



PRESS STATEMENT

30 July 2020

**ADVOCACY FORUM APPEALS TO SAVE LIVES OF YOUTH ACTIVISTS
AT HUNGER STRIKE**

Advocacy Forum-Nepal (AF) is concerned about the deteriorating health condition of Ilh, a youth activist, who has been staging an indefinite hunger strike 'Satyagraha' for the last 13 days. The second phase of the hunger strike started on 18 July 2020 as a part of the "Enough is Enough" campaign (an independent collective movement, initiated and joined by hundreds of Nepali youths around the country demanding broader accountability and transparency in the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic). This second phase hunger strike is a call to the government to adhere to its previous commitments and to address 15-point demands (such as an expansion of PCR testing criteria, optimum use of existing resources, contact tracing, the rectification of quarantine strategy, risk information, timely results, dignity, security and relief, transparency and accountability and so forth) for better COVID-19 response measures. To date, more than 150 youths have participated in a relay hunger strike.

The first phase hunger strike commenced on 26 June 2020 and lasted for 12 days until 7 July 2020. It ended with a 12-point agreement signed between the activists and the Government after the Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli visited the activists and expressed commitment to address their demands. The 12-point agreement includes the commitments to prepare a directive relating to home quarantine within a week (from the date of the agreement); to conduct COVID-19 tests of people returning from abroad after the completion of the five-days quarantine period, and issue a home quarantine, hotel quarantine or public quarantine to them accordingly; to revise the existing directive relating to Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests; to suspend the Rapid Diagnostic Test (RDT); to protect frontline workers from all harm; to ensure that those suspected of carrying the virus have access to the rights guaranteed in the Constitution; to amend the existing directives and protocols relating to quarantine and tests in line with the Supreme Court's orders; and to make public information about the expenses of the government against COVID-19 pandemic; among others. However, as in the past, the Government has failed to implement the promises in action agreed by the government and is paying mere lip service to fulfill their demands.



वकालत मञ्च-नेपाल ADVOCACY FORUM- NEPAL

Lawyers forum for human rights and rule of law

Since its establishment, AF has been at the forefront of human rights advocacy, accountability, transparency and actively confronting the deeply entrenched culture of impunity in Nepal. AF strongly urges the government to promptly address the demands of the *Satyagrahis* by keeping into account their deteriorating health condition and to reaffirm citizens' faith in the State. AF further urges the concerned stakeholders to resolve the problems through dialogue and negotiations.

AF condemns the arrest (followed by illegal detention and ill-treatment) of 5 youth activists on 29 July 2020 (and later released) from the southern gate of Singhadurbar while they were on their way to file a right to information (RTI) application before the Ministry of Home Affairs seeking transparency and accountability from the Government on COVID-19 response.

Please follow the link for the 15-point demands of the campaigners:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yQlnEj2D6UAimGy9Yb6FQFotFEpkd4eA/view?usp=drivesdk>

Om Prakash Sen Thakuri
Director
Advocacy Forum - Nepal