

## **Incidents and Electoral Environment after Madheshi Morcha's Withdrawal of Government Support**

Analysis Update – 3

*Period: March 16 to 31, 2017 / Published: April 13*

On March 15, Madheshi Morcha<sup>1</sup> withdrew support for the government<sup>2</sup> and announced it would boycott and disrupt elections scheduled for May 14, 2017 unless its demands are resolved through a constitutional amendment.<sup>3</sup> The Morcha then launched a protest program against the elections. Between March 16 and 31, at least 24 incidents occurred involving Madheshi Morcha protesting local elections. The incidents ranged from picketing and padlocking government offices to removing signboards of newly formed local units and vandalising them. A majority of incidents happened in Province 2. There were no clashes or violent incidents related to the Morcha's protest program.

Another significant development during this period was the Election Commission of Nepal's (ECN) order to have provisions regarding reinstating monarchy and a Hindu state removed from Rastriya Prajatantra Party's (RPP) charter, as it ruled they were against the spirit of Nepal's secular and republican constitution. RPP denounced the ECN's decision, as the party views reinstating the monarchy and Hindu state as its core party tenets, and accused the ECN of violating the party's freedom of expression.<sup>4</sup> At least 10 incidents were reported involving RPP protesting against the decision.

Outside of areas in the Tarai where holding the elections remains contested, citizens appeared to be greeting polls with anticipation. Political parties began fielding their candidates and the ECN worked overtime to finalize technical preparations. There were, however, at least four other incidents related to electoral processes.

There were at least 12 incidents related to local-level restructuring in which citizens picketed and protested in front of government offices or obstructed roads to express their discontent with the newly restructured local level bodies.

The main challenge for holding successful elections on May 14 continued to be reaching a political agreement between the Madhesh-based parties and other parties. The government held

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<sup>1</sup> Samyukta Loktantrik Madheshi Morcha, or Madheshi Morcha, is an alliance of seven Madhesh-based parties.

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed analysis of why Madheshi Morcha withdrew its support, read DRCN and COCAP's [second Analysis Update](#).

<sup>3</sup> Morcha's demands include, "...withdrawal of the local level elections slated for May 14, amendment of the constitution, keeping the local level structure within the provincial jurisdiction and implementing the three-point agreement reached with the alliance during the formation of government". See the Kathmandu Post's ['Morcha submits 5-pt memo to PM, gives 7-day ultimatum'](#)

<sup>4</sup> Election Commissioner Narendra Dahal said that the "Hindu state and monarchy contradicted constitutional provisions of republican order and secularism." See the Himalayan Time's ['EC Removes Hindu state, monarchy from RPP's statute'](#)

several rounds of talks through the last half of March to find a way forward. The government also proposed the idea of holding local level elections in two rounds, but this was strongly rejected by the main opposition party Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML). By April, there appeared to be little apparent progress towards a solution. As noted in previous updates, holding an election without significant parts of the population participating, or an election that results in violence and potential distrust between communities runs the risk of reversing significant progress made over the past several years.

## **Overview of Incidents from March 16 to 31<sup>5</sup>**

### **I. Election-Related Incidents**

#### **a. Madheshi Morcha protest against elections**

There were at least 24 incidents involving Madheshi Morcha protesting the local level elections. The protests were targeted at the newly formed local offices and other government offices to express the Morcha's dissatisfaction with implementing local units before provincial delineation is finalized, and for preparing to hold elections before a constitutional amendment addressing Morcha's demands is passed. It is difficult to assess to what extent the protests have disrupted the ECN's preparations for polls.

- On March 16, Madheshi Morcha cadres in Mahottari removed the signboards from seven rural municipalities in the district. They also burned the signboard and office documents of Manara Rural Municipality in Mahottari.
- On March 17, Morcha cadres disrupted a meeting held to determine the local level election center, and removed the signboard of Dhanapal Rural Municipality in Morang. On the same day, Morcha cadres prevented civil servants from inaugurating Sarawal Rural Municipality in Nawalparasi.
- On March 19, Morcha cadres burned the signboard of Hanuman Nagar Kankalini Municipal Office in Saptari district. On the same day, Morcha cadres burned the furniture of the Dewtal Rural Municipality in Pipradhi, Bara district.
- On March 20, Morcha cadres vandalized the new signboards of District Coordination Committee (DCC) of Parsa district. On the same day, Morcha cadres padlocked Pipara and Matihani Rural Municipality offices in Mahottari district. They also threatened civil servants with physical harm if they continued to implement the local restructuring process.
- On March 21, Morcha cadres removed the signboard from Aurahi Rural Municipality and vandalized the furniture of the ward office of Nagarain Municipality, both in Dhanusha district.
- On March 22, Morcha supporters protested at Ramgram Municipality in Nawalparasi district, and asked people not to participate in the upcoming elections. On the same day, Morcha cadres burned the signboard of Bhangaha Rural Municipality in Mahottari and

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<sup>5</sup> For the complete list of incidents, please follow this [Nepal Monitor link](#).

padlocked the office. Morcha cadres also removed and vandalised the signboard of the District Coordination Committee office in Dhanusha.

- On March 27, Morcha cadres interrupted a Nepali Congress election rally in Ramgram of Nawalparasi district. The cadres then burned effigies of Nepali Congress district leaders, as well as tires on the road to disrupt the rally.
- On March 28, Morcha cadres demonstrated in front of the District Election Office (DEO) in Gaur of Rautahat district. Cadres also surrounded the Saptari DEO in Rajbiraj, resulting in security personnel being deployed to prevent conflict. Also on March 28, Morcha cadres disrupted a RPP meeting being held at Gaur in Rautahat district. They attacked RPP leaders and smeared black soot on the district leader Shivaji Chaurasiya's face in the premises of Gaur Municipality meeting hall, and vandalized the hall's furniture. The Gaur confrontation escalated into a clash between cadres of the two parties, which was brought under control by the police. Cases of injury were not reported in news. Earlier on the same day, Morcha cadres had demonstrated outside DEO with a demand to pass the constitution amendment.
- Also on March 28, Morcha cadres led by Arun Singh Mandal, Central Committee Member of Sanghiya Samajwadi Forum Nepal (SSFN), padlocked offices and vandalized signboards in Sahid Municipality, Janak Nandini Rural Municipality and Kamala Riddhisiddhi Rural Municipality in Dhanusha district.

#### b. Other Election-Related Incidents

In addition to the Madheshi Morcha's protests, the other major development during this period was RPP's protest program against the ECN's decision to remove statutes from its party constitution. At least 10 incidents were reported when RPP protested against the ECN's decision. During two of the incidents RPP cadres clashed with police.

The most serious RPP protest incident occurred on March 20, when RPP cadres, led by party Chairman and Deputy Prime Minister Kamal Thapa picketed at the ECN in Kathmandu. When the RPP protesters attempted to break away from the police encirclement, the police worked to control the crowd with batons and tear gas, this resulting in at least 12 RPP cadres and police officers sustaining injuries.<sup>6</sup> The event was broadcast live across most national television stations.

There were no major clashes during this period around CPN-UML's Mechi-Mahakali campaign, or other campaign events. However, the Tharuhat/Tharuwan Joint Struggle Committee (TJSC) announced a *banda* on March 16 in Kanchanpur district with the intention of disrupting the Mechi-Mahakali program of the CPN-UML.

There were at least two other election-related incidents that were the result of parties being dissatisfied with the official operational decisions. On March 23, cadres of CPN (Maoist Centre) and RPP clashed in Dhading district over shifting the election booth of Ruwi valley from Borang of Sertungh-4 to Chalisey village.<sup>7</sup> Three people were injured in the clash. On

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<sup>6</sup> News reports did not state the number of police officers that sustained injuries.

<sup>7</sup> RPP cadres were reported to be against the shift.

March 27, Nepal Majdur Kisan Party, Chitwan rallied in Bharatpur against the new threshold set in the recently passed political parties bill.<sup>8</sup>

There was at least one other incident where parties clashed due to allegations of one party delaying the campaign of another. On March 29, cadres of Nepali Congress and Maoist Center clashed in Sanobhari Rural Municipality in Rukum district. The Maoist cadres reportedly disrupted the election campaign of Nepali Congress, resulting into three injured Nepali Congress cadres.

## II. Local Level Restructuring Related Incidents

Citizens in at least 12 locations protested decisions made by the Local Level Restructuring Commission (LLRC). The protests were generally over the new status of local units (or removing status of old units), the boundaries of new units, and location of the center of new units. In at least one location in Dhanusha district, locals have said they would boycott local elections if their demands were not met. A sample of these incidents follows:

- On March 16, citizens from former Padariya Village Development Committee (VDC) picketed the Sarlahi District Administration Office (DAO) to demand that Padariya be merged with Chakkarghatta Rural Municipality, rather than with Kabilashi Rural Municipality.
- On March 18, people from former Lite and Kunja VDCs in Mustang district stopped transportation on the Ghasa-Jomsom Highway to demand that Lite be made the center of Thasang Rural Municipality, instead of Kobang, which is reportedly inaccessible to most people in the rural municipality.
- On March 20, people from Sukhipur Rural Municipality in Siraha district began a hunger strike to protest against the LLRC's decision to dismiss its municipal status and make it a rural municipality. The local struggle committee also disrupted transportation on Zero Mile Bariyapatti road. Citizens from Sukhipur also held a protest on March 16 demanding that their municipal status remain.
- Also on March 20, citizens from former Kareti, Nauwagaun and Gairigaun VDCs in Rolpa district picketed the District Coordination Committee (DCC) to demand that Triveni be made the center of Triveni Rural Municipality. Police used tear gas to prevent the protesters from picketing the DCC.
- On March 29, citizens from Hariharpur of Mithila Municipality in Dhanusha district obstructed the Janakpur-Dhalkebar road to demand that the municipality be merged with Kshireswor Municipality. The village used to be a part of Kshireswor before it was made part of Mithila Municipality by the LLRC.
- On March 30, people from the former VDC of Raghunathpur in Dhanusha district obstructed local traffic and rallied to demand rural municipality status. Leaders and

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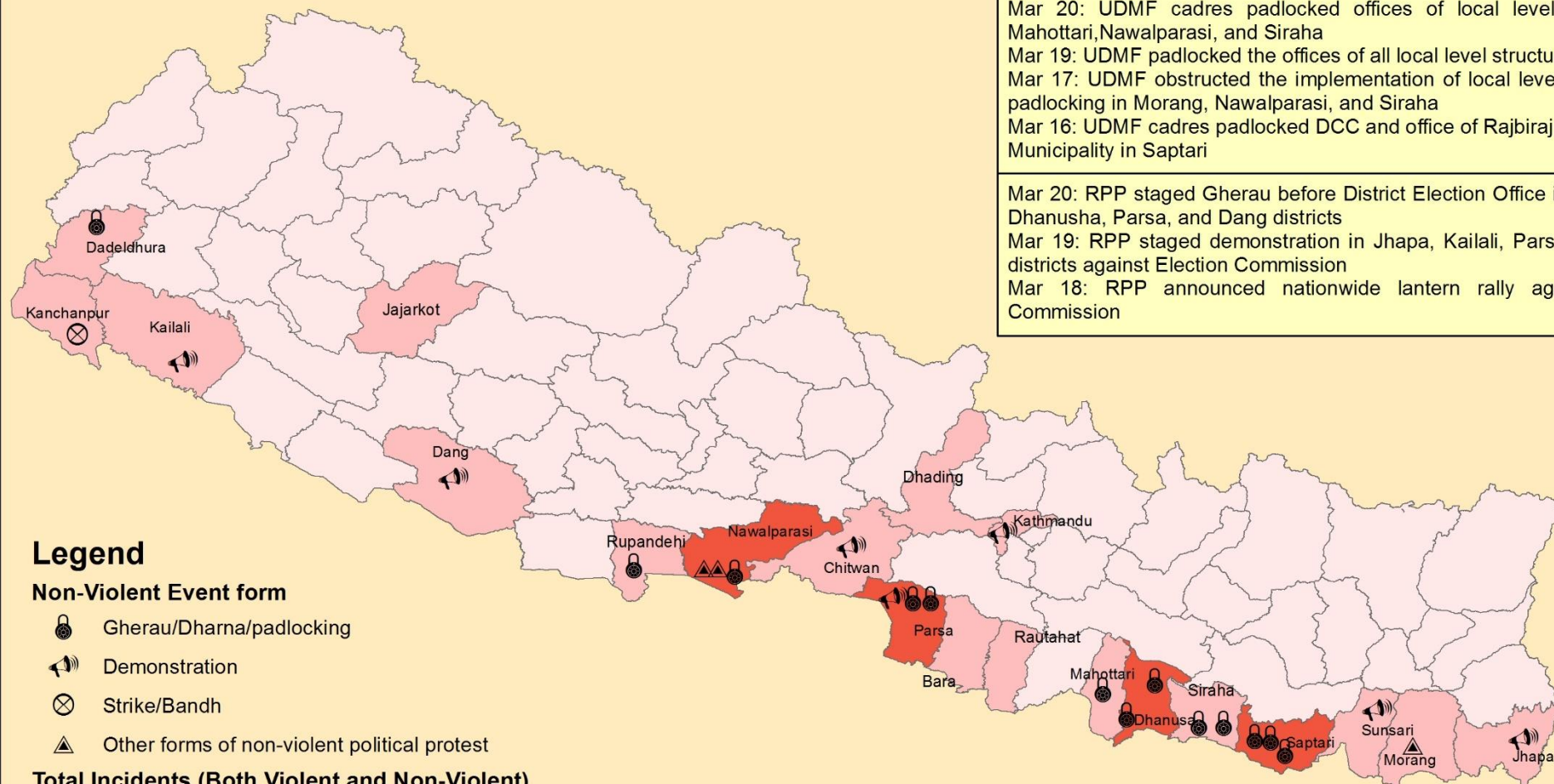
<sup>8</sup> According to the electoral threshold set for the upcoming Lower House elections, to become a national political party, a party must win at least one seat in the first past the post system, and at least 3 percent of the total valid votes in the proportional representation system. Read Republica's [Threshold of 3pc plus one FPTP seat for national party](#)

activists of all major political parties participated in the rally. The protesters warned that they could boycott local elections if the demand is not addressed.

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*This is the third of a series of periodic analysis updates that Democracy Resource Center Nepal (DRCN) and the Collective Campaign for Peace (COCAP) / NepalMonitor.org will be releasing during the upcoming election period. This project receives financial and technical support from The Asia Foundation and The Carter Center.*

# Incidents around the run up to Local Elections Mar 16 - 31, 2017



Mar 28: UDMF staged Gherau before the District Election Office of districts in Terai  
 Mar 20: UDMF cadres padlocked offices of local level structures in Mahottari, Nawalparasi, and Siraha  
 Mar 19: UDMF padlocked the offices of all local level structures in Saptari  
 Mar 17: UDMF obstructed the implementation of local level structures by padlocking in Morang, Nawalparasi, and Siraha  
 Mar 16: UDMF cadres padlocked DCC and office of Rajbiraj Municipality in Saptari

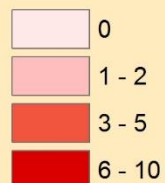
Mar 20: RPP staged Gherau before District Election Office in Dadeldhura, Dhanusha, Parsa, and Dang districts  
 Mar 19: RPP staged demonstration in Jhapa, Kailali, Parsa and Sunsari districts against Election Commission  
 Mar 18: RPP announced nationwide lantern rally against Election Commission

## Legend

### Non-Violent Event form

- Gherau/Dharna/padlocking
- Demonstration
- Strike/Bandh
- Other forms of non-violent political protest

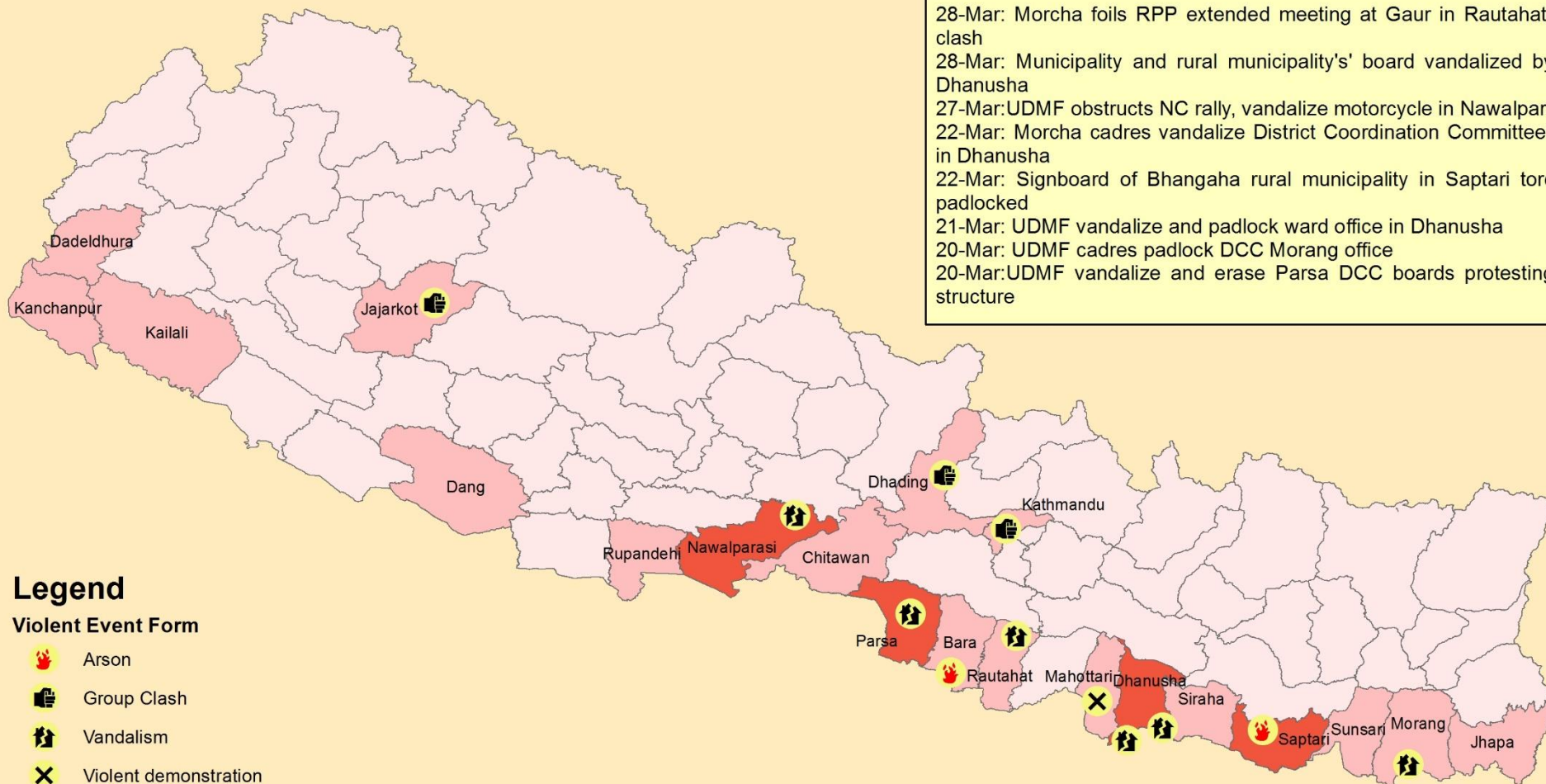
### Total Incidents (Both Violent and Non-Violent)



Mar 27: Nepal Workers and Peasants Party organized demonstration against Threshold system in upcoming election  
 Mar 16: Tharuhat announced bandh in Kanchanpur against CPN UML's campaign



# Incidents around the run up to Local Elections Mar 16 - 31, 2017



28-Mar: Morcha foils RPP extended meeting at Gaur in Rautahat, supporters clash  
 28-Mar: Municipality and rural municipality's board vandalized by morcha in Dhanusha  
 27-Mar:UDMF obstructs NC rally, vandalize motorcycle in Nawalparasi  
 22-Mar: Morcha cadres vandalize District Coordination Committee's signboard in Dhanusha  
 22-Mar: Signboard of Bhangaha rural municipality in Saptari torched, Office padlocked  
 21-Mar: UDMF vandalize and padlock ward office in Dhanusha  
 20-Mar: UDMF cadres padlock DCC Morang office  
 20-Mar:UDMF vandalize and erase Parsa DCC boards protesting local level structure

29-Mar: 3 injured in a clash between the cadres of NC and Maoist Centre in Jajarkot  
 23-Mar: 3 injured as Maoist, RPP cadres clash over election booth in Dhading  
 20-Mar: News: Dozens injured as RPP cadres picket Election Commission in Kathmandu