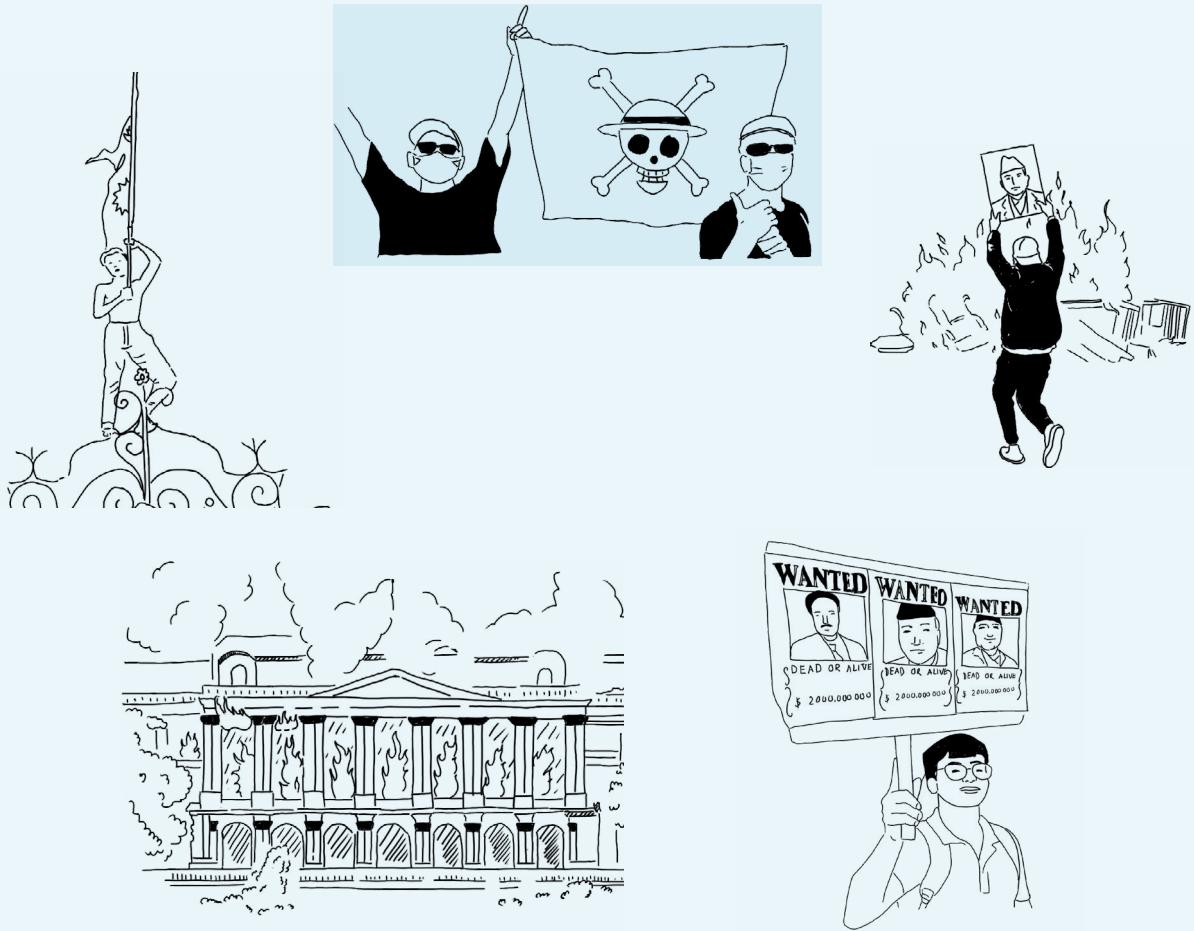


THE GOVERNANCE SPECTRUM

October 2025, Issue 12



The Governance Spectrum

Quarterly Review of Events and Trends

Formerly known as the 'Governance Watch', The Governance Spectrum is a periodic publication by GMC Nepal released every four months. This periodical attempts to identify, document and analyze events related to conflicts/ disputes/ tensions that occur across Nepal's four key governance domains:

1. Political Systems and Governance
2. Developmental Governance
3. Ethnocultural Governance
4. Natural Resource and Environmental Governance

To identify and document such events, GMC Nepal regularly monitors twelve national and provincial daily newspapers.

GMC Nepal defines an event as a specific occurrence or happening that takes place at a particular time and location. It involves participants or actors and can be either planned or spontaneous. Events can vary widely in nature, their scale, their impact and the actors involved. In the context of analysis, an event is a unit of data used to observe patterns, effects or changes over time.

Governance conflicts, as defined within the context of GMC Nepal's research, are disagreements, disputes or tensions arising from the implementation of governance system. These conflicts manifest in various forms, including those related to natural resources and environment, development, identity and political system. They are often characterized by actions such as protests, violence or legal challenges. The underlying issues to these conflicts are of power, resource allocation and the effectiveness of governance structures and processes. This report thus highlights key governance conflicts observed in the four months (June 2025 to September 2025) and a set of recommendations as potential avenues to resolve those conflicts.

Note: This report may explain multiple occurrences of the governance conflicts by highlighting only specific news and events. Hence, the governance conflicts may not be limited to examples specified in this report.

Governance Monitoring Centre Nepal (GMC Nepal) is a Centre for Social Change (CSC)'s flagship initiative. It is a platform for tracking, analyzing and addressing the governance-related conflicts/disputes across Nepal with specific focus on four governance areas mentioned above. Through research, media monitoring, stakeholder dialogues and publications, GMC Nepal provides evidence-based insights and recommendations on governance reform.

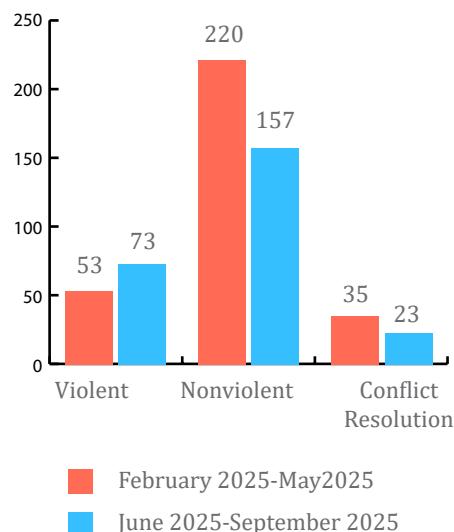
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Overview of Recorded Events

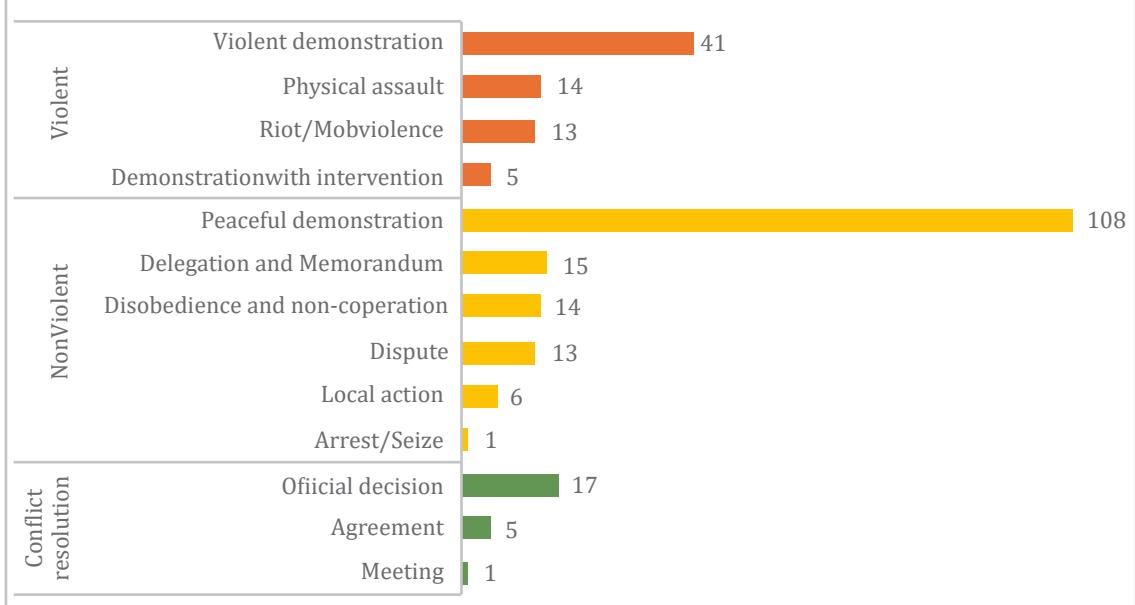
Media Coverage: June 2025 – September 2025

Figure 1. Recorded events by nature



Between June 2025 and September 2025, a total of 253 events were recorded, representing a decrease from the 308 events documented in the previous reporting period from February to May 2025. As illustrated in Figure 1, despite this overall reduction in activity, the number of violent events rose from 53 to 73, highlighting an escalation in confrontational incidents even as nonviolent events and conflict resolution efforts declined. Figure 2 further details the types of events in this period

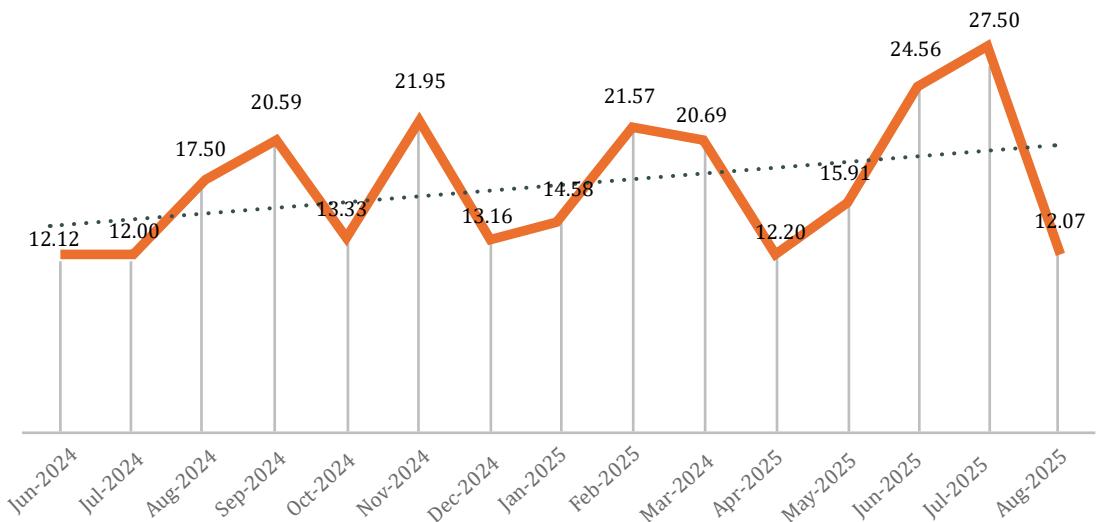
Figure 2. Total recorded events by types



During this period, events were primarily linked to Political Systems and Governance, comprising 142 events (56% of the total), reflecting widespread concerns over institutional irregularities, corruption, and political processes. Developmental Governance followed with 73 events (29%), focusing on issues like infrastructure and service delivery. Natural Resource and Environmental governance accounted for 21 events (8%), while Ethnocultural Governance made up the remaining 17 (7%), often involving identity and representation demands. A more comprehensive analysis of the issues, including a detailed examination of the underlying factors and the roles of key actors involved is provided in the subsequent sections.

Geographically, the events were concentrated in Bagmati Province with 115 occurrences (45%), largely in the Kathmandu Valley as the national political center. Madhesh Province saw 38 events (15%), frequently tied to ethnocultural and developmental grievances, while Lumbini had 30 (12%), Koshi 27 (11%), Karnali 17 (7%), Gandaki 14 (6%), and Sudurpaschim 12 (5%), indicating a centralization of conflicts in Bagmati with more localized issues in peripheral regions.

Figure 3. Percentage of violent events every month since June 2024



Violent events exhibited an overall increasing trend during this period, with monthly percentages rising from 24.56% of total events in June to a peak of 27.50% in July before dipping to 12.07% in August, and then surging dramatically to 41.84% in September due to the Gen Z uprising. As shown in Figure 3, which tracks the percentage of violent events monthly since June 2024, reveals rising volatility and instability over time, despite temporary dips that may reflect seasonal or situational factors. Excluding incidents of September, the most frequent type of violent event in this period was riot/mob violence with 13 occurrences, closely followed by physical assault with 12, violent demonstrations with 5, and demonstrations with intervention also at 5, suggesting that baseline tensions in areas like local governance and resource disputes were increasingly manifesting in collective or direct confrontations.

Political Systems and Governance

The period from June to early September 2025 in Nepal recorded 142 events that reflected continued systemic issues in governance, federalism, and civil liberties. This overview focuses on three major conflict areas: employee management and administrative challenges, media regulations, and local-level disputes. These issues contributed to widespread protests, legal battles, institutional disruptions and often times violence. This overview excludes the events regarding the September 2025 Gen Z uprising that is discussed in the separate chapter.

Administrative and employee-related disputes affected all three levels of government, often stemming from federalism's implementation and policy oversights. A key flashpoint was the Federal Civil Service Bill, passed in July 2025 but marred by a critical drafting error. The bill intended to impose a two-year "cooling-off period" for retired or resigned civil servants before taking constitutional or diplomatic posts, but a conflicting subclause from the original draft rendered it ineffective¹. This led to accusations of bureaucratic sabotage during a heated parliamentary committee meeting, with lawmakers demanding a high-level probe and the resignation of the committee chairman. The error damaged public trust and delayed restructuring of bureaucracy, as the committee urged corrections in the National Assembly. In Gandaki Province, unions submitted a memorandum against a unilateral "Provincial Administrative Structure Review Report," arguing it violated the Civil Service Act, threatened job security, and created redundant structures². Additionally, the Supreme Court on August 18 issued a mandamus ordering Rs 5,000 monthly dearness allowance for contract and temporary employees, addressing discriminatory exclusions from inflation relief in the 2082/83 budget³. This ruling benefited thousands but highlighted ongoing inequities in employee management, with disputes over contracts, terminations, and benefits fueling strikes and legal actions across municipalities.

Media freedom faced escalating restrictions, perceived as preemptive censorship amid growing scandals. On August 11, advocates filed a Supreme Court petition challenging amendments to the Printing Presses and Publications Act, which shifted online media registration and renewal to District Administration Offices (DAOs)⁴. They argued this granted Chief District Officers arbitrary powers to deem outlets "unsuitable," threatening press independence and encouraging sycophancy. Journalists in Sankhuwasabha protested the Koshi Province Media Bill, demanding revisions to provisions enabling content control and fines. A Supreme Court order on September 3 directed the regulation of unlicensed social media and foreign broadcasts⁵, but the government's September 4 ban on 24 platforms drew immediate backlash. CSOs and broader society condemned it as an arbitrary decision, with writ petitions flooding the courts. Protests followed, including detentions of demonstrators on September 6⁶ and journalist demonstrations on September 7⁷, foreshadowing the ban's role as the uprising's spark.

Local governance was riddled with disputes over authority and budgets, which often led to service disruptions and violence. In Rajbiraj Municipality (Saptari district), engineer Ashok Das's abrupt termination despite a contract extension sparked employee strikes⁸, and clashes erupted on June 10 over an acting CAO appointment, resulting in vandalism and police intervention⁹. Similar tensions arose in Biratnagar (Morang district), where Mayor Nagesh Koirala barred federally transferred CAO Ramcharitra Mehta, citing a lack of inter-governmental coordination and federalism violations, forcing reliance on an acting officer¹⁰. In Gramthan Rural Municipality (Morang district), Vice-Chairperson Gunwati Devi Tharu filed a writ on June 16 against Chairperson Namonarayan Majhi's unilateral decisions¹¹. Later, Majhi's July 11 suspension of two ward chairpersons for "breach of discipline" adjourned the assembly due to quorum issues¹². This is the latest in a series of controversies involving Chairperson Majhi, who has previously seized vehicles of UML representatives, including the vice-chairperson, and bypassed the vice-chairperson in assigning acting duties.

The period also experienced numerous other violent incidents driven by political and administrative disputes across municipalities. Key events included assaults on local officials in Dang district's Babai Rural Municipality¹³; ink attacks on judges by CPN (Majority) cadres in Birjung (Parsa district)¹⁴; and physical attacks on administrators in Simraungadh (Bara district)¹⁵ in June. July saw beatings of forest officers in Jajarkot district¹⁶, assault of a CAO in Gauriganga (Kailali district)¹⁷, internal Maoist student clashes in Kanchanpur district¹⁸, and an RPP leader assault in Kathmandu¹⁹. August and September featured ink-throwing on Survey officer in Chitwan district²⁰, mob attacks on UML members in Aathrai Triveni (Tapplejung district)²¹, and RSP secretary brutally assaulted in Kathmandu²².

Padlocking disrupted operations: Gaushala's (Mahottari district) Deputy Mayor was barred from her office on June 17 amid irregularity allegations²³; Garuda's (Rautahat district) Ward-5 office on June 19 over budget discrimination²⁴; Chhayanath Rara's municipal office (Mugu district) on August 13 over procedural violations²⁵; and Sinja Rural Municipality (Jumla district) on August 27 amid budget favoritism claims²⁶.

Highlight:

The "visit visa scandal," involving alleged organized bribery at Tribhuvan International Airport, dominated national politics, leading to prolonged parliamentary deadlocks. Opposition parties, including the CPN (Maoist Centre), RSP, RPP, and CPN (Unified Socialist), disrupted House of Representatives sessions, demanding the resignation of the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister, and the formation of a parliamentary probe committee. Sloganeering and well encirclements halted proceedings, with sessions adjourned repeatedly. A two-point agreement on June 13 between ruling parties (Nepali Congress and CPN-UML) and the Maoist Centre committed to supporting the CIAA investigation and reforming visa policies without a separate committee. However, RSP and RPP rejected this, continuing obstructions through walkouts and protests. These actions delayed budget discussions and other agendas in the Federal Parliament.

Developmental Governance

Under this theme, 73 events were recorded from June to September 2025. These events reflected societal frustrations over development governance, economic inequities, and institutional failure.

A primary cluster of events involved sectoral protests that highlighted economic and policy grievances, often manifesting as non-violent disruptions but contributing to a cumulative atmosphere of discontent. Transport operators' nationwide strikes from June 1 to 3 against Gandaki Province's ride-sharing regulations exemplified labor conflicts threatening livelihoods, with demands for social security and regulatory scrapping leading to halted services and public inconvenience²⁷. Similarly, agricultural disputes, such as sugarcane farmers' multi-day sit-ins at Maitighar Mandala from August 24 to 30 demanding subsidies²⁸, fertilizer related disputes in Madhesh Province (Bara, Rautahat, Siraha and Parsa districts)²⁹ and dairy farmers' protest demanding payments reflected rural agricultural challenges. Infrastructure protests, including road blockades in Godavari (Lalitpur district)³⁰ and symbolic rice-planting in muddy roads in Mangelsen (Achham district)³¹ and Kathari (Morang district), signaled local frustrations with infrastructure neglect. Cooperative and loan shark victims' continued their protests in Kathmandu³² and Hetauda³³ against financial institutions and setting the stage for wider anti-corruption sentiments.

Education and healthcare conflicts sparked prolonged agitations that tested societal peace by disrupting essential services. The School Education Bill triggered widespread protests from August 21 to 29, with private operators and teachers staging marches, sit-ins at party offices, and traffic disruptions, opposing clauses on scholarships and non-profit status that they viewed as threats to autonomy. Local school disputes, such as lockouts over teacher transfers³⁴ and merger³⁵ added to educational instability. In healthcare, doctors' nationwide strikes from July 3 to 8 against Consumer Court penalties halted non-emergency services, causing patient hardships and highlighting professional grievances. These conflicts, while non-violent assist in amplification of public dissatisfaction towards the government.

Violent events clustered as flashpoints of escalation, where underlying tensions boiled over into physical confrontations. Incidents included the vandalism of a vehicle by transport protesters in Bhaktapur³⁶, assaults on ward chairmen of ward 1 and ward 4 of Hetauda (Makwanpur district)³⁷, and sports committee chief of Morang district³⁸, and clashes over road widening in Barahathwa (Sarlahi district) that injured 10³⁹. Journalist attacks in Rautahat district⁴⁰ and Dharan (Morang district)⁴¹, police beatings of workers in Morang⁴² beating of protesters by locals in Gokarneshwor (Kathmandu district)⁴³, and squatter-police clashes during demolitions in Kathmandu⁴⁴ illustrated how protests could turn confrontational. These episodes, though isolated, signaled a breakdown in peaceful resolution mechanisms.

Peacebuilding efforts emerged in a cluster of negotiations and agreements that de-escalated specific conflicts, demonstrating potential for dialogue amid rising tensions. The transport strike ended with a six-point federal agreement on June 3, suspending contentious regulations and forming a task force. Medical protests concluded on July 8 with a government deal for legal reforms and a task force. Other resolutions included the June 7 unlocking of Nepal Sanskrit University after a five-point student-administration accord on facilities and the July 7 High Court order resuming the Kathmandu Tower project. Judicial interventions, like the Supreme Court's June 24 reinstatement of hospital committees in Lumbini Province, reinforced legal pathways to peace. However, many protests, such as those by farmers and teachers, remained unresolved by September, contributing to simmering unrest.

Highlight-

The most significant conflict line in Nepal's developmental governance issues from June to September 2025 centered on widespread protests against the proposed School Education Bill, 2080, which aimed to reform school operations by mandating scholarships, converting private institutions to non-profit models, and enhancing local government oversight on education. Sparked by concerns over provisions like requiring private schools to provide full scholarships to 10-15% of students based on enrollment size, forcing them to supply uniforms, meals, and stationery, and gradually shifting them to trust-based structures. The agitation involved diverse groups including private school operators from PABSON and National PABSON who organized massive rallies, bus blockades on Kathmandu's Ring Road, and sit-ins at Maitighar Mandala, threatening indefinite school closures if demands for amendments were ignored. Teachers under the Nepal Teachers' Federation escalated actions by staging targeted sit-ins at major political party offices like Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, and CPN (Maoist Centre), demanding better job security for temporary staff and rejecting clauses seen as undermining public education, while earlier protests in April 2025 by teachers had already highlighted implementation failures of prior agreements. Student unions appealed to President Ramchandra Paudel for student-friendly revisions. Despite the bill advancing through the parliamentary Education, Health, and Information Technology Committee with a majority vote on August 22, 2025 – amid notes of dissent from parties like RSP and RPP – it remains pending in the House of Representatives without further progress. This protracted dispute underscores deep-seated tensions in Nepal's education sector, that is, balancing equity and access against institutional autonomy and financial viability.

Natural Resources and Environmental Governance

During the period of June to September 2025, a total of 21 events were recorded under the theme of Natural Resource Governance Conflict demonstrates judicial contravention, dispute over income distribution from natural resource, unresolved cases of displacement, commercialization of natural resources, politicization over resource usage, demand for amendment in environmental policies, action against illicit exploitation of natural resource and inefficiency of government authorities in managing the crisis led by environmental degradation. With a wider geographical coverage, the issues of Natural Resource Governance Conflict ranges from individual cases to agendas of public concerns involving multiple actors from local to federal level of governance.

One of such cases includes a contempt of court petition filed in Supreme Court against the federal government's renewed plan to export crushed stones and gravel to India, a proposal that was reintroduced in the FY 2082/83 national budget violating a 2079 ruling that prohibits the export of minerals⁴⁵. The petition demanded an immediate removal of the budget clause 87 and maximum penalties including imprisonment, fine and suspension of alleged authorities from their offices.

Another major highlight includes the scraping of Land Bill passed by the House of Representatives on August 2025 which was perceived to be against the interest of the country or its people, favoring the land mafias and brokers, leading to deforestation followed by desertification of the Terai-Madhesh region⁴⁶. The Land Bill was feared to undermine the Chure conservation efforts. Chure conservation activists and environmentalists argue that legalizing settlements and potentially opening up forest areas for land distribution or business purposes poses a direct threat to the sensitive Chure ecosystem. The plight on conservation of Chure conservation further renewed with water crisis in Terai region. Protests were conducted in Kathmandu demanding the conservation of Chure claiming that no long-term plan had been made by the government to deal with the crisis. The protestors voiced out against federal government's decision of deep boring, demanding compensation for farmers affected by drought, a halt to forest exploitation, construction of check dams on rivers, natural conservation of ponds and action against natural resource exploiters.

With a recognition of diverse and at times conflicting contributions and actions of various actors in environmental conservation and resource use, local communities seem to openly criticize the efforts to commercialize natural resources. Local residents of Barju Rural Municipality (Sunsari district) have strongly opposed the Koshi Province government's decision to transfer the development of Barju Lake to a private company on lease⁴⁷. Similarly, community members in Pokhara (Kaski district) protested the municipal government's approval of a glass-bridge construction at Davis Falls, viewing it as an attempt

to commercialize and sell off community assets under the guise of promoting tourism. Together, these incidents highlight the tension between local communities and government authorities, raising concerns about transparency and accountability of the authorities managing local resources.

Meanwhile, there is a notable pattern in the ways local respond to disagreements or inconveniences relating to environmental actions, policies and practices. Peaceful demonstrations and public protests against the state authorities are among frequently used approaches in expression of grievances as well as in demand of transparency, accountability and efficiency from the concerned authorities. Whereas, the reporting of physical assault against the executives and the activists point outs a grave human right concern. It equally underestimates the constructive approach for conflict resolution through dialogue and communication. The instance of assault over the activists and the political leaders of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) by an elected ward chairman of Nepali Congress in ward-10 Waling (Syangja district)⁴⁸ is an acute example of political violence in the name of natural resources. The victims of the assault were advocates of the 'Save Aandhikhola' campaign which had formed a struggle committee against illegal riverbed excavation and sand/gravel mining in the Aandhi Khola river in Syangja.

These documented evidences surrounding natural resource governance reflects on rampant resource exploitation, inconsistencies in the government's conservation efforts and conflicts among stakeholders over the sustainable management of natural resources. With the existing environmental laws and policies, there is an urgent need for stronger enforcement mechanisms that can curb environmental degradation and promote responsible use of available resources. Equally important is the creation of a supportive environment that enables communities to collaboratively address their differences through discussions at local levels. Besides, clarity on overlapping rights and responsibilities among concerned authorities in efficient use and management of shared natural resources will help resolve governance conflict to a greater extent.

Highlight-

Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN) opposed the government's plan to distribute income from community forest among federal, provincial and local governments under clause 192 of Economic Reform Implementation Plan 2082⁴⁹. They demand scrapping of the clause calling it a threat to community forest autonomy. The earlier demand to abolish 15 percent tax levied by the federal government and at least 10 percent by the provincial and local level government from community forests also remains unresolved. FECOFUN also criticized local governments for interfering in eco-tourism projects and called for immediate cancellation of privatization bids. They also drew attention to the fact that although climate change policy stipulates 80 percent of the amount received as climate finance should be channeled to local communities, it has not been implemented. Additionally, they demanded the legal right to register forest-based enterprises in the name of community forest groups.

Ethnocultural Governance

Between June 2025 and September 2025, GMC Nepal recorded 17 events related to ethnocultural governance conflicts, predominantly nonviolent (11) and 6 violent events. While most of the events occurred at the local and provincial levels, these events revealed deeper governance issues, related to accountability, rights, discrimination, and inclusion. In this governance dynamics, political parties, security forces, civil society organizations, and local officials were seen as key actors.

During this period, violent events like police intervention, riots, and physical assaults tend to occur where institutional authority was directly contested. For example, royalist marches confronting police in restricted zones⁵⁰, disputes over who inaugurates or controls religious festivals⁵¹, and abuses of authority and misconduct by elected or administrative officials⁵². Likewise, nonviolent events cluster around memoranda, peaceful rallies, and symbolic protest actions that seek to pressure the state to reform law or practice on language, gender, caste, and indigenous rights.

The most frequent and intense events arose in Kathmandu, where royalist factions staged multiple high-intensity demonstrations calling for the restoration of the monarchy and the abolition of federalism. These rallies escalated into police confrontations, arrests, and internal factional disputes, painted a picture of how public frustration with federalism continue to mobilize large groups creating chaos in the state.

In addition to that, All Nepal Women's Association mobilized nationwide protest against proposed amendments to polygamy-related laws⁵³ that would allow a second marriage to remain valid if a child is born or the second partner is pregnant, effectively weakening the current legal ban on polygamy. They argued that such changes would de-facto, reintroduce polygamy into Nepal's legal system and legitimize systemic subordination of women, weakening existing legal protections. Their campaigns revealed how deeply cultural norms continue to intersect with governance decisions, highlighting the gender dimension directly influencing legal reforms affecting women's rights and roles. Similarly, adolescent girls' rallied in Achham district opposing Chhaupadi⁵⁴, and the arrest of a school principal in Taplejung district for caste-based discrimination⁵⁵ have pushed private cultural practices into national governance debates, underscoring how personal experiences of exclusion and inequality increasingly intersect with state accountability.

Festival-related violence further contributed to ethnocultural tensions, with clashes erupting during Janmashtami (Rautahat district) and Ganesh immersion (Janakpur, Dhanusha district)⁵⁶ events. Competing claims over ritual authority and cultural space led to stone-pelting, injuries, and heightened communal mistrust. These events underscored the increasing politicization of cultural rituals and the need for clearer governance frameworks at the municipal level.

Moreover, a long-running protest by the Backward Class Federation continued for more than 155 days. It was primarily driven by the government's failure to implement previously signed agreements. The prolonged nature of the agitation revealed deeper structural exclusions and the absence of institutional mechanisms to monitor agreement implementation. This recurring pattern, where commitments are made publicly but rarely fulfilled, exacerbated community grievances and contributed to sustained instability.

Highlight -

A significant case in the reporting period was the linguistic-rights protest^{57t} in Koshi Province, where Limbu and Maithili activists demanded official working status for their languages along with local working status for 11 other regional languages. On February 28, 2025 (28 Falgun 2081), opposition lawmakers from the Maoist Centre and Unified Socialist introduced Nepal's first Provincial-Level Non-Governmental Bill (private member's bill) in the Koshi Provincial Assembly to advance these demands. Supported by the National Language Commission's recommendations from three years prior, the bill was tabled after six months. However, it was swiftly rejected by majority vote after the ruling UML-Congress coalition issued a party whip to deactivate it. Initially dismissed, the government had then briefly reintroduced it for "theoretical discussion" before withdrawal.

As of December 2025, the bill remains stalled indefinitely with no resubmission or committee referral. Protests persist in Biratnagar and Dhankuta, with Limbu-Mithila alliances expanding to Yakkha and Rajbanshi groups. Koshi's Language Policy Implementation Committee (formed 2023) issued a half-hearted advisory for "local use" only, ignoring official status. This has generated frustration among language rights advocates. The continued neglect has deepened perceptions of cultural marginalization, reinforcing the narrative that federalism has yet to fulfill its promises of ethnolinguistic recognition and representation. This case is significant because it underscores a critical governance gap- a "symbolic trap" constitutional promises of ethnolinguistic equity remain unfulfilled due to provincial elite capture and fiscal constraints. Moreover, this case also screams the need for mechanisms like in this case, an independent language commissions with binding powers that translate symbolic commitments into tangible policy outcomes.

The Gen Z Uprising

September 2025

The Gen Z movement emerged as a leaderless uprising spearheaded by young people aged 17 to 28, born between 1997 and 2008. It was triggered by deep-seated frustrations with systemic corruption, nepotism, high unemployment, deteriorating infrastructure, political repression, and the government's ban on 26 major social media platforms on September 4, 2025. The ban served as the immediate catalyst for widespread protests that turned violent, culminating in the resignation of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli on September 9 and dissolution of Federal Parliament on September 12. This movement represented a new era of digital decentralization, where grievances were rapidly disseminated through social media, independent of established political parties and CSOs. The uprising resulted in 75 deaths, including 19 on September 8, extensive arson and vandalism, and the establishment of an interim government under former Chief Justice Sushila Karki on September 12, 2025, with a six-month mandate for elections.

Events Leading to the Uprising

The immediate buildup to the uprising involved a series of incidents centered on media regulation and the suppression of digital expression, escalating tensions over government control. On September 3, 2025, Supreme Court mandated the regulation of social media platforms and foreign broadcasts, a decision that critics saw as enabling greater state oversight. The government's ban on 26 unregistered platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, and WhatsApp, was implemented on September 4, 2025, prompting immediate condemnation from CSOs and press freedom groups, who labeled it arbitrary and a violation of constitutional rights. On the same day, multiple writ petitions challenging the ban were filed at the Supreme Court for registration. Protests began almost immediately, with police detaining five youths in Baneshwor, Kathmandu, on September 6, 2025, for demonstrating against the restrictions, though they were released shortly after. The following day, September 7, 2025, journalists and representatives from organizations like the Federation of Nepali Journalists and Nepal Press Union gathered at Maitighar Mandala in Kathmandu to protest the ban, displaying banners and calling for its reversal.

Events on September 8, 2025

The Gen Z uprising in Nepal commenced on September 8, 2025, as a predominantly peaceful, youth-led demonstration against entrenched corruption, political nepotism, high unemployment rates, failing infrastructure, and the government's ban on social media platforms. Organized through decentralized digital channels like Discord servers,

TikTok (which remained unbanned), and VPNs to circumvent restrictions, the protests drew thousands of participants aged 13-28, many still in school uniforms, symbolizing a generational revolt against an “aging political leadership” that had rotated power without delivering meaningful change. The movement’s initial demands focused on lifting the ban, investigating corruption scandals involving politicians’ luxurious lifestyles showcased online, and systemic reforms to address economic inequality, where politicians’ children flaunted wealth amid widespread poverty.

In Kathmandu Valley, the capital and primary hotspot, protests began around 9:00 a.m. at Maitighar Mandala, a traditional protest site, with crowds swelling to over 10,000 by midday. Demonstrators marched toward New Baneshwor, home to the Federal Parliament, chanting slogans like “End Corruption Now” and “Lift the Ban or Step Down.” The atmosphere was initially festive, with participants sharing live updates via permitted apps. However, by mid-afternoon, as protesters attempted to breach barricades around prohibited zones, security forces (including Nepal Police and Armed Police Force) responded with tear gas canisters, rubber bullets, and eventually live ammunition from INSAS rifles and SLRs. Post-mortem reports later confirmed that many of the 17 fatalities on this day resulted from high-velocity bullets aimed at upper bodies and heads, violating standard protocols that mandate warning shots and lower-body targeting. Police also raided the Civil Service Hospital in Minbhawan, firing tear gas inside to disperse injured protesters, injuring medical staff. Over 400 injuries were reported, including from baton charges and shrapnel, with hospitals in Kathmandu overwhelmed. Curfews were imposed in Baneshwor, Singha Durbar, and other central areas but defiance led to further clashes. Human Rights Watch documented instances of “indiscriminate firing” on unarmed crowds, including schoolchildren, labeling it “unlawful use of force.”

The unrest spread beyond the capital. In Gandaki Province’s Pokhara (Kaski District), hundreds rallied at the provincial assembly hall around noon, starting peacefully with speeches against corruption but escalating when alleged infiltrators from parties like Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) and Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) provoked arson attempts on government buildings; police used tear gas, water cannons, and rubber bullets, injuring four protesters and several officers, leading to 29 arrests and prohibitory orders in central Pokhara. In Koshi Province, Sunsari’s Itahari saw protesters storm the sub-metropolitan office by afternoon, setting it ablaze. Police firing killed two and injured four. Jhapa’s Birtamod and Damak (Prime Minister Oli’s hometown) featured vandalism of municipal offices and stone-pelting at Oli’s residence, with one injury from rubber bullets. Morang’s Biratnagar hosted nonviolent marches to the provincial assembly.

Lumbini Province experienced intense activity in Rupandehi’s Butwal and Bhairahawa where thousands besieged political offices, vandalizing the Nepali Congress office and former Home Minister Bal Krishna Khand’s residence. Dang’s Tulsipur, Ghorahi, and Lamahi, plus Banke’s Nepalganj and Kohalpur, saw student-led rallies halting transport. Madhesh Province’s Birgunj (Parsa district) had rallies at Ghantaghar Chowk turning tense with torch rally in the evening. Chitwan’s Bharatpur witnessed clashes at the metropolitan office with

tear gas and alleged aerial firing.

In Karnali (Surkhet district) and Sudurpaschim (Kailali district), rallies remained mostly peaceful with anti-corruption chants, though some transport disruptions occurred. By evening, amid mounting outrage over the deaths, the government reversed the social media ban, and Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak resigned.

Prime Minister Oli blamed “external elements” for the violence, while Gen Z organizers disavowed escalation, emphasizing peaceful intent. Intelligence failures underestimated protester numbers (projected at 4,000-5,000 but exceeding 50,000 in Kathmandu alone), contributing to the chaos.

Events on September 9, 2025

September 9, 2025, represented the most destructive phase of Nepal's Gen Z uprising, building directly on the previous day's bloodshed during largely peaceful demonstrations. Fueled by outrage over these deaths, the lifting of the social media ban (announced late on September 8 but ineffective in quelling anger), and long-simmering grievances against corruption and political elitism, the day saw widespread defiance of curfews imposed in at least 20 major cities. Protesters, primarily Gen Z youth organized through decentralized Discord channels and TikTok groups, shifted from marches to targeted acts of arson, vandalism, and looting, focusing on symbols of political power such as government buildings, party headquarters, and leaders' residences. The violence resulted in an additional 56 deaths (bringing the total to 75 across both days), including 20 civilians in fires, 10 prisoners during jailbreaks, and 3 police officers beaten by mobs. Over 300 more injuries were reported, many from clashes or smoke inhalation. The day's events were marked by a notable retreat of security forces, demoralized by public backlash and internal criticism over the previous day's excessive force, which allowed protesters greater freedom to carry out destruction. Preliminary police reports later revealed that 13,182 rounds were fired during the uprising (including 2,642 live ammunition), highlighting the scale of confrontation, though usage dropped significantly on this day as forces prioritized evacuation over engagement.

The morning began with political maneuvering amid escalating street action. Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli addressed the nation via a televised statement from his Baluwatar residence, urging all parties to cease violence and denying corruption allegations, while directing ministers from his CPN-UML not to resign. However, conflicting reports emerged about President Ram Chandra Poudel's potential resignation, which the Nepali Army swiftly denied in a press release, emphasizing stability. Oli airlifted to an army barracks on the outskirts of Kathmandu Valley as protesters began gathering in larger numbers, defying curfews that had been extended from the previous night.

Bagmati Province (Including Kathmandu Valley)

The national capital, Kathmandu, experienced the most intense and symbolic destruction, with protesters targeting central institutions in what appeared to be loosely coordinated waves starting in the morning. Crowds of over 5,000 converged on New Baneshwor, storming the Federal Parliament building by breaking through gates and barricades; they ransacked offices, destroying official documents, furniture, and electronic equipment before setting multiple fires using petrol bombs and accelerants smuggled in backpacks. The blaze gutted the main assembly hall and library, causing structural collapse in parts of the building and sending plumes of black smoke visible across the valley for hours. Singha Durbar (the administrative headquarters housing the Prime Minister's Office and multiple ministries) was infiltrated around noon. Protesters looted files from the Ministry of Finance and Home Affairs before igniting fires that severely damaged the eastern wing, including the cabinet secretariat. The Supreme Court building, located nearby, was looted of legal records and case files, with its library and chambers set ablaze, forcing the court to relocate operations to temporary tents in the following weeks. Sheetal Niwas, the President's official residence in Maharajgunj, was stormed with protesters scaling walls and setting fires to the main reception hall and guest quarters.

Nakkhu Jail in Lalitpur was a focal point for chaos around 2:00 p.m.; protesters overpowered minimal guards, setting fires to administrative blocks and cell doors, facilitating the escape of all 1,200 inmates, including high-profile detainees like former Home Minister Rabi Lamichhane, who was freed amid cheers but later rearrested. Media outlets were not spared: the Kantipur Publications headquarters was burnt accusing it of pro-government bias. Commercial properties like the newly opened Hilton Hotel in Naxal were stormed at 4:00 p.m. by a group of protesters, who looted luxury items before igniting fires in the lobby and upper floors, causing an estimated Rs 8 billion in damages, the single largest insurance claim from the uprising. The Ministry of Health and Population building in Ramshah Path was torched, destroying vaccine storage facilities and medical records, exacerbating post-uprising health crises.

Political leaders' residences were systematically targeted in a wave of attacks starting in the morning. Oli's official residence in Baluwatar was breached, protesters looting personal belongings and setting fires to the main house and guest quarters. Sher Bahadur Deuba's home in Budhanilkantha was attacked. Protesters broke in, assaulted Deuba and his wife Arzu Rana Deuba (then Foreign Minister), causing injuries from beatings before handing them over to police for protection. The house was then set ablaze. Pushpa Kamal Dahal's (Prachanda) residence in Khumaltar, Lalitpur, was torched, with fires spreading to adjacent properties. His daughter Ganga Dahal's nearby house was also burned, and a body was discovered in the rubble the next day, later identified as a domestic worker. Jhala Nath Khanal's home was set on fire, critically injuring his wife Ravi Laxmi Chitrakar from smoke inhalation and burns. She was hospitalized in intensive care. Other targets included Prakash Man Singh's house and vehicle in Chaksibari, set ablaze. Bidya Devi Bhandari's (former President) home in Bhangal was set ablaze. Gagan Thapa's residence, vandalized

with graffiti before burning.

At Tribhuvan International Airport, protesters attempted to block fleeing leaders around 3:00 p.m., leading to closure. Other damages included the Road Department building, CIAA office in Kathmandu, Chandragiri Cable Car lower station, CG Electronics Digital Park in Balambu, and Thankot Police Station. 3 police officers were beaten to death by crowds in Koteshwor, Kathmandu, amid looting of police posts and firearms.

Resignations accelerated: Agriculture Minister Ram Nath Adhikari, Health Minister Pradip Paudel, 21 RSP MPs, and all RPP MPs resigned by afternoon. By 5:00 p.m., Oli and remaining ministers resigned, collapsing the government. At 10:00 p.m., the Nepali Army assumed security control, with Chief of Army Staff Ashok Raj Sigdel appealing for talks and deploying troops.

In Chitwan District, protesters targeted the Bharatpur Metropolitan Office setting fires to administrative blocks and the mayor's chambers. The District Administration Office, court, and Inland Revenue Office were looted and burned, with 14 injuries from sporadic clashes. Khairahani and Ratnanagar municipalities saw similar arson, including police stations and party offices like UML and Maoist Center. Surendra Pandey's home was vandalized, and Kalika FM radio station was attacked, its equipment smashed. In Makwanpur's Hetauda, the UML and Congress district offices were set on fire at noon, along with a local leader's home, prompting an extended curfew. Bhaktapur saw Agni Sapkota's and Oli's residences burned. Lalitpur's Chyasal UML office and Sanepa Congress office were torched, with ministers' quarters in Bhaisepati looted before fires were set. Kirtipur Municipality office was arsoned. Kavrepalanchok's Dhulikhel had demonstrations turning into vandalism of local government buildings. Dhading and Ramechhap reported 2 and 3 deaths respectively amid jailbreaks and arson at district offices.

Koshi Province

Protests in Koshi were marked by widespread looting and arson, with over 46 public structures damaged. In Sunsari District, Itahari, Dharan, and Inaruwa saw fires at municipal offices, wards, revenue buildings, and CIAA offices. 14 police facilities were torched, leading to the consolidation of 66 police posts post-uprising. Former Chief Minister Bhim Acharya's home was vandalized. 2 civilian deaths and 36 injuries occurred from clashes. In Morang's Biratnagar, protesters defied curfew to torch the district administration office, court, and Chief Minister's residence. Udayapur's Triyuga Municipality office in Gaighat was burned at noon, with vandalism extending to Katari and Beltar wards. Jhapa's Birtamod had the UML party office set on fire, with three injured by police gunfire near the area police office. Sunsari's Dharan saw student-led protests turning into vandalism of local government buildings.

Madhesh Province

In Dhanusa's Janakpur, the Chief Minister's office, Provincial Assembly, and ministries (including Education and Infrastructure) were stormed and burned. Party offices and leaders' homes like Bimalendra Nidhi's and Raghuvir Mahaseth's were torched, with vehicles destroyed. In Parsa's Birgunj, protesters threw stones at Minister Ajay Kumar Chaurasiya's residence and set fire to Nepal Telecom office and party offices at noon. Bara's Nijgadh had demonstrations escalating to vandalism of municipal buildings. Sarlahi reported 20 government units looted, and Rautahat had 24 injuries from clashes. Chief Minister Satish Kumar Singh resigned amid the chaos.

Lumbini Province

Rupandehi's Butwal, Bhairahawa, Tilottama, and Sainamaina saw fires at municipality offices, leaders' homes (e.g., Bhoj Prasad Shrestha's, Vasudev Ghimire, Bhumishwor Dhakal, Mayor Phanindra Sharma), party offices, Inland Revenue Office, and hotels like Dream International and Tulip. The Chaudhary Group's factory in Nawalparasi was looted. In Dang's Tulsipur and Ghorahi, metropolitan buildings, Tulsipur Tower, Inland Revenue Office, courts, party offices, statues, banks, telecom towers, and leaders' homes (e.g., Gehendra Giri, Dilli Bahadur Chaudhary, Komal Oli) were torched. Kapilvastu's Taulihawa vandalized JSP and Congress offices, land revenue office, survey office, and judge's residence; Mayor Chakrapani Aryal's home was burned. Protests continued in Gulmi, Arghakhanchi, Nawalparasi West, and Palpa with minor vandalism. In Banke, a juvenile correctional facility jailbreak led to 5 inmates killed by security forces firing. Kohalpur Municipality's office and multiple wards were burned and looted.

Karnali Province

In Surkhet District (Birendranagar Municipality), the epicenter of Karnali's violence, protesters targeted government structures beginning with the Provincial Assembly building, where furniture, cameras, and sound systems were looted and burned. The fire spread to adjacent wings, causing partial collapse and destroying legislative archives. The Chief Minister's office and residence were stormed next, with vehicles torched and personal documents vandalized. Birendranagar Municipality office and 12 ward offices were set on fire, destroying public records like citizenship cards and halting services such as birth registrations. Party offices of major groups like Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, and Maoist Center were damaged, with flags publicly burned and interiors ransacked. Dr. Prem Bahadur Khadka's home was burned around noon, along with other officials' properties. The CM office and 7 ministries were collectively torched. Additional damages included the Provincial Public Service Commission office looted of equipment and the Policy and Planning Commission building set ablaze. In Jumla, Congress and UML offices, Chandannath Municipality, and District Administration Office were vandalized, with vehicles torched.

Jajarkot's Kushe Rural Municipality ward office was arsons. Rukum West's prison break allowed inmates to escape. No major damage reported in Dailekh, Kalikot, Humla, Mugu, Dolpa, or Salyan.

Sudurpaschim Province

In Kailali District, the provincial capital Dhangadhi became a focal point of chaos. Protestors stormed the Chief Minister's Office vandalizing furniture, computers, and documents before setting fires to the main building and vehicles parked outside. The Provincial Assembly building was attacked. Protesters burned chairs, microphones, sound systems, and four video cameras used for live broadcasting, along with vehicles. Party offices within the assembly complex were also torched. The Provincial Public Service Commission office in Dhangadhi was looted and vandalized, with documents and answer sheets burned, delaying recruitment processes. The Policy and Planning Commission had its vehicles vandalized and offices set on fire, destroying planning documents. A jailbreak occurred at the district prison, where protesters attacked the facility, setting fires and allowing inmates to flee. The District Administration Office suffered arson on its identity card and passport section, destroying citizenship cards and halting services. In Kanchanpur District, Bhimdatta Municipality (Mahendranagar) saw vandalism and arson at former Finance Minister Prakash Rawal's home around noon. Protesters torched the residence, effigies of Maoist party leaders, and ministers' vehicles. Party offices were ransacked, with documents and furniture burned.

Gandaki Province

In Kaski District, the Pokhara Metropolitan City office was stormed, with protesters looting administrative records and setting fires to the mayor's chambers, council halls, and vehicle fleet. Between 20 and 33 ward offices across the metropolis were damaged, with furniture, computers, and public service counters vandalized or burned, halting local governance. The provincial prison in Pokhara experienced a major jailbreak at noon; protesters overpowered guards, set fires to cell blocks and administrative wings, and released inmates exacerbating post-uprising security concerns. The Provincial Assembly building was torched shortly after, destroying sound systems, video cameras, and legislative records. Adjacent to it, the Chief Minister's office and residence were ransacked and set ablaze, with vehicles destroyed. The Land Revenue Office and District Court in Pokhara were burned, destroying land deeds, court files, and judicial benches. Private properties were heavily hit. Hotels like the Fish Tail Lodge and Mount Kailash Resort were looted of valuables before being set on fire. Bhatbhateni supermarket chains in Pokhara were torched. Officials' residences, including those of local mayors and assembly members, were vandalized with graffiti and burned. Additional damages included telecom towers and a Ncell office vandalized.

Aftermath and Subsequent Events

Following the peak violence, protests evolved into demands for reform, with some lingering unrest. On September 10, 2025, in Kathmandu, youths protested at military bases against interim leadership proposals, opposing Sushila Karki and suggesting alternatives like Mayor Balendra Shah, while UML and Unified Socialist demonstrated for constitutional solutions. On September 11, the Nepal Student Union rallied in New Baneshwor for constitutional protection, disclosure of the president's condition, and an all-party meeting. September 12 saw Nepali Congress protests in Samakhosi Chowk for upholding the constitution and fulfilling Gen Z demands, condemning arson. And President Paudel appointed Karki as interim Prime Minister. On September 15, victims' families and the "Hami Nepal" group protested at the PM's residence against cabinet appointments without consultation. The government declared the 74 victims martyrs, promised to provide NPR 1.5 million relief per family, free treatment for injured, national mourning on Ashoj 1, and an investigation committee. On September 19, Sarishma Thapa staged indefinite sit-in at Maitighar for transparency and non-partisan governance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Although the Gen Z uprising in September 2025 dramatically altered Nepal's political landscape by forcing the resignation of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, dissolving the House of Representatives, and ushering in an interim government under former Chief Justice Sushila Karki with a mandate for elections by March 2026, the underlying governance challenges have not only persisted but intensified in its wake. The extensive destruction of government properties, including the arson of Singha Durbar, the Parliament building, the Supreme Court, municipal buildings, police posts, courts, and other essential government building has resulted in staggering economic losses exceeding tens of billion in physical damage and disrupted goods and services, while affecting the employment of thousands and causing widespread service interruptions such as halted administrative operations, lost legal records requiring painstaking recovery, and delayed public services like citizenship registrations and healthcare. These impacts have compounded pre-existing issues like corruption, unemployment (which has risen further amid business shutdowns), and weak institutional accountability, forcing the interim administration to divert resources from systemic reforms to reconstruction and day-to-day crisis management, thereby exacerbating governance instability rather than resolving it.

Beyond the pervasive corruption and elite political capture that have long plagued Nepal, the nation contends with profound historical injustices stemming from unresolved conflict-era crimes that perpetuate a culture of impunity and undermine human rights, identity issues exacerbated by federalism's uneven implementation and ongoing debates over ethnolinguistic recognition and representation, poor development manifesting in persistent inequality, poverty, and lack of job opportunities, and a rising climate and environmental crisis that generates new forms of injustice through disaster vulnerability, migration, and unaddressed global pledges for local action. The Gen Z uprising of September 2025, however, has raised powerful voices to address these governance concerns by challenging systemic rot and demanding reforms, yet these challenges are further aggravated due to increased polarization, as the movement's leaderless nature and violent escalations deepened generational divides, political factionalism, and societal unrest, hindering cohesive progress toward resolution.

To mitigate the identified governance conflicts and prevent future escalations, GMC Nepal proposes the following actionable recommendations, tailored to the four domains while emphasizing cross-cutting themes of accountability, dialogue, and institutional strengthening. These are derived from the analyzed events and aim to provide practical avenues for resolution by government, CSOs, and other stakeholders:

Political System and Governance:

- Establish an independent high-level commission to review and amend the Federal Civil Service Bill, ensuring error-free implementation of cooling-off periods and equitable employee management. This should include stakeholder consultations to rebuild trust in bureaucratic processes.
- Enact comprehensive media freedom legislation, repealing arbitrary registration powers under the Printing Presses and Publications Act. The government should form a multi-stakeholder task force (including journalists, CSOs, and tech experts) to regulate social media without infringing on constitutional rights, drawing lessons from the September ban.
- Promote local-level conflict resolution mechanisms, such as mandatory mediation councils in municipalities, to address disputes over authority and budgets before they escalate to violence or padlocking.

Developmental Governance:

- Revise the School Education Bill through inclusive parliamentary debates, incorporating inputs from teachers, private operators, and student unions to balance equity with institutional autonomy. A dedicated education reform committee should monitor implementation and resolve ongoing protests.
- Launch a national task force on economic grievances, prioritizing subsidies for farmers (e.g., sugarcane, dairy) and infrastructure improvements in neglected areas. This could include targeted investments in youth employment programs to address unemployment, thus, reducing the risk of violent uprisings.
- Improve healthcare and labor dispute resolution by amending laws to protect professionals from undue penalties, while ensuring essential services remain uninterrupted during strikes through binding arbitration processes.

Natural Resource and Environmental Governance:

- Enforce Supreme Court rulings on mineral exports and Chure conservation by removing conflicting budget clauses and imposing strict penalties for violations. The government should develop a national action plan for drought-affected regions, including compensation for farmers.
- Foster community-led management of resources by mandating transparent leasing processes for lakes and tourist sites. Cancel privatization bids opposed by communities and promote eco-tourism.

- Address politicization and violence through training programs for local officials on conflict-sensitive resource management, emphasizing dialogue over confrontation in campaigns like “Save Aandhikhola.”

Ethnocultural Governance:

- Revive and pass the Koshi Province language bill with amendments for official status of Limbu, Maithili, and other regional languages, establishing an independent language commission with binding enforcement powers.
- Strengthen anti-discrimination laws by creating provincial monitoring bodies to track implementation of agreements with backward classes and enforce penalties for caste-based or gender-related violations, such as Chhaupadi or polygamy amendments.
- Develop municipal guidelines for festival management to prevent ritual-related violence, involving cultural leaders in planning to ensure inclusive representation.

Cross-Cutting Recommendations:

- Invest in digital governance tools to monitor and predict conflicts by integrating AI-driven sentiment analysis on social platforms.
- Convene regular multi-stakeholder dialogues at provincial levels, including youth representatives, to address uprising legacies like corruption probes and martyr relief, ensuring interim governments prioritize reforms over partisan interests.
- Enhance capacity building for security forces on non-lethal crowd control, adhering to international standards to prevent excessive force, as seen in the uprising.
- Allocate dedicated funding for post-conflict recovery, such as rebuilding torched infrastructure and providing psychological support for affected communities, to foster long-term stability.

These recommendations, if implemented collaboratively, could transform Nepal's governance conflicts into opportunities for reform, aligning with federalism's ethos of equity and participation. GMC Nepal stands ready to facilitate dialogues and provide further evidence-based support.

Endnotes

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About CSC

Centre for Social Change (CSC) is a non-profit making social think-tank based in Kathmandu, Nepal. Since its establishment in 2015, CSC has been actively working to bring positive transformation in the socio-political dynamics of Nepali society through involvements in the fields of research, development practice, education, advocacy, and community mobilization. CSC's current works are focused on issues surround conflict transformation, peacebuilding, democracy and governance, migration, labor and employment, civic space, civil society development, public policy, climate change, and social development.

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