

Statement by the National Human Rights Commission, Nepal (NHRCN)
UPR Pre-session on Nepal
28 November 2025, Geneva

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This statement is delivered on behalf of the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal (NHRCN), an ‘A’-status, independent constitutional body mandated to promote and protect human rights in Nepal.

The NHRCN appreciates the Government of Nepal’s continued engagement with the UPR mechanism and recognizes the progress made in legal and policy reforms. However, as an independent institution, we wish to draw the urgent attention to critical implementation gaps that continue to cause preventable loss of life and violations of fundamental rights.

Our statement highlights three urgent and interlinked public health and safety crises:

1. The Mental Health and Suicide Crisis
2. Air Pollution and the Right to Life
3. The Road Safety Epidemic

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Issue 1 – The Mental Health and Suicide Crisis)

Haiti recommended for the government of Nepal to “Develop and implement a national strategy and action plan for the prevention of suicide, by establishing a reliable data collection system and addressing the social stigma associated with suicide.”

Existing Commitments and Gaps:

Although the Government adopted a National Mental Health Strategy in 2020, its implementation and resource allocation remain critically inadequate, particularly at the local level.

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Current Situation/New Development:

Nepal is facing a severe public health crisis. In the fiscal year 2023–24, the country recorded 7,223 suicide deaths¹—the highest number ever reported. This translates to an average of 20 preventable deaths every day. Furthermore, it is estimated that around 80 percent of individuals who need mental healthcare still lack access to any form of support.

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¹ Nepal Police-Annual Factsheet on Suicide and Cybercrime(FY 2023-2024)
(https://www.nepalpolice.gov.np/media/filer_public/fd/3e/fd3e1c95-aaa1-41bd-815e-0221254141d4/fy_2080-81_suicide_cyber_crime_-_en.pdf)

Recommendations:

The NHRCN urges the Government of Nepal to:

- Allocate at least 5 percent of the national health budget to mental health services and integrate mental health care into all 753 local-level primary healthcare centers. This measurable and achievable action should commence in the fiscal year 2026/27.
- Launch a nationwide anti-stigma campaign through state media to promote help-seeking behavior. The campaign should reach all 77 districts and be implemented within 12 months.

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Issue 2 – Air Pollution and the Right to Life

Existing Commitments and Gaps:

Despite the adoption of the 2018 National Air Quality Management Action Plan, enforcement has remained weak, leaving millions of people exposed to hazardous air pollution that undermines their right to life and health.

Current Situation/New Developments:

- Air pollution is Nepal’s leading environmental health threat, causing an estimated 26,000 premature deaths every year.²
- PM2.5 pollution shortens average life expectancy by 3.4 years nationally and up to 5.1 years in the Terai region.³
- It contributes to nearly 30 percent of neonatal complications, including low birth weight and preterm births.⁴
- Over 89 percent of the population lives in areas where air quality fails to meet even the World Health Organization’s minimum standards.⁵

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Future Outlook:

Without urgent action, PM2.5 levels in the Kathmandu Valley are projected to rise from 37 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 2021 to 51 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ by 2035, which could result in tens of thousands of additional premature deaths.⁶

² World Bank: Towards Clean Air in Nepal, 2025

(<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099060525033528377/pdf/P176456-fd25d1c4-c05a-4740-9984-ada6a89056a2.pdf>)

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ ICIMOD Press Release, 2025(<https://www.icimod.org/press-release/nepal-initiates-development-of-national-air-quality-management-action-plan/>)

⁶ World Bank: Towards Clean Air in Nepal, 2025

(<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099060525033528377/pdf/P176456-fd25d1c4-c05a-4740-9984-ada6a89056a2.pdf>)

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Recommendations:

The NHRCN recommends that the Government:

- Strictly enforce the National Air Quality Management Action Plan and implement emission standards for high-impact sectors such as brick kilns and transport, aiming to achieve a 30 percent reduction in urban PM2.5 levels by 2030.
- Promote the use of clean-energy public transport, prioritizing electric and hybrid vehicles.
- Establish a real-time public air quality alert system accessible through broadcast and mobile platforms within 18 months to inform and protect vulnerable populations.

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Issue 3 – The Road Safety Epidemic

Existing Commitments and Gaps: A comprehensive Road Safety Bill remains pending before Parliament. This legislative delay continues to cost lives every day.

Current Situation/New Developments:

- Road traffic accidents caused 2,883 fatalities in the fiscal year 2022–23, with over 24,000 deaths recorded in the past decade.⁷
- Long-route public transport accidents are among the deadliest, primarily due to: Hazardous infrastructure, including poor road design, blind curves, and lack of safety barriers.

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Recommendations:

The NHRCN urges the Government to:

- Pass and implement the Road Safety Bill within 12 months, establishing a National Road Safety Council with independent authority and a dedicated budget.
- Allocate funds in the fiscal year 2026/27 for a Highway Safety Infrastructure Program aimed at upgrading all identified “black spots” with crash barriers, retaining walls, and safety signage.

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Recommendations (cont..)

⁷ NHRCN desk monitoring. Data also available in national newspapers like:

(<https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/01/26/nepal-sees-at-least-75-road-accidents-on-average-daily-report-shows>)

- Mandate the inclusion of safety features—such as segregated lanes for cyclists and protected footpaths—in all new national and urban road projects, effective immediately.

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Conclusion

These three crises—the mental health and suicide emergency, air pollution, and road safety—pose immediate, measurable, and serious threats to the right to life in Nepal. The NHRCN calls upon Member States to make specific, time-bound, and SMART recommendations to the Government of Nepal in these areas.

The National Human Rights Commission reaffirms its commitment to support the Government in implementing these recommendations and will continue to monitor progress in line with its constitutional mandate.

Thank you.