

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: NPL33127
Country: Nepal
Date: 31 March 2008

Keywords: Nepal – People’s Movement – 1991 Elections – Maoist party origins

This response was prepared by the Research & Information Services Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. This research response may not, under any circumstance, be cited in a decision or any other document. Anyone wishing to use this information may only cite the primary source material contained herein.

Questions

1. Please advise if elections were in 2046 (in the Nepalese calendar).
2. Was there a “Maoist” party in these elections?

RESPONSE

1. Please advise if elections were in 2046 (in the Nepalese calendar).

Nepalese calendar

Information on the Nepal Home Page website states that “Nepal follows a different calendar system than in the West... The New Year begins in mid-April. Like the Julian system, there are 12 months, each month beginning around the middle of a Western month.” According to Rajan Nepal’s Date Converter, 2046 in the Nepalese calendar ended in mid-April 1990 (‘Nepali Calendar (Bikram Sambat)’ (undated), Nepal Home Page website <http://www.nepalhomepage.com/reference/calendar/calendar.html> – Accessed 31 March 2008 – Attachment 1; ‘Friday, April 13, 1990 & Saturday, April 14, 1990’, Rajan Nepal’s Date Converter website <http://www.rajan.com/calendar/> – Accessed 31 March 2008 – Attachment 2).

According to the sources consulted, general elections in Nepal were held in May 1991 for the first time in over three decades (‘Insurgency in Nepal’ (undated), Global Security website http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/nepal_insurgency.htm – Accessed 31 March 2008 – Attachment 3).

Election background

According to the available information, in 1989-1990 the *Jana Andolan* (People’s Movement) was launched by a coalition of previously underground political parties, to “restore democracy” in Nepal after 30 years of absolute monarchical rule under the party-less

Panchayat system. Although initially demonstrations were dealt with severely, in April 1990 the king capitulated and dissolved the *Panchayat* system, lifting the ban on political parties. An interim government was sworn in on 19 April 1990, with a cabinet made up of members of the Nepali Congress Party, the communist parties of Nepal, royal appointees, and independents. A new multiparty constitution was promulgated in November 1990. The first general election for 32 years was held in May 1991 (International Crisis Group 2005, *Nepal's Maoists: Their Aims, Structure and Strategy*, Asia Report no.104, 27 October – Attachment 4; Taras, R.C. 2006, 'Rising Insurgency, Faltering Democratisation in Nepal', *Journal of South Asian Development*, vol.1: no.1, pp.51-76 <http://sad.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/1/1/51.pdf> – Accessed 11 July 2006 – Attachment 5; 'Insurgency in Nepal' (undated), Global Security website http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/nepal_insurgency.htm – Accessed 31 March 2008 – Attachment 3).

The Global Security website states:

Leftist parties united under a common banner of the United Left Front and joined forces with the Nepali Congress Party to launch strikes and demonstrations in the major cities of Nepal. This "movement to restore democracy" was initially dealt with severely, with more than 50 persons killed by police gunfire and hundreds arrested. In April, the king capitulated. Consequently, he dissolved the *Panchayat* system, lifted the ban on political parties, and released all political prisoners. An interim government was sworn in on April 19, 1990, headed by Krishna Prasad Bhattarai as prime minister presiding over a cabinet made up of members of the Nepali Congress Party, the communist parties of Nepal, royal appointees, and independents ('Insurgency in Nepal' (undated), Global Security website http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/nepal_insurgency.htm – Accessed 31 March 2008 – Attachment 3).

2. Was there a "Maoist" party in these elections?

According to the available information the Maoist movement in Nepal emerged in the late 1960s as a revolutionary, ultra-left alternative to the official communist party. Various splinter groups emerged, as did the leadership of today's Maoists. Raymond Taras, in a 2006 journal paper, states that the core of the Maoist insurgency came from a 1985 breakaway faction named the Communist Party of Nepal (Mashal) (CPN-Mashal), led by Prachanda. Four leftist parties, including CPN-Mashal, merged to form the Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre) (CPN-Unity Centre) following the 1990 People's Movement. Prachanda became the general secretary of the CPN-Unity Centre. The United People's Front (UPF) became the political wing of the CPN-Unity Centre and contested the 1991 parliamentary election, winning nine seats (Taras, R.C. 2006, 'Rising Insurgency, Faltering Democratisation in Nepal', *Journal of South Asian Development*, vol.1: no.1, pp.51-76 <http://sad.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/1/1/51.pdf> – Accessed 11 July 2006 – Attachment 5).

According to information from the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) website, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN-M) itself was formed following a split in the CPN-Unity Centre and the UPF in 1995. This information states:

The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M)...was formed in 1995 following a split in the Communist Party of Nepal-Unity Centre. A radical faction led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal alias Comrade Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai set up the CPN-Maoist and denounced the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninists) or the CPN (UML) and other mainstream communist factions as 'renegades' and 'revisionists' due to their participation in

the parliamentary process. It resorted to an armed struggle on February 13, 1996, by attacking police stations in the Rukum and Rolpa districts in northwestern Nepal and thereby declaring a 'People's War' in Nepal.

Earlier, various communist groups had actively participated in the People's Movement of 1989-90 operating under the umbrella organisation of United National People's Movement (UNPM). However, after the conclusion of the People's Movement, these groups were not satisfied with the multi-party democratic system under constitutional monarchy. In order to contest the May 1991 elections, they formed a two-tier organisation, revolutionary front and political front, known as the Communist Party of Nepal-Unity Centre and United People's Front of Nepal (UPFN) respectively. The UPFN emerged as the third largest group in the Parliament and also performed well in the local bodies' elections of 1992. Gradually, however, ideological and personality clashes led to the disintegration of Unity Centre and the UPFN split into two factions, led by Nirmal Lama and Niranjana Govind Vaidya at one end and Comrade Prachanda and Bhattarai on the other end. Subsequently, the decision by Prachanda not to participate in the 1994 elections led to the creation of CPN-M in 1995 as an underground outfit [researcher emphasis added] ('Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist' (undated), South Asia Terrorism Portal website <http://www.satp.org/satporgrp/countries/nepal/terroristoutfits/index.html> – Accessed 31 March 2008 – Attachment 6).

In a 2000 interview Prachanda reminisces about the years leading up to 1995, which is described as "the year of preparation before the initiation". He states that after the Cultural Revolution in China, there was intense ideological debate within the existing Communist Party in Nepal, which finalized "Marxism-Leninism-Maoism" as the ideology of a particular group within the party in 1986, and also produced the people who were to be the "leadership team" of the Maoists. Prachanda states that, prior to launching the People's War in 1996,

there was another debate over questions of how to initiate People's War. Our party was so much influenced by rightist tendencies. At the same time, we had indirectly participated in the elections, and we had 11 members in the parliament, nine in the lower house and two in the upper house. And that also had a big influence inside our party circles-the rightist influence was there.

That was a big challenge for our party, how to make a leap. The party was so much encircled by rightist revisionism, petty bourgeois tendencies, all these things. And many people were working openly. Although I want to mention and give more stress to the fact that our main leadership team was not working openly at that time. There were our MPs (members in the parliament) who were public. But our main PBMs (polit-bureau members) and comrades and main regional leaders and main district leaders were not open, they were underground. There was parliamentary work but the main party organizational mechanism was underground at that time (Onesto, L. 2000, 'Red flag flying on the roof of the world', Human Rights and People's War in Nepal web site, reprinted from the *Revolutionary Worker* #1043, 20 February http://www.humanrights.de/n/nepal/politics/200200_prachand_interview_cl.htm – Accessed 18 December 2001 – Attachment 7).

Also see: Curtis, T. 2004, 'Nepal' in *Revolutionary and Dissident Movements of the World*, ed. B. Szajkowski, 4th edn, John Harper, London – Attachment 8.

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Research & Information database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. 'Nepali Calendar (Bikram Sambat)' (undated), Nepal Home Page website <http://www.nepalhomepage.com/reference/calendar/calendar.html> – Accessed 31 March 2008.
2. 'Friday, April 13, 1990 & Saturday, April 14, 1990', Rajan Nepal's Date Converter website <http://www.rajan.com/calendar/> – Accessed 31 March 2008.
3. 'Insurgency in Nepal' (undated), Global Security website http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/nepal_insurgency.htm – Accessed 31 March 2008.
4. International Crisis Group 2005, *Nepal's Maoists: Their Aims, Structure and Strategy*, Asia Report no.104, 27 October.
5. Taras, R.C. 2006, 'Rising Insurgency, Faltering Democratisation in Nepal', *Journal of South Asian Development*, vol.1: no.1, pp.51-76
<http://sad.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/1/1/51.pdf> – Accessed 11 July 2006.
6. 'Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist' (undated), South Asia Terrorism Portal website <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/nepal/terroristoutfits/index.html> – Accessed 31 March 2008.
7. Onesto, L. 2000, 'Red flag flying on the roof of the world', Human Rights and People's War in Nepal web site, reprinted from the *Revolutionary Worker* #1043, 20 February
http://www.humanrights.de/n/nepal/politics/200200_prachand_interview_cl.htm – Accessed 18 December 2001.
8. Curtis, T. 2004, 'Nepal' in *Revolutionary and Dissident Movements of the World*, ed. B. Szajkowski, 4th edn, John Harper, London. (RRT Library)