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Nepal: Police must refrain from excessive use of force as another protester killed

Nepali authorities must reign in their security forces and prevent them from using excessive force as violence around protests against a new constitution shows no sign of abating, with another man dying from police gun fire on 26 August, Amnesty International said. Prompt and thorough investigations into all protest-related deaths must also take place.

Political violence has escalated in Nepal since the major political parties agreed a deal on new federal states under a new Constitution on 8 August. Reportedly three men succumbed to bullet wounds today in Nawalparasi district. Another man was killed yesterday as police opened fire on protesters in the southern Rautahat district.

At least seven members of the security forces and three protesters were reportedly killed on 24 August, with a death toll since 10 August of at least 15.

Restraint is essential. Security forces, who have already used excessive force, must avoid and prevent further bloodshed. Leaders of all groups should also ensure that their protests are conducted peacefully.

Any use of force in the policing of demonstrations, even when they have turned violent, must comply with international standards. Firearms may only be used as a last resort in self-defence or to protect others against the imminent threat of death or serious injury.

Indigenous and disenfranchised groups have staged protests across Nepal over recent weeks against the new Constitution, which they claim denies them political representation. The issue of federalism has long been contentious in Nepal, particularly in the south and mid-west of the country. Amnesty International calls on authorities to ensure that all voices are heard including those of groups who are marginalised in the decision-making process. A less than inclusive charter would be a flawed one and will only sow the seeds of future ethnic tensions and violence.

The new Constitution is being put to a vote before the Constituent Assembly – Nepal's de facto parliament with the debate having started on 26 August.