

LETTER

## TIBET PROTESTS

Amnesty International today (April, 21) condemned threats by the Nepali Home Ministry to use "force, including gunfire... to prevent anti-China protests" when the Olympic torch relay arrives on Mount Everest in early May. These threats to use lethal force follow earlier crackdowns on peaceful pro-Tibetan protestors, which were unconstitutional and resulted in the arbitrary detention of at least 400 people.

Amnesty International is gravely concerned that the Nepali government is extending illegal police actions against Tibetans in Nepal and systematically violating their fundamental rights to liberty, due process and freedom of movement, assembly and expression. "Members of the Tibetan refugee community have in recent days faced increasingly punitive police measures designed to muzzle free speech, including threats of arbitrary deportation to China. Statements threatening the use of lethal force represent an unacceptable escalation."

The Government of Nepal must ensure that its officers are adequately equipped and trained to employ non-violent means of crowd control before resorting, where strictly necessary, to the use of force. Firearms may only be used as a last resort where lives are at risk. The Nepali government must ensure that its officers are subject to strict regulations regarding the use of such methods and are tied to a strict system of accountability.

Amnesty International therefore calls on the Nepali government to police demonstrations in line with the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force. Principle 5 of the Basic Principles states that police have the duty to "exercise restraint [...] and act in proportion to the seriousness of the offence and the legitimate objective to be achieved". Police are also required to "minimize damage and injury, and respect and preserve human life". Principle 8 stipulates that "exceptional circumstances such as internal political instability or any other public emergency may not be invoked to justify any departure from these basic principles".

**Amnesty International,**  
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