

Mandates of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on the right to education; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Ref.: AL NPL 1/2025
(Please use this reference in your reply)

8 January 2026

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Special Rapporteur on the right to education; Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 60/8, 53/7, 53/4, 52/9, 59/4 and 52/4.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **alleged extrajudicial killings, detentions and excessive use of force by Nepalese security forces during youth-led demonstrations held on 8 and 9 September 2025 in Nepal, which resulted in multiple deaths and injuries among peaceful protesters, including students and schoolchildren.**

According to the information received:

8 September 2025

On Monday 8 September 2025, at approximately 9.00 a.m., a large-scale youth-led protest was organized in Maitighar Mandala, Kathmandu, to denounce the Government's ban on 26 social-media platforms (including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, X, and LinkedIn) announced on 4 September 2025, and to call for an end to corruption and restrictions on freedom of expression.

The demonstration, reportedly authorized by the Kathmandu District Administration Office, drew more than 12,000 participants, primarily students and young people, many wearing school uniforms. Participants carried the national flag and placards bearing slogans such as "*Stop corruption, not social media*" and "*Youths against corruption.*" The protest began peacefully, with demonstrators marching toward the Parliament building in New Baneshwor, accompanied by public figures and cultural personalities.

At around 10.00 a.m., some protesters breached the first line of police barricades along the road to Parliament. According to reports, some protesters threw branches and stones, and one ambulance was set on fire in the ensuing confusion. Police units, under the command of senior officers, initially retreated.

Between 11.30 a.m. and 12.30 p.m., Nepal Police and security forces reportedly launched a coordinated dispersal operation, employing water cannons, tear gas, batons, rubber bullets, and live ammunition. Witnesses and medical staff stated that security personnel opened fire directly into the crowd of unarmed protesters, many of them students, resulting in the deaths of at least 14 to 20 individuals and injuries to more than 347 others, including journalists and first aid workers.

Among the deceased were students in school attire, several of whom were reportedly shot in the head or chest. Hospitals across Kathmandu, including the National Trauma Centre (seven fatalities), Civil Hospital (three), Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital (two), Everest Hospital (three), and Kathmandu Medical College (one), received the injured and deceased. Additional casualties were documented in Itahari, Biratnagar, and other cities.

Video footage circulating on social media reportedly shows uniformed officers firing live rounds and assaulting injured protesters. There are also allegations that some victims were shot while receiving medical treatment in or near ambulances. The use of lethal force was reportedly neither preceded by warning nor justified by any imminent threat of violence.

By 12.30 p.m., a curfew was imposed across major areas of Kathmandu Metropolitan City (including New Baneshwor and Singha Durbar) and subsequently extended to Pokhara, Birgunj, and other municipalities. The Nepal Army was reportedly deployed to assist police operations.

During the afternoon, widespread panic ensued, and families were prevented from reaching hospitals where their relatives were being treated. Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak tendered his resignation later that day.

By December 2025, at least 76 people have been killed, and 384 people have been arrested, according to police data, in relation to 153 cases reportedly filed for “vandalism,” weapons possession, rioting, and other charges. Other sources report 423 detainees. The identities of all detainees remain allegedly unclear. Moreover, there is no public information confirming that all the detainees have had consistent access to legal counsel or that their families have been kept informed of their detention status.

9 September 2025

On Tuesday 9 September 2025, 14 schoolchildren aged 12 to 13 years, who had participated in the previous day’s demonstration, were reportedly among those shot and killed. Witnesses alleged that some were targeted by headshots at close range by uniformed officers. The use of live ammunition against minors engaged in a peaceful protest has generated severe public outrage.

These acts are alleged to have been carried out under the orders or authorization of senior government officials, in coordination with the Nepal Police, Armed Police Force, and elements of the Nepal Army.

Following events

In the days after the protests of 8-9 September, Nepal entered a phase of political upheaval and transition. On 12 September, Sushila Karki was sworn in as interim Prime Minister, after the resignation of K.P. Sharma Oli. The following day, the parliament was dissolved, and fresh elections were scheduled for 5 March 2026 under the interim government. A nationwide curfew, which had been imposed in Kathmandu and other areas, was lifted on 13 September.

A judicial commission was established to investigate the violence, but the criminal investigations are allegedly still on hold, awaiting for the commission's full report. As of December 2025, at least 384 suspects remain in custody under dozens of registered cases related to the protests.

Although the commission recommended freezing the passports of several high-level officials, the government has not publicly confirmed decisive prosecutions or concrete disciplinary actions. Meanwhile, a separate internal police panel has been created to investigate rapid operational failures and use of force during the protests, but its findings and any resulting reforms are not yet publicly available.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, we are deeply alarmed by the reported use of lethal and disproportionate force by Nepalese security forces during the demonstrations of 8 and 9 September 2025, resulting in the killing of unarmed protesters, including schoolchildren, and the injury and arbitrary detention of hundreds of others. If confirmed, these acts may constitute extrajudicial executions and serious violations of the right to life and security of a person, protected under articles 6, 7, and 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). We recall that, under the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, law enforcement officials shall, as far as possible, apply non-violent means before resorting to the use of force and firearms, and that any use of lethal force must be strictly unavoidable in order to protect life. Of further concern is the reported failure to conduct prompt, thorough, independent, and impartial investigations into these incidents, as required under international standards, and the continuing impunity of State agents allegedly responsible for the killings and ill-treatment of protesters.

We are further concerned by reports of violence, stigmatization, and intimidation against peaceful demonstrators, human rights defenders, journalists, and civil society actors who participated in or reported on the protests. Such actions appear to undermine legitimate civic engagement and may have a chilling effect on the exercise of the freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly guaranteed respectively under articles 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). We stress that measures to preserve public order and security must not be used to suppress dissenting voices or restrict the legitimate work of those engaged in promoting and defending human rights (Human Rights Council resolution 22/6, para. 10(a)).

We are also particularly alarmed by reports that a significant number of the victims were students and minors, some as young as 12 years old, participating in demonstrations calling for accountability and reform. This can have broader and longer-

term implications for the right to education of children and youth, protected under article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), as they may fear engaging in discussion, debate or advocacy inside and outside classrooms. These developments raise serious concerns about Nepal's compliance with its duty to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights to education and academic freedom.

We also express grave concern at the broad restrictions imposed on access to and use of social media platforms, which appear to have severely curtailed the exercise of the right to freedom of expression and access to information. Blanket bans on access to the internet or to social media platforms are generally never compatible with international human rights law. The ban on 26 digital platforms imposed does not appear to be necessary nor proportionate to any legitimate aim but rather intended to suppress criticism and hinder the ability of young people and civil society to express dissent, in violation of article 19 of the ICCPR. We recall that any restriction of the right to freedom of expression must be provided by law, necessary and proportional to one of the legitimate objectives established under article 19 of the ICCPR.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide detailed information on how the policing operations in the context of the protests of 8-9 September 2025 were planned and conducted, and how the authorities ensured that they minimized harm, respected human rights and upheld the dignity of all persons, including those in situations of vulnerability such as minors.
3. Please provide detailed information on the factual and legal bases for the use of force by members of the Nepal Police, Armed Police Force, and Nepal Army during the demonstrations of 8 and 9 September 2025. In particular, please explain how the use of live ammunition against unarmed protesters, including minors and students, is compatible with Nepal's obligations under articles 6, 7, 9, 19 and 21 of the ICCPR and with the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. Please provide information on any investigations initiated into these incidents, including their current status, their compliance with the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death (2016), and on measures taken to ensure accountability and redress, and indicate when the results of these investigations and any related reforms will be made publicly available.

4. Please provide the factual and legal basis for the detention of protesters, including minors and students, during the 8-9 September 2025 demonstrations. Please explain how these detentions comply with article 9 of the ICCPR, and provide the status of any investigations, accountability measures, and when results will be made public.
5. Please provide information about the measures taken to investigate the incidents of the 8-9 September, ensure accountability and provide reparations to victims and their families. Please provide information about any reports or communications shared with the public in this regard.
6. Please indicate whether any step has been taken after these events to avoid repetition of the apparently unnecessary and disproportionate restrictions to the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association, and ensure that all individuals and groups can exercise these rights as guaranteed under articles 19, 21, and 22 of the ICCPR, without fear of reprisals, harassment, or undue restrictions.
7. Please provide detailed information on the legal and policy justifications for the nationwide ban on 26 social media platforms reportedly imposed prior to and during the demonstrations, and how can these be deemed compatible with Nepal's obligations under article 19 of the ICCPR, including the principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality. Please indicate whether any assessment was carried out to evaluate the impact of these measures on the rights to freedom of expression, access to information, education, and academic freedom, as well as what steps have been taken to safeguard the privacy and freedom of expression of online users, students, journalists, and digital activists, including during periods of protest or unrest. Please provide information about the measures and safeguards put in place to avoid the repetition of such blanket bans on social media platforms in the future.
8. Please provide detailed information on the measures taken by the Government to ensure that students can safely access and enjoy their right to education in the aftermath of the 8-9 September 2025 protests. In particular, please indicate how the State is protecting the ability of students and educational communities to participate in public life, express their views, and engage in peaceful civic action without fear of violence, intimidation, or arbitrary detention, in accordance with the ICESCR, the ICCPR and the Convention on the rights of the Child (CRC), as well as relevant standards on academic freedom and safe learning environments.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

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Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

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Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to refer your Excellency's Government to the following international human rights and humanitarian standards.

Right to life and protection from excessive use of force

We draw your attention to article 6 of the ICCPR, ratified by Nepal on 14 May 1991, which guarantees the inherent right to life of every person and provides that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of life. The Human Rights Committee, in general comment No. 6, has emphasized that the protection of the right to life requires that States adopt positive measures to protect individuals from violations by both State agents and non-State actors. Extrajudicial killings, including the use of lethal force against peaceful protesters and children, constitute a prima facie violation of this article.

Article 6 of the CRC, ratified on 14 September 1990, similarly recognizes the inherent right to life of every child and obliges States to ensure, to the maximum extent possible, the survival and development of the child.

We recall the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials (1990), which establish that law enforcement must, as far as possible, use non-violent means before resorting to force, and that lethal force may only be used when strictly unavoidable to protect life. Arbitrary or disproportionate use of force constitutes a violation of human rights and must be punished under domestic law.

In addition, principle 9 of the Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-Legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions (ECOSOC resolution 1989/65) and the Minnesota Protocol (2016) require that all suspected unlawful deaths be investigated in a prompt, thorough, independent, impartial, and transparent manner, with victims' families involved in the process.

International obligations to prevent, investigate and prosecute arbitrary deprivations of life, including those committed by law enforcement officials, require States to: (a) adopt legislation and operational protocols regulating the use of force; (b) investigate all potentially unlawful deaths in line with international standards such as the revised 2016 Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death; (c) ensure the accountability of superior officers and remove barriers to prosecution, including immunities and amnesties. Nonetheless, around the world, instances in which law enforcement actions result in the arbitrary deprivation of life are often inadequately investigated or prosecuted (A/80/214, para.5).

To safeguard the right to life and other fundamental rights and freedoms, the use of force by law enforcement officials must fully comply with the following six principles: (1) legality; (2) necessity; (3) proportionality; (4) precaution; (5) non-discrimination; and (6) accountability (A/80/214, para.15).

Where unlawful killings occur, authorities must ensure the transparency of their investigation, public acknowledgement of wrongdoing, accountability of perpetrators and full reparations to victims' families, including restitution, compensation, rehabilitation and guarantees of non-repetition (A/80/214, para.93).

Protection from arbitrary detention

Article 9 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to liberty and security of person and prohibits arbitrary arrest or detention. The Human Rights Committee, in general comment No. 35, affirmed that detention or arrest as a punishment for the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights, including freedom of expression, assembly, or association, is arbitrary and unlawful.

Article 37 of the CRC requires that no child be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of liberty and that the detention of children always be used as a measure of last resort, for the shortest appropriate period, and with proper legal safeguards.

Right to education and academic freedom

We also wish to refer to article 13 of the ICESCR, ratified by Nepal on 14 May 1991, which guarantees the right to education, including the protection of academic freedom. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in general comment No. 13, stressed that education must enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society.

Articles 28 and 29 of the CRC recognize the child's right to education and emphasize that education must develop the child's personality, talents, and abilities to their fullest potential, while also promoting respect for human rights and preparation for responsible life in a free society.

Right to freedom of opinion and expression

Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right "to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media". This right applies online as well as offline and includes not only the exchange of information that is favourable, but also that which may criticize, shock, or offend. In its general comment No. 34, the Human Rights Committee stated that States parties to the ICCPR are required to guarantee the right to freedom of expression, including "political discourse, commentary on one's own and on public affairs, canvassing, discussion of human rights, journalism, cultural and artistic expression, teaching, and religious discourse" (CCPR/C/GC/34, para.11). Arbitrary restrictions, such as blanket bans on digital platforms, censorship, or targeting of activists and journalists, violate these protections.

The Committee further asserts that there is a duty of States to put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those exercising their right to freedom of expression (para.23). Recognizing how journalists and persons who engage in the gathering and analysis of information on the human rights situation and who publish human rights-related reports, including journalists, human rights

defenders, judges and lawyers, are frequently subjected to threats, intimidation and attacks because of their activities, the Committee stresses that “all such attacks should be vigorously investigated in a timely fashion, and the perpetrators prosecuted, and the victims, or, in the case of killings, their representatives, be in receipt of appropriate forms of redress” (para.23).

Any restriction on the right to freedom of expression must be compatible with the requirements set out in article 19(3) ICCPR. Under these requirements, restrictions must (i) be provided by law; (ii) pursue one of the legitimate aims for restriction, which are the respect of the rights or reputations of others and the protection of national security or of public order (*ordre public*), or of public health or morals; and (iii) be necessary and proportionate for those objectives. The State has the burden of proof to demonstrate that any such restrictions are compatible with the Covenant, and restrictions must always be “the least intrusive instrument among those which might achieve their protective function” (CCPR/C/GC/34, [para. 34](#)).

Articles 12 and 13 of the CRC guarantee the child’s right to express views freely in all matters affecting them and to access appropriate information, taking into account the child’s age and maturity.

Right to peaceful assembly

We would like to remind to your Excellency’s Government that “the right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (*ordre public*), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others” (ICCPR, art. 21).

“Everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests” (ICCPR, art. 22(1)).

“No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those which are prescribed by law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (*ordre public*), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on members of the armed forces and of the police in their exercise of this right” (ICCPR, art. 22(2)).

Articles 21 guarantees the right to peaceful assembly. The Human Rights Committee, in general comment No. 37, stressed that the possibility of a peaceful assembly provoking adverse or violent reactions does not justify restricting or prohibiting it. Measures to preserve public order must not be used to suppress dissenting voices or legitimate civic engagement.

“Article 21 of the Covenant protects peaceful assemblies wherever they take place: outdoors, indoors and online; in public and private spaces; or a combination thereof. Such assemblies may take many forms, including demonstrations, protests, meetings, processions, rallies, sitins, candlelit vigils and flash mobs. They are protected

under article 21 whether they are stationary, such as pickets, or mobile, such as processions or marches” (CCPR/C/GC/37, para.6).

In the joint report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on the proper management of assemblies (A/HRC/31/66 para.13), the Special Rapporteurs recalled that States furthermore have an “obligation not only to refrain from violating the rights of individuals involved in an assembly, but to ensure the rights of those who participate or are affected by them, and to facilitate an enabling environment”.

Finally, we also refer to the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which affirms the right to promote and protect human rights, the duty of States to ensure their protection, and the rights to peaceful assembly and access to information (articles 1, 2, 5, 6, and 12). Measures to intimidate, stigmatize, or retaliate against activists, journalists, or students engaged in peaceful civic participation violate these protections.