

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **Nepal: Amnesty International condemns Maoist landmine attack**

Amnesty International today condemned the killing of 45 civilians and wounding of at least 70 others in a landmine explosion for which the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) have acknowledged responsibility. It called upon the CPN (Maoist) leadership to publish in full the results of its internal investigation into this indiscriminate attack on civilians and the action taken against those responsible.

The landmine explosion took place in the morning of 6 June 2005 at Madi, Chitwan district, southern Nepal. According to a Maoist internet site, the Maoist leadership has announced that it was carrying out a "serious investigation" into the incident.

It is not the first time the Maoist leadership has announced an investigation in response to strong criticism for attacks on civilians. Amnesty International is calling for immediate and effective action against those found to have been responsible and for measures to be put in place to ensure it does not happen again.

#### **Background**

In a statement released on 7 June, the CPN (Maoist) leadership acknowledged responsibility for the landmine explosion and reportedly stated that it was "a mistake as it was aimed at government troops". The leadership also expressed regret at its actions.

It is a basic principle of international humanitarian law that persons fighting in armed conflict must, at all times, distinguish between civilians and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives. The "principle of distinction", as this rule is known, is the cornerstone of international humanitarian law and binding on all parties to armed conflicts, whether international or non-international. Whereas it is not unlawful to target combatants for attack, specific rules are aimed at protecting civilians and other non-combatants – they must not be the object of attack. Indiscriminate attacks, including attacks on military objectives that are expected to cause excessive loss of civilian lives or damage to civilian objects (the principle of proportionality) are similarly prohibited, as is the use of civilians as "human shields". In Nepal, both the CPN (Maoist) and the security forces have repeatedly breached these rules.

