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Nepal: Alarming rise in "disappearances" fuelling human rights crisis

On the occasion of today's international "day of the disappeared", Amnesty International has revealed that 378 cases of "disappearance" in Nepal have been reported to the organization in the last year, more cases than in the previous five years put together.

In its report, *Nepal: Escalating 'disappearances' amid a culture of impunity*, Amnesty International describes a growing culture of impunity in which security forces regularly obstruct investigations into "disappearances" by Nepal's courts and National Human Rights Commission.

"The dramatic escalation in 'disappearances' is not only causing massive suffering to the victims and their families but is also undermining the rule of law as well as the trust of ordinary Nepalis in their security forces and government," Amnesty International said.

The report has been sent to Nepal's Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba along with a letter expressing Amnesty International's concerns.

The organization has frequently raised concerns about the "disappearance" at the hands of security forces of those suspected of involvement in the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (Maoist), a rebel group that has been fighting an eight-year "peoples war" with government forces. However, it appears that these abuses are now taking place on an unprecedented scale with an average of at least a case a day now being reported to Amnesty International.

Since 1998, Amnesty International has received reports of 622 cases of "disappearance", hundreds of cases of extrajudicial executions, thousands of arbitrary arrests and widespread torture by security forces. The organisation has also received numerous reports of abductions, torture and killings by the CPN (Maoist) and has frequently called on its leadership to end these abuses and abide by international humanitarian law.

Amnesty International calls on the government of Nepal to:

Investigate and clarify the fate of the "disappeared", bring perpetrators to justice and pay compensation to the victims and their families;
Ensure that security forces respect the authority of the courts and comply with court orders, including in relation to *habeas corpus* petitions;

Provide Nepal's National Human Rights Commission with all assistance required to carry out its investigations, including allowing its investigation teams to operate freely and have access to all places of detention;

Abide by all Nepal's human rights obligations and implement in full "His Majesty's Government's Commitment on the implementation of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law" (26 March), with particular attention to the explicit pledges to prevent disappearances.

"The unprecedented number of 'disappearances' is one of the most pressing human rights issues facing Nepal. Only by tackling the culture of abuse, ending the impunity of security forces and putting in place comprehensive legal and institutional reforms can the government halt the slide towards a human rights disaster," Amnesty International said.

For a copy of the report, *Nepal: Escalating 'disappearances' amid a culture of impunity*, please go to: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa311552004>

For an interview with the wife of one of Nepal's "disappeared" please go to: <http://news.amnesty.org/index/ENGASA318282004>

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