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Anti-press Incidents during First Six Months of 2008

The first six months of 2008 was also remained the difficult period for journalists and media workers in Nepal. Although all political parties and leaders have repeatedly expressed their strong verbal commitment to press freedom, the incidents of media rights violation did not remain unabated. Even in the recent days, the media persons have largely become the targets of political parties, mostly CPN (Maoist), security personnel and other emerging communal groups.

As in last year, Nepali media and working journalists did not remain aloof from the problems of brutal attacks, intimidation, abduction, murder, physical torture and violence carried out in various forms by various perpetrators during first six months of the year. Nepali press came across an increased number of deliberate and indented violence, posing serious threat to the personal and professional safety of journalists and institutional security. Within the first six months from January to July of the year, journalists and media houses across the country faced a total of 145 incidents of press freedom violation, largely from the CPN (Maoist), regional and ethic groups, security personnel and locals.

The Freedom Forum Press Freedom Monitoring Desk has identified a case of murder of Pushakar Bahadur Shrestha, Editor of The New Highway and The New season from Birgunj and 24 incidents of attack in the period. Likewise, the Monitoring Desk has recorded 25 cases of threat, 39 of manhandle, 91 of misbehavior while 12 incidents of vandalism, 9 of obstruction, 6 of loot, 4 of seizure, 3 of closure and one incident related to arrest have been reported.

The month of January witnessed a total of 31 incidents related to press freedom violation while February saw 35 incidents which is the highest in the first six months. Likewise, there were 12 incidents of violation in March, 26 in April, 10 in May and 31 in June according to the record maintained by the Freedom Forum.

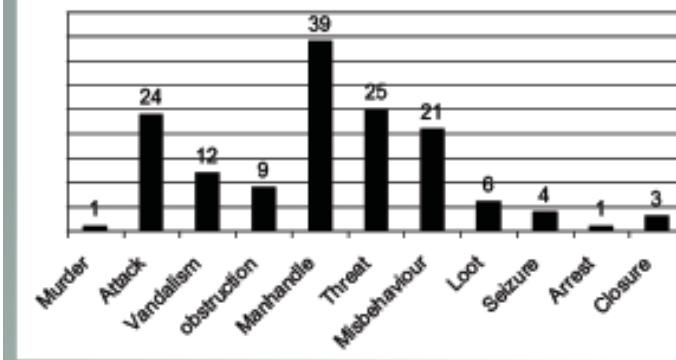
The anti-press move was significantly increased in the past six months despite a sweeping change in the political atmosphere of the country. The major anti-press incidents that took place during the period ranges from brutal attack on journalist Manoj Sah in Janakpur, attack on the building of Kantipur Publications, assault on large number of journalist in petroleum price hike protest across the country, atrocities against journalists during Madhesh

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movement, closure of all dailies and weeklies in Jhapa and Kailali district in separate incidents among other in various parts of the country. ♦

Media Rights Violation in Nepal (6 Months Report – 2008)

Month	incidents
January	31
February	35
March	12
April	26
May	10
June	31
Total	145



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Message from the Chairperson

CPN (Maoist) Chairperson Prachanda's recent commitment to protect press freedom is a welcoming move. He clearly came up with the remarks that the instances of violation to press freedom attributed to his party were the result of "wartime hangover" which would be resolved in course of time. The remarks blending confession of past misdeeds and commitment for free press from the rebel-turned-largest party has been seen significantly on the way to further development of Nepali press. To the contrary, Maoist-aligned youth wing YCL has stepped up its brutalities and atrocities against journalists and media workers in various parts which raised million dollar question to the verbal commitment of Maoist top brass. It would indeed very much helpful to Maoists to bring up a good reputation to their party if they changed their mind-sets to the press and improved their actions accordingly from top to down.

The all-pervasive impunity has been a major setback for the free press to move ahead, contributing to provoke anti-press incidents across the country in various forms. In this context, it is our firm conviction that Nepali press would not see relief and respite from the continued harassment and assault until the perpetrators were not brought to book for their heinous act against press. The Dhangadhi incident of the recent past reverberated whole Nepali media and reminded a gloomy and uneasy journey to go en route to the protection and promotion of press freedom in our country. The journalists including Lakki Chaudhary were compelled to halt all newspapers publication and forced to flee from the working place to avoid the possible menace anytime. It was the abominable act carried out by the Maoist cadres in response to a journalist act of bringing their financial embezzlement in the temple and lake to public. Freedom Forum would like to draw the attention of the government to undertake fair investigation of the incident as a start to discontinue the culture of impunity thereby to help reduce anti-press actions. We also want the government to take up in-depth investigation and actions against the guilty of the assassination of Dailekh-based journalist Dekendra Thapa whose grave was found buried some 150 metres away from Nepal Primary School at Dwari VDC after four years. The Forum is also concerned for government's inability to take legal actions against the murderer of Janakpur-based journalist Birendra Sah and Prakash Singh Thakuri of Kanchanpur.

The dillydallying on the part of the concerned authority for actions and rising trend of media violation have aggravated sense of inner fear and self-censorship among journalists which has limited the media to carry out its job in a full-fledge way. Hence, journalists do not feel free and bother to produce news and views that may affect other thinking that they may come across any consequences if they did not censor their ideas. This growing tendency of self-censorship is preventing people from getting right information on the one hand and on the other, it has impeded the opinion building process in the society, which ultimately affects our democracy. Keeping this situation in mind, we call upon coordinated and concerted efforts from the media stakeholders, including the government, political parties, civil society, journalist's organizations among other to end this situation at the earliest.

The meeting of people-yielded Constitution Assembly has been stalled owing to the lack of common stance among the political parties on contentious issues. To this effect, we urge the political party forged consensus to end the current political deadlock realizing the urgency of broader democratic alliance for the wider benefit of the country. The parties have the greater responsibility of justifying the rationality of the proclamation of the republic in the country by promoting the democratic culture.

Only when the democracy sustained, people would be empowered and their rights to freedom of expression and opinion would be protected in an unhindered way. The more the free press functions, the more the people's access to information increases. It would sweep away the culture of feudalism and autocratic mind-sets which results in the building of strong, open and democratic society with free, vibrant and professional press.



Tara Nath Dahal
Chairperson

Workshop on Journalism Policy and Laws Concluded



Media persons, legal practitioners, human rights activists and intellectuals of the eastern region stressed the need of restructuring of the media policies and laws at a time when the country is heading towards federal structure.

At a two-day workshop organized here on June 30 by Freedom Forum Kathmandu, on 'Journalism policies and laws', Political Science Reader of Morang Multiple Campus Dr. Govinda Man Singh Karki suggested the implementation of laws in favour of nation and people's welfare rather than appeasing the media world while formulating media policies and laws.

Press Council Member Yagya Sharma while pointing out restructuring of the media laws, suggested giving some share to media houses gradually by not privatizing RSS, the only news agency of the country.

Freedom Forum Central Chairman and study report presenter Taranath Dahal while emphasizing new style of policy making in the changed federal framework of the state called on the media to be responsible to the citizen as it is not superior to the citizens.

Other participating speakers underlined the wider need and significance of a comprehensive and integrated national policy on media and mass communication, adding that an intensive exercise is a must to establish this essence in a broad-based way.

They also concluded that the analysis of the journalism related policy and laws followed by necessary recommendations incorporated in the book would be milestone for the reform of Nepali media sector.

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Journalist taking visuals manhandled

The officials at Sagarmatha Zonal Transport Management Office (SZTMO) allegedly manhandled Siraha district correspondent of Sagarmatha Television, Ganesh Sah on June 21.

Journalist Sah was manhandled as he along with other cameraperson, was busy taking pictures of trial driving for light vehicle licenses. A team of journalists had reached SZTMO amidst complaint that officials there were involved in financials irregularities while issuing licenses.

Sah alleged that non gazette officer Kamala Mahaseth manhandled him as he was taking the visuals. Sah claimed that he was manhandled out of fear that the matter would reach the public.

Protesting against the incident all journalist based in Siraha have asked Chief District Officer (CDO) Bal Krishna Panthi to take action against SZTMO chief Jiwan Sharma and non gazette officer Mahaseth.

Meanwhile, journalists staged sit-in at the CDO office in the afternoon demanding action against the guilty. They have also threatened stringent protests if there is no action against the guilty. ♦

TV journalist hurt

Khagendra Bhandari, a reporter of Kantipur TV and Executive Editor of *Sanjeevani Patra* Daily published from Kavre district was hurt by a local of Banepa -11 at 28 kilo area of the district on June 25 in the evening.

A local named Deepak Karki all of a sudden attacked me saying why the photo taken last year was not published, according to Bhandari. He was taking photographs of roadside tree planted on the way to the Kathmandu University when he was attacked. His digital camera was damaged and he sustained minor injuries to his face. ♦

Unrelenting Incidents against Journalists

Journalist Mahesh Shrestha was given threats by the owner, finance director and other supporters of Unity Life Insurance Company due to his news article in the *Janadisha* Daily Newspaper, entitled "continuation of cheating profession of Unity Life" and also because the same news was broadcast by the Nepal Television on June 15, 2008.

According to Shrestha, he was manhandled when he went to the Unity Life office in Kathmandu to obtain information on its allegedly illegal transactions.

In an another incident the same day, police mistreated and baton charged journalists in the press conference called by the owner of the Birat Nursing Home in Biratnagar after a woman died due to the negligence of its doctors on 15 June 2008.

Similarly, on 17 June, Kamal Raj Nemwang, Secretary of the Federal Limbuwan State Council (FLSC) and his party workers mistreated FNJ Panchthar Chapter President Lekhnath Khatiwada, warning him not to write news. On 18 June, Khatiwada received a death threat via telephone by a man who called himself "Bhumiputra" (son of land).

In the same way, on June 21, a local correspondent of the Sagarmatha Television was manhandled by some unruly individuals on the directives of Kamala Mahaseth, an employee in Sagarmatha zone transport management office in Lahan. ♦

YCL Manhandled Journalists

The cadres of Young Communist League (YCL), the youth wing of the CPN (Maoist) mistreated some eight journalists including, Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) Tanahun Chapter President Pradip Kafle, Basanta Kandel, Santosh Pokharel, Prakash Chandra Bhattarai, Samundra Poudel, Sudip Bandu Bhandari and Damodar Adhikari on June 4 Wednesday at Damauli, the district headquarters of Tanahun.

They misbehaved with journalists using indecent words at a press conference organized by CPN (Maoist), Tanahun district after a group of local youths associated to the construction contractors barged in YCL office.

"It was very ironic that the YCL cadres used obscene words to journalists who were invited by the Maoist themselves to participate in the conference", said FNJ, Tanahun President Pradip Kafle.

He added that the Maoist leadership brought us together to inform about the development of incident on the issue of local contract. The YCL cadres presented themselves in an offensive way for questions raised by a journalist at a conference.

They abused and warned journalist Dambar Adhikari, Nepal Television Reporter and Executive Director of Seti Nadi Daily saying that 'is this the journalist and journalism to raise question against Maoist?' when he suggested Maoist to mobilize YCL in constructive works than suppressing people, added Kafle.

The clash between two groups erupted when YCL allegedly attempted to prevent other contractors from submitting application to bid for the construction of two suspension bridges in Tanahun. Two local youths, Ganesh Thapa and Biswo Shrestha were severely injured during the clash. ♦

FNJ Demands Press Freedom in Preamble

The Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) has urged all to be active in the massive public participation in the constitution making process in order to ensure press freedom in the preamble of the new constitution and for the consolidation of human rights and multi-party competitive political system,

The central working committee meeting of FNJ this month has expressed commitment to move responsibly in the constitution making process by maintaining professional ethics.

It has also urged all political parties to give up petty interest and maintain the culture of consensus till the new construction is formed.

Denouncing the ongoing interventions, attacks intimidating misbehavior against journalists in course of news collection in different parts of the country, FNJ has urged the concerned sides to end such anti-press freedom activities and culture of impunity immediately.

It has also urged the government to enforce the Working Journalists Act and Right to Information Act immediately to ensure the journalists rights.

Similarly, FNJ has asked the government to take immediate initiative to make the state-run media autonomous and reinstate all journalists who were ousted from their jobs due to political prejudice.

It has also nominated erstwhile FNJ President Bishnu Nisthuri, Taranath Dahal and Shiv Gaunle as FNJ advisors.

Another Attack on Journalist in Kailali

Karna Kunwar, Publisher and Editor of *Tikapur Times Daily* was ruthlessly assaulted by a group led by the CPN (Maoist) Kailali District Member Prem Bahadur Biswokarma and Tara Sanjyal for the news published about Maoist intervention in the local community forest on June 24, Monday evening. He sustained injuries on the face, stomach and chest.

The Maoist cadres deliberately attacked him in front of Tikapur unit police office after a news report was published

in the daily about the dispute in the general assembly of Chhatibhan community forest at Patharaia VDC. The daily is publishing from Tikapur of Kailali district.

The Daily had carried a news report quoting local Maoist leaders who, during the annual general meeting, had warned that they would "take action like that by their minister Matrika Yadav against those who talked too much", according to The Kathmandu Post, a national daily.

Journalist Beaten Up

Mahendra Luitel, Chief Editor of *Nirantar Weekly* published from Biratnagar was beaten up by Chhatra Dangi, Proprietor of Letang-based Pathibhara X-ray on June 20, Friday.

Dangi thrashed journalist Luitel when he was covering the news story on the illegal operation of X-ray service and the issuance of report unscrupulously when public started complaining against the irresponsibility of Dangi.

Dangi was not Radiologist by his profession but developed X-ray report in the guise of Doctors, stated in the press release issued by Benup Prasad Dawadi, chairperson of Youth Journalism Alliance, Letang.

But Dangi flayed the charge leveled against him saying "I am Lab Assistant not Radiologist and I have not written any X-ray report of any patient in the hospital".

ANNFSU Cadres Thrash FNJ Chapter President

The Central Member of CPN-UML-aligned All Nepal National Free Students Union (ANNFSU) and Free Student Union Bhojpur Multiple Campus President Dhruba Raj Rai assaulted and injured President of Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) Bhojpur district Shahiman Rai, including four other journalists on June 4 Wednesday.

Alleging that the journalists did not reflect his contribution while covering news, an inebriated Rai broke into FNJ office and manhandled journalists when the latter were holding meeting.

Those attacked and injured in the incident were FNJ district vice-president Gyanendra Khadka, secretary Niroj Koirala, joint secretary Eksan Rai and central member Shyam Krishna Dahal. FNJ district president Rai and vice-president Khadka sustained minor injury.



Dekendra Thapa's Dead Body Exhumed

The body of Journalist Dekendra Thapa, who was killed by the CPN (Maoist) on August 10, 2004, was exhumed after four years on June 25, 2008 Wednesday.

A team led by National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) dug out the remnants of a corpse, believed to be that of journalist Dikendra Raj Thapa from Dwari VDC in Dailekh district.

The clothes of the corpse matched the details provided by Thapa's wife, Laxmi Thapa, according to NHRC Regional Coordinator Bed Prakash Bhattarai, The NHRC technical team is yet to give its official report on the work.

He was a local correspondent of Radio Nepal and was abducted from Chhanna Bazaar of Bhawani VDC-4 on June 26, 2004 after he reached there to hold discussion with Maoists over a local dispute.

According to the investigative report of Federation of Nepalese Journalist (FNJ) released on June 15, 2008, Thapa's body could have been buried some 150 meters away from the proposed Lower Secondary School in Duwari-1 of Dailekh.

The investigation team has suggested the government of Nepal for the formation of high-committee to investigate the incident, to bring the guilty to justice at the earliest. Likewise, the team has suggested FNJ central office that it should send central investigative team to the buried place of the corpse and send for DNA test. ♦

Legal Watch

District Court Decision for Compensation to Journalist

The District Court, Morang issued an order in the name of the government to provide with the compensation worth Rs. 10,000 to journalist Manoj Shrestha. Journalist Shrestha was severely beaten up by the police while reporting during the Jana Andolan-2062/633 BS in Biratnagar, the eastern district of Nepal.

The police thrashed him to injury and broken his camera worth Rs. 25, 000 in Biratnagar buspark on 2062 Chaitra 29 in course of reporting. Journalist Shrestha is Biratnagar-based correspondent of Annapurna Post.

A bench of Morang district court judge Narayan Prasad Shrestha gave verdict of the case filed before two-and-a-half years.

It was also decided that the perpetrator Police Inspector Santosh Tamang would not be subjected to any punishment, said Advocate Binaya Raj Pandey. ♦

Rupandehi District Court Verdict

The District Court, Rupandehi furnished clean chit to a case for undue influence against the then Executive Editor of Nawa Tilottoma Daily, Ram Raj Pokharel and libel and defamation case against publisher of Manimukunda Pvt. Ltd Surya Prasad Pradhan on June 9, 2007.

A single bench of Chief Judge of the Court Narayan Prasad Dhital issued verdicts on both two cases concluding the claims furnished regarding the cases were not adequate.

Elite English Boarding School Proprietor Manohar Prasad Mainali and his wife Indira Mainali filed a duress case against Pokharel for allegedly forcing them to sign on five written and blank sheets at his office. Likewise, Proprietor Mainali registered libel and defamation case after a news on 'Rape Attempt over Girl Student' published in Nawa Tilottoma Daily of Manimukunda Pvt. Ltd. on December 2006.

Freedom Forum Legal Support Desk provided assistance to both Pokharel and Pradhan in the registration of reply letter on May 19, 2006 demanding the withdrawal of the cases.

Workshop on Journalism Policy...

In this connection, the book would prove to be a foundation which can contribute to pave the way for a future course in media restructuring in consistent with federal democratic Nepal, the participants commented. Expressing their views and comments on the report were Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), Morang Chapter Chairperson Shambhu Bhandari, senior journalists, Kaushal Chemjong and Murali Yadav and Bajaya Santosi Rai, among others.

Altogether 50 individuals, including media workers, lawyers, civil society people and intellectuals of the eastern region of Nepal participated in the workshop presided over by Freedom Forum, Biratnagar Chairperson RP Sitaula.

Culture of Impunity behind press freedom violation

Uta Melzer, Press Freedom Manager of IPI

Personal Information

Uta Melzer is the Press Freedom Manager at the International Press Institute (IPI), managing press freedom activities carried out by the regional Press Freedom Advisers. Before joining the IPI, she worked as an attorney for approximately seven years, including at an international tribunal in Zurich, Switzerland, for an appellate court in New York, and a private law firm in Washington, D.C. She is from Austria, but was educated in the United States. She also lived in Nepal for one semester as a student in 1994.



Recently, she travelled to Nepal for the second time as a member of IPI delegation from June 27 –29 with the view to calling on government leaders to take active steps to improve Nepal's media environment in the newly democratic country.

IPI Press Freedom Manager Uta spoke to Krishna Sapkota, Media Officer of Freedom Forum regarding the press freedom situation of Nepal.

Free Expression: How do you define IPI and its focused area of work?

Uta Melzer: International Press Institute (IPI) is a global network of media executors having Headquarters in Vienna of Austria. We have small staff members about 8-10 people, including press freedom advisors responsible for particular region. IPI is working on behalf of its 120 members around the world. They are generally publisher, editorial chief and high-ranking journalists. We speak on the behalf to support journalism and press freedom all over the world.

Uta Melzer: What are the current activities being carried out by IPI in the area of press freedom?

Uta Melzer: It has a few main activities for strengthening press freedom in the world. Firstly, it issues press releases to show concern for the cause of press freedom and express solidarity for actions when violations occur, journalists rights are infringed and anti-press activities increase. Sometimes, it is on the form of press release widely to its member nations or sometimes it is more targeted method. So, we write letters directly to international organizations, the president or other government leaders. We also regularly publish country report that summarizes the press freedom environment in a particular country. One of the most important activities is that IPI conducts advocacy mission where the ideas is that we take some of our members, mostly from the country better relevant for press freedom.

We arrange meeting with the representatives of media to discuss their issues and concerns. Then we follow up the respective government leaders to convey the prime concerns of journalists and essentially speak-up for the actions by the government for the greater good for press freedom.

Free Expression: As a delegate member you have closely observed the situation of Nepal during three days. What was your sole objective of the visit?

Uta Melzer: The visit was really a part of our job to ensure the on-going dialogue about press freedom in the country which is in the IPI watch list. We realize at the moment that the country is going through such a difficult transition that it would be easy to give focus on other issues mainly the political troubles and we are worried that the issue of press freedom can get lost in such tough period. So, we are here to make sure to keep emphasizing the essence of press freedom.

Free Expression: You have called on various political parties leaders to seek their commitment for the improvement of press freedom in Nepal? How was your impression during your talks with leaders in this connection?

Uta Melzer: First of all, we were encouraged that CPN (Maoist) Supremo Prachanda was writing to meet with us. And, it was a part of our responsibility to call on leaders for their greater

commitment for the protection and promotion of press freedom in Nepal. It is best prescribed as the cause of the meeting in Nepal. So we were very happy to hear a very strong verbal commitment to change his party's reputation at local level and internationally with respect to democracy including press freedom. As of today we must wait and see whether these commitments are followed-up by actual actions or not. To sum-up, he was very positive to the press freedom but we are looking forward to getting this commitment translated into practice.

Likewise, Nepali Congress Spokesperson Arjun Narsingh KC, spoke very convincingly about his party's stance for democracy and press freedom. Giving reference to his party's long involvement and support for democracy nation with a free and vibrant press, he called other party's firm commitment for the cause. CPN-UML representatives also expressed their strong verbal commitment that they would develop a common issue for press freedom in coordination with other political parties in the nations. We are always encouraged by the positive words from the party leaders and we are on wait and see for the actions.

Free Expression: How is IPI assessing the current situation of Nepal after the successful completion of the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections?

Uta Melzer: On one hand, it is very positive that the elections went largely without fabulous problems. But since the election has passed, our monitoring centre in Nepal has identified 46 incidents of violations on press freedom. And the reality is still that most of the incidents are perpetrated by the followers of the CPN (Maoist). So, I think we are hopeful that there will be an improvement after holding meeting with leaders as it was reflected in their comment and commitment for press freedom. They emphasized the main issue and concern regarding self-censorship. So that, over and over, journalists are still deciding simply avoid certain topics just because they have learnt that they would face bad consequences if they cover news and allow public know about certain deeds

and no authority bear burden to take actions against the perpetrators. So it is this culture of impunity that has created self-censorship and that is something bringing about harms and negative effects to press freedom.

Free Expression: What is the situation of press freedom in the countries like Iraq, Sri Lanka and other conflict-hit zone?

Uta Melzer: Comparatively Nepal is far better place for journalists compared to other conflict-ridden countries; however there are various problems and issues concerning press freedom in Nepal too. Sri Lanka has very unrelenting situation because the political parties leaders are still making statements that show absolutely no respect for press freedom. The government leaders are also saying very openly if journalists criticized the government, they can not protect them from any consequences. So I should say that this is the big difference between Nepal and Sri Lanka. That's why, we are strongly encouraged having seen the growing awareness amongst the government leaders in Nepal for press freedom.

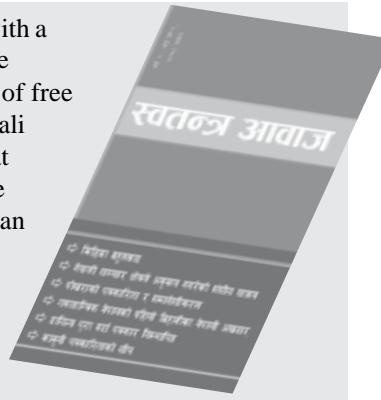
I should say that Iraq is even more dangerous place for journalists to carry on their business. The violence is being escalated and journalists are being attacked and even murdered in a greater number. So, in comparison, Nepal is doing very well showing improvement in the press freedom situation.

Free Expression: How do you evaluate the press freedom monitoring carried out by Freedom Forum and what is your recommendation ?

Uta Melzer: I found Freedom Forum's monitoring to press freedom violation appreciative and scrupulous. It has been regularly carrying out its efforts for the greater good of free press and freedom of expression campaign in Nepal. I would like to express my sincere compliments to the Forum to carry on its job in a further vibrant and extensive way in collaboration with like-minded organizations. ♦

Free Voice

Under its regular publication, Freedom Forum this time has come up with a journal namely **“Free Voice”**. The Journal has been published with the objective of advancing an advocacy for the protection and promotion of free press and freedom of expression as well as bringing out issues of Nepali press through the write-up of various journalists. Keeping in mind that there is a strong need of greater willpower and capability to materialize the principles and models envisaged by Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) for strong press freedom situation, we considered this journal would help create an environment to propel debate, discussion and campaign in this regard. This issue of the journal includes 7 writes-up and research articles on media issues by journalists working in various parts of the country.



Somalia: Murder of Abdul Samad Rohani, 25, of BBC

The journalist's body was found with three bullet wounds near the city of Lashkar Gah, capital of Helmand province in southern Afghanistan, one day after he was kidnapped. The previous day, 7 June 2008, a contributor to BBC radio and television was killed in Somalia. A pathologist said the journalist appeared to have been tortured before he was killed.

"We offer our deepest condolences to the journalist's family and colleagues. Abdul Samad Rohani was typical of many contributors to the BBC who risk their lives to ensure the independence and pluralism of news in their countries," the organisation said. Rohani was the head of the BBC's Pashtu service in Helmand province. He had also worked with the Afghan independent news agency Pajhwok since 2004.

"He was one of our best journalists. He covered a very difficult region. It is a serious blow for press freedom," said Lotfolah Latif, editor for the BBC in Afghanistan. The Afghan authorities strongly condemned "this vicious murder". Nasteh Dahir Farah, working for the BBC in Somalia, was killed on 7 June 2008, shot dead by armed men as he returned from work to his home in Kismayu, southern Somalia. His killers have not been identified.

China: One month before the Olympics, media face huge hurdles

One month before the start of the Beijing Olympics, China needs to make enormous progress to ensure the free access it promised journalists when the Games were awarded, the Committee to Protect Journalists said.

Twenty-six Chinese journalists remain in prison and heavy government censorship remains in

place despite Beijing's broad assurances - made in its 2001 bid to host the event - that journalists would be given "complete freedom" during the Olympics.

Thailand : Minister attempts to ban broadcasts of private television station

Thailand's interior minister is under fire for moving to pull a private television channel off of cable networks nationwide. Cable operators, opposition senators, and free expression advocates are calling a directive by Interior Minister Chalerm Yoobamrung - which media reports say threatens cable operators with imprisonment unless they pull the plug on cable channel ASTV - illegal and unconstitutional.

On 13 June 2008, Chalerm Yoobamrung moved to ban ASTV, in an apparent attempt to stifle its live coverage of anti-government protests organized in Bangkok by the People's Alliance for Democracy.

The English-language daily "The Nation" quoted the interior minister as telling: "...The broadcasting of ASTV through cable TV is a crime..."

Sri Lanka: State media level dangerous allegation against Sri Lanka Press Institute

Free Media Movement expresses serious concern that a state-controlled media outlet has levelled dangerous allegations against the Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI) without verifying the story with SLPI.

In a press release issued on 26 June, SLPI responded: "the Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI) strongly refutes the prominently displayed front page story of today's 'Dinamina' newspaper titled: 'Eight Tigers sent to Norway under journalist label' as baseless, misleading and factually incorrect.

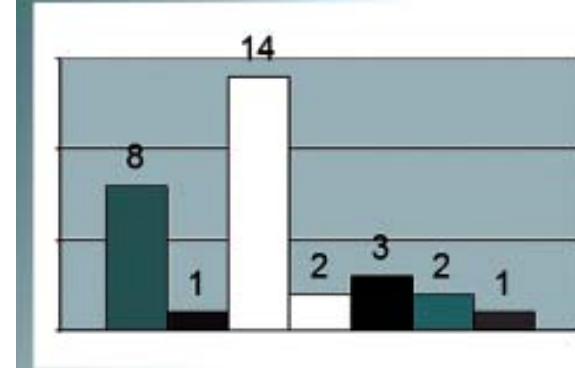
Malaysia: Government measures seek to restrict media access to Parliament

Media advocates in Malaysia are calling on the government to explain the new limitations recently placed on journalists' access to Parliament. In a statement issued on 25 June 2008, the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ), SEAPAs Alerts partner in Kuala Lumpur, said it is "deeply concerned about the ban imposed by the Parliament on journalists in the Parliament lobby."

Source : International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX)

Media Rights Violation in Nepal during June, 2008

Attack	8
Vandalism	1
Manhandle	14
Threat	2
Misbehaviour	3
Closure	2
Prohibition	1



Our Websites:



Mail To :

Published by:

Freedom Forum

P.O. Box: 24292, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel / Fax :977-1- 4102030 / 4102022

Email: info@freedomforum.org.np

Website :
www.nepalpressfreedom.org
www.freedomforum.org.np

Editor

Krishna Sapkota

Graphics

Kiran Kandel