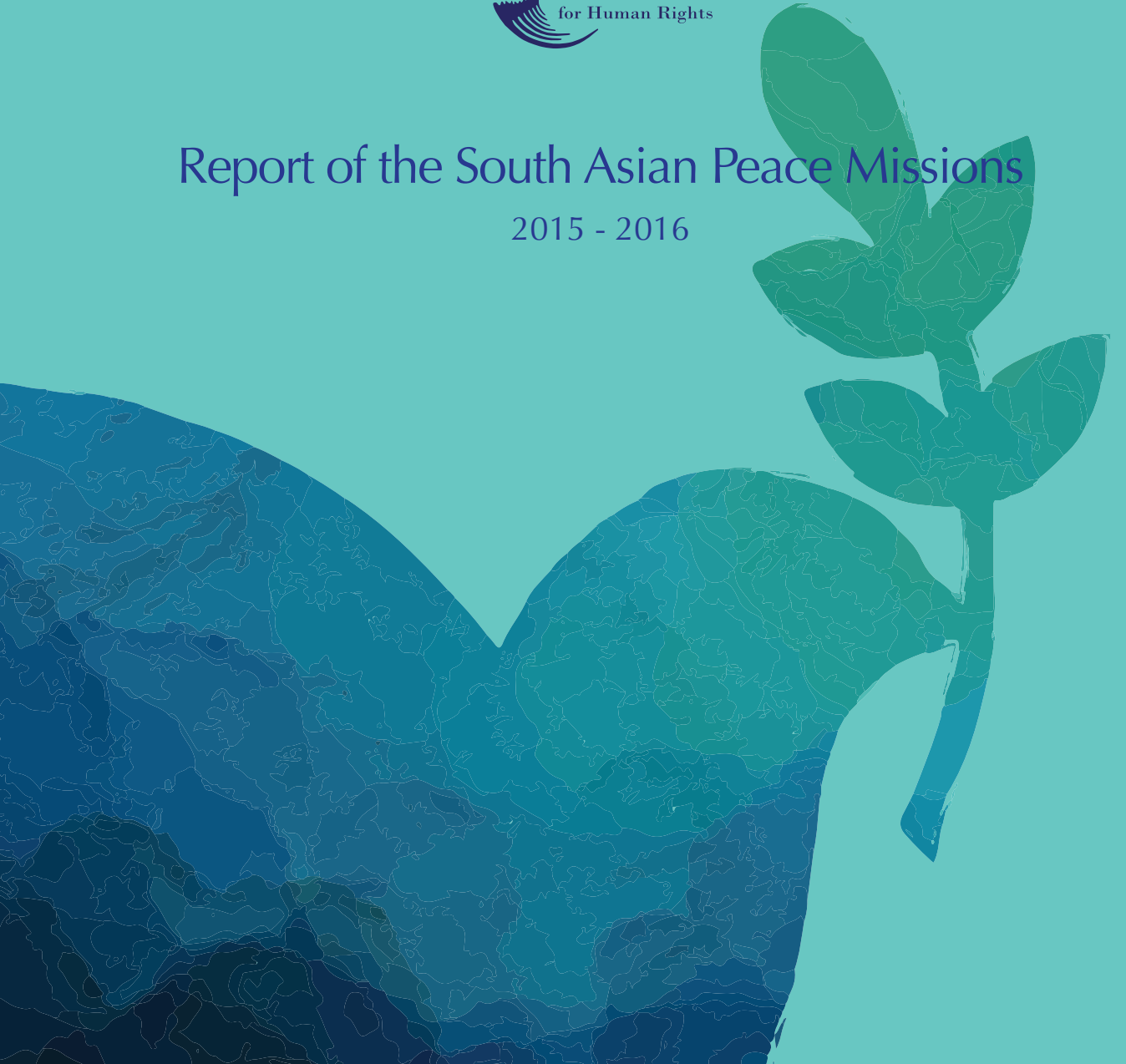




Report of the South Asian Peace Missions

2015 - 2016





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Introduction

South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR) launched three South Asian peace missions from 2015 to 2016. It was undertaken under its programme area of Women, Peace and Security. Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), mostly Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), selected from seven countries visited Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal with the objective of 1) Identifying issues related to conflict with particular focus on women 2) Enhancing information and knowledge of the situation prevailing in these countries and 3) Facilitating greater networking, sharing of information and experiences particularly between WHRDs and provide a platform to advocate and promote women's role in issues related to security and peace building. This initiative has been triggered by the recognition of the importance of women's participation in mainstream debate on security and peace building efforts and towards contributing to a gendered perspectives on security and peace building issues.

The first mission was to Dhaka, Bangladesh on 5 and 6 December 2015. The mission was carried out in the backdrop of the political crisis between Pakistan and Bangladesh owing to the executions of Salauddin Quader Chowdhury of BNP and Ali Ahsan Mohammed of Jamat-e-Islami on 22 November 2015. These two were executed as a result of the sentence passed by the International War Crimes Tribunal set up to look into the atrocities that occurred during the 1971 Liberation war.

The second South Asian Peace Mission was to Sri Lanka from 19 to 21 December 2015. The mission was keen to examine the transitional justice process initiated by the new government that came into power on 8th January 2015. The mission visited war affected areas in the North and the East of the country.

The third mission was to Nepal from 11 to 13 July 2016 and assessed efforts undertaken to mitigate the effects of the ten year internal conflict with focus on women; and to assess the role accorded to women in the transitional justice process including prevention of conflict.

The South Asian Peace Missions entailed the mission members having meetings with government officials, parliamentarians, civil society representatives, heads of UN programmes and affected communities. In Sri Lanka the mission members were also able to visit war affected areas as well while in Nepal the Mission met with the Prime Minister. In Bangladesh the mission met with the International Affairs Advisor to the Prime Minister. All these discussions were useful to understand and experience the issues at hand and to discuss with relevant officials the findings and recommendations of the mission. Upon completing the missions, the members held a press briefing to publicise their recommendations.

Findings of the peace missions

Freedom of expression has been severely curtailed in **Bangladesh** causing life threats to bloggers, journalists, secularists and academics in the past two years.¹ Foreigners have been targeted by religious extremists leading to horrific incidents. People including women have been subjected to enforced disappearances.

As a country which underwent a decade long internal armed conflict, **Nepal** has been in the process of post conflict recovery with its transitional justice process. Due to the conflict 13,000 people lost their lives.² 1,300 people were disappeared. Out of 19,600 combatants, 3846 (8%) were women. Many women suffered from sexual and gender based violence.³ 130 women disappeared; 267 women were abducted; 917 women were killed and 50,000 women were internally displaced.⁴ The Comprehensive Peace Accord agreed between the government and the Maoists stipulated the establishment of Commissions on Truth and Reconciliation and on Enforced Disappearances which commenced its work in 2014.

An almost thirty year protracted civil war between the government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) an armed group of minority Tamils later proscribed as a terrorist group in **Sri Lanka** instigated much destruction in the country.⁵ The war ended in 2009 causing many losses of lives on both sides; internally displaced; women to become widows and female householders; apart from loss of property and livelihoods. The report by the OHCHR specifically exposes the extent of the sexual and the gender based violence, arbitrary arrests and detention, torture, disappearances, extra judicial killings taken place closer to the end of the war and in the immediate aftermath. The 2015 UNHRC resolution co-sponsored by the new government which came into power on 9th January 2015 stipulates the establishment of 1) a Commission for Truth Justice, Reconciliation and Non-Recurrence, and 2) an Office of Missing Persons for truth seeking, 3) a Judicial Mechanism with a Special Counsel, and 4) an Office for Reparations.⁶

¹ Amnesty International. Bangladesh 2015/2016 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/bangladesh/report-bangladesh/>

² Nepal Report by OHCHR http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/NP/OHCHR_Nepal_Conflict_Report2012.pdf

³ Human Rights Watch, 2014. Silenced and Forgotten: Survivors of Nepal's Conflict –era sexual violence, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/09/23/silenced-and-forgotten/survivors-nepals-conflict-era-sexual-violence>

⁴ Extract from the presentation of Mr. Nav Raj Adhikari, Executive Director of the World Vision Advocacy Forum, Nepal at the Regional Consultation on Women, Peace and Security, 22 & 23 January 2016, Colombo Sri Lanka

⁵ Report of the OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka, A/HRC/30/CRP.2, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47447#.V86gSPI97IU>; Report of the Secretary General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations

Actions in Sri Lanka, November 2012, http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri_Lanka/The_Internal_Review_Panel_report_on_Sri_Lanka.pdf; International Coalition for Responsibility to Protect. Report on Crisis in Sri Lanka, <http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/crises/crisis-in-sri-lanka>

⁶ Roar.lk, 2016. Transitional Justice in Sri Lanka: Issues, Challenges and Prospects <http://roar.lk/reports/transitional-justice-sri-lanka-issues-challenges-prospects/>; Consultation Task Force on the Reconciliation Mechanisms, 2016. Interim report: The Office on the Missing Persons' Bill and Issues concerning the Missing, the Disappeared and the Surrendered, http://media.wix.com/ugd/bd81c0_1872d48845bd45afaafa7813ce2c89a0.pdf

The following are the main findings of the peace missions:

On democracy and protection of human rights in the region

- Lack of democracy, lack of self- governance, many forms of repression on freedom of movement, expression, association and above all the freedom of assembly result in the type of frustrations that lead to political tensions, collapse of rule of law and active conflict.
- Conflict causes displacement; poverty and deep suffering of the people, especially women.
- Women and men do not enjoy equal rights in practice despite constitutional stipulations and states' obligations to the international human rights mechanisms because its implementation remains a challenge.
- Women are underrepresented in politics and at decision making level. At certain instances women's quota has been severely abused to achieve any positive outcomes.



- Cultural and religious as well as traditional, patriarchal social attitudes restrain on women's rights and their well being is prevalent, i.e moral offences, honour killing, dowry related harassment etc.
- Poverty and inequality affects a majority of people, especially women, causing them to be more vulnerable to exploitation in numerous ways.
- The essential connectivity among the countries to facilitate close relations among the citizens is compromised by the ideology and *modus operandi* of national security conducted by individual countries, enhancing suspicion and distrust among people in the region.
- Individual security of the people is compromised with the promotion of the national security apparatus.

On post conflict transitional justice mechanisms and their effectiveness:

- Involvement of non-state actors against the state machinery and the geographical vulnerabilities have complicated processes of transitional justice, peace building efforts and development mechanisms.
- Transitional Justice Mechanisms set up by prevailing governments by way of Truth Commissions, Commissions inquiring into disappearances have failed to win the trust of the conflict affected people, survivors as well as the victims, due to the irregularities of their formulation or their mode of operation.
- Women's representation in the post conflict transitional justice mechanism has been distorted by the politicisation of these institutions.
- The processes of transitional justice have been set up mostly as fulfilling political goals rather than the means to bring about reconciliation and justice to the victims and the survivors; consultation of the people on the subject is undermined when the actual policy drafting takes place with the involvement of the technocrats and the bureaucrats.
- Coordination among the institutions entailing transitional justice mechanism to bring about a holistically effective reconciliation is lacking.

Conclusions

- In order to achieve a long lasting peace, harmony among communities and authentic reconciliation leading to sustainable development, peoples' voices, especially women's should be essentially included in the national as well as regional mainstream security discourse.
- Meaningful inclusion of women should be promoted both at national and regional level, for the effective functioning of transitional justice mechanisms at national level.
- Consultative processes should be held among state actors, and non state actors as well as the civil society to arrive at best possible solutions to facilitate women and children in conflict situations.



Meetings conducted by the South Asian Peace Missions

In Bangladesh the mission met

- Law Students of the State University of Bangladesh, Dhanmondi Campus
- Representatives of the Civil Society
- Mr. Mizanur Rahman, Acting Foreign Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Dr. Gowher Rizvi, adviser to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh on International Affairs

In Sri Lanka the mission met

- Representatives of the Civil Society
- A group of Muslims who were displaced from Jaffna peninsula in the war affected area in the North
- Two groups of Women who were affected by the war in Vavuniya and Kilinochchi, in the Northern province
- A group of victim families of the Enforced disappeared in Trincomalee, in the Eastern province
- A group of resettled persons who were affected by the land grabbing by the state to build the coal power plant in collaboration with India, in Sampur, Eastern province
- Dr. Deepika Udagama, Chairperson and Ms. Ambika Satkunanathan, a commissioner of the National Human Rights Commission
- Ms. Salma Yusuf, Deputy Director of the Office of National Unity & Reconciliation (ONUR)
- Mr. Juan Fernandez, Senior Human Rights Adviser, OHCHR

In Nepal the mission met

- Mr. Surya Kiran Gurung, Chief Commissioner, Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- Mr. Anup Raj Sharma, Chief Commissioner, and the Commissioners of the National Human Rights Commission
- Chairperson of the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappearances
- Ms. Bhagwati Ghimire, Acting Chairperson, National Women's Commission
- Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister, Mr. K P Oli
- Rt. Hon'ble Chief Justice, Ms. Sushila Karki
- Mr. Tomoo Hozumi, Country Representative, UNICEF
- Ms. Valeri Julliand, UN, Resident Coordinator, & Mr. Ziad Shiekh, Country Representative, UN Women
- Constituent Assembly Members
- Civil Society members

Press Statements of the Peace Missions

South Asian Peace Mission in Bangladesh - 6 December 2015

South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR) is a regional network with a membership base consisting of like-minded human rights activists, practitioners, experts and institutions committed to addressing human rights issues at both national and regional levels.

The South Asian region is severely affected by long term inter-state tensions and internal conflicts which have caused long lasting effects on political stability, economic development, governance and the respect for human rights in all countries of the region.

Women Human Rights Defenders associated with SAHR share a vision of South Asia as a region where attaining peace, justice, democracy and respect for human rights are the shared aspirations of the people and our governments. Our vision includes a region that promotes, protects and respects women's human rights as equal citizens and where women's contributions in peace building is not only recognised, but also actively facilitated.

Even though the situations of conflict have had a severe impact on the lives of women and other vulnerable and marginalised communities, they have, by and large, been denied a role in peace building and are excluded from peace processes, whether related to internal conflicts or to tensions between states in the region.

In order to overcome trends that have become an impediment to internal stability of states and progress in deepening democracy and respect for human rights in the region, such as intolerance, extremism, flawed governance and the failure to halt ever deepening inequalities, injustice and discrimination, we as SAHR have undertaken an initiative to create a people's movement for peace, development and human rights. This Initiative intends not only to give prominence to women's contribution in building peace but also to bring women into the mainstream security discourse.

Our visit to Bangladesh is a part of that initiative. We are here to bring the message of regional peace and solidarity amongst South Asian civil societies. We hope that this initiative will inspire governments to follow the desire of their people for unity, regional strength and developing common interests that will advance the interests of the people of the region.

SAHR is committed to send similar peace missions to all South Asian countries and to stimulate consultations to search practical and useful measures to achieve the objectives of this initiative.

On behalf of the members of South Asians for Human Rights

Hina Jilani
Chairperson

Sultana Kamal
Bureau Member, Bangladesh

South Asian Peace Mission in Sri Lanka - 21 December 2015

South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR) is a regional network with a membership base consisting of like-minded human rights activists, practitioners, experts and institutions committed to addressing human rights issues at both national and regional levels.

The South Asian region is severely affected by long term inter-state tensions and internal conflicts which have caused long lasting effects on political stability, economic development, governance and the respect for human rights in all countries of the region.

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In order to overcome trends that have become an impediment to internal stability of states and progress in deepening democracy and respect for human rights in the region, such as intolerance, extremism, flawed governance and the failure to halt ever deepening inequalities, injustice and discrimination, we as SAHR have undertaken an initiative to create a people's movement for peace, development and human rights. This Initiative intends not only to give prominence to women's contribution in building peace but also to bring women into the mainstream security discourse.

Our visit to Sri Lanka is a part of that initiative. We are here to bring the message of regional peace and solidarity amongst South Asian civil societies. During our stay here, we met with many people: The representatives of civil society Colombo, Vavunia, Kilinochchi and Trincomalee; people affected by war in the northern and the eastern province and people affected by the construction of the coal power plant in Sampur; Chairperson and the Commissioners of the NHRCSL; officials of the Office of the National Unity & the Reconciliation; and the Senior Human Rights Adviser, OHCHR.

The first South Asian Peace Mission to Dhaka, Bangladesh was completed successfully on 5 & 6 December. The Mission met the faculty and the students of the Department of Law, State University of Bangladesh for a fruitful discussion on status of Human Rights in Bangladesh and in the region; they met with a group of Civil Society representatives; they had an opportunity to meet the acting foreign secretary and the Prime Minister's advisor on International Relations. The South Asian Peace Mission in Dhaka had wide press coverage mainly because it included Pakistani Human Rights Defenders who strongly commented about the essentiality in people's solidarity across the region in the times of strained government relations.

We hope that this initiative will inspire governments to follow the desire of their people for unity, regional strength and developing common interests that will advance the interests of the people of the region.

SAHR is committed to send similar peace missions to all South Asian countries and to stimulate consultations to search practical and useful measures to achieve the objectives of this initiative.

On behalf of the members of South Asians for Human Rights

Hina Jilani
Chairperson

Nimalka Fernando
Co-chairperson



South Asian Peace Mission in Nepal - 13 July 2016

South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR) is a membership based regional organisation working for the protection of human rights, peace building and democratic progress. SAHR conducted a peace mission to Nepal to assess the efforts made to address the impact of conflict on people and, in particular, to assess the extent of women's active participation in initiatives for peace and in the transitional justice processes instituted by the state.

During its visit to Nepal from 11-13 July 2016, the Mission met with the Prime Minister Hon. K.P. Oli, the Chief Justice, Hon. Sushila Karki, the Minister of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Hon. C. P. Mainali, members of parliament, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, National Human Rights Commission, Commission on Investigation of Enforced Disappearances, leaders of political parties, representatives of civil society groups and the Resident Coordinator of the UN and the heads of UNICEF and UN Women.

Conclusions and Observations

The adoption of the 2015 new Constitution is a major step in Nepal's democratic progress that brings with it both opportunities as well as challenges. The Constitution has guaranteed fundamental rights and set up various Commissions for safeguarding rights and to deal with past conflict related issues such as disappearances and transitional justice. While the adoption of the Constitution ended the legal and political uncertainty that prevailed following the ending of monarchy and the conclusion of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2006, it was also followed by strong protest by sections of the population such as the Madhesis in the Southern plains region of the country, who feel that their interests were not fully accommodated in the new federal structure. Political divisions in the parliament also threaten the stability and continuity of Government. These are clear signs that this transitional phase is fraught with challenges that call for more serious efforts by the political leadership and other stakeholders to manage the transition in a manner that would bring lasting positive peace and stable democratic governance.

Transitional Justice Mechanisms:

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The establishment of Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a positive step. However, the law establishing the TRC was not fully compatible with international standards governing transitional justice process. Despite the limitations, it should be acknowledged that it is the first such initiative in the region and the level of its success and the standard of its performance will be of critical value for other countries in the region. The Commission has made commendable efforts to give maximum access to the conflict affected population

and has reached out to victims of serious violations in all districts. The Commission has taken some steps to engage the affected women directly in the TRC processes. These efforts need to be strengthened, expanded and sustained.

The composition of the Commission whose members are drawn from different political parties may, nevertheless, raise concerns regarding the independence and impartiality of the Commission, and may adversely affect the perception regarding its credibility. The Mission has also observed that propositions concerning amnesty for conflict related crimes are still under discussion. This has raised doubts regarding intentions of all political parties to ensure accountability for past crimes committed during the conflict especially sexual violence. Any wavering of commitment on accountability would weaken the prospects for justice to victims and establishing lasting peace.

The Commission is likely to receive almost 60,000 petitions from surviving victims and relatives of deceased victims. It has only seven months left to complete its mandate with the possibility of an extension for one year. It is apparent that if all petitioners are to receive redress, not only would the Commission require extension of the mandated period, but adequate arrangements will have to be made to dispose of all petitions that are left unaddressed owing to the expiry of the Commission's tenure. However, transitional justice initiatives to be effective laws must be amended to criminalize torture and enforced disappearances and remove statutory limitations for prosecution of conflict related crimes including sexual violence.

The international community should provide relevant support to the Commission for carrying out its work in areas where it finds that the quality and the standard of justice could be improved to conform to international standards.

Commission on Investigation of Enforced Disappearances

Despite limited resources and the complexity of the issues involved in dealing with enforced disappearances and the issue of missing persons, the Commission has made a good beginning in carrying out its mandate. It has made progress in seeking information and initiating investigation on disappeared/missing persons. Considering the number of cases that have been brought before it, the complex legal and technical requirements of investigation and of the final settlement of cases, the time allocated to the Commission is far too short. The extension of its tenure for a further period of one year would be most rational and reasonable. The Commission should also be provided with additional human and financial resources. In addition, it requires international expertise to adequately carry out its mandate. It may be pointed out that the nature of the work of this Commission being highly sensitive, it is incumbent on the government and

state security apparatus to ensure that there is neither any interference with the work of the Commission, nor is the safety and security of any member of the Commission, its staff or any person cooperating with it jeopardized at any stage.

Human Rights:

National Human Rights Commission

Since 2000, the NHRC has made recommendations on 735 cases of grave human rights violations. It is, however, disappointing that many of the recommendations made by the NHRC have not been acted upon. The Government has so far acted upon only 106 recommendations that most of these dealing with compensation. Not a single case has been prosecuted by the Government. This is despite the Supreme Court judgment making it mandatory for taking action on NHRCs recommendations. A serious commitment towards the protection of human rights and the genuine intention to eliminate impunity for serious violations for human rights can only be demonstrated by respecting the mandate of the NHRC and giving full effect to its recommendations. The Government should, in particular, act upon NHRCs proposals for amending the relevant laws to ensure that prosecution is initiated based on NHRCs recommendations.

SAHR welcomes the work of NHRC in the area of trafficking. However, it should ensure effective and continuous functioning of the Office of National Rapporteur on Trafficking against Women and Children set up by it. On issues that have a regional dimension, such as trafficking, the NHRC may consider finding ways to engage with NHRCs of other countries in the region. NHRC should strengthen coordination with other Commissions particularly with the TRC. The NHRC should consider handling the petitions received by the TRC once the TRC mandate comes to an end. To ensure effectiveness and avoid duplication there should be greater coordination between Commissions dealing with human rights, transitional justice, women and dalits. The Commissions should streamline the process of receiving and handling complaints and expedite resolution of cases. This is particularly important since the judicial process involves expenses and delay which the ordinary people would like to avoid while approaching the Commissions.

Women

The emergence of a strong women's movement in Nepal has contributed to greater recognition of women's rights at the political and institutional levels. However, the Nepalese women continue to face socio cultural and structural barriers to achieve equality in all spheres. The role of the judiciary in highlighting women's right to equality, protection against violence and political participation through authoritative judgments is very encouraging. The present National Women's Commission's strong focus on violence against women should be further strengthened. The Government should increase its human and financial resources to ensure its affective functioning. The Ministry of Women's Affairs should develop programmes contribute to further strengthen the gains made so far by the women's movement.

While some programs have been launched to give effect to the UN resolutions on enhancing the role of women in peace building and on giving due recognition to their contributions in this field, Nepal has still to make more efforts to widen the spaces for women's participation in mainstream peace and security discourse. Women's inclusion in all decisions taken at political, social and economic forums that relate to security, conflict resolution, peace building and to determining modes of post conflict reconstruction is an imperative inherent in the Constitution of the country. Nepal has yet to give real and meaningful opportunities for women's participation in this aspect of national life.

Children

Child labour, child marriage and child trafficking continue as major concerns. Children particularly girl children were recruited as child soldiers during the ten year long conflict. The UNICEF in collaboration with various government departments has made considerable efforts to rehabilitate former child soldiers. UNICEF has also initiated innovative programme of setting up children's clubs in rural areas to ensure that children themselves tackle problems like child marriage through peer pressure and by advocating against such practices with the elders. The Mission was particularly disturbed by accounts of children being used for political rallies by different political elements. It is unfortunate that public action based on political grievances of one or the other political party or group has negatively impacted the best interest of children. The Mission has also noted with regret that during the demonstrations in the Terai region by the Madhesi groups schools were closed for long periods and access to immunization and health care were denied to children. To safeguard the welfare and the best interest of children is the responsibility of the state as well as all responsible citizens. The Mission hopes that the government will take all measures necessary to ensure that children's rights and welfare do not suffer because of political tensions in the country.

Future prospects

There seemed to be an acknowledgment by the political parties that inclusive political process and development is essential for building a stable and democratic state. However, the rhetoric of inclusiveness should be made functional through policies and their effective implementation. The prevailing economic, caste and ethnic based inequalities must be addressed to facilitate real inclusiveness in all spheres. In particular, the inclusiveness of women in all aspects of political governance as well as social and economic development would be an essential aspect of inclusiveness.

On behalf of the mission members

Hina Jilani
Chairperson

Short biographies of the mission members

South Asian Peace Mission in Dhaka, Bangladesh

1. Prof. Sadeka Halim - Bangladesh

Prof. Halim is a senior lecturer at the Dept. of Sociology of the University of Dhaka. She is a former Commissioner at the Commission of Information and a member of the Committee on National Education Committee in 2009 of Bangladesh.

2. Dr. Aminath Jameel - The Maldives

Dr. Jameel is a medical professional. She has held the portfolio as the Minister of Health in the Maldives. She has been active specifically on the progress of nursing and midwifery in the country. She is a recipient of the Princess Srinagarindra Award (Thailand) for the year 2011 for her services in public health sector in the country.

3. Mr. Mohamed Latheef - The Maldives

Mr. Mohamed Latheef represents the Maldives as a Bureau Member of South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR). For more than three decades Mohamed Latheef has worked to transform the Maldives from a feudalistic to a more inclusive, democratic and citizen oriented society in different capacities such as, as an independent journalist, human rights activist, parliamentarian and civil society activist.

4. Ms. Darmita Mijar - Nepal

Ms. Mijar is a lawyer by profession and has worked on many socio-economic issues in Nepal. She has held the position of the board member in several civil society organizations.

5. Ms. Hina Jilani - Pakistan

Hina Jilani is an Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and a human rights activist. Ms. Jilani is also affiliated with the United Nations Center for Human Rights, the Carter Center, and the UN Conference on Women. From 2000 to 2008, she was the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders. In 2006, she was appointed to the UN International Fact-Finding Commission on Darfur, Sudan and in 2009 she was appointed to the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict. She is also a member of the Eminent Jurists Panel on Terrorism, Counter-terrorism and Human Rights and a patron of the Media Legal Defence Initiative. She has been a member of The Elders, a group of independent global leaders brought together by Nelson Mandela, since 2013.

She is the current chairperson of South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR).

6. Prof. Naazish Ata-Ullah - Pakistan

Prof. Ata-Ullah was the principal of the prestigious National Art College of Lahore. She is a member representing Punjab in the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. She has served many years in promoting art and culture of Pakistan.

7. Ms. Shreen Saroor - Sri Lanka

Shreen Abdul Saroor is one of the founders of Mannar Women's Development Federation (MWDF) and Women's Action Network (a collective of 8 women's groups) that are working on documentation and advocacy on women's rights violation in north and east part of Sri Lanka. In 2008 Shreen was awarded the Voices of Courage award by the International Rescue Committee's Women and Refugees' Commission and in 2011 the 5th International Bremen Peace Award under the category of public engagement for peace and justice in Germany. She is a SAHR member.

South Asian Peace Mission in Colombo, Sri Lanka

1. Ms. Humira Saqib - Afghanistan

Humira Saqib is the Director of Afghan Women's News Agency, the only news agency in Afghanistan that focuses solely on women's issues such as international women's movements, women in politics, and women's rights. With over 10 years' experience as a journalist, Humira founded her company in 2012 to report and emphasize women's issues and events in Afghanistan and globally. She is the current chair of Afghan Civil Society Organization network for Peace (ACSONP).

2. Dr. Amena Mohsin - Bangladesh

Dr. Amena Mohsin is a professor at the Department of International Relations at the University of Dhaka. She specializes on nationalism, ethnicity and minority issues.

3. Dr. Shahnaz Huda - Bangladesh

Professor Dr. Shahnaz Huda has been teaching at the Law Department of the University of Dhaka 1989, specializing in, amongst other issues, personal and comparative family laws; gender and child rights; human rights and Constitutional law issues. She has worked as a consultant to the Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission including in the preparation of their shadow report on the CEDAW.

4. Ms. Pragati Bankhele - Bangladesh

Pragati Bankhele is working as the Chief Copy Editor at Maharashtra Times, the Marathi language newspaper of The Times of India group for about a decade. She was awarded the 'Laadali' national award twice and a fellowship to study the stark change in sex ratio in Maharashtra for her outstanding contribution.

5. Dr. Burnad Fathima Natesan - India

Dr. Burnad is from Tamil Nadu and the Executive Director of Society for Rural Education and Development. She is a trainer, a researcher and an international activist. She is a steering committee member of Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific (PANAP) and Peoples' Coalition for Food Sovereignty (PCFS).

6. Ms. Fathimath Nelfa - The Maldives

Fathimath Nelfais currently working with Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN), formerly known as Maldivian Detainee Network which was formed 2004. Her current work in MDN mainly is with the Parliamentary affairs, submission of comments to the bills on human rights perspective, and analysing the daily minutes of the Parliament.

7. Ms. Bharati Silawal-Giri - Nepal

Bharati Silawal-Giri is a national of Nepal and started her career as a radio journalist in 1976 but later moved on to print journalism and founded the English monthly magazine, "Media Nepal". Currently, she is the General-Secretary of the Institute of Public Policy and Action Research (IPPAR), a Nepal based NGO.

8. Ms. Bushra Gohar - Pakistan

Bushra Gohar is the Central Vice President of the Awami National Party (ANP). She is a former member of Parliament (2008-2013). She chaired the Parliamentary Committee for appointing chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), Pakistan. She was elected chair of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Women's Development and was member of National Assembly's Standing Committees on Interior, Finance and Kashmir Affairs. She was a member of the National Assembly's special committee on Millennium Development Goals & Energy Sector. Ms. Gohar was also a member of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus' working council.

9. Ms. Sabha Shaikh - Pakistan

Sabha Shaikh is currently working as Director of Advocacy and Networking of Dastak, a charitable trust running a shelter for women in Lahore, Pakistan. She is extensively involved in expanding the network base of Dastak and advocating for the protection needs of women suffering from gender-based violence in the country.

10. Ms. Saroja Sivachandran - Sri Lanka

Saroja Sivachandran heads the Center for Women and Development, a Jaffna based non-governmental organization. She has worked with women in the North during the conflict as well. She is a Board Member of National Peace Council based in Colombo.

11. Ms. Nalini Ratnarajah - Sri Lanka

Nalini Ratnarajah is a Woman Human Rights Defender working on women's rights and economic, social and cultural rights in Sri Lanka. She is affiliated to regional CSO networks such as South Asian Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE) and South Asian Feminist Alliance (SAFA).

South Asian Peace Mission in Nepal

1) Ms. Palwasha Hassan - Afghanistan

Palwasha Hassan obtained a BSc in the Science Program from a government-run college in Islamabad, Pakistan. She is the founder of the Afghan Women's Education Center, a well-established Afghan women's organization. She is also a co-founder of the Afghan Women's Network. She was one of the 1000 women proposed for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005

2) Prof. Sadeka Halim - Bangladesh

Bio given above

3) Mr. D. J. Ravindran - India

Daniel Justin Ravindran has more than 25 years of experience in working for human rights at local, regional and international level. He has worked with International Commission for Jurists (ICJ) for 8 years and was instrumental in the establishment of Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development. He has worked as Director of Human Rights Division with the UN mission in East Timor, Libya and the Sudan. He was engaged in a similar assignment in Tunisia in the recent past. Currently, he is a bureau member of South Asians for Human Rights representing India.

4) Ms. Bhrati Silawal-Giri - Nepal

Bio given above

5) Dr. Priti Mandal - Nepal

Dr. Mandal is the founder member and president of NGOs Alliance for Health & Environment and Transform initiatives- Nepal. She started her career as a lower secondary level teacher and was promoted

to the secondary level. In addition, she has conducted several researches and has been working in the area of women's human rights and their empowerment since last 5 years.

6) Mr. Dinesh Tripathi - Nepal

Dinesh Tripathi is an Advocate in the Supreme Court of Nepal and has been a human rights lawyer for more than 15 years. He is also a regular contributor in various national newspapers and journals. Mr. Tripathi has been an active participant in the struggle towards democracy in Nepal, utilizing the rule of law to affect change, particularly since the royal coup in February of 2005. He is currently a SAHR Bureau member.

7) Ms. Fathimath Afshan Latheef - the Maldives

Afshan Latheef is a human rights advocate and writer from the Maldives. She has worked with NGOs on a variety of causes for over 12 years. She is currently the elected Chair of the capital Male City's Women's Development Committee which works with the Male City Council, government bodies and civil society to ensure political and economic empowerment of women, women's access to income generating opportunities and higher education, and promotion of women's rights. Previously she served as the Deputy Under Secretary at the President's Office and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ms. Latheef has also worked as the Information and Development Coordinator at Transparency Maldives, the local chapter of Transparency International.

8) Ms. Hina Jilani - Pakistan

Bio given above.

9) Ms. Deekshya Illangasinghe - Sri Lanka

She is currently heading South Asians for Human Rights as the Executive Director. Ms. Illangasinghe has represented the organisation at national, regional and international forums. She also has a keen interest in the areas of international policy as well as conflict studies and development.

10) Ms. Anushaya Collure - Sri Lanka

Anushaya Collure currently is attached to the South Asians for Human Rights. She has been engaged in activism relating to Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Sri Lanka for nearly a decade.



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