



Free Expression

A Monthly Newsletter of Freedom Forum

Press Freedom Witnessed Increasing Trend of Attack and Attrocity

Even following the restoration of democracy and signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) on 21 November 2006 Nepali media and media workers did not witness a sigh of relief and respite from the brutal attacks and blatant violation of press freedom perpetrated by the state, CPN (Maoist) including other political parties and agitating groups. Owing to the deteriorating law and order situation and growing culture of impunity followed by the intended and deliberate assault, the personal safety and

In 2064, more than 410 journalists have experienced various incidents of press freedom violations across the country due to the effect of their works.

professional and institutional security of journalists and media house remained at stake.

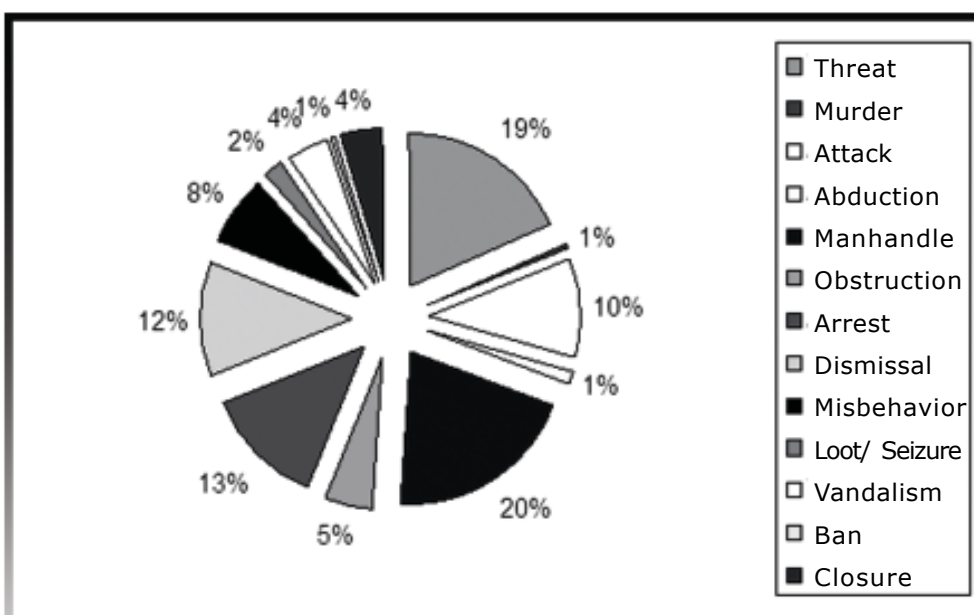
According to the record of Freedom Forum Press Freedom Monitoring Desk, over the period of one year from 14 April 2007 to 12 April 2008, three

journalists (Shanker Panthi, Correspondent of Naya Satta Daily published from Butwal, Birendra Kumar Sah, Correspondent of Avenues Television, Kathmandu and Pushkar Bahadur Shrestha, Editor of two local newspapers-New Highway and New

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Incidents of Press Freedom Violation in Nepal during 2064 BS

Threat	76	19%
Murder	3	1%
Attack	42	10%
Abduction	5	1%
Manhandle	82	20%
Obstruction	21	5%
Arrest	52	13%
Dismissal	50	12%
Misbehavior	31	8%
Loot/ Seizure	9	2%
Vandalism	18	4%
Ban	3	1%
Closure	18	4%



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MESSAGE from the CHAIRPERSON

On the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day- 2008, on May 3, Freedom Forum appeals to the entire Nepali citizens to be alert on promotion of fearless, responsible, free and pluralistic press to establish a people-oriented, transparent, and fully democratic state mechanism. Journalists and media are the vanguards of democracy and human rights. The journalists and media should get an unfringed freedom and environment to work so as to provide correct and factual information as well as analysis and varieties of opinions based on facts.

The journalists and media can reach effective services for the rights of the people to know only if they have an opportunity to work unhindered. Therefore, the issue of the security of the journalists and the freedom of the media falls under the criterion of people's concern and state's main responsibility. On the World Press Freedom Day, worldwide concern and solidarity are accorded with a view that the journalists be able to work courageously, there be abundance of free media and there be easy access of the masses in the media. On this occasion, we also express our strong solidarity.

Nepal is passing through a sensitive, complex and crucial moments of transition. Constituent Assembly members elected by the people are going to engage in framing a constitution. To build a federal republican and democratic state, the new constitution should be quite advanced and as per the democratic ideals and norms well accepted worldwide. On this day, we call on all the political parties and CA members to make serious realization and strong commitment on mainly three issues. These are - full guaranteeing of unfringed freedom of expression and opinion, guaranteeing of free press, and the right to information, and should be guaranteed in the new constitution. This only would help promote free, impartial and multiparty media. And, a strong basis will be built for making a prosperous and democratic Nepal that is people-oriented with a government of good governance.

Feudal, autocratic and authoritarian rulers only see and use the media as the tool of their praise and publicity. Authoritarians describe those who become the tools as people-oriented and those who do not become as bourgeoisies. Likewise, the feudalists rank as patriots those lackeys who praise them and as anti-national to those who are adherent to professional ethics. All kinds of extremism and radicalism always remain as threat to the free press.

Therefore, on this day, whereas the Nepalese press should exhibit the capability to fight by uniting against such anti-freedom tendencies, which can still increase in the future, the masses need to join hand and encourage such militant press.

On this day, we extend special honour to all the media colleagues who sacrificed and struggled for civil freedom and for dissemination of factual information and are devoted for professional journalism, and express greetings to them all.



Tara Nath Dahal
Chairperson

World Press Freedom Day Observed

Kathmandu-Freedom Forum and International Press Institute (IPI), Nepal Chapter jointly organized a programme to mark the 22nd World Press Freedom Day in the capital city on May 2, 2008.

On the occasion, Damodar Neupane, Gorkha District Correspondent for *Kantipur* National Daily was felicitated with 'Courageous Correspondent Award', especially for his audacious reporting during the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections despite facing threats from the cadres of CPN (Maoist). Giving away the award, Speaker of the Legislature-Parliament Subas Nemwang, who was also the chief guest of the programme, lauded the role of media and media persons during the process of making new constitution and expressed thanks to Freedom Forum for its role to expedite ahead the campaign of press freedom in Nepal.



Speaker Subas Nemwang giving away Courageous Correspondent Award to Gorkha Correspondent for Kantipur Daily amid a function organized on the occasion of 22nd World Press Freedom Day

'I remind the role of journalists especially during the regime of direct rule of king and the responsibility they discharge for press freedom and democracy amidst risks and challenges', said Speaker Nemwang, calling upon the press to play further responsible role in course of constitution building process. The Speaker added that a functional and consolidated democracy would not thrive without guaranteeing press freedom and called for synergetic efforts to bring the principles of press freedom in practice thereby contribute to build up a new Nepal.

Speaker Nemwang also released two books including 'Journalism: Policy and Law' published by Freedom Forum and 'Memorandum on the Right to Information Act of State of Nepal' prepared and published on the joint initiative of Freedom Forum, ARTICLE 19 and Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) on the same occasion.

Shedding light on the relevance of the programme, Freedom Forum Chairperson Tara Nath Dahal appealed to all Nepali citizens to remain conscious towards establishing an accountable, transparent and fully democratic system of governance and towards promotion of a courageous, vibrant, responsible and pluralistic press.

Other speakers at the program included president of IPI Nepal Chapter Padma Singh Karki, Nepal Bar Association president Biswa Kanta Mainali, Chairman of Press Council Nepal, Rajendra Dahal, FNJ former chairman Harihar Birahi, former Representative of UNESCO Standing Committee Keshab Raj Jha, and INSEC chairman Subodh Raj Pyakurel. They expressed their views on the importance of press freedom and shed light on the role of media in the contemporary Nepalese scenario. ■

Is what happened to Gorkha a sign of things to come?

If the Maoist attacks on other political parties and their harassment of the media in Gorkha in the elections and its aftermath are going to be the pattern in the New Nepal, it does not bode well for democracy and press freedom.

Damodar Neupane

As soon as voting ended on 10 April, the NC and UML complained to the Election Commission about intimidation and threats and boycotted vote counting. I filed a live report on this for Kantipur TV on the morning of 11 April and was immediately accosted by Amrit Upadhyaya, a local Maoist.

An hour later, Maoist cadres forcibly pulled NC candidate Ramesh Bastakoti from a Kathmandu-bound bus and beat him up. Police took Bastakoti to hospital, but fearing another attack he ran away and hid in a bamboo grove behind the stadium. The Maoists tracked him down and beat him up again. When we arrived to report, the Maoists roughed up journalist Bhimlal Shrestha.

Lawyer Mohan Pokharel was running away from a group of Maoists who were attacking him. They said they wanted to exact revenge for "the blood of our 13,000 martyrs". Pokharel was leaving Gorkha because he felt it wasn't safe, but the YCL pulled him out of the bus at 13km and beat him up. On 12 April I got a call. **"Not it's the turn of you journalists,"** an anonymous caller said. YCL activists were walking around with iron rods. They stopped people on the streets and forcibly searched their pockets and bags, sometimes taking away wallets and mobile phones. Some NC and UML activists went underground. Gorkha-based reporters were themselves so afraid they didn't file any of this news.

The obstructions and threats had actually started during the election campaign itself. When we reported on excesses they accused us of being anti-Maoist. "Kantipur is a capitalist newspaper, the battle from now is against Kantipur," Maoist district secretary Chudamani Khadka said. We thought this would stop after the elections, but it hasn't. On 14 April it was announced that Babruam Bhattarai had won by 40,000 votes. All three constituencies in Gorkha went to the Maoists.

The Maoists had planned a victory rally for 15 April. The Maoists threatened us again, saying they'd chase us away "like dogs" if we dared cover it. Chudamani Khadka told us we'd have to walk inside the YCL security cordon. But we feared another attack and left the rally.

By 17 April we thought the situation had returned to normal and went to Manakamana. But on return, the Maoist threats started again. This time they said they would analyse everyone's election coverage and take action. The final results of the PR ballot were also out, but reporting in Gorkha had become hazardous to our health. The police didn't tell me what kind of threat they received, but on 20 April they put me in a van and drove me to Kathmandu where I am now.

Source : Kathmandu Daily, April 20, 2008

Editor Faces Contempt of Court

The Editor of a Nepali-language weekly has been summoned by the Supreme Court to furnish clarification regarding a 'contempt of court' case filed against him.

Editor of *Drishti* weekly, Kishor Shrestha, faces contempt of court charge for writing news and editorial claiming that the recent court verdict on former Rastra Bank Governor Bijay Nath Bhattarai was influenced by financial kickbacks.

The Supreme Court on Sunday, March 30, issued an order in the name of Mr Shrestha, asking him to furnish clarification in writing as to why he could not be indicted of the contempt charge in question. He has been asked to furnish replies within five days of the receipt of the order. ■

Major Incidents of Press Freedom Violation in April

Cadres of the CPN (Maoist), one of the ruling party of Nepal, reportedly threatened to capture Radio Ramaroshan, the only FM radio station in Achham district located in a far western region of Nepal.

Maoist leader Jhankar Bahadur Rawal threatened to seize the radio station while addressing an electoral mass meeting at Janali Bandali. Just a few minutes after his threat, a group of about 100 Young Communist League (YCL) cadres surrounded the FM's transmission center at Thulasain. However, they ran away when a police team reached the site to provide security. Protesting the incident, the FM radio decided to boycott Maoist news. Likewise, in Nuwakot, Cadres of CPN (Maoist), on April 13 warned more than half dozen of journalists and Constituent Assembly Elections Observers including Prakash Kumar Adhikari of Kantipur National Daily, Raj Krishna Shrestha of Kantipur Television, Kapil Dev Khanal of Image Television and Dev Chandra Bhatta of Avenues Television in Nuwakot, a central district of Nepal while they were covering the news on Constituent Assembly elections.

The journalists were threatened for allegedly disseminating the news of the win of the rival party of CPN (Maoist) before the final result in the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections in Nuwakot constituency-2, according to FNJ Nuwakot Chapter Chairperson Rajumitra Khanal.

Nepali Congress (NC) party workers on 14 April Monday attacked Santosh Rijal, correspondent of Nuwakot Awaj Weekly and a member of FNJ's Nuwakot chapter for the similar reasons.

In Kaski, Om Hamal, a journalist of Nepal one Television channel was assaulted by Maoist cadres at Pame of Kaski district on April 7 Monday. Hamal sustained bruises to his face and body. A group of YCL cadres led by Dip Bikram Shahi, Maoist district member attacked Hamal, asking him why the latter had filmed the Nepali Congress programme there.

In Parbat, Cadres of CPN (Maoist) abducted Maya Adhikari, correspondent

of Adhikhola FM broadcasting from Parbat and Sayapatri FM of Baglung at Vorle VDC of Parbat, a western region Nepal.

The Maoist cadres took control her for two hours while she was on the way to observe the CA elections at southern part of Parbat district alleging her that she was distributing money as a campaigner of Nepali Congress to influence voters, said President of Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) Parbat chapter Om Prasad Ghayal.

Sunsari-Nepali Congress (NC) cadre prevented Jaya Karisha Yadav, a journalist working in Sunsari, an eastern region of Nepal, from carrying news on the developments at the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections polling booth and seized his reporting equipment.

Yadav was covering a clash between NC cadres and members of the Madheshi Jana Adhikar Forum (MJAF) and NC activist Rabani Ansari, also known as "Sidagi", seized Yadav's digital camera and mobile telephone and warned Yadav, "Don't cover these incidents." according to Annanda Koirala, vice-secretary of FNJ's Sunsari chapter.

Kathmandu. Cadres of CPN-Maoist raided a weekly newspaper and seized materials ready for print, in Sindhupalchowk, some 100 kilometer east from here.

According to information received this morning, a group of CPN-Maoist activists rushed into the press of local Sindhu Prabaha weekly, and confiscated all copies of its 50th edition on Monday, April 7.

The weekly's publisher, in a statement issued on Tuesday claimed the CPN-M activists also took away plates and papers about to be utilized for the printing. The statement condemned the attack as violation of constitutionally guaranteed press freedom.

Freedom Forum expresses serious concern on the indecent activities carried out to discourage the publication and journalists, and demanded immediate investigation into the incident and actions against the guilty. The Forum also urged the government to remain alert on the violation of freedom of expression and rising attack on media and media persons in various parts of the country.

Journalist-ferrying THT Vehicle Vandalized

Kathmandu-An irate group vandalized a microbus, which was heading for Bhainsepati, carrying the journalists working for the Annapurna Post and The Himalayan Times (THT) at Ekantakuna, Lalitpur on April 26 evening. According to The Himalayan Times, a national daily, the irate group vandalized the microbus (Ba. 4 Cha. 3313) after a motorbike coming from opposite direction collided with it, injuring one of the three persons riding the motorbike, Ratna lama, critically. Microbus driver Mangal Lama also sustained injuries in hand. The group broke all the glasses of the vehicle and damaged some parts, said the Times. According to Metropolitan Police Circle, Lalitpur, injured persons were taken to Patan Hospital for treatment. The police have taken the miscreants into the custody for investigation.

Scribes Injured

Two journalists were injured when fire broke out in a hotel room they were staying in Nepalgunj on April 5. Rishi Dhamala from Kathmandu and Deepak Paudel from Chitawan, who were both in this town in western Nepal to report on electoral campaigns and other situation, were hurt in the fire.

They were found in a state of unconsciousness in the morning and were soon rushed towards Dang for the treatment. ■

Court Verdict Promotes Freedom of Expression

The Labour Court has given a verdict that an employee could keep cell phone with him/her without causing any obstruction in official works. The Court has also decided that restrictions can be imposed on the use of mobile phones in certain places in the office.

The Court has furnished this explanation in response to the case filed against a company by its employees when the company resorted to actions against them citing the violation of official rules and regulations. Patan Dhoka-based Baryan Electric Company Pvt. Ltd. has not allowed its employees to use mobile phones in the office for the last two years.

'It is not justifiable act to prevent employees from keeping and using mobile phone which the government allows its citizen in the modern age of information technology. It is not indecent conduct', stated Justice Shesh Raj Shrivastava in the verdict given on April 29, 2008.

The court has termed this act a ridiculous action to make scientific achievement and progress useless. Freedom Forum expresses its concern on the incident of banning the use of mobile phone with the reference that constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights of freedom of expression cannot be restricted by imposing extralegal measures.

It can only be curtailed through legal measures. The court's verdict has established this constitutional provision in practice. ■

Photo Journalist Killed in Train Accident

Birgunj-based photo journalist Subod Singh and his friend Abhisek Agrawal of Kathmandu were killed in a train accident at Gorakhpur of Uttar Pradesh state of India on April 24 Thursday night. The train, Rapti Sagar Express rammed down them while they got off from another train heading for New Delhi to drink water at Basti station near Gorakhpur.

Photo journalist Nitesh Mathema, who was traveling with Singh, 26, a permanent resident of Gahawa, Birgunj and his friends were on way to Delhi to participate in their friend's wedding. He was an independent photo journalist working for RSS, Birgunj based Pratik Daily and also worked for Kantipur publication for a short period of time.

Jha and KC New FNJ Chairman and General Secretary

Dharmendra Jha, Executive Member of Freedom Forum has been elected the new president of Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), the umbrella organization of over 6,000 journalists. Jha polled 364 votes while his nearest rival Shiva Gaule, former FNJ vice president, got 316 votes. Govinda Acharya was elected new vice-president.

Likewise, Freedom Forum General Member Poshan KC was elected the new general secretary of the FNJ. Ramji Dahal and Ramesh Bista, were elected secretary and the treasurer, respectively. Raj Kumar Dikpal was elected executive member from Janajati quota, Mahesh Das from the Madhesi quota, Yashoda Timsina from women's quota and Diwakar Bagchanda from the Dalit quota. Other executive members are: Ujir Magar and Jagat Nepal from Kathmandu

Valley, Kishor Karki and Shambhu Jha from Eastern Development Region, Pratap Bista and Shital Shah from central region, Purna Paudel and Rabindra Bastola from western region, Prem KC and Janak Nepal from mid-western region and Manohar Swar and Chhatra Saut from far-western region. Bharat Shakya, Shard Raj Gautam and Ajaya Phuyal were elected from associate organizations.

Freedom Forum congratulates newly-elected President Dharmendra Jha and General Secretary KC including other executive committee members of FNJ and wishes for their success to move ahead the campaign of press freedom, freedom of opinion and of expression in a vibrant manner and to ensure physical safety and professional development of journalists in Nepal. The Forum is committed to work together on the issues related to press freedom, freedom of expression, right to information and capacity building of journalists in the days to come. ■



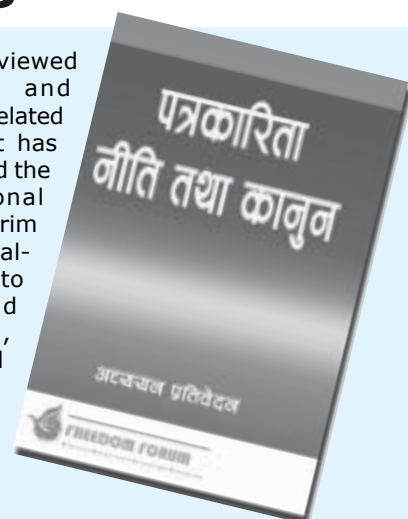
Journalism Policy and Laws

In keeping with the initiatives of legal and policy level reforms being made in the media sector, Freedom Forum has come up with an innovation of bringing out a study report entitled "Journalism Policy and Laws". We opt to compile and publish the study report as a part of our campaign and commitment for the promotion of freedom of opinion and expression, free press and right to information. The study of media related policy and laws is believed to help formulate mandatory information policy and legal provisions on the way to foster ahead our democracy as per international standard. It has been made public after a series of discussion and consultation with concerned experts and stakeholders of media sector.

In addition, Freedom Forum has also frequently provided with facts of this study to the government in course of its effort to formulate various acts and works as a participant of various commissions and task forces formed by the government to seek recommendations for reforms. The forum is set to organize second round discussion on the report at regional level. We expect it will facilitate to forge significant national consensus for the reforms of media sector in Nepal from the recommendations and response received from the discussion.

The study has reviewed the national and international laws related to mass media. It has mainly incorporated the analysis of national laws, including interim constitution of Nepal-2063, Act related to Printing and Publication-2048, National Broadcasting Act - 2042, Working Journalists Act-2051, Press Council Act-2048, Libel Act -

2016, National News Agency Act - 2012, Gorkhapatra Corporation Act-2012 and Right to Information Act while Universal Declaration of Human Rights-1948, International Covenant on civil and Political Rights-1966 including others have been taken as principle reference for the study. ■





Message

from

Koïchiro Matsuura

**Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of
World Press Freedom Day (3 May 2008)**

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right recognized in Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, whose 60th anniversary we celebrate this year. On World Press Freedom Day 2008, UNESCO pays tribute to the courage and professionalism of the many journalists and media professionals killed and wounded while carrying out their professional activities, by dedicating this Day to the themes of empowerment and access to information.

Alongside the dangers of conflict areas and war zones, journalists often face threats, intimidation and actual violence as a direct result of their work. These acts are unconscionable, not only because they violate the human rights of individuals, but also because they impede the free flow of accurate and reliable information which underpins good governance and democracy. Too often these crimes are not adequately punished.

Press freedom and access to information feed into the wider development objective of empowering people by giving people the information that can help them gain control over their own lives. This empowerment supports participatory democracy by giving citizens the capacity to engage in public debate and to hold governments and others accountable. But this flow of communication does not happen automatically. It has to be fostered by a free, pluralistic, independent and professional media, and through national policies founded on four key principles at the heart of UNESCO's work: freedom of expression, quality education for all, universal access to information and knowledge, and respect for linguistic diversity. Indeed, the freedom to express oneself in one's mother tongue as widely and as often as possible and to master other national, regional or international languages is being highlighted by UNESCO in this International Year of Languages. Without strong policies to foster linguistic diversity in all aspects of a nation's life – in schools, administration, law and in the media – we risk denying hundreds of thousands of people around the world the basic right to engage in public life and debate.

Technological advances – for example the internet – allow the media to reach more people in more places, allow people to share their opinions more readily, and allow information to flow across borders. These are huge benefits. But freedom of information, and online information, alone do not guarantee access. People also need the internet connectivity and IT resources to use that information, for example to access national or international news or to provide a plurality of media options, including community radio. Even more fundamentally, they need to have the capacity to use these tools – and this can only come about through the universal provision of quality education and promotion of multilingualism.

As we celebrate World Press Freedom Day 2008, let us remember three things:

First, the courage of those journalists who have put themselves at risk in order to provide the public with accurate and independent information

Second, that press freedom and freedom of information, are the founding principles for good governance, development and peace

Third, that new technology can provide enormous information benefits, but needs to be underpinned by measures that empower people to make use of it: quality education for all, universal access to information and knowledge, and respect for linguistic diversity.

A commitment to removing all obstacles to press freedom, to improving the conditions for independent and professional journalism, and to empowering citizens to engage in public debate is essential. On World Press Freedom Day 2008, UNESCO encourages its Member States to strengthen their efforts in this direction.

Press Freedom Witnessed ...

Season, Birgunj) were killed. Similarly, Kanchanpur-based journalist Prakash Singh Thakuri has gone missing from his rented room in Mahendranagar since July, 2007.

The Monitoring Desk has recorded 42 incidents of attack on journalists and media institutions, compared to 32 in the same period last year. Since the beginning of the year journalists and media house across the country faced 76 incidents of threats from the state and various armed group, which was 83 in 2006-2007.

This year, more than 82 journalists were manhandled and 31 had to come across misbehavior from armed groups, security personnel and political party cadres in course of discharging their duty. During the period, 18 publications (Dailies and Weeklies) and radio stations were forced to remain shutdown. Mainly, journalists working in the Terai and the eastern region had faced sinister pattern of threat, obstruction and attack from various regional and ethnic agitating groups during the year.

Likewise, 50 journalists working in various media institutions were dismissed from their job owing to the partisan interference and interest and 52 other were arrested from security personnel in various protests and demonstrations staged to exert pressure on the government and agitating groups for their commitment to ensure protection of freedom of press and of expression.

The promulgation of Right to Information Act-2064, Working Journalists Act-2064 and constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression in the Interim Constitution-2064 BS are some of the laudable achievements that Nepal witnessed during the year. However, no other significant initiative and progress has been made from the state side regarding the implementation of these Acts and provisions dwindling chances to bring about reforms in a bid to restructure the media. But, the advocacy on agenda for change for freedom of expression has begun in Nepal on the

initiative of Article 19, Freedom Forum and Federation of Nepali journalists with the view to lobbying and formulating the long-term policy of freedom of expression in Nepal.

Discouraging Moves:

With the country ushering into a transition after the restoration of democracy in 2006 AD, Nepali media and press freedom did not see the signs of improvement and development due to the effects caused by a series of confrontation and clash in the name of identity politics.

In the Terai region in particular, journalists faced death threats during strikes and protests carried out by the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum, the Terai Janatantrik Mukti Morchas, the Madhesi Tigers, the Chure Bhawar Ekata Samaj and other groups. Following death threats or threats of physical action, journalists were forced to write favourable reports of these groups' activities.

Dozens of journalists were attacked, manhandled, threatened, their offices ransacked, their vehicles set ablaze and distribution or transmission were obstructed during the movement. It was often alleged to the leading Medias operating from the central level failed to maintain accuracy in the news and was not as objective, balanced and impartial while covering the first movement launched by the Madhesi community. According to a research carried out by Freedom Forum, the national media has been more critical while giving space to news related to the Terai unrest. In turn the agitators became more furious against media and media house.

The Maoist leadership has repeatedly expressed its commitment to press freedom but at the same time has continued to obstruct journalists' activities. Maoist activists continue to harass, threaten and abuse journalists, with the Maoists and Madhesi Janadhikar Forum posing the greatest threat to the media.

In 2064, more than 410 journalists have experienced various incidents of press freedom violations across the country due to the effect of their works.

Journalists demanding reinstatements in their jobs at Gorkhapatra Corporation were thrashed by the Young Communist League on August 9 at the gate of the corporation. The publication of The Himalayan Times and Annapurna Post had since August 11 been obstructed by a Maoist-affiliated labour union. Likewise, production of Nepal Samacharpatra, Kantipur, The Kathmandu Post, HBC FM, Drishti Weekly were also obstructed to bring out the publication and disseminate news. They also threatened to attack TV station and Kantipur Television Network.

All weeklies and dailies published from Jhapa district were closed down for an indefinite period due to the general strike and obstruction in distribution caused by the agitating groups in Terai. In the same period, cadres of Federal Limbuwan State Council (FLSC) set ablaze the vehicle belonging to Kantipur publication in two separate incidents and had also burnt 8,000 copies of Kantipur and The Kathmandu Post in Jhapa.

Important Incident:

The International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission to Nepal visited Nepal from January 13-17 and expressed serious concern over the violation of press freedom taking place throughout the country. The four major issues including professional and professional security of journalists, capacity building, challenges of broadcast media and media law were discussed the international delegation and Nepali journalists.

The mission included representatives from 12 international media organizations working for freedom of expression and opinion.

■

UN Resolutions Supporting Limits on Free Speech Condemned :

The top UN rights body passed two resolutions last week that limit freedom of expression rather than protect it, say IFEX members, even further undermining its mandate.

Despite objections from 40 rights organisations from around the world led by ARTICLE 19 and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), the UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution on 28 March that turns the Special Rapporteur on free expression into a "prosecutor".

Critics say the amendment will help to justify censorship and the stifling of dissent. "The change to the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on free expression is dramatic. It turns someone who is supposed to defend freedom of opinion into a prosecutor whose job is to go after those who abuse this freedom," says Reporters Without Borders (RSF), one of the 40 organisations who appealed to the council not to amend the rapporteur's mandate.

SRI LANKA: Sri Lanka has relinquished its role as "keeper of the peace" for failing to prevent attacks on journalists and to bring those responsible to account, say 40 organisations, the majority of them IFEX members. Led by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the 40 groups have joined forces in an international campaign to "stop the war on journalists" in the conflict-ridden country.

In a joint letter to the Sri Lankan president, the 40 organisations demanded an immediate change to the "escalating culture of violence against journalists by government officials and members of the public." The letter details at least two dozen incidents of violence against journalists since the start of 2008 alone, making Sri Lanka one of the most dangerous places for journalists in the Asia-Pacific.

BELARUS: Press freedom groups worldwide have condemned the sudden, "unprecedented" crackdown on independent journalists by the Belarusian authorities. Reporters have been arrested and beaten and have had their homes raided in recent days, which critics term a "gross violation" of the right to free expression.

On 25 March, during demonstrations to mark the 90th anniversary of the Belarusian Democratic Republic, "Nasha Niva" photographer Andrei Lankievich was brutally beaten by riot police. Together with dozens of other detained Belarusians he spent a night in jail and now faces trial.

Another "Nasha Niva" correspondent, Siamion Piechanko, was sentenced to 15 days of detention under Belarusian administrative law. Both journalists were charged with organising and holding an illegal demonstration.

Then on 27 March, Belarus's security service, the KGB, raided the offices and homes of more than a dozen journalists from independent and foreign news media.

93 Jounos Killed in 2007: REPORT

Ninety three journalists were killed in 2007, almost half of them in Iraq the international press institute media watchdog said in its annual press freedom review. The figure was the second highest in a decade after 2006, which saw 100 journalist deaths according to IPI figure.

Fourty two journalists died in Iraq during 2007 while Asia was the second deadliest region, with 19 reporters killed, mostly in Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan the IPI said in statement. It also noted the first target assassination of a journalist since 1993 in the United States, with a killing of newspaper editor in Oakland, California.

IFEX members Norwegian PEN, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) and WiPC have appealed to the Belarusian government to end the crackdown.

AMERICA : Attacks on journalists and media outlets have intensified in the Americas over the past six months, as seen in court cases and judicial rulings against the media, as well as in increasing violence against journalists, said the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) at its mid-year meeting last week.

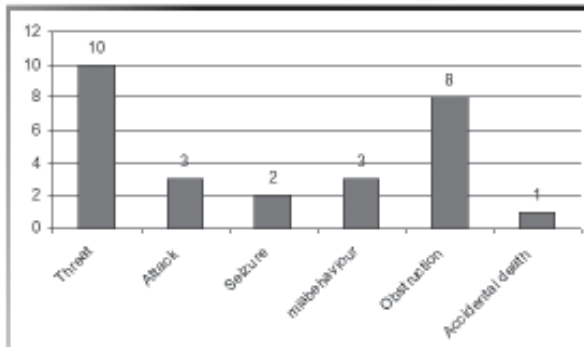
Five journalists were killed during the past six months: three in Mexico, one in Argentina and another in Honduras. More than 30 were attacked in Peru, and 32 were threatened in Colombia. Paraguay experienced the greatest increase in reports of verbal attacks.

The transfer of power in Cuba from Fidel Castro to his brother Raúl did not improve the status of the 25 journalists still in prison or the adverse working conditions of independent journalists, said IAPA.

Source : International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX)

Media Situation in Nepal during April 2008

Threat	10
Attack	3
Seizure	2
Misbehaviour	3
Obstruction	8
Accidental death	1



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