

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEPAL  
PRESS STATEMENT**

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

**Government Must Uphold Press Freedom and Ensure the Constitutional Guarantee of Freedom of Expression**

Kathmandu (02 May) -

Amnesty International Nepal (Amnesty Nepal) urges the Government of Nepal to ensure press freedom both in law and practice allowing journalists an independent and autonomous working environment to practice their profession.

"The government must uphold press freedom and rectify legal provisions that are contrary to the constitutional guarantees of the freedom of expression," said Nirajan Thapaliya, Director of Amnesty Nepal. "Amnesty International reaffirms its support to press freedom. For us, journalists are the frontline rights defenders who bring to light the abuses and violations suffered by people. Journalism is not a crime, and journalists should not become subjects of violence in the exercise of their profession. It is a fundamental responsibility of the state to ensure security of journalists and freedom of the press", said Thapaliya.

The 26th World Press Freedom Day this year presents a stark reminder of Nepal's steady decline from 100th to the 106th position in the [World Press Freedom Index](#) as recorded by Reporters Without Borders. According to the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), 36 journalists have been killed since 1996, while dozens of reporters and editors have been arrested, detained and fined in the last decade since the Electronic Transaction Act came into effect in 2006. FNJ [reports 60 incidents of violation](#) of press freedom in the last one year.

The past couple of years has witnessed the tightening of laws and regulations in various countries, including Nepal, aimed towards restricting the free operation of media and silencing of the dissenting voices critical of the establishment. In April, Arjun Giri, [a Pokhara-based journalist was charged](#) under the Electronic Transaction Act for reporting a financial fraud case. In 2018, there were [a number of arrests of journalists](#) under cyber-crime charges. In September 2018, Mr. [Raju Basnet was arrested](#) merely for posting a news also on a case of financial fraud published by a weekly paper. FNJ has [recorded the arrest of six](#) journalists in 2018.

"The state must show its unflinching support to the constitutional promises of the free press and bring improvements to this bleak picture of press freedom in Nepal. It is only by ensuring the freedom of expression as enshrined in Nepal's constitution that Nepal will be able to strengthen a free, fair and truly democratic society," said Thapaliya.

**Background**

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 has made a broad commitment to the "full freedom of the press" including civil liberties, fundamental rights and human rights. Article 17 (2) (a) of the Constitution guarantees citizens' right to the freedom of opinion and expression. Likewise, Article 19 has outlawed the censorship of any "publication and broadcasting or dissemination or printing of any news item, editorial, feature article or other reading, audio and audio-visual material through any means".

Nepal is also obligated under various international human rights treaties including the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) to "respect and ensure" everyone's freedom of expression. The UN Human Rights Committee, a body mandated to monitor the implementation of the Covenant, states in its [General Comment No. 34](#) that "a free, uncensored, and unhindered press is essential in any society to ensure freedom of opinion and expression . . . and it constitutes one of the cornerstones of a democratic society."