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UN Human Rights Office raises serious concerns with the term extension of Colonel Raju Basnet

KATHMANDU – The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal today expresses serious concern regarding the Nepal Government’s decision to extend the tenure of Nepal Army officer Raju Basnet by two years.

On 26 May 2006 OHCHR released the report of its investigation into alleged arbitrary detention, torture and disappearance of persons at Maharajgunj Barracks between 2003 and 2005. Throughout this period the barracks were under the control of the Bhairabnath Battalion, commanded by then Lieutenant Colonel Raju Basnet. In 2009, the NHRC also issued recommendations to the Government on the same case. The human rights community, including the NHRC, and OHCHR, has repeatedly called for a credible, competent, impartial and fully independent investigation into the alleged violations committed in Maharajgunj Barracks and other similar incidents which occurred during the conflict period in Nepal.

OHCHR has recommended that state personnel for whom there are credible allegations of involvement in human rights violations should be suspended pending proper investigations. “The extension in tenure of Colonel Raju Basnet together with the absence of any concrete step to initiate a proper investigation into the alleged human rights violations committed at Maharajgunj Barracks is a backward step in ensuring justice for the victims of conflict related human rights violations” said Anthony Cardon, OIC of OHCHR-Nepal.

OHCHR urges the Government of Nepal to reconsider its decision in this matter and to ensure that no further such decisions regarding extension in tenures or promotions of officials implicated in such cases are taken until the completion of full, transparent and impartial investigations.

OHCHR believes that it is time for the Government and all political actors to take concrete measures to ensure that the perpetrators of human rights violations during the conflict are brought to justice. Lack of accountability for those army officials implicated in alleged past human rights violations not only damages the institutional credibility of the Nepal Army but also send a message to the public that there are no consequences for the perpetrators of human rights violations.