



14 January 2013: For immediate release

Nepal: Dekendra Thapa Prosecution Must go Ahead

The Centre for Law and Democracy, as part of the International Media Mission to Nepal, has written to Dr Baburam Bhattarai, the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister of Nepal, urging him not to obstruct the murder case against Dekendra Thapa, a journalist who was brutally tortured and then murdered in 2004. From 3-5 January 2013, the police arrested five suspects in the case. However, reports suggest that the Prime Minister has sought to halt the investigation, on the basis that political crimes committed during the ten-year conflict period should, pursuant to the 2006 peace agreement, be dealt with by a truth commission. This is troubling in light of the danger that journalists face in Nepal, with their attackers often enjoying immunity from justice.

"This is a hugely important case," said CLD Executive Director Toby Mendel. *"While we respect the formal terms of the peace agreement, it has been six years since the agreement was signed and the truth commission has yet to be established. It would simply not be acceptable to halt an investigation into the murder of a journalist on the basis that it should be referred to the truth commission."*

Attacks on journalists and a prevailing climate of impunity have been one of the key foci of the International Media Mission to Nepal (IMM). The other has been legal and policy reform. The IMM visited Nepal in February 2012 and has since been engaged in various forms of support for freedom of expression in the country, working with our local partners, in particular the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ).

The letter to Prime Minister Bhattarai is available at: <http://www.law-democracy.org/live/nepal-dekendra-thapa-prosecution-must-go-ahead/>. The Joint Statement issued by the IMM at the end of its February mission is available at: <http://www.law-democracy.org/live/international-media-mission-to-nepal-issues-joint-statement/>. Detailed comments by the IMM on the constitutional proposals affecting freedom of expression and the media are available at: <http://www.law-democracy.org/live/nepal-mission-comments-on-constitutional-proposals/>.

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