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# **RAPID ASSESSMENT OF CHILD & YOUNG PEOPLE'S RIGHTS VIOLATIONS & URGENT NEEDS DURING 'GEN Z' LED POLITICAL MOVEMENT IN NEPAL**

14<sup>th</sup> September 2025



<b>NAME OF THE ASSESSMENT:</b>	<b>CHILD AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS &amp; URGENT NEEDS DURING GEN Z LED POLITICAL MOVEMENT IN NEPAL - RAPID ASSESSMENT</b>
<b>SUMMARY:</b>	<i>Quick study on understanding the child rights violations and urgent needs during the recent Gen Z led political movement</i>
<b>ASSESSMENT LEAD:</b>	<i>Dil Air/Ayush Joshi – Save the Children Tilottam Paudel /Raju Ghimire– CZOP Sumit Shah – Rapid Assessment Consultant</i>  <i>In consultation with: Consortium and 12 other CSOs partnering with SCI</i>
<b>STAKEHOLDERS:</b>	<i>National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) National Child Rights Council (NCRC) Save the Children International (SCI) and civil society partners Children as Zone of Peace (CZOP) Health workers Injured children and youth Police/ Security Personnel Children and youth leading the campaign Family members of deceased or injured children/ youth</i>
<b>LOCATIONS:</b>	<i>6 provinces – Koshi, Madhesh, Bagmati, Gandaki, Karnali and Sudurpashchim Provinces</i>
<b>DATA COLLECTION MODALITY:</b>	<i>Primary – site visits, KIIs, FGDs Secondary – Media monitoring, case studies</i>
<b>SAMPLE SIZE:</b>	<i>As many as the enumerators can collect in a day, 12 September 2025. At least one health worker, one injured child/ youth, one police/ security personnel, one child/ youth leading the campaign, and one family member of the deceased or injured child/ youth from each province</i>
<b>DATA COLLECTION TIMELINE:</b>	<i>12 September 2025</i>
<b>REPORT FINALIZATION DATE:</b>	<i>14 September 2025</i>

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## List of Acronyms

ACCM	Advocacy, Campaigns, Communications, and Media
CAT	Convention Against Torture
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CZOP	Children as Zone of Peace
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
KII	Key Informant Interview
NCRC	National Child Rights Council
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
PSS	Psychosocial Support
SCI	Save the Children International
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UN	United Nations

**Disclaimer:** This rapid response report has been prepared by Save the Children and Children Zone of Peace (CZOP), in consultation with larger CSO groups to provide a quick analysis and update on the impact of the protests on children and young people. It aims to offer recommendations to state parties and relevant stakeholders to adhere to, and commitment toward, the UNCRC. The data sources include desk review, media monitoring, and information from FGDs and KIIs conducted in three major hospitals in Kathmandu, and province hospitals in Koshi, Madhesh, Gandaki, Karnali, and Sudurpashchim provinces. The data and evidence presented in this report were collected between 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

It also includes suggestions from the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2025, with the National Human Rights Commission and other related organizations.

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## 1. Executive Summary

On 8th September 2025, children and young people from Gen Z took to the streets to protest their concerns on corruption and demand greater accountability and transparency from the government. What began as a peaceful demonstration soon turned violent as the state responded with excessive force. The heavy-handed approach of security forces resulted in the deaths of 51 people, including 3 children (2 boys and 1 girl), and left many others injured, as of 13 September 2025. The tragic loss of lives gave the movement greater momentum, drawing in wider sections of society who joined the protests to demand the resignation of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli. Protesters also called for the dismantling of entrenched corrupt systems and the ushering in of a new wave of leadership, staying true to the aspirations of “Gen Z.”

The Gen Z-led movement in Nepal has resulted in grave and widespread violations of children’s rights, exposing critical weaknesses in the country’s child protection systems during political unrest. It has been found that children are being called to participate in protests through social media while wearing their school uniforms. During the monitoring of human rights and child rights violations, the National Human Rights Commission faced obstruction, and vehicles were vandalized and set on fire. It was also found that children were used in the protests, which is against the law. According to media reports and on-ground accounts, the children and youths were shot on the head, chest, and abdomen. There have also been reports of children being detained, tortured, and harmed by tear gas shelling. These actions represent clear breaches of Nepal’s obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Convention Against Torture (CAT), national legislation, and the United Nations (UN) Basic Principles on the Use of Force.

The rapid assessment highlights multiple urgent needs of affected children and families across medical, psychosocial, safety, legal, and educational domains. It also highlights the trust deficit between state mechanism/Police and children/youth, and the need to ensure a peacebuilding and conflict transformation lens to address the post-conflict situation and ensure that such violations do not happen again. Trauma, fear, and anxiety are widespread among children, compounded by disrupted schooling, arbitrary arrests, limited functioning of the justice system actors including police and protection structures, and the secondary risks of violence following the escape of 12,496 prisoners during the unrest. Families who lost breadwinners are struggling economically and some are demanding recognition of the deceased as martyrs with appropriate compensation.

Testimonies from children reveal profound trauma, fear of future violence, feelings of hopelessness, and disappointment with institutions. Despite this, they also highlight the resilience of young people and their determination to participate in shaping Nepal’s democratic future.

Response efforts remain fragmented and insufficient. Hospitals were overwhelmed, psychosocial services are scarce and uncoordinated, education continuity has been ignored, and accountability for state security forces is absent. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has formed a committee to investigate child and youth deaths and injuries, but the process has not yet begun. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and international actors have attempted to fill gaps but lack coordinated frameworks and resources.

The assessment concludes that urgent and coordinated action is needed. The government must guarantee no further use of force against children and youth, ensure transparent investigations, and guarantee medical, psychosocial, and legal support. National institutions like NHRC and NCRC must lead in monitoring and accountability, while CSOs and international partners should strengthen child-centered services, advocacy, resource mobilization, creating safe spaces for child/youth dialogue, and also supporting youth with mediation/negotiation skills. Without decisive measures, Nepal risks deepening intergenerational trauma, undermining public trust, and alienating its youth—a generation critical to the nation’s social and democratic future.

## 2. Background and Context

As of 13 September, 51 people, including children, have reportedly lost their lives, and hundreds more have sustained injuries—many of them severe, due to the heavy-handed response of the state during the Gen-Z

protests. The protests, led by young people, resulted in the resignation of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, who stepped down from office on 9 September. However, public anger has remained high, with demonstrations continuing and incidents of vandalism targeting government institutions and properties.

On 12<sup>th</sup> September, the interim government has been formed, and the parliament has been dissolved. Hospitals are overwhelmed, highlighting critical gaps in emergency medical care and psychosocial support for children, youth, and families affected by the unrest. State security forces' response has been marked by excessive use of force, raising serious concerns about violations of fundamental human rights, including the right to life, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and protection from arbitrary detention and violence. These actions have had a particularly profound impact on children, undermining their rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), including Article 13, which guarantees children's right to freedom of expression. The targeting of child and youth protesters represents a clear breach of the state's obligations to uphold and protect these rights.

During the Gen Z movement, Nepal's prison system faced a major breakdown. Across 29 jails, 12,496 prisoners escaped, yet only 1,069 have returned. The remaining 11,427 prisoners are still unaccounted for, creating significant public safety risks and highlighting critical weaknesses in prison management and security.

Escaped	Returned	Not in Contact
12,496	1,069	11,470

The juvenile correction system similarly experienced a serious breakdown. Across six correctional homes, 618 children escaped, of whom only 229 have returned. A total of 398 children remain missing, raising urgent concerns regarding child protection, rehabilitation, and safety.

Correction Home	Total Children	Escaped	Returned	Not in Contact
Biratnagar	255	204	161	43
Hetauda	94	58	41	17
Kaski	109	109	0	109
Jayandu, Banke	228	115	15	100
Naubasta	176	80	3	77
Doti	52	52	9	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>914</b>	<b>618</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>398</b>

The widespread escapes from both adult and juvenile facilities underscore systemic failures in Nepal's security and correctional systems, creating serious risks for public safety and for the protection of vulnerable children. These incidents highlight the urgent need for strengthened child protection measures, rehabilitation programs, and security reforms to prevent further harm.

In response to the crisis, Save the Children, in collaboration with the NHRC, CZOP, and other CSOs, initiated a rapid assessment to identify key issues, gaps, and opportunities to hold the state and security forces accountable for upholding and respecting children's human rights. This assessment will also inform both immediate and long-term interventions to support children, youth, and families affected by the crisis.

### **3. Objectives of the Rapid Assessment**

The objectives of this assessment were as follows:

- Identify and document key incidents and evidence of children's human rights violations—including where, how, and by whom these violations occurred during the recent political unrest.
- Assess the immediate needs, gaps, and protection concerns affecting children and youth (who are in hospital), particularly in relation to medical care, psychosocial support, safety, and access to essential services.

- Determine priority areas for response and advocacy, focusing on how and where to support affected communities, children and youth, and to promote the principle that children must never be targeted or harmed during emergencies by any state mechanism.
- Develop concrete recommendations for the government, human rights agencies, and development partners to highlight urgent needs and outline the way forward for child rights programming and interventions (e.g., addressing mental health concerns and generational trauma caused by police violence).
- Analyze the impact of police and security force actions and define strategies for advocacy and influence through a child rights and peacebuilding lens.

## 4. Methodology

This rapid assessment used a mixed-methods approach to gather information from affected areas, hospitals, and key stakeholders. The aim was to understand the extent of child rights violations, immediate needs, and areas for response and advocacy. SCI and CZOP assessed potential risks and mitigation measures, including ethical considerations—such as enumerator safety protocols, informed consent, and child safeguarding—before proceeding with data collection.

### Primary Data Collection

Primary data was collected through direct engagement in affected locations considering personal safety measures. This included:

- **Site visits:** CZOP began by mapping key hospitals where injured children and youth were admitted. Simultaneously, contact persons at these hospitals were coordinated for data collection. Following this, team members/ enumerators visited hospitals to gather data and information directly from the affected children and youth.
- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):** 39 interviews were conducted with medical personnel/ health workers, affected children and youth, media personnel, parents, and to gather data and information.
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** 3 FGDs were held with family, CSOs, NHRC, and NCRC to understand their experiences, protection concerns, and urgent needs.

### Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data was gathered through desk review and media analysis. This included:

- **Media Monitoring:** News articles, social media posts, and public statements were reviewed to track incidents and narratives related to child rights violations. 51 death cases were reported, including 3 children. It was also reported that there were rampant violations of child and human rights.
- **Case Studies:** Selected incidents of serious child rights violations were documented in detail to highlight the nature, context, and impact of these events.

All collected data was analyzed to identify patterns, gaps, and recommendations for immediate support and long-term advocacy, with a focus on ensuring that children are never targeted in any emergency or conflict situation by state mechanisms.

### Timeline:

SN	Activities	Sep 2025				Responsible
		10 Sep	11 Sep	12 Sep	13 Sep	
1	Selection of the Rapid Assessment team					CZOP
2	Meeting with the team of Rapid Assessment Team					CZOP
3	Mapping of key hospitals and locations for data collection					CZOP
4	Organize coordination meeting among NHRC					
5	Mobilize members, staff and volunteers for data collection from hospitals					CZOP
6	Prepare questionnaire list for KII and focus group discussion					CZOP

7	Undertake focus group Discussion and KII					CZOP
8	Media Monitoring					CZOP
9	Develop case studies of child rights violation					CZOP
10	Share the Preliminary Rapid assessment report of Rapid Assessment of Child Rights Violations & Urgent Needs During Gen Z-Led Political Movement in Nepal					CZOP

### Ethical consideration:

This study involved data collection; thus, prior to interviews, the objectives of the study were shared with all research participants. Verbal consent was obtained from all the respondents, and in case of children, verbal consent was taken from parents, and assent was obtained from children. Respondents could at any time withdraw their participation from the study. All the personal identifiers were kept confidential, and no real name has been disclosed throughout the study, and pseudo name has been used for quoting the useful quotations. Furthermore, enumerators with backgrounds in child rights and psychosocial support were intentionally selected to ensure ethical data collection and adherence to child safeguarding standards. The nine basic principles of child rights<sup>1</sup> were strictly followed throughout the consultation and evidence-generation processes.

### The following considerations were made:

- Data collection methods were age and gender appropriate.
- Study activities provided a safe, creative space where children feel that their thoughts and ideas are important.
- A risk assessment was conducted that included any risks related to children, young people, or adults' participation.
- A mental health/psychosocial referral mechanism was in place in case any child safeguarding or protection issues arose.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Nature of Child and Human Rights Violations

There were serious and widespread violations of children's rights during the Gen Z-led movement in Nepal. These violations reflect both systemic gaps in the protection of children during public unrest and actions by state security forces that violate national and international legal standards, including the UNCRC. Approximately 2000 people<sup>2</sup> were injured in the protest, and 51 were killed<sup>3</sup>, as of 13 September 2025. Among these, 3 deaths are of children (2 boys, 1 girl)<sup>4</sup>, and 6 children (all boys) were injured. During the assessment, there were cases where the children had been shot in the chest, head and abdomen. There are also reports of children having been detained by the police and tortured. A child got hit by a tear gas shell on his face.

The following rights of the children have been observed to be violated during the movement:

1. **Right to Life**
  - CRC, Article 6 and ICCPR, Article 6 guarantee every child's inherent right to life. Alleged extrajudicial killings by police directly violate this non-derogable<sup>5</sup> right.
2. **Right to Security and Protection from Violence**
  - CRC, Article 19 requires states to protect children from all forms of violence, including by law enforcement.

<sup>1</sup> <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/nine-basic-requirements-meaningful-and-ethical-childrens-participation>

<sup>2</sup> Stats from Ministry of Health and Population

<sup>3</sup> Various media

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.onlinekhabar.com/>

<sup>5</sup> A non-derogable right is a fundamental human right that cannot be suspended or restricted under any circumstances, even during states of emergency, war, or public crises.



- *The Convention against Torture (CAT)* also prohibits cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

### 3. Right to Peaceful Assembly and Freedom of Expression

- *CRC, Articles 13 and 15* and *ICCPR, Articles 19 and 21* protect children's rights to express themselves and participate in peaceful assemblies. Killing children during protests suppresses these rights.

### 4. Right to Special Protection in Situations of Risk

- Children are entitled to **special safeguards** due to their vulnerability (*CRC, Preamble; Article 3 – Best Interests of the Child*). State actors have a heightened duty to avoid harm, especially lethal force.

### 5. Prohibition of Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Excessive Use of Force

- The **UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials** prohibit the use of lethal force except as a last resort to protect life. Killing unarmed children in protests is an arbitrary and unlawful deprivation of life.

## 5.2 Voices from Children and the Youth

### 5.2.1 Case Study:

Bibek Subedi\* (17), Pokhara (name changed)

**Incident:** A tear gas shell hit the face, causing severe internal facial injuries

**Date & Time:** Tuesday, 24 Bhadra 2082 (10 September 2025), at around 12:30 PM

**Location:** In front of Pokhara Metropolitan City Office, New Road, Pokhara-8

#### **Narrative:**

On the afternoon of 24 Bhadra (10 September 2025), Amrita\* (name changed) received a call around 1:00 PM informing her that her son, Bibek\* (17), had been admitted to Gandaki Medical College Hospital. Fellow Gen Z protesters had rushed him there after he was struck directly in the face by a tear gas shell during a demonstration in front of the Pokhara Metropolitan Office.

The injury was devastating. Doctors have already performed two major surgeries to repair internal damage to his face and have indicated that further reconstructive procedures will be necessary. On the day following the injury, Bibek's condition was described as critical. Although there has been a slight improvement, his recovery remains uncertain. Nurses have been consoling and encouraging Amrita to stay strong.

Amrita's life story adds to the gravity of the situation. She is a single mother of three sons, abandoned by her husband years ago. She sustains her family by selling vegetables in the local market. Bibek, her middle son, stays with his aunt in Lekhnath while pursuing his studies. He had joined the protests with friends despite his mother's pleas to avoid them.

"I told him not to go," Amrita recalls. "But he said, 'We must protest against what's happening. I'm not going alone; my friends will be there too. What happened yesterday won't happen again today.' And then this tragedy struck. If our country were in a better state, my son wouldn't be lying in a hospital bed like this."

Despite the severity of the injury, the hospital has not charged the family for treatment, as the government declared free medical care for protest-related injuries. Relatives have been providing food, and Amrita has not yet had to seek financial support. However, the long-term medical, psychosocial, and educational needs of Bibek remain unclear.

#### **Key Concerns**

**Medical:** Multiple surgeries already completed; further reconstructive treatment required.

**Psychosocial:** Mother and siblings experiencing distress, fear, and uncertainty about the future.

**Economic:** Single mother, primary caregiver, dependent on daily earnings; long-term care may become unsustainable.

**Education:** Bibek's studies disrupted, with potential long-term consequences for his learning and career.

## Significance

This case underscores how state responses to protests have placed children at direct risk of life-altering injuries. Beyond immediate survival, the consequences extend to long-term health, economic vulnerability, and psychosocial well-being for both the child and the family. Bibek's story highlights the urgent need for sustained medical care, psychosocial support, and mechanisms to safeguard children during political unrest.

### 5.3 Immediate Needs of Affected Children and Youth

The rapid assessment highlights urgent and multidimensional needs of children, youth and their families who were directly or indirectly affected by the political unrest. These needs include medical, psychosocial, safety, legal, and educational domains.

**Psychosocial and Mental Health Support:** Children and families interviewed during the rapid assessment reported high levels of fear, trauma, worry, regret, frustration, guilt, and anxiety following exposure to violence and loss of peers. This has contributed to generational trauma and fear of authority, eroding trust in systems, and potentially hindering the meaningful participation of children and state mechanisms in advancing child right. There is a critical need to establish and activate a referral mechanism for referring the children to the available trained and psychosocial workers and counselors.

**Medical Care and Rehabilitation:** Hospitals in Kathmandu and other major cities were overwhelmed with injured people, including children, during the unrest. The government of Nepal had declared that the treatment would be free for the people injured during the unrest. This was verified during the rapid assessment. Some children and youth might need advanced medical treatment for those with serious medical conditions. During the assessment, the health workers stressed the need to establish a crisis management system in the hospitals and have a contingency plan to be more effective in these kinds of emergencies.

**Safety and Protection:** Families expressed concerns about the safety of children and young people. Arbitrary arrests left many parents fearful of letting their children leave home, leading to further isolation and protection risks. According to several reports, during the Gen Z protests, over 12,000 prisoners escaped from prisons nationwide. This mass breakout has created significant risks for communities, raising concerns about a potential surge in criminal activities. Media reports an attempted rape case<sup>1</sup>, and there has been a sudden rise in incidents of looting and theft. The structural breakdowns, a trust deficit in justice and security mechanisms, and dormant state functions contribute to increased violence against children, women, and girls. This systemic breakdown affects underrepresented children, such as those with disabilities, LGBTQI+ children, and others.

**Education Continuity:** Schools in protest-affected areas have been closed or disrupted, resulting in a significant loss of learning time. Children injured during the unrest risk prolonged absence from education without targeted catch-up programs or inclusive education measures. So far, it has been one week, which, if continued, could become very detrimental. In addition, the risks of disrupted education on those who are less likely to return (i.e., girls, children with disabilities) show that the impacts on education are still to come and need forward thinking.

**Family and Community Support:** Several families affected by the deaths or serious injuries of children require urgent assessment of economic, social, and psychosocial assistance. During the assessment, families emphasized the urgent need of financial assistance, noting that the death of the father—the primary breadwinner—has left the children highly vulnerable with no source of income. Community cohesion has been weakened by fear of security forces, which hinders collective coping and resilience. Similarly, gaps in mental health referral pathways and the absence of basic psychosocial first-aid skills have been identified, contributing to increased anxiety and psychosocial trauma in children, as well as dismissive behaviors among parents.

Furthermore, some families have called for the deceased to be recognized as martyrs and for appropriate compensation to be provided. In some cases, families have withheld acceptance of the bodies in pursuit of these demands.

### 5.4 Gaps in Response

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.onlinekhabar.com/2025/09/1762316/he-was-imprisoned-for-9-years-in-a-rape-case-but-escaped-the-next-day-another-rape-attempt-occurred>

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The rapid assessment highlights critical gaps in the response to child and human rights violations during the Gen Z-led political movement. These gaps, both structural and operational, are undermining the protection and recovery of children and young people affected by the crisis. Despite efforts by hospitals, CSOs, the NHRC, and the NCRC, significant shortcomings remain in addressing the urgent needs of children. The absence of coordinated medical, psychosocial, legal, and educational responses, coupled with weak accountability and inadequate functioning of protection mechanisms, risks deepening the crisis and leaving children further exposed to harm and long-term vulnerability.

**Psychosocial and Mental Health Services:** There are helplines and various international and non-governmental organizations (I/NGOs) providing psychosocial support (PSS); however, the number of trained psychosocial workers and counselors available for both hospitals and communities remains insufficient. A more pressing concern is the absence of a coordinated referral mechanism, which risks depriving children and their families of available psychosocial services. This challenge is compounded by the fact that referrals to specialized care were already limited before the crisis. Addressing this gap will require long-term efforts to strengthen mental health capacity. Furthermore, rapid assessments indicate that existing helplines and psychosocial services are not sufficiently child-focused and tend to be overly generalized. Underfunding further limits their reach, relevance, and overall impact.

**Coordination and Accountability:** No government mechanism was activated until three days after the unrest. Coordination between the government, NHRC, NCRC, and child-focused CSOs is ad hoc and reactive, lacking a common strategy for child rights protection in emergencies during periods of political unrest. During the assessment, it was noted that the lack of ministerial guidance limited the capacity for immediate actions from the NCRC. The NHRC has established a committee to investigate the deaths of children; however, the investigation process has yet to commence and may take some time to begin. Accountability of state security forces for excessive use of force remains absent, fueling impunity.

**Education and Continuity of Learning:** No formal measures have been introduced to support children whose education has been disrupted by injuries, trauma, or school closures. Catch-up classes, alternative learning modalities, and psychosocial support in schools are absent. In addition, the identification of children most at risk of dropping out due to school closures has not been done.

**Community Awareness and Engagement:** Families and communities lack adequate information on available support services, referral pathways, or complaint mechanisms. Additionally, social support systems should be strengthened to safeguard vulnerable and underrepresented children, ensuring their access to protection, psychosocial support, and community-based services.

**Child-Focused Peacebuilding and conflict-sensitive approaches:** Evidence indicates a pressing need to adopt long-term, peacebuilding and conflict-transformation strategies when addressing post-protest dynamics to ensure sustainable protection and social cohesion. This includes facilitating dialogue among state actors on child rights and protection to enable coordinated, child-centered responses, and further educating and sensitizing security forces on child rights, integrating peacebuilding practices through a child-rights lens in light of the heavy-handed actions demonstrated by the state and police.

## 5.4.2 Anecdotes

On 11th September 2025, Save the Children conducted digital hangouts (safe virtual spaces designed to listen, engage, and pulse-check children on emerging issues and trends) with children from Kathmandu, Madhesh, and Karnali Province. During these sessions, children discussed the post-protest situation and the challenges they were facing.

The discussions revealed deep concern among children, who expressed fear, anger, and uncertainty about the current context. They spoke about mental health challenges, including trauma, anxiety, and survivor's guilt. Many expressed fears of losing access to education, with some having witnessed their schools being burned down. Concerns were also raised about access to government services, particularly social protection for children with disabilities. A significant trust deficit towards state mechanisms emerged, as many had never experienced such

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police brutality and feared it might recur. Children conveyed a general sense of uncertainty about the future, feeling that the violence was unjustified and worrying that state affairs might revert to previous patterns.

Children also voiced concern over escalating violence, fearing personal harm in the absence of functional state mechanisms, with LGBTQI+ children and children with disabilities feeling particularly vulnerable.

#### **Anecdotes from the digital hangout with children from Kathmandu, Madhesh, and Karnali:**

“I felt restless and angry about the student deaths during the Gen Z movement. The fear of job loss and fake news adds to my uncertainty.”

“I’m taking exams, but seeing children shot in school dress made it hard to focus. I wanted to join the movement instead. I feel hopeless about the future.”

“I have no coping mechanism except screen time, but most content is disturbing and unreliable.”

“I saw a bloody, dead body during the attack near my home. Later, my school was attacked too. I even heard Gen Z held a Discord meeting with 10,000 attendees to choose the next PM. I don’t understand how that’s possible.”

“Some of my friends feel guilty eating good food when others are suffering. I don’t know how to respond to them.”

“The police chased us from Maitighar to New Road. People fell as bullets were fired. I now regret joining and just hope I can go home by Dashain.”

“Students are the future but seeing them mishandled and shot has stayed with me. I lost my appetite.”

“There are criminals who fled from the jail, and I fear that I will be violated.”

## **6. Analysis**

The Gen Z-led movement in Nepal revealed systematic patterns of excessive force, arbitrary detention, and suppression of civic freedoms from the state parties. While the overall casualty figures were high, the deaths and injuries of children and youth highlight the lack of special protection despite Nepal’s obligations under the CRC, along with ICCPR, CAT, and other international human rights instruments. Security forces disproportionately targeted youth demonstrators, treating them as threats rather than rights-holders. The prison break that followed the unrest compounded risks, exposing children and families to secondary violence, including attempted rape, theft, and looting. The consistent absence of child-sensitive approaches in crowd control, detention, and emergency response points to structural deficiencies in child protection during civil unrest.

#### **The violations documented undermine multiple rights simultaneously:**

- **Life and survival:** Alleged killings of children constitute irreversible breaches of non-derogable rights.
- **Physical and mental health:** injuries, trauma, worry, fear, guilt and frustration threaten children’s long-term development.
- **Education:** disruption and fear of returning to school weaken continuity of learning.
- **Safety and protection:** arbitrary arrests, exposure to escaped convicts, and weakened community cohesion heighten vulnerability.
- **Civic participation:** suppression of the freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly curtails children and youth’s evolving capacities to participate in shaping their futures.

Cumulatively, these impacts create **long-term developmental, social, and psychological harm**, especially if unaddressed. Weak functioning of state structures has intensified protection risks for children. This includes political labeling and confrontations among youth, the use of violence to express intergenerational political

differences, the use of schools as venues for political debates and party activities, and the mobilization of children in election campaigns or to promote the ideologies of particular political groups.

Nepal, as a State Party to the **UNCRC, ICCPR, and CAT**, is bound to safeguard children's rights even during political crises. The deaths, injuries, and detentions of children are in direct breach of:

- **CRC Articles 6, 12, 13, 15, 19, 37, and 39** (life, expression, assembly, protection from violence, juvenile justice, recovery).
- **ICCPR Articles 6, 19, and 21** (life, expression, assembly).
- **UN Basic Principles on Use of Force** (proportionality, last resort).
- Nationally, these events undermine commitments in Nepal's Constitution (Article 39 on child rights), the Children's Act 2075 (2018), and obligations under the National Child Rights Council. The absence of accountability mechanisms exacerbates impunity, weakening trust in the state's ability to uphold its legal obligations.

The Gen Z movement has illuminated both the resilience of Nepal's youth and the fragility of its protection and civic participation systems. Unless urgent steps are taken, such as strengthening child-sensitive policing protocols, providing psychosocial and medical support, ensuring education continuity, and establishing accountability for violations, the state risks not only breaching its international obligations but also alienating an entire generation. The choice before Nepal is whether to respond with repression that entrenches trauma or with reforms that recognize children and youth as legitimate actors in shaping the nation's democratic future.

## 7. Recommendations

### For Government & Security Forces

#### 1. End unwarranted use of force against children and youth:

- a. Immediately revise crowd control and protest management protocols to comply with national and international child protection standards. Realize, reflect, and acknowledge commitments of UNCRC, and ensure that these protocols are developed from a child-friendly lens.
- b. Provide mandatory training for law enforcement on child rights and child-sensitive approaches, proportionality, and non-lethal measures.

#### 2. Ensure accountability and independent investigations

- a. Conduct timely and transparent investigations into all incidents involving child deaths, injuries, or arbitrary detention during protests.
- b. Ensure independent inquiry, and transparency of the report findings, and strategic diffusion of the findings to course-correct existing protocols, and systems.
- c. Hold perpetrators accountable to prevent impunity and restore public trust.
- d. Adequately resource child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) response mechanisms at national, provincial, and local levels.
- e. Introduce emergency response protocols for unrest, guaranteeing child- and gender-sensitive procedures during protests, detentions, and crowd control.

#### 3. Guarantee medical, legal, and psychosocial support for survivors

- a. Ensure free and timely access to medical care for injured children. The free treatment has been provided by the government, which should be continued.
- b. Invest in psychosocial first aid and strengthen systems to ensure accessible, child-friendly mental health services.
- c. Provide legal aid and protection for children and families affected by arbitrary arrests or violations.
- d. Establish psychosocial support programs and referral mechanisms within hospitals, schools, and affected communities to address trauma and fear.
- e. Hospitals should have contingency planning to deal with emergencies with a high influx of patients.
- f. Ensure survivor-centric services (medical, psychosocial, legal aid) are accessible, affordable, and confidential.

#### 4. Strengthen GBV reporting and help-seeking mechanisms:

- a. Review existing GBV reporting and help-seeking systems and widely communicate available services.
  - b. Train GBV service providers and state actors to ensure the safety and inclusion of all children, particularly those underrepresented, such as LGBTQI+ children and children with disabilities.
- 5. Undertake special initiatives to institutionalize children and schools as zones of peace.**
- a. Ensure and implement policy provisions for the safety of schools and children through coordination among federal, provincial, and local governments, civil society groups, and other concerned stakeholders.
  - b. Do not obstruct teaching and learning activities during strikes, protests, or demonstrations, and ensure children's right to education.
  - c. Children, parents, and teachers should be oriented on topics such as peace education, moral education, and the concept of schools as zones of peace.

#### **For Gen Z Activists**

- 1. Ensure that individuals below 18 years of age are not involved in protests.**
  - a. While the right to protest is a democratic process and practice, according to existing laws and policies in Nepal (such as the *Children's Act 2018*, and the *National Framework and Implementation Guidelines for Schools as Zones of Peace 2011*), the use of children for political or other purposes including propaganda, slogan shouting, violent acts, or activities that spread fear is strictly prohibited. Therefore, these legal provisions must be followed.
  - b. As protest sites are neither suitable nor child-friendly environments, children should not be brought to such risky places.
- 2. Promote child-friendly behavior and positive social messaging.**
  - a. Children should not be used during protests, and efforts should be made to promote child-friendly communication and positive social messages.
  - b. Messages and campaigns within the protest should clearly incorporate child rights and child protection standards.
  - c. Conduct pre-training and awareness programs on child protection for those involved in protest movements.

#### **For Human Rights Agencies (NHRC and NCRC)**

- 1. Conduct independent monitoring and public reporting**
  - a. Deploy monitoring teams to hospitals and protest-affected areas to document reported violations.
  - b. Issue regular, evidence-based public reports on child rights violations and recommend corrective actions.
  - c. Request the interim government, relevant government mechanism, to convene a meeting with CSOs working on child rights and activate emergency working groups to establish a clear understanding of each organization's activities, ensure alignment, and define concrete collective asks.
- 2. Strengthen referral pathways for child survivors**
  - a. Collaborate with hospitals and CSOs to ensure children and youth receive timely medical, psychosocial, and protection support.
  - b. Standardize procedures for tracking and following up on children affected by violence or trauma.
- 3. Fast-track the investigation process for the children deceased and injured**
  - a. In the absence of the Ministries, take leadership and act immediately on the investigation of the children deceased and injured.

#### **For CSOs, including CZOP and Save the Children**

- 1. Advocate and influence for child-centred crisis response policies**
  - a. Engage with government and security agencies to integrate child safety and protection considerations into emergency response and public policy, especially during political unrest.
  - b. Support enforcement of national child protection laws during periods of civil unrest.
  - c. Ensure children's voices and participation are included in post-protest and reconciliation discussions and recognize children as integral actors within the wider CSO ecosystem.

- d. Strengthen the capacity and agency of children and young people to navigate and demand transparency and accountability, using a child rights and peacebuilding/conflict transformation lens.
- e. Request the interim government to convene a meeting with CSOs working on child rights and activate emergency working groups to establish a clear understanding of each organization's activities, ensure alignment, and define concrete collective asks.
- f. Build the capacity of children and youth in social change/mediation/negotiation on how to engage while ensuring their voices are heard.
- g. Activate rumour management actions for children to counter misinformation and disinformation.
- h. Lobby with relevant stakeholders for the revision of the School and Children as Zone of Peace Framework 2068 to make it relevant to the current situation and context.
- i. Strengthen the capacity of child rights activists and stakeholders through training and workshops, and take special initiatives to protect children from potential risks.

## **2. Provide immediate psychosocial support**

- a. Support the government in strengthening the referral mechanism.
- b. Offer targeted interventions for children showing signs of trauma, anxiety, or stress.

### **For Development partners & International Community**

#### **1. Support funding for urgent medical and psychosocial interventions**

- a. Prioritize rapid response funding for hospitals, rehabilitation programs, and community-based psychosocial support.
- b. Ensure resources reach children and youth in both urban and remote areas affected by the unrest.
- c. Ensure funding for mental health initiatives, particularly those addressing generational trauma, peer-to-peer psychological first aid, and orientation/sensitization on mental health referral pathways, and strengthening GBV response systems.
- d. Allocate resources for police and state sensitization on child rights, and support programs focused on peacebuilding and conflict transformation to address the deep trust deficit arising from the Gen Z protests and ensuing state response.

#### **2. Press/Media for accountability and protection of child rights in Nepal**

- a. Encourage the government of Nepal to uphold UNCRC obligations and national child protection standards.
- b. Advocate for independent monitoring, transparent reporting, and mechanisms to hold the government and security forces accountable.
- c. Ensure ethical reporting on children in post-protest scenarios, avoiding geo-tagging and prioritizing their safety and safeguarding.
- d. Conduct follow-ups on transparency measures, report on child and human rights incidents, and ensure timely addressal of these issues.

## **8. Conclusions**

The rapid assessment demonstrates that the reported restrictions in response to the Gen Z-led movement in Nepal has resulted in grave violations of children and human rights, including, alleged killings, injuries, arbitrary arrests, and exposure to fear and trauma. These abuses reflect both systemic weaknesses in child protection during political unrest and a failure of state actors to uphold Nepal's obligations under the UNCRC, ICCPR, and national legislation. The impact on children and youth has been severe, encompassing loss of life, physical harm, disruption of education, erosion of safety, and long-term psychological distress. Families have been left vulnerable due to loss of income and inadequate support, while communities remain fearful and fractured.

At the same time, the immediate response so far has been insufficient, especially during the unrest, and needs to be activated in a coordinated way, as the unrest has now settled to a greater extent. Gaps in psychosocial support, medical preparedness, accountability mechanisms, and education continuity risk compounding the harm already suffered by children and youth. The testimonies of young people reveal not only deep trauma but also disappointment with institutions meant to protect them.

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Moving forward, urgent and coordinated action is needed. The government must end excessive use of force, ensure accountability, and provide comprehensive support services. National institutions such as NHRC and NCRC must take leadership in monitoring, investigating, and responding to violations, while CSOs and international partners should complement these efforts through advocacy, service provision, and funding. Unless concrete steps are taken, Nepal risks not only breaching its human rights commitments but also entrenching intergenerational trauma and alienating its youth—a generation critical to the nation’s democratic and social future.