



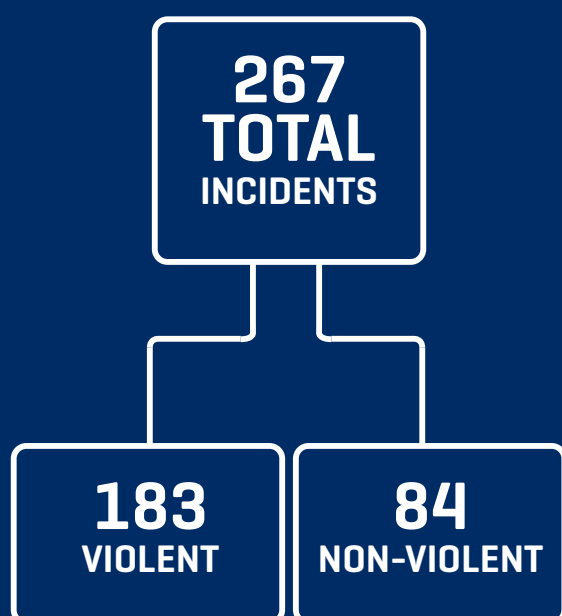
**VIOLENCE TREND AND CIVIC  
SPACE ANALYSIS AMID  
COVID-19 IN NEPAL**

**A MONTHLY BRIEF: 16 MARCH - 15 APRIL 2021**

This report from Violence Monitoring and Shrinking Civic Space in Nepal amid Covid-19 [VMSCS] Project evaluates the trends of violent and non-violent contestation with the objective of presenting their impact on civic space and the overall situational analysis of the state of civic space in Nepal from 16 March to 15 April 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 incidents reports directly submitted to the Collective Campaign for Peace [COCAP].

## OVERVIEW OF INCIDENTS

From 16 March to 15 April 2021, a total of 267 incidents were recorded across Nepal. Compared to the previous month [16 February - 15 March 2021 with 250 total incidents], there was an increment of incidents by 6.8%. Of the total incidents recorded, 183 incidents were violent and 84 incidents were non-violent in nature. This also includes eight incidents related to obstruction of civic space where five incidents were non-violent and three incidents were violent in nature.



90  
INJURED



# 45 KILLED

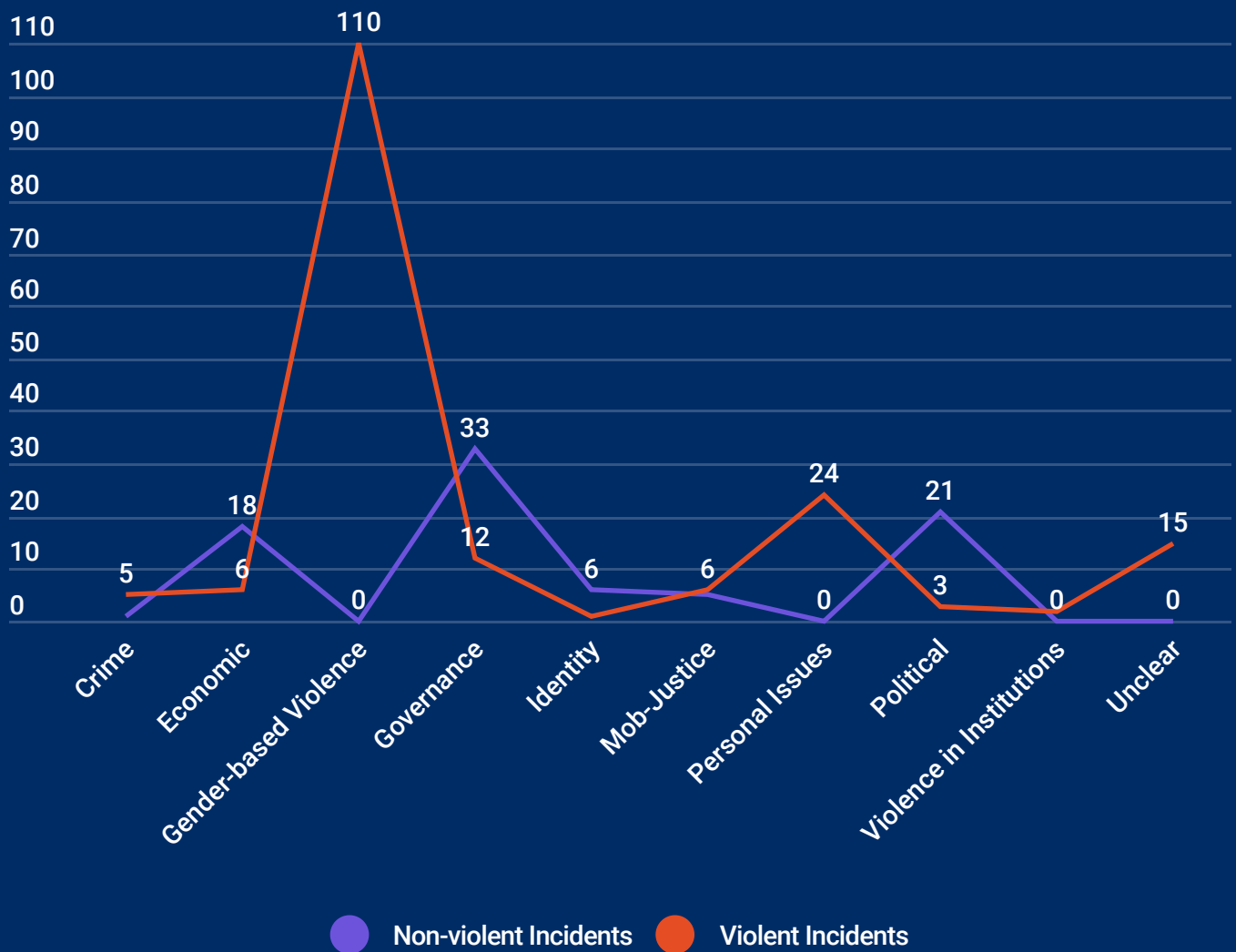


The **violent incidents** mainly involved arson, abduction, assault, fight, group clash, infanticide, murder/attempted murder, sexual assault, vandalism, violence against civilians and violent demonstration. These incidents injured 90 and took the lives of 45 people.

The **non-violent incidents** involved politically motivated arrest, banishment, curfew, demonstrations, sit-ins, program interference, public humiliation, road blocks, strike and threat/intimidation.

These incidents were triggered by issues including gender-based violence, governance, political-related, personal issues, economic issues, crime, mob-justice, and identity related, indicating a threat to the key rights that the civil society depends on.

**Fig. 1: Triggers of Violent and Non-violent Incidents**



Gender-based violence was the main trigger of incidents with 110 total incidents including sexual assault and domestic violence, followed by governance related incidents with a total of 45 incidents mostly including issues related to access of development infrastructures, economic markets and labour disputes. 24 incidents related to political issues were recorded which were mostly provoked by the current political scenario of the country and other nations including the Military coup in Myanmar. Some of these incidents were protests led by journalists against the Federation of Nepali Journalists [FNJ] regarding the distribution of illegal and politically biased membership. FNJ has been accused of depriving the active journalists of their membership in the organization.

## STATE OF CIVIC SPACE IN NEPAL AMID COVID-19

With the promulgation of the Constituent Assembly in 2015, the state of civic space seems to be progressing every year. The government, however, appears to persistently contribute in shrinking the civic space through their controversial actions and passing of new bills, directly threatening the ability to exercise civic freedom. The Covid-19 pandemic came as an excuse for the government to take control over civil rights, justifying its actions as measures to deal with the crisis. As important as it is to have directives to address a pandemic, it seems immoderate for the government to enforce orders that would adversely affect civil rights including freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression which can be seen deteriorating with extraneous arrests, physical attacks, threats, tyranny and police brutality targeted towards journalists, human rights defenders and activists and civilians.

A plausible speculation as to Nepal being hit by the second wave of Covid-19 has raised a nation-wide concern in terms of freedom and safety, pertaining to the predicament that the first wave instigated.



## THREATS AND ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS

Journalists and media workers are ceaseless victims of violation of their civic freedom and are highly vulnerable to threats and attacks regarding the work they do. Based on the data recorded this month, there were four cases of such obscenity towards journalists.

The editor-in-chief of Diopost.com, Sudip Bishwokarma was threatened by ASI Buddhi Bahadur Syangten, PSO of Senior Judge Mira Khadka of the Supreme Court. Diopost.com had published a news about 70-year-old Bir Bahadur Syangtan, along with Tirtha Bahadur Dhalaan, Ward Chairperson of Konjyosom rural municipality-4, accusing them of transferring the ownership of a piece of land to another person without the knowledge of the landlord.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the verbal threat, journalists have also been a victim of physical attacks. Madhav Prasad Guragain, operator and journalist of Nepal.com was physically attacked on 12 April by three men for reporting on the construction progress of Kathmandu View Tower located in Old Bus Park, Kathmandu. The accused have been identified as Manoj Bhetwal, Contractor of the tower, his brother Bhairav Bhetwal and his supervisor, Gyan Manoj Guragain who are still on the loose.<sup>2</sup>

On 13 April, the police attacked Kedar Dahal journalist of Naya Patrika Dainik, while collecting news about an Indian national in front of the Indian Embassy. The Kathmandu branch of Nepal Press Union (NPU) issued a statement condemning the incident of mistreatment of Dahal. This incident has induced a threat among journalists and their freedom of expression.<sup>3</sup>

Reporter of Annapurna Post Tanahu, Pawan Paudel was allegedly abused by the

Commander of Kalibhanjan Battalion of the Nepal Army. Paudel was misbehaved with, for capturing pictures of the Army in training in Damauli. The Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), Tanahu has condemned this behavior through a press release.<sup>4</sup>



## POLICE BRUTALITY ON THE CIVILIANS

Unlawful acts by the police force on civilians is a serious violation of human rights. The public relies on the police for safety and protection but instead have become a menace. The use of force as a facade of handling the situation indicates a formidable rise in police brutality.

This month witnessed one such incident of police brutality on two businessmen in Jhapa. On 23 March, Rabin Giri and Uttam Shrestha were brutally beaten by the police without any reason while on their way home from a shop in Gauradaha, Jhapa. Giri and Shrestha sustained injuries after being kicked at and hit with sticks. The victims alleged the policeman to be under the influence of alcohol while committing such an atrocity.<sup>5</sup>



## INTERVENTION DURING PEACEFUL PROTESTS

Various protests and demonstrations against political decisions and perceived incompetence of the government have been evidently interfered with by the security forces. These protests were carried out peacefully until the police's interference, resulting in several arrests and casualties.

Students protesting at Midwestern University in Birendranagar were charged with batons by the police on 26 March for chanting slogans loudly while the Vice-Chancellor P.D. Nanda Bahadur Singh was being escorted through the University gate. The students were demanding admission into the University after passing the entrance examination. The police arrested a few students while some other students sustained injuries.<sup>6</sup>

On 02 April, the police arrested about 10 protestors. A group of young students staged a symbolic protest in Singha Durbar, Kathmandu demanding the declaration of an environmental emergency. The students protested using plants and banners with messages calling for environmental conservation. They accused the government of ignoring the public health crisis caused due to the wildfire and air pollution. At Least 60 places across 22 of 77 administrative districts of Nepal battled with forest fires, adding to the growing levels of pollution across the country.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly on 07 April, the police arrested nine Nepali Congress leaders and cadres during a demonstration against the price hike in petroleum products. The police arrested central members of the party during a peaceful sit-in at the gate of Nepal Oil Corporation in Kathmandu.<sup>8</sup>

## FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE BILL

On 29 June 2020, the Federal Civil Service Bill was passed by the State Affairs and Good governance Committee of the House of Representatives. The Bill includes various provisions for civil servants some of which includes new retirement age, changes to the existing provision of 55 per cent seats for open competition and 45 per cent seats for reservation quota in the civil service examinations to 51 per cent and 49 per cent respectively and reservation for Khas-Arya, Muslims and Tharus.

Out of all the provisions brought by the Federal Civil Service Bill, the provision of filling up posts in the Gazetted Third Class [Officers] caused a demonstration by the Junior Officers inside Singha Durbar on 14 April. The officers gathered in front of the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration and demonstrated with placards. They further demanded 20 percent of the posts to be filled through internal competition and 30 per cent through promotion, going against the current provision of filling 80 percent of open posts and 20 percent through promotion according to the Bill.<sup>9</sup>





## ENDNOTES

1. See: Journalist threatened for publishing news in Lalitpur
2. See: Journalist attacked by the contractor of Kathmandu View Tower
3. See: Police assaults Journalist of Naya Patrika Dainik in Kathmandu
4. See: Nepal Army commander abuses Journalist
5. See: Police brutally beats two businessmen in Jhapa
6. See: Clash between police and students at Midwestern University
7. See: Young students stage symbolic protest against government's silence over environment pollution
8. See: Nine protesters arrested in demonstration against petroleum-price hike
9. See: Junior Officers stage demonstration against few provisions of Federal Civil Service Bill

## VIOLENCE MONITORING AND SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE IN NEPAL AMID COVID-19 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 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.



