



FreeExpression

Issue 44 October - December 2018

A NEWSLETTER OF FREEDOM FORUM

Media Freedom Deteriorating

Annual Media Freedom Report 2018

Sharp increase of press freedom violations, no concrete efforts to end impunity relating to crimes against journalists, defamation and discredit to media and journalists, intolerance to healthy criticism, no positive but hostile move while reforming media law and policy, ill efforts to control journalists and media and non disclosure of government information paint a disappointing situation of media freedom this past year 2018 in Nepal.

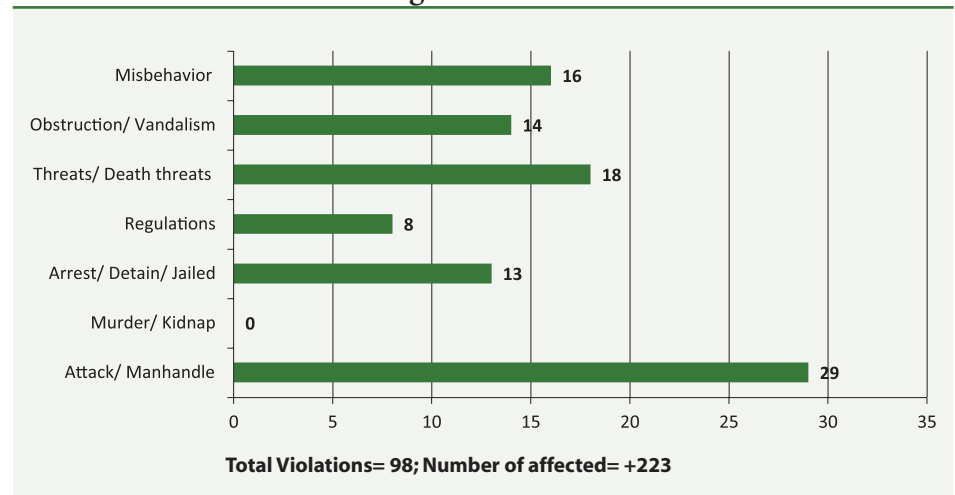
Freedom Forum recorded a total of 98 press freedom violations that directly affected at least 223 journalists in 2018, which is a sharp increase from 66 violations in 2017. The number of violations is the highest in the last six years. Despite the strong government and attempts for constitution implementation at larger scale, the situation for press freedom in the country deteriorated badly.

With the installation of new government in February 2018 following the elections in all three-tier of governments as per the federal system, there were expectations that better environment would be offered for media. The scenario, however, was opposite. The government behavior towards access to information, media freedom and journalists turned more unreceptive, and several drafts of laws and regulations which are considered, not press friendly. In sum, political environment for journalists turned gradually intolerant in new set up.

SOME POINTS

Throughout the year, FF closely watched all aspects of freedom of speech and expression issues in online, broadcast and print media. Also, the press freedom violations monitoring was done with the aspect of keeping the track of hostile elements to press freedom, province

Press Freedom Violations during 2018



wise media violation data, type of violations faced by the journalists. During the yearlong monitoring, FF made the following update: Province 3 witnessed the highest number of press freedom violations (35) followed by Province 2 (14) and Province 4 (12).

- Province 3 witnessed the highest number of press freedom violations (35) followed by Province 2 (14) and Province 4 (12).
- 12 cases of arrest and detention, 28 of attack and manhandle combined, 13 of vandalism and obstructions combined and 12 of misbehavior were recorded in the year.
- Kathmandu Valley alone witnessed 32 number of press freedom violations which is almost half the total violations.
- The data shows that security officials are the major hostile elements to the journalists where people from security agencies are involved in 40 press freedom violations.
- Out of 98 violations, the number of male journalists affected was 197 and of female journalists stood 26.

GENERAL TREND AND OVERVIEW

- There were systematic and planned efforts from government side to discredit role of media labeling media as 'false news industry', and portraying performance in negative light. It was worrying that responsible Minister took the lead of this campaign.

It is noteworthy to mention that a State owned media house shut down a talk show and terminated contract with the talk show host Raju Thapa for asking critical question to Minister's property sources.

- The trend of keeping the Cabinet decisions secret from reporters begun by the government has not only showed non-transparent decision making but also deprived media of their rights to reporting and citizen's right to information.
- Top leaders of ruling parties seemed more intolerant to media freedom creating psychological fear amongst journalists.

Continue in page 8...

Message from Executive Chief

Ensure FoE Friendly Atmosphere

When Nepal got the liberal constitution after eight year's struggle from the Constituent Assembly in September 2015, paving a solid foundation for the institutionalization of the federal democratic republic, we, as others, thought the country would not need any struggle for civil and political rights. We thought the civil society's attention for the strengthening of the exercise of fundamental rights with close watch over the implementation of constitution would suffice. But, we are bound to realize that the government formed after the conduct of the three-tier of elections held as part of the implementation of hard earned constitution and the new system in place began blatant assault on fundamental values of the democracy. Currently, efforts are rife to limit the civil liberties. Media freedoms, freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly exercised as watchdog on government have been receiving utmost hostility and intolerance.



The data and analyses prepared with the continuous monitoring of press freedom violations over this past year 2018 has signaled regressive steps of the government. It is worrying and alarming enough that the number of press freedom violation increased sharply compared to the previous year. A total of 98 press freedom violations were recorded in 2018, while there were 66 incidents the previous year. More alarming is the fact that the involvement of state agencies and cadres of the political parties in the intimidations. The local, provincial and federal governments, which are formed to better facilitate the citizens with the guarantee of the effective exercise of the rights have developed so unreceptive behaviour and attitude that they are controlling freedoms guaranteed by the constitution, and limiting and shrinking the civil and political rights. Participation of wider stakeholders and transparency in the making of laws and policies has radically declined. Responsible agencies of the government have taken move to regulate press with blatant formulation of laws and acts that are against democratic values and panic media with threats and discredit. As a result, fear psychology has spread on press. Self censorship is mounting. The critical and investigative journalism has been jeopardized.

Moreover, instead of the enhancement of participatory system with additional transparency and accountability in the State mechanisms, engagement between the State and citizen is badly weakened. The intolerance towards citizen's criticism and monitoring of the government activities and threat and dissuasion for such is backed up by the prime ministerial level. Citizen's access to information is badly curtailed. Government's ownership of information is beefed up. To a sheer mockery of transparency, it takes almost a week for the government to disclose its decision. Upsettingly, information on the decisions that 'may put government in trouble' is kept secret. It has attacked the very foundation of democracy indeed- citizen's fundamental right to information is violated. Nepal has a Nepal Communist Party-led government with two-thirds majority. The behaviour it has shown has created doubt that country would move ahead in a democratic way. Shrinking civic space, fueling cultural narrow-mindedness, obstruction on civil society organizations, disregard to partnership and participation in law making process have fomented the distrust on this government. It has resulted in a public fear and doubt that the rights achieved with struggles would be put in jeopardy.

With this in the background, FF engages in the promotion of civil and political rights with close watch on the government activities. Able, free and professional press, easy access to freedom of expression and information is imperative- both in practice and in policy/law. FF however continues its untiring advocacy and watch on the above mentioned issues by working together with the government and stakeholders. FF hopes better atmosphere for FoE. **Happy New Year 2019** 🌱

– Tara Nath Dahal

CSOs Readiness for OGP

FF organized a dialogue on 'Collaborative Advocacy and CSO Readiness for Open Government Partnership' in Kathmandu on December 30. The objectives of this initiative were to bring together different civil society leaders and Open Government advocates to review the efforts made so far on Open Government Partnership (OGP) and reinvigorating the OGP agenda in Nepal.

OGP as a multilateral initiative which aims to secure commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower and engage citizens, fight for corruption and harness new technologies to strengthen the governance. This event is a continuation of several previous dialogues organized by FF. The dialogue was also expected to consolidate CSOs efforts to strategically take ahead OGP campaign and institutionalize the efforts towards greater openness in Nepal. Out of 25, 4 were female and 21 were male participants in the event.

Reminding the previous CSOs efforts on OGP, the discussion dwelt on framing strategies and approaches, educating, empowering and engaging stakeholders on OGP, forming and expanding thematic groups, fostering common and cross-cutting agenda, piloting/modeling with sub-national government and keeping on lobby with federal government.

FF Executive Chief Mr Tara Nath Dahal said it would be easier to proclaim the progress made so far on openness and transparency and role of CSOs in these accomplishments. CSOs role on establishing new constitutional rights, access to information, anti-corruption, open data, fiscal transparency, performance audit and other governance reform initiatives in Nepal could be claimed as triumphs in this regard as he said. "To encourage government's engagement on OGP issues, 'CSO should follow appreciative approaches", said Parliament Outreach Team Leader, Parliament Support Program/UNDP, Mr Dila D Pant. He further suggested linking the benefits of different openness measures initiated by CSOs. Most of the participants pointed out the need of CSOs' role to educate, empower and engage with each other, and all layers of government in different thematic areas related to OGP. Beside this, they suggested developing basic IEC materials for massive advocacy and better campaigning. CEO of Accountability Lab, Mr. Narayan Adhikari; Chairperson of NGO Federation of Nepal, Jitram Lama; Chairpersons of CAHURAST, Mr Bishnu Pukar Shrestha; Chairperson of Media Advocacy Group, Anita Bindu and others drew attention on this issue.

Mr. Narayan Adhikari suggested formalizing previous stakeholders mapping of CSO working on different thematic areas and develop its network. Similarly, Policy Advisor of Freedom Forum, Mr. Krishna Sapkota, suggested potential areas of thematic groups for OGP such as Right to Information (RTI), open data, anti-corruption, technological innovation, fiscal transparency, access to justice and natural resources. "Working via such thematic group modality will enhance CSOs readiness when adopting OGP by government" said Law and Policy Advisor of CS: MAP, Tanka Raj Aryal. CEO of SAP Nepal, Mr Narendra Joshi, viewed that CSOs and its network could include OGP as cross-cutting agenda of their respective working theme. Development of a model project was recommended for focusing on particular sub-national government in line with OGP requirements. For example, Nilkantha Municipality, Nepalgunj Sub-Metropolis and Dhangadhi Municipality are some probable sub-national units where OGP requirements can be translated into practice establishing collaboration with CSOs. The event also formed a task force comprising three members- Mr. Narayan Adhikari, Mr Krishna Sapkota and Mr Dayasagar Shrestha. The committee will suggest the CSOs to revitalize the previous works and prepare a calendar and framework for strategic intervention on OGP. 🌱

Press Freedom Violations

FAR WEST PROVINCE



A. Attack

i Chandrakant Joshi, a journalist associated with Sagarmatha Television and STS Television, was assaulted by demonstrators protesting the government failure in identifying the culprit of a rape case. The incident occurred at District Attorney Office Dhangadi on October 2.

According to FF representative for Province 7, DR Pant, the mob during the demonstration assaulted the journalists and damaged his camera for news covering on demonstration. The journalist received minor injury. However, his camera was completely damaged.

ii. Journalist Pushkar Bhatta associated with the Mountain Television was attacked by chair of Landless People Protection Committee in Kanchanpur, a district in Province 7 on October 10.

According to the FF representative in Province 7, DR Pant, Chair Dewan Bista verbally misbehaved and attacked journalist Bhatta. Chair Bista accused Bhatta of covering news on illegal encroachment of land and construction of temporary huts.

Mountain Television had been continuously making news on illegal encroachment of land for some weeks. Chair Bista attacked and threatened journalist Bhatta while capturing photos of the slum area. Bhatta sustained minor injury and got his camera damaged.

B. Newspapers torched

Some unidentified persons obstructed the vehicle carrying newspapers and burnt the copies of a national daily on October 3. A group of six miscreants forcibly stopped the van carrying the newspapers, seized the newspapers and burnt on the road at Aatariya, Kailali, early in the morning.

Kantipur daily and its sister publication the Kathmandu Post were burnt by the miscreants. Moreover, newspaper distributor Yagya

Raj Joshi said the perpetrators seized the newspapers while unloading at his shop. He informed that the rowdy fellows also set on fire the newspapers as Nagarik daily and Annapurna Post daily.

It is not only an assault on press freedom but also the violation of citizen's right to information.

The newspapers were brought from the Nepalgunj press for the distribution in nine districts of the Province 7.

C. Police officer manhandle reporter, damage camera

Reporter with the Nepal Television from Kanchanpur district, Padam Bohara, was manhandled and threatened of physical attack by police officers while reporting on December 28. Kanchanpur district is in Far West Province. FF representative for Province 7, DR Pant, informed that reporter Bohara was manhandled while reporting on the illegal construction of cottages on the land of Municipality Development Committee.

"Police officers not only attacked the reporter but also seized his television camera and damaged it. They also threatened him of physical attack if he continued reporting," said representative Pant quoting reporter Bohara.

Freedom Forum vehemently condemned the incident as it is violation of press freedom. Nepal police being the security authority of the country should be aware about rights of press freedom and journalists' right to free reporting. Hence, FF urged the concerned authority to fairly investigate upon the case and ensure free reporting atmosphere to journalists. 🌱

KARNALI PROVINCE

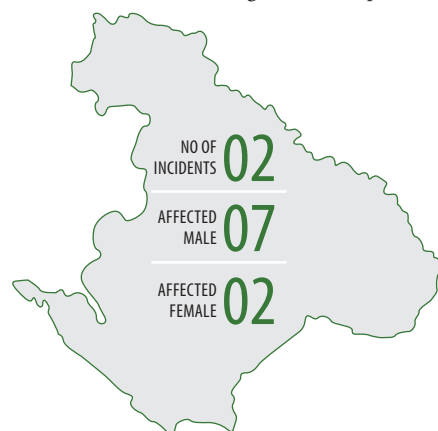
A. FM station vandalized

Radio Karnali Awaj, a Karnali based FM station was vandalized by a group of goons led by Banch Bahadur Bhandari. The group entered the FM station situated at Humla district at 9 pm on December 21 and threatened the radio technician Arjun Bohora, dragging him out of the news room.

The hooligans damaged a computer and laptop, printer, scanner and other equipment in the station. While preventing them from further damaging the station, Radio program producer Dane Bohora received an injury in his hand. Freedom Forum condemned the incident of vandalism carried out at FM station which is in the remote district of Nepal, and strongly urged the authority to investigate the incident seriously and take measures to book the vandals. Also, the Radio station was in need of due compensation to the damaged physical assets.

B. Attack

Correspondent to the Nagarik daily from Rukum district, Lokendra Khanal, sustained injury on his head after being attacked by local Kamal Jung Khanal and Karna Bahadur Kusari at Bafiyakot 6 Magma of West Rukum on November 10. West Rukum lies in Karnali Province. Journalist Khanal informed that he sustained the injury as Kamal Jung Khanal and Karna Bahadur Kusari belonging to a local youth club attacked him all of a sudden accusing him of writing news against the local government. Following the injury, he was taken to local hospital where he received 4 stitches on his head. Journalist Khanal filed an FIR against the culprit. 🌱



GANDAKI PROVINCE

Misbehavior, threat

A. News chief of Radio Sarangkot, Kamal Poudel, was misbehaved and threatened for writing news. The Radio is in Dulegaunda, Pokhara, of Gandaki Province.

FF representative for Gandaki Province, Rajan Upadhyaya, reported that the incident occurred on November 26 after journalist Poudel wrote news on illegal 'meter interest business' in Pokhara where a woman fled after collecting million of money from various persons. The news was aired on 25 November.

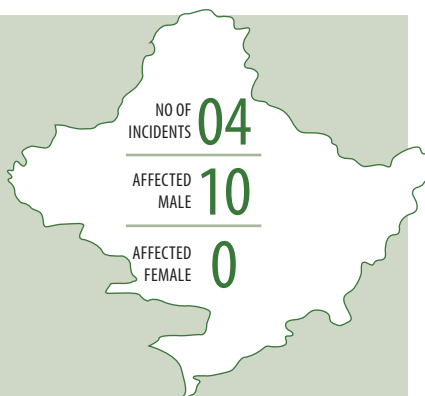
Next day, when Poudel was in his room, one of the relatives of the same woman in the news story misbehaved with him. He even received a phone call, which issued threat for writing the news.

Journalist Poudel filed a complaint against both the persons at police office in the Kaski district headquarters.

B. A journalist Kiran Lohani associated with Gorkha Choice FM was misbehaved by Superintendent of Police Bimal Basnet at Palungtar, Gorkha. Gorkha district lies in Gandaki Province of Nepal. The incident occurred on November 20.

According to Gandaki Province representative for FF, Rajan Upadhyaya, SP Basnet misbehaved with journalist Lohani while he was at Palungtar to report the news. He shared that the SP insulted him in front of the Chief District Officer and other government officers of the district.

Lohani shared that he was forced to take responsibility of the news that was shared



in other news portals. "You are against me. I will show you what I can do", said representative Upadhyay, quoting SP Basnet's threat to Lohani.

After the incident, a meeting was held on November 22 in the presence of CDO where SP Basnet admitted that he was not intending any harm on the journalist but just joking.

C. Editor of the Pokhareli news weekly, Sanjay Malla, and bureau chief of News 24 Television, Uttam Poudel, were misbehaved by local businessman at Chipledhunga, Pokhara, on November 5. Pokhara lies in Province 4.

According to FF representative for Province 4, Rajan Upadhyaya, proprietor of Tejaswi Jewelers, Bikram Sunar, misbehaved with both the journalists while covering news story being based on a complaint of local people stating that the proprietor was selling nonstandard jewelry and faulty weighing system.

Also involved in the incident were Raj Kumar Sunar and security guard Rudra Rana Magar. The journalists duo later filed a complaint at the District Administrative Office, Kaski. Security guard Magar was arrested on charge of manhandling journalists, said Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Rabindra Gurung.

Proprietor Sunar and security guard Magar later begged apology admitting their mistake in the presence of the Chief District Officer. 🌿

Arrest over protest against Minister

Police arrested six persons from Srijananagar of Pokhara in Kaski district for waving black flags to the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation on November 26. The arrested ones were Netra Chapagain, Resham Sapkota, Bishal Timsena, Narendra Basyal, Krishna Adhikari and Tejendra Bhattarai. According to FF's representative for Gandaki Province, Rajan Upadhyaya, they were held by the police in the district and initiating the investigation. The incident of arrest violated citizens' right to peaceful protest.

PROVINCE 3

Female photojournalist detained

FF was alarmed over the arrest of photojournalist Barsha Shah associated with the www.deshsanchar.com, a prominent news portal. She was detained by police for three hours for taking photos of a symbolic protest outside the President Office on December 13.

According to FF representative for Province 3, Ashok Dahal, police seized her camera after she took photos of four protesters trying to gift a toy car to the President as a symbolic protest against the government decision to buy posh car to the Head of the State.

"A police patrol took her under control though she introduced herself as a journalist and showed press card", shared Shah with FF representative Dahal.

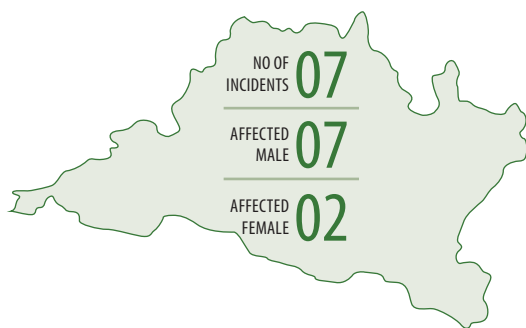
Moreover, photojournalist Shah described, "I was waiting for a bus after the security persons removed protesters from the entrance gate of President Office. A police team came and asked me to show pictures I had captured outside the gate. I introduced them as a journalist and said that I can show my identity card but not the photos I have taken. Then, Sub-Inspector Yam Paudel asked fellows to catch me and they also snatched my phone when I tried to inform my office about the incident."

According to her, they also spoke humiliating words to her and discredited that mere possession of press card was not enough to make one a journalist. Shah was taken to the Maharagunj police office after half an hour in a police van and released only after three hours of interrogation. She got her phone back only after DSP visited the office.

"I had to wait for three hours to get released because chief of the police was outside. When DSP came back he apologized, saying he was not aware about the incident," she added.

Shah has a swelling mark on her neck due to police manhandling during her arrest.

FF vehemently condemned the incident as it is sheer violation of press freedom. At a time where government intolerance towards the journalists is increasing, this incident targeting the female journalists disowns government competency on guarantee of press freedom in the country.



Journalist arrested under 'cyber crime'

Chief Editor of an online news portal- www.postpati.com - Gopal Chand, was arrested by the Metropolitan Police Range's Cyber Cell, Teku, on November 27. Editor Chand was arrested from Manmaju of Tarakeswor Municipality, Kathmandu, under the charge of cyber crime.

The editor was arrested for 'writing false news' on its news portal on the attack on one of the leaders of newly formed Nepal Communist Party. In his news, he had made a story of attack to the leader by a civilian using homemade weapon khukuri. The news was misleading as no such incident took place, argued the police. Editor is charged under the section 47 of Electronic Transaction Act- 2008.

In Nepal, there is already a rightful body Press Council Nepal which has the authority to regulate and check the news content. Arresting the editor and charging under the Electronic Transaction Act is therefore sheer misuse of authority, FF stands.

Arrest over sharing doctored image on Facebook

Two persons namely Krishna Dhakal and a journalist Kabiraj Dhakal were arrested by Nepal Police. The two were arrested for uploading the doctored image of the Prime Minister on November 10. The incident took place at Kavrepalanchowk district of Province 3.

They had uploaded the doctored image of the PM on Facebook on November 6. Later, they are charged under Section 47 of Electronic Transaction Act 2008.

During the telephonic conversation with FF, Superintendent of Cyber Crime Cell of Nepal Police, Narendra Upreti, informed that the perpetrators were booked for 'affecting the social solidarity and public moral.'

FF views that if the offense had resulted in affecting the public moral and disorder, the case could be dealt differently as the public offense under the Civil Code.

The use of Electronic Transaction Act as the cybercrime act is a sheer misuse of authority. The case could be filed under civil charge rather than making it the criminal offense.

Reporters barred from parliament meeting

The State Affairs Committee of the parliament barred the journalists from reporting the committee meeting during the briefing from Defense Minister Ishwar Pokharel about the activities of the Ministry on October 2.

This is the third time that the journalists were barred from reporting in the meeting of the committee. Earlier journalists were barred from reporting during the briefing from the chiefs of security agencies and from Home Ministry about the probe on rape and murder of teenage girl Nirmala Pant.

As per the information from Province 3 Representative for FF, Ashok Dahal, the newly elected Chairperson Shashi Shrestha of ruling Nepal Communist Party instructed journalists, including photo journalists and video journalists, to leave the meeting hall citing security sensitivity in meeting. Journalists were stopped outside during the meeting by the marshals citing the order from the committee chairperson.

Govt official threatens of legal case

Director at the Department of Transport Management, Kathmandu, threatened Sagar-matha Television reporter, Sikha Shrestha, and cameraperson Ajay Hakuju of suing under new Civil Code for reporting about anomalies at the department office on October 23.

Director Shree Chandra Saha warned them of suing under the newly enacted civil code for taking videos without his permission. "We were following a service seeker at the office who was struggling to get his work done because of lazy staffs at the office. When we entered Saha's room following the service seeker, he warned us of suing under Civil Codes for taking his videos without prior permission," journalist Shrestha shared.

Though the journalist argued that prior permission was not needed for taking videos at the public place, the government official asked not to take his videos and warned them of taking action as per the right to privacy provision mentioned under civil code. 🌱

Non-disclosure of Cabinet Decisions on Time Mocks at Transparency

FF was alarmed by the Government of Nepal (GoN)'s move to not disclose any decision of the Cabinet meeting held on 11 November against the three-decade long tradition of making the cabinet decision public through government spokesperson immediately after the Council of Ministers meeting.

The government spokesperson and Minister for Communications and Information Technology who was currently responsible to brief media about the cabinet decision said the decision would be made public in course of time. "The cabinet meeting has taken various decisions, yet the decisions will remain undisclosed for now. You (reporters) will know about the decisions later. We are mulling about its arrangements," Baskota told media while coming out from the meeting.

Journalists had to wait outside the official residence of the PM for the cabinet decision till late evening as it was scheduled to discuss on various issues of national importance. But, they returned empty handed after the government spokesperson declined to make any decision public. Editors of the media houses are puzzled by this decision.

After government spokesperson declined to make the cabinet decisions public, journalists took to social media condemning the government's move to limit press freedom.

FF condemned the government decision noting that it is against fundamental notion of transparency and accountability. The government has time and again made decisions that suppress citizen's right of access to information. Now, the media are forced to write news on speculation rather than facts. The move directly affected the constitutionally guaranteed right on freedom of expression and information and media's right to reporting. FF urged the government to maintain transparency and guarantee citizens' right to access information of public importance and interests. 🌱

PROVINCE 2

Minister warns of 'hitting journalists with shoes'

Province 2 Minister for Social Development, Nawal Kishor Saha, warned that the journalists could be hit with shoes. He made such remark after a program in Saptari district on December 29.

According to information provided by FF's representative in Province 2, Rajan Singh, journalists were reporting on Haluwai Samaj Nepal's district level conference where Minister Saha was the chief guest.

Reporters namely Baidhyanath Yadav (Avenues Television), Shubha Chandra Jha (Mithila weekly), Chandan Yadav, Bidhynanda Ram (Janata Television), Ramnath Yadav (News Today) and Shyam Sundar Yadav (News Today) were present during the program.

During lunch time, reporter Jha asked the Minister whether Member of Parliament who own house in Janakpur received housing allowance. Minister Saha then angrily said, "Journalists who write 'fake news' without proper research should be hit with shoes", informed representative Singh quoting Minister Saha.

Freedom Forum was concerned over the offensive and belittling statement of Minister to the journalists. It is fundamental rights of journalists to report on the state's financial system and irregularities slurring public officials and lawmakers. Hence, FF urged the Minister to respect the right of press freedom and journalists. Labeling false allegation on journalists and making hasty generalization by the Minister is abhorring. It is sheer misbehavior towards journalists.



Security employees misbehave with journalist

Security officials misbehaved and ill-treated journalist Pramod Kumar Saha during the reporting in Janakpur city on December 17. The city lies in Province 2.

FF representative for Province 2, Rajan Singh, reported that journalist Saha was misbehaved while covering the clash between the security officials and students at Ramswaroop Ramsagar Multiple College. The student had padlocked the college demanding the continuation of regular class while security officials forcefully tried to undo the padlock.

Journalists Saha was trying to capture the ongoing conflict between the students and police officials. The security manhandling tore Saha's waistcoat.

Journalist Saha, associated with Janata TV and Janaknandani FM, was misbehaved and ill treated by the officials even after showing the press card.

Govt official threatens reporter

Chief of Agriculture Knowledge Center, Raj Narayan Yadav, threatened journalist Rakesh Yadav for writing news about the irregularities he involved in. The incident occurred at Rautahat district of Province 2 on December 27.

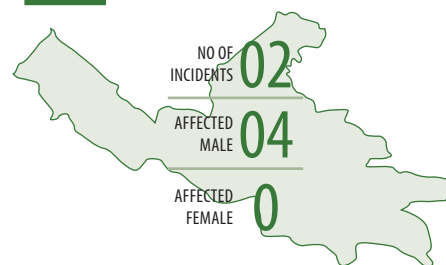
Journalist Yadav is Rautahat district reporter for the Janakpur today.

According to FF's representative from Province 2, Rajan Singh, Chief of District Agriculture Knowledge Centre Raj Narayan threatened journalist Yadav for reporting on the financial irregularities on the distribution of wheat seeds to the locals by provincial government.

"I will finish your career in journalism," said representative Singh quoting the threat to reporter Yadav.

FF condemned the incident as it is sheer violation of press freedom and urged the concerned authority to respect press freedom and journalists' right to free reporting. 🌱

PROVINCE 5



Ward Chair attacks journalist

Journalist Kendra Prakash BP associated with Madi Khabar Weekly was attacked by Ward Chair of Swargadwari Municipality-6 in Pyuthan, a district that lies in Province 5. According to the information received by FF, Ward Chair Tek Bahadur Bhattarai attacked journalist BP at municipality office by using sharp weapon on October 17. Journalist BP sustained injury. While compiling this report, injured journalist was undergoing treatment at Lumbini Zone Hospital, Butwal.

Peaceful protest obstructed

The police persons obstructed a peaceful demonstration of School Teachers' Association in Banke on November 29. Banke lies in Province 5 of Nepal.

FF's representative in the province Laxmi Bhandari reported that a group of 100 teachers representing Teachers' Association were obstructed on the way to Kathmandu to participate in a program to get their demands addressed. They were forced to leave the bus and detained for a whole night, reported Bhandari quoting Naina BC, a Provincial member of Teachers Association.

As a result, the teachers could not participate in the program but had to return home after they were released at 7:00 am the next morning, informed Bhandari quoting BC. The police obstruction seriously violated citizen's right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly guaranteed by the constitution. The obstruction is therefore condemnable.

Misbehavior

Three journalists of Province 5 namely, Priya Smriti Gajmer of Pradesh Today daily, Shiva Raj Khanal of Radio Deukhuri and Shivu Khanal of Ganatantra daily were misbehaved during the reporting. The incident occurred at Dang on December 23. Dang lies in Province 5 of Nepal. 🌱

PROVINCE 1

Police officer misbehaves with journalist

A journalist associated with Ujyalo Network, Suman Timsena (Susker), was misbehaved by Nivesh Adhikari, an Inspector of Nepal police at District Police Office Sunsari. Sunsari district lies in Province 1.

Journalist Timsena was misbehaved on the police office premises while reporting about lack of cleanliness at government offices of Sunsari.

While taking the videos around the District Police Office, Inspector Adhikari stopped him, snatched his camera and deleted the photos he had taken. The incident occurred on December 23.

FF condemned the incident as it is the sheer violation of press freedom. Threat and misbehavior inflicted to the journalist is not acceptable. FF urges the concerned authority to respect journalists' right to free reporting.

Ward Chair threatens journalist

Sujan Timsina, chief editor of local-sandesh.com, received threat by ward chair for covering news on in Ilam October 23. Ilam lies in Province 1.

Ward Chair of Suryodaya Municipality-3, Hom Karki, threatened journalist Timsina for covering news during the telephonic conversation. Ward Chair said, "I am also a resident of Suryodaya, write news after verifying otherwise I will take actions against you." 🌿

'Continue Monitoring of Women Presence in Nepali Media'



Editors from major media have appreciated the monitoring of women representation in Nepali media the FF has been carrying out for two years.

They not only shared their views on various aspects of freedom of expression and press freedom in the country but also lauded the activities Freedom Forum has prioritized as the study on women's presence in media. They viewed it during an informal gathering of 30 editors from major media of the country that FF organized at Godawari Lalitpur on December 28.

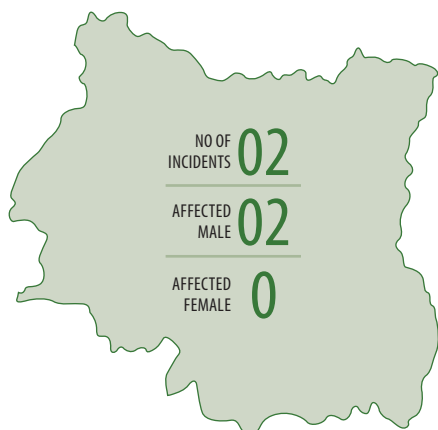
The editors were provided the fact sheets the charts and graphs reflecting the percentage of women byline in media, women as news source and the news beat women reporters are allocated. Welcoming the FF initiative, Editor-In-Chief of the Kathmandu Post daily, Mr Anup Kafle, shared that he had appointed seven women staffs on various positions in his media after he assumed the office some months back. "I'm ready to hold discussion with the FF team on how we could cooperate further on our activities," said Mr Kafle to the FF team, adding that the monitoring of women presence in Nepali media was innovative study indeed.

Similarly, Chief Editor of the Kantipur Television, Mr Prashant Aryal, suggested FF that it could expand such monitoring on television news contents as so that the study would be broader.

Chief Editor of the Karobar daily, Mr Kuvera Chalise, viewed that his daily, though committed to economic issues, had diversified its contents, FF could include his daily in the monitoring. Moreover, Chief Editor of the Annapurna Post daily, Mr Hari Bahadur Thapa, thanked FF continuous monitoring and viewed, "Newsroom diversity is one of my priorities. We're for increasing women presence for making media inclusive. My media house is mulling the policy how we can retain women in media for long."

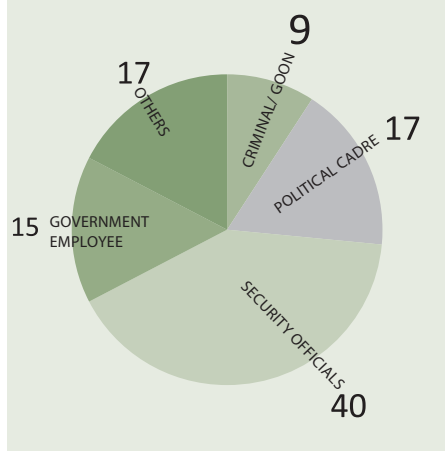
The editors were made aware that the women's presence in their media was gradually increasing over the past two year. In the presentation materials, they are recommended for the newsroom diversity, more favourable atmosphere for women reporters and editors, special policy with incentives to retain women in media, capacity building of women media persons etc.

The gathering attended by noted journalists and editors from various media was also univocal on deteriorating situation of press freedom and freedom of expression in Nepal in 2018. Atmosphere for free reporting was getting challenged, and journalists were to face tougher days, they argued, adding that suppressive policies and discredit to media would be counterproductive to hard earned democratic achievements in the country. They were also of the same voice that editorial unity could be one of the tools to expose irregularities in the society and administration. Unity among journalists could help advocate for journalists' rights and safety. 🌿



Continued from page 1...

Hostile Elements



- After the security persons, most of hostile elements are the political cadres. It shows that political parties are yet to instruct their followers to respect press freedom and journalists' rights, and develop political culture.

In different violations, 16 journalists were threatened by political cadres and local leaders throughout the country.

- In the name of 'strong government' which is falsely equated to political stability, fear is spread among journalists resulting in self-censorship. Misuse of government power is rampant to control the socio-political environment for its favor and tame people's civil and political rights.

Twelve human rights defenders were arrested from Maitighar Mandala while protesting the government decision to prohibit the place of demonstration.

- The drafts of media laws prepared by federal and provincial governments have flawed and problematic provisions but ad-

equately attention to correct these is falling on deaf ear.

- Systematic efforts to control media rights are reflected through other laws such as civil and criminal code, privacy law, and electronic transaction law.

During a year, 4 journalists were detained resorting to article 47 of Electronic Transaction Act (ETA) though the law is not related to media and journalists. In one of the representative case- Raju Basnet, an editor of the *khajalaaanews.com*, an online news portal was arrested and detained under the ETA for publishing news in the online portal about political leader's collusion with land mafias.

- A total of 52 cases were filed in the court four years back (fiscal year 2070/71 BS) which increased sharply to 104 in the last year (fiscal year 2074/075 BS). Over this period, a total 16 cases were filed for the appeal in the High Court, Patan, in which defendants of 2 cases were acquitted. However, the High Court upheld 13 cases decided by the Kathmandu District Court. In majority of the cases, Sec 47 of the ETA was vaguely used to charge of cybercrime, which was even prominent in the case related to FoE online.
- Government owned media faced strict control over the news stories and contents they disseminate. Pressing these media not to publish the news critical to government was sheer mockery of press freedom.
- Government also reportedly issued a circular to its subordinates not to provide government advertisements to private independent media company.
- Blanket approach to shutdown thousands of websites in the name of 'porn' is likely to deprive people of various information and study.

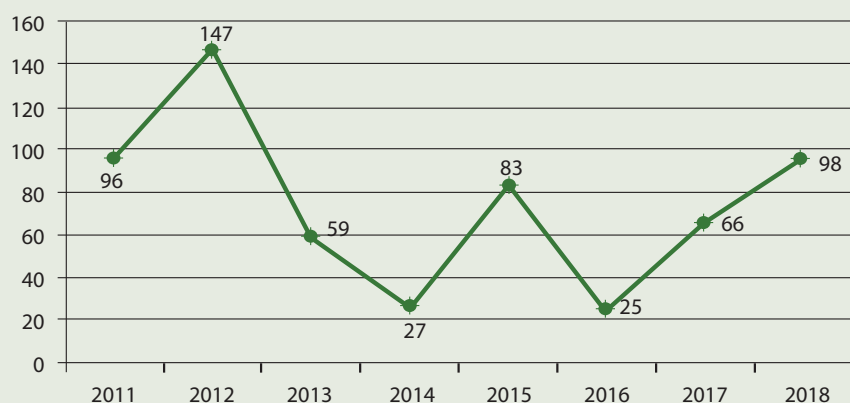
- Free Expression in social media is under direct threat as more and more people are detained abusing some provisions of ETA.
- There are not any efforts from government side to end impunity on the crimes against journalists.
- Due to the expansion of internet, number of social media users (estimated 9 million Facebook users, 1 million tweet users) has remarkably increased, thereby creating platform to people's views- a healthy exercise of their right to freedom of expression. It is appreciative.
- Another worrying trend is that writers and journalists making criticism to government activities are trolled and lashed on social media. It is not only to create unhealthy digital atmosphere but also to support the elements hostile to media persons and critics. Limiting healthy criticism is the signal of growing intolerance.
- It is positive that with the elections of three layers of governments following adoption of federal system as provisioned by the new constitution, people at the local levels have been empowered with rights and authorities. But, picking journalists by the political leaders as advisors in different layers of governments is likely to negatively impact media professionalism. The doubt is there that misuse of journalists will not only discourage investigative reporting but also create platform for governments and political leaders to keep media houses and journalists under control.
- It is equally worrying that whether journalists willing to serve as a press advisors and consultants to the elected representatives of government from center to local levels maintain media professionalism.

Gender Matters

Out of 223 journalists, 26 female journalists were affected in various incidents that occurred at different parts of the country. Along with press freedom violations monitoring, FF also continued the monitoring of the portrayal of women in Nepali media. The data of 2018 found gradual improvement in women's presence. In the initial months, women presence was dismal which gradually saw improvement.

The FF's gender monitoring desk over the year reveals that Out of the total bylines, 9% are by female in print media whereas there are 15% news stories by female in online media. Similarly, among the news sources, 13% in print media and 12% in online media are females. And 22% female write Op-ed articles in the major print media.

Press Freedom violation from 2011 to 2018



Policy Watch

- In law and policy front, 2018 year remained dismal. The time after the new constitution could be utilized properly by making laws and formulating policies in line with the constitution and international best practices, sadly, it was the opposite. The laws brought on freedom of expression, press freedom and privacy were against the national charter and international best practices. In the name of protecting privacy of State institutions, the efforts to weaken citizen's privacy were quite alarming. Close scrutiny of laws being formulated by Federal and Provincial government was one of the tasks performed by Freedom Forum in 2018.
- Some provisions of the draft laws were pointed out of the need to be amended to make compatible with constitutional provisions. Feedback was provided on Privacy bill, Press Council bill, Gandaki Province Communication Policy, Province 5 Provincial Policy, Press and Publication Bill, Broadcasting Bill, Province 3 Mass Communication Management Bill, ICT Bill, PSB Bill, Province 1 Broadcasting Bill and some other local bills.
- Similarly, the new codes that replaced decade long Civil Code (Muluki Ain 2020) also had the provision that could easily trap journalists merely for taking photographs. The provisions in the Civil and Criminal Codes were discouraging to investigative reporting.

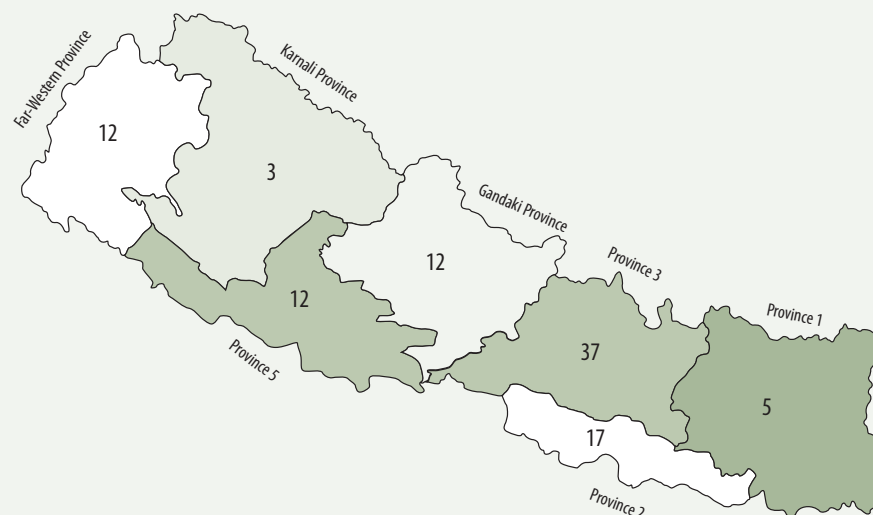
Impunity Prevails

In the impunity front, Nepal has not made progress to address the impunity relating to crimes against the journalists. Even the families of those killed during the armed conflict are still waiting desperately for the justice. During November 2 program in Kathmandu, referring to the delayed justice, a daughter of slain journalist said, "My father was killed once, but we're feeling that we're killed time and again."

Despite repeated prodding, the State agencies' apathy to address impunity is a serious concern. There has not been any significant progress in the court cases nor the commissions established to investigate the cases related to impunity works for solving the issue. Two commissions- Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons- have not solved a single cases relating to slain and disappeared journalists in Nepal. It is quite harrowing in deed.

Teju Khadka, a journalist associated with Radio Budhi Nanda of Bajura district of Province 7 has gone missing and his whereabouts is still unknown.

WHICH PROVINCE, HOW MANY VIOLATIONS?



Conclusion And Future Projection

- In view of the pending justice on impunity, the campaign and advocacy on freedom of expression and information and journalists' rights must be continued.
- Respect of press freedom, media pluralism by all levels of governments is imperative.
- Concrete efforts are required to achieve the SDG Goal 10.a and b. National mechanism for safety of journalists is essential, and assessment of RTI implementation is equally important.
- Strong watch over the activities of State agencies is imperative, so that there would not be any efforts that jeopardize freedom of expression, press freedom, right to information and journalists' safety.
- Presence of media must be increased at local level to boost watchdog over the activities there.
- With increased adversity to civic space, media is also to suffer more hostility.
- The more the government become hostile in the name of strong rule, the more the provisions on FoE are tampered, at media freedom at risk
- Capacity building of journalists needs to be continued to ensure media professionalism, so that thorough, comprehensive and investigative reporting would be possible.
- Media are likely to be guided and controlled.
- Spread of guided news and misinformation with political manipulation is likely to grow.
- Healthy criticism and professional reporting will be at stake.

Recommendation

- Government must assure media fraternity that there is a complete press freedom and government should not impose any measures that would affect or limit press freedom
- The law-making process should be open, transparent and consultative.
- Government should immediately instruct police administration not to employ Section 47 of Electronic Transaction Act in the areas of freedom of speech and expression.
- Government media should be allowed to function without any interferences and control
- The journalistic organizations close to political parties must come together and make a common acceptable position on the issue of freedom of speech and expression
- Media houses must boost the morale of journalists with their capacity building and urging them not to resort to self-censorship in their daily works.
- Ending impunity on crimes against journalists must be the top priority of all stakeholders.
- Media literacy and Internet literacy must be enhanced.
- Government should make action plan, devise new laws and amend old one to wipe out faulty provisions on FoE, press freedom. 🌱

Public Interest Reporters in Quake Affected Districts

An interaction program was organized on 'Contemporary Issues of Reconstruction Works in Kathmandu on October 9 to share the experiences of the journalists from 14 earthquake affected districts to whom FF had given training on Public Interest Reporting (PIR). Even the trainers shared their views on difficulties the quake-affected people faced.

Chief Executive Officer of the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA), Sushil Gyawali, was the chief guest at the program which brought into light the field status of reconstruction related activities with the views from the reporters, NRA district level representatives, NRA CEO, and trainers. How the role of media could be strengthened as a watchdog in reconstruction works was equally important focus. At the interaction FF Executive Chief, Tara Nath Dahal, highlighted the objective of PIR training and the interaction. He made it clear why the fellowship was providing to journalists.

Dahal shared 45 news stories written by journalists concerning the reconstruction activities in the quake hit districts and handed

over to NRA CEO Gyawali. The journalists had prepared reports and news on the status of physical infrastructures, health facilities, rehabilitation, sanitation and cultural heritage in the districts.

One of the mentors of PIR training and FF General Secretary, Dharmendra Jha, said effective engagement of media professionals was imperative to ensure transparency in the reconstruction process. The training FF provided on PIR was first of its kind that journalists meet the people affected with earthquake. The writing fellowship after training has been a medium for translating news skills and knowledge on field reporting, he added.

Similarly, one of the PIR participants, Dhurba Dangal from Sindhupalchowk district, viewed that data provided by NRA did not match in some cases. Distribution of government installment to the quake affected was quite slow, he added.

Another journalist from Kathmandu district, Purna Prasad Mishra said the increase in tax has added woes to quake survivors. He questioned

why it was taking long time for the completion of cultural heritages.

NRA Act getting amended

Responding to the queries and concern of journalists and other participants, NRA CEO Gyawali stated that NRA was effortful to address the complaints and entrusting local NRA representatives with more responsibilities than the construction of physical infrastructures.

He also informed that the NRA Act relating to the post-earthquake reconstruction was in the phase of amendment which would have the provision of formation of a reconstruction committees coordinated by the Chairperson of most affected rural municipalities and municipalities.

Also in the amendment, as Gyawali shared, another provision would be added for socio-economic restoration at district level according to which a committee would be formed under the leadership of coordinator of District Coordination Committee where lawmakers, province assembly members and chiefs of local units would be the members. 🌱



ToT on Leadership, Participation in Democratic Citizenry Processes



A four-day Training of Trainers (ToT) on Leadership and Participation in Democratic Citizenry Processes concluded on 03 October in Dhulikhel. Freedom Forum organized the training as part of 'Sustainable Use of Technology for Public Service Accountability in Nepal (SUSASAN)' Project being implemented in six districts of Nepal- Achham, Bajhang, Dadeldhura, Kailali, Lalitpur and Sindhupalchowk.

The main goal of the training was to develop some local level facilitator competencies to facilitate in using integrated technologies for the promotion of civic participation in governance and accountability. It aims that the participants after attending and participating in this school would be able to acquire necessary knowledge and skills to be able to facilitate training to the targeted community at the sub-national (local government) level on promoting civic participation in governance and accountability process through existing online and offline mechanism under project SUSASAN.

The training gave special emphasis on leadership and participation for WMGs and existing women's network in the formal and

informal local government structures. The participants excelled their capacity on various themes of open data, budget transparency, gender responsive budgeting, citizen reporting, grievance reporting and operation of techno platform. The participants also acquired skills and techniques to be able to facilitate trainings to representatives of existing women's network at local level. "Transparency is the major component to maintain good governance and hold the government accountable," said FF Executive Chief Taranath Dahal.

The training covers grievance reporting, citizen reporting, open data, budget transparency, citizen format budget on WMGs at local especially pro-poor and gender responsive budgeting, training design and delivery, definition, types of leader and leadership, unveil budget in all level of governments and planning process.

Team Leader to CECI-SUSASAN, Hem Tembe; development professional, Bharati Silwal Giri; Governance Adviser to CECIS-US-ASAN, Binod Upadhyaya; and Bibhushan Bista and Saroj Bista from Young Innovations, among others were involved as trainer in the event. Total 18 participants representing six district-based civil society organizations (CSOs) and the partners of the project had participated in the training. 🌱

Review on Broadcasting Bill of Province 5 Submitted

FF submitted the review report on Broadcasting Bill of Province 5 to the Office of the Chief Minister and Ministry of Internal Affairs and Law. The draft bill was also distributed to the Assembly members of different political parties in the province on December and to the media and FoE stakeholders. The Assembly Members of Province 5 were distributed the review FF made with the objective of facilitating them to give final shape to the bill. The bill had already been tabled before the Provincial Assembly and was in the process of getting passed as the Act. FF representatives at Province 5, Ram Bikas Chaudhary and Sudeep Gautam, also facilitated at the local level to distribute the review document establishing coordinating with the Assembly Members and Ministry officials as well. Out of 23 sections in the bill, FF showed concern mainly on 10 sections and demanded repealing of few provisions, while recommended for some change as FF mentioned.

The rationale of review of the Provincial Broadcasting Bill is:

- To use the modern tools and techniques of information and communications on broadcasting sector;
- To ensure reliable, fair and free flow of information via broadcasting means; and,
- To promote and protect the assurance of individual's freedom of expression and access to information.

FF's concern/recommendation on draft bill:

1. Repeal the provision of 'government agency' as a broadcasting institution as well as revoke ambiguous and undefined terminology of the bill such as: obscenity, unnatural fear, misinterpretation of culture, sects, ethnic groups, caste, languages;
2. Repeal the proposed provision of taking approval of every program and get the authorization of broadcasting institutions;
3. Form an autonomous and independent agency for granting permission for broadcasting institutions;
4. Distinguish and erase the proposed activities which directly come under the jurisdiction of federal government such as matters related to foreign affairs;

The provisions that were inconsistent with the constitutional and international standards, national and provincial mass communication policy were reviewed by the FF. Similarly, the review has furnished recommendations providing the grounds for repealing and amendment in the concerned provisions. 🌱

Make Social Issues Main News



Women journalists gathered at an interface FF organized on November 28 voiced that time has come to press the media to make social issues main news.

It was the female only interface organized to discuss women's presence in Nepali media on November 28 in Kathmandu.

During the program, a report on content monitoring of Nepali media outlets through gender lens was presented. The data generated after monitoring a total of 3,666 news stories from nine national dailies and six online media from January to September 2018 was presented at the program to show the comparative study on presence of women in the media.

Compared to the male's presence, women's presence is obviously low e.g. among article writers in the national dailies monitored the women's presence is 22% against 78% male. The report concluded that news from online media are more inclusive than print media in terms of byline, and news source.

Senior reporter at the Himalaya Times daily Ms. Rama Luintel argued that encouraging female to report on main beat is one solution but time has come to change the trend of news. "Media must prioritize social news as main news content. Female journalists also need to speak with editors to provide proper space for our news stories," she called on the fellow journalists.

"Though small, I am excited to see positive changes in women's presence in Nepali media," said Executive Director at Ashmita Women Publication House Ms. Sarita Shrestha. Quoting their previous studies on gender equality in Nepali media contents, she shared women have always been presented in a submissive role in Nepali media.

Speaking at the program, Chairperson at Working Women Journalists (WWJ) Nepal Ms. Amika Rajthala stressed that journalists should also be gender sensitive and link issues of women while writing news on other sectors like federalism, parliamentary activities, election, etc. Female journalists should also be ready to bear challenges otherwise, it is difficult to retain in media industry, suggested Ms. Rita Lamsal from Lokaantar online.

Gender expert and desk editor at National News Agency (RSS) Ms. Pabitra Guragain said our socialization is different from that of male so facilitation by coworkers is important. Trivialization of social issues is also one factor for majority of political issues on the front page of Nepali media, she claimed.

A young reporter at Bizpati online Ms. Bhawana Lama argued that while boosting self confidence is imperative for female journalists. They are however discriminated in many ways, she added. Female journalists reporting on parliamentary issues are yet not provided with parliamentary press card, she complained.

“Media must prioritize social news as main news content. Female journalists also need to speak with editors to provide proper space for our news stories.”

One of the participants also said that if there was a fear suffering woman journalists it is the 'fear of being raped'. It is not girl/women's personal problem, but the product of entire system.

Likewise, some participants expressed dissatisfaction upon financial discrimination among male and female journalists prevalent in most of the media houses. In some cases, their male colleagues intentionally create gender unfriendly environment in the workplace, they shared.

Lastly, concluding the program, FF's Chairperson Hari Binod Adhikari recommended participant journalists to write quality news giving different angles to the issues. He also suggested media houses to provide opportunity for main beats reporting to female journalists and empower those to increase their visibility in the media contents. 🌱

Justice Elusive, Impunity Unaddressed

INT'L DAY TO END IMPUNITY FOR CRIMES AGAINST JOURNALISTS -NOV 2

The International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists is a UN-recognized day observed annually on 2nd November. The day focuses on encouraging the media workers and journalists to talk about their issues of safety, struggle and impunity stories among government, non- government actors and the public.

In Nepal, FF observed this day by organizing a program in Kathmandu where stakeholders from various sectors came together, remembered the journalists and media persons killed and disappeared in the country, shared stories about the atrocities faced by families of victims journalists, pleaded the government to end the impunity.

A documentary named Impunity Plagues Media prepared by FF was screened in the program that highlighted the status of the slain and disappeared journalists and their families in Nepal.

At the event that brought together 93 persons from diverse sector, Chairperson at National Human Rights Commission, Anup Raj Sharma, said the victims were facing so many difficulties each and every day, but government was unable to solve their problems. The change will not be possible until people who actually went through struggles and people with strong vision come in the power, he added.

He reminded that NHRC was always pleading for justice to the victims and recommending the government for it. In the storytelling session during the program, daughter of slain journalist Dev Kumar Acharya, Trishna Acharya, shared how her family was targeted by the political leaders continuously. She said, "My father was killed because he was vocal". After the death of her father, they had no option but to rely on Truth and Reconciliation Commission. "At the age of 11, I lost my father since then my nights are sleepless in a hope to justice but in vain," she wailed.

Similarly, daughter of a disappeared journalist, Dhan Bahadur Rokaya, Pabitra Rokaya, shrieked, "Although I was only 5 year old and innocent about my father's disappearance, the struggle my mother faced in the later days were painful."



On the occasion, Head of the Central Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Tribhuvan University, Chiranjivi Khanal, viewed, "Journalists are facing numerous problems all across the globe. Freedom of journalists is linked to freedom of society." He praised FF for organizing such program and said that one should raise voice for social justice.

"I firmly believe that if impunity is addressed, the perspective of society towards justice will be change positively," he underscored.

General Secretary of the Federation of Nepali Journalists, Ramesh Bista, viewed that the people in power were apathetic towards the action on the culprits of press freedom violations. "Political will is imperative to book those violating press freedom," he emphasized.

Chairperson of INSEC, Subodh Pyakurel, said truth is the first step towards journalism. Impunity, democracy, and development cannot move together, thus leading to corruption. "Cases of present impunity were frequently closed by the court without reaching a just conclusion. So, the government must come up with a solution for ending this culture," he added.

Member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Manchala Jha, shared that her position was bound by certain rules. All around the world journalists are being killed and murdered, she said, admitting that the Commission was not able to cater justice to the families the journalists killed over times in Nepal. She wondered why the government was neglecting to address such serious issues.

Former Chairman of the Federation of Nepali Journalists and former Chairman of Press Council Nepal, Harihar Birahi extended heartfelt thanks to FF for recognizing investigative and courageous journalists with awards. He complained that even the government did not value the journalists in the country.

FF Chairperson Haribinod Adhikari hoped the voices of the brave daughters of victim journalists would work to bring change. "Speaking truth has itself become a challenge in the present world," he said, adding that FF will continuously work for the press freedom with advocacy and research.

Making clear why the program was organized, FF Executive Chief, Taranath Dahal, said November 2 is the day to remember the journalists who lost their lives during the insurgency and other difficult moments. "It is worrying the justice to the families of the victim journalists are desperately waiting for justice. So, November 2 is the also the day to remind the harrowing moments the journalists faced for reporting corruption, irregularities and insurgency, seek political commitment to address impunity relating to crimes against journalists, he added.

JOURNALISTS AWARDED

In the program, two journalists were awarded. Senior reporter with the Himal Khabar Patrika weekly, Ramesh Kumar, was conferred on the Investigative Journalism Award, while senior journalist and RTI activist at Province 5, Bikash Chaudhary, was given the Courageous Journalism Award. Each award carried Rs 25,000 and letter of appreciation.

Time to Battle Fake News

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) which serves as a common discussion forum for multi stakeholders on internet policy issues was held in Kathmandu on November 2 and 3. FF being one of the stakeholders working on internet safety, governance and media rights, held a session on “Fake News, Disinformation and Social Media”. The session was moderated by FF Vice President and Internet Rights and Principle Coalition Steering Committee member Sahaj Man Shrestha. He viewed the fake news has been disseminated as propaganda through social media sites.

“Fake news in social media as well as in online media has adverse effect on everyone’s life and the system as well. Time has come for us to distinguish false content from the genuine ones,” he emphasized. The panelists for the session were FF Executive Chief Taranath Dahal, lecturer of Mass Communications and Journalism, Yam Bahadur Dura, media researcher Meera Rajbhandari Amatya, cyber law advocate Surendra Tiwari and Online Journalist Association’s President Shiva Satyal.

Mr. Dahal argued that fake contents were for misguiding people using social media and suggested everyone to be aware about it. “Everything in the social media is not genuine,” he added.

2nd IGF
NEPAL



Lecturer Dura said fake contents were causing negative impact on people’s life especially in the developing countries as Nepal and India.

Ms. Rajbhandari shared that use of social media has affected the social norms and values. Female are more vulnerable in the social media, so certain measures could be taken to mitigate the risks. Advocate Tiwari unfolded major lacking grounds in the legal context and shared what should be done to mitigate those shortcomings. He suggested that some laws should be amended in order to attain the legal safety in view of the possible threats of misguided content.

Journalist Satyal commented that fake news on social media goes viral. These are driven by the personal interest rather than the trustworthy content. The panelists also cautioned that in the name of fake news, government and authority could also misuse power to control independent media, especially the online news portals. This trend is increasing in Nepal, the session facilitator Mr Shrestha said, urging the stakeholders to pay a heed for the protection and promotion of freedom of expression rights guaranteed in the constitution. FoE should not be limited and compromised in the name of fake news. The 2nd Nepal IGF was organized with the theme of ‘Making Internet Accessible, Affordable and Safe’.

Review of Draft Bill of Media Submitted to Province 3

FF prepared a review document on the Draft Bill of Media Management of Province 3 and it to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Law, State Affairs Committee of the Assembly, and State Assembly Members and other stakeholders. Most of the State Affairs Committee members appreciated FF initiation arguing it has helped them while finalizing the bill during assembly discussion. FF reviewed the bill being based on the international standard of FoE, media law and the Constitution of Nepal.

Through the review, FF

- Suggested making the definition of journalist a wider one.
- Recommended to repeal the provision of program-wise broadcasting approval in each and every program.

- There was no provision of ‘court appeal’ on government decision in finalization of licensing process where FF suggested appealing the provision for those parties who are not agreed with government decision.
- Suggested repealing the proposed provision of prohibition on broadcasting on typical sector or area as it was fully unconstitutional.
- Proposed for voluntary enlistment of publication rather than compulsory registration in the proposed bill.
- Recommend the removal of the provision of scrapping the registration of publication as it comes under the domain of federal law.
- Suggested repealing the provision related to international relations which comes under the domain of federal law.

LAW &
POLICY
WATCH

- Stressed on investment transparency in media industry.
- Recommended to repeal the provision related to press representation and accreditation as it is opposed to Press Freedom and FoE principles.
 - Suggested to repeal the proposed provision of criminalization of press law violation which is against to FoE and press freedom.

FF pointed out that the proposed bill failed to incorporate:

- Journalist safety and security
- Capacity building of journalist and media professionals
- Inclusion in media content and structure
- Research and development for the innovation in media sector.

Reporters' Understanding up on Public Interest Issues

The participants of the PIR training FF provided said their understanding towards the issues related to public interest has broadened. FF had conducted the 5-day 'Public Interest Reporting (PIR)' training to 33 mid-career journalists from the 14 earthquakes affected districts. The training was focused on the issue of public concern on post-quake reconstruction and the rehabilitation.

They learned the skills of using Right to Information, Data Journalism, Public Expenditure Tracking Survey- (PETS), Follow the Money and other public finance monitoring tools of the investigative reporting. They shared that their understanding about RTI and data journalism was enhanced with the training and follow up. Reporter with the Nagarik daily from Sindhupalchowk district observed, "FF could also prepare a manual on PIR training, so that others could replicate it. The training was so helpful that it encouraged us to search more issues relating to the post disaster, rehabilitation, transparency in the activities carried out for the rehabilitation and reconstruction."

After the completion of the respective trainings, FF provided fellowships to the PIR trained 13 journalists for writing reconstruction and accountability related stories. Fellow journalists were selected based on defined selection standard such as class performance and activeness, gravity of proposed issues and commitment. After conducting two rounds of trainings, fellowship and review meetings, the PIR trained journalists are now able to write stories accommodating all the points they learn in news stories. The stories they brought are expected to exert greater influence in policy to field level. Such influence of those published stories has further inspired them to initiate a 'Public Interest Journalists' Group' (PIJG) as a group which will lead in bringing to fore the burning issues not only of reconstruction but also of all spheres of social life. This initiative was facilitated and coordinated by FF.

PIJG formed

The PIJG formed after the review meeting made the following decisions:



- i. To enlist all the participants of PIR training as a member of the group
- ii. To facilitate a secretariat at FF office and look after the office management
- iii. The future work of this group (PIJG) will focus on:
 - o Enhance the skills and knowledge of PIR;
 - o Discuss different new themes of PIR;
 - o Engage in other areas in addition to the theme of reconstruction, i.e. corruption and transparency issues at local government, financial aspects of reconstructions, extraction of natural resources at local level, trafficking, migration etc.

The PIJG has a 13-member Ad-hoc Committee.

Ad-hoc Committee:

- 1) Purna Prasad Mishra, Coordinator (Kathmandu)
- 2) Shiva Upreti, Deputy Coordinator (Gorkha)
- 3) Durga Acharya, General Secretary (Sindhupalchowk)
- 4) Nagendra Adhikari, Secretary (Kavre)

Ad-hoc Members

- 5) Jeeban Sharma (Okhaldhunga)
- 6) Kishor Budhathoki (Sindhupalchowk)
- 7) Dhurba Dungal (Sindhupalchowk)
- 8) Rama Luitel (Bhaktapur)
- 9) Shaktimaya Tamang (Nuwakot)
- 10) Shivahari Ghimire (Lalitpur)

- 11) Anil Bhandari (Sindhuli)
- 12) Pushkar Thapa (Sindhuli)
- 13) Aditya Dahal (Bhaktapur)

Other Members:

- 14) Ramhari Neupane (Nuwakot)
- 15) Shiva Silwal (Dhading)
- 16) Murari Adhikari (Dhading)
- 17) Poshnath Adhikari (Dhading)
- 18) Krishna Sharma (Kathmandu)
- 19) Suranjan Ghimire (Bhaktapur)
- 20) Kiran Lohani (Gorkha)
- 21) Krishna Thapa (Rasuwa)
- 22) Anu Acharya (Rasuwa)
- 23) Namaraj Subedi (Nuwakot)
- 24) Raju Mitra Khanal (Nuwakot)
- 25) Dev Chandra Bhatta (Nuwakot)
- 26) Nabaraj Chhatkuli (Dhading)
- 27) Raj Kumar Parajuli (Kavre)
- 28) MP Sharma (Makwanpur)
- 29) Shreejana Nepal (Makwanpur)
- 30) Manvi Baniya (Makwanpur)
- 31) Deepak Ghimire (Ramechhap)
- 32) Saroj Subedi (Ramechhap)
- 33) Jeevan Lama, (Dolakha)
- 34) Kiran Thapa (Sindhupalchowk)
- 35) Yubaraj Puri (Sindhupalchowk)
- 36) Shiva Devkota (Nuwakot)
- 37) Bhawana Poddar (Office Secretariat, FF)

Moreover, FF has been a constant support and facilitated the PIR journalists in identifying the issues and use of PIR tools via different media outlets. 🌱

Collaboration must for Open Government and Open Parliament

In a bid to ensure improved transparency, accountability and citizen engagement in governance process, the members of the House of Representatives and National Assembly have underscored the need to join the Open Government Partnership (OGP) – a global movement. They underscored the need that Nepal became a part of the multilateral initiative by consolidating the existing best practices in operation of government and parliament in terms of openness. During a collaborative dialogue on ‘Open Government and Open Parliament’ organized by Freedom Forum with the support of Parliament Support Programme of UNDP in Kathmandu on December 13, the speakers asserted that Nepal’s participation in the OGP would widen her global presence in the international arena.

They argued that Nepal needs to become the member of the OGP in order to augment international partnership for the promotion of good governance, present best practices on open, transparent, accountable and participatory governance practices, bridge citizen state gaps and demonstrate higher commitment for effective governance. On the occasion, House of Representative Committee on Public Accounts, Bharat Kumar Shah highlighted the need to devise mechanisms for enhancing civic monitoring and participation in government and parliamentary affairs by improving existing openness practices in parliament.

Likewise, HoR Finance Committee President Krishna Prasad Dahal said Nepal should avail of the opportunity offered by OGP for showcasing its best practices on governance at international forums. President of Delegated Management and Government Monitoring Committee Ram



Narayan Bidari stressed the need for reforms in presenting bills in the parliament. “It is the member of parliament not the government which should introduce legislation in the parliament”. Similarly, President of Good Governance and Sustainable Development Tara Devi Bhatta underlined the urgency of bringing the knowledge of openness to sub-national levels for leveraging transparent and accountable operation of government. “Citizens should monitor all tiers of governments for maintaining good governance in the country. An informed citizenry could only make the government and parliament responsible and answerable”.

Also sharing his experience on open government, CPN leader and lawmaker Yogesh Bhattarai insisted on joining the global movement as the donors also have sought higher commitment for transparency and accountability while providing aid.

Chief Information Commissioner Krishna Hari Baskota and Freedom Forum Executive Chief Taranath Dahal made separate presentations on open government and open parliament, respectively. It was shared that Nepal has already met the

required eligibility criteria on fiscal transparency, access to information, asset disclosure and citizen engagement to be the part of OGP. It advocates a government which is committed to providing opportunities for citizen engagement in public affairs, and building the trust between the state and its citizens so essential to ensuring the sustainability of its democratic reforms.

The OGP, with its mission of securing concrete commitments from governments to increase accountability and responsiveness to citizens’ needs, can be an important platform in Nepal for realizing the elevated level of interaction needed between civil society and government in order to build the trust needed for achieving 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development and pursuing a common agenda for change. Also speaking on the occasion were lawmakers Bimala Rai Poudel, Bijaya Subba, Satya Pahadi, Metmani Chaudhary, Bindu Devi Rana and Ramesh Poudel, former Chief Secretary of Nepal government Dr Somlal Subedi, and OGP advocates Haribinod Adhikari, Madhukar Adhikari, Dila Pant, Krishna Sapkota and Narayan Adhikari. 🌱

GESI Policy Monitoring at FF

FF had a half-day workshop on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) policy monitoring on December 24, which was facilitated by Mrs Surya Laxmi Bajracharya and Ms Rachana Magar from CECI. FF Chair, Executive Chief and all senior and junior staffs attended the participatory exercise during the GESI monitoring. The participants took part in a short survey on how effectively FF has enforced the GESI policy refined with technical support from SUSASAN project. Analysis of the data collected after survey showed that FF had gender balanced human resources. As all the participants from FF were found well-aware of the GESI policy, more than 85% of the

respondents agreed that FF has developed a GESI sensitive approach with implementation of the new GESI policy.

Likewise, 93% respondents agreed that organization has been adopting a GESI sensitive approach while providing various facilities, conducting programs and designing the projects. Furthermore, all (100%) the respondents answered that FF implements a GESI sensitive practice within the organization as it provides its employees with friendly and flexible work place, separate washrooms for men and women, and equal access to the services and resources in the office. Similarly, more than 75% of the respondents

believed that the committees in the organization are also GESI sensitive. Despite the need of few improvements as of time to time orientation on GESI policy, internal audit of GESI policy, localization of GESI policy, FF has been successful in developing and implementing a GESI sensitive strategies in the workplace, concluded the survey report. Again, discussion was held after the survey with strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threat (SWOT) analysis taking into consideration the results of the survey. Organizational action plan with commitment for improvements in policy and implementation was also finalized in the workshop. 🌱

Women as News Sources Up by 2%

Freedom Forum again presents the last quarterly (October to December) report on gender inclusion in nepali media contents of 2018. The report has been prepared after three months long monitoring of nine mainstream national dailies and six major online news portals. The media outlets monitored are- Kantipur, The Kathmandu Post, Nagarik, Republica, Gorkhapatra, The Rising Nepal, Naya Patrika, The Himalayan Times and Annapurna Post. Online news portals are- www.setopati.com www.ratopati.com, www.lokaantar.com www.onlinekhabar.com, www.pahilopost.com and www.baahrakhari.com. The activity is carried out under the project 'Enabling conducive atmosphere for free, safe and inclusive media (ECAFSIM) with the financial support of the Free Press Unlimited (FPU), a foundation based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, working on freedom of expression issues across the world. The report presents the following findings:

GENDER MONITORING REPORT

- Overall, news from Nagarik daily contained maximum number of women in byline, and as news sources.
- Looking into the stories about women, among 31 stories about women 11 challenged stereotype against those.
- Annual data of 2018 show that Nagarik contained the highest number of news with female byline and news from Kantipur daily quoted maximum number of women as news sources amongst others.

Online Media

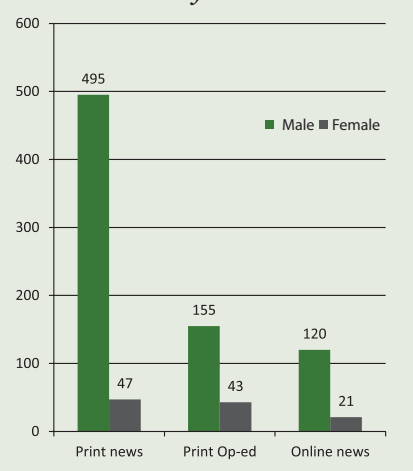
(Total 360 news stories were scanned from six major online portals for their byline and sources during these three months.)

Print Media

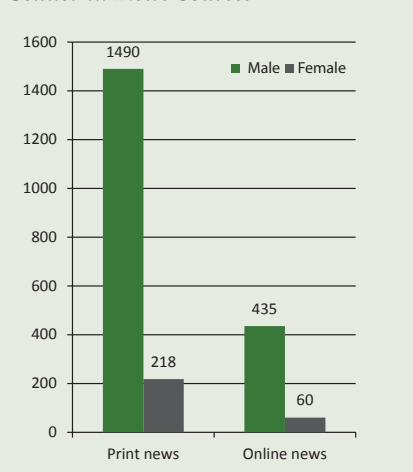
(Total 864 news stories from the main pages and 197 op-ed articles of the nine national dailies were scanned during three months- October to December for their bylines, sources, and how the issues about women are presented.)

- Scanning revealed only 540 news stories with byline among which only 9% are of female and remaining 91% are of male. Remaining 324 stories do not contain any byline. In the op-ed section of the outlets monitored, 22% articles are written by female authors. Kantipur daily has been found to be more gender inclusive compared to other broadsheets in terms of article authors.
- Among 1,708 persons quoted in the sources of the 864 news, 87% are men and 13% are women.
- Among total 1,061 news and articles monitored, 36% were related to politics and government followed by 26% social and legal news and 16% business news. The least published news items on the main news pages of the dailies were about media, celebrities, sports and entertainment.
- Highest number of male byline and news sources is found in the news on politics and governmental issues.
- Similarly, highest number of female byline and female sources is recorded in the news related to social and legal issues.
- Trend analysis of the news byline and sources recorded during previous six months revealed that in this quarter number of news with female byline decreases by 1% while their presence as news sources increases by 2%.

Gender in News Byline



Gender in News Sources



- Among 360 news stories, only 141 news stories contained byline where 15% on the news contained female byline and remaining 85% contained male in byline.
- In case of news sources, 495 were identified as person sources, among which 88% are men and only 12% are women.
- In comparison to news published on the print media, those published on the online portals are found to have covered different issues on the main news sections even though majority are those about politics (26%) followed by business news (23%) and social news (19%).
- Highest number of female in byline and as news sources is recorded from the news related to social and legal issues followed by business news.
- While, maximum number of male byline and sources is recorded from the news related to politics and government.
- Trend analysis for the last six months of female in byline reveals that in this quarter it decreases by 9% but for their presence as new sources increases by 3%.
- Among all, news from Setopati contained the highest number of women's presence both in byline and as news sources.
- Among 28 stories about women, 13 stories presented those in the dominant role.
- Annual data from January to December 2018 show Setopati among other online news portals published the highest majority of the news with female in its home page and also the news quoted maximum number of female in comparison to other portals monitored.

FF among Global FoE Campaigners to Write to Zuckerberg over Content Removal

November, 2018

Dear Mark Zuckerberg:

What do the Philadelphia Museum of Art, a Danish member of parliament, and a news anchor from the Philippines have in common? They have all been subject to a misapplication of Facebook's Community Standards. But unlike the average user, each of these individuals and entities received media attention, were able to reach Facebook staff and, in some cases, receive an apology and have their content restored. For most users, content that Facebook removes is rarely restored and some users may be banned from the platform even in the event of an error.

When Facebook first came onto our screens, users who violated its rules and had their content removed or their account deactivated were sent a message telling them that the decision was final and could not be appealed. It was only in 2011, after years of advocacy from human rights organizations, that your company added a mechanism to appeal account deactivations, and only in 2018 that Facebook initiated a process for remedying wrongful takedowns of certain types of content. Those appeals are available for posts removed for nudity, sexual activity, hate speech or graphic violence. This is a positive development, but it doesn't go far enough.

Today, we the undersigned civil society organizations, call on Facebook to provide a mechanism for all of its users to appeal content restrictions, and, in every case, to have the appealed decision re-reviewed by a human moderator.

Facebook's stated mission is to give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together. With more than two billion users and a wide variety of features, Facebook is the world's premier communications platform. We know that you recognize the responsibility you have to prevent abuse and keep users safe. As you know, social media companies, including Facebook, have a responsibility to respect human rights, and international and regional human rights bodies have a number of specific recommendations for improvement, notably concerning the right to remedy.

Facebook remains far behind its competitors when it comes to affording its users due process.

We know from years of research and documentation that human content moderators, as well as machine learning algorithms, are prone to error, and that even low error rates can result in millions of silenced users when operating at massive scale. Yet Facebook users are only able to appeal content decisions in a limited set of circumstances, and it is impossible for users to know how pervasive erroneous content takedowns are without increased transparency on Facebook's part.

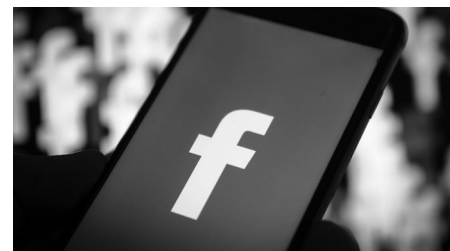
While we acknowledge that Facebook can and does shape its Community Standards according to its values, the company nevertheless has a responsibility to respect its users' expression to the best of its ability. Furthermore, civil society groups around the globe have criticized the way that Facebook's Community Standards exhibit bias and are unevenly applied across different languages and cultural contexts. Offering a remedy mechanism, as well as more transparency, will go a long way toward supporting user expression.

Earlier this year, a group of advocates and academics put forward the Santa Clara Principles on Transparency and Accountability in Content Moderation, which recommend a set of minimum standards for transparency and meaningful appeal. This set of recommendations is consistent with the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of the right to freedom of expression and opinion David Kaye, who recently called for a "framework for the moderation of user-generated online content that puts human rights at the very center." It is also consistent with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which articulate the human rights responsibilities of companies.

Specifically, we ask Facebook to incorporate the Santa Clara Principles into their content moderation policies and practices and to provide:

Notice: Clearly explain to users why their content has been restricted.

- Notifications should include the specific clause from the Community Standards that the content was found to violate. Notice should be sufficiently detailed to allow the user to identify the specific content that was restricted and should include information about how the content was detected, evaluated, and removed.



- Individuals must have clear information about how to appeal the decision.

Appeals: Provide users with a chance to appeal content moderation decisions.

- Appeals mechanisms should be easily accessible and easy to use.
- Appeals should be subject to review by a person or panel of persons that was not involved in the initial decision.
- Users must have the right to propose new evidence or material to be considered in the review.
- Appeals should result in a prompt determination and reply to the user.
- Any exceptions to the principle of universal appeals should be clearly disclosed and compatible with international human rights principles.
- Facebook should collaborate with other stakeholders to develop new independent self-regulatory mechanisms for social media that will provide greater accountability

Numbers: Issue regular transparency reports on Community Standards enforcement.

- Present complete data describing the categories of user content that are restricted (text, photo or video; violence, nudity, copyright violations, etc), as well as the number of pieces of content that were restricted or removed in each category.
- Incorporate data on how many content moderation actions were initiated by a user flag, a trusted flagger program, or by proactive Community Standards enforcement (such as through the use of a machine learning algorithm).
- Include data on the number of decisions that were effectively appealed or otherwise found to have been made in error.
- Include data reflecting whether the company performs any proactive audits of its unappealed moderation decisions, as well as the error rates the company found.

Source: <https://santaclaraprinciples.org/open-letter/>

Self Disclosure Update

Type and Nature of Organization	NGO working for Democracy, Right to Information, Freedom of Expression, Fiscal Transparency and Open Data, Media Policy and Law, Internet Freedom		
Legal Status	Registered at District Administration Office Kathmandu. DAO Registration Number: 127/062/63, SWC Affiliation Number: 18518		
Location	Adarsa Marga, Prasuti Griha Road, Thapathali, Kathmandu		
Staffs and Roles	Taranath Dahal: Executive Chief, coordinates overall organizational and administrative affairs		
	Aruna Adhikari: Finance and Administration Officer, looks after accounting and administrative affairs and performs responsibilities as the Information Officer.		
	Nanu Maiya Khadka: Gender Monitoring Officer, responsible for monitoring media content on gender perspectives		
	Manju Ojha: Front Desk Assistant		
	Kamal Poudel: Driver		
	Ganga Kumari Gurung: Office Assistant		
Projects	Krishna Sapkota- SUSASAN, Narayan Ghimire- ECAFSIM, Siromani Dhungana- SUSASAN, Sanjeeb Ghimire- EEMIR, Bhawana Poddar- EEMIR, Bobbish Dhakal- EEMIR, Kumar Chaulagain- EEMIR, Ashmita Pokharel- ECAFSIM, Pramod Bhattarai- ECAFSIM, Shanti Chaulagain- ECAFSIM		
Ongoing Project Information	Project Name	Supporting Agency	Date of Signing the Contract
	Amendment of the Right to Information Act	The Asia Foundation (TAF)	26th September 2018
	Enable Environment for Media Law Reforms and Improved RTI Practice (EEMIR) (CS-MAP)	FHI 360	30 Dec 2016
	Enabling Conducive Atmosphere for Free, Safe and Inclusive Media (ECAFSIM) in Nepal	Free Press Unlimited (FPU)	29th March 2018
	Sustainable use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal (SUSASAN)	CECI	17th April 2017
	Campaign and Advocacy of Impunity Grant	IFEX	6th November 2018
	Updating Nepal's Citizens Climate Budget: Some Ideas	International Budget Partnership (IBP)	26th November 2018
Services Offered/ Activities Carried Out	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 and Current Activities	Please follow the link: http://freedomforum.org.np/content/category/activities/		
Information Officer	Aruna Adhikari		
Financial Information	Freedom Forum received grants amounting Rs. 3346263/50 (October to December 2018)		
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/		
Mechanism for Information Dissemination	Websites- http://www.freedomforum.org.np/ ; www.nepalpressfreedom.org , and Newsletter-Free Expression		

More Journalists Killed on the Job as Reprisal Murders Nearly Double

Journalists from Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan to the U.S. were targeted for murder in 2018 in reprisal for their work, bringing the total of journalists killed on duty to its highest in three years. The number of journalists killed in conflict fell to its lowest level since 2011.

— Elana Beiser

NEW YORK, December 13, 2018: The number of journalists targeted for murder in reprisal for their reporting nearly doubled in 2018 from a year earlier, driving up the overall count of journalists killed on the job. Afghanistan, where extremists have stepped up deliberate attacks on journalists, was the deadliest country and accounted for much of the increase.

At least 53 journalists were killed around the world between January 1 and December 14, 2018, of which at least 34 were singled out for murder. CPJ tracks three types of journalists' deaths on the job: reprisal murders; deaths in combat or crossfire (11 this year, the lowest since 2011); and deaths on other dangerous assignments, such as covering protests that turn violent (eight this year). The total is up from 47 killed in all of last year, of which 18 were pinpointed for murder. A total of 50 were killed in 2016.

The recent uptick in killings follows two years of decline, but comes as the jailing of journalists hits a sustained high—adding up to a profound global crisis of press freedom. The context for



the crisis is varied and complex, and closely tied to changes in technology that have allowed more people to practice journalism even as it has made journalists expendable to the political and criminal groups who once needed the news media to spread their message.

Another significant factor is a lack of international leadership on journalists' rights and safety. The most illustrative case is the brazen murder of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul in October by Saudi agents. Khashoggi, who lived in self-imposed exile in the U.S., had been strongly critical of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The most vocal head of state in Khashoggi's case has been Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, whose government has effectively shut down the independent media and is jailing more journalists than any other around the world for the third consecutive year.

The White House, traditionally a strong defender of global press freedom, has equivocated on the blame for Khashoggi's murder despite, according to the Post, CIA conclusions that only the crown prince could have ordered such an operation. In what was billed as his definitive statement on the case, President Donald Trump on November 20 said—referring to the crown prince's alleged role—"maybe he did and maybe he didn't!" and that "in any case," the U.S. "intends to remain a steadfast partner of Saudi Arabia," citing Saudi purchases of military equipment and joint opposition to Iran. Essentially, Trump signaled that countries that do enough business with the United States are free to murder journalists without consequence.



Photo credit: <http://time.com>

Source: <https://cpj.org/reports/2018/12/journalists-killed-murdered-afghan-saudi-us.php>

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.

Editors: Krishna Sapkota, Narayan Ghimire

Design and Processed by: Spandan Design Communication, 5535884



Freedom Forum

P.O. Box: 24292

Block No. 22, Adarsha Marg
Thapathali, Kathmandu, Nepal

Telephone: 977-1-4102022, 4102030

Fax: 977-1-4226099

Email: info@freedomforum.org.np
monitoring@freedomforum.org.np

Web: www.freedomforum.org.np
www.nepalpressfreedom.org