



FreeExpression

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A NEWSLETTER OF FREEDOM FORUM

Nepali media Suffering and intimidation continues

Nepal witnessed a turmoil in the wake of Gen-Z protest launched against corruption, nepotism and social media ban. The protest organized on September 8 was so vehement that it forced the Prime Minister to step down. The demonstration initially begun peacefully turned violent, to which security persons resorted to firing which took the lives of 19 youths the same day, while the total fatalities in the two-day protest has crossed 70 so far. The number of casualties is likely to increase. The September 8 protest and killing of the youths in the federal capital, Kathmandu, flared up the protest nationwide causing massive destruction of public and private property next day, September 9. More than 1,100 persons are injured across the country. Even the media persons were seriously injured on September 8 and media houses set on fire and vandalized throughout the country. Some media houses failed to continue dissemination of news, while some resumed operation amidst ruins in Kathmandu from September 12. Most of the print media out of the Kathmandu Valley stopped publication, citing insecurity. Accurate loss of property at media houses is yet to be ascertained. By the night of September 12, an interim government was made by the President in a bid to avert further crises. With the lift of curfews and prohibitory orders, normalcy has restored now.

This is a brief preliminary report on the attack on journalists and media houses in course of the Gen-Z protests in Nepal. The agitated mob had attacked various public properties, including media houses in many places, especially on the second day. The protestors burnt down Kantipur Television and publication house, and the Annapurna



Kantipur TV Journalist Sabina Karki reporting from the office premises following arson attack

Post daily building. Following this, these media including other broadcasting channels were forced to stop their operation for at least 24 hours. However, most of the media in the federal capital have resumed their operation amid this crisis.

A total of 35 incidents were reported nationwide impacting 17 media houses through vandalism and arson. Twenty journalists and their equipment were directly affected and approximately twelve television broadcasts were disrupted.

KOSHI PROVINCE

The media outlets in this province have also faced attacks. According to information

provided by Koshi Province's representative of Freedom Forum, Bikram Niraula, newspapers published from Biratnagar, the capital city and other districts of the province stopped print publication, citing the rising threat after the protest. In Ilam, the violent protestors vandalized offices of Radio Nepal Bani and Ilam Express daily.

He further informed that that media halted their publication owing to increased risks to journalists, printing press workers and newspaper distributors. The media sector was further affected due to the curfew and prohibitory order imposed by the local administration after the incidents of vandalism and arson.

To be continued on page 7

Message from Executive Chief

Address Gen Z revolt

The Nepali youths waged a 'revolution' in September for the freedom of speech and democratic governance. The September 8-9 revolution is now recorded as one of the most wonderful events not only in Nepali history but also in the world. However, the protest caused a huge human and economic loss. It has further pushed the Nepali politics to another round of transition- 'the phase full of suspicion and risk'. The fear has gripped whether democratic system remains intact and country eludes a vicious uncertainty and conflict.



Taranath Dahal

It was a sheer regressive background leading to the Gen Z demonstration in Nepal. Irrespective of having the people elected legitimate government with near two-thirds of majority in the parliament, the government leadership under KP Sharma Oli emerged tough against the social media- banned various digital platforms unconstitutionally. It was a shameless ignorance and indifference to the suggestion and advocacy the civil society and media fraternity made repeatedly to the government to not ban the social media. The ban of the social networks, which had been integral and popular to people's life, left the users of all age groups in jitters, fueling further agitation. Freedom Forum had launched a campaign as a leading CSO against this brazen act of social media ban. However, the plea and advocacy fall on pachyderm ear of the government.

Moreover, the values of transparency faced continuous threats. The demands made for accountability and responsiveness is ignored much. The culture of tolerance was eroding. Worryingly, the Executive made repeated attempts to shadow other State organs- legislature and judiciary. The decisions made by the court was interpreted by the government in a way to curb the civil rights. The adjudication was greeted with questions of judicial independence and integrity. The institutions established to prevent and control corruption and misgovernance were at the receiving end of political influence that badly dented their performance, coursing controversy and criticisms. Such institutions did not improve but continued enjoying political diktat pliantly. It ultimately resulted into public disenchantment and distrust towards State. The distrust mounted on political parties and their leaders too. At such situation, encroachment to citizens' rights further fueled the anger, thereby exploding into the street protests. The people, especially led by GenZ group spoke vocally for the restoration of FoE and maintenance of good governance.

Horribly, the street protest was left unheard and unaddressed. The government's irresponsibility knew no bound that caused the death of two dozens of youths on the first day of the protest, September 8, outside the main building of parliament, New Baneshwor. The protest begun peacefully unleashed anarchy the next day. The vandalism and arson spread across the major urbans of Nepal on September 9, that perished the property of huge amount. The number of casualties ratcheted up, finally collapsing the government. The government collapse immediately rendered the state ineffective. The people's elected House of Representatives was dissolved and new election announced for March 5. The citizen government is in place with the mandate of holding the HoR election in six months. Once this government acts well and holds election successfully, the country will evidently restore democracy and constitution. In case the government fails to hold the election, instability will plague Nepal with the constitutional failure. It will be a state of gross chaos, causing dreadfulness.

Therefore, the citizen's revolt must be addressed by paying heed to their demands. It warrants responsibilities from all sides to prevent the country from further risk and derailment. It is the national duty to stay aware and active to protect the system. Freedom Forum is focused on it. We are active and alert to facilitate in making aware all concerned for restoring the constitution made from the Constituent Assembly for peace and democracy in Nepal. It helps minimize threats to citizen's rights. The FoE, right to information, open society, transparency in governance and functional democracy are the agenda FF have been forwarding for long. The GenZ people also demanded these issues. The research, study and advocacy FF did contributed to the youth awareness for good governance and better democracy. FF had taken a lead in advocating relentlessly for citizens' rights on digital platforms. We believe Nepal will head to functional democracy and accountable governance.

Meanwhile, agendas for policy and law reform are on hold due to the dissolution of lower house. However, FF takes this as a right moment to advocate for the better policies and laws related to freedom of expression, media and digital space regulation. FF's activities will focus on advancing the reform agenda in collaboration with the political parties.

19th National Information Day marked



Freedom Forum, in collaboration with the National Federation for the Right to Information (RTI) and 27 other organizations, celebrated 19th National Information Day with a street solidarity campaign in Kathmandu. The event marked 18 years since enactment of Nepal's Right to Information law, highlighting its poor implementation and the need for promoting transparency.

The campaign called on the National Information Commission (NIC) to prioritize effective enforcement of the RTI Act. RTI activists shared that the commission often ignores their concerns and discourages them from exercising their right to information.

As part of the initiative, a signature campaign was launched, gathering around 50 information and civil society activists who voiced for greater collaboration and robust implementation of the RTI law. FF, since its establishment, has been advancing the RTI for the cause of functional democracy and good governance where transparency and accountability are upheld.

FF has provided hundreds of trainings to youths, activists and government employees in a bid to make governance accountable to people. Citizen's right to information is continuously advocated through research and training. Numerous reports and investigative stories were prepared and disseminated with the use of RTI.

Freedom of Expression Violations

Madhesh Province

Attack

A. Reporter to Krishna daily, Basanta Lama was attacked over news on September 16 in Bara.

Talking to Freedom Forum, reporter Lama shared that teraipostonline.com had published a news story quoting him as an informant about massive deforestation of the national forest in Rautahat, Madhesh Province on September 15.

The news mentioned that locals of surrounding area reportedly cleared the forest area while the administration was controlling the violent protests ongoing in different places in the district.

Following the news publication, few people called him for a meeting and then assaulted him.

Police was informed about the incident.

B. Madhesh Province Bureau Chief of Avenues Television, Baidhyanath Yadav, was attacked while covering an event in Saptari.

Yadav told Freedom Forum that he was livestreaming a protest staged by locals after the death of Lalu Yadav, Chairperson of a local school management committee. "Meanwhile, a group of people attempted to attack me with weapons. They were also shouting and attempting to damage my reporting equipment. Fortunately, I was able to escape injury," he said.

Security officers rescued journalist Yadav and took him to a safe location. Speaking to Freedom Forum on August 12, Yadav said that while the police administration had assured his safety, no action has been taken against the attackers.

Lalu Yadav had died on August 5 in police

firing during a security operation against liquor smuggling.

C. Chairperson and operator at htpkhabar.com, Diwakar Sah, and his cameraperson Manoj Pariyar were manhandled while reporting at the Infrastructure Development Office in Jaleswor, Mahottari on the night of July 7. The incident took place in Madhesh Province of Nepal.

Sah had received a tip-off regarding the alleged irregularities at the office and informed both the District Administration Office and the District Police Office, requesting security for reporting. He reached the site along with a police officer to record activities in the office late at night.

According to Sah, office staff were providing payments to vendors at the end of the fiscal year and were allegedly demanding commissions to release the payments. As journalists Sah and Pariyar attempted to speak with the office chief, a group calling themselves members of a consumers' committee stopped them. The group questioned the journalists, "Who are you? Have you taken permission to enter the office at this late hour? Is this time for reporting? Will you pay our loss if the office does not pay us?"

The group manhandled the journalists and damaged their camera and microphone. Then, Sah began a live broadcast with his mobile phone for his safety. "Though police officers were present, they did not intervene. We have been targeted since we broadcasted critical news about the police office," Sah said.

While Sah escaped major attack, cameraperson Pariyar sustained a minor head injury. "Our reporting equipment has been damaged. I have turned off my mobile and am trying to leave the area as I do not feel safe," Sah informed Freedom Forum.

The incident was also raised in the Parliament on July 9.

D. Journalists Rabindra Prajapati and Sagar Sangam Thakur were verbally abused and attacked for their social media post on June 12 in Rautahat.

Journalist at Kathariya Musical FM Prajapati had wrote a social media post alleging Mayor Ajay Prakash Jaishwal of being unable to bring water supply in Kathariya Municipality and reporter Thakur commented on his post.

Following the post, Mayor Jaiswal called on Prajapati's mobile and spoke abusive to him. Mayor and his supporters also attacked reporter Thakur after meeting in a school. Reporter Thakur was injured in the attack.

Journalists had demanded punishment to the Mayor after the incident.

Death Threat

Editor at Pradeshtimesdainik.com Ram Pukar Yadav received death threat over a news story on July 19 in Siraha.

According to editor Yadav, the news published on the same day, highlighted irregularities in payments made at the end of fiscal year at Bishnupur Rural Municipality in Siraha. The news quoted complaints from municipality's staff and clients that payments for completed projects were being withheld while those for incomplete projects were being released.

Following this, a person calling himself Lal Bihari Yadav, a construction entrepreneur, called journalist Yadav at around 9:30 pm and verbally abused him. "He told me he was Lal



Bihari Yadav and lived in the border area. He shouted at me and asked whether I was trying to be over smart by publishing such news", journalist Yadav shared. He added that a political cadre Santosh Yadav and a local Pawan Yadav also threatened the journalist of 'wiping out his existence'.

On July 20, journalist Yadav registered a complaint at District Police Office, Siraha. Talking to Freedom Forum on July 22, journalist Yadav informed the police were searching for the absconding contractor and his friends.

Misbehavior

A. Journalist Manoj Banaita Yadav from Siraha was abused via social media for sharing a video post on June 30.

Journalist Yadav associated with Dmkhabar.com had shared a video of press conference

organized by the Deputy Mayor Ram Chalitah Mahato of Siraha justifying allegations upon him. After publishing the video on the social media, CPN UML local level leader Raj Kumar Sah wrote an abusive post targeting journalist Yadav on July 1.

Following the incident, Yadav registered an application, demanding action against Sah at District Police Office Siraha on July 3. The fellow journalists also supported Yadav in his statement. Then, both the parties were summoned at the police station on July 6. "During the meeting, leaders committed that they would apologize to the journalist through social media but I have not received any response yet", said journalist Yadav to FF.

B. A group of journalists was misbehaved with while reporting in Parsa.

According to journalist Jiya Lal Sah from Parsa, six journalists—Raju Baitha (yatradaily.com), Santosh Kumar Kushwaha (racekhabar.com), Arohan Sah and Rakesh Kumar Sah (choicexkhabar.com), Arjun Chaudhary (Sagarmatha Television), and Anand Patel (prateekdainik.com)—were mistreated by a public health officer during their coverage of a program organized by the District Health Office on July 7.

Health Officer Jay Mod Thakur verbally abused the journalists and even attempted to attack them, as reported by Sah. Police persons intervened and controlled the situation. Following the incident, the journalists lodged a complaint at the District Administration Office, demanding Thakur's arrest. He was arrested the same day. On July 8, Health Officer Thakur issued an apology to the journalists and both the parties mutually agreed to close the case.

Bagmati Province

Threat

A. An executive editor at Sidhakura.com, Nabin Dhungana, received life threatening messages over his reporting on September 25.

On September 10 and 23, Sidhakura.com published two video reports on its web portal and Facebook page about bundles of currencies burnt in a fire at the residence of Former Prime Minister and Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba during Gen Z protest.

"On September 25, a person with profile name 'Sanu bhai' sent messages to the online's official Facebook page asking my contact number and alleged that the news was fake and created using artificial intelligence. He further warned that if the news was not deleted or stated 'fake', he would kill me within two days", shared editor Dhungana with Freedom Forum. He added that the person also sent six threatening voice messages stating that he would burn the media office with diesel and kill the journalist.

According to Dhungana, the profile belongs to a person from Kailali, Sudurpaschim Province who is a supporter of the leader. He has informed the Cyber bureau of Police and Valley

Police Office about the threats and the person's identity.

B. An executive editor at Nepalestimes.com, Tekman Shakya, received threat of attack on September 19 over his reporting.

Editor Shakya told Freedom Forum that he received multiple threats from political leader Mahesh Basnet and his supporters after publishing an interview with a woman, an alleged victim seeking justice over a case involving leader Basnet on September 18.

"On September 19, first a person identifying himself as a well-wisher of Basnet called me, used abusive language and threatened to assault me wherever they find me. A few hours later, leader Basnet himself called and asked me to interview him in a threatening tone. He also said that he has been watching me," Shakya shared.

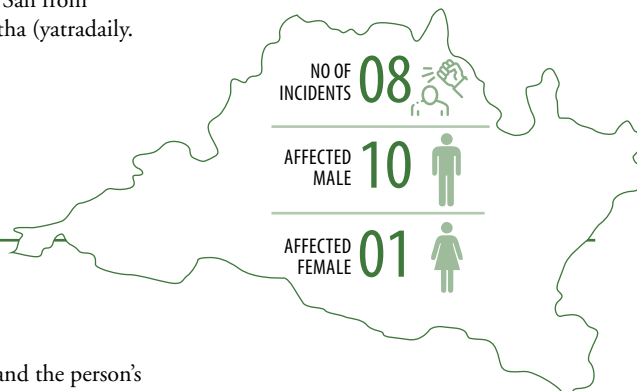
Editor Shakya has shared their recorded conversation on his social media page. "Later in the evening, Basnet called me again but I did not answer. He then sent me a message: Be ready to record many calls, stay safe, stay

happy, don't get into any accidents. Since then, I have been ignoring calls from unknown numbers," Shakya said.

He further informed that he had informed the local police and was preparing to lodge a complaint at the Valley Police Office, Kathmandu. He also requested for his safety through social media.

C. A political leader issued a threat to a journalist and media for reporting news critical of her on July 15.

Chairperson of the Nagrik Unmukti Party, Ranjita Shrestha Chaudhary, released a statement on the party's official letterhead, stating the news published by the online portal Sidhakura.com as baseless and misleading. The statement further claimed that the journalist deliberately published the news to defame Shrestha and her party.



The letter also warned that if the media did not stop reporting on her, Chaudhary would seek legal action.

The news about Chaudhary's involvement in a bribery case was published on the portal with a byline of journalist Yubaraj Kandel on July 13. Since July 11, the media has been consistently following news related to the bribery case involving then Minister for General Administration Raj Kumar Gupta. However following news publication, Minister Gupta resigned from his position on July 15.

D. Managing editor at Aarthiknews.com, Indra Baniya, received threats of assault for covering a news report on August 15. The portal is operated from Kathmandu, the federal capital in Bagmati Province.

Editor Baniya shared with Freedom Forum that the news article, published on August 14 under the headline "Dozens of staff appointed at National Trauma Center after financial dealings; Health Minister silent on the complaints filed against the Chief," exposed irregularities in staff recruitment and equipment procurement at the National Trauma Center, Kathmandu. The story was based on complaints lodged by victim employees at the Prime Minister's Office, Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority, National Vigilance Center, Department of Money Laundering Investigation, and the Ministry of Health, demanding action against Chief Medical Superintendent.

Following the publication, a woman identifying herself as a staff member of the center called Baniya and threatened to break his hands and legs and even kill him. According to Baniya, she further said that she could "do anything" because she came from the district of a leading political party's leader. Similarly, Health Assistant at the center, Upendra Dharmi, also threatened Baniya by phone.

"Later, I informed the District Administration Office, Kathmandu, and the Police Circle, Singhadurbar on the threat issued to me," Baniya informed.

On August 17, the parties reached a reconciliation during a discussion facilitated at the police office following the complaint.

E. A news coordinator at <https://mulpatra.com/>, Ramesh Bharati, has been receiving multiple threats for publishing news since July 6.

Talking to Freedom Forum, journalist Bharati shared that news about Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies (NAFEA) President Bhuwan Singh Gurung's alleged involvement in swindling around Rs 2.95 million from two women, whom he had promised to send abroad. The news also quotes victim women's application registered at Kathmandu Valley Crime Investigation Division, Teku dated July 4, demanding action against people to whom they had transferred the money. According to the victims Ashmita Basnet and Ankita Chaudhary's application, those people were associated with the overseas company owned by President Gurung.

After receiving information from Basnet and Chaudhary, news was published in the media on July 6. Following this, NAFEA issued a statement on the same day, signed by General Secretary Mahesh Kumar Basnet stating that the media published a fabricated and baseless news to defame President Gurung. Terai Foreign Employment Agencies Society's First Vice-President Akhtar Hussain threatened the media and journalist Bharati to delete the news or face consequences. Hussain also urged everyone through NAFEA's official Facebook page to start a campaign to unfollow and report the media's social media page to block it.

Journalist Bharati further informed FF that few people also called him and said that they knew every details about his family members, including his eight-months old daughter and asked whether he wanted them to remain safe. "I have been reporting on issues of human trafficking for eight years and I will not stop. I am well aware about my rights as a journalist. But I am concerned about my family's safety", said Bharati.

Attack

Journalists, dozens of protestors were injured and 14 protestors reportedly died during the demonstration called upon by the youths of Generation Z in the different places of Nepal. Gen Z called the youths to wage protest against

corruption and the government's ban on 26 social media platforms on September 8.

On September 4, Nepal Government ordered the telecommunication authority to shut down the social media platforms, after they failed to meet the government's deadline for listing in Nepal. This move induced dissents across various sectors.

The civil society organizations released joint statements stressing the government to take back this decision, journalists staged a protest on September 7, demanding the authorities to revoke the ban. On September 8, thousands of youths participated in the peaceful protest starting from Maitighar area to New Baneshwor area which has parliament premises. They chanted the slogans- "Say no to CORRUPTION. Say Yes to INTEGRITY", "Our future is not for SALE", "Youths against CORRUPTION", "ENOUGH is ENOUGH", "Free Speech, Our Right", "Stop Corruption", etc.

As the protestors reached New Baneshwor area, they forcefully broke the police barricade to enter the restricted area, Federal Parliament premises. Following this, security forces fired rubber bullets and water cannon at the protestors. More than three dozens of the protestors were injured in the incident.

Journalists were also shot by the rubber bullets fired by the security persons. Journalists at Kantipur TV Shyam Shrestha, Nayapatrika's Dipendra Dhungana, Nepal Press's Umesh Karki and Shambhu Dangal were injured while covering the protest.

Journalist Shrestha was shot in the arm, Dhungana received injuries just below the ear and Karki was also injured in his arm. Journalist Dangal was shot on the knees. Journalist Barsha Shah from Deschsanchar.com also received minor injury from stone thrown during the protest.

Following this, curfew orders were imposed in different parts of the country. 🌿

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

Gandaki Province

Ward Chair held over social media post

Nepal police arrested, Achyut Tiwari, a Ward Chairperson from Parbat district over his social media post on September 14. Parbat lies in Gandaki Province of Nepal.

Local journalist Chhabi Tiwari informed Freedom Forum that Chairperson Tiwari had been writing on exploitation of Kali Gandaki River and alleged negligence of security in controlling it. On September 9, Chairperson Tiwari posted a status on his personal Facebook account demanding action to those involved in illegal sand extraction, but the registration

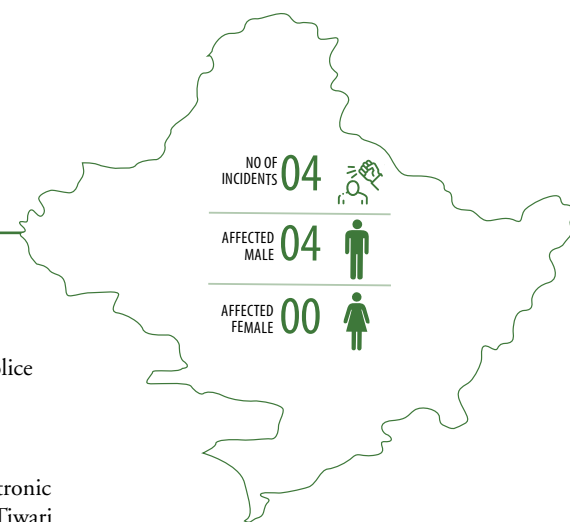
of complaint was denied by the district police office.

Rather, based on his post, police persons arrested him under Section 47 of the Electronic Transaction Act (Cybercrime). Journalist Tiwari further informed that Chairperson Tiwari was arrested for allegedly assassinating the character of senior police officer in the district.

Freedom Forum talked to the Information Officer at the District Police Office (DPO) Parbat, Ram Prasad Sapkota, to confirm on the case. Sapkota said on the day when the agitated protestors resorted to arson and vandalism at public spaces all over Nepal, Chairperson

Tiwari wrote the status inciting further violence in Parbat. So, he was arrested and would be kept in detention at District Police Office till September 16 as per the court's order, Sapkota informed.

Journalist Tiwari added that while the protestors vandalized few political parties' office, they had not attacked District Police Office.



Lumbini Province

Threat

An executive Editor at Geruwakarnalipost.com, Santosh Paudel, received threats on September 20 over his reporting.

According to editor Paudel, leader of a local youth group, Naresh Singh, issued threat by phone regarding news published on September 19 on the media's social media page. The news had brief information on the group's submission of memorandum to the Geruwa Rural Municipality, demanding an end to corruption and irregularities.

Following the update, Singh called editor Paudel and questioned why he did not publish detailed information on their demands and discussion with the Municipality's Chairperson. Singh further accused Paudel of being bribed by the Municipality and warned that he was on their target.

Editor Paudel further informed that the newly formed group's leader Singh threatened him for not publishing news as per their interest.

Obstruction

Lumbini Province correspondent for Gorkhapatra National Daily, Gobinda Sharma, was barred from reporting in District Administration Office (DAO), Banke on September 21.

Journalist Sharma shared with Freedom Forum that he had gone the DAO in the district following the Gen Z protest. He saw Chief District Officer inspecting a torched building beside the office and took a photo. Then, the CDO asked him why he took photo without permission.

In response, journalist Sharma showed his press identity card and introduced himself as a journalist but the CDO ignored and threatened him to delete the photo. He also ordered security officers to take him out of the office premise.

"Then, I had to return back without reporting to avoid further misbehavior", said Sharma.



Karnali Province

Attack Threat

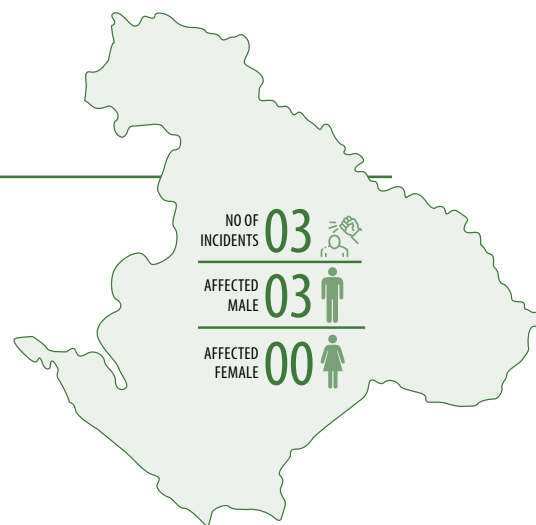
A. A reporter at Radio Paila FM, Bal Kumar Sharma, was threatened while covering an event on August 27.

According to Freedom Forum representative for the province, Laxmi Bhandari, Sharma had livestreamed an event organized at Nepal Bank, Jajarkot premises at around 10 pm on the FM's social media page. He also took few pictures and videos of the event before leaving the venue.

Then the police officers stopped him and threatened to delete the recordings.

Quoting reporter Sharma, Bhandari said that police officers forced him to unlock his mobile to check whether the senior police officers were captured in the recordings. However, after Sharma showed them the recordings he was allowed to leave the place without deleting them.

Following this, on August 28, National Human Rights Commission Province office team met reporter Sharma and facilitated discussion among the reporter and police persons.



Continued from page 1

Although online media and FM radios were operating, atmosphere was still not conducive to the newspaper printing and distribution. Additionally, journalists faced interrogations on their way by the security persons deployed to enforce curfew.

Though physical damage was not reported till date, media persons report through online medium. The print publications resumed after five days of the scourge- from September 14, according to Niraula.

MADHESH PROVINCE

FF representative for the province, Rajan Singh, reported that the protestors threw stones and vandalized the office of the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) Saptari on September 9.

In this province, dozens of newspapers have shut down their publication for at least four days, citing insecurity following curfews, vandalism, and arson. Radio and television outlets also reduced their news bulletins.

Journalist Attacked

In another incident, protestors manhandled Mero Shan TV journalist Rajiv Sah while covering news of arson at the local police station in Sarlahi. He was also forced to delete the video footage he had recorded.

Editor at Apkhabar.com, Anil Kumar Tiwari, was attacked and his laptop destroyed while covering protest in Bara on September 9. As

soon as Tiwari published news about locals attempt to stop the protestors from vandalizing Jitpur Municipality Office, few protestors attacked Tiwari while he was working on his laptop at a café.

BAGMATI PROVINCE

Kathmandu

The agitated people vandalized and set on fire buildings of national media outlets.

Violent mob vandalized and set on fire the offices of the Public Service Broadcasting (Nepal Television and Radio Nepal) inside Singh Durbar complex, Kantipur Television, Radio Kantipur, Annapurna Media Network and Thaha Sanchar.

The mob after setting fire on Singha Durbar (central administration complex of Nepal government) approached Nepal Television office and vandalized the vehicles, equipment and offices of the media. However, journalists at the media were able to rescue the media house from major attack and arson. The broadcast was not interrupted.

Journalist at Ekantipur.com, Durga Dulal, told Freedom Forum that Kantipur print and online teams were working from home in view of violent situation. Though no human casualties are recorded at the publications house in Thapathali, entire news system collapsed. "We are reporting through the social media page (@ekantipur) of the media", informed journalist Dulal on September 9.

But situation was more tense in the television office located at Tinkune.

News Producer at Kantipur TV Pushpa KC shared with FF, "We were in the newsroom, broadcasting live the protest all over Nepal. Deputy News Chief Rupesh Shrestha stepped outside the studio and Chief Editor Vijay Paudel was about to go on air. Meanwhile, we noticed protestors vandalizing the office. We were panicked as there was no way out."

"However, News Chief Shrestha broke the glass door of the studio and we were able to get out of the building. As we came out, one building was already burning, vehicles parked outside were blazing. Protestors were pelting stones at the building. We were able to reach home safely. Few colleagues were injured. But, my mind is in a state of void", journalist KC wrote in her social media post after September 9.

"Television broadcast is also completely halted after the incident. All the infrastructures are destroyed", KC said. The Kantipur Television, however, resumed its broadcast on September 12 from the temporary studio made in front of the burned building.

FF also talked to Ram Kala Khadka, News Coordinator at the Annapurna Post daily. Khadka said in a panicked voice that the protestors suddenly started shouting all the people inside the office to go outside while they were working. All the staffs ran out of the office and then, they set the building on fire.

"Though we were able to save ourselves, the

infrastructures have burnt down. However, we continued to report through the online portal and print publication”, Khadka said. She further shared that after locals' interventions, newsrooms and offices were less damaged except that of the Annapurna Express. The Annapurna Express office is totally damaged due to the attack, so, our colleagues are working from the Annapurna Post's office.

Other television channels- Avenues, AP1, Prime TV, News Nepal, Himalaya, ABC and Space 4K had displayed notice on their respective channels, stating that the service of channels were disrupted from the broadcaster's side and that the channels would resume soon. All these channels had broadcasted the protests live.

The disruption lasted for at least 24 hours. Similarly, vehicles of News24 and Prime TV were torched and reporting devices seized.

Journalists attacked

Four journalists were injured by the rubber bullets fired by the security persons to tame the protest in front of the Federal Parliament building at New Baneshwor on September 8. Injured were Shyam Shrestha from Kantipur TV, Dipendra Dhungana from Nayapatrika, Umesh Karki from Nepal Press, and Shambhu Dangal from Nayapost.com.

Journalist Shrestha was shot in the arm, Dhungana received injuries just below the ear and Karki was in his arm. Shrestha and Karki received treatment at the Civil Service Hospital near New Baneshwor and continued reporting after being discharged on September 9. Journalist Dhungana was admitted at the Patan Hospital following the attack. He was discharged on September 15.

Talking to Freedom Forum, journalist Dhungana shared that the gunshot seemed to be targeted towards us as we were only four or five journalists in the place when I and journalist Karki were injured. There were no protestors there. "Even after being discharged, I am unable to work for few more days as I am still under medication. The incident has severely impacted me. "It may have a long term effect on my health and work. Hence, I urge the concerned authority to investigate the attack and ensure justice to those who were killed and injured in these attacks," he mentioned.

Journalist Dangal received injury due to gunshot in leg and is undergoing treatment at the National Trauma Center. "I was shot by metal bullets fired by the police while recording video of the mob entering Federal Parliament. I have undergone two surgeries. It has already been 12 days since I was admitted to the hospital. I don't know how many more days I will have to stay here", he said.

On the same day, a multimedia journalist at Deshsanchar.com Barsha Shah was hit in her stomach by the stones while covering protest. "I don't know whether I was hit by stones thrown by police person or protestors, but the situation was quite scary", she shared.

Senior journalist at Nepal Television, Arati Chataut, also faced abuses and threats while trying to protect the media office from protestors' rage.

Chitwan

FF representative from the province, Ram Mani Dahal informed that security persons briefly detained Hiralal Acharya, journalist at Chitwanaaja.com, while reporting protest. They also forced him to delete the recordings and let him go.

Director at Kalika FM Chitwan, Dipak Dhungel, was injured by stones hit during the protest. Protestors vandalized and torched offices of Kalika FM, Chure Sandesh weekly and Safalkhabar.com in Chitwan. They also vandalized and set fire on residences of journalists Suresh Chandra Adhikari and Santosh Deuja.

Kapurbot.com's journalist Deuja reported to Freedom Forum that on September 9, a group of people carrying weapons entered his house and vandalized his personal property and set on fire the whole property. He has claimed that the property worth around Rs. 3.3 million was destroyed in the attack. "My house was my lifetime-earned property and seeing it turning into wreckage is painful. However, I was able to save my media office from further attack. I had to hide for two days to save myself and my family, as the mob specifically targeted me and my properties", Deuja told FF.

Journalist at Safalkhabar.com, Adhikari, informed that around 20 to 25 people stormed into his house and media house office, vandalized furniture, reporting equipment and looted the properties. After the incident, print publication and TV broadcast are disrupted while online news is in operation.

This has caused mental distress among the journalists. The journalists have demanded proper investigation to book the attackers and ensure compensation.

GANDAKI PROVINCE

Journalists' vehicles and reporting equipment were seized and vandalized in Kaski on September 9. Freedom Forum's provincial representative, Rajan Pokhrel, reported that motorcycles belonging to Radio Dhorbarahi and its Station Manager, Ashok Bishwakarma, were vandalized while covering the protest in Kaski. Agitated protestors also pelted stones at the office of Radio Dhorbarahi, causing disruption in its operation for around eight hours. They also seized the camera of Kendrabhag.com's Chief Editor, Govinda Subedi, and damaged the camera. The loss is approximately Rs. 200 thousand, claims Subedi.

Setimadi daily's publisher Dambar Adhikari also faced abuse and was manhandled while covering news.

Madiseti FM's technician Suman Shrestha's vehicle worth was also vandalized. Bhanjyang daily's office was also vandalized. Damage to the vehicles worth Rs. 40000, according to Pokhrel.



Journalist Govinda Subedi's camera damaged by protestors

LUMBINI PROVINCE

Although there were no major attacks on media in the province, print outlets stopped their publication for at least two days, according to representative for the province Sudeep Gautam.

According to the FNJ Province Chief Shukra Rishi Chaulagain, protestors vandalized office of Radio Jagaran in Butwal and journalist from Nepathya Media Niraj Singh's camera was destroyed in the arson at the Kohalpur Municipality, Banke. In a separate incident, journalist Shambhu Tharu was manhandled by the protestors. They later, apologized for the attack, stating that they had mistaken him. Tharu had to show his press card to avoid further attack.



Journalists injured during Gen-Z protest in Kathmandu

KARNALI PROVINCE

Representative for the province, Laxmi Bhandari, said, "No damage to media outlets was reported in Karnali Province. Similarly, there were no attacks or threats against journalist in the province." However, journalists shared that they faced minor problems during news collection due to prohibitory order and insecure atmosphere.

SUDURPASCHIM PROVINCE

Min Bam from the province reported that the protestors attacked Lokdarpan FM in Darchula. According to Station Manager Lokendra Joshi, documents and furniture in the office were destroyed in the attack. Sagarmatha Television's journalist Dipendra Bhatt's motorcycle was destroyed in the arson in Kailali.

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS MANHANDLED

In addition to these incidents of attack on media and vandalism, even the foreign media persons

faced intimidation while making news on the protest in Kathmandu. On September 9, Sikta Deo, a reporter for NDTV, and her colleague Pooja, TV9's Bharatvarsh Bipin Chaubey were manhandled by those in the protest. On September 10, Republic TV journalist Raghawendra Pande was misbehaved, while, on September 11, News 18 India's Anand Tiwari and CNN News 18's Sidhant Mishra faced hostility while reporting in the federal capital, Kathmandu.

OBSERVATION

These are among the attacks reported through various sources. However, there may be more incidents that are yet to be reported.

Karnali Province did not witness any threat and attack. Despite these challenges, it is worth noting that few media have resumed their operation amid limited facilities. Freedom Forum acknowledges the resilience of Nepali media outlets for standing strong at this time of crisis.

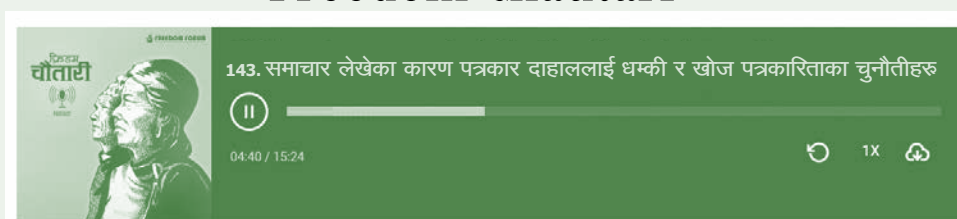
FF continuously observed the adverse situation Nepal faced that posed severe difficulty to

journalists and media houses as well. Updates were made on it, condemning the attacks upon media. Media and journalists have always been targeted during the protests and demonstrations though they are waged for human rights, good governance, justice, equality. Such acts against the media, that is a major source of information to the public, is deplorable. Attack on media is attack on democracy.

Despite having interim government in place, getting mandate to hold the election to the House of Representatives on March 5, 2026, thereby preventing further deterioration of the security, and normalcy returning gradually, the journalists are yet to rid of the fear as is the case to the Nepali social psyche.

Worrying that with the dissolution of the lower house of federal parliament, House of Representatives, around 30 bills under consideration have become inactive. The Media Council Bill and the Information Technology and Cybersecurity Bill have become defunct. 🌱

Listen to Freedom Forum Podcast - Freedom Chautari



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

FF in Int'l Forum

Regional SWIFT network meeting

Freedom Forum participated in the regional meeting of the SWIFT in Lombok, Indonesia from August 27-29, 2025. SWIFT is a regional alliance of media professionals that supports journalists in distress across Asia. The alliance comprises members from various civil society organizations from the region who gather annually to share updates on the status of freedom of expression in their countries and to develop collective action plan for next year.

Executive Chief Taranath Dahal and Program Coordinator and Media Monitoring Officer Nanu Maiya Khadka from Freedom Forum attended the meeting.

On the first day, Ruth Kronenberg, Executive Director at Free Press Unlimited (FPU) delivered welcome remarks. Then, all the participants shared experiences and challenges faced in

their respective contexts. They noted that press freedom remains under threat in many countries with unsafe digital spaces. Women journalists continue to experience harassment online. Similarly, laws and policies in several countries have been used to criminalize online expression, leading to self-censorship and growing professional insecurity among journalists.

Representatives from media organizations also shared how they were working in these challenging environments. Their works range from research and documentation to policy advocacy and direct support for journalists in distress.

On the second day, Akriti Saraswat, Project Officer–Safety at FPU, shared a presentation on the vetting process for journalist support cases at FPU. She explained the criteria and

procedures FPU follows when reviewing requests for assistance.

Following that, Kronenberg also explored on funding opportunities for media persons and organizations during global crisis. She suggested searching for private funding sources, including cryptocurrency and small-scale "pocket funding" and building coalition with like-minded organizations to strengthen networks.

The discussion also dwelt on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its growing threats to journalists. In this session, participants highlighted gendered online attacks, morphed images that contribute to trust erosion in journalism.

The session emphasized the need for guidelines on the ethical use of AI, noting that although AI poses risks, it can also strengthen information integrity if used responsibly.

In the next presentation by Fransisca Susanti from PPMN and Margaret from Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) from Indonesia introduced Indonesia Leaks, an initiative that protect whistleblowers and promote public interest reporting. They also discussed the Investigative Journalists Club, a collaborative journalism initiative for enhanced protection, as well as security guidelines for whistleblowers. However, they noted that commitment from media organizations toward such safety mechanisms remains limited.

In the final session, participants discussed the way forward, and future priorities for the SWIFT network. The members marked importance of making the network independent and active through online engagements in case offline meetings are not feasible. They were for sharing achievements of the network among donors and stakeholders and create a collective data bank to retain publications and resources of member organizations in a shared digital space. 🌱



CSOs PFM Working Group

Meets to whet transparency bid

The Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) Public Financial Management (PFM) Working Group held its inaugural meeting virtually via Zoom on September 14, drawing 11 participants from key stakeholders in governance and transparency sectors.

Amidst a backdrop of recent political turbulence, the session focused on navigating emerging challenges in fiscal accountability and citizen engagement in Nepal's evolving landscape.

Freedom Forum's Executive Chief Taranath Dahal opened discussions by underscoring the seismic shifts following the Gen Z-led protests. He emphasized the heightened risks and opportunities in the post-protest era, urging proactive strategies to safeguard transparency during this transitional phase.

Binod Bhattari of Transparency International Nepal warned that ensuring transparency and accountability could prove even more arduous in the current flux, potentially amplifying risks to budget oversight.

Another participant, Naresh Shrestha of NACASUD, advocated for immediate action to bolster effective budget implementation

Civil society must recalibrate its approaches to align with this youth-driven momentum, fostering innovative advocacy in Nepal's nascent transition period.

at the local municipal level, a critical step for grassroots fiscal health.

Likewise, Dipak Shrestha of Samuhik Abhiyan called for enhanced citizen monitoring in audit processes, particularly for provincial and local budgets, while highlighting the role of youth awareness campaigns in pressuring authorities to curb corruption.

Similarly, Hari Upadhyaya of Sahakarmi Samaj spotlighted the relevance of the International Budget Partnership (IBP) case study, stressing its value in empowering communities to actively engage with PFM governance issues.

Broader points of discussion included amplifying audit participation, universalizing budget execution across municipalities, and looking forward to revising the national PFM strategy.

The meeting features significantly the Gen Z movement of anti-corruption and for transparency, intensified by their social media ban and street demonstrations.

Speakers and all members of the working group agreed that civil society must recalibrate its approaches to align with this youth-driven momentum, fostering innovative advocacy in Nepal's nascent transition period.

The meeting concluded on an optimistic note, with plans for a follow-up session in the coming weeks to build on these deliberations. As Nepal grapples with post-protest reforms, the CSOs PFM Working Group emerges as a vital forum for collaborative reform, they underlined.

May this festivals of 2082 BS inspire everyone to create atmosphere for unobstructed exercise of human rights including freedom of expression and information to pave way to better democracy.

Happy Dashain, Tihar and Chhath 2082

Freedom Forum

Nepalese CSOs Advocate for Transparent, Accountable Budgeting

A three-day training titled “Collaborating for Open and Accountable Budgeting,” organized by the International Budget Partnership (IBP) in collaboration with Freedom Forum, concluded in Kathmandu on July 9, 2025. The event gathered representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs), media, and experts to discuss critical aspects of public finance management (PFM), focusing significantly on budget implementation, transparency and accountability in Nepal. The training underscored the need for collective action to ensure that public budgets serve citizens effectively and contribute to the country’s development.

Participants and Resource Persons

Total 21 participants- 13 CSOs including 4 freelancers in PFM and Budget in Nepal from

across the country were present in the training workshop. CSOs from the national level as well as from the local level were present in the second round of the training workshop that focused on budget implementation of the Budget cycle. The first lot of the training was held in 2022.

Alexandre Ciconello Gananca, Senior Program Coordinator; Suad Hasan, Program Officer from IBP, and Taranath Dahal, Executive Chief of Freedom Forum, were the resource persons for the training workshop.

Day 1: Understanding Budget Implementation Challenges

The first day of the training dwelt on the complexities of budget implementation in Nepal. Participants explored the reasons behind deviations in actual expenditure from the approved budgets, identification of systemic issues such as inefficiencies in planning,

weak oversight mechanisms, and procedural bottlenecks. Key actors in the budget execution process, including government agencies, were identified to understand their roles and responsibilities. The session also emphasized the importance of government acts, rules, regulations, and procedural documents as essential tools for CSOs and media to monitor budget execution effectively. Participants were introduced to the legal and procedural frameworks that govern public finance, equipping them with the knowledge to hold authorities accountable.

Day 2: Enhancing Budget Credibility and Citizen Oversight

The second day zeroed in on the concept of budget credibility, which refers to the alignment of budgeted plans with actual expenditures and outcomes. Discussions highlighted the sources, availability, and accessibility of budget implementation data, which are often limited or difficult to access by the citizens and CSOs. Trainers introduced various approaches to analyzing budget data, including both budgetary and non-budgetary information found in public documents. Global success stories like that from Ghana, Nigeria and Argentina in budget oversight were shared to inspire participants, showcasing how CSOs worldwide have leveraged data to promote accountability.

A significant focus was placed on social accountability tools, such as citizen-generated data and performance audits, to strengthen oversight of public spending. The role of Access to Information (ATI) was highlighted as a cornerstone for promoting transparency, accountability and good governance.

Day 3: Collective Action for Improved Budget Governance

The final day underlined the urgency of collective initiatives to address challenges in budget implementation. Participants discussed strategies for engaging key stakeholders, including government agencies, parliamentary



Former Deputy Auditor General Ramu Dotel

committees and local communities. The session emphasized identifying responsible actors and fostering effective collaboration to improve budget execution.

Former Deputy Auditor General Ramu Prasad Dotel emphasized the importance of performance audits in enabling citizen oversight, noting that these audits provide critical insights into the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending. He urged CSOs to collaborate with Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) like the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) Nepal to enhance accountability.

Highlighting with a presentation titled “Strengthening Civil Society Oversight in Budget Execution by Leveraging Work of SAI and Audit Findings”, Mr Dotel stressed that CSOs can play a pivotal role by directly engaging with SAIs or using their findings to ensure public spending aligns with citizens’ needs.

Mr. Dotel also pointed out a critical gap in Nepal’s budget oversight: the lack of procurement monitoring. He recommended that SAIs map CSOs, build their capacity, and engage them in auditing processes to strengthen oversight. The session underscored the importance of leveraging audit findings to hold public agencies accountable and ensure that public funds are used effectively.

Key Outcomes and Commitments

The training secured a series of commitments from participants to promote transparent and accountable budgeting in Nepal. A significant outcome was the formation of a ‘CSO Working Group for Public Finance Management,’ aimed at fostering sustained collaboration among CSOs post-workshop. The group will focus on advocating for open access to budget data and engaging with key institutions to strengthen oversight.

Participants committed to collaborating with the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) Nepal to enhance citizen participation in performance audits and audit accountability. They also agreed to advocate with the Financial Comptroller General Office (FCGO) for improved access to budget data through platforms like SUTRA, which provides financial management information. Additionally, CSOs pledged to lobby for greater access to Public



Open Budget Researcher Subash Dahal sharing his learning experiences from his visit to Indonesia

Accounts Committee (PAC) meetings and to monitor the implementation of OAG audit recommendations.

Another key commitment was to advocate for the establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Office to enhance lawmakers’ capacity to oversee budgetary processes effectively. Participants recognized that such an office would empower parliamentarians to make informed decisions on public finance, ultimately strengthening democratic governance. At the subnational level, CSOs vowed to remain vigilant in monitoring public service delivery and budget implementation to ensure accountability at provincial and local levels.

Role of CSOs and Media in Budget Oversight, Fiscal Transparency

CSOs representatives emphasized that budgets are not merely government documents but have a direct impact on citizens’ lives. They argued that effective budget execution requires informed analysis and oversight by civil society and media to ensure transparency and accountability. Collaboration among CSOs, media, and oversight institutions was seen as critical to fostering better governance of public funds.

Alexandre Ciconello, a senior program officer at IBP, one of the trainer for program, praised the strength of Nepal’s CSOs in budget monitoring at federal, provincial and local levels. However, he noted persistent gaps

in citizens’ access to information on budget implementation and policy performance. He highlighted Nepal’s fiscal decentralization as a significant opportunity for enhancing citizen participation in budgeting at the local level. Ciconello also commended innovative approaches by institutions like the OAG, particularly in promoting social accountability through citizen participation in audits.

Taranath Dahal, Chief Executive of Freedom Forum and a good governance expert, shared a success story of how the Right to Information (RTI) was used to expose VAT evasion, leading to substantial revenue collection for the state. He stressed the importance of CSOs working collectively to ensure the wise use of public funds. Dahal also advocated for the establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Office to build lawmakers’ capacity on budgetary issues, suggesting that CSOs could play a pivotal role in lobbying for this initiative.

Broader Implications for Nepal’s Public Finance

The training highlighted the urgency of raising awareness among Nepali citizens about public budgets at all tiers of government. Informed advocacy supported by access to reliable budget data was seen as essential for ensuring the right use of public spending. Participants reviewed international best practices in budget oversight, drawing inspiration from countries where CSOs have successfully collaborated with governments to improve transparency and accountability.

The event also underscored the role of fiscal decentralization in Nepal, which has devolved

significant budgetary powers to provincial and local governments. This shift presents both opportunities and challenges for CSOs, as they must now monitor budget implementation across multiple tiers of government.

The training equipped participants with the tools and knowledge to navigate these complexities, including how to use social accountability mechanisms and citizen-generated data to strengthen budget credibility.

Support from the European Commission

The training was supported by the European Commission, which was acknowledged for its commitment to promoting transparent and accountable governance in Nepal.

The partnership between IBP, Freedom Forum, and the European Commission reflects a shared vision of empowering citizens and CSOs to play an active role in public finance management.

Looking Ahead

The formation of the CSO Working Group for Public Finance Management marks a significant step toward sustained collaboration in Nepal's budget oversight landscape.

By advocating for open access to budget data, engaging with oversight institutions, and monitoring public service delivery, CSOs aim to bridge gaps in citizen engagement and ensure that public finance supports result-oriented, accountable, and transparent governance.

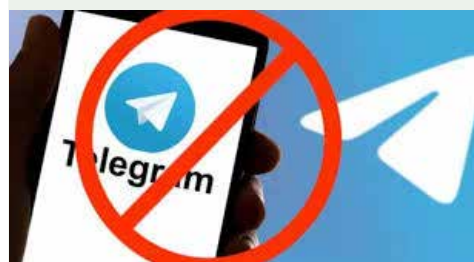
The training concluded with a renewed sense of purpose among participants, who left equipped with practical tools, strategies, and a collective commitment to improving Nepal's public finance system.

As CSOs and media continue to collaborate with institutions like the OAG and FCGO, their efforts are expected to contribute to a more transparent and accountable budgeting process, ultimately benefiting Nepali citizens and strengthening the country's democratic framework. 🌱



Program Officer from IBP Suad Hasan facilitating the sessions

Govt bans Telegram App reasoning criminal activities



The government banned the Telegram App. The Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) issued a directive to all telecom and internet service providers to immediately restrict access to Telegram on July 18. The National Coordination Committee for the Prevention of Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorist Activities under the Office of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers issued a notice on July 17 directing Ministry of Communications and Information Technology to ban the social messaging application.

The committee cited the application's increasing use in online fraud, money laundering, and other serious cybercrimes as primary reasons for the ban.

Telegram is a messaging App featuring large group chats and broadcast channels.

According to media reports, Central Investigation Bureau of Nepal Police also raised concern that regulation of the application was challenging and the application continued to be a platform for the criminal activities for instance fake job offers, illegal drug trade, fraudulent money transfers, etc.

Earlier, a video messaging application TikTok was also banned in Nepal in November 2023 and later resumed nine months on August 2024; when the application's company agreed with the government's conditions to follow necessary regulatory provisions.

Talking to Freedom Forum, Ministry Spokesperson Gajendra Thakur also confirmed the App ban. 🌱

SWIFT network statement on Violence against journalists in Nepal

The SWIFT network, a regional alliance of media professionals supporting journalists in distress throughout Asia, are deeply alarmed by the violence used against journalists during protests in Nepal. Four members of the press were injured amid a deadly crackdown on demonstrators opposing Nepal's recent social media ban.

At least 19 people were killed and over 100 injured during the clashes so far, after police used live ammunition, rubber bullets, water cannons, and tear gas against crowds. Among those injured were Kantipur TV journalist Shyam Shrestha, Naya Patrika Daily reporter Dipendra Dhungana, Nepal Press journalist Umesh Karki, and independent journalist Shambhu Dungal. Journalists were struck by rubber bullets while carrying out their professional duty to report from the scene.

SWIFT condemns, in the strongest possible terms, violence against journalists and the excessive use of force by security forces. Press workers must be able to cover public demonstrations without fear of harassment, violence, or reprisal. We also join Freedom Forum in expressing deep concern over several targeted attacks on media houses in Nepal.

SWIFT in solidarity with our colleagues in the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) and the Nepal Press Union (NPU), in condemning violence used against reporters covering demonstrations and calling on the Nepali government to launch a swift, independent investigation into the deadly crackdown.

The government's abrupt banning of 26 social media platforms was a severe restriction

on the public's right to information and expression, and part of a worrying pattern of digital censorship. Even though the ban has already been reversed, the restrictions on rallies and mass gatherings remain in place. The attempted introduction of these bans are part of a worrying pattern of digital censorship and media restrictions in Nepal.

SWIFT urges the Nepali authorities to ensure that no future measures are taken that undermine the essential work of journalists or limit citizens' rights to peaceful assembly and free expression.

Journalists must be protected, not punished, for doing their jobs. 🌱

DFC condemns Suppression of Gen Z protest

Digital Freedom Coalition (DFC) vehemently condemned the worrying situation caused by the barbaric suppression of the demonstration organized at a call of new generation (GenZ) for the digital rights, and transparent and accountable governance with elimination of corruption. The Coalition concludes that the day (September 8, 2025) is the BLACK DAY in modern democracy.

The Coalition members pay heartfelt tribute to those who got martyrdom in the barbaric suppression of the government during the Gen Z demonstration. We express condolences to the bereaved family members of the martyrs. The current government is culpable for such cruelty.

The 22 Coalition members had continued a close watch with repeated requests to the government to lift the ban on social media, but the government grossly ignored the request. On September 4, the Coalition members had drawn government's attention on it.

Government's gross indifference to the unfolding situation and to our demand resulted into such horrible acts. The Prime Minister, the Minister for Communications and Information Technology, and the Home Minister, must own up this situation and step down from the posts. Similarly, we demand action against the government officials who had direct role to suppress the protest resulting in to the dozens of deaths.

Also, the Coalition demands immediate formation of a judicial probe committee for fair investigation into the incident.

Coalition Member Organizations

Freedom Forum Nepal
Media Action Nepal
Digital Media Foundation
Antenna Foundation Nepal
Internet Governance Institute
Forum for Digital Equality
Youth IGF Nepal
Internet Society Nepal Chapter
Educating Nepal
Women's Group for Disability Rights
Media Lawyers Association. 🌱

FF joins CSO protest against arbitrary blockage of Social media platforms

Freedom Forum joined protest drive of 22 civil society organizations (CSOs) against Nepal Government's arbitrary blockage of social media platforms. The organizations, advocating for freedom of expression and digital rights in Nepal, issued a joint statement on September 4 arguing that this decision of the government is purely administrative and is against the ongoing parliamentary process on the Social Media Bill, and citizen's rights and freedoms.

This is a direct attack on constitution's fundamental rights and international democratic principles, it said adding that the ban on social platforms strictly violates rights guaranteed by the Nepal's constitution- freedom of expression, press freedom, right to information, right to association, right to property and right to live with dignity.

"Social media platforms are the important spaces for citizens to express their opinions, communicate with each other, participate in public discourse and hold the government accountable. This restriction is not only the government's intent to curb free flow of information and press freedom but also to suppress citizen's access to information," statement argued.

Moreover, the ban on social media does not only control the medium, it also directly affects opportunity for citizen's engagement in democratic discourse, thereby weakening good governance. This also obstructs communication and social relationships, limits opportunities for entrepreneurship and

innovation and halts constructive and critical dialogues in the society, claims the statement.

The CSOs call for rational and balanced approach to regulate social media platforms, citing the ban would have a long-term impact on overall democratic values, economic opportunities, social stability and citizens' rights. According to them, Nepal Government misinterpreted the Supreme Court order to impose a ban on the platforms. The court had issued order in the name of government to formulate necessary laws in order to regulate social media platforms on August 18.

While the drafted bill for regulation of Social Media Platforms is under consideration at the parliament as per the court's order, the Ministry took an arbitrary decision with an intent to curb citizen's freedom of expression and right to information, which is against the rule of law and democratic values. The government's way of manipulating court's order to justify its arbitrary decision raise serious concerns, reads the statement.

Through the joint statement, the CSOs demand:

1. Immediate withdrawal of the arbitrary administrative decision to ban the social media platforms without any legitimate basis,
2. Ensure regulation of social media platforms on the basis of law approved by the parliament in line with constitutionally guaranteed rights to free expression, communication, information, association and international standards for human rights.

3. Ensure meaningful participation of the concerned stakeholders in the ongoing parliamentary process of the laws related to regulation of social media.

The organizations in protest are- Digital Freedom Coalition, Internet Governance Institute, Digital Rights Nepal, Freedom Forum Nepal, Media Action Nepal, Internet Society Nepal Chapter, Antenna Foundation Nepal, Digital Media Foundation, Educating Nepal, Youth IGF Nepal, Forum for Digital Equality, Women's Group for Disability Rights, Media Lawyers Association, Center for Media Research, Online TV Journalists Association, Nepal Internet Foundation, Child SafeNet, Digital Rights Action Group, Information and Human Rights Investigation Center, RTI Federation Nepal, Media Advocacy Group and Information Security Response Team.

The National Human Rights Commission has also urged the government to review its decision to ban the social media platforms, warning that it violates citizens fundamental rights and international standards for human rights. The commission recommended the government to adopt alternate regulatory measures rather than imposing ban.

Similarly, international organizations including Committee to Protect Journalists, called the Nepal government to revoke the order and restore access to social media platforms, stressing that these are essential tools for exercising press freedom. 🌱

Social media platforms are the important spaces for citizens to express their opinions, communicate with each other, participate in public discourse and hold the government accountable.

Govt shut down two dozen social media, Resumed later

Nepal Government wrote to the Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA) to shut down social media platforms on September 4. The government decided to shut down the social media platforms including Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

The meeting held among officials at Ministry of Communication and Information Technology decided to ban the operation of these platforms citing their failure to get listed in Nepal as per government's ultimatum.

On August 27, the government had issued a seven-day ultimatum to the social media to register in Nepal. According to the notice, each platform must designate a point of contact, a Resident Grievance Handling Officer and a Monitoring officer to ensure compliance with self-regulation.

The seven-day ultimatum expired on September 3.

The notice published on MOCIT's official website states that the decision has been made following the Cabinet decision on August 25. The Cabinet meeting made this decision on the basis of the Supreme Court's order. The order states

that all online and social media platforms must mandatorily be listed for operation in Nepal.

The government had been repeatedly issuing threats to the social media platforms to get listed and registered in Nepal for smooth operation.

This time it officially wrote to the NTA to deactivate the social networks. The notice further states that the ban would be lifted as soon as these platforms will register.

Till date, social media platforms- TikTok, Viber, Nimbuzz, WeTalk and Poppolive have officially registered in Nepal and Telegram and Global Diary were in process of registration.

NTA published a list of 26 platforms which will be blocked following the ministry's directive order.

The platforms are:- Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, X, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Reddit, Discord, Pinterest, Signal, Threads, WeChat, Quora, Tumblr, Clubhouse, Mastodon, Rumble, MeWe, VK, Line, IMO, Zalo, Soul, and Hamro Patro.

According to the Spokesperson for MOCIT Nepal, Gajendra Thakur, two platforms Hamro Patro and X (Twitter) officially contacted the ministry to initiate registration process on September 5.

Freedom Forum was seriously concerned over the action of the government.

FF Executive Chief Taranath Dahal commented, "Social media platforms have become an efficient, instant mode of communication and an open place for democratic discourse.

The government's authoritarian move to ban these platforms is a strict violation of citizen's right to free expression and access to information."

"This decision is not based on any law. Existing laws in Nepal do not require social media platforms or internet applications to be registered", he emphasized.

Later on September 9, the government withdrew the ban following violent protests across the country. 🌿

#KeepItOn: Nepal authorities must reverse Telegram ban, uphold human rights

Date: July 29, 2025

We, the undersigned organizations, and members of the #KeepItOn coalition — a global network of over 345 human rights organizations from 106 countries working to end internet shutdowns — **urgently demand that the Government of Nepal immediately reverse its decision to block messaging platform Telegram across**

the country. Blocking access to essential communication channels is in gross violation of national and international human rights frameworks and must not be normalised.

On July 18, 2025, the Nepal Telecommunications Authority, in a notice on

its official website, instructed service providers to block Telegram, claiming the decision was aimed at combating online fraud and money laundering. The ban risks cutting off millions of people from access to a key communication tool which enables the exercise of fundamental rights, including freedom of expression, access to information, and the right to privacy. The

#KeepItOn coalition finds the government's move to block Telegram entirely as an illegal and disproportionate measure.

Data captured by the **Open Observatory of Network Interference** (OONI) shows the blocking is currently in place. The blanket restriction of critical digital platforms has severe repercussions on various aspects of people's lives, including access to education, healthcare, economic activities, and, in some cases, denying people access to life-saving information. Moreover, our monitoring has shown over and over again that blocking access to essential communications is a deliberate crackdown on dissent and criticism of government policies. Additionally, **evidence** shows that blocking access to vital communication platforms **exacerbates** harm and amplifies the **spread of misinformation and disinformation**.

This is not the first time that authorities in Nepal have restricted access to digital platforms. In 2023, the government blocked TikTok again, citing vague reasons. The normalisation of banning digital platforms in addressing national problems signals a deepening pattern of executive overreach in digital governance. An overly broad Social Media Act Bill is also being considered, which has been **criticised** for its impact on freedom of expression, right to information, and press freedom.

Telegram is used widely across Nepal for daily communication, education, work, advocacy, and community coordination. The sudden, unlawful disruption has severely impacted journalists, human rights defenders, students, small businesses, and others who depend on the platform for essential day-to-day communication. Instead of targeting those allegedly responsible for fraud or misuse, this measure indiscriminately punishes the general public.

The Government of Nepal has not made public any legal orders, evidence, or regulatory framework underpinning this decision. Nor has it provided information on the scope of the restriction, the duration, or the process by which users might seek redress. These actions fall short of Nepal's obligations under its own Constitution, including Articles 17, 19 and 28, which protect freedom of expression, the right to communication, and the right to privacy, as well as under international human rights law including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Nepal is a party. The Supreme Court of Nepal has underscored the sanctity of these rights:

in the landmark case of Baburam Aryal v. Government of Nepal, the Court held that the right to privacy is a fundamental human right, and that personal communications and data are inviolable except in accordance with law.

Telegram has publicly denied claims of non-cooperation and stated that it has responded to legal requests from the Government of Nepal, while actively removing fraudulent content when discovered. The government's decision to ban the platform entirely, without first exhausting cooperative and transparent avenues, raises serious concerns about procedural fairness and accountability.

We urge all telecommunication providers and internet service providers (ISPs) operating in Nepal to adhere to the principles of necessity and proportionality when responding to government orders. They should engage with the government and regulators, where possible, to advocate for less intrusive means of addressing problems, and ensure that users are informed about their rights. Providers should also document any shutdown orders and disclose them publicly (for example, in transparency reports), so that there is a record for accountability and affected users can seek legal remedy if appropriate. Doing so not only aligns with international business standards but will also help preserve the open internet and the long-term business environment in Nepal.

Authorities must stop using platform bans as a default response to complex societal challenges. This blunt tool only causes more harm, deepens the digital divide, and undermines democratic principles. Digital communication platforms must remain open, secure, and accessible for all people in Nepal.

Access Now and members of the #KeepItOn coalition call on the Government of Nepal to:

- Immediately revoke the directive blocking access to Telegram, restore access, and refrain from imposing platform bans in the future;
- Ensure transparency and accountability in all internet governance processes, including publishing any regulatory orders and enabling independent review; and
- Engage in open dialogue with civil society, technical experts, and platform providers to address legitimate concerns in ways that respect human rights.

Signatories

- Access Now
- Afia-Amani Grands-Lacs

- Africa Open Data and Internet Research Foundation (AODIRF)
- African Freedom of Expression Exchange (AFEX)
- Antenna Foundation Nepal (DFC member)
- Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE)
- Center for Media Research – Nepal
- ChildSafe Net, Nepal
- Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA)
- Computech Institute, Senegal
- Conexión Segura y Libre – VE sin Filtro
- Digital Freedom Coalition (DFC)
- Digital Rights Nepal (DRN)
- Digital Media Foundation (DFC member)
- Digital Woman Uganda
- Educating Nepal (DFC member)
- Eurasian Digital Foundation
- Forumvert
- Forum for Digital Equality (DFC member)
- Freedom Forum Nepal (DFC member)
- Innovation for Change (I4C) South Asia
- Internet Governance Institute (DFC member)
- Internet Society Nepal Chapter (Open Internet Protection Society (ex-Russia)
- iWatch Africa
- Kijiji Yeetu
- JCA-NET(Japan)
- Jonction, Senegal
- Life campaign to abolish the death sentence in Kurdistan
- Media Action Nepal (DFC member)
- Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA)
- Media Lawyers Association (DFC member)
- Miaan Group
- Mysansar, Nepal
- OONI (Open Observatory of Network Interference)
- Organization of the Justice Campaign
- Paradigm Initiative (PIN)
- Reclaiming Spaces Initiative
- RKS Global
- RosKomSvoboda
- SMS Without Borders
- VPN Guild
- Women Empower and Mentor All (WEmpower)
- Women's Group for Disability Rights (DFC member)
- Youth IGF Nepal (DFC member)
- YucaByte
- Zaina Foundation. 🌱

Source: <https://www.accessnow.org/press-release/keepiton-nepal-authorities-must-reverse-nationwide-telegram-ban-and-uphold-human-rights/>

CSO urges wider consultation in Draft Public Financial Management Reform Strategy

Freedom Forum and coalition of 13 civil society organizations called for spaces promoting broader citizen participation in the formulation of Nepal's "Public Financial Management Reform Strategy 2025-30," currently being drafted by the government.

In a letter submitted and addressed to the Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, the newly formed "Civil Society Working Group on Public Finance Management" emphasized the need for inclusive consultations to ensure effective governance and financial accountability before finalization and adaptation of National PFM Reform Strategy 2025-30.

The letter, signed by Tara Nath Dahal, Executive Chief of Freedom Forum, highlights the coalition's commitment to advocating for governance reforms and efficient public finance management. The group has requested the Ministry to provide opportunities for civil society to offer feedback on the draft strategy, details of which were included with the letter.

Additionally, the coalition drew attention to the "National Strategy and Action Plan for Citizen Engagement in Public Finance Management in Nepal," prepared by the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) Secretariat. Published and currently available on the PEFA website, the working group strongly request to include the strategy and action plan in the National PFM Reform Strategy.

The PEFA document on Citizen engagement in PFM outlines measures to enhance citizen participation in public finance management across Nepal's three tiers of government in the context of federalism. The coalition noted that despite its positive provisions, the strategy is waiting for approval.

The coalition's appeal underscores the importance of transparency and inclusion in strengthening Nepal's public financial systems. Meanwhile, a significant step toward strengthening public finance management

(PFM) in Nepal was taken with the formation of a "CSOs' Working Group for Public Finance Management" with the conclusion of a three-day training on "Collaborating for Open and Accountable Budgeting." Organized by the International Budget Partnership (IBP) in collaboration with Freedom Forum, the event concluded on July 9, 2025, in Kathmandu. Supported by the European Commission, the training brought together representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs) and media to address challenges in budget implementation and promote transparency and accountability.

A total of 21 members from 13 organizations including freelancers are the part of the working group. The representatives are from Accountability Lab, CAHURAST Nepal, Community Members Interested (COMMITTED) Nepal, Freedom Forum, GoGo Foundation, NACASUD, NEFEJ, Sahakarmi Samaj, Samuhik Abhiyan, The Asia Foundation, Transparency International Nepal and Vijaya Development Resource Centre (VDRC Nepal).

The newly formed CSOs' Working Group aims to foster sustained collaboration among CSOs to ensure effective oversight of public budgets.

Working Group's Commitments

Following the completion of the training, participants have committed to stay engaged post-workshop through collective action by forming a 'CSOs' Working group for Public Finance Management (PFM)'. The Group has outlined several key outcomes and commitments to enhance public finance management (PFM) in Nepal which are in line with its short term course of action.

- Promote active collaboration with the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) Nepal in the field of performance audit as part of Citizen Participation in Audits and promoting audit accountability with follows up and monitoring of audit recommendations.

- Advocate with and bring into the attention of the Financial Comptroller General Office (FCGO) for the need of open and easy access to budget data through their different technology platforms including SUTRA.
- Lobby with Ministry of Finance to incorporate the National Strategy and Action Plan for Citizen Engagement of in Public Financial Management in Nepal in National PFM Strategy.
- Bring into the attention of and lobby with Ministry of Finance the need to have consultation with CSOs including working group before the approval of National Strategy from the Cabinet.
- Advocate and lobby for CSOs' access to Public Accounts Committee (PAC) meetings and deliberations.
- Advocate and lobby for the need of CSOs and parliamentarians' joint work to promote effective audit accountability.
- Bring into the attention and lobby for the establishment of 'Parliamentary Budget Office' for strengthening Parliamentarians' capacity on their budgetary role.
- Working group will actively engage in monitoring public service delivery and remain vigilant of budget implementation at subnational level.
- Working Group will set new agendas at the end of year 2025

The formation of the CSOs' Working Group marks a pivotal moment for Nepal's public finance landscape. By fostering collaboration among CSOs, media and oversight institutions, the group aims to bridge gaps in citizen engagement and promote result-oriented, transparent governance. The commitments made during the training reflect a shared vision of empowering citizens to hold public agencies accountable, ensuring that public funds contribute effectively to Nepal's development. The working group pledged to actively monitor public service delivery and budget implementation at the subnational level. This commitment ensures oversight at provincial and local levels, fostering accountability and effective use of public funds. 🌱

Self disclosure update

Type and Nature of Organization	NGO working for Democracy, Right to Information, Freedom of Expression, Fiscal Transparency and Open Data, Media Policy and Law, Internet Freedom		
Legal Status	Registered at District Administration Office Kathmandu. DAO Registration Number: 127/062/63, SWC Affiliation Number: 18518		
Location	Adarsa Marga, Prasuti Griha Road, Thapathali, Kathmandu		
Staffs and Roles	Taranath Dahal: Executive Chief, coordinates overall organizational and administrative affairs		
	Aruna Adhikari: Finance and Administration Officer, looks after accounting and administrative affairs and performs responsibilities as the Information Officer.		
	Nanu Maiya Khadka: Media Monitoring Officer, responsible for monitoring updates on freedom of expression, media rights and right to information		
	Manju Dahal: Front Desk Assistant, Ganga Kumari Gurung: Office Assistant		
Roster of Consultants/ Researchers	Subash Dahal		
Ongoing Project Information	Project Name	Supporting Agency	Date of start of project
	COAB Initiative (Collaboration for Open and Accountable Budgeting)	International Budget Partnership	21st April 2024
	Open Budget Survey	International Budget Partnership	17th March 2025
Services and Activities	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.		
Responsible Authority	Chairperson: Hari Binod Adhikari, Executive Chief: Tara Nath Dahal		
Decision Making Process	General Assembly: Making policies, rules and regulations of organization Executive committee: Formulation of action plans as per constitution of organization, rules and regulation Management team: Running projects and daily operational affairs and reporting timely to the Executive Committee.		
Past/Current Activities	Please follow the link: http://freedomforum.org.np/content/category/activities/		
Information Officer	Aruna Adhikari		
Financial Information	Freedom Forum received grants announcing Rs. 12,05,032.65 (July to September 2025)		
Official Website	www.freedomforum.org.np		
Publications of Freedom Forum	Freedom Forum has over 50 Publications (printed) Please Follow the Link: http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/		
Annual Report	http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/reports/annual-reports/		
Information Dissemination	Websites- http://www.freedomforum.org.np/ ; www.nepalpressfreedom.org , and Newsletter-Free Expression		

“VOA”'s closure in Africa deepens information void'

The Trump administration's suspension of "Voice of America" broadcasts across sub-Saharan Africa strips rural communities of access to alternative news sources while pushing African journalists out of work.



This statement was originally published on rsf.org on 29 July 2025.

Disrupted programming, journalists sacked from their jobs: the US government's suspension of Voice of America (VOA), whose programmes were broadcast in all sub-Saharan African countries via over a thousand local partners, undermines access to reliable and diverse information.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns this major setback for the right to reliable information on the African continent, and urges the international community to find alternative solutions to remedy the situation.

For more than four months, the loss of Voice of America (VOA) has deprived millions of vital news information. The US public broadcaster has suspended all its television and radio programmes dedicated to the African continent, putting an end to 62 years of activity.

From the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to the Sahel countries, from Zimbabwe



A "Voice of America" sign is displayed outside of the broadcaster's headquarter, in Washington. DC. JUNE 2025.

to South Africa, the suspension represents a major loss of access to reliable information for millions of people who relied primarily on

local television or community radio stations that relayed VOA programmes in national languages.

Source: <https://ifex.org/voas-closure-in-africa-deepens-information-void/>

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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