



# TRENDS OF VIOLENCE AND CONTESTATION IN NEPAL

JUNE - AUGUST 2020

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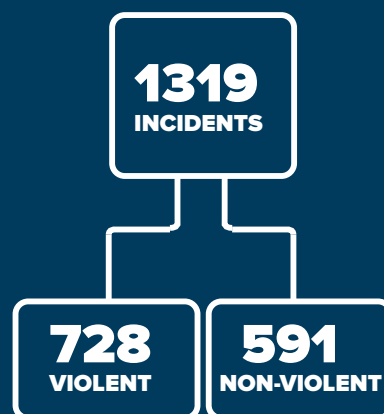
## TRENDS OF VIOLENCE AND CONTESTATION IN NEPAL FROM JUNE - AUGUST 2020

This report from the Nepal Peace Monitoring Project (PMP) analysis of violence and non-violent public contestation in Nepal from June-August 2020. The data of incidents is compiled from reports of all major online news portals, national and local newspapers from 18 districts in Nepal, and incident reports directly submitted to us. The goal of the PMP is to improve our understanding of violence in Nepal to better respond to it and to promote peace. The numbers recorded incidents in this report are based on reports mapped by [NepalMonitor.org](https://nepalmonitor.org).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From June - August 2020 the PMP recorded 1319 incidents of which 728 were violent and 591 non-violent incidents. This marked an increase in non-violent incidents by 90 percent and 20 percent in violent incidents compared to March-May. This rise in incidents were mainly due to an increase in prohibitory orders and cases of defiance of the orders, increase in protests and demonstrations, against the government's response to COVID-19, political protests in support of and against Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, protests against the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact, and the Citizenship Amendment Bill.

Violence killed 108 people and injured 493. The primary triggers of fatal violence were disputes of personal nature and gender-based violence which claimed the lives of 39 and 32 people, respectively. Some reports claim that the lockdown increased the cases of GBV as many women and girls are trapped with their abuser unable to reach out for support. There were four cases of torture of detainees in which two people died of the injuries inflicted upon them while under custody and two cases were of apparent suicides where family suspect they died of torture.



*“90% RISE IN  
NON-VIOLENT  
INCIDENTS”*

*“20% RISE IN  
VIOLENT  
INCIDENTS”*

In the period under review the PMP recorded 497 incidents related to governance, 214 of which related to the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is an increase by 47 percent of COVID-19 related incidents compared to the previous three months (March to May). However, the focus of COVID-19 related incidents shifted from an earlier focus on government's relief efforts or substandard quarantine centers to issues related to healthcare management and the enforcement of lockdown. Protests saw the emergence of the “enough is enough” campaign or included demonstrations of businessmen and labourers as their livelihoods had been severely affected by the lockdown. Similarly, health workers protested against several incidents of assaults.

From June to August, the PMP also recorded 160 incidents related to political issues of which 100 were non-violent incidents, including 74 protests. During this period 42 incidents of arrests of members of Netra Bikram Chand-led group CPN (Communist Party of Nepal) from various places were recorded.

## OVERVIEW OF INCIDENTS AMID LOCKDOWN BETWEEN JUNE 1 - AUGUST 31

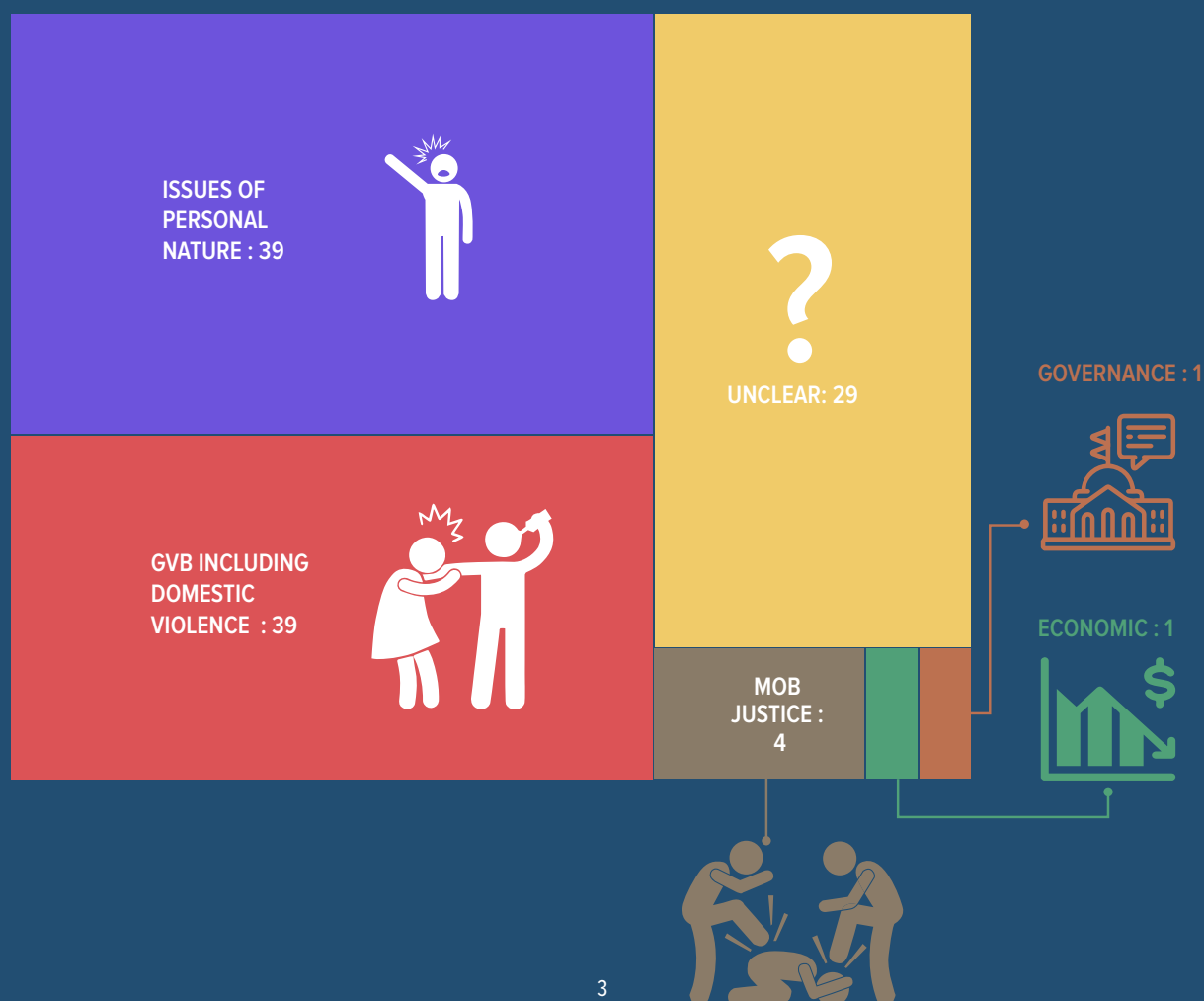
With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to spread, the initial lockdown which was imposed on March 24 continued until July 21.<sup>1</sup> However, after the highest record of 1,111 positive cases of COVID-19 on a single day, the authorities issued prohibitory orders across the country from August 17 until September 2.<sup>2</sup> By August 31, the country had seen 38,561 confirmed cases of COVID-19 which claimed the lives of 221 people.<sup>3</sup>

From June to August 2020, the Peace Monitoring Project (PMP) recorded 1319 incidents; out of which 728 were violent incidents and 591 non-violent (including 401 public protests and demonstrations, 42 politically significant arrests, and 22 local lockdowns to contain the spread of COVID-19). This marked a 20 percent increase of violence and a 90 percent increase in non-violent incidents compared to the previous three months of March to May.<sup>4</sup> This rise was mainly driven by an

increase in prohibitory orders and cases of defiance of prohibitory orders, increase in protests and demonstrations, such as demonstrations against the government's response to COVID-19, political protests in support of and against Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, protests against Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact, and the citizenship amendment bill.<sup>5</sup>

A total of 108 people were killed and 493 injured in violence from June to August 2020. The primary triggers of fatal violence were disputes of a personal nature followed by gender-based violence which claimed the lives of 39 and 32 people, respectively (See Fig 1). Gender-based violence continues to be a major challenge in Nepali society with 268 cases of rape or attempted rape recorded from June to August (See Fig 2 and 3). According to reports, the lockdown has increased cases of GBV in Nepal as many women and girls are trapped with their abusers and are unable to reach or get any support.<sup>6</sup>

Fig 1: Number of Fatalities in Violence by Trigger



Similarly, in the three months under review, PMP recorded 14 incidents of discrimination against Dalits, including several incidents of discrimination in quarantine centres.<sup>7</sup> Out of the 14 incidents, seven involved physical assaults on Dalits in which nine people were injured.

In the same period, the PMP recorded 497 incidents (both violent and non-violent) related to governance of which 214 were related to the COVID-19 pandemic (including prohibitory orders to prevent the spread of the disease or protests against perceived shortcomings of the government's response). Human Rights organisations also reported four cases of custodial deaths and demanded an impartial investigation; two cases where detainees died of injuries inflicted allegedly under torture and two cases of ostensible suicides where families suspect foul play.<sup>8</sup> The cases of custodial death are explained in box 1.

### **BOX 1: TORTURE IN CUSTODY CLAIM THE LIVES OF TWO YOUNG MEN IN CHITWAN AND RAUTAHAT DISTRICT**

On July 22, 24 year-old Raj Kumar Chepang of Rapti Municipality, Ward 2, Chitwan district died from the torture he experienced at the hands of the Nepal Army after he was caught entering Chitwan National Park illegally.<sup>9</sup> Raj Kumar Chepang who belongs to the Chepang indigenous community, along with his six friends, entered the national park to collect snails, eaten as a delicacy.

According to his friends, they were caught by an army personnel and despite their plea for forgiveness were beaten before being released the same day. On the way home, Mr. Chepang's condition deteriorated rapidly and eventually he succumbed to the injuries sustained during the torture. His family submitted a first information report (FIR) on 23 July 2020 which was only registered on 26 July, 2020. No progress has been made in police investigation so far. After two months from the incident, the district police office in Chitwan arrested a Nepal Army soldier on September 20 on the charge of assaulting the victim.<sup>10</sup>

In a similar case of torture, on 27 August, 19 year-old Bijay Mahara from the Dalit community of Garuda Municipality 8, Rautahat district died in National Medical College in Birgunj after he had been detained in connection with a murder case.<sup>11</sup> Before his death he managed to record a video sharing his experience of being tortured by the police demanding he confess to a murder which he claims not to have been involved. In the torture police had used electric shocks and beat him with wooden sticks and plastic pipes.

For several days the district police office refused to register the FIR. It was finally registered on 9 September with the public prosecutor's office in Rautahat. So far the only action taken by the authorities was the suspension of three police officers. On the demand of family members and human rights activists the body was taken for postmortem in the Teaching Hospital.



Fig 2: Triggers of Violent and Non-violent Incidents, June to August 2020

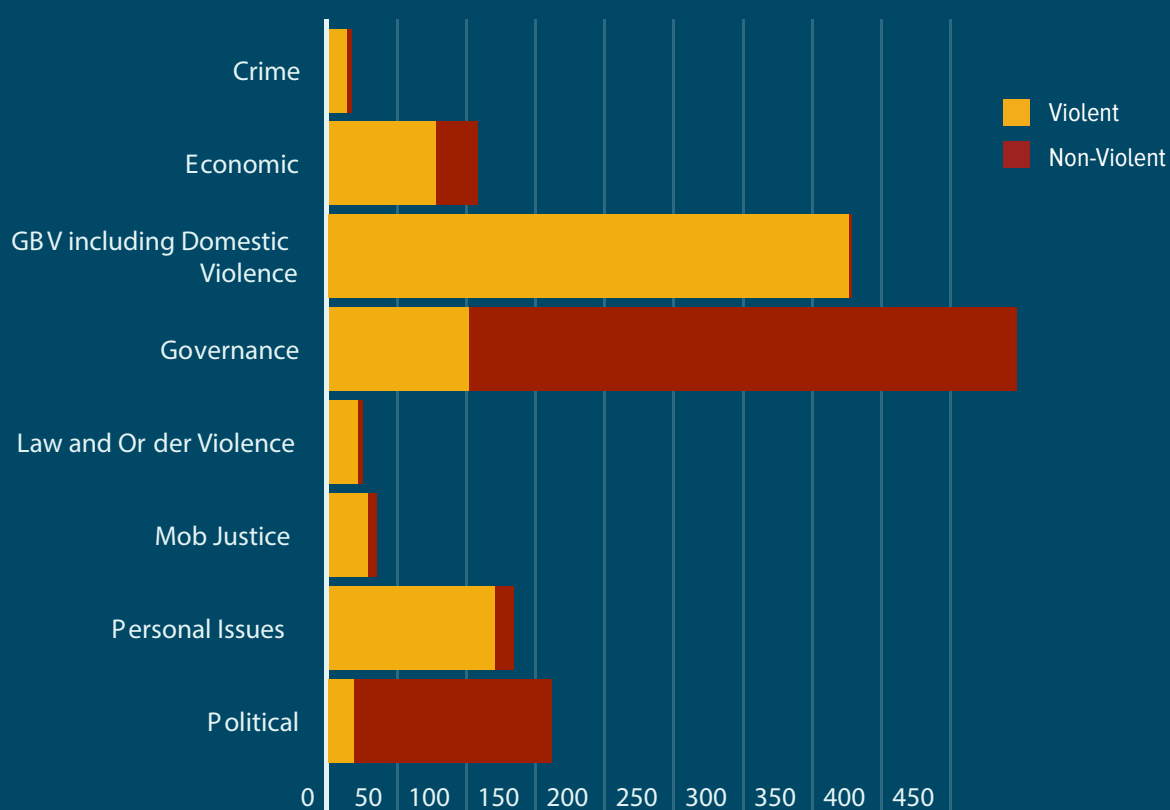
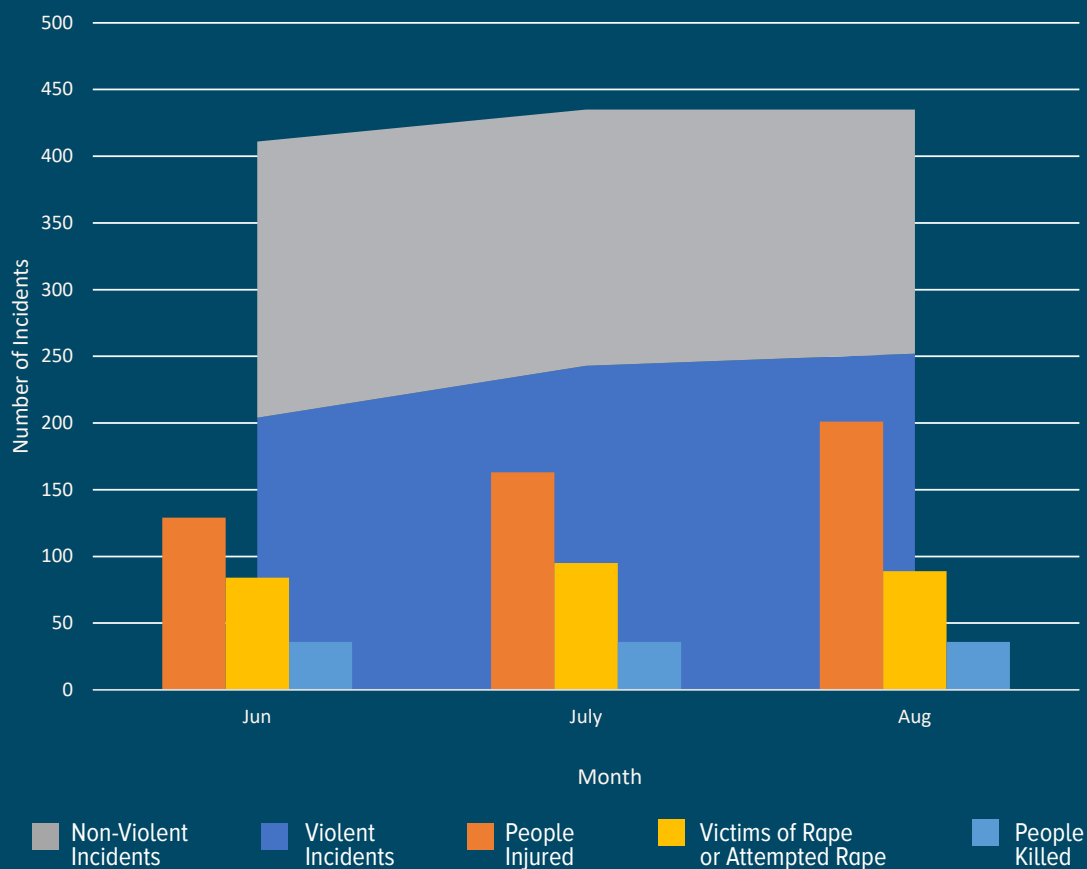


Fig 3: Incidents And Their Impact, June to August 2020



## GOVERNANCE RELATED ISSUES UNDER THE STRAIN OF COVID-19

The PMP recorded 497 governance-related incidents of which 214 were related to the government's response to the pandemic or protests against its perceived shortcomings. This marks a 47 percent increase of incidents related to COVID-19 compared to the previous three months (146 in March to May 2020). However, as Fig. 4 indicates, triggers of COVID-19 related incidents shifted over time with triggers connected to government's relief efforts or quarantine management slowly giving way to issues related to healthcare management and lockdown enforcement.

Out of the total 497 governance-related incidents from June to August, 395 were non-violent incidents, including at least 185 demonstrations, 76 incidents of padlocking of institutions, 63 cases of people and businesses defying the prohibitory orders during the lockdown, and prohibitory orders issued in 22 districts. Similarly, 102 governance-related incidents were violent. These include 62 cases of assault or group clashes. Triggers for governance related incidents of protests were alleged corruption by government agencies, restrictions of freedom of speech, a deemed lack of access to justice or missing legal action against perpetrators, and the perceived lack of quality of public services.

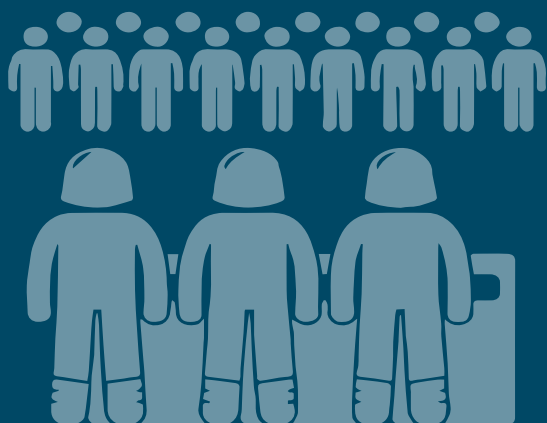
**497**  
**GOVERNANCE**  
**RELATED**  
**INCIDENTS**



**395**  
**NON-VIOLENT**  
**INCIDENTS**

**102**  
**VIOLENT**  
**INCIDENTS**

On June 9, around 150 protesters gathered in front of the prime minister's residence in Baluwatar to protest what was perceived as the inadequate government response to COVID-19.<sup>12</sup> The protesters were met with water cannons and batons. This violent response to the peaceful protest sparked nationwide outrage and further protests across the country under the banner of the 'enough is enough' campaign. The campaign leader Ishan Adhikari, popularly known as lih, and activists started a hunger strike demanding the government expand the range of coronavirus tests, stop using unreliable rapid diagnostic tests and improve quarantine facilities.<sup>13</sup> They ended the hunger strike on the 12th day, July 7, after a 12-point agreement with the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) was reached.<sup>14</sup> lih started a second fast-unto-death hunger strike on July 18 and broke the fast on August 9 after an agreement with the health ministry on 23rd day.



The prolonged lockdown in Nepal severely affected the livelihoods of the population, making it especially difficult for daily wage earners, labourers, and workers in the informal sectors and the health and education sectors. Business owners, hairdressers, transport entrepreneurs, labourers staged demonstrations in different districts demanding the government let them resume their businesses. In one instance, on August 2, labour workers from different areas staged a demonstration at Maitighar after being unemployed because of the lockdown.<sup>15</sup>

With the spread of the virus, stigmatization and assaults against health workers on the frontline, has been growing as people view them with suspicion fearing they could be carrying the virus. In five incidents recorded, health workers protested the increasing stigmatization and assaults against them during the crisis. On August 24, for instance, the Human Rights and Peace Society staged a protest in Jorpati against the increasing numbers of physical assaults against doctors and health workers across the country.<sup>16</sup>

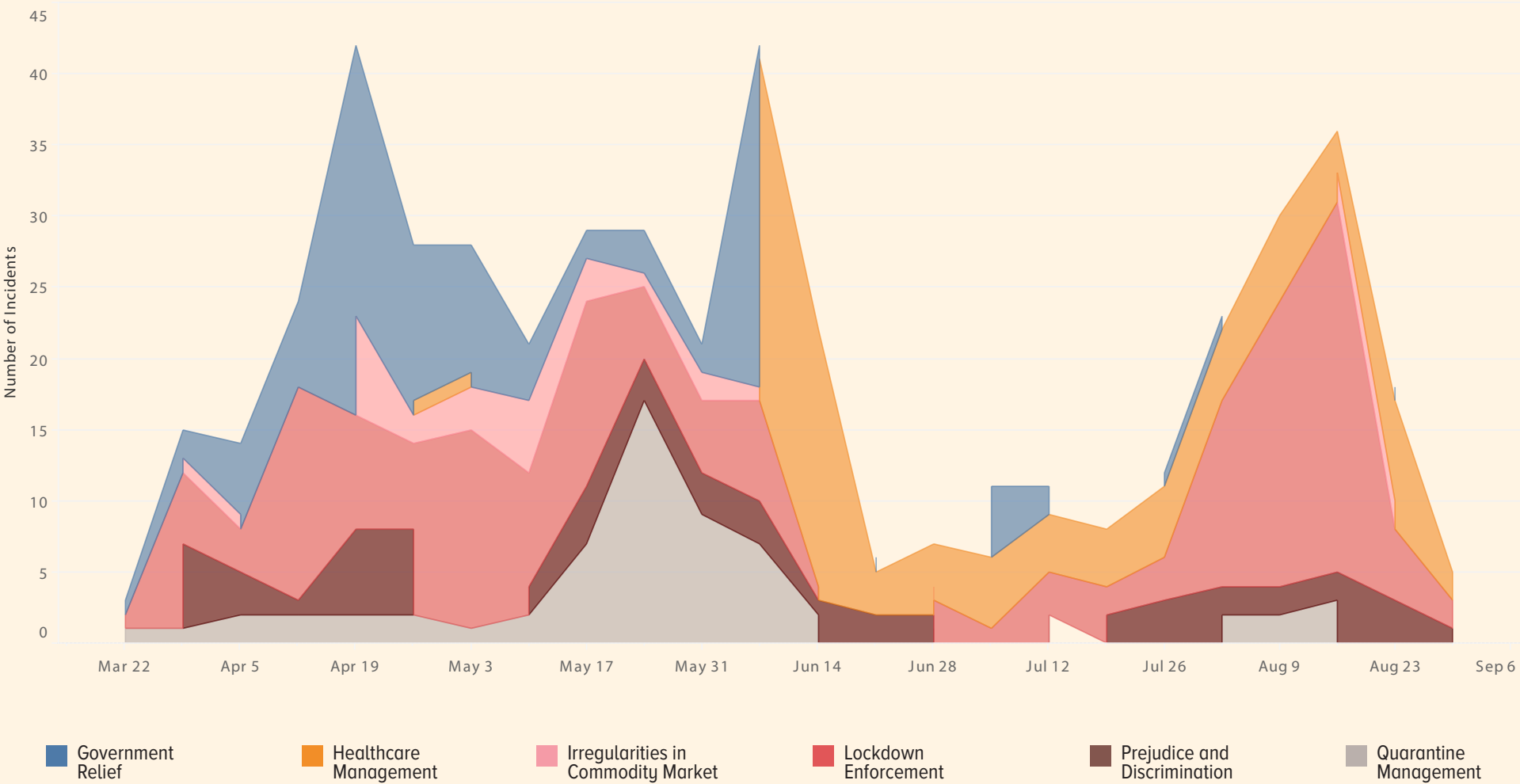
At the same time, the reluctance of hospitals to provide service to suspected COVID-19 patients took the lives of five people,<sup>17</sup> as they were denied treatment at hospitals which feared the spread of the virus. This happened despite the government's instruction to designate 20 percent of beds in community and private hospitals for the patients of COVID-19.<sup>18</sup>

As people panicked to stock up during the crisis, black-marketing of essential goods increased. About seven cases of fines or arrests for black-marketing were recorded. In one case medical supply companies were fined on the charge of black-marketing of K-N95 masks, Personal Protective Equipments (PPE) and infrared thermometers in Nepalgunj.<sup>19</sup> In a similar incident, the police arrested a health worker from Birgunj on August 24 on the charge of black marketing of prohibited drug Remdesivir, a medicine being given to the COVID-19 patients.<sup>20</sup>





Fig. 4: Number of COVID-19 Related Incidents after Government Imposed Lockdown



## THE BORDER DISPUTE, CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT AND AN AID AGREEMENT CONTINUE TO CAUSE STIR

In the period under review, the PMP recorded 160 incidents related to political issues of which 100 were non-violent incidents including 74 protests. There were at least 42 incidents of arrests related to cadres of Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) led by Netra Bikram Chand. Similarly, 18 violent incidents were recorded in which 32 people were injured. The diplomatic fall-out with India over the border dispute continued to be felt throughout the period under review with protests<sup>21</sup> recorded against and in support of Prime Minister Oli's statement that Lord Ram's birthplace was in Ayodhyapuri, an area of Madi Municipality, Chitwan, and not in Ayodhya, India where it is more commonly thought.<sup>22</sup>

**160**  
**INCIDENTS**  
**RELATED TO**  
**POLITICAL**  
**ISSUE**

**100**  
**NON-VIOLENT**  
**INCIDENTS**

**74**  
**PROTESTS**

**42**  
**POLITICALLY**  
**SIGNIFICANT**  
**ARRESTS**

**18**  
**VIOLENT**  
**INCIDENTS**



Similarly, there were at least 12 protests against the provision of the citizenship Amendment Bill, which allow naturalized citizenship to foreign women married to Nepali men only after seven years. Province 2<sup>23</sup> saw the highest number of demonstrations against this provision. In addition, different groups organized demonstrations<sup>24</sup> against the controversial Millennium Corporation Challenge (MCC) compact, a proposed large-scale US grant agreement that drew public criticism for its perceived "links with the US' Indo-Pacific Strategy and provisions that say the agreement will prevail over Nepal's laws in case of conflicts".<sup>25</sup>

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) A CRISIS AGGRAVATED BY THE PANDEMIC

In Nepal, gender-based violence (GBV) was a big challenge even before the pandemic. Various reports indicated the lockdown imposed across the nation has further made women and girls vulnerable to intimate partner violence, domestic violence and GBV as during the lockdown they might be trapped with their abusers.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, GBV continued to be one of the main drivers of violence in the period under review with a total of 377 incidents which claimed the lives of 32 women or girls. Sexual assault was the most common form of GBV with 321 incidents, including 268 cases of rape or attempted rape. Young women and girls were particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, and out of 268 cases of rape recorded, 225 victims were below the age of 26. The youngest victim of the heinous crime was an eight-year-old girl from Rupandehi.<sup>27</sup> There were also eight cases of allegations of witchcraft in which all the victims who were physically assaulted were women. Although our data cannot confirm this, reports suggest that cases of GBV further increase due to security, health and financial concern amidst the lockdown.<sup>28</sup> Unemployment, increased household responsibilities and expenses with no savings and physical violence have also resulted in mental health issues for both women and men,<sup>29</sup> which has reportedly increased the rate of suicide during the lockdown.<sup>30</sup>

To stop GBV, the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens demanded stricter action against the perpetrators of GBV and legal remedies to the victims via a letter to the Ministry of Home Affairs.<sup>31</sup> The safety of women and girls in the quarantine centre was also of great concern after a 31-year-old woman was gang-raped by three volunteers on June 14 in the centre at Lamkichuha Municipality, in Kailali district.<sup>32</sup> About 150 locals protested near the quarantine centre demanding strict action against such heinous crime.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, there were two cases of discrimination against Dalits in the quarantine centers.<sup>34</sup>

As mentioned above, despite reports indicating an increase of GBV during the lockdown period, the data of incidents publically available and recorded by PMP cannot confirm such a trend. In fact the number of incidents of GBV recorded from publicly available sources between June and August 2020 was roughly the same to the number of reports of GBV recorded during the same period the previous year. One possible explanation is that - with the restriction of movement and the focus shifted to the pandemic- victims of GBV find it even more difficult to report the abuse during the lockdown and incidents of GBV are even more underreported than under normal circumstances.



## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, THE DEADLIEST FORM OF GBV

Domestic violence (excluding dowry-related abuse) was the deadliest form of GBV on record, resulting in 32 deaths and 31 injuries in three months. The highest numbers of incidents of domestic violence were recorded in Saptari, Parsa, Mahottari, Siraha, Bara and Sarlahi of Province 2 and Pyuthan and Rolpa of Province 5.

In addition, two cases of dowry-related deaths were recorded. In one case a 22-year-old woman committed suicide on July 6, in Janakpurdham of Province two. The family suspects that she took her own life after being physically and mentally tortured in the name of dowry for the past two years.<sup>35</sup> In another case, the family of a 22-year-old woman of Samsi Rural Municipality filed a complaint at the District Police Office in Mahottari, of Province two accusing the husband and the father in law for beating her to death for not bringing dowry.<sup>36</sup>



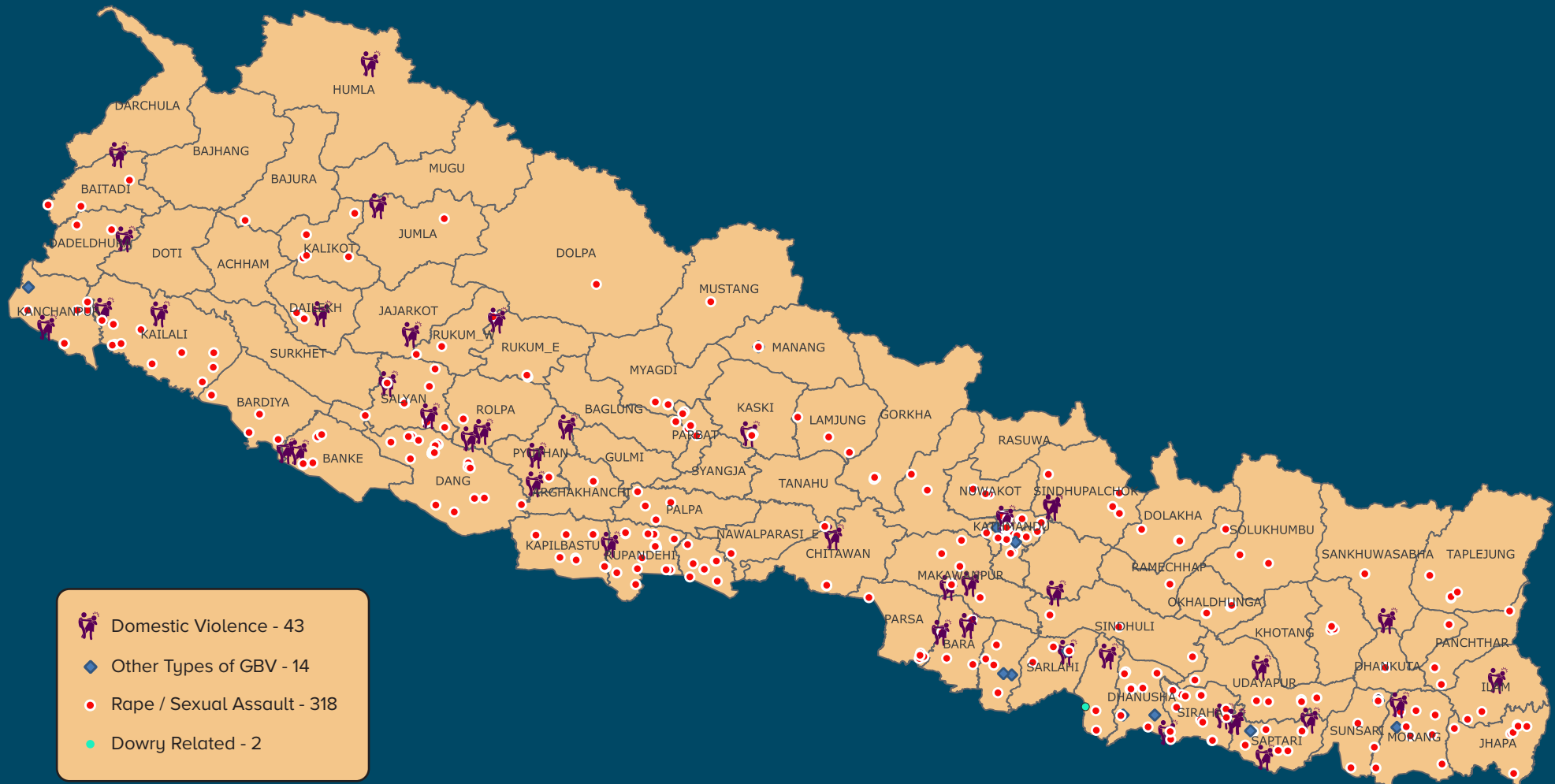
**31**  
**INJURIES**



**32**  
**DEATHS**



## INCIDENTS RELATED TO GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) JUNE - AUGUST, 2020



Each point on the map represents an event of GBV reported by the media and recorded by Nepalmonitor.

## GBV (GENDER BASED VIOLENCE) RELATED INCIDENTS JUNE - AUGUST, 2020



Each point on the map represents an event of GBV reported by the media and recorded by Nepalmonitor.

## THE NEPAL PEACE MONITORING PROJECT

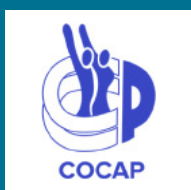
The Nepal Peace Monitoring Project (PMP) is a joint initiative by Collective Campaign for Peace (COCAP)|NepalMonitor.org and The Asia Foundation, with the support of Canada's International Development Research Center (IDRC). Building on the NepalMonitor.org platform, the PMP focuses on violence and contestation, with a view toward improving our understanding of, and response to, violence and conflict in Nepal. The PMP also provides an instrument to measure progress against Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Targets 16.1 (reduction of all forms of violence and related death rates) and 5.2 (elimination of violence against women) in Nepal.

The PMP monitors:

**Violence:** any incident involving the intentional use of physical force against another person or group that results or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, or other forms of physical harm to persons or damage to property.

**Non-violent contestation:** demonstrations, protests or other types of non-violent events that involve collective action and may be of potential significance to violence dynamics in Nepal. This includes strikes (bandh), hunger strikes, padlocking and other forms of political protest. Incidents involving intimidation and threats but no direct physical violence are also tracked.

The PMP uses a broad range of information sources, including national and district-level newspapers (from 18 districts), and reporting from police, human rights organizations, international agencies, civil society organizations, and citizens directly. For each incident, the PMP collects detailed information on the following variables: time and location of the incident, form of the incident, weapons used, reported cause/motive of the incident (political competition, land dispute, communal tensions, crime etc.), affiliations of perpetrators and victims, human impacts (broken down by gender and age) and damage to property.



## ENDNOTES

1. See: Nepal Goes Under Lockdown For a Week Starting 6 am Tuesday
2. See: Nepal Records Highest Single Day COVID-19 Infections
3. See: Nepal Count For COVID-19 Until August 31
4. From March-May, 2020, 609 violent incidents and 311 non-violent incidents were recorded
5. PMP recorded 401 demonstrations and other forms of public protests from June to August 2020, compared to whereas, there were only 171 incidents of protests and demonstrations reported in the previous three months.
6. See: In Nepal Lockdown, A Domestic Violence Spike and Rapid Gender Analysis on COVID-19 Nepal, 2020
7. See: Dalits Face Discrimination In Quarantine in Gulmi and Caste Based Discrimination In Quarantine, Food Cooked by Dalit Boycotted in Arghakhanchi
8. See: Memorandum Submitted by Advocacy Forum and THRD Alliance To Krishna Bhakta Pokharel, Chairperson Of Law, Justice And Human Rights Committee On Custodial Deaths
9. Ibid
10. See: Nepal Army Soldier Held on Charge of Assaulting Chepang Youth in Chitwan National Park in July
11. See: Memorandum Submitted by Advocacy Forum and THRD Alliance To Krishna Bhakta Pokharel, Chairperson Of Law, Justice And Human Rights Committee On Custodial Deaths
12. See: Police Use Teargas, Water Cannons To Disperse Protesters
13. See: Hunger Strike Against Government Inefficiency
14. See: Enough is Enough Campaigner Ends Hunger Strike After Agreement With Health Ministry
15. Demonstration Staged at Maitighar Mandala by Agitated Laborers
16. See: Demonstration Against Assault of Health Workers in Kathmandu
17. See: Patient Dies in Ambulance After Koshi Hospital Refuse Admission, One Dies After Hospital Refuses Admission in Birgunj, Woman Dies After Hospitals Deny Admission
18. See: Private Hospitals Refuse to Admit COVID-19 Patients As Cases Spike
19. See: Medical Suppliers Fined for Black Marketing
20. See: Health Worker Arrested for Black Marketing of Remdesivir
21. See: Hindu Communities Protest Against PM Oli In Janakpur for Statement on Lord Ram
22. See: PM Oli Tells Madi Delegation To Build Ram's Idol And Promote Ayodhyapuri As His Place of Birth and Youths Hold Demonstration in Dhangadhi Supporting Prime Minister KP Oli
23. See: Protests Flare Up in Province 2 Against Citizenship Amendment Bill
24. See: Demonstration Staged Protesting Against MCC in Rupandehi and Youths Protest in Damak Demanding The Cancellation of MCC
25. See: Why The MCC Compact Courted Controversy in Nepal
26. See: Rapid Gender Analysis on COVID-19, Nepal 2020
27. See: 8 Year Old Raped In Rupandehi



28. See: In Nepal, A Helpline Serves As A Lifeline For Survivors During COVID-19 Lockdown
29. See: Rapid Gender Analysis on COVID-19 Nepal, 2020
30. See: At Least 20 People Committed Suicide Everyday During the Lockdown
31. See: Home Ministry Urged to Curb Rising Violence Against Women
32. See: Three Allegedly Raped A Woman in Kailali Quarantine Investigation Underway
33. See: Nepal Arrest Three Men for Quarantine Rape, Amid Protests Over Unsafe Conditions
34. See: Caste Based Discrimination in Qyaranine, Food Cooked by the Dalit Boycotted in Arghakhanchi and Dalits Face Discrimination in Quarantine in Gulmi
35. See: Woman Commits Suicide After Being Tormented for Dowry
36. See: Complaint Lodged Against Husband and Father-in-Law on the Charge of Murder in Mahottari

