

28 April 2016

Nepal – Detention of human rights defender Kanak Mani Dixit

On 22 April 2016, human rights defender Mr **Kanak Mani Dixit** was arrested by order of the Commission of Investigation on Abuse of Authority (CIAA) and placed in detention in Gaushala Police Circle jail, Katmandu, Bagmati Zone.

[Kanak Mani Dixit](#) is a human rights defender actively promoting the establishment of a democratic and secular government in Nepal and advocating for various social reforms in the country. In 2006, he played a key role in the formation of the human rights organisation **Accountability Watch Committee**, where he is currently senior editor. The mission of the organisation is to fight against impunity relating to human rights violations and to promote the rule of law in Nepal. Kanak Mani Dixit is also a well-known journalist with more than forty years of professional experience in this field. He is the founding editor of the **Himal Southasian** regional review magazine, as well as publisher of the Nepali language weekly **Himal Khabarpatrika**, where he comments on Nepali affairs.

On 22 April 2016, Kanak Mani Dixit was arrested by approximately twenty police officers, (including plain clothed police officers), near his office in Patan Dhoka, Kathmandu. The order for his arrest was issued by Mr Lok Man Singh Karki, Chairman of the CIAA, in accordance with Section 19.1 (c) of the CIAA Act 2048 (1991). The refusal of the human rights defender to cooperate in a corruption investigation opened against him in November 2015 allegedly served as the basis for the arrest order. Instead of placing Kanak Mani Dixit in its own detention center, the CIAA sent the human rights defender to a common jail cell for petty criminals at Gaushala Police Circle, where he is currently being detained in inhumane conditions.

On 20 April 2016, Kanak Mani Dixit refused to present himself for questioning at the CIAA, as previously ordered. In a written reply to the investigation authority, the human rights defender challenged the CIAA's power to summon him. Kanak Mani Dixit relied on the judgement of the Supreme Court, in November 2015, which ruled that the investigation into the case of the human rights defender had been launched in violation of the prescribed decision-making process. The Supreme Court reminded the CIAA that respecting the principle of the rule of law was among the main responsibilities of the authority. Before the 20 April 2016, Kanak Mani Dixit had cooperated with the CIAA on a regular basis, presenting himself for questioning and providing written submissions including details of his assets.

On 5 December 2015, Kanak Mani Dixit was summoned for the first time by the CIAA on suspicion of illegally amassing property by abusing his authority as Chairman of Sajha Yatayat bus company. Similar summons were received by twenty-eight high-ranking personalities suspected of involvement in corruption. Reportedly, none of the accused had previously been on the CIAA's agenda. All twenty-nine persons, however, were known for criticizing the appointment of Lok Man Singh Karki as Chairman of the CIAA.

In 2013, Kanak Mani Dixit published several articles in Himal Khabarpatrika and Himal Southasian magazines, criticising the appointment of Lok Man Singh Karki as Chairman of the CIAA. The Chairman had previously been indicted by the Rayamajhi Commission, formed to investigate human rights violations committed during the people's movement to restore democracy in Nepal during the final days of the monarchy's rule in 2006. At the time of the people's movement, Lok Man Singh Karki served as Chief Secretary of the government, and was subsequently found guilty of committing a series of brutal human rights violations. He was appointed as chairman of the CIAA in spite of the guilty verdict against him.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the arrest and detention of Kanak Mani Dixit, which it believes is directly linked to his legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights in Nepal.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Nepal to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Kanak Mani Dixit from detention and close the investigation on him;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of human rights defender Kanak Mani Dixit;
3. Ensure that his treatment in detention is in compliance with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners;
4. 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.