

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: ASA 31/062/2005 (Public)  
News Service No: 191  
26 July 2005

**Embargo Date: 26 July 2005 00:01 GMT**

## **Nepal: Children victims of violence in ongoing civil conflict**

Amnesty International revealed today that thousands of children across Nepal are facing serious violence and abuse in the ongoing conflict in Nepal, where Maoist rebels and security forces have been fighting a brutal internal conflict for the last nine years.

In a report released today, *Nepal: Children caught in the conflict*, the organization said that Nepalese children are being killed, illegally detained, tortured, raped, abducted and recruited for military activities and accused both sides to the conflict of violating the most fundamental rights of children.

"This conflict is a disaster for the children of Nepal," said Purna Sen, Director of Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific Programme. "Some children have been directly targeted by one or other party to the conflict, while hundreds more have died from bombs and improvised explosive devices. Thousands of children have been forced to flee their homes and face desperate poverty and exploitation."

Both sides to the conflict have been responsible for killing children. The security forces have killed children they suspect of involvement with the Maoists, while the Maoists have abducted and killed the children of security forces personnel, as well as caused the deaths of many children by deliberately bombing civilian infrastructure and leaving improvised explosive devices in civilian areas.

There have been disturbing reports of children suspected of affiliation with the Maoist rebels being detained for long periods in army barracks, police stations or prisons -- often held together with adults. Many child detainees report having been tortured by security forces during their detention.

Such treatment is in direct violation of the Nepalese government's human rights obligations. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides that "every child deprived of liberty shall be treated with humanity .and in a manner which takes account of the needs of persons of his or her age", while torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment are forbidden under the CRC and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Chandra Malla told Amnesty International how, after her husband was killed by security forces, the police came to her home and arrested her 10-year-old son. They dragged him from the house and beat him with a pistol, accusing him of being a Maoist. The boy was held in custody for six days, during which time he was beaten with a plastic pipe all over his body. After his release, the security forces continued to visit his home and threatened to rape his 12-year-old sister.

Amnesty International has received reports of girls being raped by security forces during “search operations”. One 15-year-old girl from mid-western Nepal told Amnesty International how she was raped by a soldier in her family’s cattle shed during a night time “search operation” in her village. Many women’s organisations report that the conflict is also resulting in more girls being trafficked for sexual exploitation – already a serious problem in Nepal.

Over the last few years the Maoists have abducted tens of thousands of school children for “political education” sessions, held in remote locations. While most of these children return home after a few days, some do not and it appears that the rebels are recruiting children for military activities and forced labour, despite the fact that the use of children under 15 in armed conflict is a war crime.

Education services have come under particular attack. Both sides have used school premises for military purposes and the Maoists have bombed a number of schools, injuring children. These attacks, combined with Maoist abductions of school children and crippling strikes, mean that many of Nepal’s children are missing out on vital years of education.

“Nepal’s children are being caught up in the cycle of violence that is gripping the country. They are abducted and recruited by the Maoists and then become targets for the security forces, placing them at risk of detention or even killing,” said Purna Sen. “In addition to experiencing violence and abuse, as the conflict erodes education, health and development services, thousands of children are unable to enjoy their rights to health and education.”

Amnesty International is urging the government of Nepal to fulfil its commitments to protect the rights of children, as laid out in the CRC and other human rights treaties; to bring to justice security forces personnel who commit human rights violations; and to provide appropriate services for those children who are caught up in the conflict. It is also calling on the Maoists to end the abduction and recruitment of children, release all children within its forces and end all indiscriminate attacks and targeting of civilians. It is vital that both sides take all possible steps to respect and protect the rights of children and minimise the negative impact of the conflict on their lives.

For a copy of the full report, please see: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa310542005>

Amnesty International also has video footage depicting conditions for children in Nepal. If you would like a copy, please contact us at the number below.

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