
Le Président
The President

**His Majesty the King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev
C/O The Chief of Protocol Division
Protocol Division Ministry of Foreign Affairs Chital News Kathmandu
NEPAL**

Re: Concerns regarding human rights lawyer Mr Jitman Basnet

Your Excellency

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it has also observer representatives from a further eleven European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE writes to you to express its serious concerns over Mr. Jitman Basnet, a prominent human rights lawyer and General Secretary of the Lawyers' Forum for Human Rights, an NGO that works to combat impunity associated with human rights violations in Nepal.

The CCBE is informed that since June 2011, Mr. Jitman Basnet has received death threats, as well as being subjected to an attempted assault by unknown individuals.

The CCBE understands that on 18 and 21 June 2011, Mr. Jitman Basnet received two threatening phone calls to his personal mobile phone. On 18 June 2011, at 7.42pm, an unknown caller rang him and asked him why he was outside his house. When he asked who was on the line, the unknown caller said that he would soon be made aware of who was calling him. On 21 June at 7.00pm, during a phone call from an unknown number, the caller told Mr. Jitman Basnet that he was near his house and said "if you don't meet us soon, you will bear the result. Death is coming". It is reported that the call was made from a public telephone located in Bhaktapur. Since that date, it is understood that Mr. Jitman Basnet has received many calls from multiple unknown numbers; however he has not answered these calls.

Furthermore, it is reported that on 7 July 2011, two unidentified men followed Mr. Jitman Basnet on a motorbike and attempted to apprehend him at a road junction in New Baneshwor, Kathmandu. One of the men tried to reach into his bag while the other man said "grab him" in Nepali. According to the information received, both of the men were wearing jeans, one was wearing a helmet and the other was wearing a mask. Following the incident, on the same date, Mr. Jitman Basnet registered a First Information Report at the Metropolitan Police Station regarding the aforementioned threatening phone calls and the attempted assault.

The CCBE understands that the attempted assault, death threats against, and intimidation of Mr. Jitman Basnet are directly related to his legitimate human rights work, in particular, his efforts to combat the impunity associated with the conflict between the Government and the Maoists.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

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Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Furthermore, Article 23 states that:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organisations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organisation. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognised standards and ethics of the legal profession.

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you to take immediate and effective steps to: carry out a thorough and impartial investigation into the reported assault, death threats and intimidation against human rights lawyer Mr. Jitman Basnet; take measures to guarantee his physical and psychological integrity; and guarantee in all circumstances that human rights lawyers in Nepal are able to conduct their professional duties without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in order to preserve the independence and integrity of the administration of justice.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Dal', with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

GEORGES-ALBERT DAL

President