

## Religious minorities under threat in South Asia:

### How targeted violence and hostile laws are undermining the freedom of religious minorities

# Nepal

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## Response of Nepal on UN Resolution, Human Rights and Religious Freedom

### I. NEPAL AND UNITED NATIONS

As a sovereign country, willing and capable of fulfilling obligations as member state, Nepal joined the United Nations on **December 14, 1955** adhering to the purposes and principles of the organization (<http://www.un.int/wcm/content/site/nepal/>).

Nepal is party to almost all the major human rights treaties. It has approved the four 1949 Geneva Conventions but none of the three Additional Protocols and very few of the conventions on weapons. It is also not a party to the 1998 Rome Statute for an International Criminal Court.

*Nepal is party to 20 international human rights covenants/conventions/protocols including 7 (seven) core international Human Rights Instruments.* The core instruments include; **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (**ICESCR**), Convention on the Rights of the Child (**CRC**), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (**CEDAW**), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (**ICERD**), Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (**CAT**) and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (**CRPD**). Nepal is also a party to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Aiming at the Abolition of Death Penalty. Nepal has ratified 11 (eleven) ILO conventions including 7 of the 8 core

conventions<sup>1</sup>. (Source: <http://www.mofa.gov.np/en/nepal-and-the-united-nations-1955-2012-117.html#sthash.gSgPnUQf.dpuf> ).

Nepal has pledged her commitment to implementing the internationally accepted norms and practices with regard to human rights.

Thus as per her commitment and her being the party of ICCPR, the article 18<sup>2</sup> of which clearly states ones freedom to practice ones religion, Nepal thus commits to promote religious freedom in Nepal.

## II. NEPAL'S RESPONSE TO UN CHARTERS

As being the member state of the UN and having been party of and ratified so many of the conventions, Nepal has been applying various strategies and has been closely working with the UN system to fulfill its commitment.

*The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)*, an independent statutory body was established in 2000. NHRC has now been elevated to the status of a powerful constitutional body under the Interim Constitution 2007. It is responsible for investigation and monitoring of the human rights situation. It also examines complaints of alleged human rights violations and monitors human rights developments. NHRC may recommend remedial measures, if required. The International Coordination Committee of the national human rights institutions reviewed the status of the NHRC and in recognition of its active role as human rights watchdog, decided to continue to accord status A to the Commission.

*The National Human Rights Commission Act, 2012*, has been promulgated, containing a range of provisions in line with international standards.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11200:0::NO:11200:P11200\\_COUNTRY\\_ID:103197](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11200:0::NO:11200:P11200_COUNTRY_ID:103197)

<sup>2</sup> **Article 18**

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.
2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.
3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.
4. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

The Government of Nepal signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) in December 2004 for the technical assistance to strengthen the capacity of the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal. (<http://www.mofa.gov.np/>)

The Government is implementing **3-year National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP)** that seeks to translate into action the commitments made by Nepal in the area of human rights and related issues. The NHRAP covers such areas as education and culture, health, environment and sustainable development, indigenous, ethnic, Dalit, disabled, and senior citizens, women's rights, child's rights, law reform, justice administration and management, prison management and reform, labour and employment, conflict management and institutional strengthening (<http://www.mofa.gov.np/>).

**UNOHCHR** established its office in Nepal to monitor and investigate the human rights situation in the country as per the MOU of 2005. The Office presented its first report to Geneva in May 2007. Though the tenure of UNOHCHR Office expired a couple of times, extensions were made by GoN till 9 June 2010. This tenure was further extended for another one year with revised mandate focusing on capacity building of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). OHCHR -Nepal terminated its all activities from January 2012.

Beside these events Nepal has formulated various laws and policies in order to address her commitment to upholding her commitments to UN resolutions. (Please read annex 1 for more information).

**Human Rights Cells in Security Forces:** The Nepal Police, APF, and Nepal Army have HRCs. The Nepal Army and Nepal Police HRCs have independent investigative powers. The Nepal Army's investigations were not fully transparent, but the Nepal Police worked with human rights activists to increase transparency. From July 2012 to July 2013, the Nepal Police HRC reported 93 complaints, which resulted in the punishment of 13 police officers. After July it received an additional 43 complaints. The Nepal Army HRC maintained that it had investigated 70 percent of human rights allegations against the Nepal Army and had punished 177 personnel. (2013 Human Rights Report: Nepal)

In spite of all these initiatives, violations of rights is a major problem in Nepal. (Please refer to annex 2 for some examples on human rights violation)

### III. **RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND PERSECUTIONS**

Though being party to ICCPR, the article 18 of which states ones freedom to practice ones religion, religious persecutions, especially targeting the Christians, have been seen in various forms.

In regards to political/legal aspect Nepal has not always been hostile to Christian missionaries and preaching of Christianity. There were eras when the Christian missionaries were invited by the rulers to preach the faith<sup>3</sup>.

#### **Prior to 1768: Initial Mission Efforts**

In 1628 the Malla King, Laxmi Narsingh Malla, invited Jesuit priests to preach Christianity. In 1661 two priests were welcomed to Nepal. In 1707 two Capuchin priest started a mission center in Kathmandu.

#### **1769 to 1950: Dark Era**

On February 4, 1769 King Prithivi Narayan Shah after his victory over Malla kings, exiled the missionaries along with 14 Newar Christian families. Then after, until 1951 the doors were closed for all missionaries.

#### **1951 to 1961: Resumption of Mission Efforts**

The decade marked the resumption of mission efforts with the establishment of various St. Xavier's School (Jesuit school) and a Catholic Church. From 1952 protestant missions started in Nepal with the starting of churches in Pokhara, Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur.

#### **1962 to 1990: Hindu Kingdom and Persecution of Christians**

As per the amendment made to the *Muluki Ain* (General Code of Nepal) in 1965, changing ones religion became punishable by law. Further in 1968, Nepal was declared a Hindu State. This brought once again an end to religious freedom in Nepal and the Christians were openly and legally persecuted in various ways.

#### **1991 to 2006: Increase in Number of Christians and Persecutions**

After the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1991 Nepal saw a rise in the number of Christians while the Christians were persecuted in various ways by families, societies, Maoist rebels, armed/underground groups and the State.

#### **2007 Onwards: Persecution in the form of Impunity**

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<sup>3</sup> Further reference: <http://nepalchurch.com/2692/2692/>

In 2007 Nepal was declared Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal and the Interim Constitution 2007 has been in effect since then. Nepal was also declared a secular state on January 15, 2007. Though it has been declared a secular state, persecution of Christians has now taken different form. These can be categorized as:

1. **Political/Legal**
2. **Socio-cultural**
3. **Media and Communication**

### 1. **Political/Legal**

Though Nepal has been declared a secular state no laws specifically affecting freedom of religion have been changed. The Interim Constitution also specifically denies the right to convert another person. It also states "no person shall be entitled to convert another person from one religion to another and shall not take actions or behave in a way that would create disturbance in another's religion."

As per the *Institute on Religion and Public Policy Report: Religious Freedom in Nepal*: The 19th clause of the interim constitution guarantees the freedom of religion, but limits it so that "no person shall be entitled to convert another person from one religion to another." It states, "every person shall have the freedom to profess and practice his own religion as handed down to him from ancient times having due regard to traditional practices," and "every religious denomination shall have the right to maintain its independent existence and for this purpose to manage and protect its religious places and trusts." The Nepalese government is responsible for some instances of religious discrimination. In particular the long standing ban on proselytizing is discriminatory against Christians and other groups for whom conversion is a key element of their faith.

In spite of being declared a secular state, pro-Hindu laws have still not been changed. These laws include:

- The law prohibits the killing or intended killing of cows. Penalties for violating this law include twelve years in prison.
- The law allows personal conversion to a different religion, but the interim constitution and criminal code prohibit proselytizing, which is punishable by fines, imprisonment, or, for foreigners, expulsion. The definition of proselytizing still remains unclear.
- Some pro-Hindu Constituent Assembly members proposed a bill on "Anti-conversion Law" (Criminal Code on Religion) in June 2011<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <http://nepalchurch.com/3265/ncs-press-release-english-translation/>

- The government does not require mosques to register, but madrassahs seeking government funding must register with local district administration offices (part of the Home Ministry) and supply information about their funding sources.
- Members of non-Hindu minority religious groups expressed concern over a perceived lack of representation in top political and government positions and a lack of government resources to support religious sites belonging to minority religious groups.
- There are no registration requirements for religious groups. However they are prevented from owning land, an important step for establishing churches, mosques, synagogues, or burial sites.

Note: While laws on proselytizing are on the books, it would appear that the state does not normally initiate and conduct legal proceedings against people for proselytizing on its own accord. As indicated by the Asian Center for Theology and Mission in 2000: ...of the many Nepali citizens who have been converted to Christ and baptized, only a very few have been arrested, brought to trial, and given jail sentences. The government has chosen to take an attitude of “benign neglect” toward the law. Conversion to Christ is considered a “non-cognizable” offense, and arrest and prosecution will be made only if someone makes a definite and determined complaint and charge against the new Christian (‘Nepal’ 2000, The Asian Center for Theology and Mission—Resource Centre website <http://www.acts.edu/oldmissions/nepalhist.html> - Accessed 24 August 2005 – Attachment 5).

## 2. Socio-cultural

***Christian sources also report that conversion remains a courageous act in Nepal and that “Christians still face ostracism and isolation from family members, neighborhoods and even entire villages in many cases”***

The US Department of State’s 2004 International Religious Freedom report states that:

[t]hose who convert to other religions may face isolated incidents of violence and sometimes are ostracized socially, but generally they do not fear to admit their affiliations in public... Those who choose to convert to other religions, in particular Hindu citizens who convert to Islam or Christianity, sometimes are ostracized socially. Some reportedly have been forced to leave their villages. While this prejudice is not systematic, it can be vehement and occasionally violent.

Hindus who convert to another religion may face isolated incidents of hostility or discrimination from Hindu extremist groups. Nevertheless, converts generally are not afraid to admit in public their new religious affiliations (US Department of State 2004, Nepal: International Religious Freedom Report for 2004, 15 September – Attachment 7) Christian

sources also report that conversion remains a courageous act in Nepal and that “Christians still face ostracism and isolation from family members, neighborhoods and even entire villages in many cases” (‘Where folks go to church on Saturday’ 2004, Global Ministries website, September <http://www.globalministries.org/missionaries/sa10-wr3.htm> - Accessed 31 August 2005 – Attachment 14). Christian sources also note that the repercussions of converting can “include...being killed” (‘Nepal’ 2000, Mission Review website cache of <http://missionreview.com/index.php?loc=ct&ct=NPL&> – Accessed 31 August 2005 – Attachment 30).

Many Christians are ill-treated, esp. in the police, the army and other government offices because of their faith.

Christians as yet, do not have a proper cemetery provided by the State neither do the communities allow Christians to have a proper burial site. The community did not even allow the Christians to use the lands bought by the Christians themselves.

### **3. Media and Mass Communication**

Media and mass communication are often used as means of persecuting Christians. News, both published and electronic, do not publish Christian-friendly articles. News are often biased towards Christians and release negative news that encourage violence towards the Christians. Social media such as the facebook is widely used to demoralize Christians often writing abusive statements.

#### **IV. RELIGIOUS PERSECUTIONS: SOME EXAMPLES**

**These are just a few examples which came in the media**

- According to the “Nepal 2012 International Religious Freedom Report” Christian groups report that "Hindu extremism" continued. In July police arrested two individuals from a criminal organization who threatened to bomb churches and kidnap church leaders if the churches did not meet their extortion demands. In August a Catholic church reported threatening phone calls from an alleged radical Hindu group demanding money.
- In March 2013 police detained two Buddhist/Hindu Tamang youths in Lalitpur for slaughtering a cow and locals vandalized their home.
- (Christianity Today website, 12 February <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/107/37.0.html> - Accessed 23 August 2005 – Attachment 6); US Department of State 2004, **‘Indian couple arrested on charges of religious conversion’ 2005.** An Indian couple who ran a school for orphans in southern Nepal were arrested “for their alleged involvement in



converting students to Christianity”. As indicated by the sources consulted, the couple “was taken into custody by district authorities after complaints were received that “the couple were forcing students of the school to adopt Christianity”. They were **detained for about 2 weeks** before being released. Babu and Sabitri Varghese were arrested on April 27 after a disgruntled former employee stole a photo of an adult's baptism from a photo album and told the police that the couple was baptizing Hindu children into Christianity. According to Janis Viren, president of EquipNepal, an American charity that provides financial support to the orphanage, the former employee had tried to extort money from the Vargheses. When that failed, he gave the photo to police and made accusations that were printed in a local newspaper... According to Babu, the newspaper editors printed an initial report and then demanded 100,000 rupees (\$2,300) from the Vargheses. When the couple refused to pay, the newspaper printed another photo, along with calls for Babu and his wife to be jailed for six years for forced conversions.

On April 1, a police officer called at the Varghese home and asked the couple to appear for questioning. On April 21 they were summoned again but despite waiting for hours, the Chief District Officer (CDO) spoke with them for just a few minutes, reportedly accusing them of "teaching the Bible and teaching prayers and making Christians. **Don't you know this is a Hindu country?**" he said.

On April 22, the Vargheses were questioned for four-and-a-half hours by a man who they recognized as the leader of Arya Samaj, a Hindu organization which had previously criticized their work at the orphanage. The couple was summoned again on April 27 and this time was taken into custody

- In February 2003, 3 **Christians were arrested and detained by police for proselytising in the Pyuthan district after police found “Bibles and Christian literature” in their bags.** They were detained for about **5 months** before the charges were dropped. The men were released on 11 September 2003. In this instance, the police appear to have instigated the arrest on their own accord (‘Three Christians detained for ‘Proselytizing’” 2003, The Christian Post website, 17 March)
  
- A **Norwegian national, Trond Berg, was arrested on 29 October 2000, along with Nepalese and Indian nationals,** on the allegedly trumped up charge of proselytizing. He was **detained for three and a half months** before the case against him was dismissed at trial. According to media accounts, Berg was arrested after “being attacked by a mob. It was led by a man who claimed the Norwegian church had promised to pay him \$1,000 if he converted” (‘Four Christians Released in Nepal’ 2001, Christianity Today website, 12 February <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/107/37.0.html> - Accessed 23 August 2005 –



Attachment 6; 'Indian couple held in Nepal for alleged conversions' 2005, The Hindustan Times, 29 April – Attachment 9)

- **Bombing in Catholic Church: Nepal Defense Army**, a Hindu armed extremist group, bombed a Catholic Church on 2009-05-24 at around 9:15 a.m. during a regular Saturday prayer service in Lalitpur Metropolis. Two people, Mrs. Elishi Joseph of Patna (India) and a local Mrs. Deepa Baidhya, were killed in the incident while 12 others sustained major injuries.
- **About 2 years ago, Pastor Uttam Kumar Rai was imprisoned for some time and had to pay a fine of Rs. 200,000** (approx. USD 2,000). This happened in a remote town called Hile of Dhankuta district. He was accused of converting to Christianity and burning the statues of Buddha after his conversion. The police had taken action based on complaints from his neighbours.
- In 1998 a group of locals of Lalgadh, Bardibas attacked and vandalized a local church.
- 1999 Gorkha: a body of a Christian who had been buried in Barpak was dug up and forced to bury elsewhere.
- Gumda, Gorkha: In 2000 a Church was destroyed and 11 Christian families were forced to leave the village. In 2002 three other Christian families were forced to leave the village.
- **Sindhupalchow, 2007: Christians were forced to dig up a dead body that had been buried for 3 days. Such incident have been reported in more than 10 other places.**
- Setopati Online News, February 26, 2014: Mrs. **Dil Shova, a Christian social worker running an orphanage and an old-age home, was accused of sexually exploiting the people under her care and converting the orphans to Christianity.** (<http://setopati.com/chapa-bata/8878/>)
- The same online news recently (September 5, 2014) **accused Ms. Anju Panta, a famous Nepali professional singer of disrespecting the Hindus by not singing a song for the Hindu festival.** (<http://setopati.com/kala/17041/>)

- Pastor Mahesh Thanju along with 39 church leaders and Believers were arrested on June 30, 2014 for baptizing 24 people. <https://barnabasfund.org/UK/News/Archives/Hindus-pressure-police-to-arrest-40-Christians-in-Nepal.html?&quicksearch=nepal>

**Sources:**

<http://www.ohchr.org/>

[http://www.christianpost.com/article/asia/110/full/three\\_christians\\_detained\\_for\\_%E2%80%99](http://www.christianpost.com/article/asia/110/full/three_christians_detained_for_%E2%80%99)

Nepal 2012 International Religious Freedom Report

Nepal 2013 Human Rights Report

Nepal 2013 International Religious Freedom Report

Report of the Human Rights Council On Its Twenty-Second Session, Vice-President And  
Rapporteur: Mr. Luis Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador)

<https://barnabasfund.org/UK/News/Archives/Hindus-pressure-police-to-arrest-40-Christians-in-Nepal.html?&quicksearch=nepal>

<http://setopati.com/chapa-bata/8878/>

<http://setopati.com/kala/17041/>

## Annex 1: Laws and Policies Promoting UN Resolutions

- **Arbitrary Arrest**: except in cases involving **suspected security and narcotics violations or when the crime's punishment would be more than three years' imprisonment**, authorities must obtain an arrest warrant and present the suspect to a court within 24 hours of arrest (not including travel time). **If the court upholds a detention**, the law generally authorizes police to hold the suspect for up to **25 days to complete an investigation**. In **special cases (e.g., suspected acts of terrorism)**, a suspect can be held for up to **six months**. **Detainees have the legal right to receive visits by family members, but family access to prisoners varied from prison to prison**. There is a system of bail, but bonds were too expensive for most citizens.
- **Freedom of Speech**: **Generally citizens can voice their opinions freely. Citizens often voiced critical opinions in print and electronic media without any restrictions, but the government limited freedom of expression for the Tibetan community, restricting public demonstrations that the government interpreted as favoring Tibetan independence.**
- **Censorship or Content Restrictions**: **The interim constitution provides that media licenses cannot be annulled based on the content of what is printed or broadcast.**
- **Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association**: The law provides for freedom of assembly and association; however, the government sometimes restricted freedom of assembly.
- **Nepal's Interim Constitution 2007**:
  - The Interim Parliament, through the Interim Constitution, **officially declared the country a secular state in January 2007.**
  - The Interim Constitution provides for **freedom to practice one's religion**.
  - The interim constitution of 2007 states in its eleventh clause, **"the state shall not discrimination citizens among citizens on grounds of religion, race, sex, caste, tribe or ideological conviction."**
  - **Article 23 of the Interim Constitution protects the rights of all religious groups by guaranteeing the individual the right "to profess and practice his/her own religion as handed down to him/her from ancient times having due regard to traditional practices."**
  - **There were no restrictions on the selling or possession of religious literature.**
  - **Civil servants may take off religious holidays and celebrate them on private property without government interference.**

## Annex 2: Some Examples of HR Violations

- **Abuses of Freedom of Expression:** In September activists from the World Hindu Federation reportedly threatened an artist in Kathmandu for “outrageous portrayals” of Hindu gods at an exhibition of his works at a local art gallery. A case was filed at the district administration office accusing the artist of blasphemy and the police responded by padlocking the gallery. The charges were dropped after the gallery removed the exhibition.
- **Human Rights Violation:** Nepal in terms of Human Rights Ranking ranks 156<sup>th</sup> out of 216 countries.
  - Impunity for wartime abuses. The government has also promoted government officials and security force members suspected of involvement in human rights abuses.
  - Discrimination on the basis of caste, ethnicity, religion, gender, economic situation and disability persist.
  - The **continued absence of transitional justice mechanisms**, such as a truth and reconciliation commission to **account for past human rights abuses; and the related failure to implement court-ordered arrests of military personnel, Maoists, and other individuals accused or convicted of human rights violations stemming from the country’s 10-year insurgency.**
  - Other human rights problems included **poor prison and detention center conditions.**
  - **Corruption** existed at all levels of government and police, and the courts remained vulnerable to political pressure, bribery, and intimidation.
  - **The government sometimes restricted freedom of assembly. The government limited freedoms for refugees, particularly for the Tibetan community.**
  - **Discrimination against women** was a problem, and citizenship laws that discriminate by gender contributed to statelessness. **Domestic violence** against women remained a serious problem, and **dowry-related deaths** occurred. Violence against children was widespread, although rarely prosecuted, and **sex trafficking** of adults and minors remained a serious problem.
  - **Discrimination against persons with disabilities, some ethnic groups, and persons with HIV/AIDS continued. Violence associated with caste-based discrimination occurred.** There were some restrictions on worker rights, and forced, bonded, and child labor remained significant problems.
- **Violations of Censorship or Content Restrictions:** On January 18, the Film Development Board declined to issue a screening permit for the film *Badshala* **because the actors wore official Nepal Army uniforms without permission, which the law prohibits.** The media reported that the real reason the Defense Department requested the action was because the film depicted alleged Nepal Army torture during the conflict. In April the government lifted the ban, and the movie was shown in the country.

- **A decreasing number of armed groups, largely in the Tarai region, attacked civilians, government officials, members of particular ethnic groups, and each other.** Members of the Maoist-affiliated All Nepal National Independent Students Union-Revolutionary (ANNISU-R) were responsible for extortion, intimidation, and school bus burnings. Armed groups were responsible for **abductions to obtain ransom, mainly in the Tarai region.**
- Impunity for conflict-era human rights violations continued to be a serious problem in the absence of a truth and reconciliation commission and a disappearances commission.
- Although the interim constitution of 2007 requires that torture be criminalized, the law does not have clear guidelines for punishing offenders. The Torture Compensation Act provides for compensation for victims of torture; the victim must file a complaint and pursue the case through the courts. According to Advocacy Forum (AF), a local human rights nongovernmental organization (NGO), at least 17 abuse cases were filed with the Nepal Police during the year, adding to 140 cases filed since 2007, 46 of which have not yet been resolved. Of the pending cases, as of August the judicial system had awarded compensation in four cases. During the year the Nepal Police HRC reported receiving 11 torture complaints, which are subject to ongoing investigations.

### Annex 3: Religious freedom in Nepal by [David Griffiths](#)

As the Nepali people prepare a new constitution, they should be careful that it expands, rather than limits, religious freedom

The constituent assembly has declared Nepal a secular state, but there is an increasing resistance to the nation's new identity, seemingly fuelled by Hindu nationalists in India. If Nepal is to see through its transition to pluralist democracy, the right to freedom of religion and belief will need to be protected carefully in the new constitution. However, the current interim constitution, and proposals for a new constitution, suggest there is a long way to go before this happens. One major problem area is religious conversion. The interim constitution says that nobody shall be entitled "to convert another person from one religion to another" and one of the two constitutional proposals is almost identical to this.

However, religious sensitivities are not best handled by banning conversions, as the interim constitution has done and a new constitutional proposal seeks to do. There are three main reasons.

Firstly, a ban on conversions would be against the international treaties with which Nepal's new constitution should comply. Asma Jahangir, the UN special rapporteur on freedom of religion or

belief, has stated unequivocally that religious freedom "includes carrying out actions to persuade others to believe in a certain religion".

Secondly, it is not clear what it would mean "to convert another person", and this clause could be misused easily to harass religious minorities. The implication of the clause is that a religious conversion comes about by the new convert being acted upon by external forces, while new convert has little or no agency in this process. It is very difficult to define for legal purposes what then constitutes a genuine religious conversion, and legitimate, peaceful activities carried out by any religious group which might conceivably attract new converts would be put at risk of legal reprisals.

This leads to a third problem, that legislating specifically against religious conversions only serves to fuel prejudice and intolerance against religious minority groups. Jahangir recently spoke out strongly against the similar anti-conversion laws in India, stating that they "are being used to belittle Christians and Muslims". Vilification all-too-often leads to violence, as many Christians or Muslims in India could testify.