



media action nepal

FROM INTIMIDATION TO IMPUNITY: RISING THREATS AGAINST MEDIA IN NEPAL

Press Freedom Report 2025

This report prepared by Media Action Nepal's Media Rights Violation Monitoring Desk (MRVMD) analyzes press freedom trends and violations in Nepal from 4 May 2024 to 1 May 2025. Based on data from Media Action Nepal's online tool, documentation from province coordinators, past records, and interviews with experts and journalists, it offers an evidence-based overview of the worsening media environment and calls for stronger protections for journalists and media houses.

Review & Editing

Laxman Datt Pant

Monitoring & Documentation

Bal Krishna Sah

Contributors

Phurpa Sherpa

Narendra Dhakal

Hadis Khuddar

Lalit Budha

Layout/Designing

Ajay Maharjan

The Cover Photo: The cover features two images: the top shows a charred building in *Tinkune*, Kathmandu, from a pro-monarchist protest on March 28, 2025, where journalist Suresh Rajak was killed (Photo: Rajesh Gurung, *The Himalayan Times*); the bottom shows security forces guarding the Health Ministry during a resident doctors' protest on April 24, 2025 (Photo: Media Action Nepal). These incidents highlight the rising threats to journalist safety amid recent unrest in Nepal, with reporters covering protests increasingly becoming targets, further worsening their security in the field.

© : Media Action Nepal





ABBREVIATIONS

CIEDP: Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons

CSOs: Civil Society Organizations

FoE : Freedom of Expression

GoN: Government of Nepal

MAN : Media Action Nepal

MCB: Media Council Bill

MRVMD: Media Rights Violation Monitoring Desk

NGO: Non-governmental Organisations

PCN: Press Council Nepal

RRM: Rapid Response Mechanism

SP: Superintendent of Police

SMB: Social Media Bill

TRC: Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UN: United Nations

UNESCO: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

WJA: Working Journalists Act

WoJAN: Working Journalists Association Nepal



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From 4 May 2024 to 1 May 2025, Nepal witnessed a deeply troubling erosion of press freedom, marked by intensifying legal, strategic, and violent attacks against journalists and media houses. Despite constitutional guarantees for press freedom and freedom of expression, the year under review exposed a disturbing reality: the systematic failure of the state to safeguard these rights, and a growing culture of impunity for violations.

Media Action Nepal documented a total of 32 cases of press freedom and FoE violations, impacting 40 individuals and media houses, highlighting a terrifying environment for journalists. The data reveal an alarming increase in severity and diversity of threats:

Killings: Two journalists, Suresh Bhul and Suresh Rajak, were killed in incidents fueled by public unrest and mob violence, representing an extreme and unacceptable threat to media freedom.

Arrests: Three incidents resulted in the arrest of six journalists and individuals, often under ambiguous or excessive charges.

Equipment Seizure: Journalists faced equipment confiscation by both government authorities and mobs, undermining their ability to report and disseminate information.

Information Blockage: In three separate cases, three journalists and two films faced information blockages, including denial of access to public events or sources and pre-censorship attempts which directly undermines the right to information and the public's ability to stay informed.

Threats : The most common form of violation was threats and intimidation, with 22 incidents involving 24 journalists and media houses. These ranged from verbal threats to more serious forms of harassment, reflecting an environment where intimidation was widespread and often went unpunished.

MAJOR TRENDS

Escalation of Physical Violence: Physical attacks on journalists were not isolated; coordinated assaults were often carried out by politically or socially motivated groups, with a worrying number of incidents involving security forces themselves.

Judicial Weaponization: Court rulings and legal sanctions were increasingly used to penalize journalists, threatening the independence of the judiciary and undermining the principle of free media.

Legislative Threats: The passage of controversial legislations such as the Media Council Bill (MCB), Social Media Bill (SMB) without addressing civil society concerns, signal a deliberate push toward media control that stifles critical reporting. These laws are expected to increase restrictions on free speech and journalistic independence.

Failure of Accountability Mechanisms: Perpetrators of violence against journalists, whether from mobs, police, or political groups, largely evaded justice, fostering an environment of fear and impunity.



Advocacy and Recommendations: Media Action Nepal consistently condemned violations and called for urgent action, but government responses were ineffective. Key recommendations include strengthening legal protections, establishing rapid response mechanisms, protecting journalists' equipment, ending impunity, training law enforcement, and promoting overall media safety.

Media Action Nepal's analysis reveals that press freedom and FoE in Nepal regressed significantly during this period, with increased risks to journalists' safety, growing suppression of critical voices, and the encroachment of state power over independent media spaces.

As Nepal approaches key political and social milestones, safeguarding the rights of journalists, ensuring accountability for violations, and defending an independent media ecosystem are more urgent than ever. Media Action Nepal calls for immediate action from the government to restore the constitutional guarantees of press freedom and create a safe and enabling environment for journalism.



Table of Contents

01

SECTION 1
INDICATORS TO ASSESSING
PRESS FREEDOM IN NEPAL

02

SECTION 2
TREND ANALYSIS:
MEDIA FREEDOM AT RISK

04

SECTION 3
CASES OF MEDIA FREEDOM
VIOLATIONS

12

SECTION 4
CONCLUSION AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

SECTION 1: INDICATORS TO ASSESSING PRESS FREEDOM IN NEPAL

In order to determine the extent to which press freedom issues in Nepal are covered in this study, seven indicators were established. It is widely recognized that definitions of press freedom are based on United Nations (UN) conventions and instruments. Nepal, as a party to such instruments, is required to implement relevant provisions through the enactment of appropriate domestic laws. Many of the fundamental rights provisions in Nepal's Constitution are aligned with international instruments. The indicators reflect the concerns and rights of journalists, communicators, and individuals.

Illegal Arrest: Journalists are frequently questioned, detained, or arrested for covering news or remaining critical of government actions. These incidents have become increasingly common in recent years. As a result, illegal arrest was chosen as one of our indicators for this report.

Information Blockage: Spokespersons and authorities refuting verifications or providing information, imposing an embargo, or denying any information of public interest.

Killings: Journalists murdered or killed to refrain from news coverage or commentary are counted as killed or murdered. It also incorporates incidents that occurred during Nepal's insurgency period and the continued impunity against them.

Newsroom Harassment: Incidents include a lack of supportive environments for female journalists and sexual abuse by senior colleagues such as editors, coordinators, and managers. This also includes incidents such as bullying of newcomer journalists.

Misuse of Laws: Misuse of laws is a common occurrence in Nepal, impeding the work of media professionals. This includes official misinterpretation of laws, repressive and restrictive laws, as well as malicious libel and slanders.

Seizure of Equipment: Seizure of equipment refers to the confiscation of cameras, phones, or other types of journalistic equipment in order to prevent them from reporting on the news.

Threat: Threat is one of Media Action Nepal's indicators for determining incidents of press freedom violations. Threats are the most common type of encroachment that journalists encounter in different forms and scales. Our data gathered while preparing this report also indicates that threats have increased and continue to exist across the country. Threats have been observed in various ways, such as physical or verbal abuse or any other type of retribution, including attacks, abuse, causing injury, misbehavior, death threats, abduction, and assault. However, there have been very few actions taken to address such violations of press freedom.



2.1 Legal and Political Challenges

This year, Nepal's media landscape faced significant legal and political constraints. Central among these was the proposed Social Media Bill (SMB), widely criticized for curbing dissent and infringing on fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, press freedom & the right to anonymity. Despite facing criticism from civil society, digital rights advocates, and the media, the bill remains under consideration in the Parliament.

Illustrating this suppressive environment, a journalist attempting to question former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in Parliament was forcibly obstructed. Similarly, on March 5, 2025, the Federal Parliament Secretariat suspended the press access of Prakash Oli of *Sunaulo Nepal* and Kishore Kumar Shrestha of *Yuba Man Nepal* for a month, following their questioning of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli on February 16.

Furthermore, Media Action Nepal has documented nine additional cases that reinforce the concern that journalists and media personnel are increasingly subjected to threats simply for carrying out their professional responsibilities, such as gathering news or seeking information. These individuals are frequently obstructed, dismissed, or ridiculed while performing their duties.

The SMB includes heavy penalties ranging from NPR 50,000 to NPR 10 million, signaling an intent to intimidate the public and the press. Media Action Nepal has actively resisted this bill, voicing concern through numerous platforms, including:

- **Its published analysis:** Nepal's Social Media Bill puts Freedom of Expression in Jeopardy.
- **Editorial coverage** in The Kathmandu Post, A delicate balance, citing Media Action Nepal's analysis
- **Interviews** on Ratopati TV, News24, and Avenues TV featuring Executive Director Laxman Datt Pant
- **Reports and editorials** in The Himalayan Times: Media Action Nepal opposes Social Media Bill, warns of grave threat to free speech, The Annapurna Express: Media Action Nepal opposes Social Media Bill, warns of grave threat to free speech and Republica: Media Action Nepal raises alarm over Social Media Bill.

2.2 Exploitation of Journalists

Many journalists in Nepal endured prolonged periods, up to 12 months, without pay in 2025. This, coupled with a lack of secure contracts and a persistent gender pay gap, has worsened working conditions and undermined journalistic independence. The Working Journalists Act (WJA) mandates a minimum wage, yet enforcement remains weak.

Government advertising—intended to support media sustainability—is often awarded selectively, encouraging editorial alignment with official narratives. This, in turn, fosters self-censorship, as journalists fear losing jobs or facing reprisals.



Persistent challenges including salary delays, lack of formal employment contracts, burdensome legal procedures, and factionalism among media owners continue to erode the freedom and integrity of journalism in Nepal. These systemic issues, as noted by the president of the Working Journalists Association Nepal (WoJAN)¹, significantly hinder the professional and ethical functioning of the media sector in the country.

2.3 Judiciary, Media Independence and Freedom of Expression

Media Action Nepal's documentation over the year shows that shielding the judiciary from public scrutiny endangers democracy. While accountability must not compromise journalistic freedom, the judiciary should remain open to fair criticism particularly because judicial appointments are often politically influenced. Still, responsible journalism is essential. While journalists should not face imprisonment for their work, intentional dissemination of false or malicious content should lead to proportionate penalties, including public apologies and fines—not jail term.

A concerning precedent was set when Nabin Dhungana and Yubraj Kandel of *Sidhakura.com* were sentenced to three months in jail for contempt of court after publishing a fabricated audio clip. They were released on October 6, 2025, after issuing an apology, in accordance with Section 17(4) of the Administration of Justice Act, 2016 (2073 B.S.).

This polarizing case has split Nepal's media community, revealing political biases that threaten journalistic objectivity. It also signals a broader state intent to limit free expression under the guise of legal enforcement.

The repeated obstruction of journalists—including those questioning senior politicians such as Sher Bahadur Deuba—reinforces the perception that ruling parties aim to control the media. Media Action Nepal documented at least nine other cases in 2025 where journalists faced harassment or obstruction while performing their duties.

2.4 Impunity since the Conflict Era

Nearly two decades after the end of Nepal's armed conflict (1996–2006), impunity for crimes against journalists remains widespread. Despite court orders for investigations, successive governments have failed to pursue justice. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP), both established in 2015, have yet to make meaningful progress. This institutional inertia continues to deny victims and families the justice they seek.

A UNESCO report (2016)² revealed that 35 journalists were killed and four went missing during the insurgency. Yet by April 2025, only five cases had been prosecuted. The impunity persists. In 2025, two journalists were killed, but justice remains elusive, underscoring the ongoing risks faced by Nepali journalists and the urgent need for accountability.

¹ Janma Dev Jaishi, President, Working Journalists Association Nepal (WoJAN)

² Adhikary, N.M. & Pant, L.D. (2026). Supporting Safety of Journalists in Nepal: An assessment based on UNESCO's Journalists' Safety Indicators. UNESCO: Paris.

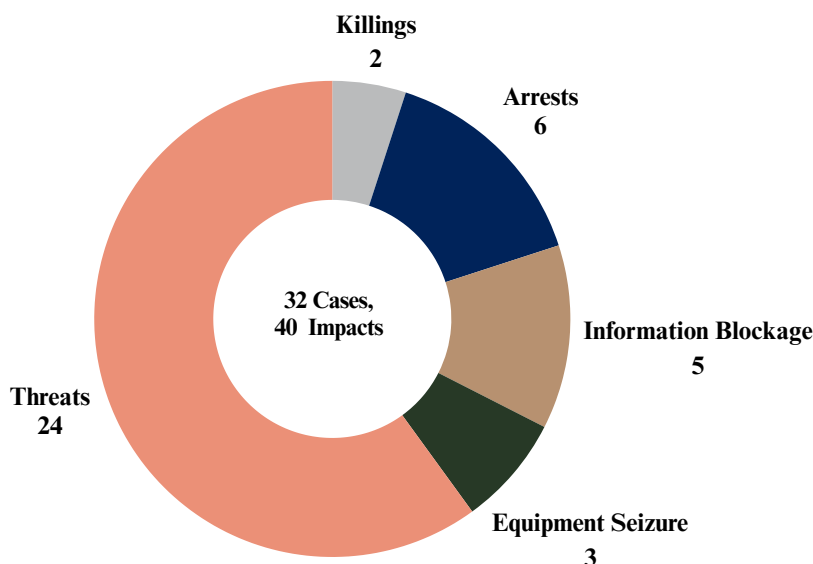


SECTION 3: CASES OF MEDIA FREEDOM VIOLATIONS

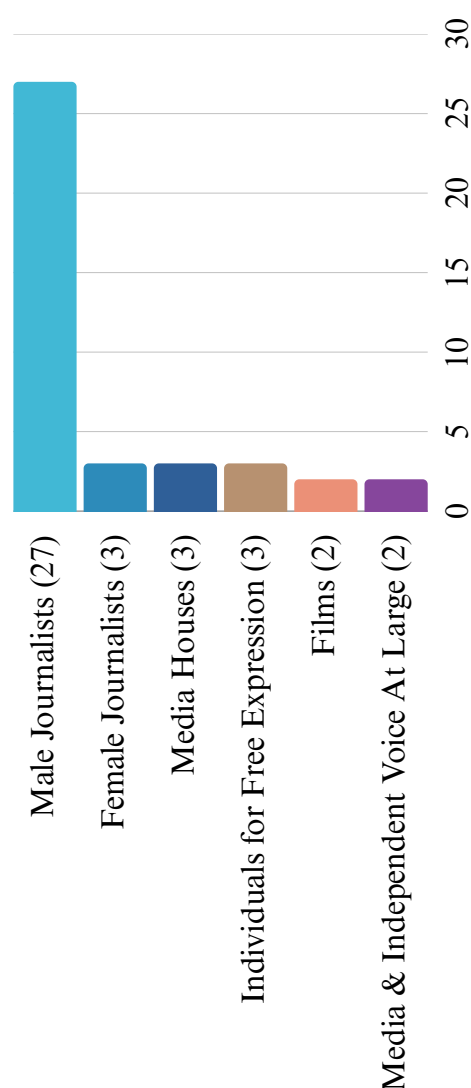
The state of media freedom and freedom of expression in Nepal in 2024/25 was not merely restricted, it came under legal, strategic, and even violent assault. While the country upholds constitutionally guaranteed rights, its failure to protect them this year has been stark. Numerous incidents throughout the year have exposed the government's troubling approach toward press freedom.

3.1 Violations and Victims

Media Action Nepal documented a total of 32 cases of press freedom and FoE violations, impacting 40 individuals and media houses. These violations represent a serious deterioration in the environment for press freedom, freedom of expression and safety of journalists.



- The nature of these violations spans five major areas: killings, arrests, information blockage, equipment seizure, and threats or intimidation.
- The most alarming among these are two incidents of killings, in which two journalists lost their lives. Media Action Nepal documented a total of 32 cases of press freedom and FoE violations, impacting 40 individuals and media houses. These violations represent a serious deterioration in the environment for press freedom, safety of journalists and consequence of hostility toward the press and send a chilling message about the risks associated with reporting.
- Three incidents resulted in the arrest of six journalists and individuals, often under ambiguous or excessive charges. Such practices demonstrate the use of legal and coercive instruments to suppress dissent and control the narrative.
- In three separate cases, three journalists and two films faced information blockages, including denial of access to public events or sources and pre-censorship attempts which directly undermines the right to information and the public's ability to stay informed.



- Equipment seizures in two incidents affected three journalists, leading to the loss of important journalistic tools and data, effectively silencing reporting efforts.
- The most common form of violation was threats and intimidation, with 22 incidents involving 24 journalists and media houses. These ranged from verbal threats to more serious forms of harassment, reflecting an environment where intimidation is widespread and often goes unpunished.
- A closer look at the gender breakdown of affected individuals shows that 32 of the 35 individual victims were male, while only three were female. Though the number of female journalists impacted appears lower, it must be interpreted with caution, as women in journalism often underreport violations due to fear of stigma or lack of institutional support.
- Moreover, female journalists may experience gender-specific forms of abuse that are not always captured in general reporting on violations.
- Three well-known media institutions, Kantipur Publications, Annapurna Post, and Samadhan Daily, were also directly targeted. This points to an institutional dimension of media suppression where not only individual journalists but also media outlets as a whole are subjected to pressure, often through targeted surveillance, obstruction, or direct attacks. Such incidents weaken the role of the press as a watchdog and hinder the operational independence of media houses.

Table 1: Press Freedom and FoE Violations 2024/25

SN	Nature of Violation	# of Victim (s)	Perpetrator (s)	Case Brief	Case Details {Hyperlinked}
1.	Killings	1. Suresh Bhul	Motivated Crowd	Suresh Bhul, a young journalist deliberately killed by a mob.	Media Action Nepal condemns journalist's deliberate murder, calls for immediate justice
		2. Suresh Rajak	Motivated Crowd	Amid pro-monarchist protests on the afternoon of March 28, 2025, on-duty journalist Suresh Rajak , was set ablaze	Journalists burned to death, injured, media houses attacked amid pro-monarchy protest in Nepal
2.	Equipment Seizure	3. Hadis Khuddar	Security Forces/GoN	Journalist Hadis Khuddar, was assaulted and had his equipment seized by the District Police Circle around 12 PM on June 6 in Dhanusha.	Police confiscate equipment, assault journalist - Media Action Nepal
		4. Binu Thapa 5. Suraj Thapa	Minister/GoN Motivated crowd	Binu Thapa, a reporter at Pokhara Television, and Suraj Thapa of Gandaki Voice were beaten and injured, and their equipment, including their cameras and phones, were snatched by the agitating transport workers	Minister publicly insults a journalist, saying he should be physically attacked - Media Action Nepal

3.	Information Blockage	6. Mohan Singh	GoN	On August 2, police in the Jajarkot district of Karnali Province forced a local journalist, Mohan Singh, with <u>Karnali Awaj</u> , to delete photos.	<u>Journalist harassed and forced to delete photos - Media Action Nepal</u>
		7. Prakash Oli 8. Kishore Kumar Shrestha	GoN	The Federal Parliament Secretariat on March 5, 2025] issued a one-month suspension of press access for Prakash Oli, reporter at the 'Sunaulo Nepal' news portal, and Kishore Kumar Shrestha of the 'Yuba Man Nepal' channel after they posed questions to Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli on February 16.	<u>Media Action Nepal condemns restrictions on journalists in parliament</u>
		9. Pooja Sir Rajagunj 10. Lajsharanam	GoN	Nepali films faced harsh pre-censorship for including pivotal real-life incidents. The recent examples of films that faced censorship are Pooja Sir Rajagunj and Lajsharanam.	<u>Media Action Nepal denounces pre-censorship of film</u>
4.	Arrests	11. Gopi Ram Jaisi 12. Ram Bahadur Buda 13. Deepak Singh Thagunna	GoN	Three youths were apprehended by police in Kathmandu on August 26, Monday, for expressing their opinions and sloganeering against Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and former Prime Minister and Nepali Congress (NC) President Sher Bahadur Deuba during the Gaura Festival program.	<u>Three youths arrested for dissent released after public outcry - Media Action Nepal</u>
		14. Nabin Dhungana 15. Yubraj Kandel	GoN	The Supreme Court (SC) of Nepal sentenced journalists Nabin Dhungana and Yubraj Kandel to three months in prison on Sunday for contempt of court after they <u>published a fake audio</u> on their online news portal, Sidhakura.com.	<u>Supreme Court slaps journos Dhungana and Kandel 3 months jail on contempt of court - Media Action Nepal</u>
		16. Bijay Shah	Police/GoN	Bijay Shah, Editor-in-Chief of Dastak Khabar, a local online news portal in Siraha District, Madhesh Province, was arrested by police on October 18 for reporting on vulgarity at a cultural programme.	<u>Journalist arrested for reporting, released after two days - Media Action Nepal</u>



5.	Threats	17. Gajendra Budhathoki	Chinese Envoy	Gajendra Budhathoki, Chief Editor at <u>Taksar News</u> was threatened on May 28 and 29 by Chinese Envoy Chen Song for writing about the interest rate for a loan for the construction of Pokhara International Airport in Nepal, which now has been pulled into a huge corruption scandal.	<u>Media Action Nepal condemns intimidation of journalist by Chinese Envoy in Nepal</u>
		18. Kishor Shrestha	Political cadres	A faction of the Communist Party of Nepal led by Netra Bikram Chand, also known as Biplav, has threatened Kishor Shrestha, the editor-in-chief of the vernacular weekly <u>Janastha</u> , over the publication of a news article.	<u>Editor threatened to be bombed - Media Action Nepal</u>
		19. Amrit Subedi	GoN	On July 28, Rajeev Gurung, notoriously known as Deepak Manange, the current Minister of Physical Infrastructure and Transport for the Gandaki Provincial Government in Nepal, publicly insulted a journalist, Amrit Subedi, bureau chief of <u>Onlinekhabar</u> Gandaki Province, by stating that the latter should be physically attacked, which constitutes an incitement to violence against media.	<u>Minister publicly insults a journalist, saying he should be physically attacked - Media Action Nepal</u>
		20. Subhak Mahato	Unknown	On August 10, Subhak Mahato, a journalist at <u>Nepal Ground Zero</u> received numerous alarming threats via a call from an American number for exposing corruption.	<u>Journalist receives death threats after exposing corruption - Media Action Nepal</u>
		21. Shyam Sundar Pudasaini	Religious Group	Shyam Sundar Pudasaini of Nepal Views was threatened, beaten, and robbed while covering the escalating clash between Bijay Bhandari's supporters and the police during the Kotihom, a sacred Hindu ritual at Pashupatinath in Kathmandu, on Friday, August 16.	<u>Journalist threatened, beaten and robbed while reporting clashes at Pashupatinath - Media Action Nepal</u>



		22. Samadhan National Daily	Religious Group Motivated Crowd	On the afternoon of August 21, victims of cooperative fraud set fire to several copies of the Samadhan National Daily, a newspaper published from Pokhara Metropolitan City in Gandaki Province. It has been revealed that this act was motivated by revenge and intended to intimidate media workers.	<u>Citizens should refrain from impeding the free flow of information</u>
		23. Media outlets/Social Media & Independent Voice	PCN/GoN	Media Action Nepal urged the Press Council Nepal (PCN) to halt its harassment of independent voices and focus exclusively on fulfilling its designated mandate of promoting ethical journalism and supporting media development.	<u>Media Action Nepal demands PCN respect free speech and stay within its mandate</u>
		24. Kamal Bahadur Bohara	GoN	On February 1, Kamal Bahadur Bohara, editor of <u>Palikasamaya.com</u> , a local government-focused online news portal, was attacked for reporting.	<u>Media Action Nepal condemns attack on journalist Bohara</u>
		25. Media at large	GoN	The National Assembly (NA)'s unanimous passage of the 'Media Council Bill-2080 BS' on February 10, without addressing broader civil society concerns. The Government of Nepal (GoN) registered the bill on April 18, 2024, aiming to transform Press Council Nepal into the Media Council, a move that poses a grave threat to press freedom and newsroom integrity.	<u>Government control over Media Council to muzzle independent journalism in Nepal</u>
		26. Bishnu Prasad Neupane	Individuals on Social Media/Kopila Valley NGO	On March 25, Bishnu Prasad Neupane, Surkhet correspondent for Annapurna Post national daily, faced threats on social media following the publication of a news report, causing him significant mental distress.	<u>Nepal sees intensified threats against journalists</u>



		27. Manjit Ram	Kunja Bihari Yadavi/Community Member	Manjit Ram, a Radio Nepal reporter from Mahottari district, was attacked and assaulted on Monday (March 17).	<u>Nepal sees intensified threats against journalists</u>
		28. Arju Hamal	Police/GoN	Police manhandled journalist Arju Hamal, affiliated with Dinesh FM and Dinesh Khabar.com, during a news gathering.	<u>Nepal sees intensified threats against journalists</u>
		29. Prakash Mishra	Hotel Owners	Journalist <u>Prakash Mishra</u> , was targeted and beaten by hotel owners in Sudurpaschim province over writing the news. On Monday, March 17, Mishra wrote a byline news story for Dhangadhi's Anumodan Khabar daily under the title 'Mysterious gathering of foreign nationals in the Simli jungle of Kailali'.	<u>Nepal sees intensified threats against journalists</u>
		30. Ajaya Hakuju	Protestors	Ajaya Hakuju, a <u>Himal Khabar</u> journalist, was attacked while photographing a clash that erupted at Patan Multiple Campus during the Free Students' Union (FSU) elections on Tuesday (March 18, afternoon).	<u>Nepal sees intensified threats against journalists</u>
		31. Kantipur TV 32. Annapurna Post	Motivated Mob	Kantipur Television and Annapurna Post offices on the afternoon of March 28 faced targeted stone pelting amid violent protest in Tinkune.	<u>Media Action Nepal condemns the attacks on media houses</u>
		33. Rajesh Gurung	Police/GoN	Rajesh Gurung, a photojournalist with <u>The Himalayan Times</u> , was injured by rubber bullets during the protest. He sustained injuries to his thigh and foot while covering the demonstrations in the Tinkune area of Kathmandu.	<u>Journalists burned to death, injured, media houses attacked amid pro-monarchy protest in Nepal</u>



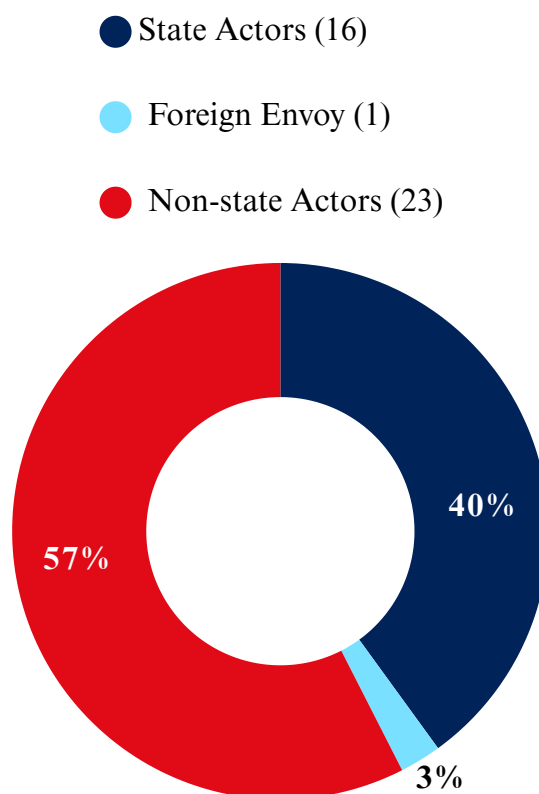
		34. Dinesh Gautam	Motivated Mob	Journalist of Onlinekhabar , Dinesh Gautam, was attacked and injured during a pro-monarchy protest in Tinkune on March 28, 2025. He was taking photos of protesters snatching a gun used by security forces to fire tear gas when he was mobbed by them.	Journalists burned to death, injured, media houses attacked amid pro-monarchy protest in Nepal
		35. Suresh Bidari	Motivated mob	Suresh Bidari, a freelance journalist and contributor to Himal Khabar, was subjected to online bullying and harassment since writing a piece for Himal Khabar following violent protests in Birgunj, which prompted authorities to impose a curfew to restore order.	Journalists harassed, beaten and attacked - Media Action Nepal
		36. Arjun Gupta	Motivated mob	On April 15 Avenues TV reporter Arjun Gupta was attacked and injured during reporting.	Journalists harassed, beaten and attacked - Media Action Nepal
		37. Anil Ojha 38. Dharendra Tiwari	Motivated mob	Madhya Nepal 's Anil Ojha and Chandra Surya Wani's Dharendra Tiwari were injured during reporting on April 15.	Journalists harassed, beaten and attacked - Media Action Nepal
		39. Sumit Mishra	Police/GoN	On April 25, SP Tiwari of the District Police Office, Dhanusha in Madhesh province, threatened Sumit Mishra, Khabarhub.com's Janakpurdham correspondent, over the news.	Media Action Nepal denounces police threat to journalist
		40. Sabina Karki	Police/GoN	Media Action Nepal condemned the police's reckless and excessive use of force that gravely injured Prime Television reporter Sabina Karki during a teachers' demonstration in Kathmandu on April 26, 2025, emphasizing that security forces must refrain from using disproportionate force, especially in the presence of journalists performing their duties.	Media Action Nepal urges police accountability after journalist Karki injured



3.2 The Profile of Perpetrators

The profile of perpetrators responsible for these violations is also revealing.

- Sixteen incidents involved state actors, including administrative officials and security forces. These figures highlight a serious failure of public institutions to uphold press freedom and FoE, and instead point to active involvement in its suppression.
- One incident involved a foreign envoy, which adds an international dimension to the issue and raises questions about diplomatic conduct in relation to host-country press freedoms.
- The majority of incidents, 23 in total, were perpetrated by non-state actors, such as individuals, protestors, and unidentified groups. This high number indicates a broader social intolerance toward the press, which thrives in the absence of accountability and rule of law, and the widespread prevalence of impunity for crimes against journalists.



The overall trends indicate a media landscape under significant strain. The high frequency of threats and the predominance of non-state actor involvement reflect both structural weaknesses in protection mechanisms and a lack of societal respect for journalistic roles. Impunity continues to be a major concern, as most cases are neither thoroughly investigated nor resolved. As a result, a culture of fear and self-censorship is likely to emerge among media professionals.



4.1 Conclusion

Between May 4, 2024 and May 1, 2025, Nepal witnessed a deeply troubling series of press freedom and FoE violations, with 32 documented incidents affecting 40 journalists, individuals and media houses. These violations spanned five key areas: killings (2 incidents, 2 killed), arrests (3 incidents, 6 arrested), information blockages (3 incidents, 5 affected), equipment seizures (2 incidents, 3 affected), and threats (22 incidents, 24 threatened). The pattern of these violations points to a systemic erosion of journalistic safety and freedom, with journalists and media houses increasingly targeted for performing their constitutionally protected duties.

Two killings were at the center of this grim period: journalist Suresh Bhul was killed by a violent crowd, and Suresh Rajak was brutally attacked and burnt during a pro-monarchy protest on March 28, 2025. Rajak's death, in particular, sent shockwaves through Nepal's media landscape as it highlighted the increasing risks for journalists covering political unrest. Arrests were carried out in politically sensitive contexts, such as protests involving youth activists and reporters covering cultural issues. Bijay Shah's arrest for cultural reporting, and two other arrests for contempt of court, illustrate how legal instruments are being used to silence critical voices.

In several documented incidents, journalists were prevented from covering news freely. Police were reported to have forced journalists to delete photographs, suspended their access to public events, and censored their coverage of politically charged gatherings. Equipment belonging to journalists such as Hadis Khuddar, Binu Thapa, and Suraj Thapa was seized or destroyed, further hampering media reporting. Such actions not only disrupt the work of journalists but also signify an intent to censor and control narratives.

Threats and intimidation were the most widespread forms of violation during this period, with 24 journalists and media houses targeted. These included serious cases of harassment from state actors and political cadres, as well as interference by a foreign diplomat, Chinese envoy Chen Song, who threatened Gajendra Budhathoki over reporting related to corruption at Pokhara International Airport. Journalists such as Subhak Mahato were repeatedly targeted for exposing corruption, and the failure to protect them has encouraged perpetrators. Even major media houses like Kantipur Television, Annapurna Post, and Samadhan Daily were not spared, facing obstruction and political backlash.

Physical violence during protests led to serious injuries. Journalists Rajesh Gurung and Dinesh Gautam were injured while reporting pro-royalist protests on March 28, and Sabina Karki suffered serious injuries from police water cannon use during a teachers' protest on April 26. Journalist Suresh Bidari endured targeted online harassment for reporting on religious tensions in Birgunj, highlighting growing digital threats to journalists. Notably, among the 33 journalists affected, three were female journalists—underscoring the gendered risks in the profession and the need for more inclusive safety measures.

Out of the total 40 impacted incidents, 16 were linked to state actors, one to a foreign envoy, and 23 to non-state actors including protestors, individuals, and unidentified groups. This distribution of perpetrators signals a severe institutional and societal failure to uphold press freedom and freedom of expression. The state's dual role, as a direct violator and a passive bystander, has led to a culture of impunity. Conflict-era crimes against journalists remain unaddressed, even after 19 years, further reinforcing the lack of accountability.



Additionally, legislative proposals such as the Media Council Bill and the Social Media Bill suggest calculated efforts by the state to curtail press freedom under the pretense of regulation.

The findings from this period underscore a deep crisis facing Nepal's democratic institutions. The increase in targeted violence, harassment, and legal repression of journalists marks a dangerous shift toward censorship. The reluctance of authorities to act against violations—even in the face of national and international condemnation—reflects a systemic failure. Safeguarding press freedom is not only about protecting individual journalists; it is a foundational pillar of democracy and accountability. Unless immediate actions are taken, the weakening of this pillar will have far-reaching consequences for human rights and democratic governance in Nepal.

4.2 Recommendations to Enhance Press Freedom in Nepal

To reverse the deteriorating state of press freedom, Nepal must take urgent and strategic steps to protect journalists, promote accountability, and strengthen democratic institutions.

- **FIRST**, the government must enact and enforce robust legal protections for journalists. This includes amending the Media Council Bill and the proposed Social Media Bill to remove vague and punitive provisions that curtail freedom of expression. Laws should align with international press freedom and FoE standards, and explicitly guarantee journalists' rights to report without fear of retaliation.
- **SECOND**, a government-backed Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) should be established to investigate all attacks on journalists, including the killings of Suresh Bhul and Suresh Rajak. This mechanism must have clear timelines, independent oversight, and legal authority to ensure that perpetrators—whether mobs, political cadres, or police—are held accountable.
- **THIRD**, the government must legislate protections for journalists' equipment and access to public information.
- **FOURTH**, training for law enforcement personnel must be institutionalized. Police and security forces need mandatory education on media rights, non-violent crowd control, and media engagement protocols. This is essential to prevent incidents like the assault on Rajesh Gurung or the injury of Dinesh Gautam and Sabina Karki from recurring.
- **FIFTH**, a national hotline and emergency support system should be set up to help journalists report threats and access protection services anonymously. This is especially important for cases involving foreign pressure or powerful domestic actors, as seen in the intimidation of Gajendra Budhathoki and Subhak Mahato.
- **FINALLY**, the government should support independent CSO initiatives, such as those led by Media Action Nepal, that train journalists in safety and legal, and digital literacy.



MEDIA ACTION NEPAL

Media Action Nepal is working to promote freedom of expression, safety of journalists, right to information and media development. Our core working areas include media and journalism, human rights, media research, right to information, communication and policy advocacy. We are committed to making the media independent and accountable. Our goals: inclusive, independent and responsible media, and professional journalism, protection of human rights, strengthening of democracy.

The first ever member and the Co-chair of the Media Freedom Coalition-Consultative Network (MFC-CN) from Nepal, the Media Action Nepal (MAN) is committed to developing plural, independent and accountable media and thus far has contributed greatly to change the course. Since its inception in 2015, the organization has been a torchbearer of freedom of expression, press freedom and media development in Nepal through research, policy dialogue, advocacy and capacity-building of journalists in collaboration with national, regional and international organizations. In addition, also the first ever signatory to the Freelance Journalist Safety Principles of the ACOS Alliance from Nepal, founding member of the Digital Freedom Coalition and a member of the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD), Media Action Nepal works closely with the international media rights organizations to advocate for the rights of journalists, with an inclusive newsroom a top priority, and uphold their safety through evidence-backed interventions in Nepal and across South Asia through solid networks and partnerships. In March 2025, Media Action Nepal joined the Civil Society Coalition of the Forum on Information and Democracy (FID), a global network of civil society organizations (CSOs) dedicated to safeguarding democracy, press freedom, and human rights in the digital age.



media action nepal

Media Action Nepal

📍 Thapagaun-10, Bhakti Thapa Sadak, Kathmandu, Nepal

☎ +977-1-5244164

✉ info@mediaactionnepal.org

<https://mediaactionnepal.org>

📘 MediaActionNepal

🌐 company/media-action-nepal-man

🔗 MediaActionNpl