



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PRESS RELEASE

Nepal: Government must ensure accountability for unlawful killings and use of force during Gen-Z protests

Widespread failings by Nepal's law enforcement agencies in policing September's youth-led "Gen-Z" protests resulted in unlawful killings, unnecessary and excessive use of force, and severe injuries, Amnesty International said in a new briefing.

The briefing, *"We went there to raise our voice, not to be killed": Nepal's Deadly Crackdown on Protesters*, documents how security forces used mounting and ultimately lethal force – including live ammunition – against largely peaceful protesters during the assembly in Kathmandu on 8 September, at which at least 19 people were killed and more than 300 injured. Across the country, the two-day protests and six days of subsequent unrest left 76 people dead and more than 2,000 injured.

"The violent and unlawful government response to young people exercising their right to peaceful assembly reflects a shocking and callous disregard for human life. All those responsible for ordering, enabling, or carrying out these abuses, regardless of rank or position, must be brought to justice through a fair and transparent process," said Nirajan Thapaliya, Director of Amnesty International Nepal.

Amnesty International verified eyewitness accounts, photographic and video evidence, and interviewed medical personnel, protesters, protest observers, organizers and journalists. The organization's findings reveal a series of systemic failures in the policing of assemblies, including the failure to exhaust non-violent means before resorting to force; the dangerous and unlawful use of less-lethal weapons; poor planning, preparation and training for policing of protests; unnecessary and unlawful use of lethal force in situations with no imminent threat of serious injuries or to life.

These actions violated the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Escalation of force against peaceful protesters

The briefing details how, after the protests had initially started without incident, tensions rose when a section of the crowd dismantled a police barricade that had been erected to prevent access towards the federal parliament building, less than 500 metres away.

Security forces responded by deploying a water cannon, in some cases using high-pressure jets at close range against protesters in a manner that raises serious concerns over the principles of necessity and proportionality under international human rights standards. The use of force quickly escalated over the course of the next few hours, with witnesses describing panic and chaos as security forces intensified their response.

According to witnesses, tear gas grenades were launched from elevated positions, an extremely dangerous practice that violates the UN Guidance on less lethal weapons. Some were discharged in and around hospital premises, and disrupted emergency medical services. Medical workers reported that tear gas was fired inside and around hospital areas, causing

breathing difficulties among admitted patients, children, and older people who were not part of the protest.

Kinetic impact projectiles, including rubber bullets and rubber-coated metal bullets, were fired directly into dense crowds without warning and without meaningful attempts at de-escalation, hitting those as young as 14 years old. Doctors who treated the injured confirmed that rubber bullets were removed from patients' skulls.

Such misuse of less lethal weapons is in violation of international standards such as the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement and Nepal's Local Administration Act.

Unlawful use of lethal force

Amnesty International also documented the rapid escalation of force to unlawful use of live ammunition.

A journalist who was documenting the protest near the parliament gate said: "The firing began wildly – from inside the parliament compound, from outside, and from armed units near the main gate."

Testimonies from healthcare workers and injured individuals describe gunshot wounds to vital organs. Security forces fired into crowds – including protesters, children, bystanders and journalists – striking people in the head, neck and chest.

A doctor at a hospital where many of the injured were treated said: "In mass-casualty disasters, the usual pattern is that there are relatively fewer severe cases and more milder to moderate cases, with only some deaths. We plan for that. Typically, we might expect 10–20% to be severe. But this time it was reversed – there were far more severely injured patients, perhaps 50–60%."

Another doctor who had attended to injured and wounded protesters said: "Some had gunshot wounds to the head and chest, others had life-threatening injuries to the abdomen or major blood vessels... Around 2pm, the emergency ward was in its worst state – blood everywhere, patients collapsing, doctors and nurses working nonstop. It felt like a butcher's house."

Amnesty International found evidence of the use of lethal force by police in circumstances that did not involve an imminent threat of death or serious injury, resulting in arbitrary deprivations of life.

The deliberate or reckless use of live ammunition, kinetic impact projectiles, water cannon and tear gas against largely peaceful demonstrators cannot be justified under any circumstance.

"The young people killed and injured during the Gen-Z uprising deserve truth and justice. By failing to ensure accountability for past protest-related human rights violations, successive governments have allowed impunity to take root and undermine the rule of law. Authorities must not repeat past mistakes and abandon victims. Without accountability, and unless Nepal urgently reforms its policing practices, the conditions that enabled these unlawful killings will persist, putting future assemblies and lives at risk," said Nirajan Thapaliya.

Amnesty International calls on the government to review the general approach towards assemblies and ensure that police facilitate peaceful protests; and amend domestic laws,

including those governing the use of force, so that they fully comply with international human rights standards.

Background

Amnesty International's briefing focuses on the events of the first day of the protests on 8 September. While the incidents on subsequent days are not documented in the briefing, Amnesty International condemns the use of mob violence against people and property resulting in deaths, injuries and serious damage to property that occurred amid the wider unrest in September 2025. The authorities must thoroughly, effectively, independently and impartially investigate these acts of violence and exercise due diligence to identify suspects, who should be brought to justice in fair trials.