

# 2023-24



# Freedom Forum Nepal

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## Message from Chairperson



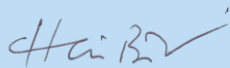
It is with great pride that I present the Annual Progress Report 2023/24 of Freedom Forum (FF), reflecting our commitment to defending freedom of expression, press freedom, and human rights in Nepal. Over the past year, Freedom Forum's interventions contributed to strengthening its role as a watchdog of democracy and a promoter of transparency and accountability.

Throughout the year, FF's dedicated team worked to monitor violations of press freedom, Right to Information (RTI), and media related policy interventions. FF also collaborated with national and international stakeholders to safeguard journalists' rights and ensure an enabling environment for independent journalism. Our engagement in the sector of open data, digital rights, and public interest reporting has further contributed to informed public discourse and good governance.

The impact of our advocacy is visible in our successful interventions, strategic litigation efforts, and policy recommendations. FF's intervention to promote open budget, open government and open parliament through collaborative actions has enhanced transparency, accountability, and public participation in democratic processes.

FF remains committed to expanding its reach, strengthening partnerships, and adapting to the evolving media landscape. I extend my sincere gratitude to our team, board members, partners, donors, and supporters, whose unwavering dedication has made this journey possible.

Together, we will continue to champion the fundamental principles of freedom, transparency, and accountability in Nepal and beyond.



Hari Binod Adhikari  
Chairperson

## **About the Report**

This is an annual report containing major activities and achievements accomplished by Freedom Forum (FF) during a fiscal year, spanning from July 17, 2023 to July 16, 2024. The primary objective of the report is to disclose overall activities, learning, and outcomes of the organizational initiatives and demonstrate its track record and competence to execute ideas aligning the key themes of the organization. It is expected to serve as a solid documentation of key efforts of the organization to attain its objectives, projects executed and a consolidated contribution FF made to the country's national development.

Information contained in this report have been widely extracted from the newsletters, project documents, project reports, press releases, website updates, meetings and discussion notes, media coverage and social media updates.





## **Who We Are:**

Freedom Forum is an independent, non-government, not-for-profit and non-partisan purely social organization established on September 1, 2005 and registered with the District Administration Office of Kathmandu, Nepal (Regd.127/062/063) and the Social Welfare Council, Nepal (Affiliation No.18518). It has 13-membered Board of Directors, 50 general members and 5 staffs. Its office is located in Kathmandu, Bagmati Province, Nepal. It has seven provincial offices and representatives in regional and district sites to coordinate programs at the local levels. FF has eight policies to regulate organization's internal governance (<https://freedomforum.org.np/policy/>).



FF is a collaborative partner of the National Human Rights Commission, Nepal (NHRC) and National Information Commission (NIC). It is also a member of steering committee of Office of Auditor General, Nepal (OAG). Internationally, It is a member of International Freedom of Exchange (IFEX), Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD), CIVICUS, Trust for Law, Open Data in Developing Countries (ODDC), Freedom of Information Advocates on Internet (FoIANet).

Freedom Forum, has been established as an acclaimed institution in Nepal working in the sector of freedom of expression, right to information, policy and legislative reform, journalists' rights safety, public financial management and open budget, internet freedoms and open data, electoral reform and democracy, governance and accountability etc. In its 18 years of experience, it is enriched with knowledge resources on freedom of expression, press freedom, right to information, open government, open budget and open data.

Moreover, its websites [www.freedomforum.org.np](http://www.freedomforum.org.np), [www.nepalpressfreedom.org](http://www.nepalpressfreedom.org) and RTI Nepal application have been knowledge hub for researchers and activists.

### **Executive Board Members:**

Chairperson	Hari Binod Adhikari
Vice- Chairperson	Rajesh Ghimire
General Secretary	Sanjeeb Ghimire
Secretary	Bin Kumar Bishwakarma
Treasurer	Shiva Maya Dahal
Members	Bishnu Sharma
	Ram Maya Lamichhane

Kedar Dahal  
Ramesh Paudel  
Rajendra Dhital  
Ram Bikash Chaudhary  
Deek Ghimire  
Jay Narayan Sah

### **Objectives**

The key objectives of the organization are:

- Protection and promotion of freedom expression and information
- Promotion and development of professional journalism
- Defending journalists, Right to Information activists and freedom of expression practitioners
- Promotion, protection and practice of the right to information
- Promotion of human rights and democratic norms and values
- Research/study, civic monitoring, oversight, education and advocacy for the guarantee of free and fair elections
- Promotion of the use of media, Right to Information, Open Data and Public Financial Management (PFM) tools to support the movement and campaign for social justice and development of disadvantaged people
- Contribution to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through exchange of ideas, experience and learning at national and international level being focused on attaining the targets of Goal 16
- Affiliation and participation in regional and global networks related to transparency, right to information, freedom of expression, free and professional press, civic engagement and Open Government Part
- Undertake action research and study to draw evidences for advocacy in its core areas of works.
- Monitor, research and lobby for gender inclusive media.

### **Our Mission**

To make sincere and collective effort towards resolution of conflict, establishment of sustainable peace, pluralistic and 'inclusive' democracy in Nepal where freedom of expression, human rights, fiscal transparency, accountability and civil liberty will be respected, protected and promoted.

### **Our Vision**

Establishment of peace and 'inclusive' democracy in Nepal by focusing on press freedom, human rights and civil liberty.

### **Thematic areas:**

Press Freedom and Media Development  
Right to Information  
Open Data  
Freedom of Speech and Assembly  
Media Policies and Law  
Governance and Public Finance Management  
Digital Rights  
Open Government and Open Parliament

## **Ongoing projects**

Overview of the partnership projects being executed this fiscal year:

<b>SN</b>	<b>Name of project</b>	<b>Funding agency</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Project Site</b>	<b>Financial grant</b>
1.	To strengthen free and safe digital civic space for protection and promotion of freedom of expression	International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX)	November 2023 to July 30, 2022	Kathmandu	\$20000
2.	Capacity building of Nepal National Human Rights Commission and other stakeholders to promote the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity	International Media Support (IMS)	July 1, 2023 to November 30, 2023	Kathmandu	\$7,938.28
3.	Open Budget Survey	International Budget partnership (IBP)	January 2023 to December 2024	Kathmandu	\$11,000
4.	COAB Initiative (Collaboration for Open and Accountable Budgeting)	IBP	Jan 1, 2024 to December 31, 2025	Kathmandu	\$ 14000
5.	Enabling Safety of Journalist (ESAJ)	UNESCO (Global Media Defense Fund)	May 7, 2024 to May 6, 2025	Seven provinces of Nepal	\$32,678

## **Programs under Projects**

### **1. Strengthening free and safe digital civic space for protection and promotion of freedom of expression:**

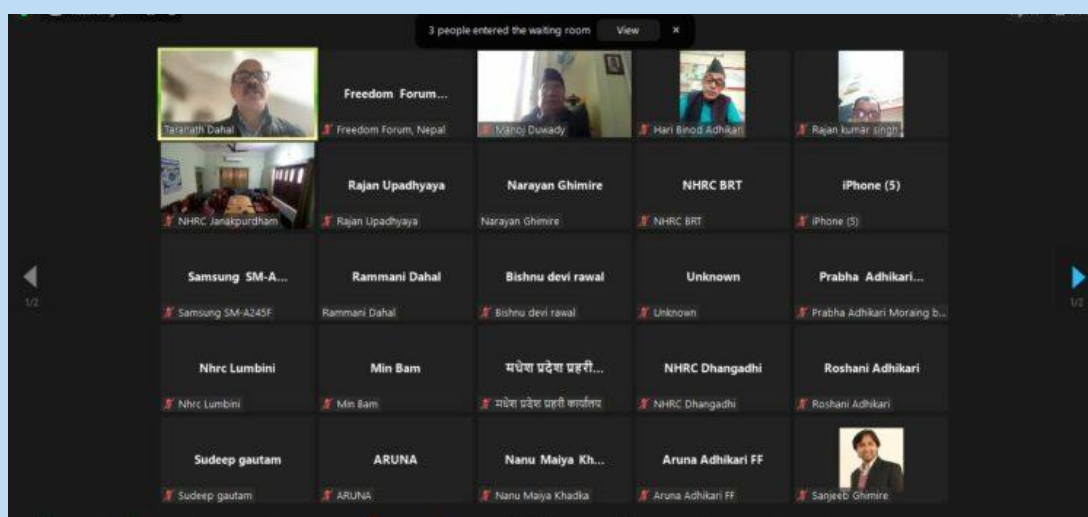
Summary: Freedom Forum, in this project, plans to strengthen safe and free digital civic space adopting multi-stakeholders approach. The project aims at building provincial networks across seven provinces by engaging journalists, CSO representatives, lawyers, human rights defenders, human rights agencies. These networks will function as knowledge sharing and awareness-raising public places in each province of Nepal.

Project goal: To strengthen free and safe digital civic space for protection and promotion of freedom of expression

Project impacts: Improved readiness of multiple stakeholders for protection of free and safe digital civic space.

Impact indicators: Data of freedom of expression violation online before and after the project intervention; documentation of stories about the incidents from province networks and commitment from policy stakeholders for reforms in line with the recommendations of the National Cyber Security policy review.

Target groups: Journalists, media outlets, lawmakers, advocates, civil society groups, academia, and government officials.



#### **Activities:**

a. *Reconnection and refresher meeting with province representatives:* A virtual meeting was organized on January 12, 2024 to discuss among the province representatives on the activities to be conducted in provinces to build Freedom of Expression network for free and safe civic space. It was also a reconnection and refresher meeting with the representatives on their contribution to the province network. They were oriented on National Human Rights



Commission (NHRC)'s directive for the formation of networks for protection and promotion of freedom of expression and journalists' safety.

For details: <https://freedomforum.org.np/ff-representatives-called-for-province-network-on-foe/>

b. *Roundtable discussions on “Freedom of Expression Issues and Implementation of National Cyber Security Policy”*: Freedom Forum organized a discussion in Kathmandu on February 4 in a bid to garner information from the government and stakeholders especially on the FoE issues and concerns surrounding cyberspace. The program was attended by representatives from MoCIT, Federal parliament secretariat, civil society organizations, media educators, advocates, FoE experts, journalists and researchers. Total number of participants were 41 including 12 females.



Similarly, in next discussion held in Itahari city of Koshi Province on March 30, 2024 the participants dwelt on the issues ranging from the provisions of IT and Cyber Security Bill to anti-press incidents on digital spheres, online news media, and cyber security. For details: <https://freedomforum.org.np/policymakers-reminded-to-heed-foe-on-cyber-related-laws/>

c. *FF's review on media -related policies*:

i. Media Council bill: FF studied the Media Council Bill submitted in the upper house of the federal parliament, National Assembly, and provided feedback to the lawmakers and parliament secretariat. The points that warrant attention were identified and the lawmakers suggested as recommendations. FF made the suggestions in 24 points. The points for the amendment were on structure of the Press Council, recommendation committee, code/ethics and self-regulations,

journalists' accreditation, independence and accountability.

For details: <https://freedomforum.org.np/freedom-forum-suggests-points-for-lawmakers-to-amend-media-council-bill/>

ii. Mass Communication Bill: Freedom Forum submitted its inputs to the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology for the correction in the Mass Communications Bill (draft). FF commented on provisions for community and public media, accreditation of news agency, state's responsibility for journalists' physical safety. FF also suggested to wipe out other redundancies and provisos in the bill to make media free. Labour Act should be clearly stated in Section 53. Old Radio Act, 2014 needs cancellation and two clauses added about it.

For details: <https://freedomforum.org.np/ff-provides-inputs-to-ministry-on-mass-communications-bill/>

iii. Information Technology and Cybersecurity Bill: Freedom Forum went through the draft bill and made initial observation. With the IT regulation, the present bill covers data protection, cybercrime, cyber security, and privacy. The 47-page bill has 18 chapters, 60 clauses, and a schedule. Although the bill is relatively progressive for it has included new issues, it has not yet been clear on how it could promote and protect human rights, especially freedom of expression, privacy and citizen's data online and cyber space. although the draft bill on IT and cyber security has sought transparent, accountable and safe use of artificial intelligence, machine learning, blockchain, and the internet of things (IoT), it has failed to defining these technical jargons.

For details: <https://freedomforum.org.np/make-cyberspace-foe-friendly/>



d. *Formation of journalist safety networks in seven provinces:* Safety network/mechanisms for protection and promotion of free expression and journalists' safety have been formed in provinces in Nepal. Freedom Forum mobilized its province representatives to institute the multi-stakeholder network to make FoE protection and journalists' safety a shared responsibility. The

network/mechanism is a 7-member team formed in each province comprising representatives of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Province Office, Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) Province chapter, High Court Bar Association, Human Rights Cell at Nepal Police in province, Office of the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers, Province Attorney Office, and Freedom Forum Province representatives.

Freedom Forum provided coordination and logistics support during the formation of the networks. The networks for having NHRC as the coordinator of the province mechanism, where FF facilitates the meetings.

For details: <https://freedomforum.org.np/journalist-safety-networks/>

## **2. Capacity building of Nepal National Human Rights Commission and other stakeholders to promote the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity**

### *Objective:*

To build from the 2022 peer-to-peer workshop with Nepal context-specific recommendations to bolster and further operationalize its journalist and human rights defender safety mechanism

*Beneficiaries:* Journalists, freedom of expression activists, National Human Rights Commission's officials and members, concerned stakeholders of human rights.



### *Activity:*

a. *Two- day workshop with the NHRC Direction Committee of the safety mechanism and selected experts for a full orientation to their role and an opportunity to update the mechanism:* Stakeholders relating to freedom of expression (FoE) and journalists' safety and rights and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) pledged to make more functional the safety mechanism, which was set up at NHRC during a meeting held on . They decided to make

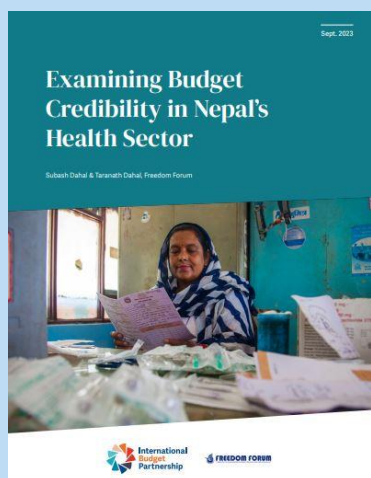


necessary amendments on the existing Directive on protection of FoE so that the Directive would come into effect and journalists' safety made a multi-stakeholders' issue. The multi-stakeholders compose a Direction Committee incorporating the representatives from Prime Minister's Office, Nepal Police, Nepal Bar Association, Federation of Nepali Journalists, NGO Federation, and CSOs working on FoE and journalists' rights.

For details: <https://freedomforum.org.np/nhrc-vow-to-make-journalists-safety/>

### **3. Budget transparency and accountability interventions- International Budget Partnership (IBP):**

Freedom Forum has been executing open budget survey in Nepal since 2008. The survey supported by International Budget Partnership adopts internationally accepted criteria to assess public access to central government budget information; formal opportunities for the public to participate in the national budget process; and the role of budget oversight institutions, such as legislatures and national audit offices, in the budget process. Survey report is published every year. These reports show that Nepal has low score on public participation in budget making and implementation processes. Budget making process is yet non-consultative; it lacks



meaningful participation of representatives from all the sectors.

#### Objectives:

- To ensure meaningful civic participation during the formulation, implementation and oversight of the budget,
- To build a community of CSOs who share an interest in building capacity for open budgeting, particularly to act at the subnational level.
- To advocate for more transparency in budget implementation thus, ensuring the quality of the data and resources available

Target groups: Minister of Finance, National Planning Commission, Public Accounts Committee – PAC, Finance Committee, Office of Auditor General Nepal

Expected outcomes: Improved access to budget Information and inclusive public participation mechanisms. A network, which will be an important information sharing and capacity building platform for the CSOs on open budget.

#### Activities:

a. *Examining budget credibility in Nepal's health sector:* Freedom Forum researched 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 and



prepared a brief. The brief 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.

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. Read the brief here: <https://freedomforum.org.np/download/examining-budget-credibility-in-nepals-health-sector/?wpdmdl=5463&refresh=650181722df061694597490>



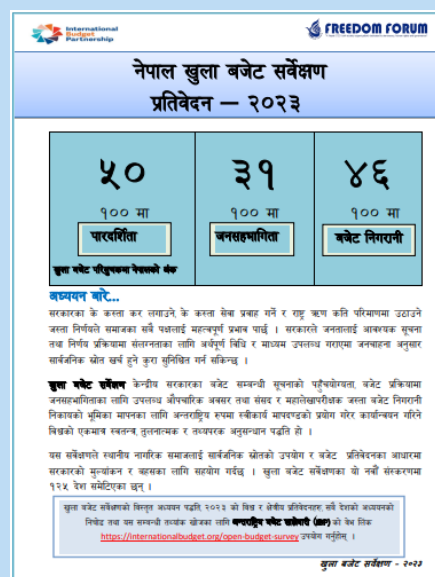
b. *Sensitization of human rights officers on budget and human rights*: At the invitation of the National Human Rights Commission – a constitutional human rights watchdog body of Nepal, Freedom Forum experts sensitized senior human rights officials of the commission on Budget and Human Rights on 13 September 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. For details: <https://freedomforum.org.np/senior-human-rights-officials-sensitized-on-budget-and-human-rights/>

c. *Open Budget Survey (OBS 2023)*: This is independent, comparative and fact-based research instrument that uses internationally accepted criteria to assess public access to central government budget information; formal opportunities for the public to participate in the national budget process; and the role of budget oversight institutions, such as legislatures and

national audit offices, in the budget process. The survey helps local civil society assess and confer with their government on the reporting and use of public funds. This is 9th edition of the OBS covering 125 countries.

The survey report was prepared based on analysis of documents published and events, activities, or developments that took place through 31 December 2022 and a completed questionnaire provided by IBP.

For details: <https://freedomforum.org.np/download/obs-nepal-2023-english/?wpdmdl=5659&refresh=67af2d1c4b3bf1739533596>



#### 4. Enabling safety of journalists:

The project is supported by Global Media Defense Fund (GMDF). The GMDF is a UNESCO Multi-Partner Trust Fund established within the framework of the Global Campaign for Media Freedom and under the overall umbrella of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. It was developed with the goal of enhancing media freedom and improving the access of journalists to specialized and gender-sensitive legal assistance. FF has been continuously monitoring anti-press incidents and making the concerned authority aware of journalists' rights. But the authorities have largely been indifferent. This time around, FF intends to leverage its close collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to reinforce the national journalists' safety mechanism and support its operationalization.

##### Objectives:

- Making functional the safety mechanism at NHRC thereby exerting pressure on the State agencies and non-state actors to be accountable towards citizen's freedom of expression, journalists' rights and safety
- Establishing peer support network in all of Nepal's seven provinces
- Legal support facility provides legal defence supports to at least 10 journalists and FoE practitioners, especially women journalists and journalists from minority communities

*Project beneficiaries:* Victim journalists, RTI campaigners and information seekers, FoE activists identified through Freedom of Expression violation incidents, human rights monitors, Nepali journalists all over the country, media fraternity, media lawyers, researchers, academia.



#### *Impact indicators:*

- NHRC journalists' safety mechanism begin engagements in safety and protection of journalists in Nepal.
- Number of cases addressed by NHRC and FF jointly,
- Number of NHRC monitoring mechanism's report, FF's reports and updates
- Number of legal cases provided litigation support
- Number of lawyers' engaged and court engagements
- Number of support seekers assisted by legal desk

#### *Activities:*

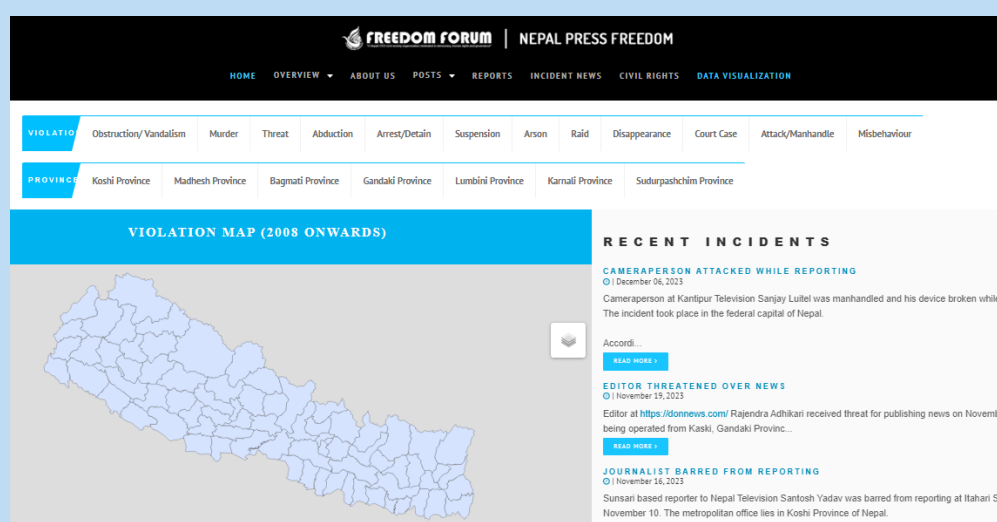
*a. Inception meeting with NHRC officials:* An inception meeting was held among the project staff and NHRC officials on the project in NHRC office on May 31, 2024. Major highlights of the meeting were- introduction on Freedom Forum and NHRC's collaboration initiatives, highlight upon NHRC's approval letter for collaboration on proposed program between NHRC and FF Sharing information on new collaborative activities.

*b. Facilitation meeting with NHRC's Direction Committee for journalists' safety:* FF facilitated a meeting of NHRC's Direction Committee under the mechanism for protection of freedom of expression and journalists' safety held on June 14. The meeting decided to continue meetings to strengthen the safety mechanisms formed at province level as well. The high level officials including the Direction Committee Coordinator Honorable Member of the NHRC, Mr Manoj Duwadi, expressed happiness over the collaborative modality to further strengthen the mechanism and go to province level together.



## **Programs under Core Activities**

### **1. Media Monitoring:**



Monitoring of media contents and developments in media rights and journalism is the core activity of FF. Under this, FF is watchful on the government and civil society's movement on issues of press freedom, media rights, freedom of expression and access to information.

FF records incidents of violation of press freedom and freedom of expression through media monitoring and updates those on its dedicated website- [www.nepalpressfreedom.org](http://www.nepalpressfreedom.org).

During this period, FF recorded total 59 incidents of press freedom violations where 73 male and 10 female journalists were victimized with majority incidents of attack and manhandle.

**2. Right to Information Campaign:** FF continues its campaign to promote use of RTI thus, making citizens informed and aware of the public issues through its RTI Nepal application.



a. RTI Nepal Mobile App: News, articles and important information related to RTI are regularly updated on the App available on both Android and IOS systems. The application can be downloaded from Playstore of android devices and Appstore of IOS devices.

b. Statements and support: FF continuously advocates against unconstitutional move of the government that curtails citizen's access to information and classify information.

*Four information seekers were arrested from Gokarneshwor municipality of Kathmandu on June 18. A police team mobilized from the Police Circle, Bouddha apprehended four right to information (RTI) campaigners affiliated to the National Federation for RTI. Campaigners Ashmita Khatri, Adharsha Chhetri, Raju Sunar and Prem Shrestha were arrested based on a complaint of the municipality. Later, they were released on June 28 following pressure from other RTI activists and civil society networks. FF also actively lobbied for their release.*

For details: <https://freedomforum.org.np/release-rti-activists-unconditionally/>

c. RTI in World Social Forum 2024: Freedom Forum organized a discussion event 'Challenges of Right to Information regime in South Asia' as part of the World Social Forum 2024 in Kathmandu on February 18.



The event witnessed approximately 100 participants ranging from information commissioners, RTI activists, civil society representatives to general citizens, where the speakers underlined the need to cement south Asian networking to keep alive RTI movement and frustrate push back against RTI in the region. The south Asian activists and campaigners of right to information (RTI) vowed to work together and called for broader collaboration to augment RTI regime.

For details: <https://freedomforum.org.np/south-asian-rti-activists-call-for-collaboration-to-foster-rti-regime/>



### 3. Day Celebrations:

#### a. Celebration of **World Press Freedom Day 2024**:

Freedom Forum marked the World Press Freedom Day 2024 by organizing a program entitled 'Press Freedom and Human rights'. It was held on Zoom online platform on May 3. It was held in collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Nepal.

On the occasion, FF's report on press freedom presented. As per report, FF recorded increase in the incidents of press freedom violations this year as compared to the previous year May 2022/23. According to the report, FF recorded 60 incidents of violation this year which affected 88 media persons- 77 female and 11 male, as compared to 40 incidents affecting 79 journalists last year.

For details: <https://freedomforum.org.np/ff-observes-world-press-freedom-day-2024/>



#### b. **Int'l Day for Universal Access to Information 2023** observed:

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, 2024. 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'. 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.

For details: <https://freedomforum.org.np/intl-day-for-universal-access-to-information->

[observed/](#)

**c. End Impunity Day 2023 observed:**

Freedom Forum marked the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists on November 1 and 2 through social media campaigns. FF's executive chief and media monitoring officer jointly published an article entitled- [Ensure justice to journalists](#) on The Kathmandu Post on November 1.

In addition to this, FF made several posts on its official Facebook and twitter pages about the day. FF also shared its documentary showcasing stories of journalists killed and forcefully disappeared since 1996.

Similarly, FF also shared data of press freedom violations documented in its dedicated website: [www.nepalpressfreedom.org](http://www.nepalpressfreedom.org).

For detail: <https://freedomforum.org.np/ff-observes-end-impunity-day-2023/>

**4. Podcasts:**

FF has been producing various podcasts based on its concerned themes as right to information, freedom of expression, public finance management and democratic rights in both Nepali and English languages. In this fiscal year, FF produced seven episodes of Freedom Chautary podcasts which were also published on FF's website and social media handles.

All the episodes can be accessed here:

<https://freedomforum.org.np/podcast/>



**5. Social Media Updates:**

FF has its official Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts through which it disseminates and publishes its publications, advocacy campaigns and important information.

Facebook id: Freedom Forum Nepal

Twitter id: @forumfreedom

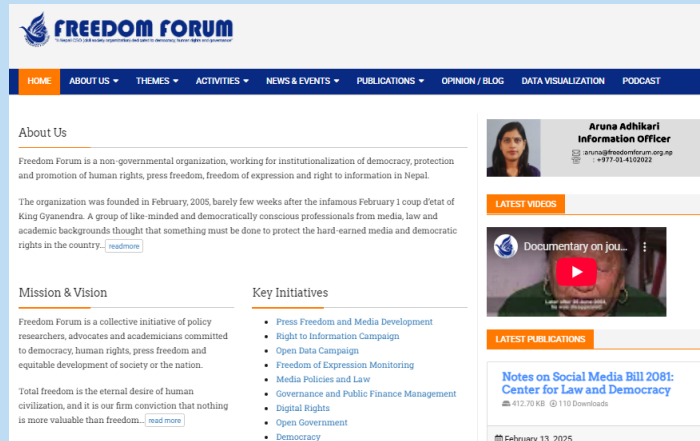
Linkedin id: Freedom Forum Nepal

**6. Regular Updates and Operation of Nepal Press Freedom website:**

FF has its own website dedicated to Freedom of Expression [www.nepalpressfreedom.org](http://www.nepalpressfreedom.org). On this website, incidents of violations of press freedom, freedom of expression and right to information are updated along with data presentation and visualization. The website is a one-stop site with data on current press freedom and freedom of expression status in Nepal. It also

covers incidents of violations faced by the civilians for exercising right to information and free expression rights in Nepal.

Similarly, event updates and important press releases on freedom of expression issues are also updated on official website: [www.freedomforum.org.np](http://www.freedomforum.org.np).



## 7. Press Statements:

FF issues attention letters and [press statements](#) on the issues around media rights, open budget, freedom of expression, journalists' safety and other contemporary issues. In this fiscal year, total 24 statements were issued, and submitted to the concerned authority and also published on FF's official website.

A major setback observed in this fiscal year is ban of a social media platform TikTok in Nepal reasoning the platform spread malicious contents and was harmful to social harmony.

Link: <https://freedomforum.org.np/nepal-government-comes-up-with-anti-foe-moves-one-after-another/>

FF was also engaged in international advocacy campaigns through signatures and solidarity statements. Freedom Forum [joined](#) 58 organizations on January 19 in calling on Sri Lankan Minister for Public Security to withdraw the proposed Online Safety Bill and conduct sustained multi-stakeholder consultations, including with civil society and human rights experts.

Freedom Forum [joined](#) MENA Alliance for Digital Rights and international community to support immediate restoration of telecommunications and other essential services in Gaza and any other affected areas, and to ensure that international and humanitarian law are respected.

FF also collaborated with national and international COSs to send and [open letter](#)- The UN Cybercrime Convention Must Not Become a Tool To Undermine International Human Rights Standards - to the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Cybercrime on February 8, 2024.

## 8. Collaborative Movements:

FF is a collaborative partner of Office of Auditor General (OAG), National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and National Information Commission in Nepal.

### a. Office of Auditor General (OAG) Nepal:

FF has been involved in performance audit, advocacy of citizen participation in audit and



workshops on CPA developing trained citizen auditors across the country as a collaborative partner of OAG. FF also has representation in steering committee of Performance Audit Unit at the OAG.

In this fiscal year, Freedom Forum (FF) successfully participated on audit of “Status of Implementation of Health Insurance Program” as part of citizen participation in performance audit for FY 2080/81. It was initiated after the agreement between Freedom Forum and Office of the Auditor General (OAG) in January this year. It was conducted at 13 health centers and hospitals located in Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur districts.

For details: <https://freedomforum.org.np/performance-audit-on-health-insurance-program/>

**b. National Human Rights Commission (NHRC):**

NHRC worked in collaboration with FF in the follow-up activities of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and other human rights related issues.



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 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.

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

**c. Independent News Service (INS):**

In collaboration with sister organization INS, Freedom Forum designed and delivered the five-

day residential CRA Media Training cum Fellowship program for mid-career working journalists. The activity, supported by Finn Church Aid (FCA) was organized for journalists from seven districts of Karnali and Sudurpaschim provinces in Surkhet, Karnali province on August 21-25, 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.



For details: <https://freedomforum.org.np/cra-media-training-cum-fellowship-program-concludes/>

## 9. Membership and Networks:

FF is a member at IFEX (International Freedom of Expression Exchange), Freedom of Information Advocates Network, CIVICUS, and Open Data in Developing Countries. In addition, FF also works in coordination with Committee to Protect Journalists, Federation of Nepali Journalists, Amnesty International Nepal, and Digital Rights Nepal.

FF became a member of the GFMD - the largest global community for media development, media freedom and journalists' support. In May 2024, GFMD welcomed FF along with other ten organizations into the community reaching total 199 member organizations. GFMD said that new organizations with diverse visions and skills will contribute to the synergistic effect, expecting it to be helpful to bring positive impact on the worldwide media landscape.

For details: <https://freedomforum.org.np/ff-a-member-of-gfmd/>

## 10. Publications:

All the publications of FF can be accessed and downloaded at:

<https://freedomforum.org.np/publications/>

### a. Newsletters:

As its core activity, the newsletter- Free Expression- is published every three months. The newsletter covers updates on the thematic issues FF has been working on. Total four issues of newsletter were published this year. All the issues are published on the official website of Freedom Forum and can be accessed at:

<https://freedomforum.org.np/publications/newsletters/>

### b. Annual reports 2023/24:

FF published two media monitoring reports- [Annual Media Report 2023](#) and [Annual Press Freedom report 2024](#) which present status of press freedom and freedom of expression in the country and also observe the trend of media freedom, impunity and access to information during the reporting period.

Moreover, annual progress report and audit report for the fiscal year 2021/22 were also published in this fiscal year, covering overall program and administrative details of Freedom Forum.

