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Nepal: Bidya Shrestha Maharjan physically assaulted by police personnel

On 4 July 2020, woman human rights defender **Bidya Shrestha Maharjan** was physically assaulted by police officials while participating in a peaceful protest against the government's acquisition of indigenous farm land for the building of the Expressway motorway in Khokana.

[Bidya Shrestha Maharjan](#) is a teacher and human rights defender from the Kathmandu valley of Nepal. She is the women's president of the World Newa Guthi, an indigenous community organization that works to protect the rights of the Newa Guthi people. An indigenous woman herself, Bidya Shrestha Maharjan has long been leading the movement to stop the illegal road expansion in the valley inhabited by the Newa Guthi people, which has already seen the displacement of thousands who have not been compensated and/or have been left landless.

On 4 July 2020, Bidya Shrestha Maharjan, along with fellow activists and farmers of the indigenous Newa community from the Kathmandu valley gathered in Khokana to peacefully protest against the acquisition of land owned by indigenous Newa people. The land has been acquired for the construction of the proposed Expressway motorway, despite objections by the Indigenous Newa as well as other local communities, due to concern that such mega projects will displace the entire community. They have demanded that large scale projects such as the proposed motorway be relocated to more suitable locations.

The peaceful protest turned violent when the armed police force intervened, lobbing tear gas shells and charging at the crowd with batons, leaving dozens of protestors and police personnel injured. Bidya Shrestha Maharjan was beaten by armed personnel and later taken to hospital for the injuries she incurred.

Front Line Defenders is concerned by the physical attack and intimidation of woman human rights defender Bidya Shrestha Maharjan by police officials, as it believes this was solely due to her legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights and exercising her right to peacefully assemble.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Nepal to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the physical assault of Bidya Shrestha Maharjan, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Nepal are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.