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Joint Press Statement

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Nepal's systemic failure to prevent torture and ensure justice for victims raises serious concerns

The Constitution of Nepal, 2015, the National Penal Code, 2017, and the United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT), ratified by Nepal, all strictly and absolutely prohibit torture. Despite this, the Government of Nepal continues to violate its obligations by failing to effectively prevent torture and other ill-treatment in practice. Issuing a joint statement today on the eve of the [International Day in Support of Victims of Torture](#) (26 June), Amnesty International Nepal (AI Nepal) and Advocacy Forum-Nepal (AF) expressed their serious concerns over the government's persistent failure to address these grave abuses and urged the authorities to take immediate and concrete action to end the use of torture as a law enforcement tool and ensure accountability for such violations.

Despite clear legal provisions—including up to five years' imprisonment for acts of torture—not a single conviction has been witnessed under Nepal's Penal Code since torture was criminalized in 2017. This stark gap between law and enforcement reflects a culture of impunity, negligence, and the state's unwillingness to hold perpetrators accountable. Meanwhile, credible reports of torture and other ill-treatment, regularly leading to deaths in custody, continue to emerge from government detention facilities, including police stations, child reform homes, prisons, and other custody and detention centers across the country.

In the most recent tragic case, [28-year-old Harish Singh Pali](#) was found unconscious in police custody in Kailali District on 17 June 2025 and was declared dead at a local hospital that night. While a police sub-inspector has [been arrested](#) following a complaint by Pali's family, the circumstances of his death raise serious concerns of torture and need to be fully and impartially investigated.

This is not an isolated incident. Torture and custodial deaths were also reported in the media in [July](#), [October](#), and [November](#) 2024. In 2024, AF continued to visit the government detention facilities and documented a significant number of cases of torture and other ill-treatment, including leading to deaths in custody. In June 2024, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) also released a [press statement](#) citing [receiving 55 complaints of torture](#). These recurring violations reveal systemic failures to protect detainees and ensure accountability.

“Torture is not only a grave violation of human rights—it is a crime that undermines the rule of law and public trust. The authorities' unwillingness to hold perpetrators accountable emboldens further abuses. This must end immediately,” said Nirajan Thapaliya, Director of Amnesty International Nepal.

Culture of Impunity and Lack of Accountability

Officials implicated in torture and related custodial deaths nearly always evade judicial processes, reinforcing a culture of impunity. Investigations are conducted by police themselves against their fellow officers, raising serious concerns of conflicts of interest and compromising impartiality and independence. Instead, those suspected of causing harm should be suspended from their positions, pending the completion of effective investigations.

For example, in August 2023, Binod Tolangi (19) and Akash Balami (28) died after being [brutally beaten by police officers and fellow inmates](#) at Sankhuwasabha prison. Despite civil society recommendations for strict action, no criminal accountability has yet been ensured towards alleged perpetrators, and a case against seven police officers and eight prisoners remains pending in the District Court.

Similarly, in 2020, Bijay Mahara, a 19-year-old Dalit man, died in custody in Rautahat District [after being reportedly tortured](#)—beaten with rods and boots and electrocuted. Despite Mahara's recorded video testifying to the torture inflicted on him before his death and arrest warrants for the accused officers, no arrests were made. The case remains unresolved.

Conflict-Era Torture Survivors Still Denied Justice

Thousands of individuals tortured during Nepal's 1996–2006 armed conflict by both state security forces and Maoist insurgents remain without truth, justice, or reparations. Grave abuses—including torture, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrest, and extrajudicial killings—were committed with impunity, yet Nepal's transitional justice process remains stalled.

“While the National Penal Code criminalizes the practice of torture, it places the provision of a six-month statutory limitation in reporting a case of torture, making it effectively impossible for survivors of torture during the conflict to access any remedies under it,” said Thapaliya. Under international standards no statute of limitations or other time limits may be applied to acts of torture.

The Government claims that all conflict-era cases, including torture, will be addressed by transitional justice bodies. However, these bodies are widely viewed as politicized and lack victims' trust. Although a 2015 Supreme Court ruling struck down broad amnesty provisions and amendments in 2024 narrowed the possibility of amnesty for “serious human rights violations”, concerns remain that mediation and leniency provisions continue to impede full accountability, leaving many survivors without justice.

“The failure to address conflict-era crimes has fostered impunity, enabling ongoing violations such as torture, other ill-treatment, and related deaths in custody. The government must ensure victims receive full reparations and perpetrators are held accountable through fair trials,” said Bikash Basnet, Director of Advocacy Forum-Nepal.

The Government of Nepal must act without delay to end torture and related custodial deaths, uphold the rights and dignity of all individuals, and fulfil its constitutional and international human rights obligations to prevent further erosion of public trust in the justice system.

Amnesty International and Advocacy Forum-Nepal call on the Government of Nepal to:

1. Amend the Penal Code to bring it in line with international human rights law and standards, including the removal of the statute of limitations for filing complaints.
2. Establish an independent mechanism to monitor and investigate all allegations of torture and custodial deaths, including the case of Harish Singh Pali.
3. Thoroughly, impartially and independently investigate all allegations of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment under international law, both past and present, and where there is sufficient admissible evidence, prosecute those suspected of committing the crimes before competent, independent and impartial civilian courts, in fair trials under international standards.
4. Ensure regular and independent monitoring of all places of detention by official actors and civil society representatives.
5. Ensure the recommendations from the National Human Rights Commission, including on cases of torture, are promptly and fully implemented. Immediately implement the pending recommendations of the National Human Rights Commission calling for action against suspected police officers, prison and other government officials in cases of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and on granting compensation to victims.
6. Collate and publish annual disaggregated statistics on the incidence of deaths in custody, with the status of investigation in each case.
7. Accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT).
8. Facilitate a visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment to Nepal.
9. Ensure that victims of torture and other serious human rights violations committed during the 1996–2006 armed conflict receive truth, justice, and full reparations and are provided with support and rehabilitation programs, and that those responsible are prosecuted in fair trials before civilian courts without undue delay.
10. Amend the TRC Act to explicitly criminalise gross violations of international law, including torture and sexual violence, in line with Nepal's international obligations under the international human rights law, including the ICCPR, CAT, and ICPPED.