



Regd. No. 149/053/054  
Estd: 1988 A.D. (2045 B.S.)

# नेपाल मानव अधिकार संगठन Human Rights Organisation of Nepal

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## Statement of Solidarity

July 7, 2026

### Freedom of Expression is Indispensable for Democratic Future of the Republic of Korea and Asia

The Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON) writes today to express profound concern and solidarity with human rights defenders, journalists, and civil society actors in the Republic of Korea, as the country enters a new and troubling chapter in its regulation of online speech.

Today, 7 July 2026, the amended Act on Promotion of Information and Communications Network Utilization and Information Protection comes into effect in the Republic of Korea. HURON views this development with serious apprehension. The amendment's central flaw lies in its vague and overbroad definition of "false or manipulated information," a definition so elastic that it hands enormous discretionary power to the State, to digital platforms, and to dispute resolution bodies to decide, case by case, what speech is permissible in the public square.

History has taught human rights advocates in Nepal and across Asia that vagueness in speech law is rarely neutral. It is a tool that can be applied selectively, often against the very voices that a healthy democracy most needs to hear: journalists investigating power, scholars questioning official narratives, activists organizing peaceful dissent, and ordinary citizens debating matters of public concern.

Of particular concern to HURON is the mechanism by which this law is likely to operate. Rather than the government directly silencing speech, the Act pressures private platforms and fact-checking intermediaries to remove, restrict, or demonetize content under threat of liability. This is a form of outsourced censorship: it achieves the same silencing effect as direct state control, while allowing the government to distance itself from responsibility for the outcome. Private companies, acting to protect themselves from legal risk, are turned into de facto arbiters of truth, a role that should never rest with parties motivated by liability avoidance rather than the public interest.

HURON is especially troubled by the law's potential impact on Korea's younger generation and its civil society organizations, for whom digital platforms are not a peripheral space but the primary arena of civic life, public debate, and democratic organizing. A law that narrows this space narrows democracy itself.

Nepal's own transition to democracy, achieved through the sacrifice and sustained struggle of its people, has taught HURON that democratic resilience depends on the ability of citizens to speak, question, and dissent without fear of arbitrary reprisal, and that truth is best served not by state



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sanctioned determinations of falsehood but by open debate, a free press, and independent judicial scrutiny.

We wish to be clear: HURON does not dispute that disinformation and online harms are legitimate matters of public concern that governments may seek to address. However, any such measures must satisfy the well established international standards of legality, necessity, and proportionality, must be narrowly and clearly defined, and must remain subject to independent judicial oversight, rather than administrative or platform level determination. A law that fails these tests does not protect the public from falsehood; it protects those in power from accountability.

HURON therefore stands in solidarity with the lawyers, journalists, scholars, and civil society organizations in the Republic of Korea who are working peacefully and lawfully to challenge this legislation and to defend the space for free expression. We call on the Government of the Republic of Korea to review and reconsider this Act in consultation with civil society, the legal community, and international human rights mechanisms, and to bring it into full conformity with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Korea is a State Party.

We also call on regional human rights networks, democratic governments, and international bodies across Asia to remain attentive to developments in the Republic of Korea, and to lend their voice and support to those defending freedom of expression in this critical moment.

A free Asia requires a free Korea, and a free Korea requires a digital public sphere where citizens may speak, question, and disagree without fear. HURON reaffirms its unwavering commitment to this principle and to solidarity with all those who defend it.

With solidarity and respect,

**Indra Prasad Aryal**

President

Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON)

