

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
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**Nepal: Amnesty International urges authorities to ensure security
as more deaths reported before national elections**

Amnesty International expressed grave concern at the escalation of killings and arrests in Nepal in advance of national elections tomorrow, Thursday, 10 April.

Amnesty International said: "The last two weeks have been marked by growing violence, including attacks by armed groups, intimidation of political candidates and reports that the Young Communist League and others have harassed voters in several districts. Supporters of all major political parties have been involved in a number of street demonstrations leading to, at times, violent confrontations.

"This election is a turning point for Nepal. It is an opportunity to put an end to years of violence and work towards a new kind of political future. We urge the authorities to ensure public safety and security for the elections and call for all parties to abide strictly by the Election Commission code of conduct," said Amnesty International.

Seven Maoist cadres are reported to have been killed by security forces during clashes between rival party supporters in Dang district, and another Maoist cadre was killed in Surkhet district this morning (9 April), again reportedly by security forces.

On 8 April Rishi Prashad Sharma, a candidate for the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist) was shot dead by unknown gunmen near the south eastern town of Nepalgunj.

These are the first national elections in Nepal since 1999. Many Nepalese have been looking forward to voting into power a new assembly which they hope will write a new constitution for the country and turn the 240 year old monarchy into a federal republic.

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