

## **Year of Political Stability**

The Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC) had completed publication of 27<sup>th</sup> Human Rights Year Book. INSEC began its activism for human rights and social justice in 1990 when democracy was re-established in Nepal after a gap of 30 years. It began publishing the Yearbook that records incidents of human rights violations and abuses in 1992.

Nepal has undergone unprecedented political and social changes in the last 27 years and INSEC has witnessed and professionally documented all the changes the Human Rights Yearbook every year. The Yearbook has not only become a valuable record for conflict victims to claim and receive reparation and relief support but also serves as a valuable reference for researchers, investigators, government officials and the general public. In the process, INSEC has also successfully established itself as a credible human rights watchdog and continues to remain vigilant even after the formal end of decade long (1996-2006) armed conflict.

This year INSEC began reporting and documenting for the Yearbook with provincial offices as hubs for monitoring, with representatives in all 77 districts. INSEC will continue monitoring and recording the human rights situation under the new governance arrangement now in place in the country.

INSEC documentation and data on human rights indicate that despite some improvement in the overall human rights situation in 2018, violence against women and especially the incidents of rape and sexual abuse have increased significantly. Last year, INSEC had recorded about 700 incidents of rape and the number reached more than 1400 in 2018. Further, the increasing incidents of rape of minors is a matter of concern. Details on these incidents are reported in the district section of this Yearbook.

The Yearbook has also documented instances of domestic violence against women. Incidents such as pouring boiling rice on wife, stabbing and killing wife with serving utensils have been observed. In 2018 more than 100 women were killed by a family member. Many of the victims were tortured and killed in dowry-related disputes. As in the past year, INSEC has also recorded one incident of “honor killing”.

Like in the past year Nepal’s prisons remain overcrowded with inmates and detainees. INSEC’s monitors found as many as 239 inmates held in a prison that had a capacity to accommodate 25. In another case, 33 inmates were compelled to use one toilet. The government’s fourth National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) also included the construction of new prison buildings and adding facilities to inmates. But no significant progress was made in 2018.

Most cases related to beating, polygamy, etc. that were registered in court remained pending as a result of which the victims were not able to get justice. This is because “justice delayed is justice denied”. “Truth, service and security” represent the motto of Nepal Police but there was an incident of beating and torture in custody over an incident of theft in 2018 that has not gone unreported by the Yearbook.

Nepal has completed elections to three tiers of government and has begun its journey towards political stability. The country has enacted 18 laws for the implementation of fundamental rights and various commissions, as required by the constitution, are in a process of formation. Several new laws came into force in 2018, including the civil and criminal codes whose implementation remains to be thoroughly examined from a human rights perspective. Similarly, various laws enacted at the local also need to be analyzed in the context of Nepal's international obligations. On the positive side, human rights issues are included in all basic and services-related training provided by the police force. The Nepal Army also regularly trains soldiers on international humanitarian law and human rights.

Effective implementation of legal provisions with zero impunity and making existing laws human rights compliant remain as major tasks for state agencies at all three levels. The human rights situation in Nepal will depend on how fairly the constitutional and legal provisions are implemented.

The Human Rights Yearbook 2019 analyzes the overall analysis of human rights situation in the country and also indicates the challenges that could lie ahead. INSEC extends special thanks to all 77 District Representatives for their special contribution. INSEC is also grateful to all political parties, government administration units, the judiciary, Nepal Police, Nepal Army and leaders of civil society for their support and feedback that was involved in preparing the texts for the Yearbook.

I am also thankful to the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Nepal for the continuous support it has provided towards the publication of this Yearbook since 1992; Bread for the World for institutional support to INSEC for undertaking ground level monitoring, and other national and international donors who have supported its effort to document human rights in Nepal. Finally, I thank all members of the INSEC family who have worked day in and day out in putting together this year's Yearbook. I am also grateful to my colleagues in the INSEC the Executive Committee for their support to the Secretariat and towards the publication of the Human Rights Yearbook 2019.

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