest of the sacked cabinet condemned the Kings' actions as unconstitutional. [9aw]

4.18 On 11 October 2002 the King appointed a new Prime Minister, Lokendra Bahadur Chand, who was a member of the RPP. [10af][9c] On 18 November 2002, he directly appointed a new cabinet of 13 Ministers. [9af]

4.19 On 3 January 2003, the King affirmed that he was committed to the restoration of multi-party democracy and a constitutional monarchy, but did not specify any dates. [9at]

4.20 On 29 January 2003, after 24 hours of secret negotiations, the Government and the Maoists agreed on a cease-fire. [9ay] The Maoists said that the cease-fire would take effect immediately. It was reported that the Government had precipitated peace moves by agreeing to three conditions: to stop calling the Maoists terrorists; to lift rewards for Maoist arrests; and to withdraw international police warrants issued for rebel leaders. [9ay] On 2 February, the 5-strong Maoist negotiating team was announced - it was to be headed by Dr Baburam Bhattarai, a senior Maoist leader. [9az]

4.21 On 6 February 2003, it was reported that the Government had sent an official invitation to the Maoists for a formal dialogue. [10h] On 7 February 2003, the Maoists leader Prachandra gave a formal interview. He stated that, in order to boost confidence in the peace process, the Government had to: release jailed Maoist activists; provide information on those who had allegedly disappeared in police custody; call the Army back to barracks; and work to frame a mutually accepted code of conduct for the dialogue. [9bb]

4.22 Amnesty International (AI), though welcoming the possible peace talks, stated that human rights should be an integral part of the agenda. [5m] According to their Public Statement of 31 January 2003:

Nepal, April 2004

“Amnesty International also suggested the following measures:

- the establishment of a mutually agreed human rights monitoring mechanism, including international human rights monitors with a strong human rights protection mandate;
- ensure independent investigations into all allegations of human rights abuses reported in the context of the "people's war" by a body that has the powers and capacity to ensure full accountability for these abuses, and grant compensation to the victims or their relatives;
- an independent review of the cases of all prisoners currently held under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) with a view to release all those against whom there is no evidence of involvement in criminal activities;
- return of all children recruited as soldiers by the Maoists to their homes, with adequate provisions for their rehabilitation into society.”
[5m]

4.23 Prior to the talks an article in The Telegraph, a Nepalese newspaper, raised concerns that the established political parties had been virtually by-passed. [10i](p1) It also reported that former Prime Minister Deuba believed that the Maoists had been cowed into the agreement. [10i](p1) It further reported that the UML party, despite being outside of the Government, had expressed reservations at being by-passed. [10i](p1)

4.24 The King made a televised address supporting the peace process on 19 February (Nepal's national Democracy Day). [15a]

4.25 The first round of peace talks began on 11 March 2003, as agreed in February [9bc] By late April 2003 the process had slowed somewhat, and talks scheduled for 21 April were postponed. [9b]

4.26 Prior to the postponement, the Government had begun developing a co-ordinated strategy of infrastructure repair and improvement. [15f] The Nepal Donor Group, which includes other governments' aid agencies and multilateral organisations such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, had agreed to give financial backing. [15d] United Nations agencies also pledged their support, including human rights initiatives. [15e]

4.27 On 13 March 2003 the Government and the Maoists signed a 22-point code of conduct. [15h][9be] Apart from the issue of prisoners (see below), the 22-point agreement covered the ceasing of Maoist extortion immediately, along with Maoist rallies, sit-ins, strikes and other forms of disruptive protest. In return, the Government would allow justified and fair coverage of Maoist news. [15h]

4.28 According to a report dated 25 February 2003 by the South Asia Analysis Group, it appeared that the Government had made three main concessions towards the Maoists, even before the code was agreed. These were: to remove "price tags" i.e. rewards placed on individual's heads; to legitimise the

Nepal, April 2004

Party, allowing a representational political wing to be formed; and to cancel red alert notices. [4j](p1)

4.29 The Code of Conduct also covered the release of prisoners. The Government agreed to release Maoist prisoners gradually, and the Maoists agreed to release their hostages immediately. [15h] According to a report by Agence France Presse, around 5,000 Maoist prisoners were believed to be in police or army custody, and the Maoists were thought to have 180 prisoners. [15g]

Dissolution of Parliament

4.30 On 9 May 2003, further peace talks between the Government and the Maoists concluded. The meeting concentrated on procedural matters, and did not result in any notable progress. [9bm] An exchange of fire between Maoists and Government forces in the Jajarkot district on 18 June 2003 was the first major breach of the January cease-fire. [6da]

4.31 On 4 June 2003 Surya Badahur Thapa was appointed as Prime Minister [6dm] (in place of Chand, who had resigned a few days earlier under mounting political pressure). [9br] According to a BBC news report, this appointment was not well received by the Maoist leadership. [6do]

4.32 On 9 July 2003, a Nepalese human rights group, Insec (Informal Sector Service Centre) reported that Government forces and Maoists rebels had between them killed 32 people since the cease-fire of 29 January 2003. [6db]

4.33 The two sides met for an informal meeting on 11 July 2003, with a view to organising a third round of formal talks. [6dc][6dd] In spite of continuing attacks, [6dj][6dk][9bo][9bp] the brief closure of the Maoists' contact office in Kathmandu, [6de][6du] and numerous political and logistical difficulties, [6dh][6dv] the Maoists agreed to the resumption of formal talks with the Government. [6df][6di] The talks, scheduled to take place on 17 August 2003, [9bq] were subsequently delayed, [6dl][6ep] during which time further clashes between the authorities and rebels were reported. [6eq] On 27 August 2003, the Maoists declared that the cease-fire had collapsed. [9bt] The rebels later indicated that the withdrawal was temporary. [6es][6eu] Nevertheless, by the end of August 2003, general hostility [6ew][6ex] and reported clashes [6ev] between the two sides had once again escalated.

4.34 A political stalemate has resulted, and there has been a resurgence of violence and clashes between students/activists and police. [9c](p4)[9bv][9bx] In November 2003 BBC News reported that, following the collapse of the cease-fire, the Government were once more calling the rebels terrorists and had asked Interpol to issue arrest warrants for 21 rebel leaders - 11 had been issued by 28 November 2003. [9bw]

4.35 There was a serious clash between security forces (29 dead) and Maoists rebels (10 dead) when the latter attacked and destroyed a telephone tower at Bhojpur (500km East of Kathmandu) on 2 March 2004 [9by][10o].

Nepal, April 2004

Amnesty International (AI) appealed to the Maoists to observe Article 3 humanitarian standards in respect of any hostages they had taken, [10p] and the Maoists released 9 hostages (including 8 security personnel) the week after the attack. [10q]

4.36 According to the British Embassy in Kathmandu, an estimated 5,000-8,000 Maoists raided Beni, the district headquarters of Myagdi district, Western Nepal, on 20 March 2004. The Maoists overran Beni, except for the army barracks. After a two-day conflict the rebels fled, taking with them the Chief District Officer – the main government authority – the Deputy Superintendent of Police and 35 security personnel. Following pressure from Amnesty International, the detainees were released on 6 April 2004 to the ICRC. 51 security personnel were killed (33 members of the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) and 18 police personnel) and 80 bodies of Maoists were recovered, although the government speculated that hundreds of Maoists had been killed. [12b]

4.37 According to the British Embassy in Kathmandu the huge Beni attack, coming so soon after the attack on Bhojpur, established that, despite earlier speculations to the contrary, the Maoist military strength had not been weakened. The Maoists had not carried out such large attacks for a long time. [12b]

4.38 One of the reasons cited by the Maoists for withdrawing from the cease-fire was the killing of 19 unarmed Maoists by security forces in Doramba on 17 August 2003. A major of the Royal Nepalese Army was under custody on 11 March 2004 awaiting court-martial for his actions in regard to this incident. [10r][9bz] In a separate incident, following criticism of human rights abuses by the security forces, the BBC reported on 11 March 2004 that two soldiers had been jailed for “committing excesses”. [9bz]

4.39 Throughout the month of April, there have been local news reports of continued abductions by the Maoists. [10ag][10ah][10ai] Throughout April, local news articles have reported on “anti-regression” protests staged by the five political parties opposed to the government. [10aj][10ak][10al] Local news articles report that the protests have been supported by students, [10am] professional groups [10an] and Radio Nepal staff and journalists. [10ao][10op] Both local and BBC News have reported numerous clashes between protesters and the police, resulting in arrests and complaints of ill-treatment of protesters by the authorities. [10aq][9cg][9ch][9ci][10ar][10as][9cj] Opposition leaders were among those arrested. [9ck] (Also see Political System - paragraphs 5.19 on).

4.40 For history prior to 1959, refer to Europa Regional Surveys of the World [2a] (p900-937)

[Return to contents](#)

5. State Structures

The Constitution

5.1 Since 1990, Nepal has been a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary form of government. [1f](p1) However, since May 2002, with Parliament dissolved, the country has reverted back to direct monarchical rule. [6bn] The parliament consists of two houses, the House of Representatives (Lower House - 205 members) and the National Assembly (upper house - 60 members), both of which are democratically elected. [1a](p1)[1b](p2) The Executive is comprised of the King and the Council of Ministers (which includes the Prime Minister). [4f](p10) The King appoints the Prime Minister, who is the leader of the party commanding a majority in the House of Representatives, [4f](p10) and the Prime Minister selects the cabinet. [1b](p2) However, since 24 May 2002 the King has appointed both the Prime Minister and the cabinet. [9av]

5.2 The current Prime Minister is Surya Badahur Thapa (appointed on 4 June 2003) [6dm] and the Head of State is King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev (succeeded to the throne on 4 June 2001). [2a](p928)

5.3 Under the constitution, elections are meant to be held every five-years. [2a](p903) However, as stated by the US State Department's Background Note on Nepal dated January 2004:

“With the dissolution of Parliament in May 2002 and the expiration of local bodies' terms in July 2002, Nepal currently has no elected representatives at either the national or local level.” [1b](p5)

This is still the case at the time of publication of this report (30 April 2004).

Citizenship and Nationality

5.4 Citizenship and nationality are covered in Articles 8 -10 of the 1990 Constitution. Nepalese citizenship covers all whose fathers are Nepalese citizens; anyone who applies for and meets the criteria laid down in Article 9; and anyone who is conferred honorary citizenship as in Article 10. [4f](p2-3) Article 1(2) of the Constitution states that “It shall be the duty of every person to uphold the provisions of this Constitution”, [4f](p1) and Article 21 states that “No citizen shall be exiled.” [4f](p5)

The Monarchy

5.5 The Monarchy (*adhirajya*) dates from the latter half of the 18th century when Prithvi Narayan Shah formed a unified country out of a number of independent hill states. [1b](p3) The Shah family has constituted the hereditary monarchy from that time on, losing power to the Rana family in 1846 to 1950, but still ruling, nominally, throughout. [1b](p3) The modern politically effective monarchy dates from King Tribhuvan in 1950, followed by King Mahendra.

King Birendra ascended to the throne in 1972. The King's future successor, until June 2001, was the Crown Prince Dipendra. [1b](p3-4)

5.6 On 1 June 2001, the Crown Prince shot and killed the King, the Queen, his brother and his sister, his uncle, and several of his aunts before attempting suicide. [8a][1b](p4) Whilst in a coma, Dipendra was declared king on 1 June, but died on 4 June. [8a] He was succeeded by his remaining uncle, Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev. [9a](p2) A BBC website Country Profile report on Nepal stated that Gyanendra was thought to be a more forceful man than Birendra. [9a] Crown Prince Paras is next in line to the throne, and his young son (born 30 July 2002 to his wife Crown Princess Himani) is second in line to the throne. [9u]

5.7 The political role of the monarch is as Head of State. The monarchy has retained a number of important powers and privileges under the 1990 Constitution. [1a](p1)[4f](p7) These include exclusive power over legislation relating to the monarchy, tax exemption and non-interference of royal property, and wide powers of leadership in event of a state of emergency. [1a](p1)[4f](p7)

5.8 On 22 May 2003, thousands of opposition activists staged a sit-down protest outside Government offices across the country to protest at King Gyanendra's assumption of executive powers and the controversial appointment of Lokendra Badahur Chand as Prime Minister in October 2002. [9bn] Following these and further demonstrations, as well as wider political discontent, Chand resigned on 30 May 2003, sparking a constitutional crisis. [9br] His replacement, appointed by the King on 4 June 2003, was Surya Bahadur Thapa. [6dm][9bs] The appointment was immediately denounced by opposition parties (including the Maoists) on account of his royalist credentials. [6do][6dn] (See above, [Dissolution of Parliament](#)).

5.9 The constitutional crisis peaked on 24 June 2003, when a third of representatives in the Upper House of the legislature resigned en masse. [6dp] A month later, in a move to avert further abuses of the constitution by the King, members of the 1990 Constitution Recommendation Commission (CRC) suggested the formation of an all-party Government. [6dq] There was also an increase in pro-all party government demonstrations during July 2003. These were generally organised by the youth wings of the opposition parties. [6dy] Further opposition demonstrations in Kathmandu, scheduled for 4 September 2003, [6ey] were restricted by a month-long curfew on public protests imposed by the authorities on 2 September 2003. [6ez] The subsequent protests, fuelled by the restrictions imposed, resulted in several hundred arrests. [6fa][9bu]

5.10 Five political parties have formed an alliance against the King's assumption of executive powers, and protest rallies have taken place across Nepal. [9ca] (See below – Political System).

[Return to contents](#)

Political System

5.11 Under the 1990 Constitution, political parties are required to register with the Electoral Commission. [2a](p928) *Europa* lists 20 political parties, both open and underground. The main party in terms of representation in the House of Representatives is the Nepal Congress Party (NCP) with 111 members elected in the 1999 elections. There are two parties with ten or more members, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist - UML) 71 members) and the National Democratic Party (NDP) (11 members). Four other parties gained representation in the Lower House in 1999. [2a](p929)

5.12 With the suspension of parliament in May 2002, [6bn] followed by the King's appointments of 13 Ministers in November 2002, [9a7] all parliamentary parties are therefore operating in an extra-parliamentary sphere. An independent interest group, the South Asia Analysis Group, produced a report in early December 2002 that claimed that the King was capitalising on the political parties' disarray. [4g](p1) The appointment of another royalist (Thapa) as Prime Minister in June 2003, [6dm] in spite of the circumstances that had led to the resignation of his predecessor Chand, [9br] suggested that even though the actions of opposition parties and activists could force the PM to resign they could not combine to prevent the King from selecting a successor. [6dn]

5.13 The parties have launched many protest campaigns. An initial point of conflict was the King's appointment of Prime Minister Chand in October 2002, and they saw the King's appointment of 13 new Ministers in November 2002 as a consolidation of an unconstitutional temporary arrangement. [9a7] In early December 2002, five of the six political parties that had previously been represented in Parliament united to protest. [9ak] The coalition divided, however, on whether to force the King to ensure elections to replace interim appointees with a properly elected government, or to ensure the direct appointment to the existing cabinet of the parties' appointees. [9ak](p2)

5.14 According to a BBC News report of 31 March 2003, the Maoists were making conciliatory moves towards other mainstream parliamentary parties since the 2003 cease-fire. [9b1] The same report said that the other parties harboured suspicions that they would be sidelined in the official political process. [9b1] The references in sources to non-Maoist Communist parties distinguish between at least 5 parties or factions. [2a]

5.15 Rastriya Prajatantra Party – RPP - is the National Democratic Party (NDP). Described by sources as a "monarchist-based political party composed of former Panchayat-system supporters" i.e. endorsing absolute rule by the monarch through local/village councils. [3f](p1) In the crisis of the mid-1990s, the RPP split into two factions - one faction (led by Lokendra Bahadur Chand) as operators of a strategic alliance with the UML, [2a](p906) and another (under Surya Bahadur Thapa) as supporters of a NCP led coalition government (in 1995). [2a](p905)

5.16 Regarding extra-political movements and pressure groups, the National Democratic Student Association could not be found in reports accessed by the

Canadian IRB in May 1997. [3e] The All Nepal National Free Student Union (ANNFSU) is politically active; it was particularly active during the demonstrations against the panchayat system in the early 1990s. [4i](p1) It is aligned to the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), a legal Communist party. [4i](p1)

5.17 A split occurred in the ruling Nepali Congress Party in May 2002, when the Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba dissolved parliament in the face of opposition to the continuation of the state of emergency. (See above). On 17 September 2002, the Deuba faction suffered a setback with the decision of the Electoral Commission to recognise the anti-Deuba faction as the NCP and owners of the tree symbol. [6cr] The Deuba faction called for a rally of support, [6cs] and announced a new party, the Nepali Congress (Democratic). [6cu] The NC has refused to recognise this breakaway group as a political party, but has called for reunification. [10w] Deuba has refused to consider this, demanding recognition of the NC-D's status as an equal party first. [10x]

5.18 On 28 March 2004 the King made a speech calling for co-operation from all sides to create an environment for early general elections, [10y] but this has been generally greeted with scepticism by party leaders. [10z]

5.19 According to advice from the British Embassy in Kathmandu, since 1 April 2004 the five opposition parties - Nepali Congress, CPN (UML), United People's Front, Nepal Peasants and Workers Party and Nepal Sadwawana Party (Anandi Devi faction) - have been carrying out Kathmandu centred protests demanding that the government give up executive powers and appoint a new Prime Minister recommended by them. The protesters clashed with the police as the former organised mass rallies in defiance of the government ban on such rallies in the central parts of Kathmandu. The protesters, including senior leaders Madhav Kumar Nepal and Girija Prasad Koirala, were detained but later released. Several protesters and policemen were injured. [12b] At the same time the Nepali Congress (Democratic) party has started a separate protest demanding that the King restore Deuba's government (which the King dismissed on 4 October 2002). [12b] (Also see History – paragraph 4.39).

5.20 The British Embassy in Kathmandu advised that, unlike previous protests, many professional people such as doctors, engineers, lawyers, human rights activists and journalists have joined the movement. As at 22 April 2004, there was no sign of this agitation diminishing until the king addresses their cause. [12b]

5.21 The latest local news reports indicate that the CPN-Maoist Party wish to unit with the dissatisfied mainstream parties, [10at][10au] Rebel Maoists have meanwhile stated that they will take "people's action" in accordance with the recommendations of the Malik Commission report, which was formed to investigate security force atrocities whilst curbing the people's movement in 1990. [10av]

[Return to contents](#)

Judiciary

5.22 The courts are arranged with one Supreme Court, 11 appellate courts, and 75 district courts. [1b](p2) The Constitution, adopted on 9 November 1990, [4f](p1) upholds an independent judiciary, and the Supreme Court has demonstrated that independence, according to the US State Department. The source maintains that the lower courts are open to political pressure and that the bribery of judges and court staff is endemic. [1a](p6) District and appellate courts have displayed an increasing independence, (though sometimes susceptible to political pressures), though in Rolpa District, human rights groups have alleged district court complicity with Government officials in violating detainee's rights. [1a](p6)

Legal Rights/Detention

5.23 According to the US State Department's Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004,

“The Constitution provides for the right to counsel, equal protection under the law, protection from double jeopardy, protection from retroactive application of the law, and public trials, except in some security and customs cases. All lower court decisions, including acquittals, were subject to appeal. The Supreme Court was the court of last resort, but the king may grant pardons. The king can also suspend, commute, or remit any sentence.” [1a](p7)

5.24 A report issued on 24 March 2004 by Amnesty International states that,

“Many people were arrested under the 2002 Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Act, which gave the security forces the power to arrest without warrant and detain suspects in police custody for up to 90 days. Scores of people are reported to have been held for weeks or even months in illegal army custody without access to their families, lawyers or medical treatment. In 2002, Nepal recorded the highest number of “disappearances” of any country in the world. The CPN (Maoist) are also reported to have abducted scores of people.” [5p](p1)

Death Penalty

5.25 The death penalty was abolished for all crimes in 1997, and the last execution took place in 1979. [5q](p3)

Internal Security

5.26 According to the US State Department's Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004,

“The Royal Nepal Army (RNA) continued to exercise responsibility for internal security that it assumed from the National Police Force at the beginning of the state of emergency in November 2001. The National Police Force and the paramilitary Armed Police Force (APF) comprise the other elements of the security forces. Local Chief District Officers (CDOs), civil servants in the Home Ministry, have wide discretion in maintaining law and order. While the King as Army Supreme Commander maintained ultimate control of the Royal Nepal Army, there is no evidence that he exercised direct operational control of the Army. Civilian authorities retained effective control of the national police and Armed Police Force. Some members of the security forces committed numerous, serious human rights abuses.” [1a](p1)

5.27 The Belgian fact-finding mission report of February 2002 noted that all contacts were of the opinion that internal communication of intelligence in the Police Force did not function very well. Therefore national alerts were kept to key Maoist leaders, and not ordinary members or sympathisers. [14a](p29) The update report (June 2002) held that this position was still true. [14b](p3) The police, according to all the Belgian contacts, did not interfere with the Nepalese postal service, contrary to some Belgian asylum claims. [14a](p27)

5.28 Arrest warrants are only issued by the Chief District Officer, under Article 16 of the Nepalese Police Act, 1955. [14a](p25) The Belgian fact-finding mission report states that though lawyers theoretically may ask for these documents, they are hard to obtain, especially since the declaration of the state of emergency. Few lawyers are willing to risk being branded Maoist sympathisers. [14a](p25) The UK Government's experience is that hitherto all arrest warrants presented for verification in Nepal have turned out to be fraudulent documentation. [12a](p1)

5.29 The Terrorism and Destructive Activities Act, building on the Terrorism Ordinance [6a0] has given immunity for members of the security forces or others who undertake "bona fide" actions to control terrorism. [1a](p2) The US State Department report for 2002, reporting Amnesty International's views, alleges that this latitude has been abused by the security forces, demonstrated in a low prisoner to fatal shooting rate when engaged in conflicts with the guerrillas. [1a](p2) Members of the security forces often were unwilling to investigate and to discipline fellow officers, and persons were afraid to bring cases against the police or Army for fear of reprisals. The Government provides human rights education for the police force, and soldiers receive human rights education as part of regular training. [1a](p4)

5.30 On 17 February 2004, the International Crisis Group reported that the government were creating local civilian militias, and raised concerns that these groups would become an untrained, unaccountable and undisciplined armed force. [14e]

[Return to contents](#)

Prisons and Prison Conditions

5.31 According to the US State Department's Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004:

"Prison conditions were poor and did not meet international standards. Overcrowding was common in prisons, and authorities sometimes handcuff or fetter detainees. According to the Department of Prisons, there were approximately 6,000 persons in jail, of which approximately 55 percent were awaiting trial. Women normally were incarcerated separately from men, and in similar conditions.

Due to a lack of adequate juvenile detention facilities, children sometimes were incarcerated with adults, either with an incarcerated parent, or as criminal offenders. In November 2001, the Government began transferring children detained in jail to two residential facilities that provide education in accord with a provision in the 1992 Children's Act. Unlike in previous years, there were no reports of children in jail or custody as suspected or convicted criminals.

The Government permitted local human rights groups and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to visit prisons. The ICRC has limited access to detainees in army custody." [1a](p5)

5.32 The report also states that, according to the Department of Prisons, the prison population numbered approximately 6,000 persons, of whom 55 per cent were awaiting trial. [1a](p5)

Military

5.33 The US State Department Background Note on Nepal dated January 2004 states that:

"Nepal's military consists solely of the 70,000 strong Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) organized into three divisions (Eastern, Central and Western), a Valley Command and separate Aviation, Parachute and Royal Palace brigades. Equivalent brigade-sized directorates encompassing Air Defence, Artillery, Engineers, Logistics, and Signals also provide general support to the RNA. King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev is the Supreme Commander of the RNA while Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa serves as Minister of Defence. General Pyar Jung Thapa is Chief of the Army Staff." [1b](p7)

5.34 Articles by The Advocacy Project on the alleged assault on a Nepalese human rights activist by members of the RNA in January 2004 imply that security force personnel carry ID cards on their person. [4ad][4ae]

Conscientious Objectors and Deserters

5.35 Age for enlistment is between 18 and 23 years. Conscription has never existed in Nepal and there is no known provision for conscientious objection. Most of the enlisted are drawn from castes and tribes of mountainous areas and the Kathmandu plain. [4a] The Government does not enlist under the age of 18, but sources claim that some recruits may be as young as 15 through lying about their age, being younger than stated through birth certification irregularities, and through local bribery. [4c](p1-2)

5.36 Also see below - [Gurkha Soldiers in Foreign Armies](#)

Medical Services

5.37 The US Department of State Consular Information Sheet for Nepal dated 22 December 2003 states that:

“Medical care in Nepal is limited and is generally not up to Western standards.” [1g](p3)

Hospitals are either state run, private or NGO administered, there is one teaching hospital in the capital Kathmandu. [4v](p1) The US Embassy provides full list of hospitals in Nepal. [4v]

HIV/AIDS

5.38 The UNAIDS epidemiological survey published in 2002 estimated that 58,000 people were living with the disease in 2001. [4m](p2) The UNAIDS/WHO Working Group on Global HIV/AIDS and STI Surveillance speculates that:

“Effective public health programmes capable of increasing consistent condom usage levels in FSW (Female Sex Workers) and their male clients to 80-90% may be capable of keeping HIV prevalence in Nepal to less than 1% (i.e. less than 100,000) of the 15-49 year-old population.” [4m](p2)

Tuberculosis (TB)

5.39 The World Health Organisation (WTO) has identified Nepal as a country particularly stricken by tuberculosis (TB). Almost half of the population of 20 million is estimated to carry TB, with 90,000 active cases, and 44,000 newly diagnosed cases each year. [4d] Under the DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment, Short-course) treatment programme, in place since 1996, treatment success rates have increased from 40% in 1994 to over 88% in 1999. [4d]

Mental Disorders

5.40 Disability benefits are provided for persons with mental disorders. [4n](p2) Chronic mental illness has been classified as one of the mental disabilities and these patients have equal rights as other disabilities according to the Disability Act. Mental health is not an integral part of primary health care, but

treatment of severe mental health disorders are available in 10 districts where community health programmes, with the support of NGO's, are established. [4n](p2)

Educational System

5.41 Sources differ on education. One source (Europa) states that primary education is compulsory and provided by the State. [2a](p914) Another source (US State Department) states that education is not compulsory. [1a](p15) The Government is aiming to give each child six years' primary education, but provision is very poor, with schools not existing in some areas. Roughly 60% of children who are working receive some schooling after work. [1a](p15) As a result of the poor state of the state system, the number of private schools has increased. [6dt] In June 2003 around 8,500 private schools throughout the country closed over a dispute with student unions. [6dt] The dispute was resolved in early July 2003, following the intervention of the Ministry of Education. [6dt] The adult literacy rate in 2000 was estimated by UNESCO as being 41.8% (males 59.6%, females 24.0%). [2a](p927)

[Return to contents](#)

6. Human Rights

6.A Human Rights Issues

Overview

6.1 According to the US State Department's Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004 (covering events in 2003),

“The Government's human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit numerous serious abuses. The citizens' right to change the Government was provided for by the Constitution, although the ongoing insurgency prevented the holding of elections in 2002. The security forces used arbitrary and unlawful lethal force and continued to abuse detainees, sometimes using torture as punishment or to extract confessions. The disappearance of persons in custody was a problem.” [1a](p1)

6.2 According to the same source,

“During the year, including during the ceasefire, Maoists continued their campaign of torturing, killing, bombing, forcibly conscripting children, and committing other gross abuses, targeted at government agents but also including civilians.” [1a](p2)

This is broadly in line with the previous year's US State Department Report of 2003 (covering events in 2002). [1f](p1-2)

6.3 The Amnesty International (AI) fact-finding mission of 9-23 September 2002 recorded many accounts of violations of human rights by the security forces against the civilian population, human rights violations committed by the Maoists, and violent abuse of combatants on both sides. [5h][5j]

6.4 On 20 November 2003, AI stated that they were gravely concerned at the sharp rise in reports of arbitrary arrests and detentions and “disappearances” in Nepal since the collapse of the cease-fire in August [2003] and called for the Nepal Government to invite UNHCR experts to the country. [5r]

6.5 On 22 March 2004 the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, voiced his concern at the recent escalation of fighting in Nepal, and appealed to the Nepalese Government and the CPN-M (Maoist) to cease the fighting and resume the peace process. [4w] On 29 March 2004, the BBC reported that the Prime Minister, Surya Bahadur Thapa, had announced a series of measures to curb human rights abuses in respect of illegal detention and disappearances following arrest. [9cb] A Nepal News report states that this recommitment has been welcomed by a UN Rights Commissioner. [10aa] A Human Rights Watch Report of 1 April 2004 also welcomed the move but called for a specific plan of action and for the Government to enable Nepal’s National Human Rights Commission – NHRC – to create an independent mechanism to monitor violations. [7e]

6.6 Despite the above, in early April 2004 Nepal News reported ‘shocking and unnecessary violence’ by police against peaceful protesters in Kathmandu during an ‘anti-regression’ march on 4 April [10ad] and 2,000 plus abductions of youths and students by the Maoists in the South-East part of Kanchanpur district. [10ae]

Freedom of Speech and the Media

6.7 According to the US State Department’s Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004:

“The Constitution specifies that all citizens shall have freedom of thought and expression and that the Government may not censor any news item or other reading material; however, the Government imposed restrictions on these rights. The Constitution prohibits speech and writing that would threaten the sovereignty and integrity of the Kingdom; disturb the harmonious relations among persons of different castes or communities; promote sedition, defamation, contempt of court, or crime; or contradict decent public behavior or morality.” [1a](p8)

6.8 According to the same source, the Press and Publications Act governs licences to publish and granting credentials to journalists. [1a](p8) According to The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), under the state of emergency (in effect until late August 2002) press freedom and other civil liberties were suspended. [4j][p1] The CPJ’s latest Report, covering 2003, reports that journalists still feel threatened by both security forces and Maoists, resulting in fear and self-censorship. [4x](p2)

Nepal, April 2004

6.9 The BBC profile of Nepal has a good listing of media sources, [9a](p3) likewise *Europa*. [2a](p930-931)

6.10 According to a BCC report dated 25 March 2003, the newspaper 'seen by many as the unofficial mouthpiece of Maoist rebels in Nepal', *Janadesh*, was permitted to be published again in March 2003, after an absence of eighteen months. [9b](h)

Journalists

6.11 According to CPJ (see above) The anti-terrorism ordinance, commonly referred to as TADO, identifies the Maoist faction of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-M) as a terrorist group and allows for the arrest of anyone "in contact with" or "supportive of" the rebels. [41](p1)

6.12 According to the CPJ more than 100 journalists were detained during 2002 under these broad provisions, which remain in force. The government also introduced reporting guidelines, banning anything "likely to create hatred against [the] Royal Nepal Army, police, and civil servants, and lower their morale and dignity." [41](p1)

6.13 Full details of the journalists arrested and detained in the years 2002 and 2003 can be obtained from the CPJ (Attacks on the Press). [41][4x] A report issued in 2003 by Reporters without Borders also describes attacks on journalists by security forces and Maoists and restrictions on reporting in the media. [4o]

6.14 State security forces commit the majority of abuses against journalists. Of the journalists who have been detained since November 2001, most have no connection to the Maoist movement, and most were released after relatively short periods of detention. [41](p2) Journalists were targeted for various reasons—for reporting on Maoists or for expressing views considered supportive of the rebel movement, but also for reporting that had nothing to do with the insurgency. However, of the 16 journalists who remained in prison at the end of 2002, most were working for pro-Maoist publications. [41](p2)

6.15 The Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) put out a statement on 11 January 2002 claiming that the Government was increasingly curbing press freedom under the emergency regulations. This was reported in both a BBC Monitoring Service article [6n] and a BBC news report. [9g]

[Return to contents](#)

Freedom of Religion

6.16 According to the US State Department Report on religious freedom for 2003,:

“The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and permits the practice of all religions; however, although the Government generally has not interfered with the practice of other religions, there are some restrictions. The Constitution describes the country as a "Hindu Kingdom," although it does not establish Hinduism as the state religion.” [1h](p1)

6.17 According to the US State Department’s Report on Human Rights for 2004:

“The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and permits the practice of all religions; however, proselytizing was prohibited and punishable with fines or imprisonment, and members of minority religions occasionally complained of police harassment. Some Christian groups were concerned that the ban on proselytizing limited the expression of non-Hindu religious belief. The Constitution describes the country as a Hindu Kingdom, although it does not establish Hinduism as the state religion.” [1a](p10)

6.18 According to the US State Department’s Report on International Religious Freedom Nepal issued 18 December 2003, adherents of religious groups co-exist peacefully for the most part, with all places of worship respected as such. Hindus and Buddhists respect one another’s holy places, and the Buddha’s Birthday is a national holiday. Muslims, however, remain a separate community. [1h](p1)[1a](p10)

Religious Groups

6.19 More detailed information on freedom of religion and religious groups can be found in the US State Department International Religious Freedom Report 2003, Nepal. [1h]

Freedom of Assembly & Association

6.20 According to the US State Department’s Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004:

“The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association; however, the Government restricted these rights on vague grounds, such as undermining the sovereignty and integrity of the State or disturbing law and order. Freedom of assembly was one of the civil rights suspended under the state of emergency. The Government required that organizers apply for permits for public rallies and demonstrations. Except for the duration of the state of emergency, large public demonstrations were common. The Government temporarily suspended the right to assembly in Kathmandu Valley from September 1 to 26. During the year, some protests turned violent, and police sometimes used baton charges to break up demonstrations. Local authorities in Kathmandu halted a number of public celebrations

by the Tibetan community throughout the year that included veneration of the Dalai Lama as a political, as well as a religious leader.” [1a](p9-10)

6.21 An Amnesty International (AI) Public Statement issued on 22 April 2002 reports that national strikes, known as *bandhs*, have regularly been called for by the Maoists as a form of political protest. Violence has often ensued, with the Maoists deliberately killing civilians not participating in the *bandh*. [5d](p1) The US State Department’s Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004 states that student strikes have been the scene of acts of violence, both on the protesters’ side and on the police side. [1a](p10) Keesing’s Record of World Events reported almost daily student-led strikes in January this year. [11b] However, a BBC News report stated in February 2004 that continued strike calls are frustrating many Nepalis, and that a 5-day strike called that month was cut short due to a large boycott. [9cc]

6.22 Since the January 2003 cease-fire, rallies have been permitted again, and the BBC reported the rally of an estimated 30,000 people in Kathmandu on 3 April 2003. [9b] The report stated that the rally was addressed by Baburam Bhattarai, the second in command of the CPN (Maoist), [9b] and that Maoist supporters claimed harassment by the accompanying police. [9b]

6.23 Further BBC news reports from September 2003 stated that opposition demonstrations in Kathmandu, scheduled for 4 September 2003, [6ey] were restricted by a month-long curfew on public protests imposed by the authorities, [6ez] and that the subsequent protests resulted in hundreds of arrests. [6fa][9bu]

[Return to contents](#)

Political Activists (Maoist Groups)

6.24 The term "Moovad" or "Maovad" made in asylum claims to the Canadian Government could not be found in sources consulted by Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board researchers. [3m]

6.25 A REFINFO report of 20 May 1997 advises that the United People's Front (UPF) = Samyukta Jana Morcha (SJM) was an alliance formed in February 1996 of United Liberation Torch-bearers (Samyukta Mukti Bahini) and the Democratic Front (Janawadi Morcha), who took to armed insurgency at the same time, [3d] Other REFINFO searches place the UPF as the political wing of "the revolutionary Maoists". [3g][3k] However, "Jane’s Intelligence Review 06/1999" states that the UPF=SJM was an organisation that was active in the early 1990s, had great success in the 1991 elections, then split into 2 factions in 1994. [6w] One of the factions, led by Baburam Bhattarai, then joined up with the Communist Party of Nepal (Mashal/"the torch") - CPN (M) led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal in 1995 to form the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) - Maoist. [6w]

6.26 A REFINFO report of December 2000 says that the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) - Maoist is now the key armed group operating in Nepal, and that

it models itself on Peru's Sendero Luminoso (The Shining Path), combining Maoist ideology with a call to a radical brand of Nepali self-determination. [3j]

6.27 In March 2002, the Washington Times reported that the CPN was using Maoist revolutionary strategy and currently developing the second stage of the "people's war"; that of strategic stalemate, whereby the Maoists bide their time, pin down and suck up Government security resources and consolidate their own resource supply lines in areas of control and of influence. [6ad]

6.28 In December 2001, Jane's Information Group reported that the leader of the CPN was a shadowy figure called Prachanda (English translation = "Awesome"). [6f] The US State Department Report on Human Rights issued 4 March 2002 for the year 2001 identifies Prachanda as Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who launched the "People's War" unilaterally with Baburam Bhattarai in 1995. [1c](p3) The Belgian fact-finding mission of February 2002 states that their contacts did not know of any important Maoist leader who had fled to Europe; Maobadi leaders tried to remain close to the Nepalese border in India, in order to close contact with the militants in the field. [14a](p14-15)

6.29 The above-mentioned REFINFO report of December 2000 says that Maoist areas of control are primarily in the Mid-Western districts of Rolpa, Rukum, Jajarkot and Kalikot, physically located around the Kamali and Bheri river valleys. [3j] The contacts of the 2002 Belgian fact-finding mission reiterated the districts of Rolpa, Rukum, and Jajarkot, adding the district of Salyan. They identified Kalikot and Pyuthan as the main Maoist power base areas. [14a](p17)

6.30 Jane's Intelligence Review, October 2001 lists a number of legitimate organisations inside Nepal that the Maoists have infiltrated or tried to influence, and political rebel groups outside Nepal who the Maoists have reportedly established links with. [6f] Jane's Intelligence Review 06/1999 reports that the CPN - Maoist also operate behind a number of urban front organisations. [6w]

6.31 The 2002 Belgian fact-finding mission concluded from contacts' comments that "low level Maobadi" and Maoist sympathisers are not at risk of attracting persecution at the hands of the security forces. [14a](p21) Likewise, they concluded that there were many people who sympathised with the aims of the Maoists without supporting them as an organisation or their methods. [14a](p21-22)

6.32 A BBC news report of 9 May 2003, reported on formal talks between the two sides and concluded that the cease-fire was 'largely holding', but that otherwise little progress was made and no date had yet been set for a further meeting. [9bm] The BBC subsequently reported a Nepal News article detailing the first major violation of the cease-fire agreement; it occurred when rebels and Government forces exchanged fire in Jajarkot district on 18 June 2003. [6da] The BBC reported a later Nepal News article of 20 July 2003, stating that the Maoist had closed their contact office in Kathmandu. [6de] The BBC reported various articles by Nepal news describing instances of attacks and

arrests by both sides through June and July 2003 [6dw][6dx][6ea][6ef][9bo] before the Maoists set preconditions for the resumption of formal peace talks. [6df] In early August 2003, a BBC news article reported that a Nepalese human rights group had estimated that over 50 people had been killed since the cease-fire came into force in January 2003. [9bp] Two BBC news reports in August 2003 reported that the third round of formal talks since the cease-fire were scheduled to take place later that month. [6dl][9bq] On 27 August 2003, following renewed clashes, a BBC news article reported that the Maoists had declared that the cease-fire had collapsed [9bt]. A subsequent BBC report said that the rebels had indicated that the withdrawal was temporary. [6eu] Nevertheless, by the end of August 2003, BBC news reports of general hostility [6ew][6ex] and reported clashes [6ev] between the two sides indicated that the situation had once again escalated. (See also History – above – for further information)

6.33 Nepal News reports of the 18 and 19 March 2004 stated that both the Government and the Maoists wanted to resolve the conflict. [10s][10t] However, following a major Maoist attack at Beni over the weekend of 20-21 March 2004 [9cd][10u] Home Minister Kamal Thapa said that talks were now unlikely. [10v]

[Return to contents](#)

Employment Rights

6.34 According to the US State Department's Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004 for the year 2003:

“The Constitution provides for the freedom to establish and to join unions and associations. It permitted the restriction of unions only in cases of subversion, sedition, or similar conditions. Trade unions developed administrative structures to organize workers, to bargain collectively, and to conduct worker education programs. The three largest trade unions were affiliated with political parties.” [1a](p16)

6.35 The Report also said, “There were few reports of discrimination against union members,” [1a](p16) and that:

“The Government did not restrict unions from joining international labor bodies. Several trade federations and union organizations maintained a variety of international affiliations.” [1a](p16)

6.36 The above report advised that there are legal protections, particularly in the case of child workers, but these are limited in their enforcement. [1a](p17) (*See below, Children*).

6.37 In November 1977 the BBC reported the findings of a three-year study by Anti-Slavery International (ASI) of conditions in Nepal. It estimated that around 40,000 Nepalis were treated as slaves and that some 200,000 Nepalis were in unpaid labour. [9b] Such bonded labour arrangements were, until recently, accepted by the Nepali Government as tribal tradition. [9b] According

to the US State Department's Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004 for the year 2003, the Department of Labour has been making efforts to release bonded Kamaiya, having banned the bonded agricultural labour system in July 2000. [1a](p16) However, the same report advises that:

“Enforcement of the Act by the Government was uneven and social integration of the Kamaiyas was difficult. According to ILO, 10,336 Kamaiyas have received land, and only 4,000 have received timber to build houses. The Government has set up temporary camps for Kamaiyas still awaiting settlement, but few have been accommodated. Arrangements for distribution of food under a food-for-work program continued. A 2001 International Labor Organization (ILO) Rapid Assessment estimated that 17,000 child laborers were working as bonded laborers in the remnants of the Kamaiya system.” [1a](p17)

Nepali Prostitutes in India

6.38 According to the US State Department's Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004 for the year 2003:

“The law prohibits trafficking in persons and prescribes imprisonment of up to 20 years for infractions; however, trafficking in women and girls remained a serious problem.” [1a](p18)

The Report further states that:

“Local NGOs combating trafficking estimated that from 5,000 to 12,000 Nepali women and girls were lured or abducted annually into India and subsequently forced into prostitution; however, these numbers were not consistent and NGOs were seeking better estimates. Citizens reportedly also have been trafficked to Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, and other countries in the Middle East.” [1a](p18-19)

6.39 A Human Rights Watch Report of September 2001 on caste discrimination said of Nepalese Dalit women:

“Many have been driven to prostitution. One caste in particular, known as *badis*, is viewed as a prostitution class. Many Dalit women and girls, including those from the *badi* caste, are trafficked into sex work in Indian brothels”. [7d](p13-14)

6.40 A more recent Human Rights Watch submission of 9 February 2004 states that, although legal protections for Dalits are strong on paper, discrimination remains a central feature of life and social interaction and the government regularly fail to prosecute offenders. [7f] An article in 'The Kathmandu Post' from 17 June 2003 records several personal experiences of discrimination against Dalits. [10ab]

Gurkha Soldiers in Foreign Armies

6.41 A BBC news report advises that Gurkhas are Nepalis who have been employed as paid soldiers in the British Army, a tradition dating from 1815. [9ce] A Kyodo News article reporting on a 2002 court case over Gurkha's rights said that current conditions of employment are set by the 7 November 1947 memorandum of agreement between the UK and the Kingdom of Nepal. [6aj] A BBC news report says that, due to Maoists threats to local youths, the British Welfare Centre - which acts as a recruiting depot - was reportedly unable to conduct any selections in 2002. [6ch]

6.42 The above-mentioned Kyodo News article states that some 500,000 Nepali troops have served in the British Army, including in World War I and World War II. Less than 3,500 are currently employed in the British Army. Thousands of Gurkhas have served in the Indian Army. [6aj] Parity of pay and pension rates between British and Gurkha service personnel has been an issue in Nepal, with a Nepalese Supreme Court judgement against equal pay and pension rates given in March 2002. [6aj] UK court cases are currently ongoing. [6aj] Most Gurkhas retire back to Nepal. [6aj]

[Return to contents](#)

People Trafficking

6.43 According to the US State Department's Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004 for the year 2003:

“The law prohibits trafficking in persons and prescribes imprisonment of up to 20 years for infractions; however, trafficking in women and girls remained a serious problem. Border guards and immigration officials commonly accepted bribes from traffickers. Young women were by far the most common targets; trafficking of boys was reported in rare instances. While the vast majority of trafficking was of women and girls for sexual exploitation, women and girls sometimes were trafficked for domestic service, manual or semi-skilled bonded labor, or other purposes. The country was a primary source country for the South Asia region; most women and girls trafficked from the country went to India.” [1a](p18)

The Report further states that anti-trafficking measures by the Government were "sporadic", prosecutions difficult, and rehabilitation of traffickers' victims were limited by insufficient funds. [1a](p18-19)

6.44 Also see above - [Nepali Prostitutes in India](#)

Freedom of Movement

6.45 In respect of freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration and repatriation, the US State Department's Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004 for the year 2003 states:

“The Constitution provides for these rights, and the Government generally respected them in practice. However, for security reasons, the Government restricted travel by foreigners, including Tibetan residents, to some areas near the Chinese border. On January 18, (2003) the Government lifted restrictions on women's travel to the Gulf States to work as domestic servants. The Government allowed citizens to emigrate and those abroad to return, and was not known to revoke citizenship for political reasons.” [1a](p10)

6.46 The Belgian Fact-Finding Mission of 2002 reported that Nepalese citizens normally carried any of a number of official papers that can be used for identification. [14a](p15-16) The scenario of passports being checked and withheld by the Government, forcing the use of false passports and people smugglers, was not held to be credible by the contacts interviewed by the Belgian Government researchers. [14a](p15)

6.47 The Belgian Fact-Finding Mission also concluded that internal flight was a viable option for the majority of people fearing violence. [14a](p28) Kathmandu and other cities were held to be safe from security force/Maoist violence generally, and from Maoist reprisals in particular. [14b](p3-4)

6.48 More recently, the Global IDP Project of the Norwegian Refugee Council held a training workshop on protection and the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement on 5-6 March 2003, and subsequently issued a report of their findings. [14d] Among its conclusions were that: it was difficult to distinguish between Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and economic/urban migrants; lack of documentation and fear of retaliation/corruption by the authorities prevented people registering as IDPs; and IDPs could face forced recruitment by the security forces and/or retaliation from Maoists who suspected them of assisting the security forces. [14d](p20)

Immigration and Asylum Issues

6.49 The UNHCR's latest record of State Parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol shows that Nepal was not a State Party to either of these documents as at 1 February 2004. [14c]

6.50 According to the US State Department's Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004 for the year 2003:

“The country is not a party to U.N. Refugee Conventions and the law does not include provisions for the granting of refugee status or asylum to persons who meet the definition in the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol. On August 22, the Government formulated an official policy toward refugees that pledged to uphold the principle of non-refoulement and without hindrance to allow U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) “to verify and establish the status of people seeking asylum.” The Government did provide asylum for refugees and asylum seekers and generally has cooperated with the office of the UNHCR and other

humanitarian organizations in assisting them. The UNHCR maintained an office in Kathmandu. [1a](p11) (See below for [Ethnic Groups](#)).

6.51 In October 2001, the Nepali Times, an English-language paper in Nepal, ran an exposé of asylum scams running in European countries and Australia. [10b] It described recent changes in the basis of claims, saying that whereas in 1999 claimants alleged that they were Bhutanese refugees, in 2001 they now alleged persecution either from the police or the Maoists. [10b]. It detailed counter-measures taken within Nepal and abroad, both by the Nepali authorities and by foreign Governments. [10b] The article ends "As long as there is unemployment and economic desperation in Nepal, there will be Nepali migrants trying to sneak into Europe or overstay in Australia. And, it seems, they will use whatever political cause is most likely to grant them asylum".[10b]

6.52 On fraudulent documentation, the article runs:-

"Asylum seekers are typically armed with documents to "prove" their claims. Some have Maoist photo IDs (in English), others have supposed threats spelled out on what appears to be Maoist party stationery. Still others have warrants on police letter heads that say the person in question is being sought for killing civilians. Many also have with them front-page stories from obscure district newspapers speaking of threats to their lives. (We received a copy of one such paper with a page 1 story detailing the threats to the life of an asylum seeker, but we couldn't find a copy of the newspaper.)" [10b]

6.53 In dealings with the F&CO on verifying documentation, the following general information was offered by Kathmandu on 12 March 2002:

"Our experience has shown that on average it takes about 2 months to have checks/verifications done. However, it can take more depending on the remoteness of the district where the checks need to be sent to. Most of the Government Offices outside the capital have no fax machine. Moreover the postal system in Nepal is very poor. We frequently receive request for checks from UK on newspaper articles and documents produced by police i.e. arrest warrants. So far there has not been one of these documents has proven to be genuine. It is difficult to check newspaper reports, very few (if any) appear in the better known/circulated papers. Most appear in obscure publication that may only exist for one or two issues. Most of these papers do not have proper contact address nor telephone numbers. We also receive documents produced by the Nepal Communist Party (Maoists), Nepal. Unfortunately these documents cannot be verified as the Maoist Party is an illegal organisation and is not a

recognised party by the Nepalese Government. They are an underground organisation and have been recently proclaimed as terrorists.” [12a]

6.54 A Nepali Newspaper, the Daily Janamat, wrote to the British Embassy in Kathmandu on 16 March 2002 and stated 'It is clear from the original issues that Daily Janamat has been used by some organisation to publish false news.’ [13a]

[Return to contents](#)

Belgian Fact Finding Mission, January - June 2002

6.55 In July 2002, the Kingdom of Belgium, Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CEDOCA) documentation and research department, made a fact-finding mission report to Nepal publicly available. It is fully disclosable. [14a] The CEDOCA mission was in Nepal between the 21 January and 9 February 2002; and the report was written in March 2002. [14a](p1) The report was updated with a follow-up report written in June 2002. [14b](p1) A quick summary of the first CEDOCA report follows. [14a]

6.56 I. General findings - of situation in Nepal and of abuse of the asylum claims. The report found that there were serious indications of abuse of the asylum procedure by Nepalese people in Europe. [14a](p14) The report concluded that there was not a single human rights organisation or human rights activist that knew one real refugee who is said to have fled to Belgium, [14a](p14) and stated that several human rights organisations indicated being aware of this phenomenon of abuse of the asylum procedure and regretted it, as it damaged the reputation of all Nepalese people.” [14a](p14)

6.57 II Identification papers - gave details of the general official documentation available to Nepalese citizens, such as passports, ID cards, birth certificates, etc. The Office of the Commissioner General came to the conclusion that all of the contacts found it very strange that several of the Nepalese asylum seekers were not able to present any identification papers to prove their identity. [14a](p15-16) (See 5.32 above, concerning the carrying of ID cards by the security services)

6.58 III Spread and nature of persecution – had an annexed map of districts from where most claimants claim to originate. CEDOCA saw a clear distinction between districts affected by Maoist violence and districts of claimants' origin. [14a](p18)

6.59 IV Sufficiency of Protection Issues - concluded that the arrest and detention of Maoist suspects could be arbitrary on occasion; [14a](p25) that monitoring of abuse by official agencies is compromised lack of resources as set against the volume of complaints received; [14a](p26) that there is an active monitoring of human rights abuse by local NGOs. [14a](p26-27)

6.60 V Post (the postal system) – refuted suggestions by claimants that the postal system was monitored by the Nepalese Government. [14a](p27)

6.61 VI Internal Flight Alternative - concluded that for most low-level Maoist sympathisers, internal flight to other districts is possible. [14a](p28) One contact claimed that many Maoists wanted by the police were unable to get to Kathmandu because of lack of funds. [14a](p30) The report concluded that problems with freedom of movement in Nepal were confined to Maoist affected districts prior to 26/11/01, though since that date there were reportedly more checkpoints; [14a](p28) and that poor communication and intelligence made it difficult for a person wanted by the local police to be signalled and wanted on a national level. [14a](p29)

6.62 VII India as a safe third country - no extradition from India by the Indian Government had been made at the time of the report. [14a](p31) There were no passport restrictions on Nepalese in India, and India was held by CEDOCA to be the main route out to Europe. [14a](p31)

6.63 VIII Nepalese policemen as claimants – CEDOCA was unsuccessful in obtaining information from the Royal Nepal Police on this issue, and NGOs had little information on this group. [14a](p32-33)

6.64 IX Conclusion – according to the report’s conclusion, “The low level Maobadi, the sympathiser, or someone who is only suspected of having Maobadi sympathies does not risk persecution on a national level, and that person can use the internal flight alternative. This category only runs a higher risk of being persecuted in the most discordant districts.” [14a](p34)

6.65 According to the report’s conclusion, on the basis of the obtained information, there are enough elements available to be able to state that many Nepalese asylum seekers have taken advantage of the care of the Office of the Commissioner General while treating the Nepalese cases.” [14a](p34) The update report of June 2002 concentrated on four supplementary questions on internal flight issues, namely, of flight from police alerts and military alerts, and whether Kathmandu was safe from violence generally and violence from the Maoists in particular. [14b](p1-5)

[Return to contents](#)

6.B Human Rights - Specific Groups

Ethnic Groups

6.66 According to the US State Department’s Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004 for the year 2003:

“In the country there are more than 75 ethnic groups that speak 50 different languages. The Constitution provides that each community shall have the right "to preserve and promote its language, script, and

culture." The Constitution further specifies that each community has the right to operate schools at the primary level in its native language."
[1a](p15)

Tibetans

6.67 The latest REFINFO report on Tibetans in Nepal (dated 22 December 1999) states that there are approximately 20,000 Tibetan refugees, many of who are second and third generation refugees. Most have integrated into Nepali society. [3n](p1)

“According to Thubten Samdup, president of the Canada-Tibet Committee, Nepalese border guards are given a fee from Chinese authorities for every Tibetan they return to China (21 Oct. 1999). A 13 May 1995 Tibet Information Network (TIN) report also quotes a refugee as saying that Nepalese border guards receive goods each time they hand a Tibetan over to the Chinese police.” [3n](p2).

6.68 Both reports confirm that the Tibetan Government in Exile (self-styled) runs a number of reception centres and runs one in Kathmandu jointly supported by the UNHCR. [3h](p2)[3n](p1) The Government's firm stance with regard to Tibetans continued when police detained 19 Tibetans en route to India on 27 June 2003. This followed the widely criticised deportation of 18 Tibetans to China earlier in 2003. [6e0]

6.69 According to the US State Department's Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004 for the year 2003:

“Police and customs officials occasionally harassed Tibetan asylum seekers who fled China. According to the UNHCR, police conduct in this regard has improved since 1999, although border police sometimes extort money from Tibetans in exchange for passage. There were credible reports that Tibetan asylum seekers were sometimes handed back to Chinese authorities after crossing the border.

On April 15, the Government arrested 21 Tibetans, including 11 minors, on immigration charges. The three youngest children were released in UNHCR custody. On May 31, the Government handed over the 18 remaining Tibetans to Chinese authorities. The Government has since characterised the deportations as an aberration that does not reflect official policy. On November 24, the Government released all remaining Tibetan asylum seekers held in detention after a private benefactor paid their immigration fines.” [1a](p11)

Further information on Tibetans in China, Northern India and Nepal is to be found in China Extended Bulletin 3/2002 (Tibet) - July 2002.

Bhutanese

6.70 According to the US State Department's Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004 for the year 2003:

“Since 1991 it (the Government) also has provided asylum to approximately 101,000 persons who claim Bhutanese citizenship. The great majority of these refugees live in UNHCR administered camps in the eastern part of the country. An additional 15,000 Bhutanese refugees reside outside the camps in either the country or India. The total represents approximately one-sixth of Bhutan's estimated pre-1991 population.” [1a](p11)

The report also stated that:

“The UNHCR monitored the condition of Bhutanese refugees and provided for their basic needs. The Government accepted the refugee presence as temporary on humanitarian grounds. The camps were administered by UNHCR; the World Food Program (WFP) provides sustenance and the Government made a contribution to the WFP earmarked for the refugees.” [1a](p11)

6.71 A Human Rights Watch Report of 27 February 2001 states that the refugees are mainly Nepali Bhutanese who were expelled from Bhutan after being stripped of Bhutanese nationality under nationality laws that deliberately discriminated against the southern Bhutanese. [7b] An article in the Kathmandu post reported by the BBC says that these people are known as Lhotsampas, and that there are seven Bhutanese refugee camps in eastern Nepal. [6b]

6.72 BBC news reported two Nepal News story of 20 May 2003 that, following the ministerial talks held between the two Governments of Nepal and Bhutan on 20 May 2003, [6ek] the first ever refugee repatriation, scheduled for 8 September 2003, had been announced. [6ei] The main bulk of the repatriations were to take place from the Khudunabari camp. [6ei] However, subsequent BBC reports stated that a categorisation of the refugees was strongly disputed by the refugees themselves [6em] and human rights/humanitarian organisations [6ej] and the negotiations have failed to resolve the issue. [9c] A report on the Nepal-Bhutan Joint Verification Team (JVT) updated on 31 January 2003 gives more detailed information on the verification process. [4a]

Further information on the Bhutanese and ethnic Nepalis from Bhutan is to be found in Bhutan Extended Bulletins 1/2002 - October 2002, and 1/2003 – September 2003.

[Return to contents](#)

Women

6.73 According to the US State Department's Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004 for the year 2003:

“Violence against women was a serious problem that received limited public attention. In April 2002, parliament passed the Domestic Violence Control Bill that did not receive royal approval before parliament was dissolved; if it is to become law, it or another version will have to be re-introduced in another parliamentary session. There was a general unwillingness among citizens, and particularly among government authorities, to recognize violence against women as a problem. In a 1998 survey conducted by local NGO SAATHI, 42 percent of the respondents said that in their experience medical practitioners were uncooperative or negligent in cases of violence against women and girls. This unwillingness to recognize violence against women and girls as unacceptable in daily life was seen not just in the medical profession, but among the police and politicians as well.” [1a](p13-14)

6.74 The Report further states that:

“Although the Constitution provides protections for women, including equal pay for equal work, the Government has not taken significant action to implement those provisions, even in many state industries. Women faced systematic discrimination, particularly in rural areas, where religious and cultural tradition, lack of education, and ignorance of the law remained severe impediments to their exercise of basic rights such as the right to vote or to hold property in their own names. Inheritance laws were revised in 2002 so that unmarried, widowed, or divorced women can inherit parental property.” [1a](p14)

6.75 An article issued by REFINFO in June 1996 advises that the basic marriage laws of Nepal are to be found in the 1971 Marriage Act. All marriage rites must be legitimised by a marriage certificate, though all religious and customary marriage ceremonies are recognised. [3a](p1) The male partner must be 21 years of age, female 18 years; but younger couples may marry if with parental assent. [3a](p1) Forced marriages, polygamy and adultery by women are illegal. [3a](p1) The US State Department’s Report on Human Rights issued 31 March 2003 for the year 2002 says that the dowry tradition is strong, particularly in the Terai region, (near the Indian border). [1f](p18)

6.76 According to the US State Department’s Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004 for the year 2003:

“Rape and incest also were problems, particularly in rural areas. Laws against rape provide for prison sentences of 6 to 10 years for the rape of a woman less than 14 years of age and 3 to 5 years for the rape of a woman above the age of 14. The law prescribes imprisonment for 1 year or a fine for the rape of a prostitute. The law prohibits spousal rape.” [1a](p14)

6.77 The Report also states that:

“The police department has 18 women's cells with female officers who received special training in handling victims of domestic violence. The police also have sent out directives instructing all officers to treat domestic violence as a criminal offense that should be prosecuted. However, according to a police official, this type of directive was difficult to enforce because of entrenched discriminatory attitudes. Even though the police may make an arrest, often neither the victim nor the Government pursued further prosecution.” [1a](p14)

6.78 Also see above - [Nepali Prostitutes in India](#) and [People Trafficking](#).

Children

6.79 According to the US State Department's Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004 for the year 2003:

“Unlike in previous years, there were no reports of children in jail or custody as suspected or convicted criminals, although in 2002 there were reports of children held under anti-terrorism laws as suspected Maoists.

There have been numerous reports that Maoists recruited teenagers to serve as porters, runners, cooks, and armed cadre. During the cease-fire, the Maoists reportedly abducted hundreds of rural teens and children, requiring them to attend training and indoctrination programs and/or join their ranks.” [1a](p15)

6.80 According to the Europa publication on Nepal for 2003, life expectancy is low in rural areas. [2a](p914) The US State Department's Report on Human Rights issued 31 March 2003 for the year 2002 reported that many children were at risk from severe and fatal diseases stemming from poor or non-existent sanitation. [1f](p19) A Kathmandu Post article reported by the BBC said that the child workforce was estimated by the Nepali Government to be over 77,000 children (year 2000 estimate). [6am]

6.81 A Human Rights Watch report issued in January 2003 on child soldier use in Nepal stated:

“There were no indications of a policy of, or systematic recruitment below the age of 18 into the Royal Nepal Army (RNA). However, the government reportedly targeted children suspected of affiliation with the Communist Party of Nepal”. [7g](p1)

It further stated that:

“There were reports of CPN recruitment and use of children aged between 15 and 18, although the CPN leadership denied this.” [7g](p1)

The report also related an incident where eighty children had been supposedly abducted in January 2003 and received training in “guerrilla

Nepal, April 2004

warfare” before being released. [7g](p1) In March, Nepal News reported UNICEF’s call to all sides to put children’s welfare first. [10ac]

6.82 A BBC news report in July 2002 quoted children’s rights activists as claiming that during the "People's War" more than one hundred children had been killed, fifteen hundred orphaned, and thousands displaced; and that children were vulnerable to be targeted as Maoist collaborators. [9o] According to the US State Department’s Report on Human Rights issued 25 February 2004 for the year 2003:

“The Constitution prohibits forced or bonded labor, including by children; however, there were reports that such practices occurred.”
[1a](p16)

The report also states that:

“Societal attitudes view a female child as a commodity to be bartered off in marriage, or as a burden. Some persons considered marrying a girl before menarche an honorable, sacred act that increases one’s chances of a better afterlife. As a result, although the law prohibits marriage for girls before the age of 18, child brides were common. According to the Ministry of Health, girls’ average age of marriage was 16 years of age. The age difference in marriage often was cited as one cause of domestic violence.” [1a](p15) (See also People Trafficking, above)

Child Care Arrangements

6.83 There is no information available about official care of children in Nepal, but there is an active organisation called Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN). They have launched a “Children are Zone of Peace Campaign”, [4z] organised a “Winter Camp for Street Children-2004” Programme, [4aa] and last year brought out a Report on “The State of the Rights of the Child in Nepal” Report which itemised incidents regarding children. [4ab]

Homosexuals

6.84 The Gay Times website advises that homosexuality is illegal in Nepal. [4y] The International Lesbian and Gay Association recorded that there was some media reporting of a lesbian marriage case in 1998. [4b](2-3) It also reported that The Nepal Queer Society founded in 1993, was Nepal’s first gay rights group. [4b](p1) In February 2003, the Inter Press Service reported that about 60 to 70 gay men (or by the Nepali preferred term, men who have sex with men - MSM) had gathered together to discuss health and general welfare issues. The article outlined details of different Nepali terms for different characteristics. [15l](p1)

[Return to contents](#)

6.C Human Rights - Other Issues

The caste system

6.85 The Human Rights Watch Report of September 2001 on Caste Discrimination states that the Hindu caste system in Nepal is practically identical to the caste system of India. It has the four classes of the *varna* system (*Brahmins*- priests and teachers; *Ksyatriyas* - rulers and soldiers; *Vaisyas* - merchants and traders; and *Shudras* - labourers and artisans) with an out-caste class, the *Dalits* or "untouchables". [7d](p1)

6.86 The 1990 Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of caste (as well as sex, race, religion, tribe and ideology), [4f](p3) but the HRW Report advises that it includes a provision for discrimination in Hindu religious practices. [7d](p2) This loophole allowed a number of wide interpretations, such as in the "Gaidakot Milk Scandal" of year 2000, when a Dalit milk producer was barred from selling to a Hindu milk marketing co-operative. NGO protest and pressure eventually resolved the situation. [7d](p2)

6.87 According to the HRW Report, Nepal is co-operative with some international monitoring organisations (CERD) and the Government attempts to address caste problems. Castes are deeply entrenched in Nepali society though, exacerbated by the remote and rural nature of most of Nepal. [7d](p2-3) The bonded labour system also exacerbated caste discrimination. [7d](p8)

6.88 According to the HRW Report, the socio-economic situation of the Dalits and lower castes is significantly lower than that of the higher castes, with Dalits living five years less (50) than the average non-Dalit Nepali citizen (55 years). [7d](p9) The HRW Report:also stated:

“Although many of *Nepal's* agricultural laborers are Dalits...collectively Dalits own only about 1 percent of Nepal's total cultivable land. Moreover, 90 percent of Nepal Dalits live below the poverty line, compared to 45 percent of the overall population.” [7d](p11)

6.89 The Report also says that the Dalits make up one-fifth of the total population of Nepal, [7d](p12) and that Dalit women are further marginalised and exploited, within and outside the family. There is a sub-caste known as the Badis who are viewed as a prostitute caste. [7d](p13)

[Return to contents](#)

Annex A Chronology of Events

1951: Restoration of the monarchy: absolute rule by the monarch.

1959: Multi-party constitution adopted.

Nepal, April 2004

1960: King Mahendra seizes control - parliament and multi-party politics suspended.

1962: Panchayat system of local councils introduced under a new constitution. The King has overall control of the panchayats.

1972: King Mahendra dies. Succeeded by King Birendra.

1980: Constitutional reform referendum - King permits non-party direct elections to the national assembly.

1985: The Nepal Congress Party (NPC) begins a campaign of civil disobedience for restoration of multi-party system. New direct, non-party elections in **1986** boycotted by the NCP. Campaign increases until in **1990**, King Birendra bows to pressure and agrees to new democratic constitution.

1991: The Nepali Congress party win first democratic elections.

1994: Period of political instability begins. The Nepal Congress Party Government brought down and Communist Party wins elections.

1995: Communist Government dissolved and Communist party of Nepal (Maoist) begin insurrection, with "People's war" declared in **1996**. A period of political turmoil, culminating in the Nepali Congress Party winning the **1999** elections

2001, 1 June: Most of the Royal Family murdered by the Crown Prince Dipendra.

July: Sher Bahadur Deuba is appointed Prime Minister. The Maoists step up their campaign of violence.

State of Emergency Imposed

2001, 26 November: Three-month state of emergency announced.

23 February 2002: renewed

24 May 2002: renewed

2002, 28 August 2002: withdrawn

2003, 29 January: Cease-fire between the Government and the Maoists announced.

2003, May/June: Lokendra Bahadur Chand resigns as Prime Minister. King appoints his own nominee Surya Bahadur Thapa as new PM.

[9a]

2003, 27 August: Maoists declare that the cease-fire has collapsed.

2003, March Serious clashes and casualties in Bhojpur district and Myagdi district (Beni Bazaar battle).

Nepal, April 2004

2004, March Nepal joins the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

2004, 28 March King calls for co-operation from all sides towards early elections.

2004, early April Violence' by police against peaceful protesters in Kathmandu, and 2,000 plus abductions of youths and students by Maoists

Annex B Political Organisations

Name (English translation)	Abbreviation	Type of organisation	Notes
Bhutanese Refugees Representative Repatriation Committee	BRRRC	Bhutanese refugee pressure group	
Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)	CPN (Maoists)	<u>Illegal</u> , underground political movement	Known as the Maobadi
Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist - ML)	CPN (ML)	Legal political party	Founded in 1989 as a breakaway faction of the UML
Communist Party of Nepal (Mashal)	CPN (Mashal)	Legal political party	
Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist - UML)	CPN (UML)	Legal political party	
Communist Party of Nepal (Verma)	CPN (Verma)	Legal political party	
Green Nepal Party		Legal political party	
Janabadi Morcha		An anti-monarchist party	Faction developed into the Nepali People's Front
Janawadi Morcha		Legal political party	
Moovad / Maovad		Unknown group	
National Democratic Party	NDP	Legal political party	Nepalese name - Rastriya Prajatantra Party - RPP
National	NDP (Chand)	Legal political	Also claims

Nepal, April 2004

Democratic Party (Chand)		party	Nepalese name - Rastriya Prajatantra Party - RPP
National People's Council			Nepalese name - Rastriya Janata Parishad - RJP
National People's Front			Nepalese name - Rastriya Jana Morcha ; formerly Janabani Morcha
National People's Liberation Forum			Left-wing, rejects 1990 constitution as reactionary.
Nepal Praja Parishad		Legal political party	
Nepal Workers' and Peasants' Party		Legal political party	
Nepali Congress Party	NCP	Legal political party	Until the dissolution of Parliament, May 2002, was main political party with a majority of deputies.
Nepali Janata Dal		Legal political party	
Nepali National Congress		Legal political party	
Nepali Sadbhavana Party	NSP	Legal political party	English - Nepal Goodwill Party; promotes the interests of the Madhesiya community, ethnic Indians from the Terai region.
Samyukta Janmorcha Nepal		Illegal political movement	United People's Front (UPF) an alliance formed in February 1996 of United Liberation Torch-bearers (Samyukta Mukti Bahini) and the Democratic Front (Janawadi

Nepal, April 2004

			Morcha) who took to armed insurgency at the same time.
United People's Front		<u>Illegal</u> , underground political movement	<i>See note above, Samyukta Janmorcha Nepal. The political antecedent of the CPN (Maoist) and CPN (Mashal)</i>

[Return to contents](#)

Annex C Prominent People

Baburam Bhattarai: Rebel leader, co-founder of Communist Party Nepal (Maoist)

Bikalpa: A Maoist leader.

Birendra: King, died in 2001.

Chand, Lokendra Bahadur: former PM, appointed October 2002, resigned in May 2003

Deuba, Sher Bahadur: Prime Minister; leader of the Nepali Congress party until expulsion in May 2002, dismissed as PM October 2002.

Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev: King since 4 June 2001.

Krishna Sen: journalist and newspaper editor.

Mahendra: King, died in 1972. Succeeded by King **Birendra**.

Prachandra: Rebel leader

Pushpa Kamal Dahal: Founder member of the "People's War"

Thapa, Surya Badahur: PM since 4 June 2003

[Return to contents](#)

Annex D

Nepal, April 2004

Nepali / English Glossary

Nepali	English
Badis	A Dalit (untouchable) sub-caste where the women are usually forced into prostitution.
bandh	national strike
Dalit	"out-caste; untouchable" lowest rank, outside caste, in the Hindu caste system.
jan-jati	"ethnic group" as defined by the Government
kamaiya	System of bonded agricultural labour agreements
Lhotsampas	Southern Bhutanese refugees, of Nepali ethnicity.
panchayat	"Council" System of government introduced in 1962.
varna	Hindu Caste or lit. "colour" system

[Return to contents](#)

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[Return to contents](#)

[END]