

## Nepal's Sherpa awaits death in Kuwait jail

Nepal's hardy mountaineering community, the Sherpas, in the limelight last month when Everest conqueror Edmund Hillary was laid to rest, are back in the headlines. But for a different reason.

A 29-year-old woman from the peace-loving Buddhist community is languishing in a Kuwait jail, fighting a death sentence for the alleged murder of another woman.

Dolma Sherpa left her village in remote Sindhupalchowk district in north Nepal two years ago to work as a maid in Kuwait.

She left her three-year-old son in the care of her sister, who is a Buddhist nun, to make her fortune in Kuwait, disregarding the government's ban on Nepali women from going to the Gulf to work as domestic help.

In 1998, Nepal banned women from working as maids in the Gulf after mounting criticism following the mysterious death of a woman, Kani Sherpa, who is alleged to have been abused and thrown to her death by her employer.

Dolma is believed to have circumvented the ban by travelling through India, like thousands of Nepali men and women do every year.

Her husband Ang Tenzi Sherpa too went to Iraq in a similar manner to work as a cook in an American military camp.

Nepal also banned its citizens from going to Iraq, after the murder of 12 workers by Islamic militants.

'I was making dinner when a Nepali accountant in the camp gave me the news,' said a shaky Ang Tenzi, who is back in Kathmandu.

The accountant, who regularly surfed the net for news about Nepal, came across a report that said Dolma had been given the death sentence three months ago for murdering a Filipina maid.

'My body began to shake,' the stunned husband told the media, making an appeal to save his wife. 'I couldn't speak.'

Last month, Ang Tenzi rushed to Nepal to beseech the government to save his wife.

'We still don't have a clear picture of the case,' said Uma Tamang, an official at Maiti Nepal, a famed Nepali NGO that works for the rescue and rehabilitation of Nepali women and children.

According to Tamang, a Nepali restaurateur in Kuwait, Mitra Sanjali, has provided a sketchy report.

Dolma, a Filipina, and a man were working as domestic helps in a Kuwaiti's house.

The murder reportedly occurred when the owner left for Haj to Saudi Arabia.

Crippled by lack of money, local language and local laws, Dolma has not been able to put across

her version of the incident.

Since Nepal doesn't have any mission in Kuwait, it sent an official from the Nepali embassy in Riyadh to meet the woman in Kuwait's central jail.

Nepali organisations abroad have already been issuing appeals to the Kuwaiti government to commute her death sentence.

Rights body Amnesty International too has issued an appeal.

However, Dolma's family and village say that Nepal's ministry of foreign affairs has not shown any initiative to appeal to the Kuwait government.

*Sudeshna Sarkar ( © IANS / India eNews)*