

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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> Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment, please email the [Knowledge and Information Management Unit](#).

8 August 2016

NPL105568.E

Nepal: Information on the Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON), including location of the office, listings of leaders and staff; whether HURON issues letters of support for people who are political targets or victims of attacks by Maoist groups; format, appearance and information contained in such letters; requirements and process to obtain a letter of support from HURON and other human rights organizations in Nepal; availability of fraudulent support letters from human rights organizations (2014-June 2016)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview of HURON

According to their website, HURON was "one of the first human rights organizations in Nepal," was founded in 1988, and has developed into a movement with membership representing individuals of "all political persuasions" (HURON n.d.a.). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a General Secretary of HURON stated that the organization "has been playing a leading role to institutionalize democratic change" in Nepal and that it was founded by "a consortium of human rights activists, freedom fighters, professionals, academia and social reformers" (ibid. 1 July 2016). The same source indicated that the organization is registered in Kathmandu, with five regional offices, 75 district chapters and an affiliation of over 25,000 members (ibid.).

The HURON website lists its location as: Anamnagar, Kathmandu, and its mailing address as G.P.O. Box 5424, Kathmandu, Nepal (ibid. n.d.b.).

The Himalayan Times, a Nepali English-language newspaper, reports that as of December 2015, Indra Prasad Aryal is HURON's chairperson and Govinda Dhakal is a member (*The Himalayan Times* 4 Dec. 2015).

Lists of members and leaders of HURON, as found on their website, are attached to this Response, including a list of leaders and members of the Central Executive Committees between Nepali years 2069 and 2072 [mid-April 2012 to mid-April 2015] [1] (Attachment 1), and as of 2072 [Mid-April 2015] (Attachment 2), as well as lists of leaders and members of HURON chapters in the Eastern, Central, Western, Mid-Western, and Far-Western "Development Regions" in 2016 (Attachment 3).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Nepal researcher for the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), an independent Hong Kong-based NGO "which seeks to promote greater awareness and realization of human rights in the Asian region" (AHRC n.d.), described HURON as "a very little known organization" (ibid. 28 June 2016). The same source stated HURON was based in Kathmandu and engaged in human rights protection activities in the past, but that they are not aware of any activities conducted by the organization "in recent years" (ibid.). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Nepal Peacebuilding Initiative (NPI), a Kathmandu-based non-profit organization which researches local and national peacebuilding policies (NPI n.d.), and has worked on Nepal's conflict and peace processes for 10 years, stated that HURON has two part-time staff in Kathmandu, and "a few collaborative organisations in the districts" (ibid. 27 June 2016).

The Himalayan Times reported in December 2015 that HURON released an investigative report regarding violence in the southern plains of Nepal, based on a 4-day field visit to the region in November 2015 (*The Himalayan Times* 4 Dec. 2015). The same source indicates that a three-person team from HURON interviewed families of deceased people, injured people, journalists, human rights activists and security personnel in this region (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Further information on activities of HURON in the period of 2014-2016 could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Support Letters from HURON

According to a Secretary General of HURON, the organization "issues letters in favor of victims requesting concerned authorities and parties to honor their right to life and [human rights] during conflicts" (HURON 1 July 2016). The same sources stated that there is no standard format for the letters, and that the content varies depending on individual cases (ibid.). In follow-up correspondence on 12 July 2016, the Secretary General indicated that HURON issues such letters on official letterhead paper, with its logo and seal (ibid. 12 July 2016). The source further noted that HURON's central office issues the support letters, and that the organization's "president, general secretary, secretary and office bearers can sign the letters" (ibid.).

The Secretary General of HURON indicated that to obtain a letter "as a general practice, the person first should contact [the organization] with adequate information, and upon verification, HURON decides whether to issue letters based on reliability and circumstantial evidences (ibid. 1 July 2016). The same source added that to apply for a support letter, victims or their relatives can come to HURON to register grievances, "with or without evidence," but that most applications are accompanied by "supporting documents issued by the local police, administration and other agencies" (ibid. 12 July 2016). The Secretary General further stated that HURON "prefers the victim to be present in person, if possible, [but] if not, relatives or representatives may be allowed to complete the process" (ibid.). The source also indicated that HURON verifies "the accompanying documents, statements of victims and other circumstantial evidences to establish the claims by utilizing local chapters and other sources" (ibid.).

In contrast, in correspondence with the Research Directorate on 12 July 2016, the Canadian Consulate in Kathmandu provided the following information, which they obtained from their own conversations with HURON:

[HURON] confirmed that they had issued letters during the period of conflict certifying that people had been political targets or victims of attack or threats by Maoist groups. Their source of information used to be letters and/or recommendations from the local authorities (such as the office of the local municipalities). Based on information provided by the local authorities, HURON issued such letters certifying that people had been political targets or victims of attack or threats. As there are no more conflicts in the country, HURON no longer issues such letters. (Canada 12 July 2016)

Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3. Support Letters from Other Human Rights Organizations in Nepal

The NPI representative indicated that human rights organizations in Nepal issue letters of support, but only after verifying the facts in the field, with the district police, and with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) (NPI 24 June 2016). The same source provided the opinion that since 2006, there have been "hardly any threats for political reasons in Nepal;" after enquiring with Nepali human rights organizations the source found that "none of the credible human rights organizations have issued letters of support [recently] as they see no reason for this right now" (ibid.).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC), a Kathmandu-based human rights NGO (INSEC n.d.), indicated that their organization issues support letters to victims of threats and political targets, but only after verifying that the human rights violation(s) for which the person seeks a letter of certification is recorded in their Nepal Human Rights Yearbook and/or on Inseconline, their own human rights monitoring system (ibid. 27 June 2016). The same source stated that if INSEC does not have records of the human rights violations in the above mentioned sources, they do not issue a letter of support, even if the victims have other evidence (ibid.). Without providing further information, the INSEC representative also noted that the letters are issued to the victims themselves or "sometimes to government authorities and stakeholders if they ask"; letters are printed on INSEC letterhead paper, are given the organization's stamp, and are issued only by the central office and signed only by INSEC's Chairperson or Executive Director (ibid.). The same source added that letters of support can only be generated "if the victim

and their family visit [the central office] personally" and that they do not respond to requests by email or phone (ibid.)

According to the AHRC researcher, prior to 2006 [2], "in very rare cases" human rights organizations provided letters certifying that people were targeted politically or threatened by Maoist groups (AHRC 28 June 2016). The same source further stated that for the period of 2014-2016, organizations "may issue a letter if the case is known to the public, and the case has been covered by the media," however, it continues to be a "rare practice" (ibid.). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

For further information on threat letters sent by Maoists, refer to Response to Information Request NPL105569. For further information on activities of extortion, kidnapping and land capture by Maoist groups and affiliated student groups, refer to Response to Information Request NPL105360.

4. Availability of Fraudulent Support Letters

The AHRC researcher stated that in Nepal "you can easily design a letter head [and] stamp for less than US\$5" (28 June 2016). The same source further gave the opinion that fraudulent support letters would be more difficult to use at the domestic Nepali level than internationally, as the Nepali government would be able to identify forgeries (ibid.).

The NPI representative provided the opinion that "a letter issued by the NHRC is more authentic" than those issued by other human rights groups, adding that to his knowledge "since 2006, no such letters have been issued [by NHRC]" (NPI 24 June 2016.).

According to the HURON Secretary General, their organization "is not aware of forgeries of [HURON] support letters to date" (HURON 12 July 2016).

Further and corroborating information on the availability and prevalence of fraudulent support letters could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. For further information on the availability of fraudulent documents (police reports, medical reports and employment records) in Nepal, please refer to Response to Information NPL105570.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] Nepal uses the "Bikram Sambat" calendar, which is approximately 56 years and 8 months ahead of the Gregorian calendar (Nepali Calendar N.d.). In Nepal, the new year starts in the middle of April (ibid.).

[2] In November 2006, a Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed between the government and Maoist groups that had fought an insurgency since 1996 (Carter Center 20 Aug. 2015, 4).

References

Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC). 28 June 2016. Correspondence from a researcher at the Nepal Desk to the Research Directorate.

[Asian Human Rights Commission \(AHRC\). N.d. "About Us."](#) [Accessed 28 June 2016]

Canada. 12 July 2016. Consulate in Nepal. Correspondence from an official to the Research Directorate.

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Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON). 12 July 2016. Correspondence from a Secretary General to the Research Directorate.

Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON). 1 July 2016. Correspondence from a Secretary General to the Research Directorate.

[Human Rights Organization of Nepal \(HURON\). N.d. a. "About Us."](#) [Accessed 22 June 2016]

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Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC). 27 June 2016. Correspondence from a representative to the Research Directorate.

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Nepal Peacebuilding Initiative. 24 June 2016. Correspondence from a representative to the Research Directorate.

[Nepal Peacebuilding Initiative](#). N.d. "[About Us](#)." [Accessed 28 June 2016]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral Sources: Associate Professor of Political Science, Wright University; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Nepal Office; Nepal – National Human Rights Commission, Superior Court of Justice; Professor of Political Science, Western Michigan University; Research Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; Asia Foundation; BBC; eoi.net; Factiva; Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme; Human Rights Watch; International Crisis Group; IRIN; Jane's Intelligence Review; *República*; NepalMonitor.org; Nepal - National Human Rights Commission; Nepal News; Radio France Internationale; UN – United Nations Development Program, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Nepal, Refworld, Reliefweb; US – Department of State.

Attachments

1. Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON). N.d. "[Twelfth Central Executive Committee \(2069-2072\)](#)." [Accessed 27 June 2016]

2. Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON). N.d. "[Thirteen Central Executive Committee 2072](#)." [Accessed 22 June 2016]

3. Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON). N.d. "[HURON Chapters](#)." [Accessed 22 June 2016]

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