



NEPAL:

**SILENCING
INDEPENDENT
MEDIA**

Journalists face
attacks, threats

**PRESS FREEDOM
VIOLATIONS IN NEPAL**

(OCTOBER 2022 - MARCH 2023)

Journalists in Nepal face arrest, harassment, and hostility from both public officials and private individuals. Crimes against journalists are rarely, if ever, prosecuted.

31

IPI documented at least 31 press freedom violations in the six-month period between October 2022 and March 2023. Nearly two-thirds of the violations were physical attacks or verbal and online threats against journalists, often in retaliation for publishing news on local government officials.

There were at least **15 documented cases of physical attacks against journalists by state authorities and the public**. In December 2022, a group of local leaders with ties to the Nepali Congress political party attacked three journalists in retaliation for a story on the defeat of a Nepali Congress candidate and a group of 50 people entered the offices of Radio Banglacheluli and assaulted journalists. In January 2023, a group of local traders attacked six journalists who were reporting near shops at New Baneshwor Chowk and in March 2023, a reporter was attacked at home in retaliation for a story he published on illegal excavations by the crusher industries in Bagmati Province.

There were at least 8 documented cases of verbal and online threats, which included at least 3 death threats, against journalists. In November 2022, a journalist received death threats for publishing a story on a dispute between two local government leaders in Janakpurdham. In December 2022, a reporter was threatened and forced to delete photo and video footage on his mobile of the misuse of government vehicles by the mayor of the Lamkichuha municipality in Kailali.



At a December 2022 political ceremony in the Bideha municipality in Dhanusha, the local mayor told a journalist he would “break [his] bones” as punishment for his critical reporting.



Nepal passed a constitution in 2015 that enshrined the right to “complete press freedom.” Yet, that right came under assault in 2018 when the government passed a new criminal code with broadly-worded rules related to defamation and privacy that threaten public interest journalism and restrict free speech. The new code has led to greater self-censorship by journalists and a steady decline in press freedom in Nepal.

Nepal’s new criminal code: a step backwards for press freedom



- ← **Section 293:** criminalizes recording and listening to conversations without consent
- ← **Section 294:** criminalizes disclosing private information on public figures without permission
- ← **Section 295:** criminalizes photographing a person outside of a public space without consent
- ← **Section 306:** criminalizes satire that disrespects an individual

Two years later in 2020, the government of Nepal proposed four bills that build considerably on the new criminal code. If passed, the Advertisement Regulation Bill, the IT Bill, the Nepal Media Council Bill, and the Public Service Broadcasting Bill would criminalize journalistic work, lead to greater self-censorship by journalists, and erode Nepal’s hard-fought democratic gains.

The Electronic Transaction Act, or cybercrime act, is also deployed to silence journalists in Nepal who publish “improper” news on online news sites and social media. In November 2022, a photojournalist in Udayapur was arrested and charged under the Electronic Transaction Act for a story he published online about the elections.

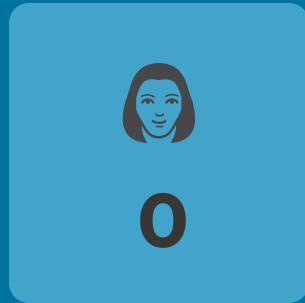
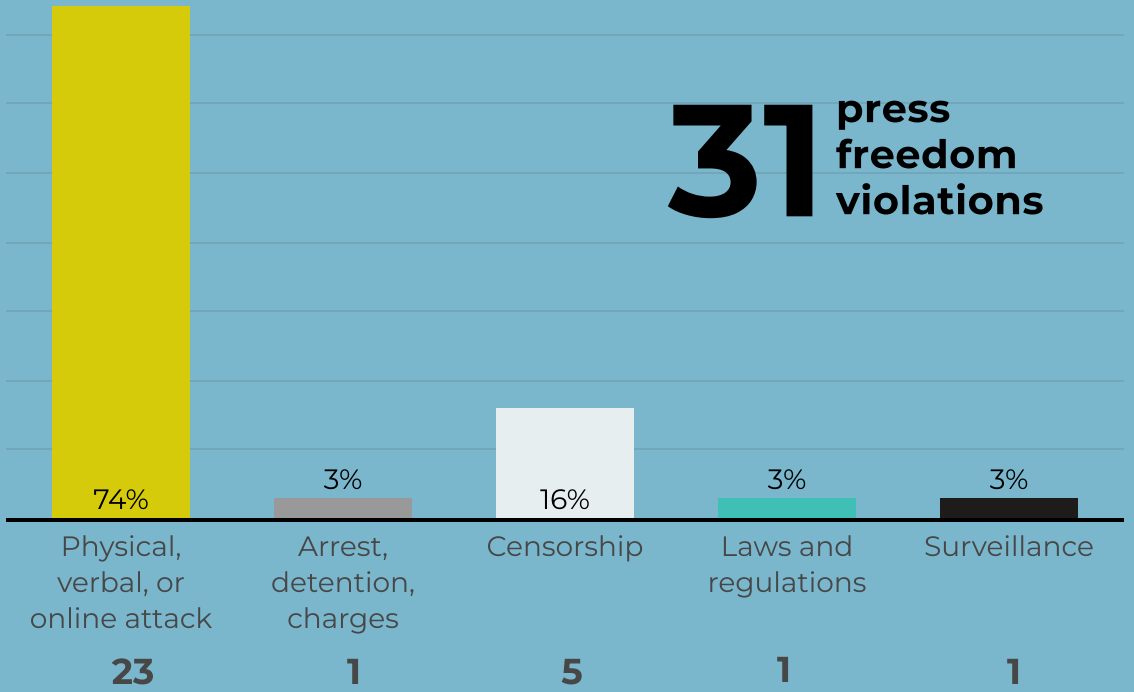
In the lead up to the federal elections in December 2022, media censorship by state agencies escalated. The Press Council Nepal issued a notice to Nagarik Daily about the publication of a satirical cartoon of Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, the former Prime Minister and President of the Communist Party of Nepal. The Council claimed the cartoon violated journalism and electoral codes of conduct. The Election Commission of Nepal ordered online news outlet Setopati to delete an article about the son of the former attorney general and election candidate Agni Kharel on grounds that the story was defamatory and a violation of the electoral code of conduct. Just ahead of the elections, the social media accounts, email account, and mobile number of a senior journalist and former president of the Federation of Nepali Journalists were hacked.

In January 2023, a government committee announced it classify more than 80 policy areas, a decision that undermines the right to information enshrined in the Constitution of Nepal and the Right to Information Act.



Type of press freedom violation

31 press freedom violations



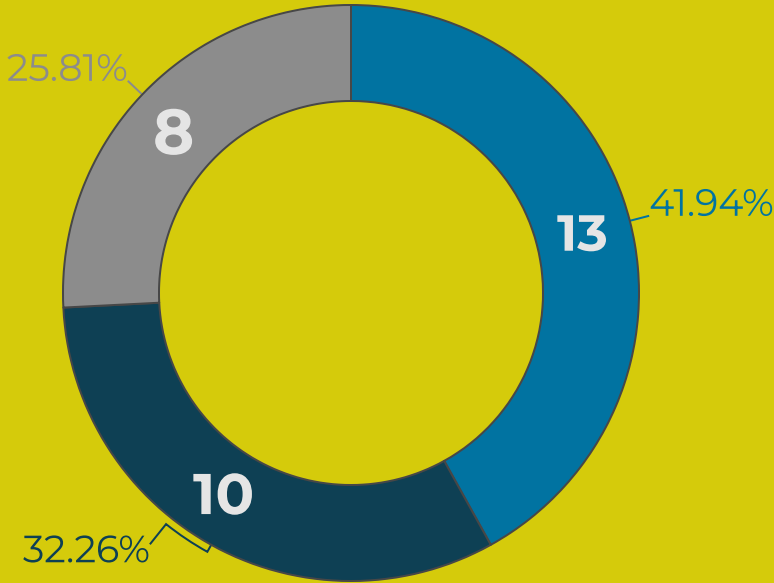
Violations impacted 23 male journalists and 0 female journalists.





Source of incidents

- State actor
- Non-state actor
- Unknown



IPI monitors and collects data on press freedom violations in Nepal as part of an ongoing cross-border project that brings together partner media outlets in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal to create public awareness about attacks on journalists and highlight the erosion of press freedom across South Asia.

Photo: Unsplash; Mr Cup / Fabien Barral



To report a violation:
info@ipi.media



Photo: Unsplash; Mr Cup / Fabien Barral