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## **Nepal: Maoists must end abductions, killings and the recruitment of child soldiers**

*Evidence is mounting that children as young as 14, including girls, are being recruited by members of the armed opposition group, the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (Maoist), Amnesty International said today after issuing an appeal to the group's leadership.*

*In letters to the two leaders of the CPN (Maoist), Pushpa Kumar Dahal and Dr Baburam Bhattarai, Amnesty International called for an immediate end to the recruitment of child soldiers and the abduction of civilians and for any captives to be treated humanely. The letters were delivered through an intermediary in late June, but to date no response has been received.*

*At least thirty children have been abducted over the last few weeks by members of the CPN (Maoist). Among them are believed to be three 14-year-olds and a 15-year-old from Janapriya High School in Jajarkot district who were reportedly taken from their school hostel in Dashera on 8 and 9 June respectively.*

*Although it has not been confirmed whether these children were abducted to be trained and deployed as combatants, Amnesty International has urged that they be returned to their families or communities. Amnesty International opposes unequivocally the recruitment and deployment of children below the age of 18 by both government and opposition forces.*

*Amnesty International also expressed concern about other individuals currently held captive. Dirgha Bahadur Dashoudi and Narayan Sharma, two teachers and members of the Tarun Dal from*

Dailekh district were abducted in early May and the Chief Education Officer of Rolpa district, Rajendra Prasad Yadav was taken from a bus on which he was travelling on 10 June.

To Amnesty International's knowledge, they have not been released and no statement has been issued by the CPN (Maoist) as to why they were abducted. The organization has urged the CPN (Maoist) to inform their relatives of their fate and give them the opportunity to communicate with them through the International Committee of the Red Cross.

In the letter, Amnesty International also condemned the unlawful killings of other people abducted by members of the CPN (Maoist), including members of Nepal Congress Party, the Rasthriya Prajatranta Party (RPP) and the National Democratic Party (NDP).

NDP activist Chitra Bahadur Thapa was abducted from his home on 3 May at Bhotechaur in Sindhupalchok district and was found dead in a nearby village seven days later. According to a pamphlet found near his body, the CPN (Maoist) believed he misappropriated development funds and worked as a police informer.

Amnesty International has urged the CPN (Maoist) leadership to publicly pledge it will abide by the international humanitarian principles in situations of armed conflict as laid down in the Geneva Conventions. Both governments and armed opposition groups should not torture or kill people taking no active part in hostilities, they should not take hostages, or harm anyone who is wounded, captured or seeking to surrender.

*"As an organized armed opposition group, the CPN (Maoists) are accountable under international law and should respect basic human rights at all times," Amnesty International said.*

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