

Government Officials in Press Freedom Violation

(Media Monitoring from December 16, 2011 to January 15, 2012)

Information

A total of 12 incidents of press freedom violation occurred during this month (December 16, 2011-January 15, 2012).

Himal Rai, reporter with the *Byline* weekly of Dharan, a city in the eastern hilly region of Nepal was beaten up and robbed by Binod Limbu for writing news about religious fair on January 15. Earlier on January 3, an unknown gang beat up Tirtha Jaishee, reporter with *Bheri FM*, Nepalgunj, a city in the western part of Nepal while he was going to office early morning. The gang also looted his tape recorder and diary. Similarly, a person named Subash Rai beat up journalist Heman Yatri affiliated to the *Naya Sansar* weekly under the direction of a teacher Raj Kumar Rai over the news journalist Yatri wrote about a case of domestic violence in Morang, a district in the eastern part of the country on December 22, 2011.

On December 19, 2011, the *banda* (general strike) organizers manhandled Pushpa Neupane, journalist with the *Radio Mirmire* in the capital city while returning from office. Sharan Karmacharya and Hem Lata GC, reporters to the *ABC television* from Banke, a district in the Midwest of the southern plain in Nepal were manhandled by Nepali security persons and intimidated by the employees at customs office, India while making news about the misuse of government vehicle by Nepal Army on December 21, 2011. Similarly, a reporter Rohit Bhandari, and cameraperson Jayaraj Thapliya with the *Mountain Television* were manhandled by the responsible employees of the Social Welfare Council in course of making news about the agitation of the employees and corruption in the Council in the capital city on December 23, 2011. Inebriated Assistant Chief District Officer (CDO) Rajendra Prasad Ghimire at Tanahu, a hilly district in the western part of Nepal manhandled editor at the *Setimadi* daily in the district, Dambar Bahadur Adhikari and editor of the *Madiseti Prabaha* Omkar Acharya in course of making news over the alleged financial irregularities in the distribution of medicine against elephantiasis on January 4, 2012.

The *banda* (general strike) organizers vandalized two press vehicles-one belonging to the *Nayapatrika* daily and another of Nepal FM on December 19, 2011. On the same day, a motorcycle belonging to journalist Pushpa Neupane affiliated to the *Radio Mirmire* was also vandalized by the *banda* organizers.

A reporter with the *Rajdhani daily*, Madhu Jung Pande was attacked by the demonstrators in the capital city, Kathmandu, on December 17, 2011 while making news about the demonstration.

In the same incident, a motorcycle belonging to reporter Pande was set on fire. The demonstration was organized by the cadres affiliated with the Nepal Tarun Dal, a sister organization of the Nepali Congress over the death of the Tarun Dal Chairman at Chitwan, Shiva Prasad Poudel.

Police in Banke district arrested 21-year-old Santosh Bam of Ramnagar of Nepalgunj-7 in the evening of January 4, 2012 for beating up and robbing journalist Tirtha Jaishee.



Analysis

Compared to the last month, this month witnessed three more incidents of press freedom violation reaching 12.

The prompt action of police administration to search and nab attacker on journalist in Banke district is a positive deed in deed. Such prompt action helps create secured environment for the journalists to work, and check impunity as well.

Most of the incidents of press freedom violation occurred because of violent nature of the political cadres. It denotes that the political parties and their cadres in Nepal are still in need of knowledge about press freedom and journalist's right to collect news. The party cadres are unable to tolerate media criticisms.

Similarly, the government officials and employees involved in the incidents of press freedom violation significantly this month. It the result of the old mindset among the government officials that information should not be revealed. The impunity might have encouraged the arbitrary nature on the government employees.

Projection

The growing misunderstanding among the political parties is likely to mar the people's rights to freedom of press. The unstable political situation will grow the incidents of press freedom violation.

With the increase in the press freedom violation, the journalists, rights defenders and civil society need to be watchful on the activities of the political parties.

Similarly, the rise in the press freedom violation will provoke impunity, and self-censorship among the journalists.

If the government does not take initiatives for freedom of press, the impunity will go unabated in Nepal.

