



UNERASED
SCARS OF
THE
CONFLICT

FOREWORD



Since the end of the armed conflict, which lasted from 1996 to 2006, the Nepal government has struggled to meet the demand for an adequate justice and reconciliation process to support victims of the conflict.

Despite assurances that the issue remains a priority, the two commissions that were set up to guide the Transitional Justice process, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Commission for Investigation of Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP) remain chronically under-resourced, opaque and ineffective at meeting even the most basic of victim's needs. As of April 2019, no concrete steps or actions have been taken to act on the cases registered by both commissions even after the completion of their four year tenures.

Women's experiences of the conflict are different than those of men. It is a fact that many women victims, especially those who suffered from sexual violence have neither registered their complaints, nor will they appear to testify before the commissions. There is no confidence among the victims that their cases will be investigated with due diligence. They do not think they would ever get justice as they have not seen this happen in any other cases. They are not even afforded recognition as victims as there is no interim relief for those who suffered from sexual violence and torture. Those few women who reported their cases have neither received any relief nor any remedies. Despite promises, there were no measures for them to record their statements confidentially as there were no trained female members accessible in the commission to register their complaints. Going to the commission, for these victims, meant being excluded from their families and dealing with social stigma, without getting any redress. All these factors have demoralized victims of gender-based violence (GBV) in general, sexual violence in particular and silenced them further.

This is why story-telling, and its documentation, is crucial to the process of attaining justice for victims of conflict. It's crucial to not only look at the large-scale political, social and economic repercussions of the conflict, but the personal impacts as well. In 2018, FWLD conducted number of story-telling workshops, providing a space for conflict victims to share their stories, empathize with fellow victims and understand the collective struggle that they face. We documented some of these stories with

the support of the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal (TPO Nepal) who provided psychosocial counseling to the victims.

Beyond the victims, it's also important for the rest of us to understand what the impacts of the conflict were on Nepal. As policy-makers continue to falter in their efforts to provide victims with the support they need to live comfortably, it has become increasingly important to share these stories to raise awareness about the hardships that these individuals and their families face. Stories of people facing torture, sexual violence, displacement, kidnappings, extortion etc. from both sides (State and Maoist) are widespread, and the stories documented here are just a few of the thousands that occurred during the armed conflict.

These stories also show that conflict victims have a variety of things that they want from the government: some want economic support or assistance with their physical and mental well-being, while others want to find out what happened to missing loved ones. Many of them, however, mention the need for an adequate reparation and truth process. A process which is yet to be delivered to them. These stories serve as a reminder of the impacts the conflict had, and we hope that their documentation will help prevent these horrific acts from ever being repeated.

FWLD would like to extend its gratitude to the conflict victims who shared their testimonies and provided consent for us to publish them. We thank TPO Nepal for the case documentation and the psychosocial counseling services provided to the victims. We extend special thanks to International Alert Nepal for providing us with technical support in this process.



Sabin Shrestha
Executive Director
FWLD

“I still carry scars from those days in my body and my mind”

Even though I was not involved with the Maoists, I was forced at the age of 12 to attend their cultural program. After about 4 -5 days of the program, some officers from nearby police station came to where the Maoists were eating. Earlier, the owner of the house had told me and my other friend to join the feast. He told us nothing will happen so, without any idea of what was happening, we decided to sit there. When the police came, the house owner told the police that us girls were also Maoists. Me and my friend were taken along with the others to the jungle. We were taken deeper into the jungle and raped. I cannot explain the intensity of the pain. When we reached the police station, we were raped the entire night by the police officers. The following day we were in deep pain and bleeding all over. We weren't even in a condition to speak. We were kept in the police station for a night. We had teeth marks all over our body and barely able to walk. The next day we were taken to another police station and there too we were raped the entire night. Then, we were taken to another location. We were made to walk for 4 days. I did not think I would survive too long. My friend and I were kept together and raped together every night we were there. They would also spit on my food and force me to eat it. The officers would urinate on me and make me look while they did it. We were also kicked with their boots after they were done with us. I still carry a bite mark on my chest from one of the officers.

The police took me to a hospital, where my medical treatment was to be done. Even though the doctor saw blood coming out of my vagina he decided not to treat it, nor did he ask why I was bleeding. After being hospitalized for 3 months

I was taken back to the police station where I was again raped every day for a week. After that the frequency of rape decreased; not that it never happened but then the intensity was low. There was however a person who used to come and rape me and if I made any sound he would threaten to call others. By that time my uterus had already fallen (uterine prolapse) but then I didn't realize it nor did anyone ask me about it. I only found about this after my marriage when I was unable to conceive for a long time. I managed to get required treatment. When I was returned to my home I had recurrent thoughts of committing suicide, I even tried mixing metacid to my food. My mother stopped me and told me whatever happened was not my fault. But, my mother did not know the details of what I had gone through. I used to wonder if I will would ever get any respect from society. My eating pattern were disturbed, my sleep was disturbed, I was scared of the society and the people living in it, I worried about my future. During this time my mother supported me a lot. She used to make me understand things and never let me sleep alone. This was very important for me at that time of need. After marriage fear of my husband finding out about the incident and the consequences was so intense I planned to kill myself again, just a few years ago; but, this time I was stopped by my son.

I have so many health-related issues, both psychological and physical. I am mostly lost in my own world, I find it difficult to do everyday household work, I have issues with my nerves, I can't even work when seated, sitting and getting up is always painful, my uterus gives off foul smell and frequent discharge of blood. This makes going out in public very difficult. However, I have started to talk to people to cope with the trauma. I also get small support from few organizations for medical treatment. I have started to come out of the house. I hope to be able to live a peaceful life.

“We all need more support”

My husband was a police officer during the conflict. Being a police officer meant that we should have had financial security because of the pension he would have received after he retired. But because of the injuries he sustained from the incidents he was involved in, he was unable to continue and now works as an e-rikshaw driver. Even now, we struggle to fill our basic needs at home. We're worried we won't be able to support our children.

During the conflict, my husband was involved in several incidents. Once, he was attacked by Maoists with bombs and gunfire. He had to be taken to the hospital the next day because his injuries were so bad. I didn't even find out what had happened to him until the next day. He was there for three days, but his condition didn't improve, so he had to be moved to another hospital with the hope that he could get additional treatment. Our children were really young, so I couldn't go with him. The treatment was really difficult for him, and he had to be kept there for three months. Somehow he managed to survive six gunshot wounds. There was bullet that had entered from his teeth, moved through his nose and came out the other side; the other five wounds were in his hands and other parts of his head.

After this, he returned and was stationed as a police officer once more. He was again ambushed by Maoist cadres. Thankfully he wasn't injured in this attack, but he had colleagues that died. After this, he was given documents so he could leave his job, but he continued—despite the fact that he'd already



Kali Pun

been on the receiving end of two attacks. He was assigned to the place where the first attack happened, but he eventually had to leave his job because of the dangers he faced.

This is when he began to experience a variety of psychological issues: he was depressed, anxious, couldn't sleep and questioned himself all the time. He turned to religion for a sense of security and comfort—he says that it makes his fortune better. The problem is that now he's begun to worry about our kids. He's worried that he won't be able to provide for them and help them fulfill their wishes and desires.

He doesn't like to socialize with other people. He's restless, but he has problems with walking because of the pain he suffered before. He can't help with our farming because of this. I've had to start working because of the family's poor financial circumstances. I feel like I've developed physical problems because of the work I'm forced to do. Now, I feel like the problem is that I can't spend a lot of time with my family, and give them the attention I think they need. I don't feel like I'm involved in their lives. I really want to focus on being able to provide a better education to my kids so that they can find good jobs and make their children happy. I want to learn skills so I can do this for them, and I think the government needs to do more to support women like me.

“I demand justice, but I need support”

One day, at around 5/6 pm, while returning home alone from the market, a few policemen grabbed me from behind, blindfolded and abducted me before I could identify who they were. I could only tell they were policemen because of their uniforms. I was conscious enough to know that I was raped by 5 policemen. The next day, when I woke up, I couldn't stand or sit. I found myself in the jungle near the municipality. I had blue marks on my fingers, chest, face and breast. With great difficulty I somehow managed to get up to go home and rest. When my mother saw me, she asked me about the bruises; I only told her I couldn't walk because of an abscess. I hid the marks on my face with some adhesive tape.

The incident traumatized me and made me anxious about someone finding out. I started avoiding home and my parents to dodge questions about my bruises. I used to lie to my parents about going to school; instead I used to go to the meadow and rest alone. During these hours of being alone I used to contemplate committing suicide. The physical and psychological pain was unbearable. Death seemed like the easiest way out of the suffering. In the days following the incident I used to find myself staring blankly. I felt weak and vulnerable. I didn't like being in crowded places. I used to get nauseous and feel pain in my breasts. I used to get angry seeing men, even in my own house. I didn't trust men and used to get angry seeing army or police officers. I lost my appetite, cried all night, and sleep evaded me.

I never talked about the violence that was inflicted upon me; but my parents wanted me to get married. They coaxed me into getting married. I used to give my husband hints about what happened to me, so I assumed he knew about the incident. But after our child was born he confronted me and accused me of adultery and started becoming aloof. Sometime later, he married another woman (a mother of a child) and eloped with her to India. He must have shared details about the incident with his parents because after he left, they started mistreating me and I was compelled to leave my husband's home with my child within the same year. The rape made me physically disabled. I haven't been able to move my hands or legs easily, the pain in my hand makes even combing my hair difficult. I have a vaginal infection that causes great difficulties and pain. I can't do heavy work due to the pain in my abdomen. Being a single woman with a child makes it very difficult to rent a room. I feel intense fear that similar incident might occur again. I feel acute helplessness and fear. Even now, I get scared if someone comes to the house. I fear darkness and I get crippling nightmares, so I sleep with the lights on. Still, I can only sleep for 2-3 hours a day. I continue getting suicidal thoughts, but I try to be tough.

I am hopeful that someday I will get the justice I deserve, and I will fight for it. I demand an explanation for such brutal behavior inflicted upon me. If the State doesn't give me justice, then I think I am brave enough to take my case to an international court; for that, I will need the support of human right activists, organizations, and others.

“*Bhai Tika isn't the same anymore*”

I was born into a Dalit family in Rolpa. I was the only girl child among us 4 siblings, so my brothers loved me to bits. Tihar was my favorite festival; especially *Bhai Tika*, the day when a sister offers puja to her brothers. Despite being Dalit family, my maternal family was doing well financially, and we were happy. The Maoist conflict, however, changed my life. Two of my beloved brothers were killed and one is still missing.

My brother Chitra Bahadur BK was taken away by the police on the night of December 11, 1998 (2055-08-25). I was pregnant at that time and was stay with my maternal family. We were browsing through an old photo album after dinner, after which we all went to sleep. Later in the night, someone knocked on the door asking for water. When my mother opened the door; five or six policemen came in and went into each room while twelve to fifteen policemen surrounded the house. The photo album we were going through earlier had not been put away, so when one of the policemen saw it he started asking us questions about the people in the photographs. The police took away Chitra on pretext of making small inquiries. Even though I was pregnant, I went in search of my brother at the nearby police station, but they said they did not know where he was. I recognized one of the police officers who had come to our house and I asked him too. He said Chitra had been taken to Ghorahi but did not give me any more information. He still has not been found and there is no information about him either.



Tej Kumari BK

Another brother, Dhanbahadur BK was murdered by the police at around 11 pm of January 1, 2000(2056-09-17) outside his own house. He had a pregnant wife and 4 children (two, four, six and eight years old). Although they took his wife little further away, he was killed in front of his children. The children started to cry. The police then tied a rope around his neck, dragged him and threw him into a nearby field. He was accused of being involved with the Maoist party, but it was not true. Nobody touched his dead body out of fear. However, a couple of Maoists came and buried his dead body near our house.

My eldest brother Gopilal BK was killed in Juga VDC by the police February 9, 2001 on (2057-10-27). Gopilal was a teacher but he joined the Maoist party to get justice for what happened to our two brothers. My family begged him not to join, but he wouldn't listen; he was killed after a year of joining Maoists.

Losing all three of my brothers not only traumatized me, it also frightened me. I would isolate myself from others; gathering of people in big groups brought fear. It got to a point where I had to take medication for depression, but I am off the medication now. The society has ostracized me for reason I don't know, the responsibility of both sides of my family has befallen me, I am taking care of my children as well as my brother's children. But, the most unbearable of all is having only the photos of my brothers to offer puja to on Bhai Tika.

“I will live with scars on my body and my mind”

My family (wife and three children) depends on agriculture for income. This was the same before the Maoist conflict started and during the conflict. Even though there was a Maoist Commander living in our village who used to ask us or threaten us to join the revolution, majority of my village men denied and continued with their own occupation.

On the night of 9 July 2002, around 700 Maoist rebels surrounded our village and started assembling the men of my village near a well at the center of the village. They were there to avenge their fallen cadres who had been killed in Army operation near our village. They assumed the men in our village were the informants. Around 300 people, including me, were dragged from our houses. Our hands were tied, and they read our names from a list they had to see if everyone on the list were there. After that they randomly picked out men one at a time, made them lay on the ground and placed wooden plank underneath the legs and started battering the legs. Same was done to me. My legs were battered with an iron digging rod and an axe from thighs to knees. I fell unconscious with the first impact itself. I regained consciousness at the hospital 6 days later.

I had to stay in the hospital for six months, and even after being discharged, I had to stay in bed for a year. The bones in my legs were shattered and it had to be pieced together. Death would have been easier than going through that pain and continue living with physical and psychological trauma. For the past 16 years I live with nightmares of the torture, knee pain, pain in lower



Ram Kumar Yadav

back and chest, headaches. I've been diagnosed with post-traumatic knee stiffness, and lower backache-- it's been recommended I do physiotherapy regularly. Nothing makes me happy, not even celebrating festivals which I used to enjoy before. I have become disabled and I cannot provide for my family anymore. The uncertainty of my children's future adds to my woes. I don't have any other skill than farming and I can't even do that anymore. I depend on my children and hope they will do well without their father to support them. I will live with the scars of the torture on my body and my mind for the rest of my life.

I've reported my case at the Local Peace Committee, National Human Rights Commission and Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I received one lakh rupees from the Local Peace Committee and obtained a disability card from the government and received Rs. 60,200. I'm still waiting on other legal procedures. My only wish is to be able to provide a good education for my children, so they can get good jobs. If only the State introduced programs focused on torture survivors, my wishes will be fulfilled.

“Both sides are responsible”

I am a human rights activist and it's my belief that everyone needs to fight for freedom. This belief motivated me to be involved in politics. A majority of Nepalis were economically backward when the conflict started. There wasn't enough food, no warm clothing for the winter, quality education was inaccessible and practicing traditional methods of agriculture was leading to more economic problems. I feel like all of these were contributing to bigger social issues.

I once wrote a poem on revolution—it was titled “Bidroha.” In this poem, I said that I will fight against impunity in whatever situation. This poem got me arrested and I was charged as a Maoist a year later. It was before my SLC exams, I was very young then and I did not even know about the Maoist party. I was tortured inhumanly while I was in custody. I would get shouted at, pins were poked in various parts of my body, I was threatened frequently, blindfolded with hands tied behind my back and placed in a cell that reeked of urine. I was given a head wound that caused internal blood clotting.

After I was let go, I could not stay in my home for security reasons, so my only option was to join the Maoists. I was imaginative and had ideas, so I started writing poems. I wrote about the fight against discrimination, poverty and spoke about difficulty and the sufferings. I like to think of myself as an activist, a fighter; but I was not allowed to speak or walk freely. I got arrested every fairly frequently and was threatened with death. I would have been a successful person if I had been selfish and focused on my own



Mukunda Singh Oli

life; but I preferred to contribute to society and the country. Fighting for human rights became my priority.

Because I was directly involved with the party, I can say that the picture painted of the Maoists was not the truth. Even though the party was formed to fight against discrimination and inequality, there was inequality within the party. When I raised my voice against this inequality within the party I got dragged into controversies and conspiracies with other members. Once, I was taken to a place where one of my friends was killed. The Maoists kept there as a prisoner there for roughly twenty-nine days. I couldn't see anything from the room I was locked in. On the twenty-ninth day they moved me to the third floor of the building; that was when I was allowed to clean myself. From the third floor I was able to outside and the door was opened. I saw some light and vehicles. I saw my opportunity to escape. I climbed down a pipe attached to the side of the building to get out. I only had the twenty-one rupees a police driver had given me to get some tea when I escaped. It was then that I figured out my location-- I was somewhere in the west while my house was in the north.

I thought I could get home if I walked for two or three days. After a whole day of walking I managed to reach a road where I could ask people for help. I had to lie to them because I didn't trust strangers. I told them that my uncle and I were here for medical purposes and wanted to get to Keshwahak. I took an auto rickshaw to Keshwahak but stopped it ahead of my destination because I was afraid I would get caught. After walking for a few hours, I realized that the village I had reached was close to the place I had run away from. I decided to take refuge in a buffalo stable; but two police officers found me and wanted to arrest me by claiming that I had escaped from their camp. I was saved by villagers who told the police that I was a resident of that

village. I worked in the village for some time and collected enough money to go back to my party office. By then, rumors had been spread about me within the party. I was asked a lot of questions, they wanted to know whether my medical treatment was done, how I returned and how I escaped.

After I came back to the party, I was given the responsibility for work I had done during a party conference. However, I presented a disagreement letter, in which I wrote that if there is a problem with finances then only the relevant people should be punished. This and other many incidents made me vulnerable within the party. I was rebellious and I was punished by the party for criticizing its leaders. I was arrested and tortured again. During this arrest and torture, I was blindfolded, beaten and thrown into a ditch. They would put salt and lemon juice on my wounds, the torturers would walk on my legs or over my body as if I was a bridge. During the winter they wouldn't give me warm clothes or to cover myself with. I lived with extreme fear. I used to get nightmares. It was difficult for me to forget the torture. My head was wounded, and eardrums were damaged. The psychological impact of the torture also contributed to the physical and emotional estrangement that happened with my wife.

Even after all this suffering I'm still hopeful that I can create a successful life. I want to start a cooperative business and a buffalo farm. I want to create jobs for others and educate my children.

“I watched them torture my husband to death”

My husband used to be a teacher at the local secondary school. During the Maoist conflict, the Maoists would come to the school and our home to ask for money. My husband thought that these payments were necessary to keep us safe, so he would pay them. I think the amount he gave them totaled up to about Rs. 200,000.



Gauri Tharu

One day, we learned that security forces had brutally murdered a Maoist cadre. After this, at around 11pm one day, between seven and eight hundred people showed up to our village and surrounded our house. Five people broke down our front door and forced their way into our home. They accused us of being the government informants that gave the information which led to the death of their friend. They took my husband to the center of the village and forced him to stand in front of a temple. They stripped him of his clothing and beat him savagely with a gun, sticks and even cut him with a knife. There were lacerations all over his body. You could see blood all over the ground where he stood.

I begged them to stop torturing him, but then they started to beat me too. They injured my back and hand. They didn't stop at me; they beat my young children too. My son managed to escape and run away, but my daughter couldn't. They kept beating her and my husband. Our neighbours were too scared to come and help us, they stayed inside with their doors locked. By the time they were done torturing my husband, his legs had been broken.

One of the torturers came up to me, broke my bangles and told me to go home. They shouted profanities at me and then left. Some other villagers helped me take my husband home. Within a few minutes of reaching home, he asked our kids to bring him water. He took his last breath after drinking that water.

I was traumatised after this. The very next day, the army had to diffuse four bombs which had been left near my house. I've had so many problems with my health after these incidents. I used to cry all the time when I remembered what happened to my husband. I used to have problems with my breathing and faint as well. Two years after he died, people would accuse me of being a witch. They would come to my house and threaten to kill me, other times they would threaten to feed me feces.

My husband was the only person who earned money in our family. After he died, we've had problems with our finances. My maternal home has helped me a little, it's allowed me to continue sending my children to school.

I can never forget that night. It makes me feel weak and lonely. I'm not allowed to go into temples because I'm a widow and it's considered inauspicious for me to do so. I feel really hurt because this too.

“If leaders from both sides stood trial, I would feel justice”

I didn't have any issues before I was tortured. I was a self-practice health worker; my social life was good and my neighbours respected me. Everything changed after the incident though. I get depressed thinking about the pain I had to endure.

I had gone to India because my wife needed treatment. We returned fifteen days later, only to find that our house and properties had been robbed by Maoist cadres. I was shocked, there was nothing left. I had to stay with a neighbour after that. The cadres came back to look for me around midnight, but I hid in the jungle so they couldn't find me. They kept calling out my name and shouting threats. I left and moved after this.

I came back a few years later, but I was abducted and blindfolded by the Maoists upon my return. They beat me, broke my leg and severely injured other parts of my body. They would verbally abuse me, tie me up while I was asleep and starved me for seven days. They kept threatening to kill me and hurt my family. On the eighth day, I fell unconscious and had to be taken to the hospital. They needed to give me two pints of blood to help heal me.

I was terrified that something could happen to us at any time. The Maoists seized all of my property and land so I couldn't even sleep in my own house. My economic condition is deteriorating because I don't have any



Dinraj Bhandari

land to use. This displacement caused strains with my family and friends. I was tortured not only physically, but mentally as well. There was a loan I couldn't repay and so the bank took all of my land (10 bigha).

I'm angrier and more forgetful than I used to be, but I'm not afraid of anything. I have pain in my leg and osteoarthritis. I need to take medication for neurological problems too and I have to deal with stress as well.

I went to a few human rights and justice agencies for support like the National Human Rights Commission, Local Peace Committee Kailali, Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Supreme Court for investigation and compensation. The District Administrative Office gave me Rs.4000 and my land was returned, but my entire life was made worse by the conflict. I would feel a sense of justice if all the leaders, from both sides, that were responsible for the conflict were to stand trial in an international court.

“They battered my legs until all bones were shattered”

I am a simple farmer, I have a wife and three children. Whatever I yielded from my farmland was sufficient to sustain my family. When the Maoist conflict started, I continued with my simple life as a farmer as I had before the conflict. I never saw any reason to involve myself in either side of the conflict.



Jagdish Yadav

I was visiting my sister's house on the night of 9 July 2002. She lives in another village near Nepalgunj. We had already had our dinners and were getting ready to go to bed, but someone knocked at the door and demanded us to come out. We were frightened by their threats, so we volunteered to open the door. A few men dragged me outside without any explanation. I saw that all the men in the village were being dragged out and taken to a well at the center of the village. I had no idea what was happening, but I knew those men were Maoists because later I learnt they were taking revenge on the villagers for letting Army kill a couple of their cadres near the village.

When all of us men were assembled they picked us one at a time and made us lie on the ground on our stomach and started torturing us. I was the first to be picked. They had tied my hands at the back and while I was lying on the ground they put a wooden plank under my legs and started battering my legs with a hammer. They kept battering my legs from thigh to calf until all bones were shattered into many pieces. I had fallen unconscious with the second impact of hammer. They apparently kept battering my legs

even after I was unconscious. Someone told me later that they shook my legs after battering to ensure the shattered bones fell out of place. They had also sprayed acid on my face. All the men assembled were tortured in the same way; two of the men who were also tortured died on the spot. Rest of us became unconscious. After the torturing was over they left us there in the same state. I later learned that Army came and took us to the hospital. I regained consciousness three days after I was admitted. I was hospitalized for three years to recover. The bones had to be put together, and my skin patched up, but my legs were never going to be the same again. The village was not safe for anyone so everyone moved away to other places and deserted their homes until it was safe to come back again.

For a farmer to be hospitalized for 3 years meant additional burden of medical expenses. While in hospital, all I could think of was my responsibilities to my family, the medical expenses and a wish to die than living in this state. At present, although the wounds have healed, the bones don't support my body weight. A medic diagnosed me with post-operative stiffness of my lower knee and tinnitus. I am still under medication. I can't walk for more than half an hour each day, my back aches terribly, crowd stresses me, the acid damaged my eardrums so loud noises are intolerable, I lose my temper quite easily. I also have anxiety symptoms and recommended for counselling.

I went to Banke District Administrative Office and Local Peace Committee for compensation more than five times but haven't received relief or justice. Even the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hasn't provided me with any support.

“I still don’t know where my husband is”

At around 11pm one night, state forces came into our home while we were sleeping. They had been calling out my husband’s name, so my son opened the door and let them in. They told my husband to put his clothes on and follow them. I asked them where they were taking him, but all they told me was that they had be instructed to come get him and that he would be brought back the next day. That same day, five other villagers had been arrested and detained; only one of them was released. The rest, including my husband have been missing since. I don’t even know if he’s alive.



Deusara BK

The next day, I went to the police station, but they wouldn’t let me in. They wouldn’t even tell me if my husband was there or not. I went back four days later and they told me that he’d been arrested and handed over to the army. I went to the army barrack, but all they did was threaten me and give me no information. There were rumors a few days later that six or seven people had been killed in a gunfire exchange in the jungle. There was no information about where or not my husband, or the people that had gone missing, were involved. I was so scared that something had happened to him. Nobody came to see or comfort me, not even my family and friends. Everyone feared being arrested by the state under accusations of being Maoist cadres.

Before he went missing, my husband had a furniture shop—this was how we maintained our expenses. We’ve had problems since the incident though, There’s nothing to support our daily expenses or my children’s education. I don’t even know if I should do the final Hindu rituals for him. I miss him so

much, especially during the festival season and special occasions. I dream about him sometimes—it affects me a lot for a few days when I do.

I've become really angry and irritable because of everything that's happened. I feel like my community shunned me because my husband isn't around.

I've filed complaints with the Supreme Court, Local Peace Committee, National Human Rights Commission, Advocacy Forum, INSEC and Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons to find out what happened to my husband. The Local Peace Committee gave me Rs. 10 lakhs, but it wasn't given to me in one lump sum, so I haven't been able to use it properly. I feel like human rights and legal support organizations will have an important role to play when putting pressure on the government find the truth about individuals that have disappeared.

“My condition means that I cannot educate others anymore”



Dhaniram Tharu

I used to be a farmer and a theatre performer for a local NGO. I would perform in street and Kachahari dramas to educate the community about bonded labors (kamaiya and kamlaharipratha). From this I made good relationships with my family and my community, and also earned a good amount of money.

I wasn't involved with any political parties at the time of the incident. One day, I was recording a radio program with my colleagues at the media center. At around 3pm, security forces came into the building and arrested us. They took me to a dark room, blindfolded and verbally abused me. I was asked how much property I'd stolen from my landlord and in how many locations I'd planted bombs in. They threatened to kill me and slapped me three or four times. The next day they beat me with a pipe and threw me into a river while I was still blindfolded. They kept me there for two days and then put me in prison for four months.

All of this happened during my son's SLC examinations, I was so worried about his education and how this would affect him. While I was in jail, one of my daughters tried to kill herself. My mother also became very ill during this time. While I was in jail, I had no idea if I'd ever be let out. They made me deal with unimaginable pain. I feel so much anger towards the police. They didn't even conduct a proper investigation.

I developed heart problems after I was released from jail. I had to undergo a heart valve replacement and take medication. I still feel so much pain because of the torture I had to endure. I can't work anymore even though all of my contemporaries are fine. I feel like I'm a burden. I'm sad, restless and forgetful—I feel angry a lot and I'm dependent on my son and other people for money. My family isn't in a great place because of the burden posed by our work.

I followed legal procedures with many human rights agencies, committees and courts, but haven't seen any justice. I've only received Rs. 25,000 from the local peace committee through the District Administrative Office.

“I light an oil lamp every morning with the hope that my husband will return”

My husband joined the Maoists during the conflict, he said he did it to change our lives. Before this our lives were happy and normal, and our neighbors would support our bartering and agricultural activities.



Tulasa Pathak

One day, while my sister, sister in-law and I were farming, the police came and arrested us. My younger son was only two months old at the time. We were taken to the police station and the head of the police threatened us saying “you fed the Maoists and encouraged them to kill police personnel, so we will kill your family members”. In the evening, we were moved into a room filled with weapons. They then made us sleep in a cold and empty room three days. On the fourth day they gave us a dirty bedsheet and some food. They would threaten us; I can still hear what they said to this day. They would threaten us and claim they killed my son and husband. We were kept there for thirty days.

My husband was arrested three time, the first time he was in jail for three months, the second he was there for ten and the third was when he disappeared. I could see after his second arrest that he was not mentally stable.

They made me endure horrible mental torture when I was in custody. Even after I was released I would receive threats. It's been so difficult to provide for myself and my children.

Nowadays, I think a lot and feel unnecessarily scared and worried. I can't sleep either. I light an oil lamp (*diyo*) every morning with the hope that my husband will return. I have problems with my uterus and lower abdomen. According to the doctor I have symptoms of both depression and anxiety. I still haven't received compensation from anywhere.

I am the one who has suffered and been tortured, yet I have nothing to compensate for it. They made me live a life of sorrow and sadness. If the state had provided medical service for the torture victims, then it would be easier for us. *Tara ahile natekne thaun nasamaune dalo jastaichha.*

“If there was some kind of soap to wash away this taint”

I don't remember the exact day, but I was only 12 or 13 at the time. In the afternoon a truck full of security personnel came to our village. Between ten and twelve people entered our house and started searching, claiming that Maoists were hiding in our house. Then one officer took one of my friends to a different room and claimed that she was providing sexual services to Maoists, and demanded that he be given the same service. Then another officer forced the youngest girl down and sexually assaulted her. After the first officer's assault on me, I fainted, and don't know how many others assaulted us.

After they left, one of my friend's aunts came in the room and dressed us. I was in extreme pain and bleeding, but nobody reported it, or went to get medical help. We didn't even know who to report it to, because it was security officers who were involved. Even after I got married, I couldn't tell my husband, and my parents never found out. We didn't report it because we feared other people knowing about it.

It's been 18 years and I still feel like I can't share details about this incident openly. I still get nightmares and acute anxiety about people finding out about the incident. It took me a long time to share the details of the incident with someone I could trust. The first time I shared this story, I locked myself in a room and cried for three days. The second time I shared it, I could not

sleep. But, later sharing my story started empowering and encouraging me. I felt like I can help others share their stories too.

I have developed a heart disease now. I had to get PTMC (Percutaneous Transvenous Mitral Commissurotomy) done, it's an alternative to surgery for the heart. I must get checked every 6 months. I have problems with my menstrual cycle too, sometimes it is disturbed for 5 or 6 months, I also have chronic vaginal infection and pain in my legs.

After my husband passed away and I became a widow, lots of men tried to take advantage of me in the place I was working. This didn't just harm my work, but also disturbed me emotionally. My in-laws always taunt me with sarcastic remarks. They say I am still young enough to find a man to elope with.

I realize that I must be financially capable and cannot depend on family members. Sometimes I feel like determination might not be enough. I worry that if people find out about what happened to me, they won't support me as much as they do now. My body and heart have been tainted with such heinous act that if there was some kind of soap to wash away this taint, I would rub myself until it's washed away.

“I’ve been compelled to tolerate all things silently”

I was eleven or twelve when the Maoist movement started. The Maoists would come to our home asking for donations, food or shelter. We had no choice, so we had to give them what they asked of us. Then the army would keep showing up to ask why we helped the Maoists. During this time, they exploited my family members by making us do work for them. They used to take away food we were eating or spit on the food we were eating. Sometimes they would hit my family members in the private parts and molest me

One day when I was alone in the house the officers came inside our room. They threatened me and told me to take my clothes off. I was terrified, so I did as they told. Within a fraction of seconds my hands were bound, and my mouth shut. They forced themselves onto me. I fainted after the assault and regained consciousness at a hospital in Lucknow. My entire body was in terrible pain and my father was standing in front of me. Even though we both knew what happened, we never talked about it. After this incident, the entire village was fearful. They left their houses slept outside in a nearby jungle for a month even though it was winter, and the weather was at its coldest.

After the incident I used to sit alone and stare blankly for a long time. I had difficulties with my studies because of the intense anxiety about people finding out about the event. I couldn't even sleep inside my own house or talk to my own parents. It got so bad that I couldn't tolerate anyone

coming and sitting beside me. I couldn't focus on my studies. Even to this day I get lots of terrifying flashbacks and nightmares; I cannot sleep. I feel helpless, and hopeless about ever getting justice. I haven't filed a case with authorities because I lack evidence of the incident.

I still have difficulty having intimate relationship with my husband because of flashbacks of the incident. I always sleep with the lights on. I've been compelled to tolerate all things silently. I had to leave my home and live in a rented place, but I struggle financially. I had dreamt of becoming a staff nurse; but this incident robbed me of that dream. I lost my chance at creating a beautiful future for myself.

“Our dreams were shattered”

From a really young age, I used to live as a Kamlari (bonded labourer). I was so young that I don't remember anything from that time. I used to watch the cattle, wash dishes and clothes.

I was frustrated with how my life as a Kamlari was, so I decided to join the Maoist party with the hope of liberating all poor people and achieving equality. I was small, so I obeyed everything the people older than me would say. During the war, I was on the front line. During one battle, I was shot in the hip, but I couldn't get the necessary treatment because we were afraid of getting caught. We needed to run away to stay safe. It was very hard because I couldn't get decent treatment for my bullet wound

I was involved in many different incidents during the war. I was very active and thought I was there for the right reasons. Despite this enthusiasm, I was always scared of being found and killed. I got married to a fellow combatant in the camp. We weren't together for that long though, because we had to travel a lot to fight. When I got pregnant, I could not continue to fight, so I had to leave to go home. They never trusted me and taunted me all the time. They didn't understand, or care, that it was hard for me too. My difficulties did not end here though. Once I returned home, my sister in-laws would shame me for my affiliation with the Maoists. They wouldn't even use the same utensils as me to eat food.



Geeta Chaudhary

I've developed Rheumatoid Arthritis, and I need to take medication for it. I think it's the result of needing to spend many nights on cold jungle floors: my body became weak because of this. The doctor said I shouldn't take this medicine for long periods of time, but if I don't, I won't be able to walk. I'm semi-paralyzed and I have sexual and reproductive health issues. Even my vision has blurred. I'm dependent on steroids too, but the side effect is that unwanted hair growth, my face becomes puffy and I can't open my eyes. I feel like I'm intoxicated all the time. I can't do household chores either. It's especially difficult during the colder months. I know I won't have a long life, but I want to be able to live the remaining part of it happily.

I used to dream of equality during the war, but when my husband and I were forced to leave, our dreams were shattered. We can't earn much money now because of our physical condition and lack of skills. We're dependent on daily wage labor. I feel frustrated, guilty and excessively scared. I'm so worried about my future and my children. Sometimes I wonder why I wasted my time with the conflict. My life would've been much better if I hadn't. I'm angry at the politicians that made us fight and ruin our health.



Working for non-discrimination
and equality

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