



Free Expression

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A NEWSLETTER OF FREEDOM FORUM

ANNUAL PRESS FREEDOM REPORT 2026

Eroding Press Freedom

The trends of increased violation of press freedom with growing death threats and physical attacks, media under mounting economic stress with new advertisement regulation, stalled lawmaking and media reform, information disorder, destruction of properties and equipment of media and brutal attack upon frontline journalists, impunity left ignored and rising intolerance and discredit to media characterized Nepal's media landscape in this past one year- from May 1, 2025 to April 30, 2026. Supportive and inclusive laws on media reform along with collaborative efforts are essential to make media viable and credible. Equipping journalists with evolving technological skills and building tolerant public spheres are equal needs.

Freedom Forum recorded 97 incidents of press freedom violation from May 1, 2025 to April 30, 2026. In 97 anti-press incidents, a total of 145 media persons- 123 male and 22 female journalists- including 20 media houses were directly affected. This past year saw increase in violation, as the previous year from May 2024 to April 2025, had only 68 incidents of violations which had affected 88 media persons including 11 female and eight media houses.

Freedom Forum tracks incidents of press freedom violations in all seven provinces of Nepal through its media monitoring desk. These incidents are then analyzed and data maintained in the website- www.nepalpressfreedom.org.

1. Violation Type

This year, FF recorded seven types of violation against journalists and media. These are categorized as: - 28 incidents of threats/ death threats, 18 obstruction and vandalism, 21

attack/ manhandles, 13 misbehaviors, 5 court cases against media and journalists, 8 incidents of arson on media houses and their properties, and 4 cases of arrest/ detention.

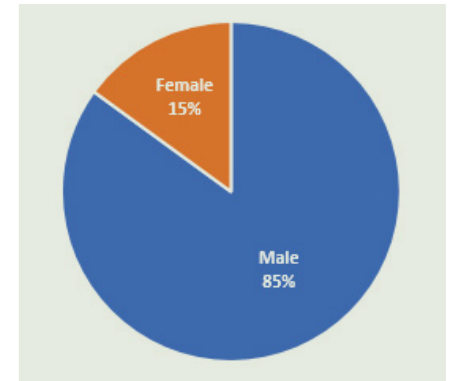
Out of total 145 media persons affected this year, 37 received threat and death threats combined; 34 faced obstructions while reporting; 30 were attacked; 23 faced misbehavior; 8 faced lawsuits (two under cybercrime charge); and 6 faced arrest/ detention. 7 journalists were injured in the arson attack at media houses.

Sudurpaschim Province, Beldadi Municipality Vice-Chairperson Shanti Nath filed a complaint against journalist Basudev Dhimi over news reports published on Paschimkhabar.com. Following this, Nepal Police issued an arrest warrant against journalist under cybercrime charges on April 23, 2026.¹

Moreover, out of total affected journalists 22 media persons including three females were assaulted while covering the Gen Z movement in different places on September 8 and 9, 2025. Out of 22, three photojournalists and a reporter were seriously injured with the bullets fired by the security forces in Kathmandu. A female photojournalist was also injured with stones thrown by the protestors in the same incident. Their reporting devices were also damaged.

Further, this year witnessed huge loss on media houses due to arson and vandalism that occurred during the Gen Z uprising. In these incidents, six media houses were set on fire and 10 vandalized in different parts of the country. Around 12 television channels broadcast were

Gender distribution of affected media persons (%)



disrupted and 38 media persons' vehicles and properties were destroyed in these incidents. Affected media organizations recorded a huge loss of infrastructures and relevant data and archives.

Similarly, four media houses faced lawsuits under different charges.

The Special Court staffs filed a contempt of court against Drishtinews.com and its Chairperson Shambhu Lal Shrestha and Executive Editor MP Subba on June 23, 2025. The portal had published news on alleged corruptions in the court processes leading to acquittal in the cases registered by the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority.²

Himal Khabar and Drishtinews.com faced contempt of court charges; and Bizmandu.com and Nepal Khabar.com faced lawsuits under defamation charges for publishing critical contents.

¹ <https://nepalpressfreedom.org/main/issue-single/1601>

² <https://nepalpressfreedom.org/main/issue-single/1534>

Message from Executive Chief

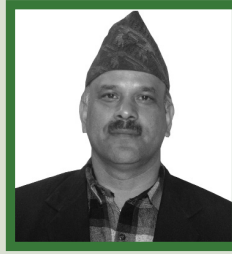
100 Days of New Government: Accessing Civic Space in Nepal

On March 27, 2026, former Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City Balendra Shah was elected Prime Minister of Nepal following the House of Representatives elections. Many people celebrated his victory as a defining moment in Nepal's democratic journey. This political transition came after a massive Gen Z-led movement against the previous government's declining public trust and triggered by the ban on social media platforms. The sweeping victory of the Rastriya Swatantra Party and formation of new government under PM Shah reflected nationwide public frustration with traditional politics and political leaders as well as a strong demand for accountable and responsive governance. However, as the new government has crossed its first 100 days of work, PM Shah's administration is facing growing public criticism. The civic movement that brought Shah to power is once again filling the streets. A movement that once demanded greater democratic freedoms is now increasingly concerned over the shrinking civic space under the same government. During this period, the government focused on reforming public services but failed to adequately address growing intolerance towards public dissent. Several incidents have alarmed civil society organizations, human rights defenders and independent journalists. Moreover, the administration's high-handedness towards the media has emerged as another disturbing trend during the past three months. In June 2026, newly appointed Home Minister Sudan Gurung warned that the ministry would take direct action against those who defame or damage the reputation of Nepali citizens. Such statements could lead to greater state interference in media content thereby undermining the constitutional role of the Press Council Nepal as an independent media regulatory body. More recently, several incidents have signaled an alarming tendency to criminalize journalism on the pretext of preventing character assassination.

Equally concerning was the government's attempt to restrict government advertisements and public notices exclusively to private media outlets. The directive, issued on April 1, raised serious concerns about the media's ability to hold the government accountable and threatened the economic sustainability of independent, provincial and community-based media. It is, however, a welcome step that the Supreme Court annulled the directive on July 14, ruling that private media cannot be excluded from receiving government advertisements. By weaponizing state resources, the government risks penalizing critical media and encouraging self-censorship. Another disturbing trend is the increasingly hostile online environment faced by journalists, civil society representatives, academics and critics who question or criticize government policies on social media. They have frequently been targeted by coordinated cyberbullying campaigns intended to silence, discredit and intimidate dissenting voices. Ironically, a government born out of resistance to digital repression now faces criticism for failing to protect freedoms in online stage.

After all, the public mandate of March 2026 was not simply a call for better governance or anti-corruption measures. It was also a demand for a more open, accountable and democratic state that respects civil liberties and fundamental freedoms. If the government continues to use excessive force against vulnerable communities, such as landless squatters without adequate rehabilitation strategies and adopts restrictive policies toward the independent press, it risks losing the public trust that made its historic electoral victory possible. Furthermore, legal reforms have progressed slowly and Parliament has not shown visible progress. In its first 100 days, the government has yet to deliver on its commitments to strengthen press freedom, promote a vibrant and independent civil society and encourage citizen participation through meaningful policy reforms.

To uphold Nepal's hard-earned democratic achievements, the government should immediately reverse policies that undermine civic freedoms. It should withdraw discriminatory advertising policies, ensure that media regulation remains constitutionally independent and hold security forces accountable for violations committed during public protests. A vibrant democracy is measured not only by ambitious reform agendas or technological innovation, but also by the extent to which citizens can assemble peacefully, journalists can report independently and critics can express their views without fear of intimidation or retaliation. Freedom is neither an ideal concept nor merely a slogan or a constitutional clause. It is the sum of fundamental freedoms: ability to communicate, to move, to organize, to defend oneself and to maintain human connections. When these rights are restricted, freedom disappears not only in principle but also in practice. Nepal must ensure that these freedoms are protected to preserve the democratic aspirations. FF looks forward to the government's positive actions in the months ahead to strengthen human rights and democracy. 🌱



Taranath Dahal

FF Marks 33rd World Press Freedom Day

Freedom Forum marked 33rd World Press Freedom Day on May 3 by releasing its annual press freedom report and joining a solidarity event with human rights activists in Kathmandu.

The report - Eroding Press Freedom- provides a comprehensive overview of the state of press freedom in Nepal between May 1, 2025 and April 30, 2026. It documents 97 incidents of press freedom violations, affecting 145 media persons and 20 media houses. Of those affected, 15 percent are women journalists. The report shows a notable increase in threats and attacks against journalists compared to the previous year. On the day, FF joined the Human Rights and Peace Society (HURPES) Nepal, Kathmandu Chapter in a peaceful demonstration at Jorpati Chowk. Participants displayed banners and placards calling for press freedom, social security and justice for working journalists.

Addressing the gathering, Former HURPES President Homa Kanta Chaulagain emphasized the indispensable role of journalism in defending freedom and human rights. "We respect every journalist who courageously uses the pen in the public interest. At a time when many journalists themselves have not received justice, we salute those who continue to stand up for the rights of others."

HURPES Kathmandu Chapter President Renuka Paudel stressed the state's responsibility to protect press freedom and journalists' rights. "HURPES has always remained committed to strengthening press freedom and human rights. On this World Press Freedom Day, we reaffirm our solidarity with a strong, free and independent press", Paudel said.

FF's Program Coordinator Nanu Maiya Khadka said World Press Freedom Day is an opportunity to recognize and honour the invaluable contributions of journalists while drawing attention to the challenges they continue to face. "FF's monitoring shows that attacks against journalists are increasing while impunity continues to prevail. The long pending impunity must end and justice for journalists must be ensured. Protecting press freedom requires not only constitutional guarantees but also effective implementation of laws and accountability for attacks against journalists", Khadka stressed. 🌱

Freedom of Expression Violations

Koshi Province

Threat

A group of journalists received death threats while covering river excavation in Morang on April 28.

Dumarlal Mehta, a reporter at Ajakoupdate.com told Freedom Forum that seven reporters reached the site to cover ongoing excavation in the local Lohandra River where workers were extracting sand and loading onto trucks. They were- Dipendra Kumar Sah (Breakingnepalnews.com), Bramha Dev Mahato (Namoonline), Santosh Mehta (New Drishti), Mohan Dhakal (Sangalo khabar), Nagendra Khadka and Prabesh Timsina (Shabda Express) including Dumarlal Mehta.

Reporter Mehta said, “During a monitoring visit by the District Administration Office a few days ago, authorities found excavation reaching around 25–30 feet deep and instructed the operator to stop, as it was not allowed. While we were speaking with the workers on-site, a group of 10 to 12 people approached us and asked if we were journalists. They then, began threatening us saying- What do you know to report here? Leave the place and do not come next time, or we will kill you.”

“Meanwhile, Gramthan Rural Municipality Chairperson Namonarayan Majhi also arrived and said that if even national leaders could be beaten, those who come without their permission- even journalists- could face the

same. We then left the area and reached a nearby police station”, Mehta added.

The journalists, later submitted a letter of concern to Chief District Officer Yubaraj Kattel seeking protection. 🌿



Madhesh Province

Threat

Madhesh Province based reporter at Ratopati.com, Ajay Shah was verbally abused and threatened following the publication of a news story. The incident took place on April 23 in Bardibas, Mahottari district.

Reporter Shah told Freedom Forum that he faced abuse and threats after publishing a news titled “Bardibas Water Supply and Sanitation Users Organization dispute unfolds” on the same day. The news story carrying Shah’s byline, revealed irregularities in the Bardibas Small Town Water Supply and Sanitation Users’ Organization and disputes among its members and consumers.

Following the publication, the organization’s treasurer Bhoj Prasad Phuyal mistreated Shah. “As Phuyal saw me with my colleagues, he became aggressive and started abusing me, linking it to the news. He even threatened to kill me,” Shah said. Phuyal also threatened a fellow journalist Bishal Basnet, Secretary of Network for Journalists of Bardibas, Mahottari for publishing statement demanding action against him, according to reporter Shah.

Misbehavior

Reporter Narendra Mahato of Gekhabar.com faced misbehavior while covering a protest in Mahottari on May 31.

According to Mahato, he had been reporting on a disputed government-owned land issue in the district. Following a court order, the local authorities had begun evicting residents from the land where local communities had been living for a long time. In response, locals staged a protest at the main market from early morning on the day of incident.

Mahato stated that while he was filming the protest, some individuals approached him and





Journalist Deoram Yadav receiving treatment after attack

verbally abused him. They shouted at him for reporting on the land issue and claimed he should not be allowed to remain at the site. Mahato reported that they seized his mobile phone and threw it to the ground.

The mobile phone was slightly damaged in the incident.

Attack

Reporter at Gorkhapatra National Daily from Saptari, Deoram Yadav was attacked on June 19 over a critical social media post.

According to the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) Saptari President Shrawan

Kumar Dev, Yadav was attacked over a social media post he had written on June 13 regarding irregularities in local road construction in Mahadeva Rural Municipality.

In a video shared by FNJ Saptari, reporter Yadav stated that his post was about substandard road construction over private land in the Ward no. 1 Sonra village. Following this, relatives of the municipality's Vice Chairperson Archana Yadav approached him and questioned him about the post. They then, hit Yadav on the head with helmet. He sustained bruises on his shoulder during the attack and was taken to a nearby hospital for treatment.

"The attackers, who attacked me for doing my job, must be punished as per the law. We (journalists) should be able to continue our profession without fear", Yadav said.

Yadav informed Freedom Forum that he has lodged a complaint against the attackers under offensive behavior charges at local police office and the police is investigating the case. 🇳🇵

Bagmati Province

Threat

Editor-in-Chief of Diyopost.com, Sudip Bishwakarma received a threat over news reporting on April 9.

Chief Editor Bishwakarma told Freedom Forum that a news report on the investigation initiated by the Department of Money Laundering Investigation into the assets of Nepali Communist Party leader and former Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal was published on April 8, along with screenshots of supporting documents.

Following the publication, Ganga Dahal, daughter of leader Dahal, called Bishwakarma and questioned why he had published the news and what/who the source of information was. She also threatened him with legal action, warning him to be prepared for legal process.

Bishwakarma further shared with FF that he was prepared for any legal action but would

not reveal his sources and that the report was published with evidences from credible sources.

Obstruction

A. Security personnel barred journalists from reporting at squatters' holding centers in Kirtipur on April 30. The holding center is a government-managed facility where families identified as 'squatters' displaced from riverbank settlements in various parts of Kathmandu have been relocated.

Reporter Sarisha Achhami of Setopati.com told Freedom Forum that while she was taking photos and videos of affected families, security persons approached her and said taking photos was not allowed in the center. They asked her to delete all the recordings. Achhami refused and argued that the photos were taken with the consent of the families and the journalists have right to document conditions of the displaced communities. Then, she was threatened that

reporting would not be allowed unless all the recordings were deleted.

"They not only forced us to delete our reporting, but also surrounded us while we were speaking with the families," she said, "As a result, we could not properly cover the hardships of affected families that were clearly visible at the center."

Freedom Forum also spoke with Kantipur National Daily reporter Daya Dudraj, who was similarly compelled to delete all photos and videos in order to continue reporting at the center the same day. He had also reached the holding center to document the condition of relocated families.

He said, "While I was filming the condition of families and their belongings, a municipal police officer suddenly grabbed my arm and asked- Why are you taking photos here? It is



Attack

Photo journalist at Onlinekhabar.com, Kamal Prasai was attacked while covering the ongoing demolition of informal settlements in Kathmandu on April 25. Nepal government began removing the settlements along riverbanks in Kathmandu from the day.

Speaking to Freedom Forum, journalist Prasai said he was recording drone footage of settlements along the Manohara riverbank when the incident occurred. "While recording, I saw three individuals carrying protective shields and batons approaching me. I thought they were police persons and continued recording. But they started shouting at me, asking- Are you a journalist? Where is your camera?" Prasai said.



Prasai added that due to the darkness in the evening, he could not clearly identify whether they were police persons or locals.

"While I was trying to remove the memory card from my camera to keep it safe, they snatched it, and one of them hit me on the nose. As I started bleeding, I ran away from the scene for my safety and to protect my equipment," he said.

Prasai underwent surgery of his nose at National Trauma Center on April 28. 🌿

not allowed. When I asked why, he said media access was restricted inside the center and nothing could be recorded as per the 'order from above'."

Reporter Dudraj was also instructed to delete all recordings to talk to the affected families. Amid a group of municipal police, his phone was seized and the recordings were deleted even from the recycle bin.

"I was not in a position to resist because I needed to speak with the displaced people, so I asked them to let me go inside," he added. "They again said no photos or videos were allowed and that I could only observe the situation." He further noted that while speaking with the families, police moved around the place and even asked him to stop and leave.

Other journalists, including Monika Waiba of Ukeara.com and Pawan Mudbhari of Khabarhub.com, also faced similar intimidation while reporting on the same site. Lately, media reports have brought to light the actual conditions and plight of the affected families in the holding center, contrary to the government's claims that the squatters were relocated to a safe place.

B. Reporters were barred from covering news at the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers in Singha Durbar on May 4.

According to a reporter from News Agency Nepal, media persons from various outlets were restricted from reporting at the premises following an order from Prime Minister Balen Shah. As PM Shah entered the office, security persons instructed journalists to stop recording videos and leave the premise.

However, Press Advisor at the Prime Minister's Secretariat, Dipa Dahal, stated that no such instruction had been issued to restrict journalists. She clarified that journalists are not barred from reporting or collecting information from areas where they are permitted. According to her, the issue reported by the media was merely a technical matter and not related to any restriction on press freedom.

Court Case

A. Kathmandu District Court issued an interim order on April 27, against online news portal Beemapost.com, directing it to remove published news reports.

The court order followed a case filed by Bibek Sikariya, Managing Director of MAW Vriddhi Commercial Vehicles Pvt. Ltd., seeking a restraining order against the news portal. Beemapost.com had published two reports alleging customs and tax evasion by the company's Chairman Bishnu Agarwal during the import of vehicles.

According to the portal's editor Navraj Neupane, Beemapost.com published two reports on April 7 and 9 based on the Office of Auditor General (OAG) Nepal report. The report stated that the company was found evading customs duties on the purchase of EV vehicles and recommended that the evaded amount be recovered from the company.

Following news publication, Sikariya filed a complaint at the court against the media outlet and its editor Neupane. Subsequently, on April 27, the court issued an interim order directing the portal to remove both reports from all its platforms and not to publish similar news in the future.

According to editor Neupane, neither the media outlet nor the editor was informed about the case or summoned for a hearing before the interim order was issued. The online portal received the court's restraining order at its office in Putalisadak, Kathmandu on May 12. Only then did the media outlet become aware of the case and the court's directive.

Editor Neupane told FF that the court has seriously undermined constitutionally guaranteed freedom of the press and their right to justice by issuing an interim order without hearing both parties. "We filed an appeal before the court today (May 14) requesting withdrawal of the interim order", Neupane informed.

B. Kathmandu District Court issued an interlocutory order against a news portal, Biznessnews.com on July 19. The order directs the news portal to remove total 66 news articles published on the portal related to the case.

The order was issued following a complaint filed by Cimex Inc. Pvt. Ltd., official distributor of a vehicle brand in Nepal, seeking to halt the publication of news reports of the company. Biznessnews.com has been publishing news highlighting concerns regarding alleged irregularities and misconduct by the distributor company in the sale of vehicles.

The court's order states that it is a continuation of an interlocutory order issued on June 8 and directs the media outlet not to publish or broadcast news related to the applicant (Cimex Inc. Pvt. Ltd.). It further states that previously published reports should not be republished and should be removed from all online platforms until the case is resolved. However, according to the media outlet, no such interlocutory order was issued on June 8. 🌿

Attack

Editor at Gandakilive.com, Dinesh Thapa was attacked while covering an event in Kathmandu, the federal capital of Nepal.

Speaking to Freedom Forum, editor Thapa shared that he along with several other journalists were covering the inauguration event of a television show. During reporting, a minor disagreement occurred between Thapa and cameraperson Saroj Moktan from the YouTube channel HitNepal, over adjusting their cameras. Moktan hit Thapa from behind in anger. When Thapa questioned him, Moktan again punched him on the face.



The attack caused an injury below Thapa's right eye resulting in bleeding. According to Thapa, Moktan attempted to attack him again but fellow journalists present at the venue rescued him.

Following the incident and immediate treatment at Annapurna Neuro Hospital, Thapa filed a complaint at the Police Circle, Singhadurbar.

Reporter Thapa further informed that the police summoned both parties to resolve the matter. Moktan apologized to Thapa and committed to covering his treatment expenses.

Gandaki Province

Obstruction

Journalists reporting on a public event were verbally abused and obstructed from reporting on April 7 in Tanahun district.

Speaking to Freedom Forum, Federation of Nepali Journalists Tanahun, DP Adhikari, who was present at the event, said that around 10 media persons covering the program were subjected to abuse.

According to Adhikari, the journalists were at the Vyas Municipality conference hall to report on an event focused on curbing corruption. During the program, Narayan Prasad Regmi, Chief of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA Pokhara office) told reporters that they had not requested his permission before recording video while he was speaking. He further claimed that recording video without his permission could also be considered 'corruption'.

Adhikari added, "We clarified to Regmi that we were there to report on a public event concerning good governance and we left the venue without reporting."

Misbehavior

Himalayan Television reporter from Tanahun, Binod Dhungana was verbally abused while reporting in Shuklagandaki Municipality.

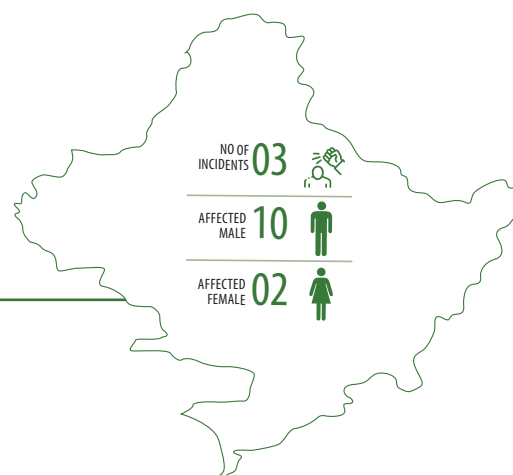
Reporter Dhungana shared with Freedom Forum that on June 14 while he was reporting on promotion of a local market, the municipality's Chief Krishna Raj Pandit made disrespectful comments about journalists stating that journalists were affiliated to political parties.

"I could not resist and I asked him whom he was referring to and why. In response, Pandit shouted, 'I do not need you to teach me' and left the place. This is not the first time he has used abusive language against journalists", added Dhungana.

Threat

Editor of Aadarshasanchar.com, Khemraj Gautam received threats over news reporting on June 13. The news portal is operated from Baglung.

Editor Gautam shared with Freedom Forum that Aadarshasanchar.com published a news



report on June 12, 2026 alleging irregularities in Kathekhola Rural Municipality. The report claimed that municipality Chairperson Raju Thapa was involved in irregularities in the municipality development works.

Following the news publication, Chairperson Thapa called Gautam and spoke abusive against him. He also sent threatening messages to Gautam's mobile phone. Thapa also posted a Facebook post criticizing journalists on the same day.

Gautam then, informed Federation of Nepali Journalists Baglung and the online portal's chief editor about the incident.

"The Chairperson's remarks has affected me personally and professionally", Gautam added.

On June 16, FNJ Baglung Chapter facilitated discussion between journalist and municipality Chairperson. During meeting, Chairperson Thapa admitted his mistake and apologized for his behavior. He also committed not to repeat such action in the future.

Lumbini Province

Threat

Reporter at Saurya Online, Ram Bikash Chaudhary was abused and threatened through social media over a news report on May 8.

Reporter Chaudhary shared with Freedom Forum that he had published a news story on April 28 about the repeated sexual harassment of a 17-year old girl at a local school. In the report, he mentioned that a teacher at Shrimati Manraajidevi Secondary School allegedly threatened and raped a minor student on the school premises. The story with Chaudhary's

byline further stated that although the school's Principal Hridayaram Yadav was aware of the incident, no action was taken against the accused teacher.

Following publication of the news, Principal Yadav and two other individuals posted abusive messages against Chaudhary on social media and threatened him with legal action.

Reporter Chaudhary then, filed a complaint with the cybercrime department of Nepal Police on May 11 seeking strict legal action

against Principal Yadav and Facebook users Manoj Yadav and Aryan Yadav under cybercrime charges.



Karnali Province

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



Sudurpaschim Province

Obstruction

Four reporters were intimidated while covering news in Ranisain, Bajura.

Reporters Janak Bohora (Image TV), Anil Shahi (Radio Budinanda) and Jeetjung Kattel (Radio Api) were harassed and forced to delete their recordings during the incident on May 18.

Speaking to Freedom Forum, reporter Bohora said they had travelled to Ranisain to promote the area as a tourism destination due to its scenic beauty. However, the area has recently become a site of conflict over a geographical dispute between Karnali and Sudurpaschim provinces.

Reporter Bohora said, "On May 18 as we reached Lampata, three individuals asked who we were and threatened us to return home.

But we continued reporting and recording photos and videos with our mobile phones and camera. Meanwhile, around 250–300 people approached us and ordered to delete all recordings. They also forcefully seized our mobile phones, but later returned them after deleting all the recordings."

"The mob also shouted- Who is Anil Shahi among you? We will not spare him. As they could not identify reporter Anil Shahi, we escaped a possible mishap and left the place", Bohora added. Reporter Shahi continuously reported on the conflict in the bordering villages.

In a separate incident on May 19, Janata TV reporter Umesh Bahadur Shahi's drone camera was damaged while he was reporting in Lampata. Locals asked him to hand over the drone and threw it on the ground. Reporter



Shahi informed FF that the drone camera, fans and gimbal were completely damaged.

"This incident should be raised as a national issue and our safety must be ensured," reporter Bohora said.

Attack

Executive Editor at Palikasamaya.com, Kamal Bohora was attacked on June 7 in Kailali.

Speaking to Freedom Forum, journalist Bohora shared that he had been covering news about alleged illegal activities in community forests in Mohanyal Rural Municipality, Kailali. According to him, two individuals on a motorcycle attacked him at around 9:00 pm. He alleged that attackers were informed of his presence by the forest official. Bohora sustained minor injuries to his face, hands and legs in the attack. Security persons took the attackers under control preventing more serious harm.

Following the incident, police facilitated discussion among the journalist and attackers

on June 8. During the meeting, the attackers apologized and Bohora agreed not to register the case.

Threat

Journalist Dhanaraj Saud of Paschimraibar.com was threatened over news on June 25 in Achham.

Journalist Saud told Freedom Forum that Chairperson of Bannigadhi Jaygadh Municipality Tek Bahadur Saud, summoned

him to the municipality office and asked who the source of a news published on the portal was. The news report published on the portal on June 23 alleged the Chairperson's involvement in irregularities related to procurement in the municipality. The story quoted a municipal employee as the source.

Following news publication, Chairperson Saud called the journalist to office and asked about news source. When the journalist refused citing journalistic code of conduct, Chairperson threatened to 'show him his place' in the presence of municipality officials and executive members.

Arrest warrant issued against journalist under cybercrime charges for reporting

Nepal Police issued an arrest warrant under cybercrime charges against journalist Basudev Dhami in Kanchanpur on April 23. Dhami is the publisher of Paschimkhabar.com.

According to Freedom Forum's representative for Sudurpaschim Province, Min Bam, the warrant was issued after Beldadi Municipality Vice-Chairperson

Shanti Nath filed a complaint at the District Police Office, Kanchanpur under Section 47 of the Electronic Transaction Act. Vice-Chairperson Nath lodged the complaint over critical news articles published on the portal on April 16 and 17 and Dhami's Facebook post. The reports covered her arrest in connection with the alleged murder of a local resident and her alleged involvement in fraud related to the provincial government's agricultural grant

program. The news reports are based on quotes from local sources.

Following the news publication, Vice Chair Nath filed the complaints and the arrest warrant was issued against journalist Dhami. About 25 days later, the police revoked the arrest warrant, stating that there was no evidence to substantiate the allegations against the journalist.

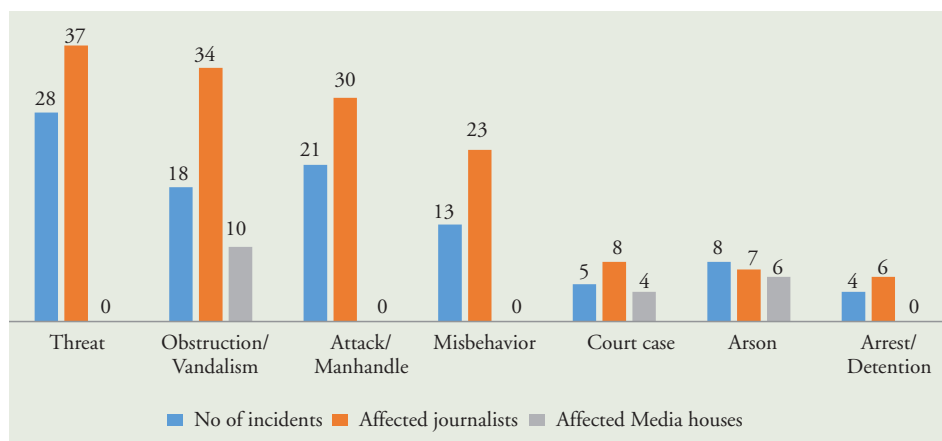
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2. Violations in Provinces

The highest number of press freedom violation (40) was recorded in Bagmati Province with majority (33) in federal capital, Kathmandu. In these incidents, total 61 (46 males and 15 female) media persons and 14 media houses were directly affected.

Lately, Kathmandu has become increasingly hostile for the journalists' covering protests and government activities with affected numbers 35 male and 10 females in the past year. Even the newly formed government is yet to create a positive atmosphere for free press.

On April 30, while reporting on homeless squatters in rehabilitation centers in Kirtipur, around five journalists were harassed and their recordings were forcefully deleted from their mobile phones and cameras. When the journalists confronted the security personnel at the centers, they were told that they had received "orders from higher body" to restrict media access to the premises.³



During Gen Z movement alone, 11 different incidents took place in Kathmandu, where media outlets- Kantipur Television and publication house, and the Annapurna Post daily were set on fire and various television channels- Avenues, AP1, Prime TV, News Nepal, Himalaya, ABC and Space 4K - were also forced to stop their operation for at least 24 hours. Four journalists were seriously injured with bullets and other were injured during arson and vandalism in the media offices.

³ <https://nepalpressfreedom.org/main/issue-single/1603>

Similarly, media houses outside Kathmandu-Bhanjyang daily, Radio Dhorbarahi, Safalkhabar.com, Kalika FM, Ilam Express, Radio Bani, Lokdarpan FM and Radio Jagaran were also seriously affected in vandalism during the movement.

Bagmati Province is trailed by Madhesh Province with 21 incidents affecting 31 media persons (3 females). Similarly, 10 incidents each occurred in Gandaki and Sudurpaschim Provinces affecting 20 media persons in Gandaki and 11 in Sudurpaschim; followed by 7 incidents in Lumbini Province where seven journalists were affected. In 6 incidents recorded from Koshi Province, 10 males and in 3 incidents from Karnali Province 5 male journalists were affected.

3. Affected media persons and media

Continuation to the previous years' trend that media persons affiliated with the online media are found to be the most targeted for their news coverage. According to data, 50% of the total journalists who faced intimidation for doing their job in the past year work in different online media houses.

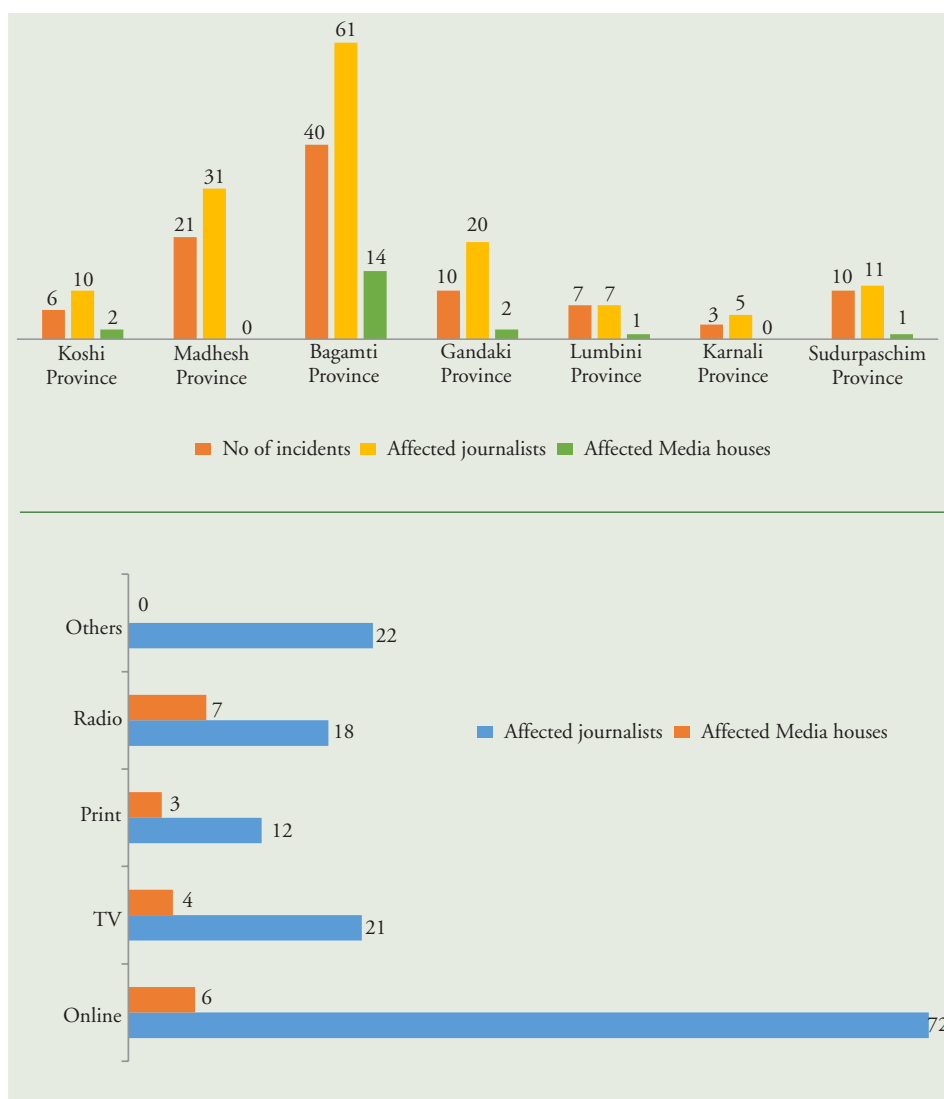
Among 145 violation affected journalists, 72 are affiliated to online media followed by 21 in television, 18 in radio, 12 working in print media and remaining 22 journalists categorized under 'Others' faced intimidation during reporting in groups (events, press meet, etc.)

*Photojournalist at Onlinekhabar.com, Kamal Prasai was attacked while covering the ongoing demolition of informal settlements in Kathmandu on April 25. While he was recording drone footage of settlements along the Manohara riverbank three individuals carrying protective shields and batons approached him and threatened whether he was a journalist. They hit on Prasai's nose and took camera's memory card.*⁴

Notably, with the growing number of online news portals and television channels broadcasting on social media platforms like YouTube, a significant number of journalists in these media have been targeted for their contents.

4. Elements hostile to journalists

The highest number of journalists (42) faced threat and/ or attacks from political leaders



and their cadres followed by public employees intimidating 36 journalists.

Additionally, 23 media persons were intimidated by the security persons including four photojournalists who were hit by the bullets during Gen Z protest coverage. Total 40 were targeted by elements categorized under 'Others' such as businesspersons, locals, contractors, advocates, etc. Under this category, 17 journalists faced attacks and obstruction during reporting from the protestors. It is concerning that both state and non-state actors are on the frontlines, actively intimidating journalists.

5. Topics of the news reported

Out of total affected journalists, majority (35) faced intimidation for covering news related to government activities in both the federal and local levels. Secondly, journalists (31)

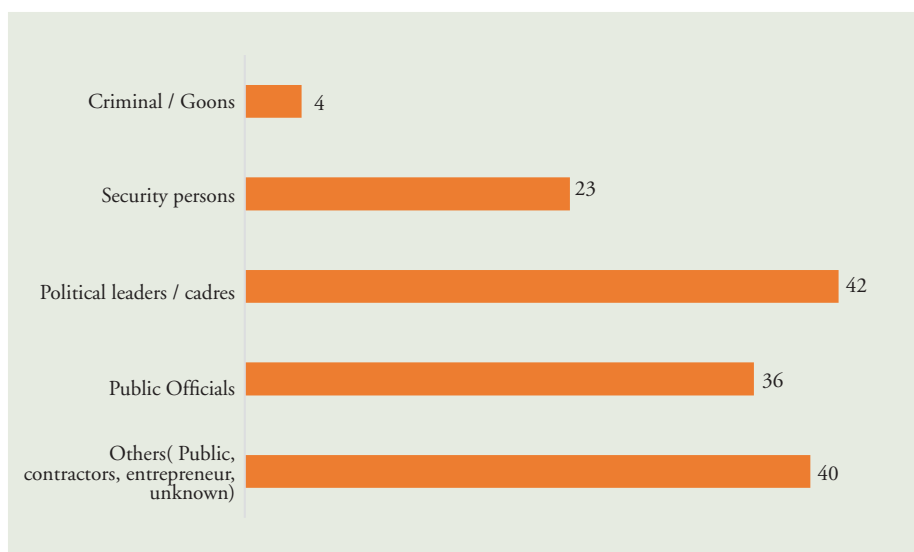
reporting corruption at public offices were found to receive threats of attack and death threats followed by 22 journalists intimidate for covering news on social issues including health, education, protests, etc. and 14 reporting on political issues.

Moreover, ten journalists faced violation during reporting on environmental issues especially illegal extraction of natural resources.

Journalists reporting election activities during March 5 House of Representatives election were also attacked and threatened for their news coverage.

On February 26, a prominent online news portal Ratopati.com's Koshi Province bureau chief Arjun Acharya was attacked in Jhapa-5 while covering a door-to-door campaign of Communist Party of Nepal (UML) Chairperson KP Sharma Oli. His

⁴ <https://nepalpressfreedom.org/main/issue-single/1599>



mobile phone was confiscated and he sustained injuries to his head, eyes and face.

In addition to physical attacks, media also faced regulatory restriction on its contents during election.

On February 16, the Election Commission (ECN) wrote to the Press Council Nepal (PCN) to take action against Setopati.com, an online news portal, for publishing a public opinion poll on election outcomes. The Press Council sought clarification, alleging a violation of the code of conduct. Setopati.com subsequently filed a writ petition at the Supreme Court, arguing that the move violated constitutional guarantees of press freedom. On March 9, the Election Commission imposed a fine of NPR 100,000 on the media.

TREND ANALYSES

Media at receiving end during Gen Z uprising

This past year Nepal's media also became victim during the historic Gen Z uprising that marked massive destruction. Many media persons were injured. The Gen Z uprising held on September 8 and 9 took lives of 76 youths and more than thousands were severely injured across the country.

With rising youth frustration toward then government leading to demonstrations and protests, a notable trend this year has been severe attacks on photographers and their equipment. Multimedia journalists on the ground covering news faced increased intimidation.

Arson attacks on mainstream media houses caused huge loss of property and documents

including irreplaceable contents archive. These losses are yet to be compensated or adequately addressed. These incidents clearly indicate that the journalists are at the receiving end during are political protests- be it in the federal capital or outside. The more political protests, the more risk to media.

The House of Representatives that was dissolved after the Gen Z movement on September 12, 2025 came to life after election held on March 5 electing representatives to 275 seats. Subsequently, a new government led by the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), with nearly a two-thirds majority is formed amid high public expectations.

Stalled law and policy reform

The laws and policies that were rendered ineffective at the Lower House following the dissolution of Parliament are yet to be reintroduced or reformulated by the newly elected members of the Lower House.

Social Network Management and Operation Bill is pending at the National Assembly, the upper house and Mass Media Bill is still waiting entry to parliament.

After a year of transition period since the approval of the Public Service Broadcast Bill and the transformation of state-owned media into Public Service Broadcasting organizations, no visible reforms have been observed. The PSB has largely failed to establish itself as an independent and autonomous entity, as envisioned by the law.

Misuse of outdated legislation- Section 47 of the Electronic Transaction Act (ETA)- is

continued against journalists and citizens for exercising their freedom of expression on digital platforms. In the past year, two journalists were issued arrest warrant over their critical reporting under this charge.

Senior journalist Dil Bhusan Pathak was issued arrest warrant for his reporting in June 2025, following complaint filed by a Former Prime Minister's son. Pathak faced the lawsuit for a year and was finally acquitted by the court on April 1, 2026 stating that prosecution's claims were insufficient.⁵

Impunity persists, Justice delayed

At a time when impunity relating to crimes against journalists during the conflict-era are still awaiting address, the torching alive the on-duty journalist and lackadaisical investigation into the incident exposes journalists are at high risk. Cases of slain journalists Suresh Rajak, Suresh Bhul and recent brutal attack upon journalists during Gen Z protests are still awaiting investigation and justice.

Even though the government declared martyr to journalist Suresh Rajak who died while covering the pro-monarchy protest on March 28, provided employment to his wife and provided monetary support to four journalists injured during Gen Z movement, justice is yet awaited. Inaction of transitional justice mechanisms have further fueled a trend of impunity and deepened despair among victim families.

In a democratic society where press freedom and journalists' safety must be a multi-stakeholders' concern, the inadequate advocacy for these shows a reflection of shrinking civic space in Nepal.

Investigative journalism under constant threat

As was the case in the past, the investigative journalists who expose political and financial corruption and irregularities were among the most targeted this past year too. Both the state and non-state actors are at frontlines to assail these journalists who question officials and their cabals linked to irregularities.

Despite political parties being one of the key pillars of a democratic system, the other pillar-free press continues to be victimized by political cadres at the district and local levels. Their public commitments often contradict their actions, as they undermine media freedom and are often intolerant of criticism. This calls for a shift in the political perspective on the role of media and free press in sustaining a functional democracy.

⁵ <https://nepalpressfreedom.org/main/issue-single/1525>

Regulatory pressures on media

The media regulatory body, Press Council Nepal took action against 136 registered media and 27 unregistered media till January 21, 2026 through its own monitoring. According to the Council, these media allegedly violated the journalistic code of conduct.

During election period, both the Election Commission and Press Council Nepal monitored contents published in both social media and mainstream media through their own monitoring system. Elections Commission's Information Integrity Promotion Center claimed 612 contents as 'Harmful Information' published on various platforms including media outlets from February 20-26. The commission referred 74 cases to the Press Council Nepal for further action.

Press Council Nepal too, took action against 25 for allegedly violating election's code of conduct and publishing the misleading contents such as public polls, fake screenshots of news portals, fake and misleading information. Additionally, the Council's monitoring between January 18 to March 8 identified total 987 media publishing fake or misleading contents. Of these, 844 were registered media and 143 involved fabricated screenshots impersonating credible media. The Council notified 125 media through phone calls and issued letters to 269 media. Further, 43 cases were referred to the Cyber Bureau of Nepal Police and 550 remain under investigation at the Council.

On February 26, ECN also wrote to the PCN asking removal of the documentary published in YouTube channels of BBC citing its potential impact on the HoR elections that was going to be held on March 5. PCN, responded on the request as its was beyond its jurisdiction because BBC is an international media outlet. But the Council advised Nepal-based media outlets not to republish the documentary.

Moreover, Setopati online was also fined Rs. 100,000 for publishing public polls during election period.

On April 22, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology issued a statement urging all news media, individuals, and institutions not to publish, disseminate, or circulate "baseless, false, or misleading" news. It warned that violators would face strict action under prevailing laws, including the Electronic Transactions Act. This statement is unconstitutional and represents a severe

attempt to suppress free expression.

A new trend that the Nepal Army issued a notice on April 24 urging public not to trust fake and misleading information on social media and the mainstream media and rely on the official and verified information. It has warned that its department is regularly monitoring such activities and those involved in spreading such information will face serious legal pursuit. This act may have serious repercussions upon facts brought through investigative journalism and published in media in future.

Media literacy must to combat Mis/ Disinformation

The number of online media outlets is continuously rising with around 5,307 online media portals already registered at the Department of Information and Broadcasting. However, their sustainability remains uncertain. The need for skilled human resources, affordable internet access and a favorable business environment is essential to strengthen online media.

Moreover, the capacity building of Nepali media houses and journalists to navigate disruptive changes remains inadequate leaving them vulnerable to the growing flood of disinformation, misinformation and malinformation. This has undermined the information integrity, contributed to information disorder and restricted citizens' access to information. It has further weakened the role of a free press and traditional media.

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are emerging frontier bringing both opportunities and challenges to Nepal's media landscape. However, their sustainable and effective use to promote press freedom is still limited. Their use with current applications is largely limited to basic tasks such as translation, editing and content generation. Nepali journalists and media houses still lack adequate AI literacy as well as the skills needed to mitigate its risks, particularly those arising from the spread of misinformation and disinformation.

The widespread circulation of misinformation on social media during the House of Representatives (HoR) election also influenced mass media this past year, resulting in the noticeable publication of misleading information. This highlights the urgent need for efficient editorial skills and dedicated fact-checking desks in every media organization.

Rising economic crisis in media

Media co-opting is a concerning trend that is eroding the value of a free press. This growing practice involves the control and manipulation of media houses and journalists to serve specific interests, posing a serious threat to press freedom.

In the aftermath of COVID 19, significant number of media shifted toward digital formats, bringing slow financial recovery in the media sector. However, as the financial health of media houses has not significantly improved, risks to journalistic professionalism have increased. Worsening this situation, the government's introduction of new advertisement regulations has become a severe blow to private media organizations, pushing them to further financial hardship. This has a direct bearing on strength and sustainability of media.

Retrenchment in media houses has continued this year as well, leading to increased job-hopping among media professionals. A comprehensive study and research on promoting press freedom and improving journalist retention has become an urgent need. Even the media houses have begun writing about each other's financial health, disclosing sorry state. Kantipur national daily talked to 27⁶ working journalists at different media and learned that most of them have been unpaid, underpaid or laid off of their jobs.

The ongoing financial crisis in the media sector has also resulted in the non-reporting and under-reporting of important public interest issues. The closure of media outlets and reduction of staff have deprived many journalists of their ability to practice press freedom and have further restricted citizens' right to information.

Safety mechanism at NHRC should be more functional

The FoE and journalists' safety mechanism of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) under its Directive on the Formation of a Safety Mechanism and Work Procedure for the Protection of FoE, 2019, has three level based on functions- one at central level Steering Committee, central level Task Force and seven Province-level mechanisms in seven provinces.

The central mechanism has decided to allocate budgets for these mechanisms in the upcoming annual program plan and to form a five-member mechanism in each district in coordination with district chapters of the Federation of Nepali Journalists, the Nepal Bar Association, and the NGO Federation.

Furthermore, the NHRC has mainstreamed freedom of expression issues into its regular human rights monitoring activities. During the House of Representatives election, the Commission also conducted monitoring visits to media organizations including Freedom Forum to assess any violations of press freedom and the need for journalists' safety.

However, these mechanisms at the central and provincial levels need to be made more functional, especially given the current environment in which the media faces increasing threats and journalists reporting on corruption and government activities are becoming more vulnerable. The proactive functioning of these mechanisms can be helpful to free media reporting and journalists' rights.

DISCUSSION AND WAY FORWARD

Uncertainty in law and policy reform initiatives hampers the effective functioning of the state. In a democratic regime, constructive engagement and dialogue among multiple stakeholders form a foundational basis for making important decisions that has been largely ignored in recent times. As the new government and parliament have repeatedly committed to constitutional reforms, it is important to uphold the constitutional commitment to "full press freedom" by revisiting Articles 17 (2) and 19 of Constitution in line with international obligations, including the ICCPR. Multi-stakeholder engagement in policy making is the need of the hour.

Efforts to discourage and target media outlets and journalists- who question and demand

accountability- are intensifying through social media campaigns, including coordinated "unfollow" movements. Digital threats, attacks, and discrediting campaigns against journalists and media must be addressed in ways that strengthen the media as a source of credible information. All sectors should support and encourage the media to fulfill its role as a watchdog and a critical voice holding all forms of power accountable.

Promoting independent fact-checking skills of media, civil society organizations and fact checkers and increasing public awareness of journalists' rights and safety are steps toward safeguarding democratic processes in Nepal's evolving digital landscape.

With the rapid growth of digital platforms and the absence of appropriate legal frameworks to regulate them, citizens and journalists face increasing risks of surveillance and threats under outdated laws. The fast-evolving digital landscape requires constructive interventions through supportive and inclusive laws and policies.

Rising intolerance on multiple fronts poses growing risks to press freedom. It is essential for all stakeholders to build consensus and abide by the rule of law, ensuring respect for press freedom and the safety of journalists. Intolerance toward the media must end, and the protection of journalists reporting on corruption and irregularities must be guaranteed at all levels.

Continuous capacity building of journalists is essential through collaborative efforts. Skilling, reskilling, and upskilling should be continued

as ongoing efforts in response to evolving political, digital, and environmental challenges. Empowering journalists will strengthen press freedom.

Adequate training in modern technologies, especially for navigating digital environments and responsibly using AI, is increasingly necessary. Journalists and media personnel should be equipped with the skills to leverage AI effectively while safeguarding credibility and protecting themselves from misuse and digital mishap.

Government advertising policies should ensure fairness, proportionality and equal access to resources across all media outlets. Proper advertisement policy counts for sustainability of private media.

Insurance coverage for journalists and their equipment has become an urgent need as frontline journalists face increasing threat of intimidation. Moreover, journalists working under distress should also be provided with psychosocial counseling and support to strengthen resilience and their retention.

Journalists' strict adherence to ethical codes and professional standards help them minimize risks and maintain credibility.

A progressive and liberal approach to media, IT, and cyber laws and policies is crucial to ensuring both press freedom and the safety of journalists. Prolonged impunity in cases of crimes against journalists has further victimized affected families. Strong government commitment and decisive action are urgently needed to address this issue. 🌱

Stage drama 'Lucifer Rising' halted following threats

The stage drama 'Lucifer Rising' was halted on May 24. Drama team announced indefinite halt of the show in Kathmandu. The drama was being performed at EK Theater Nepal in Kathmandu since May 15.

Theater member Saujan Senehang told Freedom Forum that the drama had two shows scheduled at 1:15 pm and 5:15 pm on Saturday. "Writer and director Sahalesh informed us that the play would not be staged from the day. He further informed us that he had been receiving numerous death threats through phone calls and messages over the play and asked us to halt the show," shared Senehang.

According to media reports, other actors involved in the play have also been allegedly receiving death threats.



Senehang further cited director Sahalesh as saying that the threats appeared to be politically motivated. Publisher Majhuwa Bagar issued a notice stating that the show was forcefully halted due to increased pressure from unidentified political persons and groups.

FF tried to contact director Sahalesh but his mobile was found switched off. Later, on May 25 a statement undersigned by Sahalesh was posted in Instagram account of Majhuwa Bagar stating that the drama was officially over.

Lucifer Rising, released on May 15 and scheduled to stage till June 3, is based on the Gen Z movement that took place in Nepal on September 8 and 9. 🌱

Editors Call for Ethical Framework on AI

With the rising use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Nepali media, media editors have called for an urgent need to develop ethical framework for responsible, credible and human-controlled use of AI during a workshop held in Kathmandu.

Freedom Forum conducted a workshop among editors in collaboration with Press Council Nepal, in Kathmandu on June 19. The workshop - Responsible, ethical and reliable use of AI in Nepali journalism- was organized with support from Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MOCIT). The workshop gathered total 54 participants (including six female editors) representing Press Council Nepal (PCN), Department of Information and Broadcasting (DOIB), nepali media organizations and freelancers.

Chief Officer at PCN, Jhabindra Bhusal noted that AI is a technology that can be used as a helpful tool but it cannot replace human intelligence and core values of journalism. He discussed positive and negative trends on AI use in media, for instance- news summary, developing sketch of infrastructures, accident related news sketch, fake photos and videos circulated in social media, etc.

Bhusal emphasized that with uncontrolled use of AI and institutional policies still lacking to regulate its usage, ethical framework is important. He suggested that this framework should include clear provisions for final editing and fact-checking compulsorily by editors, mandatory disclosure of AI generated material and adequate awareness on copyright violations in the production of multimedia content.

Following Bhusal remarks, Freedom Forum Executive Chief Taranath Dahal shared a paper on opportunities, challenges and way forward on ethical use of AI in journalism in Nepal. He shared that journalists still lack the skills necessary to effectively use AI. While AI is supportive in data analysis and collecting information, it lacks human sensitivity. Equally critical are the concerns regarding privacy, safety and intellectual property. He expressed concern that while there is a rush to consume new technology, users often lack the skills to utilize it responsibly.



Sharing important international resources on AI in media, Dahal highlighted a framework built by Media Matters for Democracy in Pakistan- Standards for AI in Journalism- as an excellent reference for Nepali context. He also warned that without proper awareness; use of AI could perpetuate algorithmic bias that could reflect social biases in media content.

On way forward, Dahal called all the media editors and media regulatory bodies to establish guiding principles ensuring transparency, mandatory disclosure, fact-checking and verification, editorial control on media contents and contents free from bias and discrimination. He further stated that data privacy and copyright should be protected, 'No-Go' zones must be clearly defined and media persons must be adequately trained. "Today in this forum, let's make a collective commitment to uphold core values of journalism- truth seeking, balance and public accountability- while adapting to the evolving technology", he said, "The council should revise its code of conduct and develop a separate directive for the use of AI. All the concerned sectors should focus on literacy and capacity building initiatives and promote co-regulation." Journalist and AI practitioner Jeevan Bhandari presented his paper on 'Use of AI in Nepali media and Code of Conduct'. During the

presentation, Bhandari explained how AI has intervened in all stages of journalism including data collection, production, editing and distribution. He noted circulation of deepfake and misleading content in social media platforms, copyright violations and threat of unemployment as the darker sides of AI, highlighting the urgent need for policy-level interventions. Concluding his presentation, Bhandari suggested that the Council should issue a national-level AI code of conduct, media houses should equip journalists with AI literacy skills and advocacy is required for responsible use of AI in other sectors as well.

During the workshop, a quick online survey with 24 questions was also conducted among the editors to understand their basic awareness, current use of AI, editorial stances and their input on a basic framework for the ethical use of AI in media. The survey found that the majority use AI for content translation, followed by fact-checking. They identified AI-generated misinformation, deepfake audio and video and job displacement as major concerns. Regarding capacity building and legal priorities, most respondents said that training to media persons should be a priority and that the PCN or a similar independent regulatory body should be responsible for enforcing AI guidelines in the media sector in Nepal.



In the discussion session, editors shared their experiences of using AI tools in newsrooms. They noted that AI is generally used in Nepali newsrooms for translation, language editing, headline selection, designing sketches and creating social media content. They said AI often fails to fully understand the nuances of the Nepali language in translated contents; copyright issues are also a problem. They emphasized that relying on AI without

final editing and verification by journalists themselves can be dangerous. So, capacity building for journalists on how to give appropriate prompts to AI tools along with development of ethical guidelines is the need of hour. They also stressed that media houses must adopt in-house guidelines as required.

Following the discussion, PCN's Member Secretary and Director General at DOIB

Chhabindra Parajuli said that all the sectors- media, general public and regulatory bodies- need to understand how to use AI and the government should also develop appropriate policies in line with the evolving technological developments. He ensured that the council will address issues raised during discussion in its future activities and further urged the media organizations to formulate in-house rules for using AI.

Moderating the workshop, Senior Administrative Officer at the council, Deepak Khanal said the program was timely and contextual given the rising use of AI in journalism in Nepal. He informed the floor that the council regularly monitors use of AI in Nepali media in accordance with the journalistic code of conduct.

Lastly, FF Chairperson Hari Binod Adhikari concluded the workshop with a joint commitment to prepare a draft of national ethical and responsible AI use framework for Nepali journalism. "The draft will incorporate suggestions from discussion. And, FF will always remain dedicated towards promoting and protecting ethical and credible journalists", he noted.

Ensure Safe Press to Strengthen Democracy

Freedom Forum organized a national seminar titled 'Enabling Democracy through Free and Safe Press' in Kathmandu on May 28, 2026 in collaboration with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Nepal. Speakers and participants called for comprehensive media law and policy reforms to address growing challenges to press freedom, journalists' safety and media sustainability in Nepal in the seminar.

Speaking as a keynote speaker, Member of Parliament Hon. Prakash Chandra Pariyar assured his commitment to defending press freedom and journalists' rights. Being a journalist himself, Hon. Pariyar described himself as a bridge between Parliament and the media community and pledged to support reforms that strengthen media freedom, democracy and human rights.

Highlighting seminar objectives, FF Executive Chief Taranath Dahal stressed that a free, independent and credible press is essential for democratic governance. He said the event

was aimed to build a common understanding among stakeholders on the need for legal, policy and institutional reforms to strengthen media freedom and democracy.

Following the keynote address, the seminar proceeded with two thematic sessions featuring

paper presentations on journalists' safety, media law, and policy reforms.

The first session focused on press freedom and journalists' safety. Senior journalist Namrata Sharma presented a paper on the state of press freedom in Nepal. She noted that





despite constitutional guarantees and Nepal's relatively favorable position in international press freedom rankings, journalists continue to face physical, digital and economic threats. She highlighted increasing incidents of attacks against journalists, online harassment, misuse of legal provisions such as Section 47 of the Electronic Transactions Act and growing safety concerns for women journalists.

Session moderator, RSF correspondent Binod Dhungel emphasized that journalists' safety should be viewed beyond physical protection and should include professional security, economic stability, mental well-being and digital safety.

Commenting on Sharma's paper, Dr. Binod Bhattarai suggested incorporation of UNESCO's comprehensive Journalists' Safety Indicators into press freedom violations monitoring systems. Further, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

multi-stakeholder mechanisms should be a shared responsibility of journalists, concerned stakeholders and commission itself for its effectiveness and sustainability.

Joint Secretary at NHRC, Yagya Adhikari urged the media rights organizations to engage actively with the mechanisms and also formally file complaints regarding violations with the NHRC to facilitate institutional action. He also recommended to establishment a dedicated journalist protection fund.

The second session focused on media law and policy reform. Presenting the paper on the issue, former Chief Information Commissioner Dr. Suresh Acharya argued that many existing media laws were enacted before the digital era and no longer adequately address current context. He called for an integrated national media policy and an umbrella media law that would govern all forms of media, including digital platforms.

Senior journalist Anita Bindu noted that emerging challenges such as fake information, misinformation and other evolving risks, including various forms of violence must be taken into account for media related policy reforms. In this context, relevance and effectiveness of existing media policies must also be reviewed.

Assistant Professor at Tribhuvan University Kundan Aryal emphasized the importance of regulating digital platforms in ways that protect freedom of expression while addressing misinformation and harmful content. He also raised concerns about the government's recent advertisement directive, arguing that it could negatively affect media independence and sustainability.

Federation of Nepali Journalists Vice-President Nitu Pandit stressed that any media-related legislation must be developed through broad consultation with stakeholders. She reiterated FNJ's position in favor of an independent and autonomous Media Council and called for legal reforms that promote media freedom rather than control.

In the closing session, Freedom Forum Executive Chief Taranath Dahal emphasized the need for continued collaboration among media organizations, civil society and state institutions to advance media reform and strengthen democratic governance. Chairperson Hari Binod Adhikari urged stakeholders to remain vigilant in defending press freedom and democratic values.

During seminar, participants urged the government to engage meaningfully with media stakeholders before introducing new legislation. Such reform efforts are essential to ensure a free, safe and independent press that supports democratic governance and strengthens public accountability.

The event brought together total 89 participants with 26 female including journalists, parliamentarians, representatives from National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Press Council Nepal, media organizations, academia and legal experts. 🌱



Open Budget Survey 2025: Nepal

About the survey

Government budget decisions – what taxes to levy, what services to provide, and how much debt to take on – have important consequences for all people in society. When governments provide information and meaningful channels for the public to engage in these decisions, we can better ensure public money is spent on public interests.

The Open Budget Survey (OBS) is the world's only independent, comparative and fact-based research instrument that uses internationally accepted criteria to assess public access to central government budget information; formal opportunities for the public to participate in the national budget process; and the role of budget oversight institutions, such as legislatures and national audit offices, in the budget process.

The survey helps local civil society assess and confer with their government on the reporting and use of public funds. This 10th edition of the OBS covers 82 countries.

Visit www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey for more information, including the full OBS methodology, findings for all surveyed countries, and the Data Explorer.

Transparency

This part of the OBS measures public access to information on how the central government raises and spends public resources. It assesses the **online availability, timeliness, and comprehensiveness** of eight key budget documents using 109 equally weighted indicators and scores each country on a scale of 0 to 100. A transparency score of 61 or above indicates that a country is publishing a sufficient volume of budget information, and that this information provides meaningful coverage of

core fiscal data, enabling the public to understand government budget decisions and supporting informed public debate on fiscal policy.

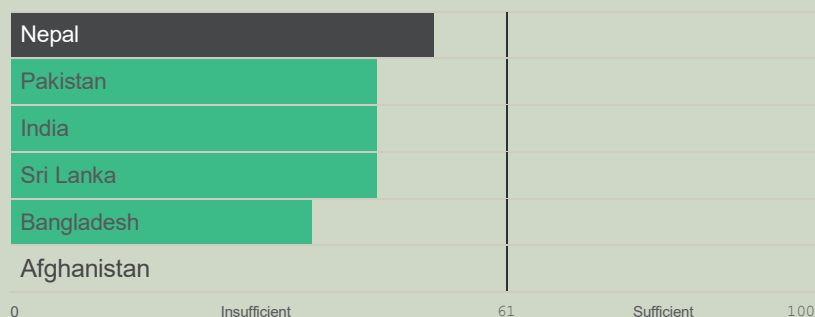
Nepal has a transparency score of 52 (out of 100).

Recommendations

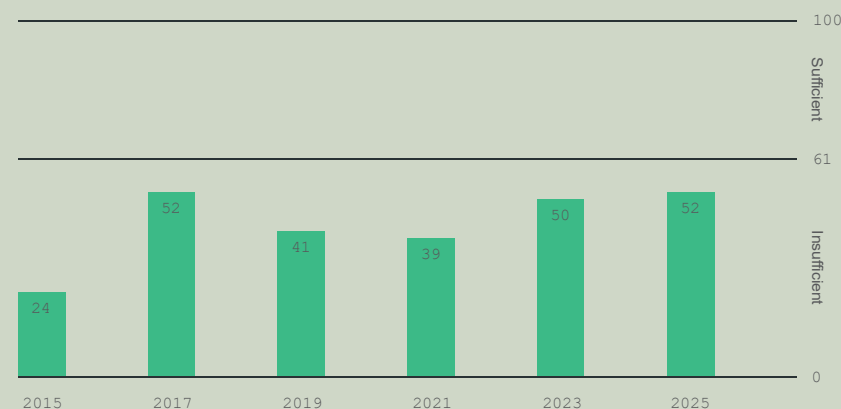
Nepal should prioritize the following actions to improve budget transparency:

- Produce and publish the Pre-Budget Statement and Citizens Budget online in a timely manner.
- Include in the Executive's Budget Proposal more comprehensive multi-year projections (including BY+2 estimates) and macro-economic forecast data, by strengthening the disclosure of sensitivity analysis detail, multi-year expenditure projections, multi-year revenue projections, and the fiscal sustainability of finances in the long-term.
- Publish a glossary of budget terms along with Executive's Budget Proposal to improve budget literacy.
- Improve the comprehensiveness of the Enacted Budget, by strengthening the disclosure of debt level and servicing detail, program-level expenditure detail, revenue category (tax and non-tax) information, and individual sources of revenue.
- Include in the Year-End Report more comprehensive macroeconomic forecast data, disclosures of fiscal risks, and policy and performance information, by strengthening the disclosure of comparisons between original estimates of extra-budgetary funds and actual outcomes, a financial statement, comparisons between original macroeconomic forecast and actual outcome, comparisons between planned nonfinancial outcomes and actual outcomes, and original level of funds for policies impacting the most impoverished and actual amounts.
- Improve the comprehensiveness of the Audit Report, by strengthening the disclosure of extra-budgetary fund information and steps taken by the executive to address audit recommendations.

Transparency in Nepal compared to others



How has the transparency score for Nepal changed over time?



Overview

Transparency:
52 /100

Public Participation:

28 /100

Oversight:

52 /100

Public availability of budget documents in Nepal

Document	2015	2017	2019	2021	2023	2025
Pre-Budget Statement	⊘	⊘	⊘	⊘	⊘	⊘
Executive's Budget Proposal	●	●	●	●	●	●
Enacted Budget	●	●	●	●	●	●
Citizens Budget	⊘	⊘	⊘	⊘	⊘	⊘
In-Year Reports	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mid-Year Review	●	●	●	●	●	●
Year-End Report	●	●	●	●	●	●
Audit Report	●	●	●	●	●	●

Key

- Available to the Public
- Published Late, or Not Published Online, or Produced for Internal Use Only
- ⊘ None

How comprehensive is the content of the key budget documents that Nepal makes available to the public?

Key budget document	Document purpose and contents	Fiscal year assessed	Document content score
Pre-Budget Statement	Discloses the broad parameters of fiscal policies in advance of the Executive's Budget Proposal; outlines the government's economic forecast, anticipated revenue, expenditures, and debt.	2024-25	Not Produced
Executive's Budget Proposal	Submitted by the executive to the legislature for approval; details the sources of revenue, the allocations to ministries, proposed policy changes, and other information important for understanding the country's fiscal situation.	2024-25	60
Enacted Budget	The budget that has been approved by the legislature.	2024-25	28
Citizens Budget	A simpler and less technical version of the government's Executive's Budget Proposal or the Enacted Budget, designed to convey key information to the public.	2024-25	Not Produced
In-Year Reports	Include information on actual revenues collected, actual expenditures made, and debt incurred at different intervals; issued quarterly or monthly.	2024-25	67
Mid-Year Review	A comprehensive update on the implementation of the budget as of the middle of the fiscal year; includes a review of economic assumptions and an updated forecast of budget outcomes.	2023-24	63
Year-End Report	Describes the situation of the government's accounts at the end of the fiscal year and, ideally, an evaluation of the progress made toward achieving the budget's policy goals.	2022-23	48
Audit Report	Issued by the supreme audit institution, this document examines the soundness and completeness of the government's year-end accounts.	2022-23	62

Key

- 61-100 / 100
- 41-60 / 100
- 1- 40 / 100

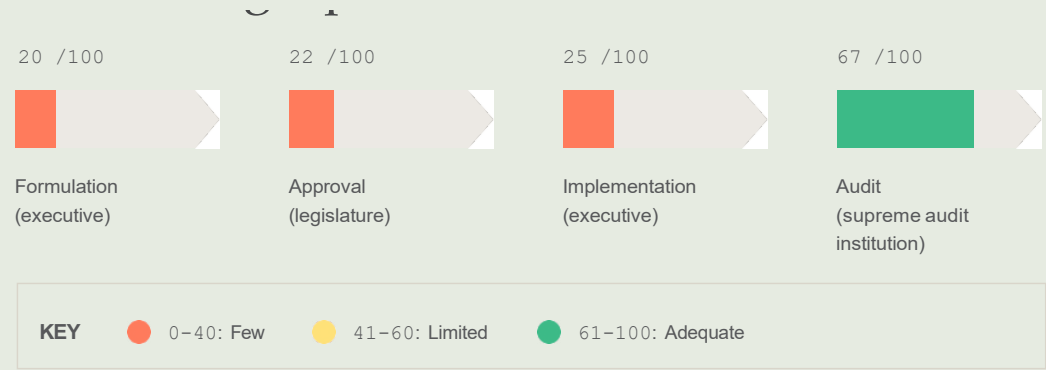
Nepal's transparency score of 52 in the OBS 2025 is near its score in 2023.

Public participation in Nepal compared to others



For more information, see [here](#) for innovative public participation practices around the world.

Extent of opportunities for public participation in the budget process



Public Participation

The OBS assesses the extent to which governments provide formal and meaningful opportunities for public participation across the different stages of the budget process. It examines participation practices used by the central government’s executive (including line ministries), the legislature, and the supreme audit institution (SAI), recognizing that engagement can occur across different institutions. Using 18 equally weighted indicators, the OBS evaluates whether these participation mechanisms are timely, inclusive, transparent, and responsive, in line with the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT) Principles of Public Participation in Fiscal Policies . Each country is scored on a scale from 0 to 100, reflecting the strength of its formal public participation practices across institutions and throughout the budget process.

Nepal has a public participation score of 28 (out of 100).

Recommendations

Nepal's Ministry of Finance has established online platforms and digital consultations during budget formulation and during budget implementation but, to further strengthen public participation in the budget process, should also prioritize the following actions:

- Continue and sustain the practice of pre-budget consultations with stakeholders, including at the provincial level, and submit its report to the Parliament. Additionally, the Ministry of Finance and the Revenue Advisory Committee should have a practice to inform the citizens on which recommendations and inputs received were used to improve budget policies.
- The Government of Nepal has launched its Third National Public Financial

Management (PFM) Reform Strategy for 2025–2030. The Ministry of Finance should ensure effective implementation of this national framework, with particular emphasis on inclusivity and alignment with the National Strategy for Citizen Engagement in Public Financial Management.

- Actively engage with underrepresented communities, directly or through civil society organizations representing them. Nepal's Federal Parliament has established public hearings related to the approval of the annual budget, but should also prioritize the following actions:
- Allow any member of the public or any civil society organization to testify during its hearings on the budget proposal prior to its approval.
- Allow members of the public or civil society organizations to testify during its hearings on the Audit Report.

Oversight

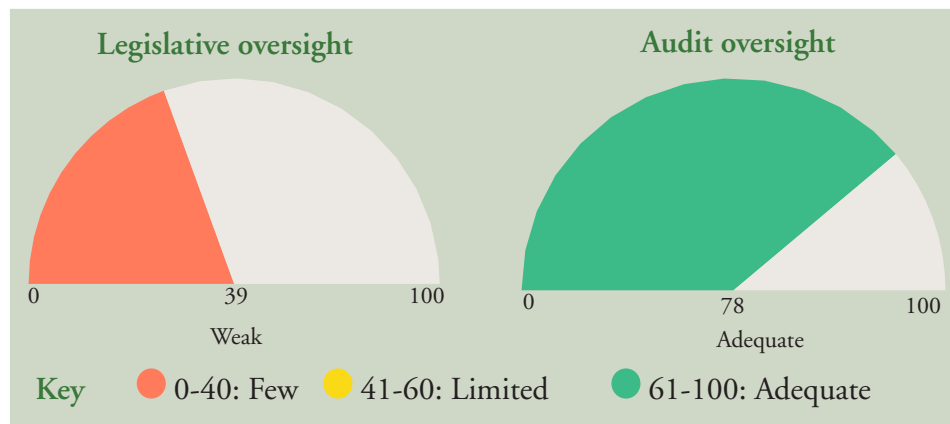
The OBS examines the role that legislatures and supreme audit institutions (SAIs) play in overseeing the budget process, including how effectively they scrutinize budget proposals, monitor budget implementation and review government accounts. Using 18 equally weighted indicators, the OBS assesses the strength and independence of these oversight institutions and scores each country on a scale from 0 to 100. In addition, the survey collects supplementary information on the existence and role of independent fiscal institutions (IFIs), which can contribute to informed debate and enhanced oversight of fiscal policy (see box below).

The legislature and supreme audit institution in Nepal, together, provide limited oversight during the budget process, with a composite oversight score of 52 (out of 100). Taken individually, the extent of each institution's oversight is shown below:

Recommendations

Nepal's Federal Parliament provides limited oversight during the planning stage of the budget cycle and weak oversight during the implementation stage. To improve oversight, the following actions should be prioritized:

- The Executive's Budget Proposal should be submitted to legislators at least two months before the start of the budget year.
- Legislative committees should examine the Executive's Budget Proposal and publish reports with their analysis online.



- A legislative committee should examine in-year budget implementation and publish reports with their findings online.
- Legislative Committees, such as PAC, should adopt a more proactive stance in monitoring debt accountability and ensuring rigorous transparency across all inter-budgetary fiscal transfers.
- In practice, ensure the legislature is consulted before the executive shifts funds specified in the Enacted Budget between administrative units or reduces spending due to revenue shortfalls during the budget year.
- A legislative committee should examine the Audit Report and publish a report with their findings online.
- Legislative Committees, such as PAC, should strengthen its legislative oversight role by prioritizing the timely follow-up and resolution of OAG audit recommendations.

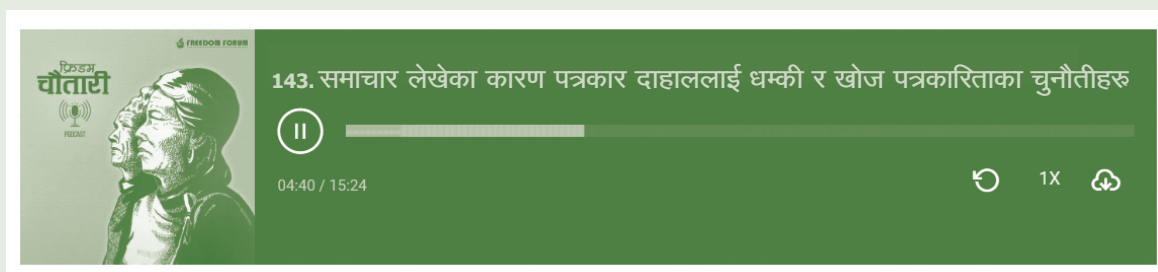
The benefit of establishing independent fiscal institutions

*Nepal does not have an independent fiscal institution (IFI). IFIs are widely recognized as valuable independent and nonpartisan information providers to the Executive and/or Parliament during the budget process. *These indicators are *not* scored in the Open Budget Survey.*

Methodology

- Only documents published and events, activities, or developments that took place through 31 December 2024 were assessed in the OBS 2025.
- The survey is based on a questionnaire completed in each country by an independent budget expert: Taranath Dahal and Subash Dahal Freedom Forum <https://www.freedomforum.org.np/>
- Organization Email Address: info@freedomforum.org.np

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

RightsCon 2026 Cancellation, Serious Blow to Free Expression

Freedom Forum stood in solidarity with members and partners of IFEX and the Global Forum for Media Development in condemning RightsCon cancellation and stressed that cancelling RightsCon and thereby seriously disrupting UNESCO's World Press Freedom Day conference weakened an already strained ecosystem and contributes to fragmentation, isolation, and, ultimately, a chilling effect on collective action.

Full Statement:-
May 5, 2026

We, undersigned members and partners of the Global Forum for Media Development and IFEX, strongly condemn the Zambian government's decision to force the last-minute cancellation of RightsCon 2026 due to foreign interference of China of the participation of Taiwanese delegates. The world's leading summit on human rights in the digital age was due to take place from 5 – 8 May in Lusaka.

Shutting down an international civil society forum through its invocation of prior restraint on content of the programme and citing the need for alignment with "national values, policy priorities, and broader public-interest considerations" represents a serious and unacceptable violation of universal human rights standards including freedom of assembly, press freedom, independent journalism, and open civic space which are protected by Articles 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Right.

That pressure from China influenced Zambia's decision further demonstrates the

scale and severity of threats facing the civic space environment from foreign interference. No government should have the power to compromise such convenings.

Although this is an extremely serious attack on human rights, it is not isolated. These developments take place in an already challenging context of shrinking liberties and funding for journalism, digital rights, and free expression communities worldwide.

Effectively cancelling RightsCon and thereby seriously disrupting UNESCO's World Press Freedom Day conference on 4 May weakens an already strained ecosystem and contributes to fragmentation, isolation, and, ultimately, a chilling effect on collective action.

Multistakeholderism must be protected in practice, not just proclaimed in principle
Members of international platforms such as the Media Freedom Coalition and Freedom Online Coalition must continue to use their convening power to ensure the participation of civil society in global forums and take concrete action against restrictions on civic space and freedom of expression.

For future regional and international fora, the demands of journalism, digital rights, and free expression communities for the physical, digital, and legal conditions for safe and open convening must be met by the UN, other inter-governmental organizations and States.

Restoring the legacy of the Windhoek Declaration
Zambia's decision is symbolically significant

because of its proximity to Namibia, where in 1991 the signing of the Windhoek Declaration led directly to the UN declaring 3 May as World Press Freedom Day two years later.

Promoting independent, pluralistic, and free media, it urges governments to protect journalists and avoid media control. Its renewal in 2021 reaffirmed a regional and international commitment to media freedom, independence, and safety.

That legacy underscores what is threatened today. These challenges remind us of the need for media to remain agile and innovative, and to uphold functional independence from any one specific actor.

Safeguarding the future of World Press Freedom Day and of the broader ecosystems it engenders requires renewed collective commitment to solidarity, accountability, and the protection of civic space.

We stand with our colleagues in Zambia and across Southern Africa

We express our solidarity with the almost 3,000 journalists, digital rights defenders, press freedom and media support and civil society actors in Zambia, across Africa, and globally who have been directly affected by the last-minute cancellation of RightsCon 2026 and the subsequent drastic downscaling of UNESCO's World Press Freedom Day conference in Lusaka on 4 May.

We also express our strong support and solidarity with AccessNow, the organisers of RightsCon, as well as all their partners who had planned side events to further their vital work.

Above all, we stand with our colleagues in Zambia and across Southern Africa who continue to work indefatigably under increasingly constrained conditions.

About this statement

- The statement was drafted by the members and communities of the Global Forum for Media Development and IFEX.
- The Global Forum for Media Development (GMFD) is the largest

* Having previously announced that Zambia's Ministry of Technology and Science would be the primary Government partner for RightCon 2026, the Zambian government announced the "postponement" of RightsCon on Wednesday, 29th April, just days before the conference was due to begin on 5th May.

Later the same day, the organisers of RightsCon- AccessNow confirmed that RightsCon would not proceed in Zambia or online.

On Thursday, 30th April, UNESCO announced that the programme of the World Press Freedom Day in-person conference, entitled "Shaping a Future of Peace", which has been scheduled to take place at the same venue as RightsCon, would take place "primarily online with an event also organised in Lusaka on 4 May".

global community for media development, media freedom, and journalism support. Through collaboration, coordination, and collective action, our network of 224 member organisations- as well as our dozens of partners- creates, promotes, and delivers policies and programmes to sustain journalism as a public good.

- IFEX is a nexus for free expression expertise contributed by over 100 member organisations, spanning 70 countries, and committed to collaboration and transformative advocacy.

Signatories

Organisations

1. 7amleh – The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media
2. Accountability Lab
3. ACOS Alliance
4. African Women in Media
5. Alhudood
6. Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) Indonesia
7. Asosiasi Media Siber Indonesia (AMSI)
8. Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ)
9. ARTICLE 19
10. Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE).
11. Association for International Broadcasting (AIB)
12. Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN)
13. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
14. Cartoonists Rights
15. Catholic Media Council (CAMECO) e.V
16. Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) Malaysia
17. Centre for Law and Democracy
18. Centre for Media and Society (CEMESO)
19. Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR)
20. Center for Sustainable Media (CSM)
21. Centro de Archivos y Acceso a la Información (Cainfo)
22. Critical infrastructure lab – University of Amsterdam
23. Daily Humanity Foundation
24. Daily Nawa-I-Ahmedpur Sharqia Pakistan
25. DW Akademie
26. Eastern Africa Editors Society (EAES)
27. Espacio Público
28. Ethical Journalism Network
29. Factjaja
30. FlokiNET ehf
31. Fojo Media Institute
32. Fondation Hirondelle – Media for peace and human dignity
33. Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa

- (FLIP, Colombia)
34. Freedom Forum, Nepal
35. Freedom of Expression (FXI)
36. Gambia Press Union (GPU)
37. Gisa Group | 3ayin
38. Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD)
39. Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN)
40. Global Voices
41. Global Youth & News Media
42. GoodBot Society
43. Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
44. Hungarian Civil Liberties Union
45. I'lam – Arab Center for Media Freedom Development and Research
46. IFEX
47. IFoX/Initiative for Freedom of Expression-Turkey
48. Institut Panos-Haiti
49. Institute for Regional Media and Information (IRMI)
50. International Association of Women in Radio and Television -(IAWRT-Kenya)
51. International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)
52. International Federation for Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)
53. International Press Centre (IPC)
54. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
55. Internews Europe
56. Institute of Mass Information (IMI)
57. International Media Support
58. Instituto Prensa y Sociedad – IPYS, Perú
59. JASS – Just Associates
60. Journalismfund Europe
61. JUMMAR
62. Lviv Media Forum
63. Media Action Nepal
64. Media Development Center (Tunisia)
65. Media Diversity Institute
66. Media Diversity Institute Global
67. Media Leadership Think Tank, GIBS
68. Media Policy Institute (MPI) Kyrgyzstan
69. Media Rights Agenda (MRA)
70. Media Self Regulation Council of Zambia
71. Media Voice
72. Momentum – Journalism and Tech Task Force
73. Moxii Africa
74. Muwatin Media Network
75. National Union of Journalists of Ukraine
76. NMT Media Foundation
77. Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA)
78. Paradigm Initiative (PIN)
79. PEN America
80. PEN International
81. Penn Center on Media, Technology, and Democracy (Penn MEDIATED)
82. Press Club Belarus
83. Protection International (PI)



84. Pulitzer Center
85. Public Media Alliance (PMA)
86. Raseef22
87. Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
88. RNW Media
89. ROZANA MEDIA
90. Samir Kassir Foundation (SKF)
91. S.A.F.E. Narratives – Secure Action for Freedom of Expression
92. SembraMedia
93. Software Freedom Law Center India (SFLC.IN)
94. Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)
95. Tech4Peace Iraq
96. The African Editors Forum (TAEF)
97. The Transparency, Accountability & Participation (TAP) Network
98. Turkey recap
99. Wattan Media Network, Palestine
100. World Association for Christian Communication (WACC)
101. World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)
102. Zambia Free Press Initiative

Individuals

1. Angie Drobnic Holan, director, International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN)
2. Joan Chirwa, Zambian journalist and lawyer
3. Ledja Canaj, Maison Culturelle Belgo-Albanaise (Shqipëria), Civil Society & Integration Platform, Brussels
4. Natalia Viana, executive director, Agencia Publica, Brazil
5. Nozha Ben Mohamed, Radio 6, Tunisia
6. Rashweat Mukundu, Zimbabwean Journalist and free expression activist
7. Sandro Mattioli, freelance journalist covering Italian organised crime
8. Mohamed ElGohary, Digital Rights Expert and Human Rights Defender

The statement is originally published at:
<https://ifex.org/rightscon-2026-cancellation-is-a-blow-to-civil-society-free-expression-and-the-right-to-assembly-everywhere/>

Nepal Leads South Asia in Budget Transparency but Falls Short of ‘SUFFICIENT’ Threshold

Nepal has demonstrated steady progress in fiscal transparency securing a score of 52 out of 100 in the latest Open Budget Survey (OBS) 2025 published on May 7, 2026. Released biennially by the International Budget Partnership (IBP) the 10th edition of the survey covering 82 countries shows a slight improvement for Nepal from the 50 points it recorded in 2023.

While the incremental rise reflects sustained efforts by the central government to make budget information accessible, the country still falls below the global baseline score of 61. A score of 61 is considered the minimum threshold required for "sufficient" transparency to foster informed public debate.

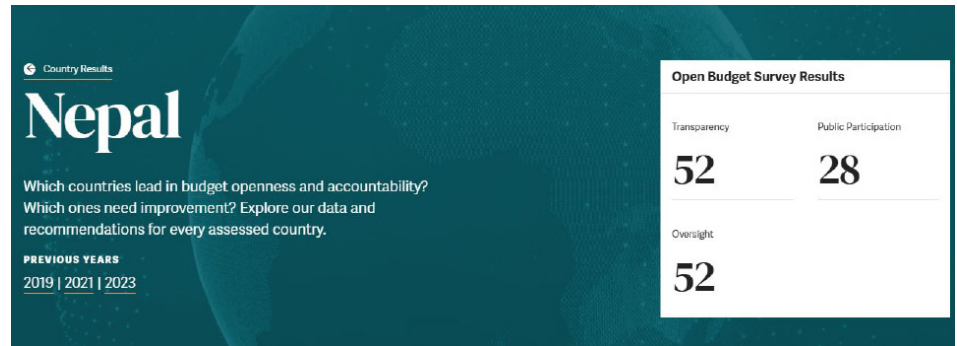
The report underscores that government choices ranging from tax levies and public services to national debt management have profound societal consequences, making meaningful public engagement essential to ensure public money aligns with public interests.

Regional Leader, Global Laggard

Despite trailing global standards, Nepal comfortably leads its South Asian neighbors in fiscal transparency. With an Open Budget Survey (OBS) 2025 score of 52, Nepal sits ahead of Pakistan, which scored 45, and India, which scored 44. Sri Lanka and Bangladesh follow further behind with transparency scores of 43 and 37 respectively, while Afghanistan lags at the bottom of the regional index with a score of 0.

Weak Spots: Public Participation and Legislative Oversight

While Nepal fares relatively well in data disclosure, public participation in the budget cycle remains low at 28, indicating "few" formal opportunities for citizens to engage. The survey highlights a sharp contrast between state bodies: while the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) offers adequate engagement avenues (67), the executive and legislative branches lag far behind.



Similarly, Nepal's composite oversight score sits at a "limited" 52. While Audit Oversight is robust at 78, Legislative Oversight remains a critical bottleneck, ranking "weak" at 39, a persistent challenge across multiple survey cycles.

Taranath Dahal, Executive Chief of FF and a budget researcher who co-authored the Nepal portion of the survey alongside FF's researcher Subash Dahal, noted that despite years of advocacy from civil society organizations (CSOs) and the media, the government has repeatedly failed to produce and publish key documents like the Pre-Budget Statement (PBS) and the Citizen Budget.

"The recommendations based on the survey data are highly relevant and crucial for the overall improvement of the financial sector. Relevant authorities must pay serious attention to their implementation," Dahal urged.

Roadmap for Fiscal Reform

To restore public trust and bridge the gap toward "sufficient" transparency, the OBS 2025 outlines actionable reform measures for Nepal across three key pillars.

To boost transparency, the government must timely publish both the Pre-Budget Statement and the Citizens Budget online, while

enriching the Executive's Budget Proposal with multi-year projections and a budget literacy glossary, and ensuring Year-End and Audit reports better disclose fiscal risks, performance outcomes, and extra-budgetary funds.

To foster inclusive public participation, the report calls for the effective implementation of the Third National PFM (Public Financial Management) Reform Strategy, recommending that the government sustain provincial consultations, allow public testimony during parliamentary hearings, and clearly communicate how citizen inputs actually influence policy.

Finally, to strengthen legislative oversight, the Federal Parliament must mandate that the Executive's Budget Proposal be submitted at least two months before the fiscal year begins, while legislative committees—including the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) must proactively monitor national debt, publish budget analyses online, ensure timely follow-up on audit recommendations, and require the executive to consult the legislature before shifting any public funds.

The full report of Open Budget Survey 2025 is available online on freedom forum's website.

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 Manager looks after accounting and administrative affairs and performs responsibilities as the Information Officer.		
	Nanu Maiya Khadka: Program Coordinator		
	Manju Dahal: Program Assistant, Ganga Kumari Gurung: Office Assistant		
Roster of Consultants/ Researchers	Subash Dahal		
Ongoing Project Information	Project Name	Supporting Agency	Date of start of project
	Open Budget Survey	International Budget Partnership	17th March 2025
	National Seminar on Enabling Democracy through Free and Safe Press	FES Nepal	19th May 2026
	Ethical and responsible use of AI in Nepali Journalism	MOCIT Nepal	2nd June 2026
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 NPR 13,81,688.25 from April to June 2026.		
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		

Twenty years of open budgets: Transparency has Advanced, but Accountability has not Kept Pace

Over the past two decades, governments across the globe have made notable progress in releasing more information about how they collect and spend public funds. Yet a persistent and growing “accountability gap” remains, as the institutions and participatory channels meant to oversee that spending have failed to evolve at the same pace.

These are the central conclusions of the Open Budget Survey (OBS) 2025 global report, released by the International Budget Partnership (IBP). The 10th edition of this independent assessment, marking two decades of research, evaluated 82 countries across three pillars of public financial management: fiscal transparency, public participation, and institutional oversight.

The data reveals a clear pattern. While governments have grown more willing to disclose budget information, they continue to lag in creating robust mechanisms to ensure accountability for those numbers. This gap is particularly concerning amid rising sovereign debt burdens and tightening national budgets worldwide.

Two Decades of Incremental Transparency Gains

The global average score for fiscal transparency rose modestly by two points from the 2023 cycle, reaching 45 out of 100. Over the longer term, gains are more evident. Among 57 countries tracked continuously since

Global
Watch



2008, about two-thirds have improved their transparency scores. Twelve nations including Cameroon, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, the Kyrgyz Republic and Rwanda have more than doubled their original scores by consistently publishing essential budget documents.

In the 2025 survey, 21 of the 82 countries scored 61 or higher, the minimum threshold considered sufficient for informed public engagement. Leading the index are Brazil, the Dominican Republic, South Africa, Norway, and Benin. Albania crossed this threshold for the first time, while Ukraine recovered past the 61 point mark after wartime disruptions affected its 2023 performance.

Regionally, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, along with East Asia and the Pacific, lead in openness. Governments in these areas publish an average of 86% and 84% of key budget documents, respectively. Latin America and the Caribbean also showed positive momentum, especially through wider dissemination of “Citizens Budgets” “accessibility summaries that explain complex fiscal data to ordinary people. South Asia, however, remains a notable concern as the only region where the average transparency score in 2025 fell below its 2008 baseline.

For more: <https://internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey/2025-global/>

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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