

For Immediate Release

Nepal: Balen Government Should Bring Human Rights Reforms

International Rights Organizations send Recommendations on Key Issues

(Geneva, May 1, 2026) – Nepal’s recently elected Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) government, led by Prime Minister Balendra Shah, which came to power on a wave of popular demands for change, should use this opportunity to bring lasting protections for human rights and the rule of law, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the International Commission of Jurists said in a letter to Shah published today.

The organizations made recommendations on 13 areas of human rights, including the transitional justice process, women and girl’s rights, the rights of Dalits and other minorities, the rights of migrant workers, LGBTI rights, the right to housing, and freedom of expression and association. Some of the new government’s early actions, including the forced eviction of landless people from informal settlements, and a proposed ordinance that would dilute the independence of the constitutional council in making appointments of judges and commissioners to constitutional bodies, appear to violate housing rights and due process protections, and show an alarming disregard for procedure and the rule of law, the organizations said.

“The protests by young Nepalis were a demand to end entrenched inequities, and that can only be addressed with transparent and accountable governance,” said Elaine Pearson, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. “Many voters have high expectations that the RSP government will deliver real change, and to achieve that, it is crucial for the authorities to hold people accused of human rights violations and abuses and corruption to account in fair trials,”

Nepal’s new government won a landslide majority in a snap election in March 2026, after the previous government collapsed amid youth led protests in September 2025, in which [at least 76 people were killed](#) mostly unlawfully and by police, and which caused widespread damage to public and private property. The protests, sparked by a sweeping ban on social media sites, [demanded](#) an end to corruption and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

The cornerstone of building a culture of accountability should be ensuring a credible, effective and timely transitional justice process that meets international legal standards, to provide truth, accountability and reparation, particularly for international humanitarian law violations and human rights violations and abuses that were committed during the 1996-2006 internal armed conflict, the groups said. Among those who have not yet received even interim relief are survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. Although the law relating to the transitional justice process was improved in certain aspects by [amendments in 2024](#) , shortcomings remain and the

process has since stalled, after victims' groups objected to the appointment of commissioners who they said lacked political independence or expertise.

“Victims and survivors of crimes that were committed during the conflict have waited far too long for justice, while the culture of impunity that took root in that period has contributed to ongoing violations including the killing of Gen-Z protesters,” said Mandira Sharma, director for the Asia and Pacific program at the International Commission of Jurists. “Completing the transitional justice process in line with international legal standards is crucial to building a rights respecting system under the rule of law.”

The organizations called for the authorities to bring those responsible for human rights violations during the Gen-Z protest to justice, release unpublished official reports on previous incidents of lethal violence against popular movements dating back to 1990, and implement recommendations by the National Human Rights Commission to appropriately prosecute people against whom there is sufficient evidence of human rights abuses and violations amounting criminal conduct.

Women and girls in Nepal are at heightened risk of rights violations, including sexual violence, which the authorities have done too little to prevent or prosecute, the groups said. Despite being illegal, child marriage remains widespread. Dalits and members of other marginalized communities are also particularly at risk. Successive governments have failed to enforce the 2011 Caste-Based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offense and Punishment) Act or even collect data on caste-based crimes.

Despite Supreme Court rulings, officials have often failed to uphold LGBTI rights, including to same sex marriage, and the right of trans people to affirm their gender on official documents.

Nepal depends on the economic contributions of migrant workers, yet they often work [in extreme heat and unsafe conditions](#), and face exploitation and exorbitant recruitment fees. The organizations made specific recommendations for steps the government should take to protect migrant workers' rights during the current crisis in the Persian Gulf, as well as important measures to protect their human rights more generally.

About 40 percent of Nepal's population is under 18, but children receive only around four percent of the government's social security budget. To help secure the welfare and rights of all Nepali children, the organizations recommend extending the successful [Child Grant](#) social security program, which is currently only available in 25 out of 77 districts. The groups also made recommendations about securing other social and economic rights, including the rights to health, education, and housing.

“The people of Nepal have demanded change, and that is what Balendra Shah and the RSP promised during the election campaign,” said Smriti Singh, South Asia director at Amnesty International. “Now the government needs to seize the opportunity and walk the talk to deliver real and lasting change built on respect for Nepal's international human rights obligations.”

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