

Nepal: Release Journalist Shesh Narayan Jha immediately and unconditionally

(Bangkok/Kathmandu, 26 May 2016) – The arbitrary arrest of Shesh Narayan Jha on 23 May, while he was carrying out his professional duties as a journalist, is a flagrant violation of his human rights and a serious attack on press freedoms in Nepal, the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) said today.

FORUM-ASIA calls on the authorities in Nepal to release Shesh Narayan Jha immediately and drop all charges against him.

Shesh Narayan Jha, a photojournalist associated with the state-run National News Agency (RSS), was arrested outside the main government secretariat in Kathmandu on 23 May. He was taking photographs of a protest. He was detained along with a protester who threw paint on the secretariat wall and another bystander. The bystander was released later on the same day.

According to Shesh Narayan Jha's lawyer, he has been charged under the [Some Public \(Crime and Punishment\) Act 2072](#). His judicial detention has been extended for four more days by the Kathmandu district administration office. A special petition filed with Nepal's Supreme Court calling for the journalist's immediate release is expected to be heard today.

"The arrest and treatment of journalist Shesh Narayan Jha sends out extremely worrying signals for press freedoms and freedom of expression in Nepal," says Evelyn Balais-Serrano, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA. "Charging him for public offence and extending his detention on flimsy charges is nothing but administrative high-handedness."

Police officials reportedly told Shesh Narayan Jha that he was being arrested for participating in the protest on 23 May where an activist threw red paint on the secretariat wall. He was detained despite denying any links with the protestor or the protest.

FORUM-ASIA calls on the Government of Nepal to intervene immediately and ensure Shesh Narayan Jha's release as he has committed no crime. Officials responsible for obstructing and harassing the journalist should be held accountable and Shesh Narayan Jha should be adequately compensated for violation of his personal liberty. The Nepali Government must ensure freedom of press and protect journalists from arbitrary detention.

About FORUM-ASIA:

FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 58 member organisations in 19 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu.

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FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratization.

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