



3.1.2012

NEPAL | CSW concerned by arrest of lawyers protesting against constitution delays

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is concerned by reports that police arrested 166 lawyers in Kathmandu on February 24, for participating in a protest demanding that the peace process and constitution be completed by the end of May deadline after four previous deadline extensions.

An estimated 800 lawyers belonging to the Nepal Bar Association (NBA) were involved in the protest on February 24. Following speeches at the NBA premises, they attempted to walk to Ratnapark, but were prevented by police from walking through the prohibited area around the Supreme Court. Struggles ensued, and the lawyers sat down in the road, shouting slogans against police intervention. Later, police arrested 166 lawyers, who were held in custody until 6.30 pm, when they were released.

CSW's Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "There is a clear need for the peace process to be brought to a close and for Nepal to define its new identity as a secular republic. By confronting and arresting lawyers who were exercising their democratic right to protest, the police simply risk compounding widespread public frustration about the delays in the process. There are concerns that the government of Nepal is refusing to recognize the urgency of constitutional priorities within the peace process, or recognize legitimate democratic pressure to meet urgent deadlines. CSW continues to urge Constituent Assembly members to do their utmost to meet the new deadline, and to ensure that the new constitution protects human rights in a manner consistent with the international human rights framework, including full guarantees for freedom of religion or belief."