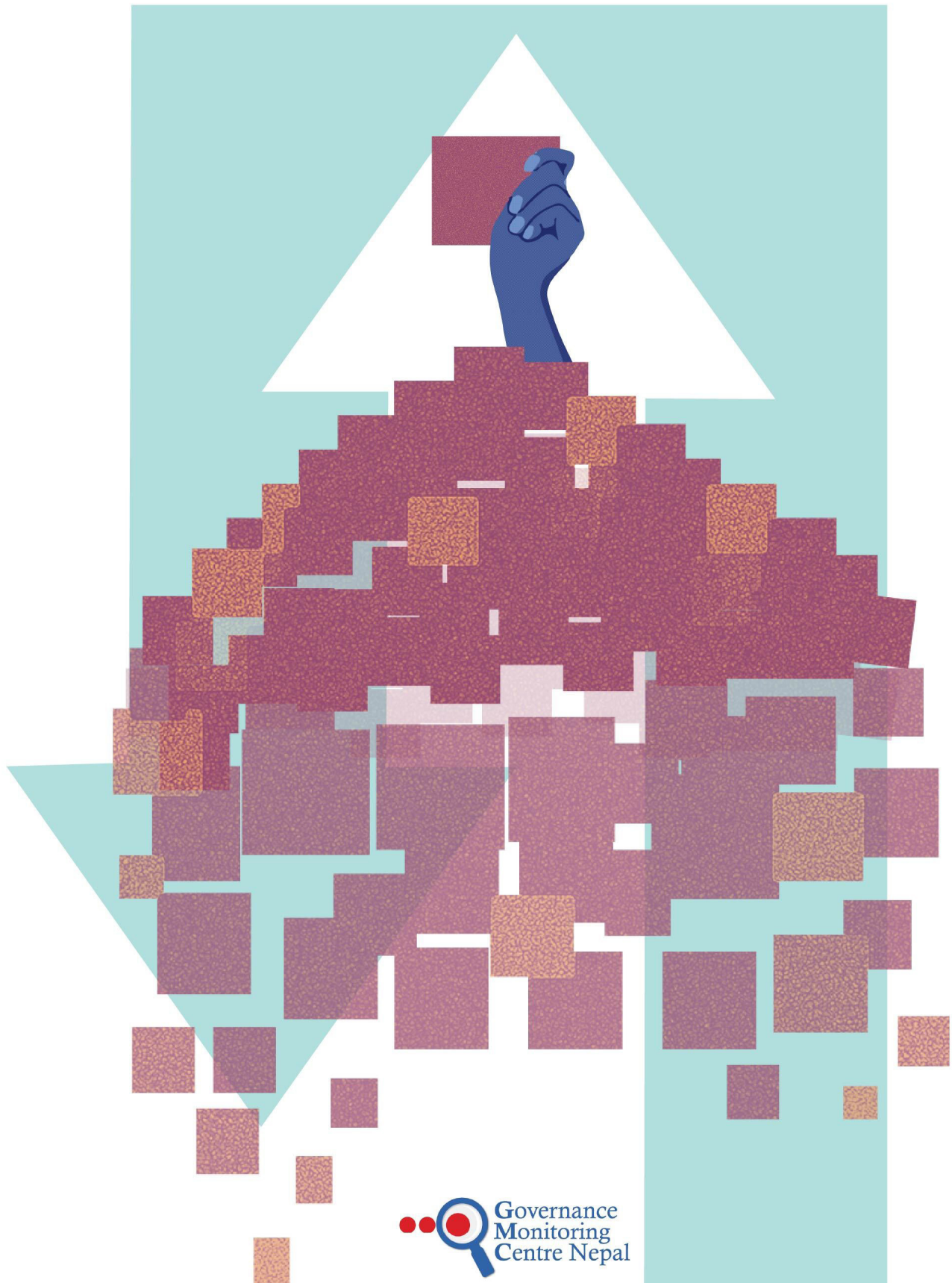


THE GOVERNANCE SPECTRUM

February 2026, Issue 13



The Governance Spectrum

Quarterly Review of Events and Trends

The Governance Spectrum is a periodic publication by GMC Nepal released every four months. These 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 Resources 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 (October 2025 to January 2026) 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 cited in this report. Additionally, as a quarterly publication, it provides preliminary descriptions and analyses of the events. These may differ from the annual publications, which use more rigorously cleaned and verified data to deliver final descriptions and analyses.

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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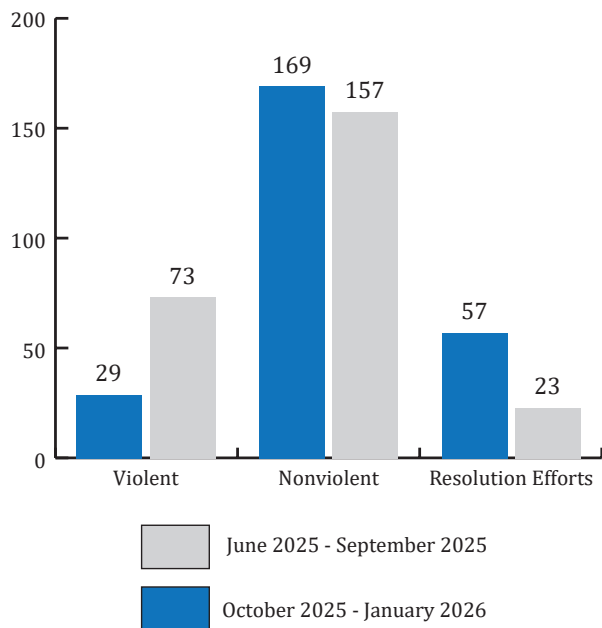
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Overview of Recorded Events

Media Coverage: October 2025 – January 2026

Figure 1.

Total Recorded Events by Nature



The period from October 2025 (Ashoj/Kartik) to January 2026 (Poush/Magh) marked a transitional phase in Nepal's post-Gen Z Uprising governance landscape. Following the violent protests of September 8 & 9, the interim government led by Prime Minister Sushila Karki focused on restoring stability while preparing for the House of Representatives election scheduled for Falgun 21 (March 5, 2026). GMC Nepal documented 255 governance-related events during these four months, a volume comparable to the previous quarter (June–September 2025). However, the nature of events shifted markedly: violent incidents declined significantly, while nonviolent expressions of grievance and structured conflict-resolution mechanisms increased. Table 1 further details the types of events recorded in this period.

Table 1.

Total Recorded Events by Type

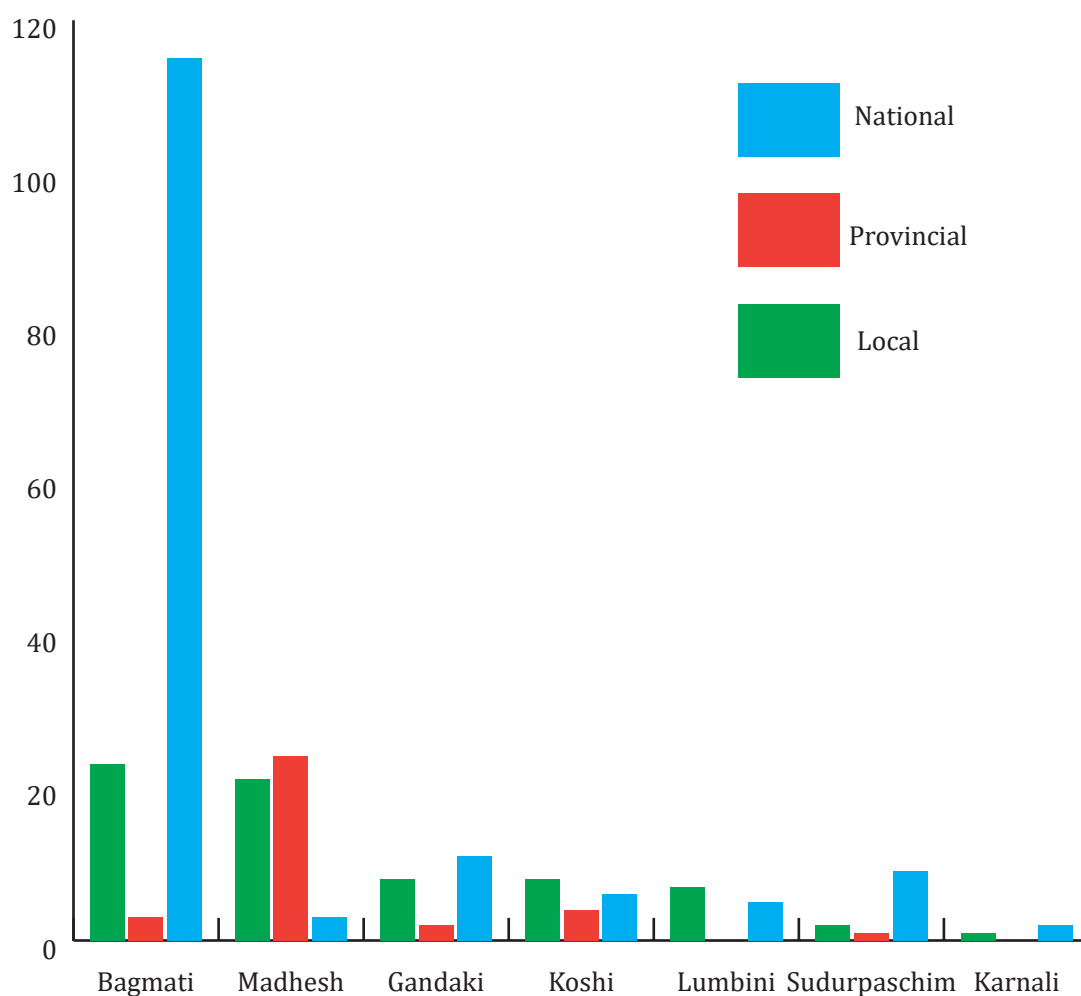
Nature	Type	Number
Violent	Violent Demonstrations	11
	Riots / Mob violence	9
	Demonstrations with Intervention	7
	Physical Assaults	2
Nonviolent	Peaceful Demonstrations	88
	Delegations / Memorandums	26
	Legal Actions	23
	Disputes	13
	Arrests / Seize	11
	Disobedience and non-cooperation	8
Conflict Resolution Efforts	Official Decisions	33
	Agreements	13
	Meetings	11

Peaceful demonstrations, legal actions, delegations/memorandums, disputes, and arrests/seizures together accounted for nearly two-thirds (66%) of all recorded events. This marked a clear shift toward institutionalized channels of protest and redress. Conflict-resolution efforts were equally prominent, with 33 official decisions and 13 formal agreements.

Violent events remained limited, totaling only 29 incidents. These sporadic flare-ups were largely confined to communal, labor, and election-related contexts but were swiftly contained through curfews, prohibitory orders, and targeted security deployment.

Figure 2.

Total Recorded Events by Province and Scope of Conflict/Dispute



Geographically, events were heavily concentrated in Bagmati Province, which recorded 141 incidents (55% of the total). This represents a notable rise from 45% in the previous quarter, largely driven by Kathmandu-centric activities linked to the interim government and the ongoing fallout from the Gen Z Uprising. Madhesh Province accounted for 48 events (19%), primarily stemming from repeated political instability, including three changes of Chief Minister within the three-month period and recurring ethnocultural tensions.

As illustrated in Figure 3, national-scope events dominated the period, reflecting the widespread reverberations of the Gen Z movement across the country. The five most affected

districts - Kathmandu, Dhanusha, Kaski, Morang, and Bara - together accounted for 72% of all recorded governance conflicts, highlighting clear geographic hotspots in both the political center and the southern plains.

The period was overwhelmingly dominated by the Political theme, which accounted for 57% of all recorded events. Accountability remained the central governance indicator as Gen Z groups, political parties, and civil society continued to press the interim government through complaints, writ petitions (more than 16 challenging the dissolution of parliament), passport freezes on former leaders, inquiry commission clarifications, trilateral Baluwatar meetings, and factional protests within the Nepali Congress over its special convention and the Election Commission's recognition of rival leadership.

The Developmental theme (30% of events) centered on efficiency and labour rights. The most sustained conflict involved nationwide nurses' strikes across private and some government hospitals, where staff demanded government-scale salaries; these protests were partially addressed through a central committee and provincial task forces. Other notable issues included the hydropower share agreement and protests over waste management and landfill sites.

Ethnocultural issues (roughly 8% of events) highlighted challenges to inclusiveness, including festival-related Hindu-Muslim clashes in Janakpur and Nepalgunj (which led to curfews and all-party peace pacts), caste-based discrimination and violence against the Dom community in Siraha, Tharu protests against alleged police brutality in Chitwan, and the January mosque vandalism in Dhanusha that triggered violent counter-demonstrations in Birgunj.

The Natural Resource and Environmental theme featured smaller but persistent accountability-driven actions, such as protests against Supreme Court-mandated river buffer standards, demands to reinstate the Land Problem Resolution Commission, human-wildlife conflict rallies in Bardiya, and incidents of river pollution.

A more comprehensive analysis of issues, including a detailed examination of the underlying factors, is provided in the subsequent sections.

Political Systems and Governance

The period from October 2025 to January 2026 in Nepal recorded 145 events that exhibited emerging dynamics of political governance in Nepal following the Gen Z movement. This overview focuses on three major conflict areas: the accountability of the interim government, fallout of the Gen Z protests on political parties, and interparty conflicts in the build-up to national elections. These issues contributed to an increasing number of dissatisfaction-led street protests, demonstrations rooted in constitutional debates, right-based protests, and legal actions.

The demand for the interim government's accountability and transparency prompted most of the political protests around the country in this period. Individuals and youth groups demanded that the government be aware of the sacrifices made by martyred youths in the Gen Z movement and be responsible for the demands raised in the process. Along with holding those involved in the indiscriminate killings during the movement accountable, they demanded that the government disclose the assets of top political leaders, submit short-term action plans for each ministry in the interim government, and ensure the equal inclusion of all provinces in the cabinet of ministers.¹ Later on, those injured in the September 8 incident joined the ranks of protesters. They claimed their exclusion from the negotiations with the government added to their grievances and warned of fresh street protests if their demands were overlooked.² Similarly, the lack of transparent intention in several government decisions was also a source of contention. Advocates filed a writ petition at the Supreme Court on October 19 by challenging the legality of the government's decision to recall 11 Nepali ambassadors appointed by the KP Sharma Oli administration. Although the government used dissatisfaction with the performance of the envoys to substantiate the decision, the Supreme Court issued an interim order to stop the recall, citing the lack of adequate justifications behind the government's decision.³ Nevertheless, Karki-led government recalled them using the prerogatives of the foreign minister. Four ambassadors out of eleven eventually resigned from their posts.⁴

This period recorded numerous instances of political parties ousted from power seeking justice and, for the most part, attempting to delegitimize the revolutionary gains. In Kathmandu, Makwanpur, Bara, Parsa, and Chitwan, formal police complaints were filed by the youth wings of CPN-UML against the mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Mr. Balendra Shah, and Sudhan Gurung, an activist actively involved in mobilizing the Gen Z protest. Both were accused of criminal disturbance and treason.⁵ These accusations held them responsible for fomenting violence, anarchy, arson, vandalism, and attacks on national monuments and institutions during the Gen Z protest. Nepal Students' Union, a student political wing of Nepali Congress, demanded strict legal action against Shah for inciting the mob on September 9 and against those who carried out a planned attack on NC President Sher Bahadur Deuba and his wife Arzu Deuba.⁶ CPN-UML and Nepali Congress each filed writ petitions in the Supreme Court challenging the dissolution of the House of Representatives, demanding its restoration, and claiming the formation of the interim government as unconstitutional. In addition, 17 writ petitions were filed by legal practitioners in the light of the same concern. A five-judge constitutional bench issued a show cause order to the concerned parties. The date for the final hearing, however, has not been fixed yet.⁷

Several interparty conflicts in the run-up to the elections were likewise recorded in this period. Youths from the Nepali Congress Reform Campaign padlocked the party's central office in Kathmandu on November 2, demanding that the party immediately announce the 15th General Convention and ensure a 40 percent representation of youth in the party.⁸ Twenty-four central committee members of the party also submitted a letter to the party office demanding that the convention be held before the upcoming election.⁹ Months later, after the verbal assurances to

follow up were not fulfilled, party members who favored the organization of a special convention shouted slogans against the 'establishment leaders', accusing them of obstructing the special convention.¹⁰ Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) also split ahead of the elections. Janardan Sharma, who left CPN for Pragatisheel Loktantrik Party, was confronted by his former party cadres who shouted slogans and waved black flags at him in Rukum West, his home district.¹¹ The Rastriya Swatantra Party was similarly affected by intra-party disputes. In Janakpur, local leaders and cadres of the party protested against the alleged manipulation in the distribution of election tickets.¹²

Intermittent events aimed at resolving outstanding conflicts were not completely absent, however. On October 16, in the presence of President Ramchandra Paudel, the interim government and the representatives of the Gen Z movement agreed to form a committee to carry out talks and reach an agreement with the government based on the mandates of the Gen Z movement.¹³ On 21 October, Prime Minister Sushila Karki held a meeting with 18 injured Gen Z protesters who urged the Prime Minister to take strict action against corrupt leaders.¹⁴ On the same day, Sushila Karki met with major parties to discuss how free, fair, and safe elections could be conducted on time. To reduce complexities on the way, she included representatives of the Gen Z movement for the first time in a trilateral dialogue to institutionalize the Gen Z movement and encourage the participation of youth in political parties.¹⁵

Highlight -

The political landscape of Madhesh Province in the months following the Gen Z movement was unstable as a result of frequent coalition changes and a constitutional controversy. The crisis erupted after Chief Minister Satish Kumar Singh, who vowed to resign from office through a social media declaration in the thick of the movement, refused to do so. He ultimately resigned while the provincial assembly was in session, hours ahead of a scheduled vote of confidence on 14th October, accusing his own party of involvement in a political conspiracy.¹⁶ Jitendra Prasad Sonal, who replaced him on October 15, could not sustain his tenure backed by a fragile coalition that soon collapsed after he was denied a vote of confidence. After 25 days of his tenure, Sonal resigned on November 8.¹⁷

To resolve this issue, parties in the provincial assembly advised the Province Head Sumitra Subedi Bhandari to form a government under Article 168(2) of the Constitution. However, Bhandari, using ill health as a pretext and claiming to be en route to Kathmandu, secretly swore Saroj Kumar Yadav early morning at a hotel in Bardibas on November 10 under Article 168(3) of the Constitution. This sparked protests, physical assaults, and vandalism in Janakpur.¹⁸ Opposition parties challenged the act as unconstitutional and filed petitions in the Supreme Court, which issued interim orders restraining the new regime's authority. Ram Chandra Paudel summarily sacked Bhandari in the face of growing criticism.¹⁹ As a result, Saroj Kumar Yadav resigned on December 3. Krishna Prasad Yadav, thereafter, was appointed as the Chief Minister of Madhesh Province by Province Head Surendra Labh Karna under Article 168 (2) of the Constitution backed by 77 members of the assembly.²⁰

Overall, the period reflected a profound breakdown of provincial governance, characterized by contested constitutional practices, volatile coalition politics, and sustained public dissent. The chairman of the Janata Samajbadi Party, Dr. CK Raut, also made headlines when he appealed to declare Madhesh an autonomous province.²¹

Developmental Governance

Under this theme, 76 events were recorded from October 2025 to January 2026. The recorded events reveal a recurring pattern for the conflicts surrounding the development governance: top-down policy decisions or regulatory changes, inadequate stakeholder consultation, enforcement gaps in labor and economic laws, and federal-provincial-local coordination failures. These triggered direct action from nurses, youth, farmers, traders, industries, and local communities, often disrupting essential services, revenue collection, and development projects.

The most widespread and sustained conflict during this period was nationwide nurses' agitation. Starting in mid-October at Manipal Teaching Hospital in Pokhara²², the protest rapidly spread to Gandaki Medical College, Charak Memorial, Nobel Medical College, Universal College of Medical Sciences, Civil Hospital, Western Regional Hospital, Gorkha Hospital, and facilities in Karnali Province. They demanded the full implementation of government-mandated salaries (NPR 34,730–38,000+ basic pay), proper benefits, reduced workloads, overtime pay, and an end to labor exploitation in private hospitals where they were paid as low as NPR 9,000–19,500. Nurses halted emergency and ICU services, wore black armbands, and staged sit-ins with slogans such as "Expensive hospital, cheap nurses." By late October, even government-hospital nurses joined solidarity actions (10 a.m.–12 p.m. daily halts). The Nepal Nursing Association endorsed the movement and issued a November 4 deadline. The government responded by forming a 14-member central committee (19 October), followed by the decision to form provincial task forces.²³ An agreement was signed on November 1 promising government-scale salaries from Kartik in large hospitals²⁴, but the Nursing Association withdrew it on November 2 after grassroots' rejection, leading to renewed strikes and a 48-hour ultimatum²⁵. The nurses' movement appears to have moved from active demonstrations into a lower-intensity phase of monitoring and follow-up pressure, with no new nationwide or provincial-level actions documented by the end of January 2026.

Infrastructure and project delays formed a parallel theme. Locals protested stalled Mid-Hill Highway construction in Baglung (November 3)²⁶, Araniko Highway widening disputes in Banepa (agreement in late November)²⁷, electrification delays in Salyan (October 17)²⁸, school-building delays in Bara (29 November)²⁹, and Banchare landfill blockades (agreement on 2 November after ministerial intervention)³⁰. These incidents illustrate governance shortcomings in project execution: repeated deadline extensions, weak monitoring, and insufficient local consultation, leading to economic losses and service disruptions.

Energy-sector friction compounded the problems. Industrialists in Biratnagar protested export-subsidy suspension (October 10).³¹ Nepal Electricity Authority power cuts over unpaid dues and tariff disputes halted production at Ghorahi and Sonapur Cement factories and triggered Morang Industry Association demands (November 2).³² Hydropower shutdowns and industrial blackouts together signaled investor distrust and employment threats, undermining the very development goals the government sought to advance.

Regulatory and policy changes provoked sharp resistance. Customs agents launched a nationwide "pen-down" strike from 9 December against the new Customs Act 2082, citing punitive fines, licensing hurdles, and bureaucratic overreach. It was reported that Biratnagar Customs lost the revenue of NPR 140 million daily due to the strike.³³ The protest was withdrawn after the discussions between the Customs Department and the Customs Agents Federation Nepal on December 11.³⁴ Similarly, Pharmaceutical traders protested Drug Act amendments (late November–December) that imposed automatic license cancellation after 30-day renewal delays,

shutting shops nationwide.³⁵ Other flashpoints included the health-screening fee hike for migrant workers (October–November), taxpayer-service-office abolition in Saptari (December 14 hunger strike), and revenue raids on jewelers (October 13-17) that sparked clashes.

Resource and justice issues also persisted during this period. Rice farmers in Kanchanpur (November 19)³⁶ and sugarcane farmers in Parasi (November 26)³⁷ accused procurement bias toward traders. Cooperative victims continued protests over unresolved claims. On 13 November, government directed District Administration Offices to revive the Meter-byaj complaint mechanisms after prior commissions expired.³⁸

Federal-provincial tensions surfaced clearly in Gandaki Province's 18-point demand to the federal government (December 11), seeking electricity subsidies, water-project funds, overlapping-office reforms, Gen-Z damage compensation, and revenue redirection. These grievances reflected ongoing federalism implementation gaps.³⁹

Highlight-

In late 2025, Nepal's hydropower sector faced a wave of disputes as local communities and youth groups, often operating under the "Gen-Z" banner, began aggressively demanding greater benefits from projects built on their land. The flashpoint was the 45 MW Upper Bhotekoshi Hydropower Project in Sindhupalchok district. In September 2025, a group of Gen-Z youth from Bhotekoshi Rural Municipality in Sindhupalchok district, Nepal, forcibly shut down the 45 MW Upper Bhotekoshi Hydropower Project. They demanded 10% free shares in the company for local affected residents, claiming that previous agreements had not been fulfilled. The protesters occupied the headworks and powerhouse, forced staff to open the spillway gates, and threatened to keep the project closed until their demands were met.⁴⁰

As a result, the project remained completely shut for over a month, causing daily losses of nearly one crore rupees (around 98 lakh per day) and a total financial loss exceeding 27 crore rupees.⁴¹ The Independent Power Producers' Association, Nepal (IPPAN) raised the issue with Home Minister Om Prakash Aryal, describing the shutdown as "anarchy." The minister immediately called the District Administration Chief and instructed him to restart the project without delay, stating that while locals have the right to raise demands, stopping electricity production entirely was unacceptable.⁴²

After negotiations, on 12 October 2025, the company and the protesters reached an agreement to provide 10% shares (an increase from an earlier 6% deal) through a specially formed local public investment company. The shares would not be entirely free; they would be financed through bank loans backed by future dividends from the project.⁴³

Similar disputes have emerged in several other districts of Nepal, inspired by or running parallel to the Upper Bhotekoshi case in Sindhupalchok. In Sindhupalchok alone, letters demanding 10% free shares were sent to at least ten other operating and under-construction projects.⁴⁴ Protests spread to other districts: in Lamjung, locals halted the 50 MW Marsyangdi Besi project in November 2025 over fears of environmental damage and loss of water sources.⁴⁵ In Khotang, residents shut down the Upper Rawa Khola plant in December, citing unpaid compensation.⁴⁶

These conflicts reflect deeper frustrations. Communities feel they bear the environmental and social costs of hydropower while receiving minimal benefits. Demands have shifted from jobs and compensation to direct ownership through "free shares." The Independent Power Producers' Association Nepal (IPPAN) has warned that such "irrational demands" and forced shutdowns discourage investment, threaten national energy goals, and create an unstable environment for the private sector, which has already invested over 1.5 trillion rupees in the sector.

Ethnocultural Governance

During the reporting period from October 2025-January 2026, GMC Nepal recorded 22 events of ethnocultural governance conflicts across three provinces: Madhesh, Bagmati, and Lumbini. The recorded events reveal persistent caste-based discrimination, recurring religious/communal tensions, identity-based political mobilization, gender-based discrimination, and honor killings, among others. All these recorded cases point to some of the broader systemic issues, such as lack of accountability, unfulfilled promises of inclusiveness, and the politicization of ethnic conflicts, among others.

Caste-based discrimination remained the central feature of ethnocultural governance failures in this reporting period with most concentrated cluster violence emerging in Siraha district. The Dom and Dalit communities were subjected to repeated physical assaults, forced displacement, and demolitions of homes rooted in notion of caste-based untouchability. The incident of Sukhipur Municipality⁴⁷, where a family of a member of the Dom community, was physically attacked on September by neighbors on the grounds that their mere presence in the locality was considered inauspicious due to their caste status. A similar case in Kalyanpur Municipality-8 (Arang)⁴⁸, saw five Dalit families attacked by a mob of approximately 50 people who damaged five homes and looted them, with alleged involvement or support from local officials who was later arrested.

These events expose the continued failure of local to federal level state institutions' to protect constitutionally recognized marginalized groups. Despite legal protections, enforcement remains inconsistent, allowing exclusion to persist, thereby reinforcing the gap between constitutional guarantees and everyday realities.

Another recurring pattern was inter-religious and inter-community conflict, often triggered by symbolic or festival-related events. After the Dashain festival, disputes during Durga idol immersion in Dhanusha district escalated into violent clashes, prompting curfews and police intervention.⁴⁹ A similar incident in Nepalgunj⁵⁰, where garbage was allegedly thrown during the idol immersion, quickly led to tensions between Hindu and Muslim communities. However, there were instances of de-escalation. In Janakpurdham, an all-party agreement facilitated dialogue between conflicting groups, while in Nepalgunj, community-level reconciliation helped diffuse the situation. This mixed pattern suggests that while conflict management mechanisms exist, they remain largely reactive and are activated only after tensions escalate. Where religion is involved, peace remains particularly fragile, and the long-term sustainability of these resolutions is yet to be seen. A more serious communal episode unfolded in Dhanusha and Parsa following the vandalism of a mosque and the burning of the Quran.⁵¹ Protests by members of the Muslim community in Birgunj escalated into clashes with police, requiring the use of tear gas and resulting in injuries. These incidents highlight the urgency of actively promoting religious harmony and preventing actions that could disrupt communal peace.

Moreover, various forms of political mobilization were seen in the reporting period ranging from pro-monarchy protests⁵² and women's political representation. The movement led by Durga Prasai to restore monarchy demanded state-restructuring under the "Nation, Nationality, Religion, Culture and Citizen Protection Movement" (Rashtra, Rashtriyata, Dharma Sanskriti Nagarik Bachau Mahaabhiyan) sustained pressure on the government through demonstrations, provocative statements, and negotiations. The groups submitted a 27-point demand letter calling for abolition of the constitution and provinces, restoration of a Hindu kingdom with constitutional monarchy among others. The government stated that the demands were unconstitutional and

incompatible with social harmony and could not be fulfilled. In addition to that, Concerns about women's political representation emerged as a prominent governance issue in January 2026. Women activists under the Women's Rights Pressure Campaign⁵³ and women leaders of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), against under-representation in PR closed lists⁵⁴, reflected dissatisfaction with governance outcomes, particularly around inclusion and representation. They probed that this undermines constitutionally guaranteed proportional inclusion and women's rights.

Community concerns about accountability recurred across multiple events. In Madi, Chitwan, the Tharu Kalyankari Sabha⁵⁵ protested a reported police assault on a local resident and women in his home, presenting CCTV evidence and demanding arrests within 24 hours. In Siraha, police registered complaints against perpetrators of caste-based violence but made no arrests, reflecting a structural tendency where legal processes are initiated under public pressure but not followed through. In Mithila Municipality, Dhanusha, a land encroachment dispute resulted in eight injuries and 16 tear-gas shells fired by combined police and APF.⁵⁶ Another instance of force deployed reactively where early mediation was absent.

Women's safety was also in question as locals and relatives protested violently over the killing of 32-year-old woman, who was allegedly murdered by being set on fire with petrol burned to death by her mother-in-law and sister-in-law in Sindhuli.⁵⁷ Likewise, the case of Ramjanaki Temple priest Jantridas Bairagi in Saptari illustrates how this pattern extends into the formal justice system. Years after his alleged murder over a temple land dispute, arrest warrants against the main accused remain unenforced. Saints and religious leaders gathered outside the district court demanding action.⁵⁸ The failure to execute active warrants signals not administrative inefficiency alone, but a deeper erosion of institutional accountability.

Highlight-

A particularly striking case during the reporting period was the continued discrimination against the Dom community in Siraha⁵⁹ and surrounding areas. Despite their essential role in producing bamboo materials used in major Hindu rituals such as Chhath, they continue to face severe untouchability and exclusion.

Community members reported incidents of forced displacement, physical abuse, and destruction of property in February 2025, simply because of their caste identity. In one case, the family of Deepak Mallik, who had been living in a house built under a government housing program, was forcibly removed. Their home was demolished on the grounds that their presence would make the land "impure." Even the soil where the house stood was removed, reflecting the depth of caste-based prejudice.

The land was reportedly cleared for a religious event (Mahayagya), further illustrating the intersection of religion and exclusion. The incident only gained national attention after media coverage, following which police arrested the rural municipality chairman, a former ward chairman, and others, including a religious figure associated with the event. Cases were filed under charges of caste-based discrimination, untouchability, and forced displacement.

This case is significant because it captures both the persistence of deeply rooted social discrimination and the delayed, reactive nature of state response. It also raises critical questions about the role of local authorities in either enabling or failing to prevent such violations, despite clear legal prohibitions.

Natural Resources and Environmental Governance

A total of 14 events were recorded under the theme of Natural Resources and Environmental Governance Conflict from Bagmati, Gandaki, Koshi, Madhesh and Sudurpaschim Province within the period of October 2025 to January 2026. This indicates that the issues concerning usage, sharing and management of natural resources are not just confined within one region, rather spread across the country. The six of these events were recorded locally whereas and eight at national level. However, many of the conflicts relating to natural resources are largely rooted among local community members involving residents and the stakeholder committees. Whereas the involvement of security forces, governmental bodies, judicial bodies, and private sectors as a party of conflict are commonly witnessed in concerns relating to natural resources.

One such issue concerning natural resources relates to the demand for reinstatement of the Land Problem Resolution Commission, where the dissolution of commission by the interim government (September 2025) was considered to be against the human rights of landless Dalits, squatters, informal settlers, and working people.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the Supreme Court also overturned the government's decision to dissolve the Land Problems Resolution Commission in response to a writ petition citing the lack of alternative arrangements to address the needs of landless people.⁶¹ With an emphasis over the fundamental rights of people on land, housing, and family security, the affected citizens expressed deep concern about their future.

Similar discontentment also emerged upon the government decision among the Melamchi Water Project flood victims against the non-fulfillment of the agreement done between the victim's committee, rural municipality and the Ministry of Water Supply.⁶² This posed a serious question on the government's accountability and its commitment on upholding the agreement. Following the continued blockade of water supply by the flood victim committee, a renewed agreement was reached between the government and Melamchi flood victims.⁶³ The conflicting parties agreed on the points relating to damage assessment among flood victims and compensation for them within three months, release of pending payments within 15 days, resolution of the water levy issue within 45 days and advancement of the Melamchi-Helambu integrated development program.

Another grave concern was about the Sirsiya River pollution. The issue caught significant attention after locals poured Mobil oil over the accountant of Nepal Petro Lub Industries in front of police as locals were worried about heavy pollution in the Sirsiya River just before the Chhath festival, when people bathe in the river and perform religious rituals.⁶⁴ The District Police Office remains uninformed about the incident, and the residents also criticized the lack of attention from locally elected representatives in addressing and controlling the unchecked discharge of waste into the river. This act reflected the community's growing frustration over the severe contamination of the river along with lack of due initiatives from the concerned authorities in resolving the issue.

Meanwhile, the continued government inaction in the case of reserve-victims in Kanchanpur have also protested against the government after being forcibly evicted from forest land they had occupied.⁶⁵ The victims displaced during the expansion of Shuklaphanta National Park two decades ago still await rehabilitation where this act of neglect from the government raises questions upon the fulfillment of fundamental rights of people and broader pursuit of social justice.

Contrary to what is often perceived as state institutions' inefficacy, there are also instances where conflicts arise from the exercise of power or the questionable use of force by state authorities in the name of protection and conservation. For instance, death of a local driver by gunfire reportedly by armed police during an anti-smuggling operation in Koshi Rural Municipality during late night sparked widespread outrage among locals, who responded by blocking the East - West Highway also, setting fire to a temporary Armed Police post.⁶⁶ Such incidences add to the deep mistrust toward security agencies, particularly when civilian casualties occur under unclear circumstances.

Another dimension of human security involves challenges posed by human-wildlife conflict. Bardiya has recently emerged as one of the most affected areas, with wildlife conflict extending beyond park boundaries into community forests and human settlements.⁶⁷ With a growing threat to their safety caused by increasing human- wildlife conflict, the locals in Bardiya are obliged to draw government attention. Their grievance centers around the argument that while national parks are important, the safety of nearby settlements is equally essential. This situation underscores a continued critical imbalance between conservation efforts and human security. To avoid the risk of intensifying conflicts, it is imperative to draw inclusive strategies or policies that address both wildlife protection and community safety.

Analysis of the presented data reflects a pre-dominance of nonviolent measures in expression of dissatisfaction by the public and their disagreements to government rules, policies and practices. Peaceful demonstrations, public protests against the state authorities and obstruction in the public service distribution (such as interruption on the Melamchi water supply) emerged as frequently used approaches in expression of grievances as well as in demand of transparency, accountability and efficiency from the concerned authorities. Timely responsiveness from government as well as proactive attention from the concerned is likely to prevent the escalation of public dissatisfaction into violent conflict.

At the same time, the presence of violent incidences involving physical assault and destruction of infrastructure highlights the perceived ineffectiveness of the peaceful measures in resolving conflicts at its latent stage. Hence, more attention should be paid in establishing a grievance-redress mechanism that seeks to address issues at an early stage, before it evolves into conflict. This will potentially help foster sustained trust between the public and governing authorities.

Highlight -

Protest were held at Maitighar in January 2026, against riverbank standards in the Kathmandu Valley led by the Land Right Conservation Committee along with other concerned stakeholders.⁶⁸ Demonstrators opposed the Supreme Court's decision requiring an additional 20 meters of setback along riverbanks, on top of the existing 20-meter mandate. Concerned stakeholders have repeatedly demanded a review of the decision, arguing that it negatively affects social and cultural rights of communities residing in nearby areas. They also cited ILO 169 (an international convention that legally protects the rights of Indigenous and tribal peoples, emphasizing self-determination, cultural preservation, and participation in decision-making), through the placard display. They voiced for justice rather than decisions from the government. Describing the decision as impractical and unjust, they demanded its revision. They also expressed dissatisfaction with the authorities and even called for action against the judges involved.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The October 2025–January 2026 period provides a revealing snapshot of Nepal’s governance resilience in the aftermath of the Gen Z Uprising. With 255 documented events, the quarter confirmed a decisive shift from the high-intensity violence of September 2025 toward a lower-intensity but multi-front protest landscape. The sharp reduction in violent incidents, coupled with a surge in peaceful demonstrations, legal actions, official decisions, and negotiated agreements, indicates that civic actors and state institutions alike have increasingly turned to institutional channels to manage conflict. This maturation of civic engagement is encouraging; however, the persistence of deep-rooted grievances such as accountability deficits, labor exploitation, ethnocultural tensions, and natural-resource disputes reveals that structural weaknesses in governance remain unaddressed.

Politically, the interim government faced continuous pressure over Gen Z-era accountability, parliament dissolution, and ambassador recalls, while factional battles within the Nepali Congress and volatile coalition shifts in Madhesh Province exposed the fragility of political stability on the eve of national elections.

Developmentally, the nationwide nurses’ agitation laid bare enforcement gaps in labor laws and private-sector regulation, while hydropower disputes and infrastructure protests highlighted the economic and social costs of top-down decision-making.

Ethnoculturally, festival-triggered clashes, caste-based violence against Dalit and Dom communities, and the mosque vandalism episode in Dhanusha illustrated the limits of reactive peacebuilding and the fragility of social cohesion.

In the natural resources and environmental domain, protests over river buffer standards, land commission dissolution, and human–wildlife conflict underscored ongoing tensions between conservation imperatives, livelihood rights, and meaningful community consultation.

Three cross-cutting governance challenges stand out.

1. First, inadequate stakeholder consultation before major policy or regulatory changes repeatedly triggered backlash.
2. Second, weak enforcement and follow-through on existing laws and signed agreements prolonged instability.
3. Third, insufficient preventive dialogue mechanisms at local and provincial levels allowed latent grievances to escalate.

At the same time, the data affirm a positive trend: when the government responded promptly with committees, task forces, trilateral talks, and court interventions, escalation was often prevented. This responsiveness, though imperfect, helped avert a return to the widespread violence of the previous quarter and prevented the period from descending into a deeper crisis.

The recently held March 5 elections delivered a credible electoral process and marked substantial progress in youth inclusiveness within the House of Representatives. Nevertheless, further visible advances on core Gen Z demands, together with tangible improvements in labor rights and broader inclusiveness, will be essential to consolidate the shift toward institutionalized conflict management. Conversely, if underlying grievances around corruption, youth representation, resource management and communal harmony remain unaddressed, protests risk intensifying and eroding public confidence in the newly formed government.

Recommendations

Immediate Actions (next 3–6 months)

1. Establish permanent multi-stakeholder dialogue forums at municipal and provincial levels, including government, political parties, Gen Z representatives, civil society, and private-sector actors, to address grievances proactively before they escalate.
2. Create time-bound public monitoring dashboards for key agreements (nurses' salary implementation, hydropower benefit-sharing, land rehabilitation, and flood victim compensation) with independent oversight and regular reporting.
3. Mandate independent reviews of all police interventions in demonstrations and caste/communal violence cases, with clear timelines for arrests, prosecutions, and public disclosure of outcomes.
4. Convene an all-party election monitoring committee that includes Gen Z and civil-society representatives to ensure transparent candidate selection, campaign finance oversight, and strict enforcement of the election code of conduct.

Medium-Term Reforms (6–18 months)

5. Introduce mandatory pre-legislation stakeholder consultations and social/environmental impact assessments for all policies affecting labor, land, environment, customs, and health regulations.
6. Accelerate provincial capacity-building in labor inspection, dispute resolution, and local development planning to reduce federal–provincial friction and improve service delivery.
7. Enforce proportional representation quotas with transparent verification mechanisms and launch targeted programs to combat caste-based discrimination and enhance women's and youth leadership within political parties and local bodies.
8. Develop a national digital early-warning dashboard (building on GMC Nepal's model) to identify emerging hotspots in communal tensions, labor disputes, land conflicts, and resource issues for timely government intervention.

Long-Term Systemic Changes

9. Mandate annual public asset disclosure for all senior officials, ministers, judges, and constitutional body heads, with independent verification and penalties for non-compliance.
10. Support internal democratic reforms and leadership training programs within political parties to institutionalize generational transition, youth inclusion, and anti-nepotism measures.

Nepal's governance system has shown notable resilience under post-uprising stress. The transition from street violence to institutional contestation marks genuine progress. If political will is mobilized to implement the recommendations above, backed by demonstrable results on accountability, inclusion, and service delivery, the current fragile stability can evolve into durable, responsive, and inclusive governance. Failure to seize this window, however, risks normalizing protest cycles and further eroding public trust at a time when the country most needs cohesive and forward-looking leadership. The coming months will determine whether Nepal consolidates the lessons of the Gen Z movement or allows old patterns of grievance and instability to reassert themselves.

Endnotes / News Articles

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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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