



5.29.2012

NEPAL | Deep uncertainty as constitutional deadline passes without agreement

Nepal has been plunged into a state of deep uncertainty after political leaders failed to agree a new constitution by the deadline on May 27.

Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai responded to the crisis by calling elections, to be held on November 22, and said he would lead a caretaker government in the meantime. A key partner in the national unity government which Bhattarai constituted in early May condemned the move, and several parties have resigned from the coalition.

Recently, the key point of contention for the constitution has been whether or not states within a federal Nepal should be established along ethnic lines. Thousands of people on both sides of the debate were protesting around the Constituent Assembly in Kathmandu yesterday, with police at one point using batons and teargas to prevent one group breaking through a security cordon.

The Constituent Assembly, created in 2008, has a dual role of drafting the new constitution and functioning as an interim legislature. It was tasked with “creating a political system that fully complies with universally accepted fundamental human rights”. The original constitutional deadline of May 2010 has been extended four times. On November 25, 2011, the Supreme Court issued a controversial ruling that it could not be extended again.

CSW’s South Asia Team Leader, David Griffiths, said, “The passing of the constitutional deadline without any agreement is a huge blow to Nepal’s future. The constitution was supposed to complete the transition to a secular, democratic republic, and the hopes of the people have been profoundly disappointed. There are now rising fears of instability or violence. We sincerely hope that the Nepal’s political leaders will now work together in the national interest and that they will be able to regain the faith of the people”.

Notes to Editors:

1. Please include the following linked text in any online articles using the above information: Find out more about [religious freedom in Nepal](#) from Christian Solidarity Worldwide.