



## Human Rights in Focus

COVID-19 is not only a health threat - and the impact of the pandemic is not only economic. The psychosocial burdens are severe. In many places the extent of domestic violence is increasing. Human rights are sometimes neglected and the pandemic also bears the risk of further increasing social inequalities. The Nepalese network COCAP opposes all this.

Our partner organisation [Collective Campaign for Peace](#) (COCAP) acts as an **umbrella organisation for over 40 local human rights and peace organisations**. Its members are committed to the observance of human rights and the dissemination of nonviolent conflict transformation in all parts of the country.

COCAP is currently stepping up its work in two main areas: monitoring the human rights situation and providing psychosocial care. Another important concern is to draw attention to social inequalities, which are all the more apparent in the context of the pandemic.

*"With COCAP, we are trying to **make social inequalities visible with regard to the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak and to inform about offers of help**," reports our civil peace worker Inga Ferber from Nepal's capital Kathmandu, from where she has been supporting COCAP since February 2019. "Even if it doesn't always feel that way, I know that keeping the curfew is a luxury. For many people in Nepal, social distance is impossible because they lack food, income or a safe home."*

COCAP members have observed an **increase in mental illness** since the spread of the coronavirus Sars-CoV-2 - the first infected person was already registered on 24.1.2020 - and especially since the imposed curfew. There are also numerous indications that the **extent of domestic violence** is also increasing. *"From my work with COCAP against gender-specific violence in the south of Nepal I know that mental illnesses as well as domestic violence are widespread.*

*In many cases, these **problems are exacerbated by the curfew**," Inga Ferber can confirm. "Mental stress and illnesses are often not recognised as such by those affected and their family members, so that the existing offers of psychosocial counselling are not sufficiently used. The subject of domestic*

*violence is also taboo, so that many affected persons are either not informed about offers of help or do not make use of them."*

To counteract this, COCAP offers all employees **advice by telephone or video chat**. COCAP members also use social media to disseminate tips on **how to deal with stress and psychological strain** for children and adults. COCAP also uses its **cooperation with Radio Baadal** in southern Nepal to inform people about psychosocial support services. *"I hope that our radio programme will help to bring these issues to public awareness and encourage those affected to seek help,"* says Inga Ferber, who continues to support her colleagues from the home office in Kathmandu.

Since the nationwide curfew came into force on 24 March 2020, COCAP has also been **receiving news of violent clashes almost daily**. In most cases, violence is used to enforce rules of conduct or distribute aid. According to COCAP employees, police violence in particular has increased considerably in the wake of the curfew. COCAP makes such incidents public via its [Facebook-Profil](#)

**It informs the population about their rights and reminds the security forces of their responsibilities.** *"The Nepalese police force has committed itself to a culture of zero tolerance with regard to the disregard and violation of human rights [...] in the context of law enforcement"* - for example, a mail about two incidents of registered police violence is preceded by a letter. The quote is an excerpt from the voluntary commitment of the Nepalese police. *"It is time to keep your word!"* - COCAP logically adds to the post.