



# FreeExpression

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A NEWSLETTER OF FREEDOM FORUM

## Time to follow up implementation of UPR recommendation and commitment

Freedom Forum organized a follow-up discussion on Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Freedom of Expression and Association in collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in federal capital, Kathmandu on August 11.

The discussion focused on 3rd Cycle of UPR. The UPR is an innovative process of UN Human Rights Council where human rights situation of 193 UN member countries is evaluated, and declaration of and commitment made to protection of human rights.

The event held in the wake of the mid-term of the 3rd Cycle of UPR for Nepal had secured participation of 35 persons including 11 women representing human rights institutions, media, and Nepal Bar Association, among others.

A human rights official at NHRC Khima Nanda Basyal started the program highlighting its objective. He said NHRC had always submitted UPR on entire human rights issues. The program's aim was to discuss current status of implementation of recommendations to Nepal on human rights and way forward for the preparation of the fourth cycle especially on FoE and FoA.

Secretary at NHRC Murari Prasad Kharel made extensive presentations on the UPR process, UN member countries' recommendations to the Nepal government in all three cycles and Nepal's responses so far. It is an important moment to discuss on UPR in the wake of its mid-term, he underscored.



"UPR has focused on rights of human right defenders as well. But the government is trying to shrink the civic space instead", he noted. He also expressed the need for adopting integrated approach to implement and monitor all 233 recommendations in cross-cutting issues. He also shared joint action plan (how NHRC and CSOs could work together) on monitoring and evaluation of the implementation.

"Nepal's First and Second cycles of UPR took place in January 2011 and November 2015 respectively. The third cycle took place in January 2021 where Nepal received 233 recommendations. Recommendations related to strengthening NHRC, establishing transitional justice mechanism and cooperation with treaty bodies among others were made in all three cycles. In the third review, Nepal has accepted 196 and noted 37 recommendations. Out of total, 47 recommendations were on economic, social and cultural rights, 26 on Child and Political Rights, 14 about Transitional Justice, 22 recommendations

on equality and nondiscrimination, 25 on ratification of international instruments, etc. According to NHRC's study in February 2020, 121 recommendations from previous cycles were partially or fully implemented and 42 recommendations are yet to be implemented", mentioned the presentation by Secretary Kharel.

Following Kharel's presentation, Mr Narayan Ghimire made presentation on FF's UPR submissions being focused on the themes- Freedom of Expression, and Freedom of Association and Assembly- in all third cycles. The recommendations made by 98 countries to the Nepal government on these themes were highlighted in the presentation. FF had prepared and submitted UPR reports on freedom of expression and association prepared in collaboration with Free Press Unlimited and CIVICUS.

Following Kharel's presentation, Mr Narayan Ghimire made presentation on FF's UPR

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## Message from Executive Chief

# Curb hate speech, foster free speech

**E**xpressions inciting religious, ethnic and communal conflict and violence are spreading on social media and networking sites- Facebook, twitter and YouTube of late. The hate speech spread fast and widely on the social networking sites by stoking tension among Hindu-Muslim followers in different parts of the country, signaling fundamentalist expressions. It is serious indeed that such expression would further result in intolerance and unrest, which must not be obviated on time. On the other hand, showing this reason, voices are raised why not to regulate social media and networking sites stringently to hush the speech. It is equally worrying if undue measures are adopted to suppress hate speech that curtail free speech guaranteed by the constitution. We are a democratic republic where citizen's rights to freedom of expression and speech are enshrined under fundamental rights and right to information enforced along with legal and institutional mechanism.

Recently, the misinformation, disinformation and mal-information (MDM) spread over the digital spheres are serious and sensitive. Demonstrations waged by different ethnic groups in the background of a fake video clip of 'eating cow meat' in Dharan, an eastern city of Nepal, a month back has taken toll on facts and truths, the essential elements of information ecosystem and professional journalism. The MDM has not only dented journalistic practice but also created disorder and chaos in society which will further jeopardize governance and democracy. When citizenry suffers from MDM, it stokes fear and misinformed decisions which are deleterious to unobstructed exercise of citizen's rights and freedoms. MDM has role to create information disorder, thereby depriving citizens of democratic dividend. It is upsetting that even the high level person- former secretary of Nepal government- had involved in spreading MDM. A person calling himself a journalist twitted a fake video clip, and the speech of a people's representative at local level in Nepalgunj, a city in the Lumbini Province of Nepal, prompted demonstrations of different religious groups decrying each other. Such posts and views are made viral with further reposts.

Moreover, digital troll and hatred of journalists and independent thinkers making critical views that are healthy criticism and essential to functional democracy, is another disappointing trend in the digital sphere. Attack on journalist and their contents have confused the people and making them antagonist to press and media. Discrediting and deriding mainstream media and journalists have increased with flurry of troll. The misuse of social media and social networks have disseminated MDM. With this, the real freedom of expression has been in casualty. Independent and fair journalism and opinions are discouraged and diminished while extremist and ultra-rightist elements are rearing their heads. Democratic society is polluted. In view of the unity in diversity and such unfolding incidents in the country, the government has repeatedly requested and urged all concerned to maintain restraint, while the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology is learnt to have been drafting directive to regulate social media and networking sites. Similarly, the bills relating to mass communications and information technology have not been finalized yet.

Surge of hate speech and blasphemy on the one hand and government and policy makers all set to prepare laws and directive to regulate digital spheres on the other have awakened again the civil society that informed and timely intervention is required. Careful watch on the making of law and directives relating to practice of freedom of expression irrespective of the medium is imperative. Freedom Forum is always aware over the protection of freedom of expression, which is the foundational right of other freedoms. Similarly, religious tolerance and social harmony must not be in disarray. Tolerant society and system can protect and promote free speech. A nationwide campaign for informed and aware society has been a need of hour where freedom of expression can flourish.

In view of the present unfolding situation, the country needs a massive digital literacy campaign, which can be carried by the multiple agencies ranging from government bodies to CSOs, private sectors and academia. Better awareness on free speech on digital spheres among police, attorney and judge is equally essential so that they would be able to take informed decision while dealing with FoE issues and protecting citizen's rights. Knowledge on scope, value and limitation of free speech and its differentiation from hate speech and blasphemy can foster healthy information ecosystem. Similarly, as one of the significant actors in democracy, political parties and their cadres must also be aware on these pressing issues of hour. Freedom Forum is always ready to cooperate with any agency to hone debate and discussions on it. 🌱

- Tara Nath Dahal



## Call for govt to join 'open government partnership'

Freedom Forum took an initiative to bring together a section of civil society organizations (CSOs) and individual champions of open government partnership (OGP) to continue pushing the OGP movement in Nepal.

In order to review the progress made in regard to the Government of Nepal (GoN)'s efforts to officially join OGP, the meeting was held at Freedom Forum on August 4.

The meeting discussed the ways to strategically approach the government to declare joining the global movement of transparency, accountability and participation in view of the OGP Global Summit to be held in Tallinn, Estonia on coming September 6-7.

The meeting also reviewed the past efforts of the CSOs to push the government to become a part of the multilateral global movement and grab the opportunity to show greater commitment for open governance.

On the occasion, the participants agreed to continue the discussion on governance reform agendas among other CSOs as well. "We agree to create incentives for the government to grab the global opportunity to get connected with the world leaders of reforms", FF Executive Chief Taranath Dahal observed.

The meeting was attended by Narayan Adhikari from Accountability Lab, Babita Basnet from Media Advocacy Group, Sajana Maharjan, Pray Sthapit from The Asia Foundation, Right to Information Federation Chair Umid Bagchand, journalist/researcher Krishna Sapkota, advocate Tanka Aryal and development professional Hem Tembe. 🌱



# Press Freedom Violations

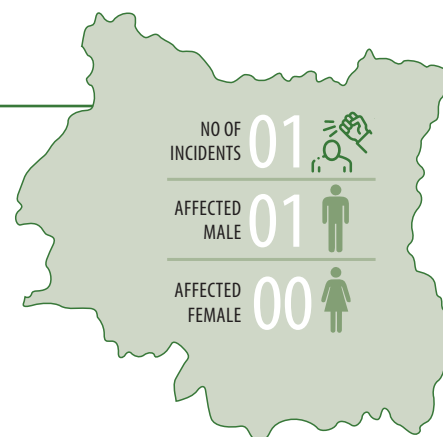
## Koshi Province

### Threat

Associate editor at hamrosabda.com, Subin Bishwakarma, received threat of attack for his reporting on July 25 in Sunsari district. Sunsari lies in Koshi Province of Nepal.

According to information shared by Freedom Forum's representative from Koshi Province, Bikram Niraula, editor Bishwakarma had published news critical to Barahakshetra Municipality's Mayor Ramesh Karki on July 24.

Thereafter, Mayor's staff reached Bishwakarma's house and threatened him of breaking his limbs. As this incident came into light, one of the political cadres called on Bishwakarma's mobile and threatened that he would attack Bishwakarma wherever he meets him.



## Madhesh Province

### Hostility mounts in Madhesh Province

#### Reporter attacked brutally for exposing irregularities

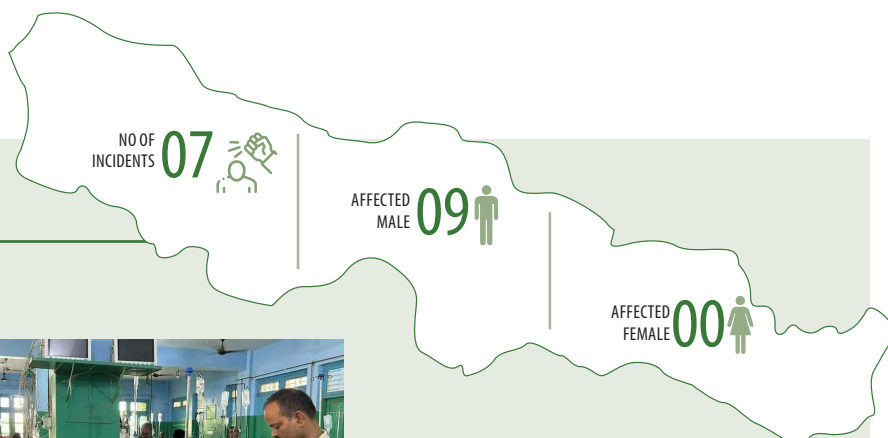
Reporter to makalukhabar.com Shibendra Rohita was attacked for reporting in Dhanusha on July 10.

According to Freedom Forum's representative for the province, Rajan Singh, news about corruption and irregularities in the Dhanauji rural municipality was published on Rohit's byline on the news portal on July 8. Following this, Chief Administrative Officer at the rural municipality office Ranjit Yadav's brother and relatives attacked reporter Rohit in a busy marketplace.

Reporter Rohit was severely injured on head and chest in the attack. He received treatment in the Kathmandu Medical College Teaching Hospital, Kathmandu after referral from Dhanusha Hospital and returned home after ten days.

"The vehicle used by the administrative officer Yadav's relative has been known to be rented by the municipality office", shared representative Singh.

Similarly, police persons severely beat Annapurna Post national daily's Saptari-based



reporter Manohar Pokhrel on July 31.

Reporter Pokhrel shared with Freedom Forum that he had gone to District Police Office, Saptari to collect information and take police chief's quote on delayed registration of victims' complaint on sexual harassment and abortion.

"After talking to police officers, I was leaving police station. Meanwhile, a police officer at help desk scolded at me, slapped me, and kicked me with boots", reporter Pokhrel said, "I am undergoing treatment at Rajbiraj-based Gajendra Narayan Singh hospital. Due to attack, my urinary tract has been obstructed."

Pokhrel also informed that the police officer was suspended and fellow journalists were in the hospital to support for his treatment.



In another case, Saptari based reporter to the Nayapatrika national daily Saurav Yadav was attacked on August 18.

Reporter Yadav shared with Freedom Forum that he was preparing news on domestic violence meted out against daughter of a former parliamentarian in Saptari. She was repeatedly assaulted at home by her in-laws. Victim's brother in-law called reporter Yadav to meet him and threatened not to publish the news.

"As I said, I am a journalist and I will publish the news, they started hitting me. They hit me





on my chest and other body parts. I ran into a nearby police station and rescued myself. Then, I was taken to hospital for treatment", said Yadav adding, "I was discharged from the hospital the next day." "I filed a First Information Report at District Police Office against the attackers", informed reporter Yadav.

In yet another event, Himalaya Television's reporter Rakesh Yadav was attacked while reporting in Rautahat on August 21. Freedom Forum called reporter Yadav to talk about the incident on August 22. Reporter Yadav informed that he reached the Bagmati River in Brindavan Municipality, Rautahat to report on illegal excavation of the river as per information shared by the locals. Reaching there, he saw two crusher machines in the river and started capturing video.

Meanwhile, 5 to 6 people from a crusher industry approached him and interrogated who he was and from whom he got permission to take video. As Yadav shared, he, responded, "I am a reporter, this is my identity card and I have also informed administration before reporting." But they started beating him on chest and threw his camera too.

According to him, locals working nearby came and rescued him and then he called Deputy Superintendent of Police at District Police Office. Police officers took him to local

police office where he filed a First Information Report. Thereafter, police arrested the attackers.

"I am still undergoing treatment in the hospital. The doctor has said that I have blood clot in ribs due to attack, so additional tests are needed. I am also suffering chest pain", shared reporter Yadav with Freedom Forum.

Moreover, publisher and editor of Nabasangram daily Dineshwar Gupta was attacked while reporting on August 28. The incident took place in Siraha, a district in Madhesh Province.

According to journalist Gupta, he and other journalists were reporting on a clash among local people and Nawarajpur rural municipality officers on the day of incident. During protest on the ownership of a public pond, journalists were taking photos and videos of agitated locals trying to set on fire a municipality's tractor. Meanwhile, a group of 12 to 15 youths attacked journalists warning to not take photos.

"Other journalists escaped the attack whereas, two of us (me and Jaynath Yadav of Today Khoj daily) were injured from the attack. I have injuries on neck, head and back", shared journalist Gupta. Thereafter, journalist Gupta informed Superintendent of Police Tekunanda Limbu about the incident and asked him to get his mobile back. But according to Gupta, police was unable to arrest them.

On the next day (August 29), fellow journalists also met SP Limbu and requested to immediately arrest the attackers. SP Limbu then suggested the journalists to file a First Information Report to initiate the investigation.

"Soon after filing FIR at the local police office, police arrested one of the attackers on August 30 who was, however, released immediately. Again after continuous pressure from journalists, police arrested another person involved in the attack on August 31", said Gupta. Gupta again called FF after a week of the incident to share that the attackers were still walking scot free and police was mere spectator of the incident.

Likewise, journalists Anil Karna and Santosh Yadav were attacked for their social media posts in Madhesh Province. Karna was attacked on September 13 and Yadav on September 14. Karna shared with Freedom Forum that he had written social media posts about the Province Hospital's Medical Superintendent Dr. Ram Naresh Pandit. "Following this, Dr. Pandit sent 15 people to attack me. My friends, however, rescued me. I am out of danger", said Karna. "I wrote a social media post and was planning to publish full news the next day", he added.

In a separate incident, reporter with <https://www.nepalpress.com/> Santosh Yadav was also attacked with sharp weapon in Siraha. According to media reports, one of the attackers Nabal Kishore Yadav wrote abusive comment about reporter Yadav's father and former ward chairman on reporter Yadav's post. While discussing the social media post, dispute arose between them. Meanwhile, Nabal's nephew attacked the reporter with weapon. Yadav received minor injury on his neck. Police arrested attackers Nabal Kishore Yadav and his nephew after the incident.

These incidents show Madhesh province remained much hostile to media these past three months. Attacking journalists for their views and exercise of press freedom is condemnable. In case the social media posts or if the content of news story has defamed any person, he/she can follow different course rather than resorting to assault. 🌱

## THREAT

A. Sarlahi-based reporter to Rastriya Samachar Samiti (RSS) and Sagarmatha Television, Shankar Pahadi, was receiving death threats for news published on September 3.

Reporter Pahadi shared with Freedom Forum that he had reported news about Department of Revenue Investigation sealing a warehouse of local businessman for evading tax.

"After publication of news on different media, warehouse's owner Santosh Sah and his close relatives started threatening to shoot at me for

mentioning Sah and his company's name," Pahadi shared.

They have also posted abusive and misleading posts against reporter Pahadi on their social media pages.

The reporter also said that he lodged his complaint to District Police Office, Sarlahi through email. 🌱

# Bagmati Province

## Death Threat

**A.** Editor-In-chief at [www.bikashnews.com](http://www.bikashnews.com) Ram Krishna Poudel received death threat through phone call for news published on the portal on July 14.

Talking to Freedom Forum, chief editor Poudel shared that several news about entrepreneur Durga Prasai were published on the news portal. A news story was published on July 7 stating Prasai as a fraud businessman who had been avoiding his loan payments in different banks. Following this, Prasai called on Poudel's mobile and asked him to delete the news.

"As I refused to delete the news, he asked me to meet him. I asked him to meet me in my office but he did not show up. He rather called me again and warned that he has been assaulting everyone who is against him so he will not spare me too", informed editor Poudel. He sent more than 50 messages on Poudel's WhatsApp but he ignored the messages. "I am worried he is attempting to hack my social media accounts," chief editor Poudel shared the plight.

**B.** Senior journalist Ujir Magar received death threat for his reporting for some days from August 1, 2023. He is former General Secretary of Federation of Nepali Journalists. Magar has been receiving the threat since publication of news with his byline on [www.lokaantar.com](http://www.lokaantar.com) on August 1.

Journalist Magar shared with Freedom Forum on August 3 that he had been receiving death threat through phone calls and through social media posts since the news about alleged gold smugglers was published on the online news portal.

"A person named Khagendra Chhantyal said he will kill me wherever he meets me. Similarly, another Amar Roka Chand issued threat through Facebook post stating that my name and contact number is enough to take any action against me for writing news without proof. Chand also wrote that she will not spare me at any cost", said journalist Magar.

"They have also been threatening the daughter of a source of my news accusing her of providing information to me. In the news, I have clearly mentioned that the quote was taken", he added.

Magar added that he had been ignoring their threats till date but now it seemed he should take some action against them.

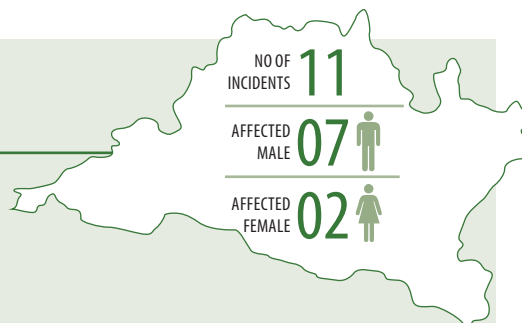
**C.** Reporter to the Crime TV Nepal, an online television, Kushlav KC, was issued death threat for reporting on August 22 in the federal capital, Kathmandu. Journalist and host of the online, KC had been reporting on grievances of people duped by the cooperative and recruitment agencies. On the day of incident, a person named Bhautik Lama claiming himself a cadre of a political party called on KC's mobile and threatened to shoot at him within 24 hours if he did not remove the news from the online.

Host KC had uploaded full video of the threatening call on the online channel on August 25. According to KC, he also requested chief of the political party to advise his cadre not to threaten him.

"Then, I wrote an application to Kathmandu District Administration Office and Metropolitan Police Circle, Teku requesting for my safety. It is painful to face such hostility for doing journalism. Being a journalist, I have always done my duty within journalistic ethics and standard", argued host KC.

**D.** Chairperson of a news portal, [www.nitinews.com](http://www.nitinews.com), Shankar Tiwari had been receiving threats of attack for reporting news since August 15. The portal is being operated from federal capital Kathmandu.

Talking to Freedom Forum, journalist Tiwari shared that he had published a news critical to a Member of Parliament Gyanendra Bahadur Shahi. Since then, he has been receiving various threatening messages and calls from Shahi and



his supporters. Immediately after the publication of news, Shahi's partner Prakash Nayak called on Tiwari's mobile and threatened of kidnapping him wherever he meets Tiwari, if the journalist again writes news quoting him.

Journalist Tiwari continued reporting on parliamentarian Shahi's alleged multiple marriages even after the threatening call. Thereafter, on August 27 parliamentarian Shahi threatened Tiwari through Facebook messenger account. Tiwari has shared the screenshot of messenger chat which reads- Shahi threatening Tiwari of arresting and suing him.

Journalist Tiwari informed FF that he filed a complaint at Metropolitan Police Circle, Teku against Shahi on August 28. Freedom Forum provided legal counselling to the journalist.

**E.** Reporter to [www.ratopati.com](http://www.ratopati.com) was issued threat for covering news on September 12.

Freedom Forum talked to reporter Dhami on September 16 about the incident. He shared that news about Tribhuvan University providing affiliation to the colleges was published on the online on September 11. In the news, reporter Dhami stated that the university authority was forced to provide affiliation to four colleges that did not meet the standard. In line with journalistic profession and ethics, he had quoted well the news sources. According to reporter, a political party's student wing had forced the university to provide affiliation to those colleges.

*"They have also been threatening the daughter of a source of my news accusing her of providing information to me. In the news, I have clearly mentioned that the quote was taken."*

- Ujir Magar

Since then, cadres of the party wing had been calling him and writing threatening messages through multiple Facebook accounts. On September 12, a statement was issued with Party's Chairperson Prakash C's signature, threatening reporter Dhimi and the news portal to be prepared for any consequences or apologize for publishing news.

"A central member Vikrant C also called me on my mobile and asked- why I wrote the news and who was the source. He also asked me whether I could verify the news quotes. I told him that I would not share any information about my sources. I rather suggested him to go to Press Council Nepal to complain in case he had concern over news content", said reporter Dhimi.

Moreover, he shared that he informed about the incident to his colleagues in the online office. One of his colleagues talked to spokesperson of the party leader on September 15 about the incident. The spokesperson however maintained that issuing statement was a mistake and they were ready to apologize to the reporter and media. He also called them to meet to resolve the issue, Dhimi added.

Later on September 25, reporter Dhimi was attacked by a group of five to six people while going to his office. He received injuries on his head and body parts.

**F.** Reporter to the Nepal Samacharpatra daily Motiram Timalisina received death threats for writing news on September 17. Reporter Timalisina is a Kavre-based reporter for the daily and its web portal <https://www.newsofnepal.com>. Kavre lies in Bagmati Province of Nepal.

He informed that he has been receiving continuous death threats after publication of news about- Province minister's involvement in gold smuggling- in his byline on the newspaper and news portal on September 17.

"I have been receiving threats through social media. Leader and cadres of a major political party have threatened me of shooting at and stabbing with sword for including their party's president name in the news. They have also posted fake and misleading status about me on their social media pages", he said.

## Misbehavior

**Female reporter faces verbal abuse**  
Reporter at [www.onlinekhabar.com](http://www.onlinekhabar.com) Namita Dahal was misbehaved while reporting at

Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu on September 6.

According to Dahal, she had been reporting on sports for four years. She reached the airport to report on Nepali cricket team's arrival and welcome at the airport on the day of incident.

"Nepali team was returning to the hometown after playing international cricket tournament which is a matter of pride and of everyone's concern. So I was also ready to cover this moment carrying my mobile and tripod", shared reporter Dahal, adding, "Meanwhile, a person pushed me from behind saying why was I there being a woman?"

"I looked back but could not recognize the person due to huge crowd. Though I did not receive injury, it was so shameful and embarrassing", said Dahal.

Dahal has wrote a post on her social media stating- #ItsNotOk, women journalists are also the journalists, we are equally capable in this profession.

## Taken Under Control

**A.** A freelance journalist Krishna Prasad Subedi was taken under control and his mobile phone seized for writing news on August 30.

Freedom Forum talked to journalist Subedi on September 19 about the incident.

Subedi shared that he had been writing news and articles on human trafficking in Nepal for Nepali media for more than five years. He also runs an official Facebook account named Anticorruption Nepal (<https://www.facebook.com/Acnbureau>) where he shares his articles and news.

On August 15, Subedi had shared an article about human trafficking by a recruitment agency in Nepal. Following this, he was taken under control for nine hours on August 30. Agency's staffs and board members also seized his diary, mobile phone and press identity card.

They have not returned his goods. Moreover, they forced him to sign on papers mentioning he would not write any news on recruitment agency.

"I have filed my complaint at Nepal Police Headquarters, Office of Chief District Office, Kathmandu and National Human Rights Commission Nepal. I have not received my goods yet", informed Subedi.

There is not any progress in police investigation either, according to Subedi.

**B.** Mayor of Manahari Rural Municipality, Makwanpur, Ranjan Kalakheti, took dozens of journalists under control on September 16 in Hetauda.

According to the victim journalists, Mayor Rupakheti had called journalists in the district for a press conference to refute the news published in the media about the embezzlement of collected revenue at the municipality.

"Soon after we entered the venue, they closed the gate and a group of youths appeared who abused us verbally. They also did not let us leave the venue for some hours", shared one of the victim journalists, Devraj Panta. The news came to light very late.

He further shared that they called police and were able to get out with the help of police escorting. 🌿

## Unauthorized clarification sought from newspaper publisher

The Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) sought clarification from Chairperson of Simrik Air, captain Rameshwar Thapa, over the news stories about poor airlines service in remote parts of Nepal which were published in the Annapurna Post daily. Thapa is also the publisher of the daily.

On August 17, CAAN wrote to publisher of the daily, captain Thapa. CAAN, the airlines regulatory body, has the jurisdiction to seek

clarification on airlines service from captain Thapa, also the airline owner, but has no authority at all to seek clarification on media contents from him as publisher. In case of the complaint over news content, CAAN could complain with the newspaper editor rather than publisher of the daily. Similarly, it could move Press Council Nepal, the media regulatory body, for its grievances on news content, or even go to court. 🌿



## Attack

### A. Female reporter attacked

Reporter at [www.golkhabar.com](http://www.golkhabar.com), Shanti Gharti Magar, was attacked while reporting a protest on August 3 in Kathmandu. The incident took place in the premises of Metropolitan Police Circle, Teku.

Talking to Freedom Forum, reporter Magar shared that she was reporting on a clash among police persons and protestors on the day of incident. While



taking video of police officers misbehaving with the protestors, a police person approached reporter Magar and shouted at her for taking video. Magar has also posted the video on her social media page. In the video, Magar has repeatedly told the police officers that she was a media person and also asked them to see her identity card but the officers did not listen to her, rather took her into the police station.

Magar had injuries on her forehead and felt chest and stomach pain. "They almost detained me in the police station and also hit me in my sensitive body parts", she added, "I have not been able to attend office since the day of incident." "Not only me, other human rights activists (mostly women) were also severely attacked in the incident", informed Magar.

### B. Gangsters barge into multiple media houses,

A gang of hooligans entered media houses in Chitwan and threatened journalists on August 21 for publishing news. Managing Director of Chitwan Post daily Govinda Aryal told Freedom Forum that few dailies had published news on a bus accident due to negligence of a college's driver.

The news stated that the driver was under influence of drug while driving, and it was a major cause of accident.

Then, at around 10:30 am, six goons led by son of the college owner Rohan Bhandari reached the daily's office and started threatening staffs. "They shouted-who reported the news? Give me the news report and I will show you", said Aryal adding, "I requested them to lodge complaint at Press Council if they had any problem with the news. If the Council asks for the report I will show it to the Council but I neither need to give it to you nor is it your right to threaten this way."

Then, they left the office and went to the office of another Narayani online media and threatened in the same way, according to him. Narayani's chief editor Raju Chaudhary has also issued statement on the incident. The news was published according to the information provided by the District Police Office, Chitwan and the Chitwan Medical College. They wrote a letter to the District Administration Office, requesting for action on the case and safety of journalists, Director Aryal added. 🌿

## Gandaki Province

### A. Photojournalist issued arrest warrant for social media post

Photo journalist and activist RK Adipta Giri was issued arrest warrant for his critical post on social media on August 8. The arrest warrant was issued by District Police Office, Parbat, Gandaki Province. Journalist Giri shared with Freedom Forum that he had been conducting campaign named 'Save Kaligandaki river' for more than three years.

"I have clearly observed activities of the authorities and journalists here who are involved in encroachment of the river and natural resources in Parbat. I tried to warn them through my social media posts and now I am facing this situation. But I will not give up, my fight will continue", said journalist Giri.

"The journalists, who have filed complaint against me, had gone to my house and threatened my family members in my absence. It has been three days since I have gone to my house", said Giri. Giri has posted several critical statuses on his social media posts about alleged involvement of Parbat journalists in exploitation of the river.

District Police Office Parbat's Deputy Superintendent of Police Madhusudan Neupane told FF that journalists had filed a complaint with a Federation of Nepali Journalists' signed letter demanding his arrest under Electronic Transaction

Act Section 47. "And then, we issued the arrest warrant against Giri. However, no further action has been taken yet", informed DSP Neupane.

### B. Reporters taken under control

Reporters to Bagmati Television Gaurav Adhikari and Suman Niraula received death threat while reporting in Lamjung on August 15. Bagmati Television is broadcasted from Kathmandu, Bagmati Province.

Chief Executive Officer of the television Manoj Neupane shared with Freedom Forum that reporters duo had gone to report on the alleged irregularities in a local cooperative office in Lamjung. As the television team reached the office, they requested the Chairman of the cooperative Ramji Kandel for his views on the allegation.

Chairman Kandel invited the reporters at a nearby local hotel to discuss the issues at around 5:00 pm. As soon as the reporters reached inside hotel to talk to the chairman, Chairman Kandel threatened to kill the reporters and seized reporters' identity cards, mobile phones, camera, boom and other belongings and then he also took the reporters under control for at least four hours. "One of the reporters was however able to find his mobile and called me after four hours. Then, I informed the police chief at District Police Office, Lamjung and



asked for help. Thereafter, police officers rescued the reporters and took them to the local police station. The Chairman and his supporters again reached the police station to protest. However, police persons safely released both the reporters at 11:30 pm. In the incident, reporters were safe but camera was slightly damaged", said CEO Neupane.

Our team registered a complaint at the District Administration Office, Lamjung on August 16. Chief District Officer wrote a letter to the DPO for prompt action on the case. In response to this, police office invited both sides to discuss the incident. In the discussion, Chairman apologized for his action and confirmed that such incident will not be repeated in future", added CEO Neupane. According to CEO Neupane, both sides had signed an agreement with their written commitment to cooperate with the journalists in future. 🌿

## Lumbini Province

### A. Media House Attacked

A group of locals pelted stones at the office of Marchwar Sandesh weekly in Rupandehi on July 31.

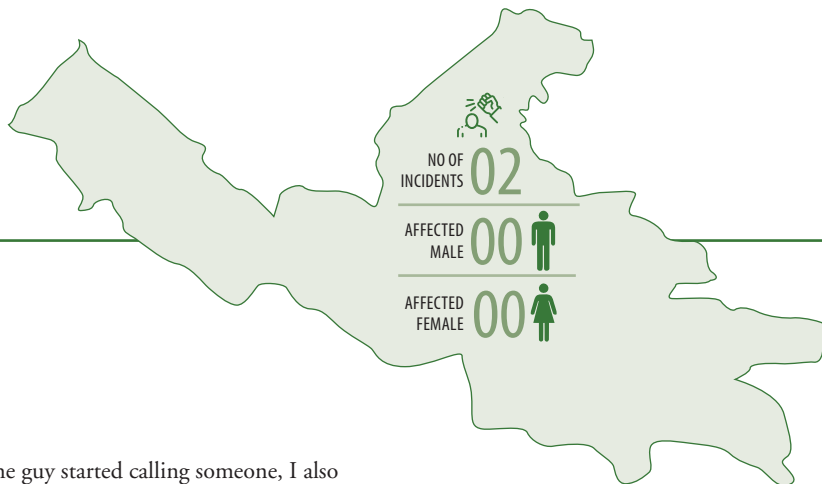
A group of four locals hurled stones at the office. However, no huge damage has been reported.

Editor of the weekly Hridayram Gupta shared with Freedom Forum that on July 29, he was reporting on the heap of rice sacks found unattended on roadside near the border area. "While I was asking questions to a person carrying sacks, another approached me with half-masked face and asked why I needed the details about those sacks", said editor Gupta.

"As the guy started calling someone, I also called nearby Area Police Office for my safety and informed them about the unattended sacks. Thereafter, I left the place. Recently, smuggling of rice has increased in Marchwar area", said Gupta adding, "Then, I received a call the other day, requesting to talk to police to release their rice sacks. I told them that it was not matter of my concern."

On the day of incident, four people reached the office asking for the editor Gupta. As Gupta was not in the office, they waited for him for two hours and threw stones while returning back.

Editor Gupta filed a complaint at the local police station.



### B. Rural municipality seeks clarification from online media over news story

A rural municipality in Pyuthan district issued a letter to sworgadwariupdate.com, an online news portal, seeking clarification over a news story on August 23.

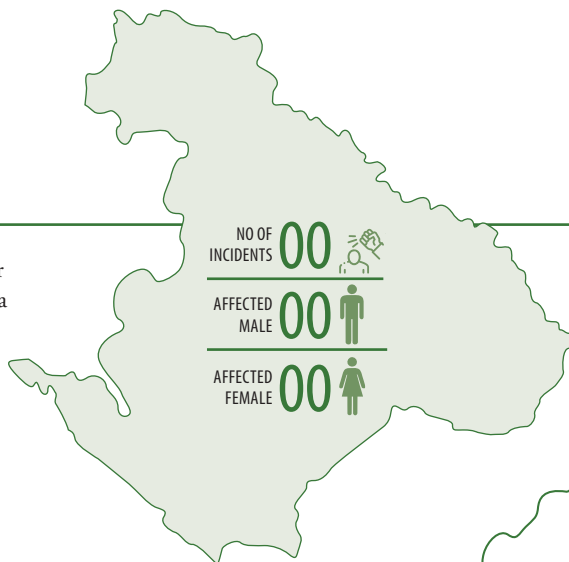
Managing Director of the portal Lava Kumar Adhikari shared with Freedom Forum that news about Mandavi rural municipality's administrative chief's fraud in a contracting process was published on the portal on August 21. In response to news, the rural municipality issued a letter ordering MD Adhikari to appear in the office on August 24

by 1:00 pm sharp and furnish clarification over the published news.

According to MD Adhikari, the municipality's administrative chief had asked them to change the headline of news.

## Karnali Province

No incident of press freedom violation was recorded this quarter in this province. It is welcome in deed that journalists and media houses did not face any obstruction, threat and intimidation.



## Sudurpaschim Province

### Verbal abuse

Local leaders of political parties in Doti have made abusive comments on journalists in the district.

According to Freedom Forum's representative in Sudurpaschim Province,

local media had published news about Shikhar municipality some days ago. Following this, local leaders started posting abusive comments against journalists on their social media pages accusing media of defaming leaders.





Continued from Page 1...



submissions being focused on the themes- Freedom of Expression, and Freedom of Association and Assembly- in all third cycles. The recommendations made by 98 countries to the Nepal government on these themes were highlighted in the presentation. FF had prepared and submitted UPR reports on freedom of expression and association prepared in collaboration with Free Press Unlimited and CIVICUS.

In his presentation, Ghimire mentioned that most of the recommendations to Nepal on FoE and FoA were supported by the government and only few noted. One among the recommendations regarding amendment of Electronic Transaction Act (recommendation by USA) in line with free speech right of citizens was 'noted' by Nepal government.

After these important presentations, the floor was opened for discussion on those recommendations and participants' observation on their implementation. Columnist and noted investigative journalist Namrata Sharma warned that if all sides concerned do not raise voice on any issue of public concern on time, the State would gradually slide to tyranny. Bringing forth reference of India that how journalists and civic thinkers were censored, Ms Sharma stressed that critical thoughts and public opinions are essential to healthy democracy, she insisted, urging all to stay aware in this regard.

Mass media and journalism educator at Tribhuvan University, Shreeram Paudel, viewed

media pluralism should be ensured in Nepal. He also pointed out the honest implementation of right to information (RTI).

Senior official at NHRC, Shyam Babu Kafle, wondered why the mechanism to implement UPR implementation was still uncertain. He suggested Freedom Forum to take a lead in advancing freedom of expression and rights of FoE defenders by making national network on it.

Executive Director at SAP Nepal, Narendra Joshi viewed it was worrying to hear shrinking civic space in Nepal. Old laws must be replaced, and some amended to fit changed condition so that civil society can work in unrestricted manner.

Media Action Nepal's Chairman Laxman Datt Pant suggested that suppression of FoE online is a serious issue and it should also be addressed on the UPR process. Safe online space is need of hour, he argued, expressing that attack on online space was growing lately in Nepal.

Ms Sadikchhya Silwal from Digital Rights Nepal expressed concern despite such criticism from rights defenders, the recent National Cyber Security Policy government still warrants attention. She doubted that FoE is well protected in the policy.

Moreover, Ms Neha Gauchan from Body and Data underscored that FoE of minority community should also be addressed well. "At present, not only government but also tech companies breach freedom of expression and

privacy," she opined.

In response to the comments of participants, Acting Chairperson of NHRC, Surya Dhungel, viewed NHRC was always ready to cooperate and collaborate with civil society to protect and promote human rights in the country. Avoiding responsibilities by the government on human rights obligation is worrying factor, so lawmakers and parliamentarians must be made further accountable. Focused discussions are needed on multifarious issues relating to UPR, Dhungel suggested.

Similarly, General Secretary of Nepal Bar Association, Anjita Khanal, viewed Nepal Bar Association is always ready for protecting and promoting human rights. She urged the stakeholders to make integrated efforts on advocating and realizing human rights.

FNJ President Bipul Pokhrel said protection and promotion of freedom of expression is essential also for achieving SDGs. UPR is a significant platform to whet debate on human rights including FoE (freedom of expression) and FoA (freedom of assembly and association), he added.

Moreover, Freedom Forum Executive Chief Taranath Dahal reminded the process of UPR and believed that constructive discussion on different issues of human rights and UPR would help create atmosphere favourable for exercise of human rights including FoE and FoA. It also gives reference to mid-term review of UPR third cycle. UPR is such an effective global platform that facilitates discussion on

human rights issues and makes governments accountable to these fronts.

“Time has come to ask government how and when it will prepare mid-term report on UPR 3rd cycle and how it responds to the recommendations it supported and noted,” he commented, saying that present discussion is organized in a right moment because it is mid-term for the review of UPR 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle. According to him, there is slight reform in the recent National Cyber Security Policy. It needs further reform, Dahal added.

Concluding the discussion, FF’s Chairperson Hari Binod Adhikari appreciated the NHRC initiative for collaboration with FF on fostering debate on such important issues of UPR. FoE is a base of other freedoms hence, we must continue our initiatives to promote and protect human rights and FoE by making government responsible on UPR issues, he argued.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle of UPR, a dozen of recommendations were made by various countries to Nepal government on FoE and FoA.

Some of them are:

**Brazil:** Consider revising the local legislation on media and information technology in order to guarantee the full respect of the right to freedom of opinion and expression. (Nepal had supported it.)

**Canada:** Uphold respect for freedom of expression and the right to privacy, including in draft legislation regulating information technology, media and mass communications. (Nepal had supported it.)

**Czechia:** Safeguard the freedom of expression and foster civil society participation; ensure that NGOs active in the field of human rights – including those receiving foreign grants – are free to operate. (Nepal had supported it)

**USA:** Reform the Electronic Transactions Act to eliminate the criminalization of speech. (Nepal had noted it)

**Estonia:** Ensure the right to freedom of expression online and offline, in law and in practice, and guarantee a safe and enabling

environment for journalists and human rights defenders (Nepal had supported it.)

Under the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle of UPR, Nepal government (Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali) had submitted its UPR early in January 2021.

Meanwhile, on October 2021, the Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights had written to Nepal’s Foreign Minister Dr Narayan Khadka, reminding the following points under ‘Fundamental Freedoms.’

- To revise the draft of National Integrity/Ethics Policy
- To revise Draft Privacy Policy
- To revise draft Online Media Directive
- To Amend Electronic Transaction Act
- To Amend National Broadcasting Regulations
- To Decriminalize defamation and place it within a Civil Code to meet international standards 🌱

Full details:

(<https://freedomforum.org.np/time-to-observe-implementation-of-upr-recommendation-and-commitment/>)

## Budget credibility in Nepal’s health sector

Nepal underspends its approved budget annually, and in recent years, the country’s aggregate budget has seen repeated downward revisions.

Lack of parliamentary budget approval makes matters worse by enabling the poor institutional practice of shifting approved funds from one budget category to another. Consequently, key social sector ministries– including Environment, Agriculture and Food, and Health underspent their budgets by an average of 4, 30, and 35 percent, respectively, during budget implementation between 2018 and 2020.

Nepal’s 2020 Voluntary National Review on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) notes that despite the modest gains to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” (SDG 3), there are still critical challenges plaguing Nepal’s health sector that must be addressed. The key difficulty is ensuring access to health services for every citizen of Nepal, especially those in poor and marginalized communities. A health insurance scheme is being implemented in partnership with the federal government to decrease the out-of-pocket expenditure of local people. However, there is a long way to go, as data indicates that only seven percent of the population has health insurance. Besides the accessibility

*“Nepal’s 2020 Voluntary National Review on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) notes that despite the modest gains to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” (SDG 3), there are still critical challenges plaguing Nepal’s health sector that must be addressed.”*

problem, the quality of health services requires attention. To aid efforts toward achieving SDG 3, Nepal should improve the execution of its health budget, implementing it as approved.

The Nepal Government health expenditure as a percentage of the GDP was static until FY 2017/18, when it reached 1.5 percent and 2.2 percent and 2.4 percent in FY 2019/20 and FY 2020/21 respectively. The World Health Organization reports that public expenditure of almost 6% of GDP on health will considerably reduce out-of-pocket payments for healthcare services. Therefore, public health expenditure above 5% of GDP is necessary to attain a conservative target of 90% coverage of maternal and child health services and progress towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC). By this measure, the government of Nepal’s outlays on health may be sub-par and not drive efforts towards UHC.

This brief compares actual expenditures against approved budget allocations in Nepal’s health sector, examining why there are significant deviations over the four-year period from FY 2017/18 to FY 2020/21. The brief further analyzes how these budget deviations affect the delivery of planned programs and services within the health sector and recommends reforms to improve the implementation of Nepal’s health budget. To arrive at these recommendations, the authors relied on document reviews, including budget statements and budget performance reports, as well as budget execution data pulled from the Consolidated Financial Statement of the Financial Comptroller General Office. Data on health sector underspending is then compared to Nepal’s health performance indicators, including progress to achieve relevant SDG targets. 🌱

# NIC and FF to collaborate on RTI promotion

**F**reedom Forum is pleased to share that National Information Commission, Nepal has principally agreed to work in collaboration with Freedom Forum for protection and promotion of right to information (RTI) in Nepal.

According to the decisions made by NIC's board on August 2, the Commission has agreed to collaborate in the following activities for the fiscal year 2023/24 (2080/81 BS).

These activities include –

1. Operation of mobile application (for both android and ios)- RTI Nepal ,
2. Legal assistance to RTI activists,
3. Celebration of International Day for Universal Access to Information (September 28),
4. Effective functioning of RTI help desk at Freedom Forum,
5. Promote the dialogue with different stakeholders on open government and form different thematic groups of civil society on open government partnership,

6. Advocacy for regulation to protect rights of whistleblowers,
7. Training to journalist on investigative reporting on public interest issues through the use of RTI,
8. National conference on RTI,
9. Publication of success stories about use of RTI and its impacts, and
10. Research and publication of materials on RTI

These activities will be conducted on the basis of available resources at FF. NIC's collaboration on the activities will be non-monetary. 🌱

## FF participation in National and Int'l Forum

**A.** Freedom Forum's Executive Chief Mr. Taranath Dahal participated in four sessions of 'Regulation Framework for Ethical and Responsible Development of Artificial Intelligence' event held from September 16-22, 2023 in New York. These side events were held during the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, USA. The event was coordinated by a think-tank organization Atlantic Council.

Mr. Dahal is a Global Network member of AI Connect, an artificial intelligence based program of US Department of State. This is a multi-stakeholder's dialogue which is held regularly to discuss way forward for the regulation of AI.

"The dialogue among government, civil society representatives, academia and private sectors' representatives was helpful to understand recent developments and measures to regulate AI", shared Chief Executive Dahal.

**B.** Executive Chief Mr. Taranath Dahal has been appointed a member of Steering Committee of Performance Audit Unit at the Office of Auditor General.

**C.** Policy Advisor Krishna Sapkota has been appointed a member of Working Committee at Performance Audit Unit at the Office of Auditor General.



<http://freedomforum.org.np/content/podcast/>

## Listen to Freedom Forum Podcast- Freedom Chautari





# Karnali and Sudur Paschim: CRA media training

In a bid to strengthen the capacities of journalist in understanding on climate resilient agriculture and help media identify challenges and good practices of farmers in CRA, Freedom Forum designed and delivered the five-day residential CRA Media Training cum Fellowship program for mid-career working journalists. As part of the GRAPE Project, FCA organized the program for journalists from seven districts of Karnali and Sudurpaschim provinces in Karnali province headquarters, Surkhet, on 21-25 August 2023. A total of 32 journalists from Dailekh, Surkhet, Humla, Kailali, Dadeldhura, Bajura and Doti districts had participated in the training aiming at raising an understanding and awareness about the climate-resilient agriculture. Besides, the thrust of the training was to help them in developing media content (news, stories, features) in the theme of CRA.

The training program mainly included three domain of works – developing a manual for CRA media training, facilitating training sessions and providing inputs in selecting fellows based on their training performance. The major areas covered in the training manual and training delivery were fundamentals of climate change and climate resilient agriculture, CRA and journalism, field reporting of CRA and feedbacks and digital story telling on CRA.



A 52-page CRA media training manual covered weather change, climate change, differences between weather change and climate change, subsistence and modern agriculture, Green House Gas emission in Nepal, rise in temperature and global warming, Nepal in risk cycle, climate change effects in agriculture and food security, climate change risk mapping and reporting, interaction with CRA specialists, climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies for CRA, hard news, soft news and feature stories on CRA and its story-telling through different varieties.

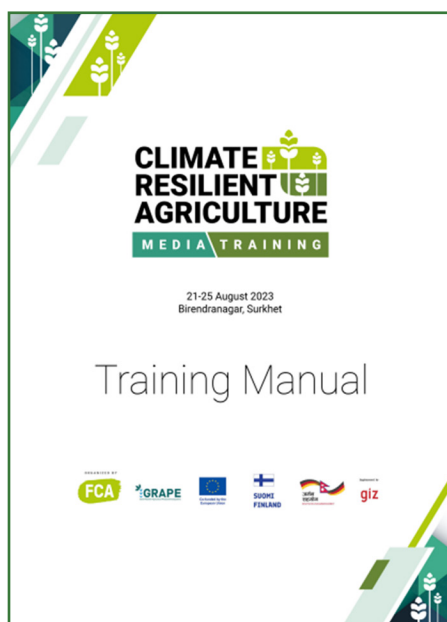
The training was divided into five modules and 22 sessions spanning five days. Roughly 60 minutes were allocated for the presentation and illustrations and 30 minutes for journalistic exercise.

The training was focused on developing understanding Climate Change and CRA; linking CRA and Journalism, field visit for CRA reporting and news writing, writing CRA stories in different formats and CRA story-telling and fellowship.

The Climate Change Resilience (CRA) training session was a significant milestone for both participants and organizers. First and foremost, it's important to note that this training marked the inaugural exposure to CRA for all the participants. This fact alone highlights the importance of

creating opportunities for individuals to enhance their understanding of climate change resilience, an area of critical importance in today's world. The outcomes of the training were nothing short of remarkable, with participants and organizers alike expressing their unanimous agreement that the training was immensely valuable, highly effective, and eminently practical. For the participants, many of whom were seasoned journalists, this training was an eye-opener. They discovered the significance of reporting on CRA, a topic that had not received the attention it deserved in their previous work. The training allowed them to connect the dots between their existing journalism efforts and the broader context of climate change resilience. It served as a revelation, illuminating how their work, even if indirectly, was already intertwined with the overarching theme of climate change resilience.

A substantial number of participants shared their experiences of reporting on climate change and its far-reaching impacts on agriculture and the livelihoods of people. These journalists had been covering stories about changing weather patterns, shifting agricultural practices, and the struggle of communities to adapt to these changes. However, what they hadn't fully realized before the training was the depth and breadth of the CRA framework and how it provided a comprehensive approach to address these issues. The training content, which ranged from the basics of climate change to the



intricate linkages between journalism and CRA, was instrumental in bridging the knowledge gap. Participants found it not only enlightening but also incredibly practical. They appreciated that the training didn't just delve into theoretical concepts but provided actionable insights that could be immediately applied to their journalism practices.

One key takeaway from the training was the importance of effective communication. Journalists play a pivotal role in disseminating information about climate change and resilience to the broader public. Through compelling storytelling and accurate reporting, they can raise awareness and drive positive change. Many participants remarked that the training had sharpened their skills in conveying complex climate related information in a clear, accessible, and engaging manner. Moreover, the training encouraged participants to view their

role as not just reporters but as catalysts for change. They realized that their stories could inspire action and policy shifts at local, regional, and even national levels. This newfound perspective invigorated their commitment to their craft and their mission as journalists. The holistic approach of the training also left a profound impact. It emphasized the interconnectedness of various aspects of climate change resilience, such as community engagement, sustainable agriculture, and disaster preparedness. Participants grasped the significance of addressing these issues comprehensively, 17 rather than in isolation. They saw how their reporting could contribute to a more resilient and sustainable future.

In conclusion, the CRA training was a pivotal experience for both participants and organizers. It served as a catalyst for change, empowering



journalists to play a more active and informed role in the discourse on climate change resilience. As a specialist in this field, I'm heartened by the positive feedback and the newfound enthusiasm of these journalists to make a difference. It's clear that the training has set them on a path to becoming even more effective advocates for climate change resilience, armed with the knowledge and skills to drive meaningful change through their reporting. 🌱

## Discussion with NHRC officials on budget and human rights

At the invitation of the National Human Rights Commission – a constitutional human rights watchdog body of Nepal, Freedom Forum experts sensitized senior human rights officials of the commission on Budget and Human Rights on 13 September 2023.

NHRC organized the knowledge sharing program for exploring the ideas and information on various human rights issues to develop the capacity of the staff on new dimensions, trends and experiences in the human rights regime.

On the occasion, Freedom Forum's executive chief Taranath Dahal and open budget expert Krishna Sapkota delivered their sessions on budget and human rights highlighting open budget practices in Nepal and the role of human rights commission. Dahal shed light on seminal works of Freedom Forum, especially generating evidence and advancing advocacy for open and accountable budgets and public finance management, including audit accountability, performance audit, climate budget and



COVID fiscal management. He highlighted the need for explicitly linking justice, democracy and human rights with public finance so that citizens' rights can be assured through accountable budgeting.

Likewise, Sapkota highlighted the survey methodology, findings and recommendations of latest Open Budget Survey 2021 and explained how NHRC can play a role in providing oversight roles in promoting accountable budgeting in Nepal. He highlighted the National Strategy of Citizen Engagement in Public Finance Management in Nepal which was prepared and submitted by Freedom Forum for PEFA secretariat.

Responding to the queries from participants, Dahal highlighted the need for tax investment study and overall budget reforms from formulation to

oversight in Nepal. He urged NHRC to proactively participate in the budget oversight process in the country taking into consideration the explicit linkage between budget and human rights.

Also on the occasion, NHRC Commissioner Mihir Thakur delivered his presentation highlighting NHRC view on budget and human rights.

He pledged to actively engage NHRC in the area of budget and public finance sector so that public resources of the country will be properly channeled for the protection of rights of the citizens.

Also present on the occasion were NHRC Commissioner Manoj Duwady, Acting Secretary Murari Prasad Kharel and senior staff of the commission from all provinces and branch offices. 🌱





September 28, 2023

# Int'l Day for Universal Access to Information celebrated



Freedom Forum observed the International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI) by organizing various campaigns and participating in the public forums on September 28. The IDUAI was proclaimed by UNESCO's General Conference in 2015 and it was formally recognized by United Nations General Assembly in 2019.

This year too, the IDUAI was celebrated organizing various campaigns, dialogues, and seminars worldwide under the theme of 'importance of the online space for access to information'.

In Nepal, Freedom Forum and other civil society organizations joined the National Information Commission to mark the day. Freedom Forum prepared a podcast entitled- 'current status of implementation of Right to Information (RTI) in Nepal, its challenges and way forward'. In the podcast, RTI experts and activists Sanjeeb Ghimire, Krishna Sapkota and Aditya Dahal discussed legal status of the RTI implementation in Nepal. Activist Dahal shared his experience that a public office filed court case against him for seeking information however, the court issued decision in favour of Dahal.

Similarly, RTI experts Ghimire and Sapkota argued the current legal approach towards RTI implementation is not enough and existing RTI Act 2007 needs to be amended. They also shared that majority government offices do not update related information periodically on their website as stated in the Act.

They also highlighted the importance of proactive disclosure among public bodies to build informed citizenry. Sapkota, who is also an expert on open data, claimed that there is no appropriate disaggregated data on status of implementation of RTI in Nepal despite passage of 16 years since its commencement. Hence, lack of

disaggregated data is the biggest challenge in RTI regime.

The podcast is available in Freedom Forum's website [www.freedomforum.org.np/podcast](http://www.freedomforum.org.np/podcast) and can be accessed through podcast apps.

Moreover, FF also secured its participation in the RTI National Conference held in Kathmandu where its General Secretary Sanjeeb Ghimire presented a paper, 'Proactive Disclosure Practices in Public Bodies and Challenges of Information Management' and moderated a panel discussion.

Sapkota and Dahal also participated in a national conference, 'Online Space and Right to Information: Opportunities and Challenges' - organized by the National Information Commission. In the program, NIC also released its two publications: A manual for Information seekers and a manual for public bodies.

Throughout the day FF engaged in a social media campaign to raise awareness on the importance of RTI and its application in our daily lives. The RTI related placards, were sported and posted on social media along with FF publications. 🌱





# Self disclosure update

<b>Type and Nature of Organization</b>	NGO working for Democracy, Right to Information, Freedom of Expression, Fiscal Transparency and Open Data, Media Policy and Law, Internet Freedom		
<b>Legal Status</b>	Registered at District Administration Office Kathmandu. DAO Registration Number: 127/062/63, SWC Affiliation Number: 18518		
<b>Location</b>	Adarsa Marga, Prasuti Griha Road, Thapathali, Kathmandu		
<b>Staffs and Roles</b>	<b>Taranath Dahal:</b> Executive Chief, coordinates overall organizational and administrative affairs		
	<b>Aruna Adhikari:</b> Finance and Administration Officer, looks after accounting and administrative affairs and performs responsibilities as the Information Officer.		
	<b>Nanu Maiya Khadka:</b> Gender Monitoring Officer, responsible for monitoring media content on gender perspectives		
	<b>Aditya Dahal:</b> RTI App and website operator		
	<b>Manju Ojha:</b> Front Desk Assistant, <b>Ganga Kumari Gurung:</b> Office Assistant		
<b>Consultant/Researchers</b>	<b>Krishna Sapkota, Narayan Ghimire, Subash Dahal</b>		
<b>Ongoing Project Information</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Supporting Agency</b>	<b>Date of start of project</b>
	Open Budget Survey	International Budget Partnership (IBP)	1st January 2023
<b>Services and Activities</b>	Research, capacity development and policy advocacy including media monitoring, trainings on RTI and journalism, meetings, workshops, seminars and other campaigns to promote issues of democracy, RTI, FoE, fiscal transparency, human rights, local governance. It also provides legal aid to journalists, media and information seekers.		
<b>Responsible Authority</b>	<b>Chairperson:</b> Hari Binod Adhikari, <b>Executive Chief:</b> Tara Nath Dahal		
<b>Decision Making Process</b>	<b>General Assembly:</b> Making policies, rules and regulations of organization <b>Executive committee:</b> Formulation of action plans as per constitution of organization, rules and regulation <b>Management team:</b> Running projects and daily operational affairs and reporting timely to the Executive Committee.		
<b>Past/Current Activities</b>	Please follow the link: <a href="http://freedomforum.org.np/content/category/activities/">http://freedomforum.org.np/content/category/activities/</a>		
<b>Information Officer</b>	Aruna Adhikari		
<b>Financial Information</b>	Freedom Forum received grants announcing <b>Rs. 15,75,326.75 (July to September 2023).</b>		
<b>Official Website</b>	<a href="http://www.freedomforum.org.np">www.freedomforum.org.np</a>		
<b>Publications of Freedom Forum</b>	Freedom Forum has over 50 Publications (printed) Please Follow the Link: <a href="http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/">http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/</a>		
<b>Annual Report</b>	<a href="http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/reports/annual-reports/">http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/reports/annual-reports/</a>		
<b>Information Dissemination</b>	Websites- <a href="http://www.freedomforum.org.np/">http://www.freedomforum.org.np/</a> ; <a href="http://www.nepalpressfreedom.org">www.nepalpressfreedom.org</a> , and Newsletter-Free Expression		

# UK's Online Safety Bill undermines privacy, security and freedom of Internet users

The UK's recently-passed Online Safety Bill (OSB) promises to make the UK "the safest place" in the world to be online. In reality, the OSB will lead to a much more censored, locked-down Internet for British users. This statement was originally published on [eff.org](https://eff.org) on 19 September 2023.

The U.K. Parliament has passed the Online Safety Bill (OSB), which says it will make the U.K. "the safest place" in the world to be online. In reality, the OSB will lead to a much more censored, locked-down internet for British users. The bill could empower the government to undermine not just the privacy and security of U.K. residents, but internet users worldwide.

## A backdoor that undermines encryption

A clause of the bill allows Ofcom, the British telecom regulator, to serve a notice requiring tech companies to scan their users – all of them – for child abuse content. This would affect even messages and files that are end-to-end encrypted to protect user privacy. As enacted, the OSB allows the government to force companies to build technology that can scan regardless of encryption – in other words, build a backdoor.

These types of client-side scanning systems amount to "Bugs in Our Pockets," and a group of leading computer security experts has reached the same conclusion as EFF – they undermine privacy and security for everyone. That's why EFF has strongly opposed the OSB for years.

It's a basic human right to have a private conversation. This right is even more important for



the most vulnerable people. If the U.K. uses its new powers to scan people's data, lawmakers will damage the security people need to protect themselves from harassers, data thieves, authoritarian governments, and others. Paradoxically, U.K. lawmakers have created these new risks in the name of online safety. The U.K. government has made some recent statements indicating that it actually realizes that getting around end-to-end encryption isn't compatible with protecting user privacy. But given the text of the law, neither the government's private statements to tech companies, nor its weak public assurances, are enough to protect the human rights of British people or internet users around the world.

## Censorship and age-gating

Online platforms will be expected to remove content that the U.K. government views as inappropriate for children. If they don't, they'll face heavy penalties. The problem is, in the U.K. as in the U.S., people do not agree about what type of content is harmful for kids. Putting that

decision in the hands of government regulators will lead to politicized censorship decisions.

The OSB will also lead to harmful age-verification systems. This violates fundamental principles about anonymous and simple access that has existed since the beginning of the Internet. You shouldn't have to show your ID to get online. Age-gating systems meant to keep out kids invariably lead to adults losing their rights to private speech, and anonymous speech, which is sometimes necessary.

In the coming months, we'll be watching what type of regulations the U.K. government publishes describing how it will use these new powers to regulate the internet. If the regulators claim their right to require the creation of dangerous backdoors in encrypted services, we expect encrypted messaging services to keep their promises and withdraw from the U.K. if that nation's government compromises their ability to protect other users. 🌱

Source: <https://ifex.org/uks-online-safety-bill-undermines-privacy-security-and-freedom-of-internet-users/>



Freedom Forum is an independent, non-governmental and not-for-profit civil society organization working for the cause of social accountability, democracy and human rights focused on press freedom, freedom of expression and right to information in Nepal. Incepted in 2005, Freedom Forum has emerged as a prominent national organization in promoting access to information and freedom of expression through dialogue, research, training, public advocacy and campaign and programme implementation. Currently, the organization is working on the issues of public finance management, budget transparency, open data and aid governance, political and parliamentary accountability, freedom of expression online and open government partnership (OGP) based on its on-hand experience and learning.



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