





**VIOLENCE TREND AND CIVIC  
SPACE ANALYSIS AMID  
COVID-19 IN NEPAL**

**A MONTHLY BRIEF: 16 DEC 2020 – 15 JAN 2021**

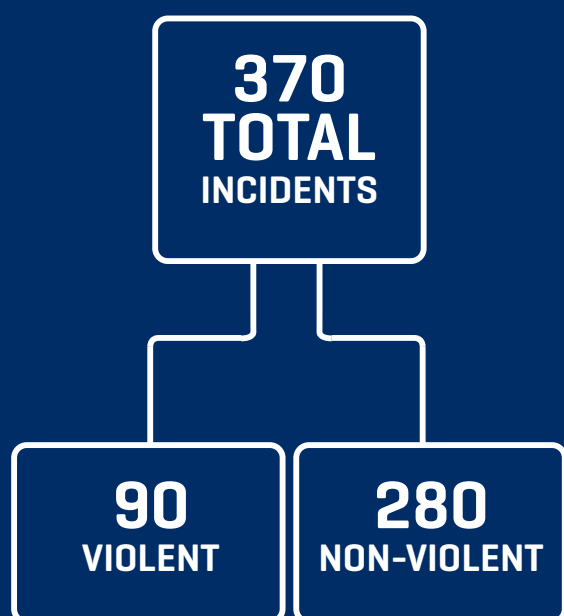
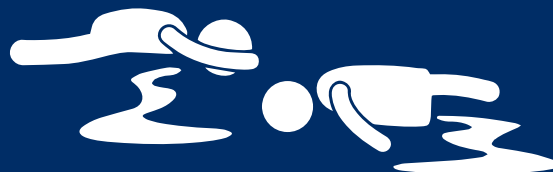


This report from the Violence Monitoring and Shrinking Civic Space in Nepal amid Covid-19 (VMSCS) Project evaluates trends of violent and nonviolent public contestation with the objective of presenting their impact on civic space in Nepal from 16 December 2020 – 15 January 2021. Data of violent and non-violent incidents are compiled from reports mapped by NepalMonitor.org, which uses a broad range of information from all major online news portals, national and local newspapers, Nepal Police, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working for human rights, and incident reports directly submitted to the Collective Campaign for Peace (COCAP). Multiple incidents of human rights violations, humiliation, physical assault, and use of force against citizens by security personnel tasked with enforcing the lockdown have been reported this month.



## OVERVIEW OF INCIDENTS

From 16 December 2020 – 15 January 2021, the VMSCS project recorded a total of 370 incidents which marks an increment of incidents by 32.97% as compared to the previous month (from 248 incidents to 370 incidents). Of the total incidents recorded, 90 were violent and 280 were non-violent in nature. (See Fig 1)



**22  
INJURED**

Bagmati province had the highest number of cases of violence with 125 incidents followed by Province 2 and Province 1 comprising 64 and 51 incidents respectively. Likewise, about 40, 31, 30, and 29 incidents of violence were recorded in the Provinces of Gandaki, Far-west, Lumbini, and Karnali respectively.

This month witnessed a series of incidents contributing to shrinking civic space and violating human rights. Different forms of cases involving demonstrations, protests, sit-in/padlocking, riots concerning politically significant arrests of the cadres, and security force intervention have largely violated citizens' rights and impacted civic space. The primary causes of these incidents are surrounding political contestation, over the constitution and federal restructuring, over non-elective positions and influence, as well as government's poor performance in ensuring the quality and accessibility of public services such as health, education, and safety, among others. Moreover, lots of demonstrations took place against Prime Minister Oli's unconstitutional move on dissolving the House of Representatives. Oli's decision to unilaterally dissolve the HoR is a flagrant violation of the constitutional text and spirit that invited a series of nationwide protests from the opposition political parties and civil society resulting in a number of violent incidents across the country.



## **CIVIC SPACE SITUATION AMID COVID-19**

Although the constitution of Nepal 2015 has guaranteed the freedom of expression, association, and to assemble peacefully, there have been sustained efforts to curtail civic space in the country. In Nepal, there has been widespread opposition to the various attempts to pass laws that could systematically curtail civil liberties in the country. States need to be respecting and protecting civilians' freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of information, freedom of association, and freedom to peaceful assembly. However, in the context of COVID-19 in many countries including Nepal, it is not necessarily practiced and the government is seen coming up with different restrictive measures to control the flow of information and crackdown on freedom of expression and press freedom. Similarly, increase in the incidents of arrest, detention, prosecution or persecution of political opponents, journalists, doctors and healthcare workers, activists and others for allegedly spreading "fake news", also aggressive cyber-policing and increased online surveillance from the government side are some of the efforts from the government exercising their power over the civilians' and against the shrinking of civic space.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Civil society in Nepal has faced serious restrictions on its freedom to express and engage in activism to defend human rights following the COVID-19 pandemic. The government of Nepal has also displayed this form of control over civic space during the pandemic, from inconsistency in their approach toward CSOs, to tabling of the different legislative measures, and suppressing peaceful protestors in an attempt to silence all forms of criticism during the pandemic.

## **COVID-19 AFFECTING CIVILIANS' FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT:**

Freedom of movement is a fundamental human right, protected by domestic laws and international treaties, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 13) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (article 12). Both documents guarantee the right of everyone to leave any country including their own country and to return to it. They also protect the right of everyone lawfully in a country to move freely within the territory of the belonging country.

Unfortunately, the extent and danger of the COVID-19 pandemic threatened public health all over the globe. Since, Article 12(3) of the ICCPR allows restrictions on the right to freedom of movement for reasons of public health and national emergency, this justified restrictions on certain fundamental rights and freedoms, such as imposing travel bans, quarantine and isolation.<sup>2</sup> Hence, in order to address the COVID-19 outbreak, governments around the world including Nepal took strict measures and curtailed their citizen's freedom of movement since the beginning of the year 2020 and beyond. People were confined within the four walls, and lock-downs and quarantines further obstructed non-essential movement of the civilians' outside of the home. In Nepal, a nation-wide lockdown came into effect on 24 March 2020, and ended on 21 July 2020, but Nepal's border with India and China remained closed in the post lockdown period in order to control the spread of the virus.

This month observed non-violent events of sit-ins demanding the opening of borders with the neighboring nations, India and China, which was closed due to the coronavirus crisis since it's outbreak. Local transport businessmen, hoteliers, travel businessmen and others have been holding programs such as signature collection campaigns, peaceful rallies and sit-ins demanding to open the checkpoints.

For instance: after the 6-day long consecutive demonstrations, the locals in the East of Nepal staged a sit-in and rallies on 16 December, in the presence of hundreds at the border. This movement was led by Hotel Entrepreneurs Association Mechinagar and Travel Association Jhapa, and also participated by the locals.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, on 04 January, a pressure rally followed by an hour-long staged sit-in was organized by the cadres of Janata Samajwadi Party and a group of businessmen at No-man's-land of West Nawalparasi, demanding immediate re-opening of the border, mentioning it has affected their business and religious celebrations.<sup>4</sup> Since China also imposed an unannounced blockade at the Tatopani checkpoint in Sindhupalchowk, on 27 December, big traders, containers, and hoteliers were frustrated when the checkpoint was in ruins and protested against China demanding the opening of the Nepal-China border.<sup>5</sup>

## **INCIDENCES CONCERNING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND CIVIL RIGHTS:**

Numerous pieces of legislation before parliament proposed to severely curtail freedom of expression. A new Special Service Bill, endorsed by the Upper House in May 2020, provided Nepal's intelligence agency, the National Investigation Department (NID), with sweeping new powers to intercept communications and search properties without judicial oversight. Other bills currently before parliament, including the Media Council Bill, the Information Technology Management Bill, and the Mass Communications Bill, contain numerous stringent measures seeking to control the media and limiting freedom of expression for journalists and social media users, threatening custodial sentences for those who violate broad and vague prohibitions especially for online speech.<sup>6</sup>

However, this month saw a space for exercising civil liberties of freedom of expression and to assemble peacefully, through various non-violent incidents of mass protests against PM Oli's move to dissolve the HoR on 20 December. Hundreds of people from various walks of life, that included intellectuals, writers, poets, artists, civil society activists, various professionals, businessmen, rights activists, students, youths group, and the general public gathered across various regions in Nepal, calling the move of PM Oli to be reactionary, unconstitutional, and an attack on the constitution. The protesters further accused the Prime Minister of trying to violate the constitution and democracy in an arbitrary and authoritarian manner. Civil Movement Chitwan then issued a press release stating that it will hold more protests and precautionary programs in the coming days and agitate until the sovereign rights of the people are restored in the country. Since the dissolution, the Nepal Communist Party has split into two, with one faction led by Oli and the other by Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Madhav Kumar Nepal.

Then viewing the dissolution of the HoR as the government's totalitarianism upon civil liberties, the Brihat Nagarik Aandolan (A Broad Citizen's Movement), an alliance formed by civil society members and people from various walks of life, held a march as part of its protests triggered by the dissolution of the HoR. As part of this campaign the civil society members carried out demonstrations, mass assemblies, and symbolic protests including torch and candle light rally, drama shows, ethnic dance shows, and playing different types of nepali musical instruments, throughout the country against the government, demanding the restoration of parliament.

## **APPOINTMENTS TO CONSTITUTIONAL BODIES AND DISSOLUTION OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:**

On 15 December, the government introduced an ordinance to amend the Constitutional Council Act, a total of 32 individuals were appointed to various constitutional bodies the same day, including the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). According to the constitution, nominees to positions in constitutional bodies need to face a parliamentary hearing. But this process was bounced due to the dissolution of the House of Representatives. This move of the PM Oli was opposed by the major political parties considering it as a step towards totalitarianism.

Then, in response to the appointments, there were triggered episodes of protests and demonstrations all across the country. The Nepal Communist Party (NCP) faction led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Madhav Nepal called for nationwide protest from the next day. “The general strike is against Prime Minister Oli’s fascist attitude,” said party leader Pampha Bhusal adding that the strike will be observed peacefully.<sup>7</sup> The Nepali Congress (NC) also criticized the government for taking steps towards totalitarianism. Then after, the series of protests and demonstrations were observed by major political parties, civil society members, rights defenders, youth groups, students and other critics against the Oli government. These actors of the state continued protesting peacefully in all parts of the country again after PM Oli’s perceived inefficiency in the government, and for his unconstitutional step towards the dissolution of the House of Representatives (HoR).

## **POLICE INTERVENTION DURING PEACEFUL PROTESTS AGAINST DISSOLUTION OF THE HoR:**

As the UN Human Rights Committee explained in its recent General Comment No. 37 (dated 17 September 2020) on the right of peaceful assembly (article 21), states have a negative duty to respect peaceful assembly without discrimination and “unwarranted interference.” Even if an assembly turns violent, states still need to protect other civil and political rights, including the right to a fair trial, freedom of expression, right to life, and right to privacy. Similarly, crowd control by police and military, including incidents involving use of tear gas, rubber bullets, batons charge, and other harsh tactics, must be tightly regulated, independently monitored, and when excessive, held to account transparently.<sup>8</sup>

This month observed such intervention from the security forces, despite the political parties, civil society members, and rights defenders protesting peacefully against the House dissolution move. In some of the protests and demonstrations, police personnel are seen using excessive force to suppress the peaceful protest/ demonstration organized by political parties, and civil society members. For instance, police charged batons on a demonstration organized by cadres of Prachanda and Madhav Kumar Nepal faction on December 24, over the dissolution of the house of representatives by PM KP Sharma Oli, 1 NCP cadre was injured in a police baton charge during the protest. In another incident of burning an effigy of PM Oli, a policeman was injured in the scuffle between the protesters and the police. Likewise, a member of the National Youth Association Kaski of Prachanda-Madhav faction of NCP was arrested after a clash during a torch rally in Pokhara on December 28.

## **THREATS, INTIMIDATION AND ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS:**

Under international human rights law, governments have an obligation to protect the right to freedom of expression, including the right to seek, receive, and impart information of all kinds, regardless of frontiers.<sup>9</sup> In a number of countries including Nepal, governments have failed to uphold the right to freedom of expression, taking actions against journalists, human rights defenders, and healthcare workers. This has restricted the actors of the state to express themselves fully by not letting them enjoy their rights to the optimum, which ultimately limits the effective communication, and further deprives the citizens from exercising their civil liberties through right to information.

Between December 2020 and January 2021, Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), particularly journalists and media persons, faced challenges in carrying out their work, facing threats and often physical attacks. This month, 2 incident reports of violation against social activists and journalists were mapped and monitored. Among which 1 such incident involved a death threat against social activists in Janakpur.<sup>10</sup> In another incident of violent physical assault against a journalist, a man was arrested two days after the incident in Kanchanpur, on charge of carrying out such an act.<sup>11</sup>

## **USE OF FORCE FROM THE SECURITY PERSONNEL:**

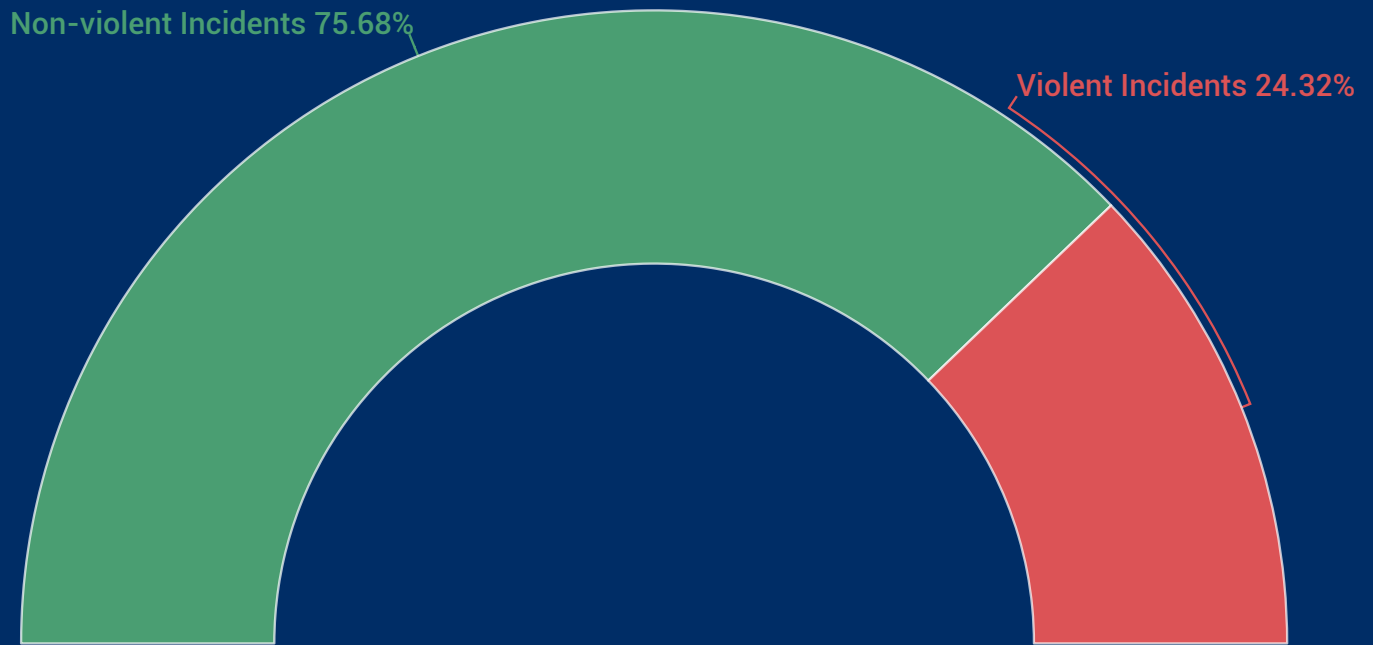
This month also witnessed incidents concerning human rights violations from the police forces, in order to control the agitation raised by the civilians during protests and demonstrations over the course of one month. The security personnel charged batons, used tear gas, and aerial fire against the protesters and demonstrators, suppressing the civilians' from exercising their right to freedom of expression, and to assemble peacefully without any fear. For instance, on 9 January, police deployed force after the locals in Morang staged a demonstration for five hours on the road and pelted stones at a police vehicle, demanding severe action against the bus driver, alleging that the driver had deliberately backed the bus with an intention of killing a teacher.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, on 10 January, a clash broke out at Midwestern University after the students started pelting stones at vice-chancellor Nanda Bahadur Singh, as he refused to take the memorandum (which consisted of the demand for the reduction of tuition fees for Hydro Engineering taught during the Corona pandemic) from the students stating to submit it to the subordinate examination control office. Police fired tear gas, charged the batons, and aerial fire to control the situation where 3 students were injured in the incident. Following this event, the next day students burned the effigy of the Vice-Chancellor Nanda Bahadur Singh at the university premises accusing him of directing the police to repress the students the previous day.<sup>13</sup>

Likewise, the police fired 5 rounds of tear gas and charged the batons against the demonstrators to open the road in Surkhet, after the locals agitated over the death of a 23-year-old girl, who died in a traffic accident. After the accident, the locals and relatives of the deceased blocked the Birendranagar - Jumla road section.<sup>14</sup>

## VIOLENCE AND CONTESTATION IN NEPAL

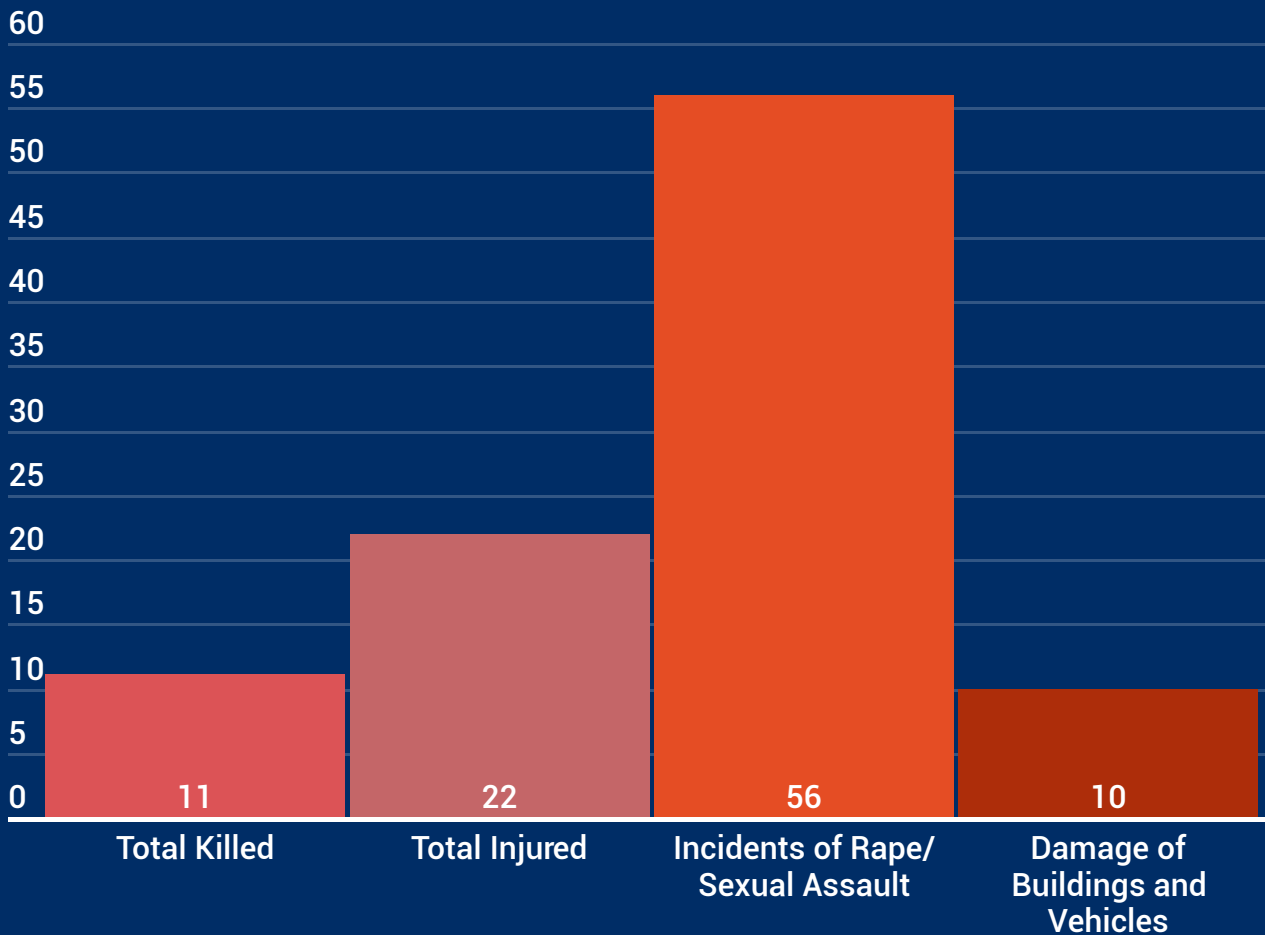
FIG 1: INCIDENTS AND THEIR NATURE





The main triggers of violent incidents involved cases related to domestic violence, whereas non-violent incidents involved protests, demonstrations over issues related to politics and governance. Violence killed 11, injured 22 people and severely damaged 2 buildings and 8 vehicles.<sup>15</sup> Rape/sexual assault was the most common form of GBV with 56 cases recorded this month. (See Fig 2).

FIG 2: VIOLENT INCIDENTS AND THEIR IMPACTS



11

KILLED



22

INJURED



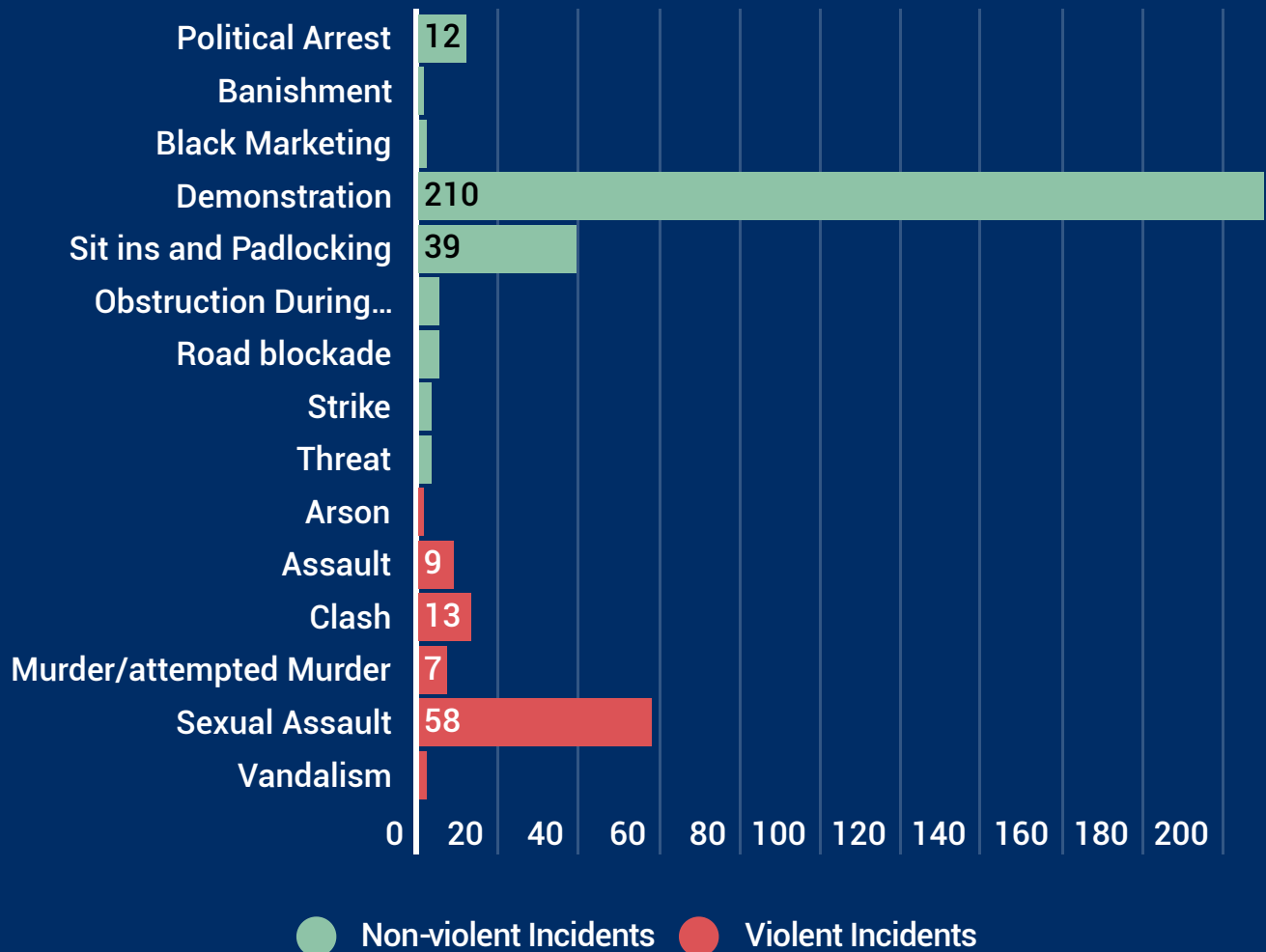
56

CASES OF  
RAPE / SEXUAL  
ASSAULT



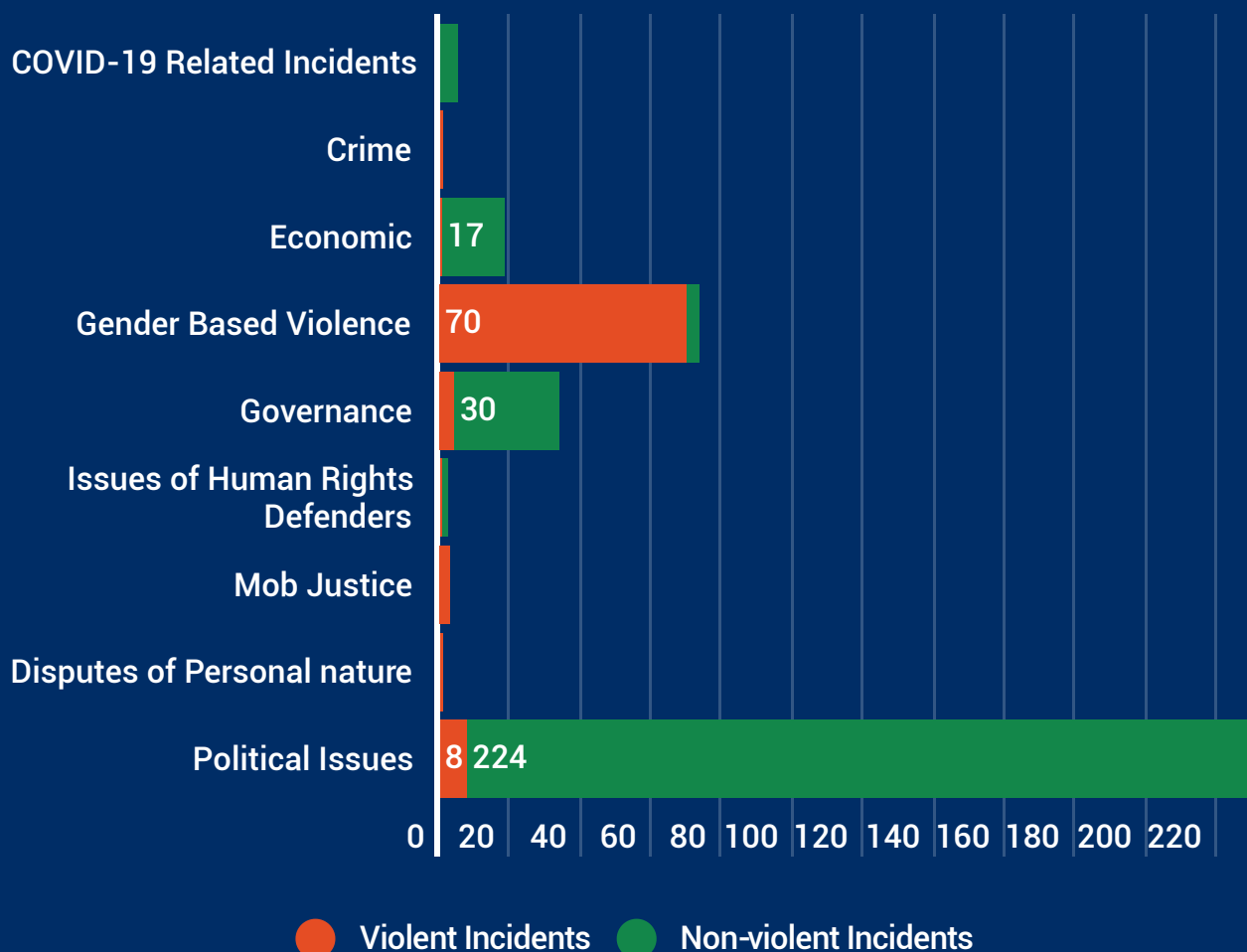
Among 90 incidents recorded violent in nature, 58 incidents were of sexual assault, 13 incidents of group clash, and 9 of small group assault. The main triggers to it was gender-based violence, involving incidents of rape and sexual assault, domestic violence, and demonstrations over constitution and federal restructuring. Similarly, non-violent incidents mainly involved demonstrations, sit-in and padlocking against the government and institutions and politically significant arrests of the cadres of CPN Chand (See Fig 3).

FIG 3: FORMS OF VIOLENT AND NON-VIOLENT INCIDENTS



The primary triggers of the recorded incidents were of categories related to COVID-19 (5 non-violent cases), Crime (1 violent case), Economic (1 violent and 17 non-violent), GBV (70 violent and 3 non-violent), Governance (4 violent and 30 non-violent), Human Right Defenders issues (1 violent and 1 non-violent), Mob Justice (3 violent cases), disputes of personal nature (1 violent), and political (8 violent and 224 non-violent). (See Fig 4)

FIG 4: TRIGGERS OF VIOLENT AND NON-VIOLENT INCIDENTS



## POLITICAL INCIDENTS

From 16 December 2020 to 15 January 2021, the VMSCS recorded 232 incidents related to political issues. The incidents mainly involved demonstrations and protests in regards to the Prime Minister's unconstitutional and undemocratic steps towards the Dissolution of Parliament, and his perceived inefficiency in the government, also protests demanding restoration of monarchy were recorded.

Of the total political incidents recorded, 192 incidents were related to contestation over the constitution and federal restructuring, which included 5 violent incidents. Similarly, 6 incidents recorded involved contestation between rival political parties, of which 2 incidents were violent in nature.

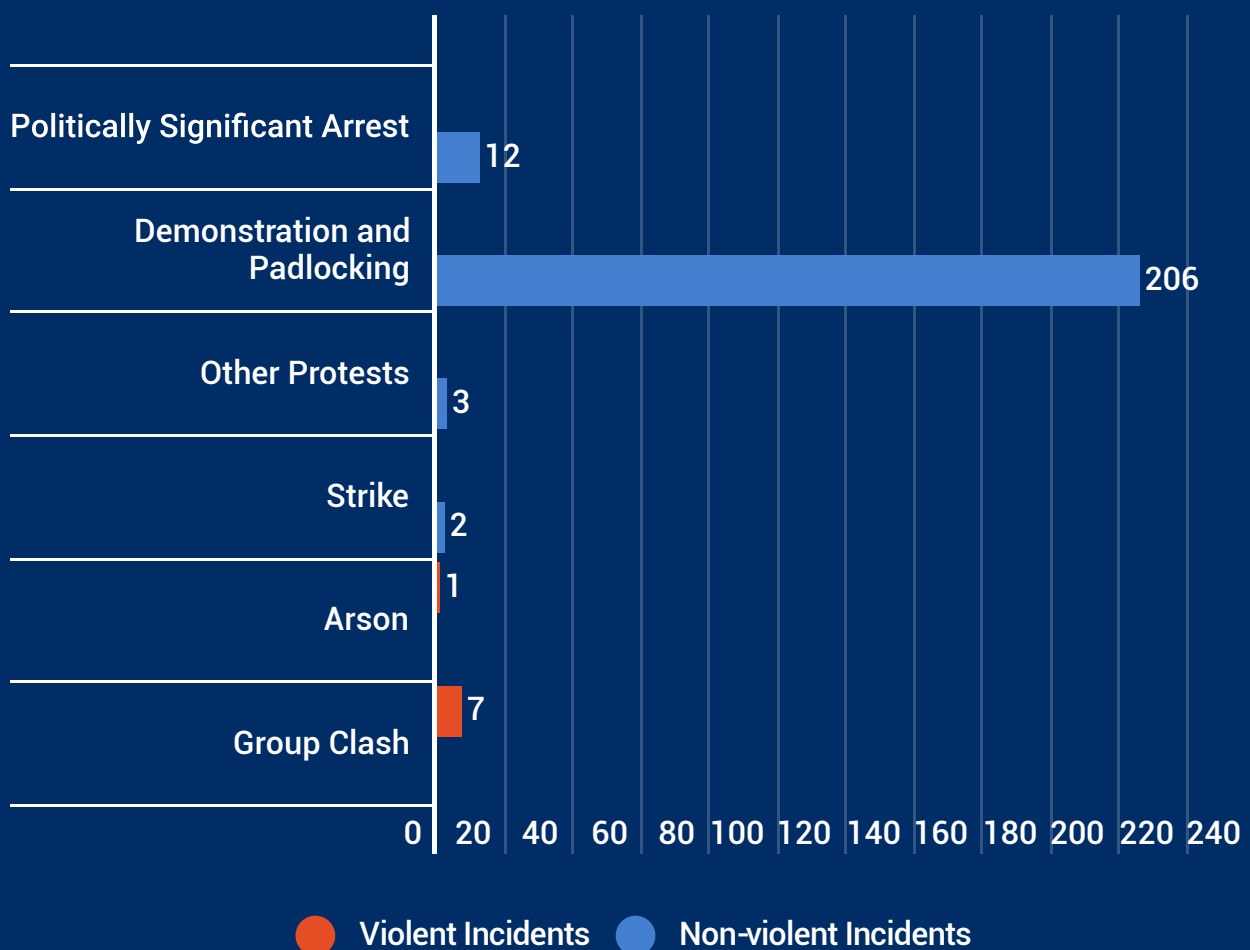
On 20 December, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli announced the dissolution of the House of Representatives' which created chaos within the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) affecting the country's political sphere.<sup>16</sup> President Bidhya Devi Bhandari sanctioned Prime Minister Oli's decision to dissolve the House of Representatives and announced midterm elections on April 30 and May 10 2021. Following the Prime Minister's decision, several protests were organized against it by the opposition

parties namely the NCP faction led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal “Prachanda” and Madhav Kumar Nepal,<sup>17</sup> Nepali Congress (NC),<sup>18</sup> Janata Samajwadi Party<sup>19</sup> and Bibeksheel Sajha.<sup>20</sup> On December 28, thousands of people joined the demonstration against the dissolution of the House of Representatives organized by the Nepali Congress Party across the country.<sup>21</sup> Since the announcement of the decision 13 writs have been registered in the supreme court against it.<sup>22</sup> Constitutional experts, politicians and other observers called the decision “unconstitutional” and criticized the president for not holding any consultation with other leaders.<sup>23</sup>

This month 7 incidents were recorded demanding the restoration of monarchy and reinstatement of Nepal as a Hindu state. For instance, on 26 December, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) held a mass demonstration in Kathmandu demanding the restoration of monarchy and Hindu state.<sup>24</sup> The party also submitted a memorandum to all district administration offices across the country.

Among 232 cases related to political issues, 224 incidents were non-violent in nature including 191 demonstrations, 15 Sit-in/Padlocking, 12 incidents of politically significant arrests of the political cadres, 3 incidents related to other forms of nonviolent protests, and 2 strikes. Similarly, 8 incidents were violent in nature comprising the 7 incidents of group clash, and 1 related to arson as recorded in the month (See Fig 5).

FIG 5: TYPES OF VIOLENT AND NON-VIOLENT POLITICAL INCIDENTS



The demonstrations were organized by different state and non-state actors, including 105 from Nepal Communist Party (NCP) and affiliates, followed by 41 demonstrations by the Nepali Congress and affiliated organizations, 28 incidents from Janata Samajwadi Party, and 10 incidents from the Civil Society Organizations. Among which, 185 of the demonstrations and rallies were targeted against the government and civil servants at central level. About 33 events were targeted towards Nepal Communist Party (NCP) and affiliates, including the majority of the protests against the Prime Minister for dissolving the House of Representatives.

Nepali Congress and its affiliated organizations (Nepal Student Union, Tarun Dal) was involved in 42 non-violent demonstrations against the Oli's undemocratic move of dissolving the House. Whereas, the 2015 Constitution of Nepal, firstly does not give the head of government the right to dissolve the House, and secondly it must get ratified by a two-thirds majority of the total number of the then members of the Federal Parliament within thirty five days.<sup>25</sup> It included 2 violent group clashes between the protesters and the police in Rautahat district, where Nepali Congress burnt an effigy of Prime Minister in Chandranigahapur and in Dolakha where the NC staged a torch rally at the district headquarter in Charikot.<sup>26</sup>

TABLE 1: ACTORS AFFILIATION IN THE DEMONSTRATIONS

ACTORS INVOLVED	No. OF DEMONSTRATION
Nepal Communist Party & Affiliates	105
Nepali Congress & Affiliated Organizations	41
Janata Samajwadi Party	28
Civil Society Organizations	10

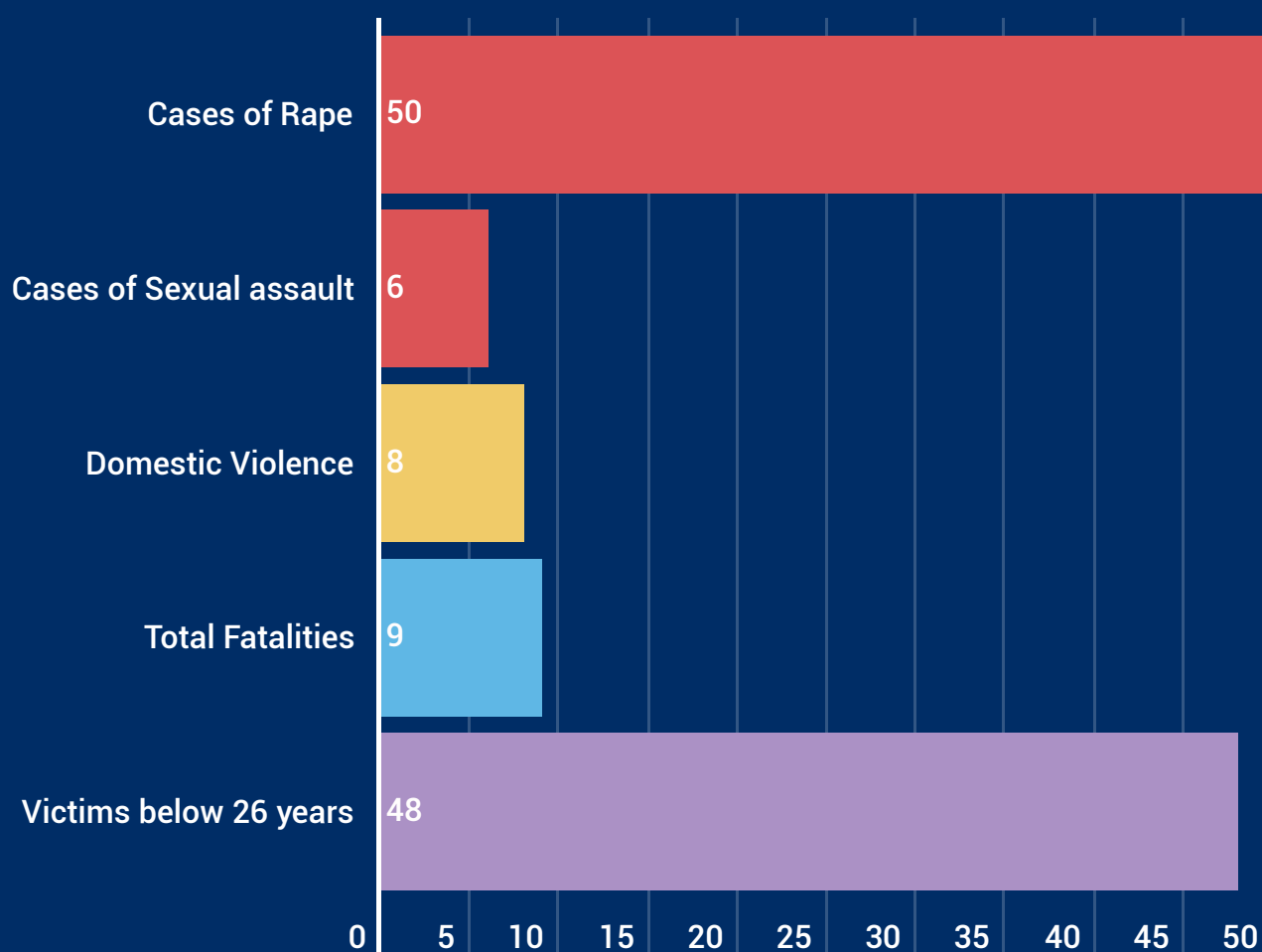
Looking at the pattern of incidents recorded, 192 incidents confined within contestation over constitution and federal restructuring counting the highest in number, among which majority of the incidents were around the dissolution of the parliament and for the restoration of monarchy. It included various forms of symbolic and non-symbolic protests, and rallies from different political parties, youths, students, which included bullock cart demonstration, candle light rally, whistle rally, burning of Prime Minister's effigy, waving black flag, torch rally, khajjadi song protest, and demonstration in cultural attire. Similarly, 17 Biplav-led cadres were arrested during this period.

## YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS MOST VULNERABLE TO GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Women and girls in Nepal have faced inequality and discrimination in various forms with no equal access to resources and power. Violence against women and girls have become a serious issue of concern, leaving young women and girls most vulnerable to such crimes. It is important to note that both men and women are vulnerable to GBV, but as per the recorded data, women and girls are the main victims. The numbers of cases are likely to be higher than the recorded data, as so many cases go unreported due to threats to the victims, forced reconciliation, and also because of the fear of being stigmatized by the family and society.

Gender based violence was the main trigger of violent incidents this month with cases of violence affecting the daily lives of many women and girls. Rape/sexual assault was the most common form of GBV with 56 incidents, of which 50 were cases of rape and 6 included the cases of sexual assault, followed by 8 cases of domestic violence which claimed the lives of 6 women. About 48 victims of rape were women and girls below the age of 26 years. According to police records at least 6 women and children are raped every day.<sup>27</sup>(See Fig 6)

FIG 6: IMPACTS OF GBV RELATED INCIDENTS



From 16 December - 15 January, 73 incidents of GBV were recorded of which 70 were violent incidents which injured 22 people and claimed the lives of 9. Compared to 15 November - 15 December, there was a slight decrease in cases of GBV by 19.17 percent (from 87 to 73 cases) this month. However, there is a continued trend of sexual assault being the most common form of violence against women with an increasing trend each month.



With increased incidents of settlement or reconciliation of cases of rape the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration issued a circular to all the 753 local levels requesting them to act according to the directive of the Office of Attorney General against those accused of rape.<sup>28</sup> The Ministry also pressed the local level leaders to ensure that no rape case is settled outside of court through reconciliation whether voluntarily, under coercion and undue influence. Similarly, on November 22, the government recommended an ordinance on rape cases to President Bidya Devi Bhandari for its certification.<sup>29</sup> The ordinance includes a specific provision of extending the jail term of people involved in mediating rape cases by six months to three years.<sup>30</sup>

Among the various other forms of gender-based violence, events involving cyber-crime incidents like; demanding money from female friends by threatening to publish private images<sup>31</sup>, tormenting female relative over social media were also recorded this month<sup>32</sup>. And, one witchcraft related violence that involved beating a woman over witchcraft allegations<sup>33</sup> has further hindered the safety and protection of women and their rights in Nepal. Many such cases are widespread in the community but still remain under-reported. Superstitious beliefs, illiteracy, lack of awareness and culture are some of the root causes of allegations of witchcraft.

## GOVERNANCE RELATED ISSUES INCLUDING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

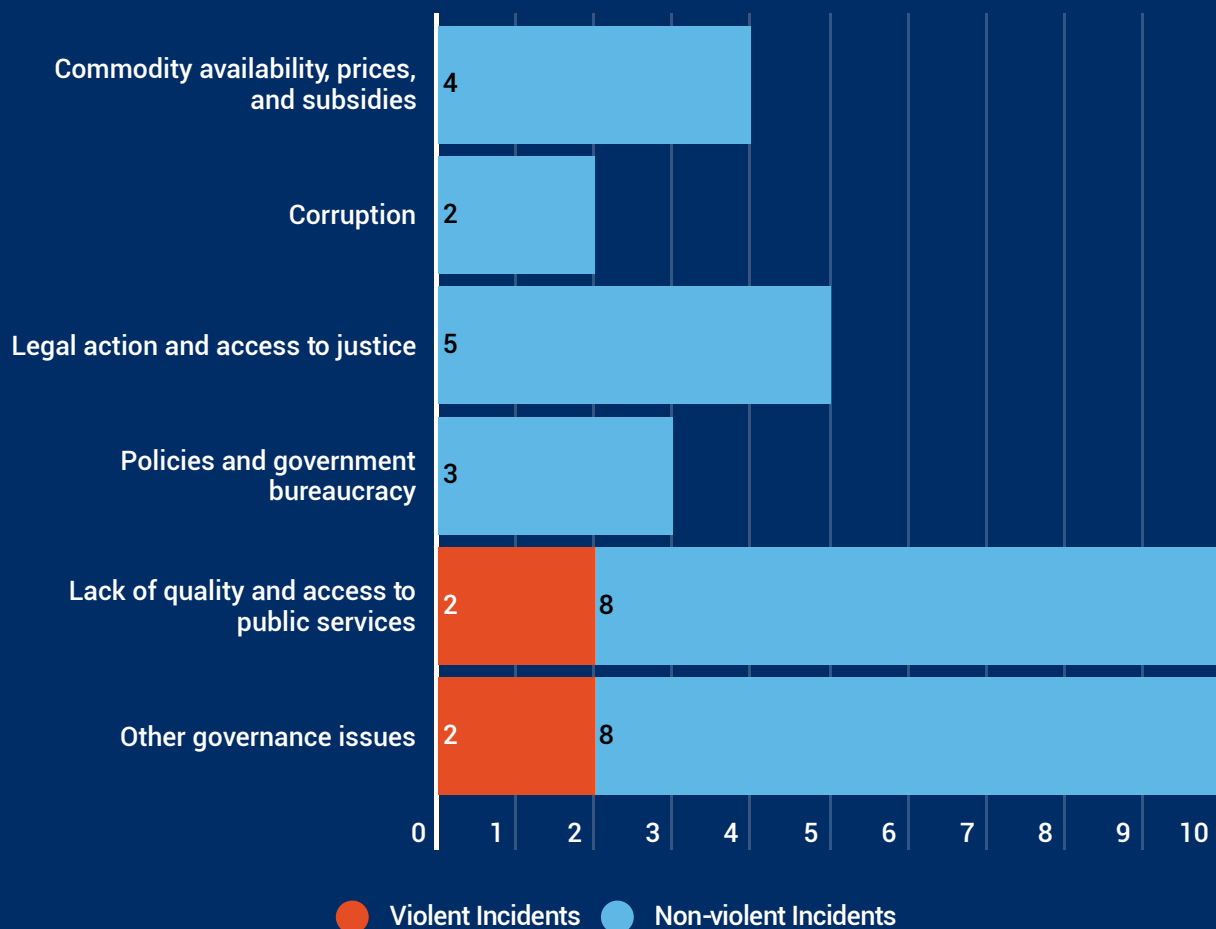
The VMSCS recorded 34 governance related incidents from mid-December to mid-January, among which 30 were non-violent incidents involving 21 episodes of sit-ins, 14 demonstrations, including 5 incidents of road blockage, 5 of program interference/ obstruction, and 1 incident of strike, 1 black marketing. While, the remaining 4 incidents were violent that involved 3 incidents of group clashes, and 1 case of vandalism. The primary cause of it comprising 10 cases related to access/control of development infrastructure (roads, bridges), 10 issues related to the quality and access to public services (health, education etc.), and other forms of governance issues, and 5 issues related to legal action against certain crimes and access to justice (See Fig 7).

Likewise, out of the 34 incidents recorded, 4 were violent in nature. The primary triggers of non-violent incidents mainly involved protest against lack of quality and access to public services such as health and education, perceived inefficiency of the government in responding to the Covid-19 crisis and access to legal action and justice regarding certain crimes. As the pandemic caused panic among people some businesses saw it as an opportunity to make extra money through blackmarketing of goods. In this period two cases of blackmarketing were recorded. For instance: Two hospitals, BP Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital, and Chitwan Medical College in Chitwan were found guilty of charging Rs. 500 more for Reverse Transcription- Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) test than the charge fixed by the government. The District Administration Office, Chitwan has taken action against the Government and private hospitals in Chitwan.<sup>34</sup>

#### TWO HOSPITALS IN CHITWAN FACE ACTION FOR CHARGING MORE FOR PCR TESTS:

The District Administration Office, Chitwan has taken action against the government cancer hospital (BP Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital) and Chitwan Medical College for charging Rs. 500 more for PCR test than the charge fixed by the government after they were found guilty during the preliminary investigation. According to Assistant Chief District Officer Netra Prasad Sharma, the office had ordered the executive director of the cancer hospital, Dr Dej Kumar Gautam, in custody for further investigation. According to Sharma, Gautam was released on Rs 8 lakh bail after the order of the Chief District Officer Narayan Prasad Bhattarai.

FIG 7: VIOLENT AND NON-VIOLENT INCIDENTS RELATED TO GOVERNANCE





About three incidents were related to perceived inefficiency of the government in dealing with the pandemic. The incidents mainly involved protest at the Tatopani checkpoint in Sindhupalchowk, bordering China against an unannounced blockade<sup>35</sup> and traders at the Biratnagar Metropolitan City office staged a sit-in demanding the reopening of the weekly market which remained closed due to Covid-19 since the first week of April.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, another incident involved protests by health workers at the district hospital in Siraha demanding risk allowance for working on the frontline during the pandemic.<sup>37</sup>

The residents of Khokana, an ancient Newari settlement in Lalitpur district staged protests throughout the year against the ongoing construction of the Kathmandu-Terai expressway. On 7 January, they smeared black soot on their own faces to protest against the project.<sup>38</sup> According to the locals, the construction of the expressway, a project of national pride, presents a threat to their cultural and religious heritage sites and their indigenous identity. In addition the compensation for the land acquisition for the project was insufficient.<sup>39</sup>

## ENDNOTES

1. See: COVID-19 and Human Rights
2. See: Freedom of Movement during COVID-19
3. See: Demonstrations in Kakarvitta demanding opening of the Nepal-India border
4. See: JSP stages sit-in at Maheshpur border of West Nawalparasi demanding opening of border
5. See: Demonstration against China in Tatopani to open the border checkpoint
6. See: World Report 2021: Nepal
7. See: Appointments to constitutional bodies receive widespread flak
8. See: Fundamental Rights and the COVID-19 Pandemic
9. See: (2020) Human Rights Dimensions of COVID-19 Response.
10. See: Death threat issued against social activist in Janakpur
11. See: Man arrested on the charge of assaulting journalist in Kanchanpur
12. See: Locals in Morang vandalized police vehicles over death of a teacher in an accident
13. See: Students clash with police at Midwestern University in Surkhet, Students burn effigy of Vice-chancellor of Midwestern University in Surkhet
14. See: Birendranagar locals agitated after death of a girl in accident, situation tense
15. See: Land Revenue Office in Parbat vandalized, Madhav-Prachanda faction set fire to the house of the Oli faction's cadre in Sarlahi, Locals in Morang vandalized police vehicles over death of a teacher in an accident, Clash between Prachanda-Nepal cadres and Nepali Congress cadres in Sarlahi
16. See: PM Oli Recommends Dissolution of the Parliament
17. See: NCP (Dahal-Nepal) faction stages demonstration in Saptari
18. See: Nepali Congress stages rallies in ten constituencies of Kathmandu against the dissolution of the House of Representatives
19. See: Janata Samajwadi Party stage demonstration in Parsa against the dissolution of parliament
20. See: Bibeksheel party stages demonstration against the dissolution of parliament
21. See: NC Holds Massive Protests Against HOR Dissolution
22. See: House Dissolution: Whether Its Lawful Is Now For Supreme Court to Decide
23. Ibid
24. See: RPP Holds Mass Demonstration Demanding Restoration of Monarchy, Hindu State
25. See: The Constitution of Nepal 2015, Clause (4) of Article 232, Page 144
26. See: Nepali Congress burnt effigy of Prime Minister in Rautahat
27. See: Attorney General: If Death Penalty Is Remedy For Rape It Should Be Seriously Discussed
28. See: Authorities Warned Against Settling Rape Case Through Reconciliation

29. See: Cabinet Approves Ordinance Against Rape Case Mediators
30. See: Mediators in Rape Cases Will Also Face Jail Term, As Per A New Ordinance  
The ordinance has increased the provision of punishment according to the age of the victims. If the victim is between the age group 14 and 16, the culprit will be imprisoned for 12 to 16 years, earlier it was 12 - 14 years. According to the ordinance the mediators too will face jail terms. The punishment for those involved in mediation ranges from six months - three years and a fine of Rs 30,000. If the mediator is a person holding public office or a people's representative their jail term will be increased by six more months if found guilty.
31. See: Man arrested for demanding money from female friend by threatening to publish private image
32. See: Man in Chitwan arrested on the charge of tormenting female relative over social media
33. See: Man arrested on the charge of beating a woman on witchcraft allegations
34. See: Two hospitals in Chitwan face action for charging more for PCR tests
35. See: Demonstration against China in Tatopani to open the border checkpoint
36. See: Traders in Biratnagar stage sit-in demanding the opening of the weekly market
37. See: Health workers stage sit-in in Siraha demanding salary and allowance
38. See: Khokana Folks Stage Protest Smearing Soot Over Their Faces
39. See: Khokana Residents Protest Against Kathmandu - Terai Expressway

## ABOUT THE PROJECT:

The Violence Monitoring and Shrinking Civic Space (VMSCS) is a joint initiative by Collective Campaign for Peace (COCAP) and Innovation for Change (I4C) - South Asia Hub. The project is supported by the USAID and the Tides Foundation. The project aims to focus on violence and contestation, with a view toward improving our understanding of, and response to, violence and shrinking civic-space incidents in Nepal amid Covid-19. The VMSCS also provides as an instrument to measure progress against Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Targets 5.2 (elimination of violence against women) and 16.1 (reduction of all forms of violence and related death rates) in Nepal.



