

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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**NEPAL: CRITICAL SHORTAGES OF ESSENTIAL MEDICINES AND SERVICES
PUTS LIVES AND HEALTH AT RISK**

Amnesty International calls on the Government of Nepal to take urgent steps to ensure that hospitals have the essential drugs and other medical supplies and services they need to save lives and treat patients. The people most at risk are those living in poverty, the elderly and the young and those suffering from chronic illnesses such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. The government must take immediate action to comply with its international obligations and guarantee access to the essential medicines and other goods necessary to ensure people's human rights to life and health.

Amnesty International has investigated the situation and spoken to officials from several hospitals across the country. They told Amnesty International that, after more than three months since the start of disruptions to the flow of goods at the India-Nepal border amid ongoing protests against Nepal's new Constitution, there is a critical shortage of essential medicines and services. The Nepali authorities' slow and inadequate action to ensure the continued flow and access to essential medicines is putting people's lives and health at risk. Steps must be taken to address this deficit of medical supplies, before it turns into a serious crisis resulting in avoidable deaths and suffering.

The lack of fuel has further exacerbated the situation, with ambulances and vehicles carrying medical supplies unable to deliver services and available goods, particularly to areas outside of the capital, Kathmandu. Steps taken so far by the authorities to prioritise the medical sector's access to fuel in this time of crisis have been inadequate in practice.

Hospitals outside of Kathmandu have reported varying degrees of scarcity, with proximity to the Indian border a key factor in the ability to access supplies. The re-routing of some supplies from the main Raxaul border to other India-Nepal border entry points, airlifted donations from various international sources and the production of some drugs by Nepali pharmaceuticals using stocks and some imports of raw materials alleviated some of the critical pressure reported a month or so ago from some of the hospitals in the country. However, according to hospital officials in and outside of Kathmandu who spoke with Amnesty International, even these supplies are now running alarmingly low.

Regardless of the border situation, the Government of Nepal has to do all in its power to ensure it upholds its obligations under international human rights treaties it has signed, including protecting people's human right to life and health.

With the onset of winter in Nepal, Amnesty International recommends the government of Nepal to urgently take steps to:

- Ensure that people's right to life and health are guaranteed, and that they have access to quality essential medicines;
- Ensure that the medical sector has the fuel necessary to deliver their essential services;
- Ensure that medical health professionals and hospital staff are consulted in designing the solution to the current crisis and their concerns are responded to.