


TRENDS OF VIOLENCE AND SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE IN NEPAL AMID COVID-19

A QUARTERLY BRIEF

15 NOVEMBER 2020 -15 FEBRUARY 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 15 November 2020-15 February 2021. Data of violent and non-violent incidents are compiled from reports of 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).

Violent Incidents refers to 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 includes; 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 protests. Incidents involving intimidation and threats with no any involvement of direct physical force are also tracked.

The project aims to focus on violence and contestation, with a view toward improving one's understanding of, and response to, violence and shrinking civic-space incidents in Nepal amid Covid-19. The number of incidents recorded in this report are based on reports mapped by NepalMonitor.org, which uses a broad range of information sources, including national and district-level newspapers, and reporting from Nepal Police, human rights organizations, international agencies, and citizens directly.

OVERVIEW OF INCIDENTS FROM 15 NOVEMBER 2020 – 15 FEBRUARY 2021

From November 2020-February 2021, the VMSCS recorded 1081 incidents. Of the total incidents recorded, 36.26% were violent and 63.73% were non-violent in nature. Out of 392 violent cases recorded in this quarter, 57 people lost their lives.

Among 392 violent incidents, 205 incidents were of sexual assault, 58 of violent small group assault, 41 included cases of murder/attempted murder, 32 incidents of violent group clash, and 23 cases of vandalism. The causes to it involved gender-based violence incidents relating to rape and sexual assault, domestic violence and violent demonstrations over the constitution and federal restructuring.

Out of 689 non-violent incidents, VMSCS recorded 466 events mainly involving demonstrations and protests against the government, 97 events relating to sit-in/ padlocking, and 38 riots concerning politically significant arrests of the cadres. The primary causes of it was the political contestation over constitution and federal restructuring, governance issues related to legal action and access to justice, lack of quality and access to public services (health, education etc).

The Non-violent incidents mainly involved peaceful demonstrations, protests, and rallies, followed by sit-ins/padlocking, mostly around the Prime Minister KP Oli's proposal towards the dissolution of the Parliament. Also, there were 38 reports witnessing the Politically significant arrest of the cadres during this quarter, which included 63 arrests of the banned CPN (Chand-led) Cadres, 19 arrests of the Prachanda-Madhav faction cadres. Likewise, 16 incidents of road block, 13 of threat and intimidation, and 12 incidents of strike were also recorded in this quarter. The majority of such incidents, did not have any violent impact, and no any form of physical force was used as a target towards the affiliated actors involved in the contestation, which somehow portrays that there is a space for the civilians, civil society and other actors to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and to assemble peacefully.

This quarter witnessed the space for HRDs, journalists and civil society increasingly being constricted in Nepal. Besides legislative measures that imposed various administrative hurdles and restrictions, HRDs and media personnel working in the field frequently face intimidation and threats. This held true for journalists reporting news surrounding irregularities of the government's Covid-19 response too.

Continued violence against human rights defenders (HRDs) and journalists, as well as the introduction of various controversial bills and police intervention during peaceful demonstrations, have all contributed to the deterioration of Nepal's human rights and civic space in recent years. Currently, Nepal has the strongest ever government led by Nepal Communist Party (NCP) with two-thirds majority. Despite adopting the slogan "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali" the government's recent actions are aimed at shrinking civic space and silencing the critical mass. The government's recent actions have alarmed Nepal's civil society, media, and human rights organizations.

CIVIC-SPACE MONITOR IN NEPAL

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, civil society in Nepal has been facing restrictions on exercising their efforts to protect civic rights, strengthen democracy and engage in activism to defend human rights. A key incident trends and data collection by VMSCS depicts that there has been a state restriction on civic space, particularly on the freedom of expression, demonstration and assembly.

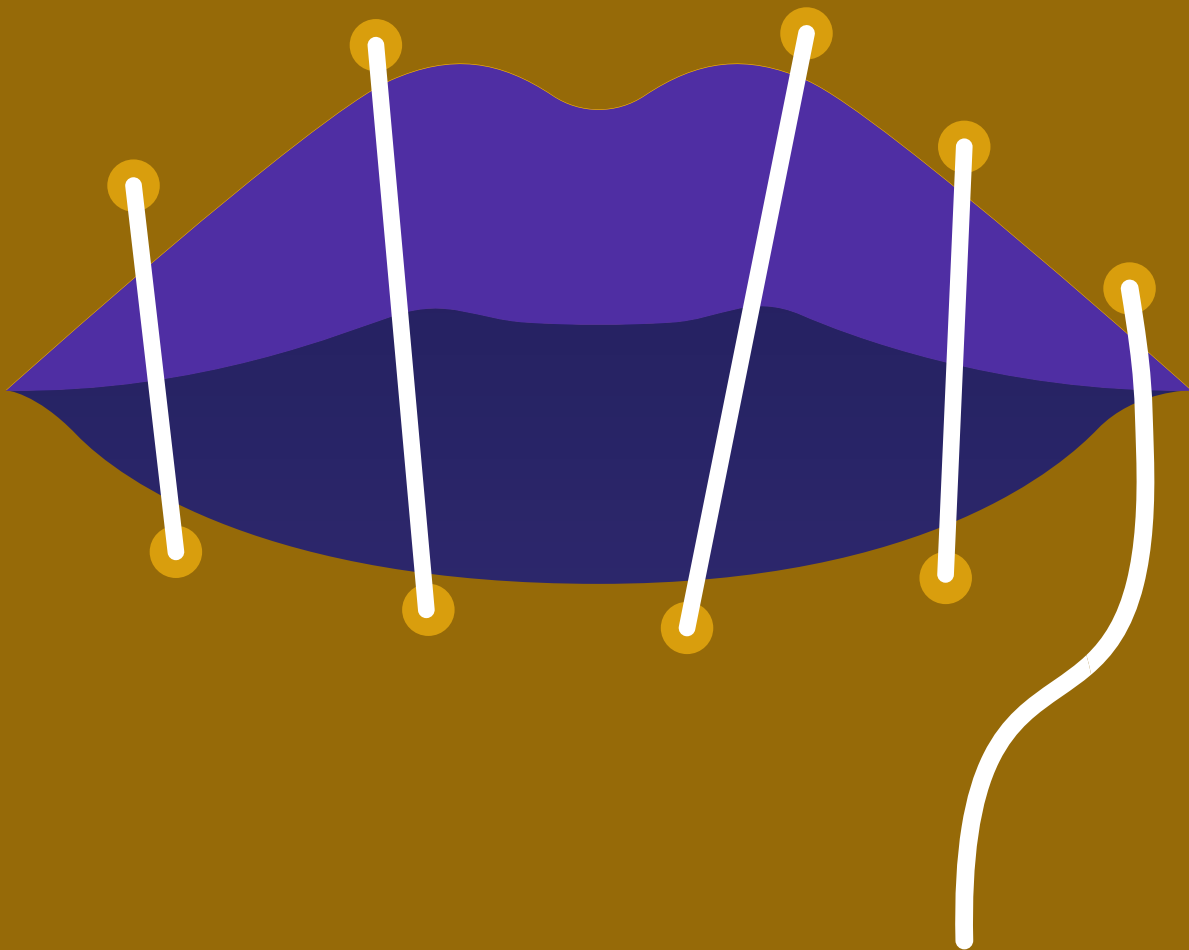
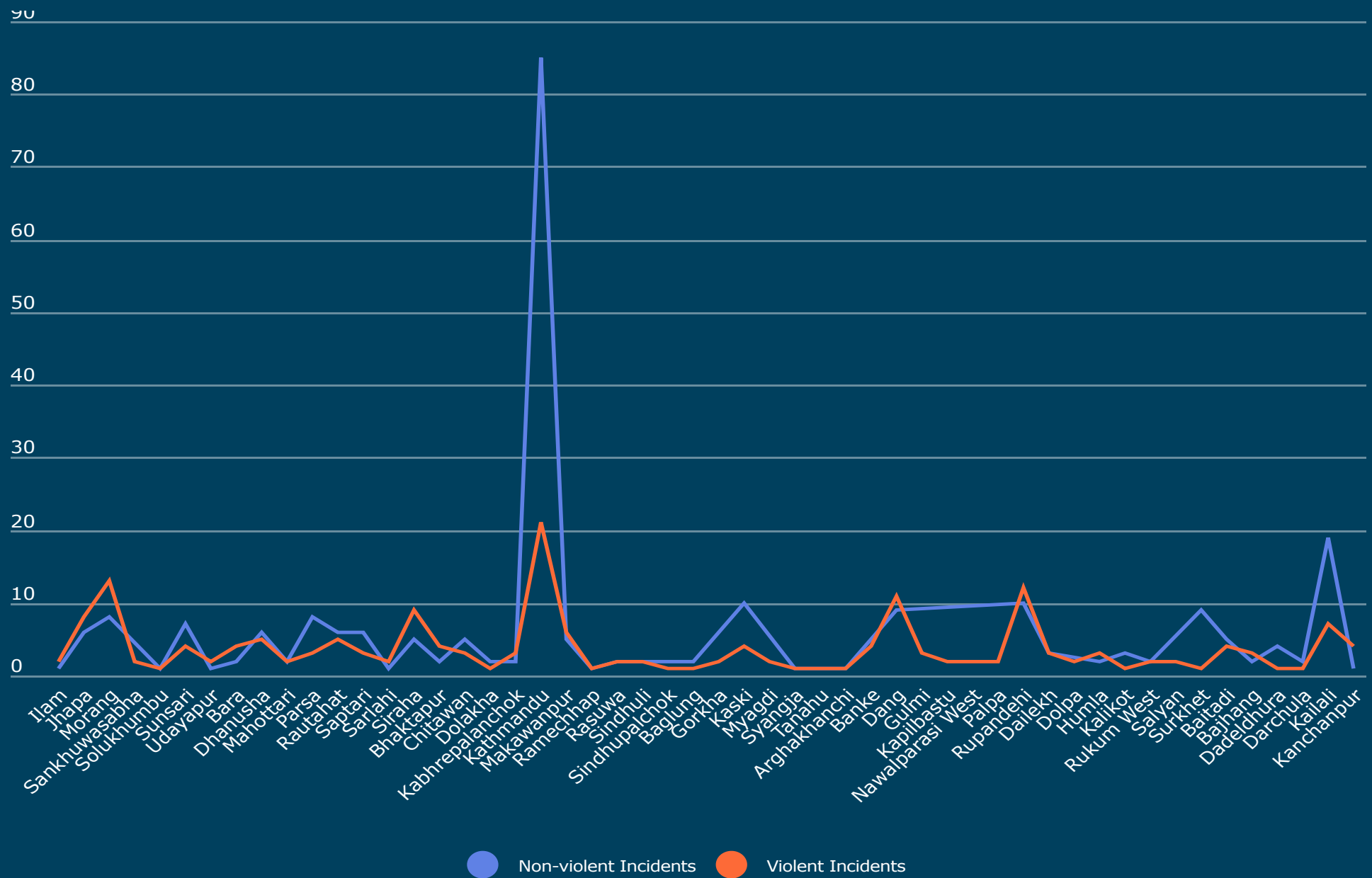


FIG 1: NATIONWIDE PROTESTS ON DISSOLUTION OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



The escalation in political incidents was triggered by the dissolution of the House of Representatives (HoR) by the president upon the request of the government on December 20, 2020. There was a sudden rise in the political incidents, as all the major political parties, civil societies, activists, and the civilians were on the streets against the dissolution of the HoR. Following the HoR dissolution, political parties staged phase-wise symbolic and non-symbolic protest campaigns against the government in all parts of the country during this reporting period. The majority of the protests witnessed from the political parties included Nepali Congress, rival faction of the ruling party Nepal Communist Party (NCP), Janata Samajwadi Party, and Bibeksheel Sajha Party.

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 drama shows throughout the country against the government.

APPOINTMENTS TO CONSTITUTIONAL BODIES RECEIVE WIDESPREAD CRITICISM

After amending the Constitutional Council Act through an ordinance on December 15, the Constitutional Council led by PM Oli made a total of 32 appointments to various constitutional bodies, including the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) after allowing the council to make recommendations in the presence of a simple majority of its members. As per the constitution of Nepal, nominees for positions in constitutional bodies must go through a parliamentary hearing¹. The procedure was bypassed due to the dissolution of the House of Representatives. This flawed appointment process of commissioners to key constitutional bodies will seriously challenge their independence from the Executive and further weaken checks and balances which is one of the founder pillars of a strong democracy.

The swearing-in of over two dozen individuals to various positions in various constitutional bodies has been criticized by major political parties, constitutional experts and the civil society actors as a step toward totalitarianism and an attempt to shrink the civic space.

This action was also criticized by the international communities and the UN Human Rights. On April 27, UN independent human rights experts expressed grave concerns about the recent appointment of new members to Nepal's National Human Rights Commission, saying it "undermined its independence, integrity, and legitimacy." In a statement², the experts said "We are deeply concerned that the appointment process is not in line with international standards and that it undermines the independence, integrity and legitimacy of the National Human Rights Commission, which restricts the ability of the people of Nepal to access appropriate remedies for alleged human rights violations." "This will have a chilling effect on civil society actors", the experts said, calling on the Government to reverse the appointments and to "facilitate a new process marked by openness, transparency, broad consultation and participation".

An independent and impartial national human rights institution is critical for the promotion and protection of civic space and in particular the right to assemble and associate, the statement noted, adding that it is also vital to the transitional justice process, and ensuring accountability for crimes committed during Nepal's armed conflict, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and torture.

POLICE INTERVENTION DURING PEACEFUL PROTESTS AGAINST DISSOLUTION OF THE HoR :

Political parties, civil society members and rights defenders peacefully protested against the House dissolution move, which experts on constitutional affairs say is unconstitutional, as the Constitution of Nepal does not allow the prime minister to do so. In some of the protests and demonstrations, police personnel have even used excessive force to suppress the peaceful protest demonstration organized by civil society members. For instance, on 25 January 2021, police used excessive force on members of civil society protesting against the dissolution of the House of Representatives in Baluwatar. The police personnel used water cannons and batons to charge the crowd in a bid to disperse the crowd.³ 12 people were injured during the protest in Baluwatar, after police using force to control the crowd and trying to curtail the civilian rights to freedom of expression, and freedom to assemble peacefully. Over 20 activists were taken into police custody during this peaceful protest.⁴ Likewise, 16 human rights activists were detained by the police while protesting against the government's move to dissolve the HoR.⁵

On 26 January, a day after the protest, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), released a press statement, stating that the incident that took place at Baluwatar a day before had drawn its attention, and urged the government to respect the citizens' rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assemblies. The NHRC reiterated that Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, and Article 17 of the Constitution of Nepal have ensured the right to freedom of opinion and expression and to assemble peaceably and without arms. Hence, "The use of excessive force goes against the national and international laws, and urged the government to be sensitive in this regard",⁶ said NHRC in its statement.

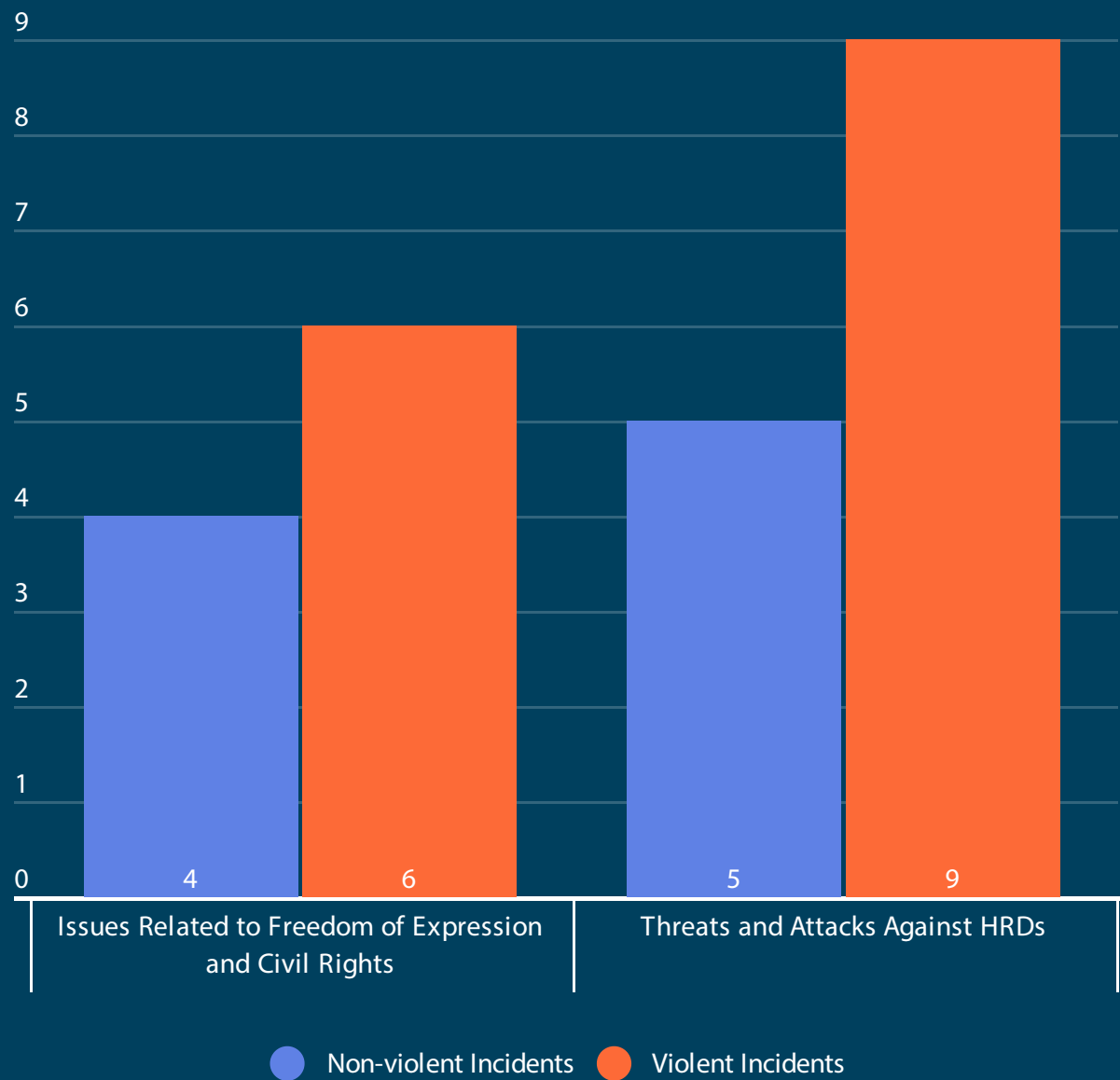


THREATS, INTIMIDATION AND ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS:

Between November 2020 and February 2021, Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) particularly journalists and media persons faced challenges in carrying out their work facing threats and often physical attacks. During this quarter, 10 incident reports of Governance Issues related to freedom of expression and civil rights were mapped and monitored, among which 6 such incidents involved threats against journalists while they were on-duty reporting.⁷ Similarly, out of 14 incident reports mapped and monitored under HRDs related issues, 9 incidents were of violent physical assault against the HRDs.⁸ (See Fig 2)



FIG 2: ISSUES RELATED TO HRDs AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION



STRICTER RULES AGAINST MEDIA AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

BACKGROUND

Since 2019, freedom of expression came under attack in Nepal in a range of ways, perhaps most markedly in the case of arrests made under the controversial Electronic Transactions Act (ETA) law. Since coming into power, the current communist government has introduced some controversial bills that have centralized power to the state authority to snatch civic rights to speak and express openly and force civil society to keep silent.

NEW LEGISLATION TABLED BY THE GOVERNMENT

In 2019 the government of Nepal drafted and registered several controversial bills with provisions of criminalizing acts that should be protected under the right to freedom of expression which the civil society and human rights advocates believe are unconstitutional.⁹ The bills tabled by the government restricts constitutionally guaranteed freedom of press and expression and right to criticize the government. The bills are aimed to obstruct human rights and to narrow civil liberties by disrupting the autonomy of constitutional bodies like the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). The bills give authorities unwarranted powers to enforce harsh punishments for the offence. These bills include a media council bill and information technology management bill which limits the freedom of expression of the general public, media personnel and media houses.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) MANAGEMENT BILL WITH PROVISIONS TO BLOCK SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

The IT Management Bill is under a huge controversy since the current government tabled it in the parliament. The IT management bill supersedes the existing Electronic Transaction Act (ETA), and according to the government, is the most comprehensive and clear bill to address the concerns around IT management.¹⁰ According to activists, the bill limits online freedom of speech and increases the scope of surveillance activity online, including platforms used to share content such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Viber, and personal data generated by users through this activity. Among other provisions the bill gives power to the authorities to block social media platforms which are not registered in Nepal.¹¹

GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL MEDIA DIRECTIVE IS LIKELY TO RESTRAIN ONLINE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

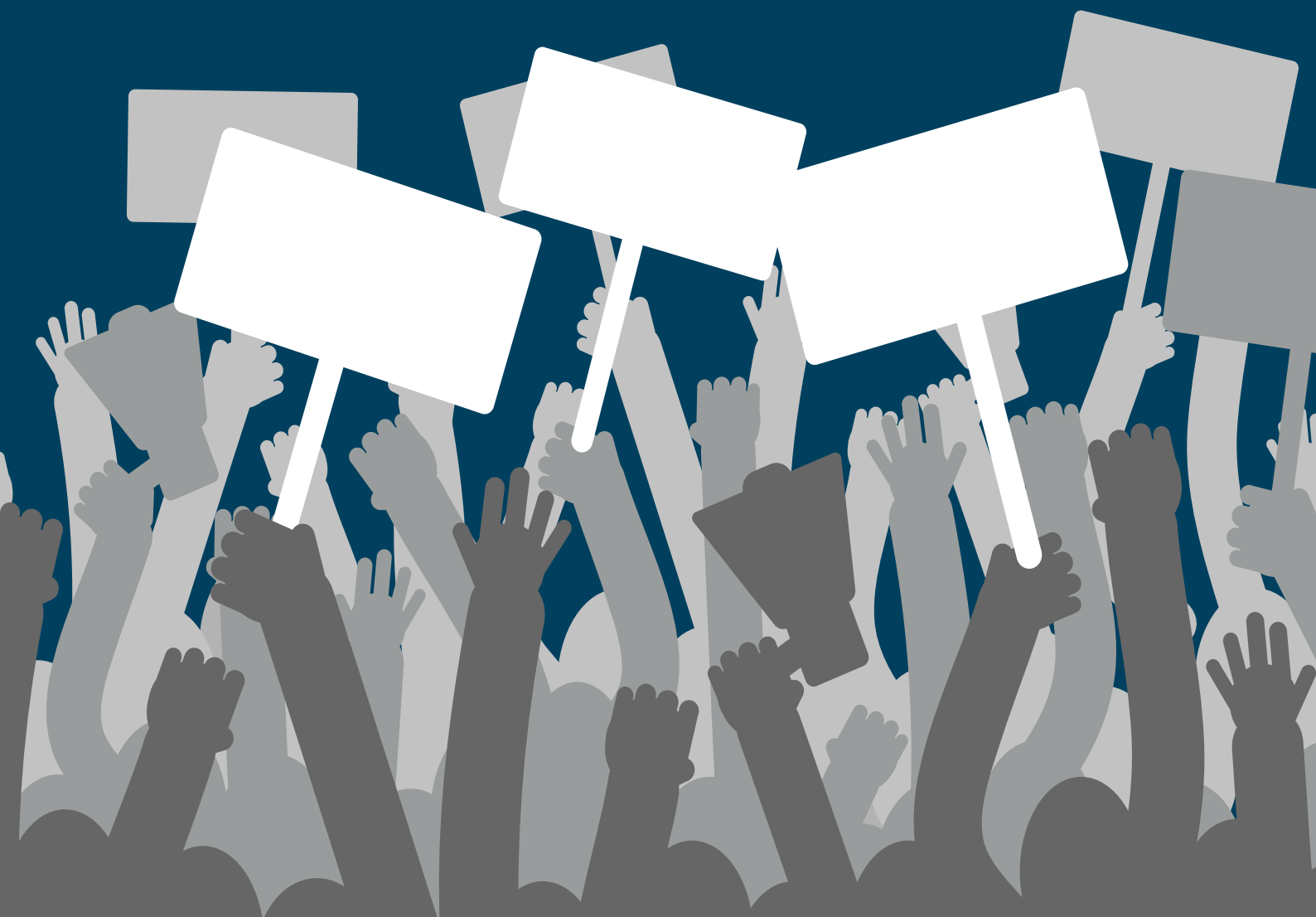
A draft directive has been prepared by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology to regulate the use and registration of social media in the country. According to the draft, the government intends to give the Department of Information Technology broad authority to regulate social media, its operators, and users.¹²

On Feb 10 2021, the Ministry informed that the directive was being brought to control provocative speech and objectionable remarks in the name of freedom of expression on social media sites including Facebook and YouTube. It further argued that such expressions were against top institutions and high profiles.¹³

The majority of the provisions in the draft are identical to those in the controversial Information Technology Bill, which was introduced in Parliament in February 2019 and approved by the relevant House committee in December despite dozens of amendment proposals. Civil society activists and journalists have criticized this move and call it unconstitutional. Advocate Baburam Aryal, an expert on information technology law, said it is questionable that the provisions of a bill registered in Parliament are included in a directive. “The provisions of a bill are there to be discussed in Parliament,” Aryal said. “The government can’t include such provisions in a directive”¹⁴

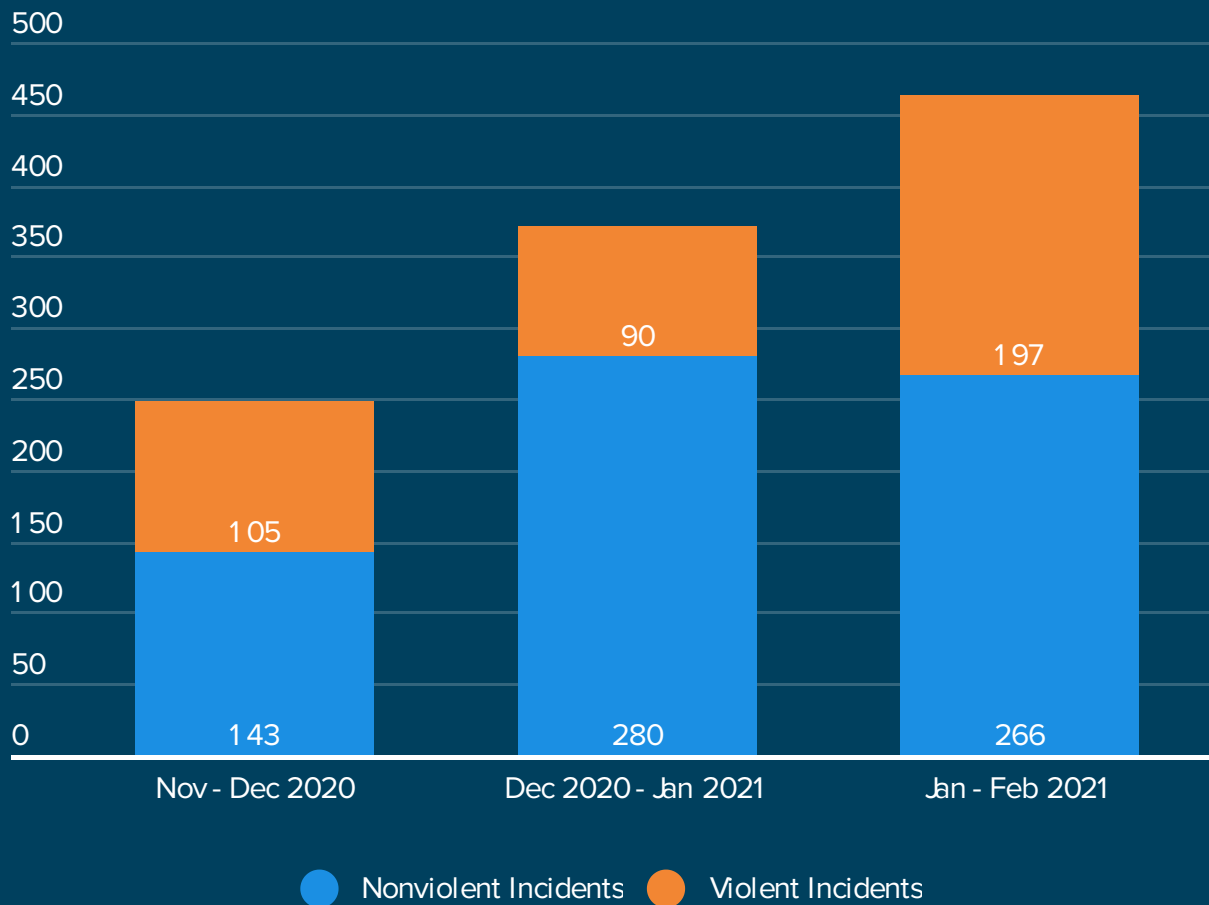
Earlier too, the Ministry made an ill-advised attempt to suppress healthy criticism by restricting online speech, which was foiled after widespread criticism from civil society and the media.¹⁵ With a series of attacks on the media and civic space, this government has repeatedly attempted to stifle press freedom and freedom of expression through regressive bills.

If passed, the bill would allow the department to order social media companies to remove any posts that it deems to be inappropriate. It also states that social media companies must provide user data for criminal investigations even if a court order is not required.¹⁶ These bills with stringent provisions have raised alarms among media professionals, civil society, human rights activists and other concerned stakeholders.



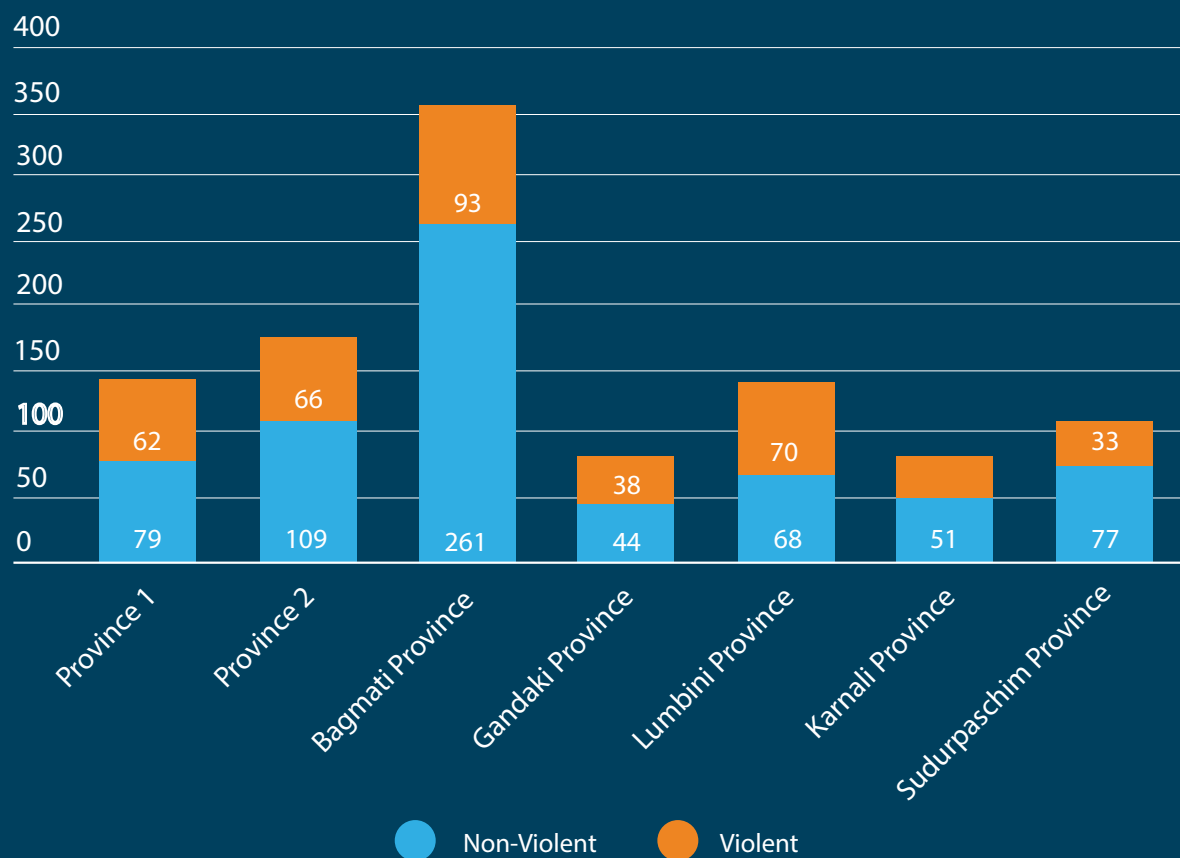
VIOLENCE AND CONTESTATION IN NEPAL

FIG 3: MONTHLY TRENDS OF VIOLENCE AND CONTESTATION



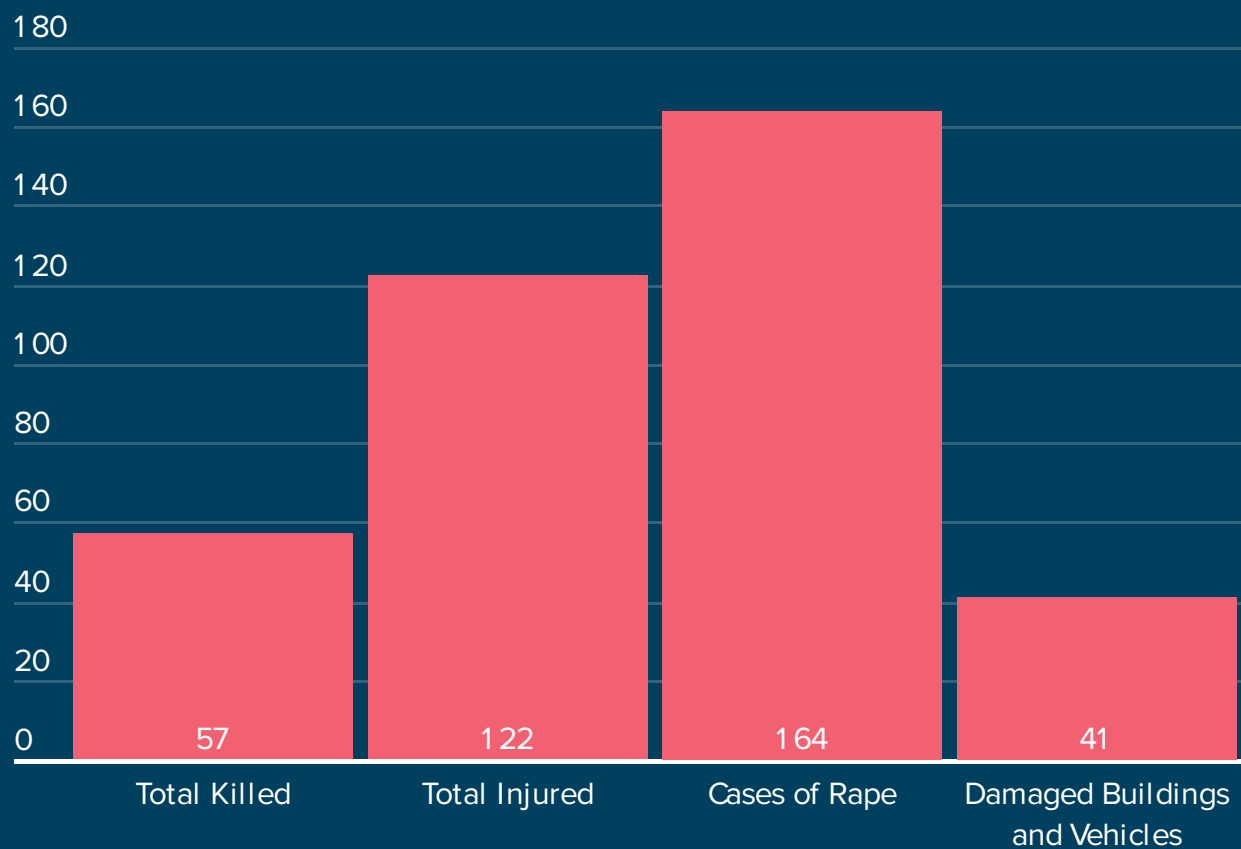
Looking at the trends of violence and contestation in this quarter, mid January to mid February saw a spike in the number of violent incidents by 54.31 percent as compared to the past two months, which was 105 in November-December, 90 in December-January, and 197 in January-February (See Fig 3). This upsurge was seen because of the sudden increment in the political incidents. The causal factors associated with political events were mostly around the constitution and federal restructuring which involved protests and demonstrations against the PM Oli on his move towards the dissolution of the House of Representatives. These violent protests vandalized the private and government buildings and vehicles, and injured many people. Out of 34 violent political incidents recorded between 16 January - 15 February 2021, 32 people were injured, 3 buildings and 18 vehicles were damaged.

FIG 4: GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF INCIDENTS



Bagmati Province saw a remarkable trend of upsurge in the number of incidents monitored and recorded during this quarter, involving 261 non-violent and 93 violent events. Whereas, Gandaki and Karnali Provinces saw the lowest number of non-violent and violent incidents (i.e. 44 and 30) recorded respectively (See Fig 4). One of the primary reasons Bagmati province witnessed large numbers of incidents is because of the high population concentration in this province. Besides, incident news from this province also gets well covered by most media outlets.

FIG 5: IMPACTS OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS



57
KILLED



99
INJURED



164
RAPED

The main triggers of violent and non-violent incidents mainly involved issues related to Politics, Gender Based Violence (GBV), Governance, Economic, disputes of personal nature, Mob Justice, Crime, Law and Order, incidents related to COVID-19 and Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) issues. Violence killed 57 and injured 122 people in total and damaged 12 buildings and 29 vehicles. GBV was the main driver of violence which included rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, and claimed the lives of 42 women within this reporting period. This quarter recorded total of 164 rape incidents from across Nepal. (See Fig 5)

POLITICAL INCIDENTS

From 15 November 2020 - 15 February 2021, VMSCS recorded 521 political incidents of violence and contestation. The recorded incidents included different forms of protests and demonstrations against the Prime Minister Oli, in regards to his unconstitutional step towards the proposal to dissolve the House of Representatives (HoR), and his considered inefficiency in the government, also protests demanding restoration of monarchy and few protests from the hindu nationalist demanding Nepal to be established as a Hindu state, were recorded during this quarter.

On December 20, as a result of an internal power struggle within the ruling party, Prime Minister Oli announced dissolution of the House of Representatives' which created chaos within the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) affecting the country's political sphere.¹⁷ President Bidhya Devi Bhandari sanctioned the Prime Minister'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,¹⁸ Nepali Congress (NC),¹⁹ Janata Samajwadi Party²⁰ and Bibeksheel Sajha.²¹ 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.²² Since the announcement of the decision 13 writs have been registered in the supreme Court against it.²³ Constitutional experts, politicians and other observers called the decision "unconstitutional" and criticized the president for not holding any consultation with other leaders.²⁴

Among 521 incidents recorded, 475 were nonviolent contestations and 46 violent incidents. Non-violent incidents included 383 demonstrations, 37 incidents of politically significant arrests of the political cadres, 25 incidents of padlocking, 20 included other forms of non-violent protests, 7 strikes, and remaining 3 relating to public humiliation, road block, and program interference/ obstruction. Whereas, violent incidents included 19 cases of group clash, 13 cases of vandalism, 4 symbolic violence, 3 arson related, and the rest 7 included cases relating to large and small group assault, and other violent forms including cases of violence against civilians.

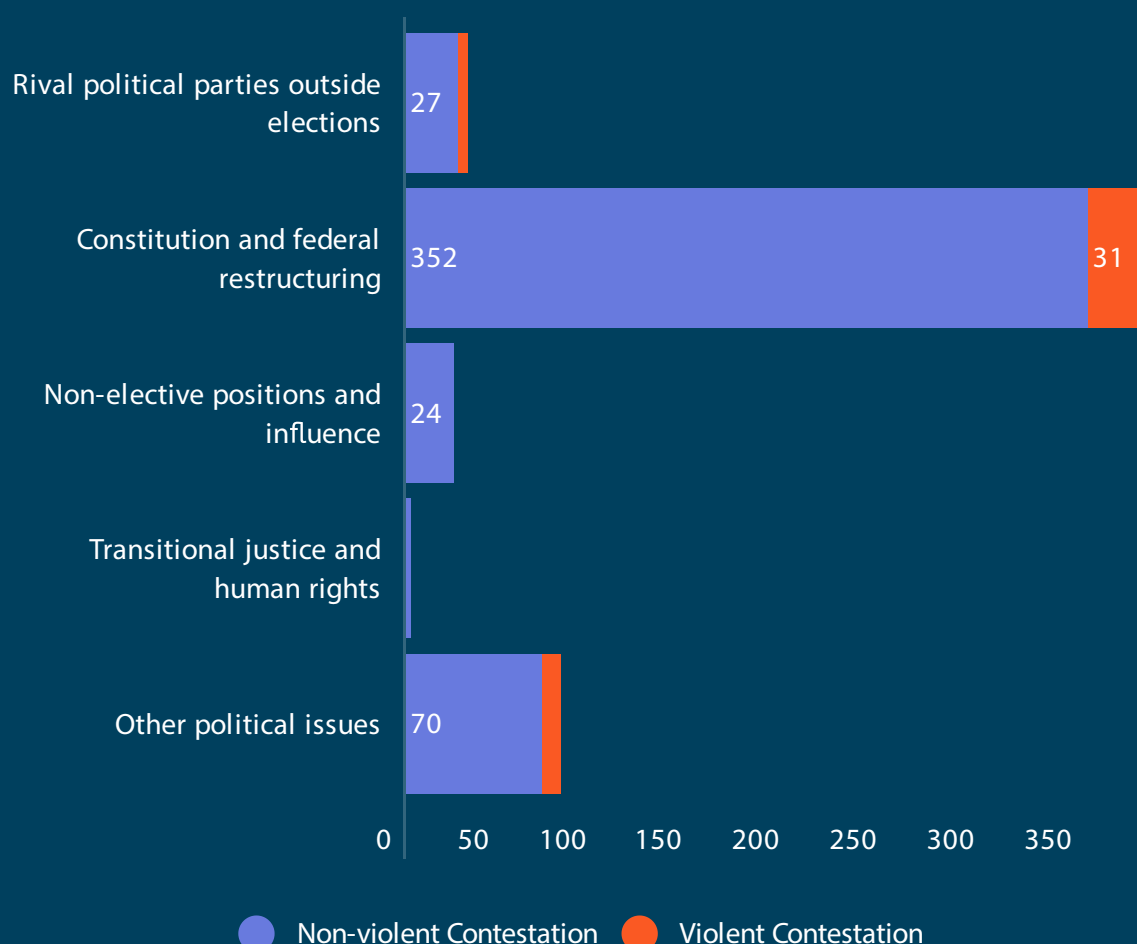
Table 1: Actors Affiliation in the Protests

ACTORS INVOLVED	NO. OF PROTESTS
Nepal Communist Party and Affiliates	178
Nepal Congress and Affiliated Organization	118
Janata Samajwadi Party	44
Communist Party of Nepal Led by Chand (Biplav)	37
Other Multiple Unspecified Political Affiliation	35

This quarter also witnessed episodes of political arrests and detention of the political cadres, demonstrators, and human rights activists. In the political events, 44 Biplav-led CPN cadres, 14 demonstrators,²⁵ and 7 NSU affiliated students were arrested.²⁶ Similarly, 8 cadres belonging to NCP Prachanda-Madhav faction were also arrested,²⁷ and 17 detained in the acts of violence and contestation.²⁸

Biplav-led groups were also involved in some of the most violent forms of incidents. For instance, on January 4, two cadres of Biplav-led groups were arrested with explosives in Kalikot.²⁹ And, on January 23, Biplav-led group was also involved in planting a pressure cooker bomb in Banepa, which was later defused by a bomb disposal team of the Nepal Army.³⁰

FIG 6: POLITICAL INCIDENTS AND THEIR TRIGGERS



The recorded political incidents were mostly around the contestation over constitution and federal restructuring, that included 383 incidents of demonstrations (73.51%), of which 31 involved violence in the forms of vandalism, group clash, large and small group assaults, and arson related cases. (See Fig 6)

Bagmati Province had 11 violent political incidents, marking the highest, followed by 6 cases each in Province 1 and 2, three cases each in Gandaki and Far-west Province, and 2 cases recorded in Karnali Province.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE RELATED INCIDENTS

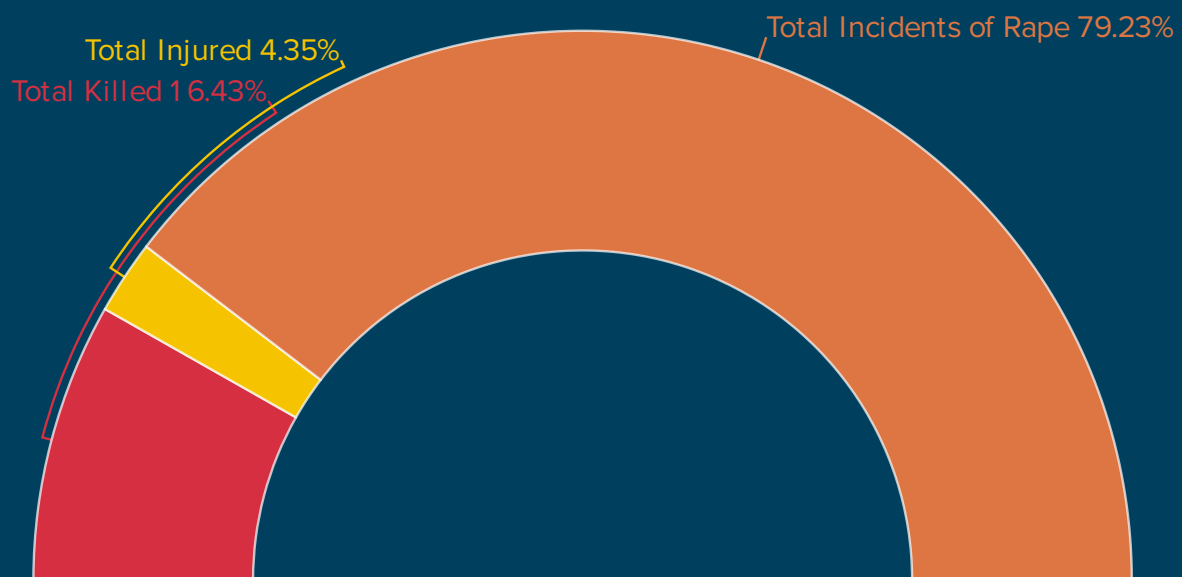
This quarter recorded the turbulent number of GBV related violent incidents, out of 256 incidents recorded under GBV, 250 incidents included violence. There were 9 injuries, and 164 cases of rape recorded (See Fig 7), of which 131 victims of the heinous crime were women and girls below the age of 26.

Nepal has high cases of gender-based violence and while anyone can be affected, regardless of sex, women are still the majority of victims. In three months time, 34 women were killed as a result of GBV in Nepal. Of these victims, 24 were killed because of domestic violence. From 15 November 2020 - 15 February 2021, 256 incidents of GBV were recorded, with the main perpetrator in 242 of them being a family member or relative of the victim. However, such cases are generally unreported due to the stigma attached to GBV. According to Nepal police records, at least 6 women and children are raped every day.³¹



Violence against women and girls is a severe form of human rights violation. Globally, even prior to COVID-19 pandemic, one in three women experienced physical or sexual violence mostly by an intimate partner.³² Emerging data shows an increase in calls to domestic violence helplines in many countries since the outbreak of COVID-19 Pandemic. Similarly, sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women continue to occur on streets, in public domains and online spaces. Hence, violence against women is a Shadow Pandemic growing amidst the COVID-19 crisis.³³

FIG 7: IMPACTS OF GBV RELATED VIOLENT INCIDENTS



Domestic violence was the second most common form of violence against women with 32 cases, which claimed the lives of 24 women during this quarter. Kathmandu and Dang district had the highest number of incidents of GBV, with 15 cases. There were 12 cases each in Siraha and Rupandehi districts of Province 2 and Lumbini Province. Likewise, 9 cases each in Jhapa, Morang, Saptari and Kailali districts of Province 1, Province 2, and Far-west Province. And 7 cases each in Kaski and Dailekh districts of Gandaki Province and Karnali Province respectively. (See Fig 8)

For instance, on 4 February, news of a 17-year-old girl of Baitadi district being killed after rape, grabbed the media's attention. According to the relatives of the deceased, she went missing on 3 February while returning home from school and her body was found in the Lakhlek forest near her house on 4 February.³⁴ This incident created a turmoil within the country, leaving the various human rights groups, activists, students, youth groups, political parties, and civil society groups shattered from this heinous crime. The rage against rape was witnessed through different forms of symbolic, staged, and peaceful protests, demonstrations, and rally all across Nepal. There were a total of 23 events of protests and demonstrations following this incident of grave human rights violation.

Besides carrying out protests and demonstrations against the House dissolution, the Brihat Nagarik Aandolan (A Broad Citizen's Movement) also held a women's march in Kathmandu demanding an end to violence against women and impunity on 12 February 2021.³⁵ This women's march was mainly organized to protest against various incidences of rapes and sexual violence cases across the country where no arrests have been made and none actions have been taken towards punishing the perpetrator of such a heinous crime. During this movement, a large number of people participated in chanting slogans against the government to protest the systemic patriarchy, inaction against gender based violence, state protected misogyny and violence and systemic oppression.

The rage against rape then continued in the capital. On 13 February, various human rights groups, activists, students and civil society groups staged protests and demonstrations against rape and murder all across the country. In recent years, Nepal has witnessed a sharp rise in rape and murder cases.³⁶

NEW LEGISLATIVE STEPS AGAINST RAPE AND OTHER VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

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.³⁷ 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 Bidhya Devi Bhandari for its certification.³⁸ The ordinance includes a specific provision of extending the jail term of people involved in mediating rape cases by six months to three years.³⁹

In October, the government of Nepal also introduced new laws to increase the punishment for offenders of acid attacks to up to 20 years in prison and to regulate the sale of acid, following campaigns from survivors of acid attacks and women's rights activists. This is a milestone in the fight against GBV.

FIG 8: TOP 10 DISTRICTS WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF GBV CASES

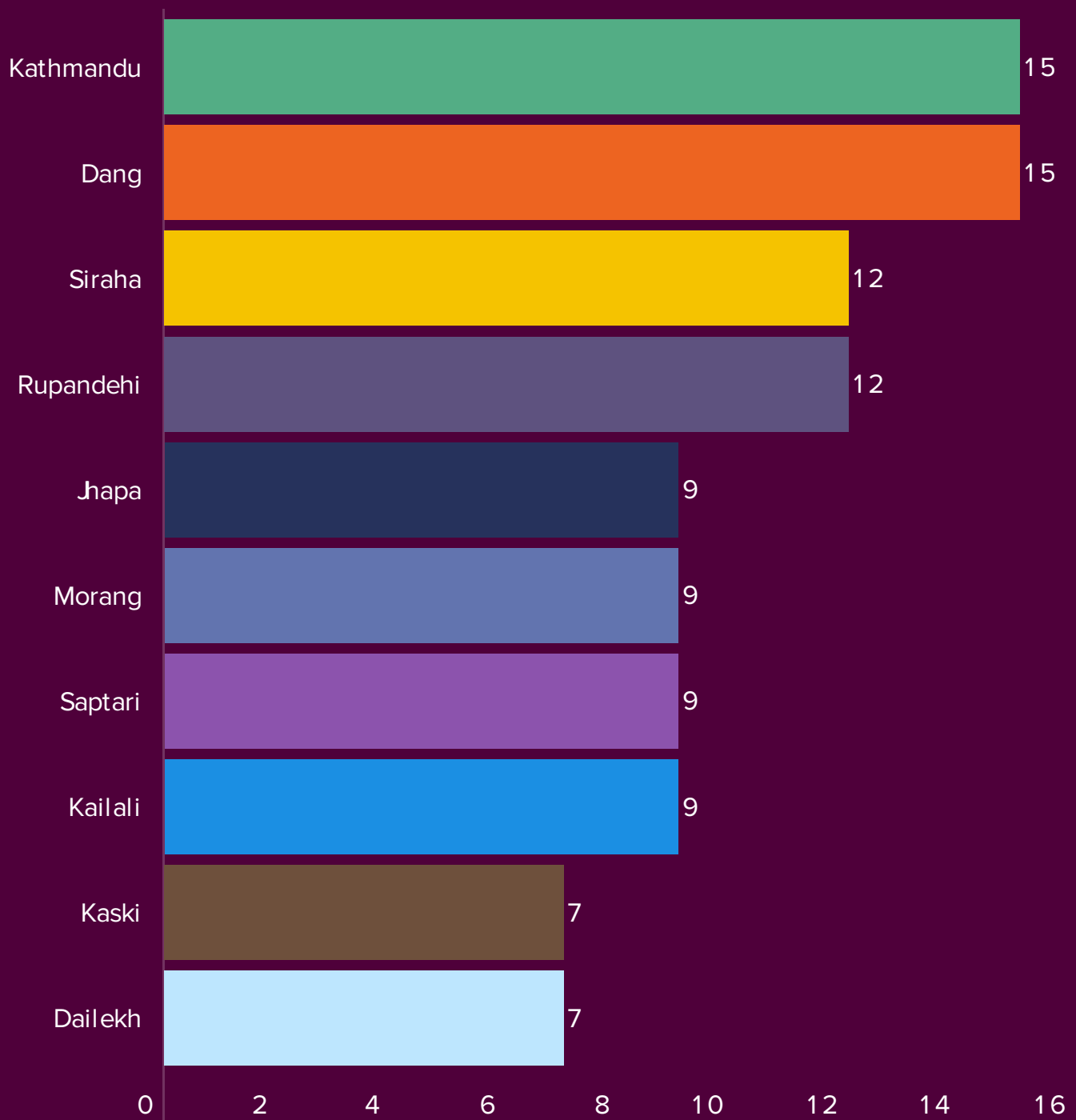
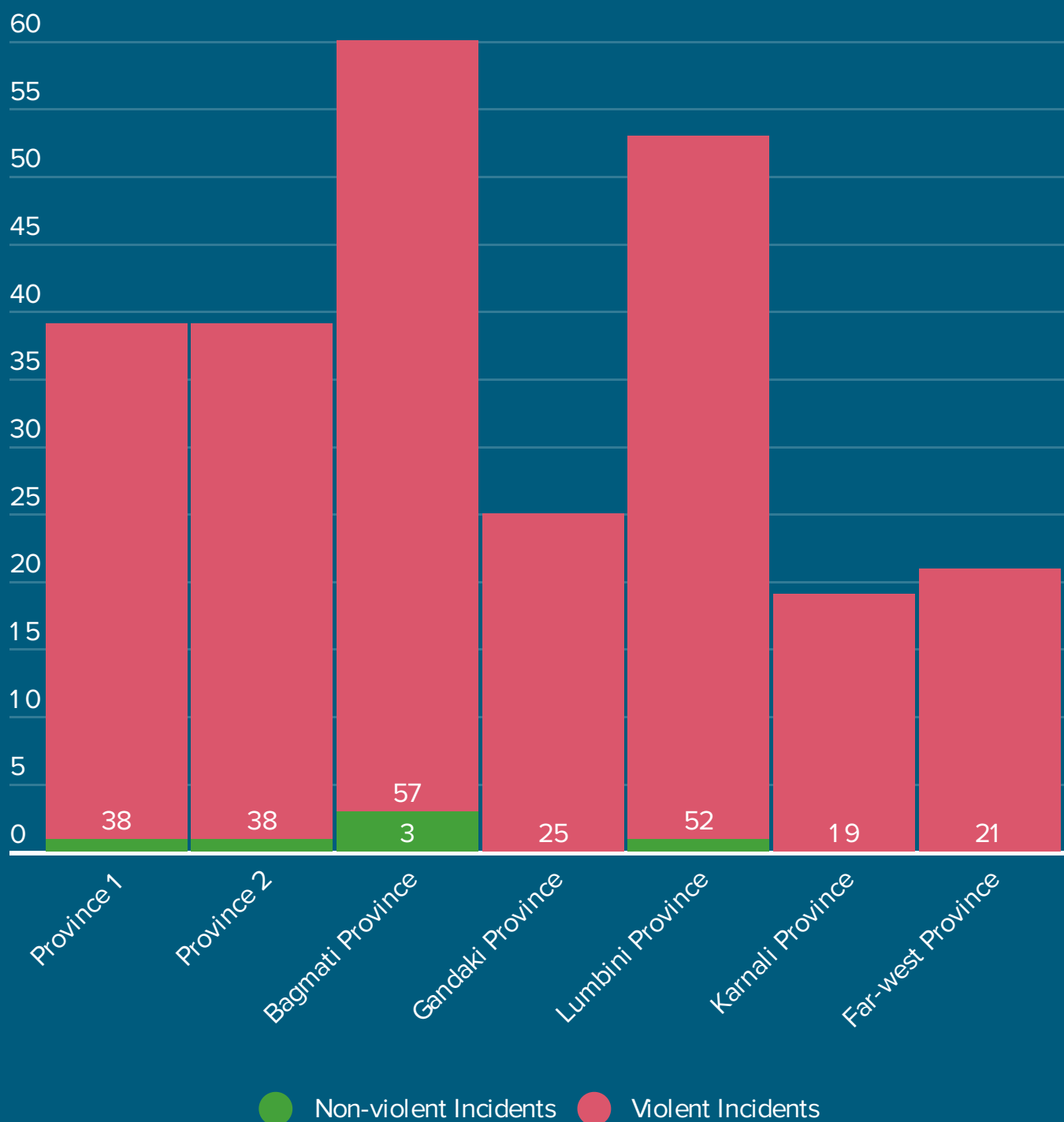


FIG 9: GBV RELATED INCIDENTS BY PROVINCE



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 images⁴⁰, sexually harassing a female friend on social media,⁴¹ tormenting female relative over social media,⁴² blackmailing a woman by hacking her facebook account,⁴³ were also recorded during this quarter.

GOVERNANCE RELATED INCIDENTS

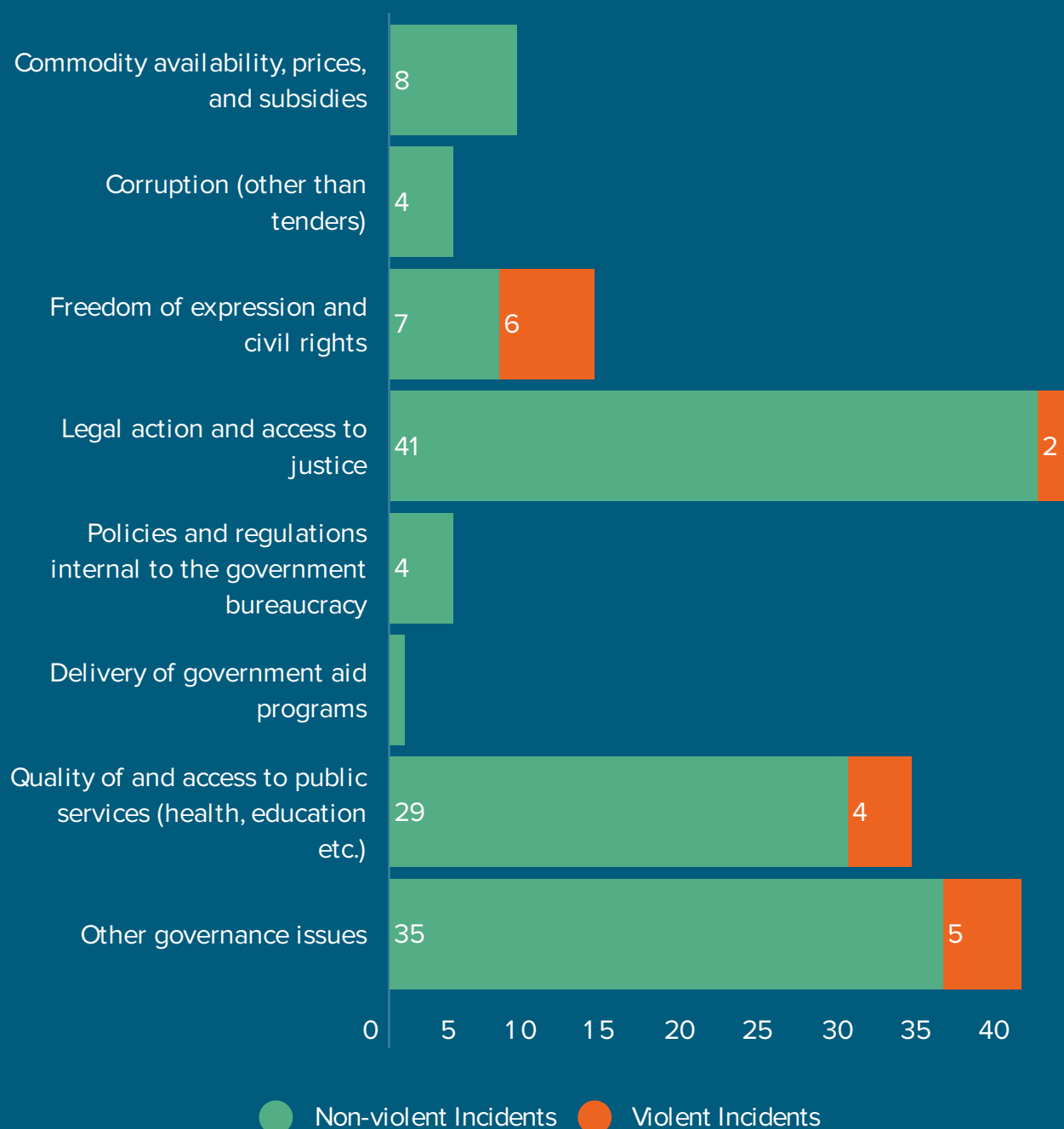
From 15 November 2020 - 15 February 2021, VMSCS recorded 17 violent and 129 non-violent governance related incidents, totalling 146 in numbers. The violent incidents mainly involved events of small and large group clashes, assaults, and vandalism. Whereas, non-violent incidents mostly included non-violent demonstrations, sit-in/padlocking, road blockage, and threat/intimidation. Blunt weapons were used in 4 of the violent incidents recorded in this quarter. The violence and contestation injured 15, damaged 2 buildings, and 2 vehicles during this reporting period.

Bagmati Province recorded 38 governance related incidents, marking the highest in this quarter, of which 3 were violent, Province 2 had 30 incidents, among which 5 were violent in nature. Similarly, Sudurpaschim (Far-west) Province recorded total of 28 incidents, including 2 incidents of violence, followed by Province 1, having 16 incidents (2 violent), Lumbini Province - 14 incidents (1 violent), Karnali Province - 12 incidents (3 violent), and Gandaki Province - 8 incidents (1 violent).

Of the total incidents recorded in this quarter, 43 incidents were concerned with issues related to legal action and access to justice, of which 2 incidents involved violence.⁴⁴ Among 40 incidents related to other types of governance issues, 5 were violent in nature.⁴⁵ Out of 33 incidents related to access to and quality of public services (health, education, etc.), 4 such incidents involved violence.⁴⁶ Similarly, out of 13 incidents relating with issues to freedom of expression and civil rights, 6 such incidents involved violence.⁴⁷ (See Fig 10)



FIG 10: TRIGGERS OF GOVERNANCE RELATED INCIDENTS



This quarter also recorded 16 non-violent governance incidents directly related to COVID-19 Pandemic, including 12 incidents around lockdown enforcement, which included eight incidents of sit-in/padlocking,⁴⁸ and 4 peaceful demonstrations⁴⁹ demanding the opening of Nepal-India border, and the weekly market.⁵⁰ Similarly, 2 Covid-19 related incidents were around healthcare management,⁵¹ and 2 regarding government relief.⁵²

ENDNOTES

1. See: Appointments to constitutional bodies receive widespread flak
2. See: Nepal: UN experts express concerns for independence and integrity of the NHRC
3. See: Police use water cannons, baton charge citizen protesters in Baluwatar
4. See: Over 2 dozen human rights activists protesting outside Baluwatar detained
5. See: Police detain human rights activists protesting government move to dissolve House
6. See: NHRC urges govt to respect citizens' right to freedom of expression, peaceful assemblies, NHRC Press Statement
7. See: Chief of Dhangadhi Land Revenue mistreats journalist, Journalist abused while filming motorcycle vandalism during general strike, Post photojournalist injured covering a protest against the arrest of Jharkri
8. Police manhandles Human Rights Defenders in Siraha
9. Nepal: Information Technology Bill threatens freedom of expression
10. See: Everything you need to know about the Nepal government's new IT bill
11. See: Nepal government's new Information Technology bill draws battle lines against free speech
12. See: Draft directives to regulate social media give authorities power to define decency and morality
13. See: New directives to regulate media, social networking sites in offing
14. See: Draft directives to regulate social media give authorities power to define decency and morality
15. See: Govt plan on social media directive likely to curb freedom of expression online
16. See: Draft directives to regulate social media give authorities power to define decency and morality
17. See: P.M Oli Recommends Dissolution of the Parliament
18. See: NCP (Dahal-Nepal) faction stages demonstration in Saptari
19. See: Nepali Congress stages rallies in ten constituencies of Kathmandu against the dissolution of the House of Representatives
20. See: Janata Samajwadi Party stage demonstration in Parsa against the dissolution of parliament
21. See: Bibeksheel party stages demonstration against the dissolution of parliament
22. See: NC Holds Massive Protests Against HOR Dissolution
23. See: House Dissolution: Whether Its Lawful Is Now For Supreme Court to Decide
24. Ibid
25. See: Fourteen demonstrators arrested on charge of vandalism and arson in Rautahat and Bara
26. See: Seven NSU affiliated students arrested for protesting in front of the Supreme Court against the Parliament dissolution
27. See: 6 cadres of Dahal-Madhav group arrested for vandalizing government vehicle in Morang
28. See: 17 NCP cadres detained from Birgunj
29. See: Two cadres of Biplav arrested with explosives in Kalikot
30. See: Pressure cooker bomb planted by Biplav-led group defused in Banepa

31. See: Attorney General: If Death Penalty Is Remedy For Rape It Should Be Seriously Discussed
32. See: Devastatingly pervasive: 1 in 3 women globally experience violence
33. See: The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19
34. See: 17-year-old girl murdered after being raped in Baitadi
35. See: Fed up with injustice and inaction, women march to demand end to impunity
36. See: Rage against rape continues in the capital
37. See: Authorities Warned Against Settling Rape Case Through Reconciliation
38. See: Cabinet Approves Ordinance Against Rape Case Mediators
39. See: 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 Mediators in Rape Cases Will Also Face Jail Term, As Per A New Ordinance
40. See: Man arrested for demanding money from female friend by threatening to publish private image
41. See: Man arrested on charge of sexually harassing a female friend on social media
42. See: Man in Chitwan arrested on the charge of tormenting female relative over social media
43. See: Two arrested for blackmailing woman by hacking her facebook account
44. See: Public offense case registered against 9 involved in violent demonstration in Jumla, Victim's family accuse police of weakening murder case, six injured in clash
45. See: Locals and police clash in Bara, Street vendors clash with municipal police in Birgunj, Chairs vandalized at rural municipality meeting in Dhanusa over the budget division, Nepal Electricity Authority employees assaulted in Sirutar, Labor and Employment office vandalized in Biratnagar
46. See: Students clash with police at Midwestern University in Surkhet, Land Revenue Office in Parbat vandalized, Gyanendra Shahi group's youth manhandles Bheri Hospital staffs in Banke, Students in Sarlahi vandalize Barhathwa municipal office and school
47. See: Journalist attacked at Damak Land Revenue while filming a video of official accepting bribe, Post photojournalist injured covering a protest against the arrest of Jharkri, Journalist abused while filming motorcycle vandalism during general strike, Journalist physically assaulted for reporting during general strike in Kanchanpur, Strike enforcers assault on-duty reporters, Chief of Dhangadhi Land Revenue mistreats journalist
48. See: Indefinite sit-in started in Sarlahi putting forward five-point demands including opening of Nepal-India border, Indefinite sit-in started in Sunsari demanding opening of the Nepal-India border
49. See: Demonstration against China in Tatopani to open the border checkpoint, Biratnagar residents held demonstration demanding easy movement at Nepal-India border
50. See: Traders in Biratnagar stage sit-in demanding the opening of the weekly market
51. See: Health workers stage sit-in in front of Ministry of Health and Population, Tanahun Hydro workers agitated for the third time demanding PCR tests of all workers
52. See: Health workers stage sit-in in Siraha demanding salary and allowance, Entrepreneurs stage protests, urge govt to honor tax exemption promise made during lockdown

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.



