



CHILDREN ATTACKED DURING NEPAL PROTESTS WATCHLIST URGENTLY CALLS ON SECURITY FORCES TO HALT EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE AGAINST CHILDREN

April 24, 2006, New York and Kathmandu -- The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict calls on Nepal's security forces to urgently stop using excessive force against children participating in protests. The Nepali government security forces have beaten, shot and used tear gas and other forms of violence against children and adolescents who have participated in protests in Kathmandu and other parts of Nepal. Watchlist further calls on parents and guardians to keep children away from any protest activities that could turn violent. Security forces have shot and beaten children as young as nine years old, resulting in head trauma, skull and bone fractures, gunshot wounds, and other injuries, said Jo Becker, an advocate for Human Rights Watch and member of the Steering Committee of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, who has been monitoring treatment of children during protests in Kathmandu.

Security forces have shown little restraint in assaulting pro-democracy protesters, including children. The government must take immediate steps to end all excessive use of force, and take particular steps to protect children participating in the protests, said, Julia Freedson, Director of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, a global network of non-governmental organizations based in New York. Given children's vulnerability, we strongly urge all adults to carefully mind children's safety and ensure that young people remain far from protests that may turn violent, Freedson continued.

According to interviews conducted by Becker, doctors at two Kathmandu hospitals estimated that at least 10 percent of injured protesters treated were children under the age of 18. Becker has also interviewed several children who have been beaten or shot during protests, including a 14-year old boy who was beaten with a bamboo stick by a police officer. The boy required twelve stitches to his head, suffered temporary paralysis in his hands, and was not able to walk for a week after the attack. Children at protest sites have also been arrested and detained along with adults, according to Kathmandu-based partners of Watchlist. The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict is a network of NGOs that monitors and reports on violations against children in armed conflict. Watchlist is managed by a Steering Committee of leaders in child protection, including CARE International, Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, International Save the Children Alliance, Norwegian Refugee Council, Womens Commission for Refugee Women and Children, World Vision.