

Monthly Update – October 2012

UN Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator's Office Nepal



This report is issued by the UN RCHCO with inputs from its UN Field Coordination Offices and other partners and sources. The report covers October 2012. The next report will be issued the first week of December 2012.

CONTEXT

Political update

In mid-October, another deadline set by Nepal's political leadership came and went without agreement to resolve the political crisis over steps to move the constitution making process forward. Politics remained deadlocked. As party political discussions failed, the political space and influence of President Ram Baran Yadav grew. On 9 October, the ruling Unified Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist (UCPN-M) floated a proposal to reinstate the Constituent Assembly (CA) to promulgate a constitution, as a precursor to elections. President Yadav publicly rejected the idea and the UCPN-M and other political actors accused him of overstepping his ceremonial constitutional role. On 19 October, UCPN-M Chairperson Dahal shared a written proposal with the President and top leaders of the Nepali Congress (NC) and the Communist Party of Nepal–Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML). It proposed that the parties should agree either on reinstating the CA or holding new elections for the CA. On 31 October, the NC responded with its own political roadmap, which ruled out a revival of the CA and proposed fresh elections in the spring of 2013. The roadmap also staked NC's claim to lead the government holding the elections. Both options of reviving the CA and holding fresh elections present considerable legal and constitutional challenges and would require consensus among the parties on several fronts, such as electoral modalities, safeguarding past CA achievements and on power-sharing. As of the release of this Monthly Update, no consensus agreement has been reached between the parties on the way forward. In the very near term, this situation may complicate the ability of the parties to also forge consensus on extending the government's current partial budget by the deadline of 15 November.

Operational space

Few operational space problems were reported across the country during October for signatories to the Basic Operating Guidelines (BOGs). BOGs signatories in the Mid West Region (MWR) were partially affected by the *bandh* organized by so-called 'Verified Minors and Late Recruits' (VMLRs) from October 2 to 3 in Dang, Rukum, Rolpa and Salyan districts (*see below for more information*). Although the UN was allowed to move during the *bandh*, other BOGs signatories were not.

Many BOGs signatories had reported in September that some political parties and their sister organizations were requesting donations from development partners in various districts of the Far Western Region (FWR) and MWR. In response, those organisations receiving such donation requests responded to the political groups, referring to the BOGs that development partners do not make contributions to political parties or their affiliated organizations. However, NGOs in Surkhet received visits to their offices by sister organizations of political parties during October. Reportedly, the Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist (CPN–Maoist) intensified its donation drive in the District, targeting development partners and other actors. There have also been reports that some political parties and their sister organizations are also making donation requests from the business community and government officials in Dadeldhura, Kanchanpur, Kailali and Chitwan districts (*see below regarding the case of Chitwan*) during October. Importantly, the form of requests is changing from direct to more indirect methods; for example, a local businessman in Surkhet mentioned that donation requests from parties now often come in the name of cultural, educational or youth oriented programs and outreach activities by various political parties rather than for outright political activities of parties.

EMERGING ISSUES AFFECTING PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Local identity politics and federalism tensions persist in the Far Western Region

Federal state restructuring again triggered tensions in Kailali District during the first week of October. The supporters of an 'Undivided Far West' (UFW) suddenly announced a *chakkajam* on the Attariya-Dhangadhi section of the main highway in Kailali on 3 October protesting the Deputy Prime Minister/Home Minister's public statements against any future establishment of a province that encompasses the whole of the Far Western Region. The 'Undivided Far West Unity Society'¹ stated that the Deputy Prime Minister/Home Minister, at a programme in Phoolbari (Kailali) on 2 October, expressed his opinion that Kailali and Kanchanpur districts should be included in a 'Tharuhat province' and that an Undivided Far West province will not be acceptable to him. The 'Undivided Far West Unity Society' also called for the closure of government offices and a halting of government vehicles on 4 October in Kailali. The protests had mixed effectiveness; though agitators padlocked some government offices, making access difficult for service recipients in Kailali, most development partners and even some government offices were not affected.

On 4 October 2012, two prominent Tharu leaders – Laxman Tharu, Chairman of the Tharuhat Tarai Party-Nepal (TTP-N)² and Yogendra Chaudhary – joined the Madheshi People's Rights Forum-Democratic (MPRF-D) amid a function in Lamahi (Dang District) where MPRF-D Chairman and Deputy Prime Minister/Home Minister issued the party membership. At the function, Laxman Tharu³ announced the TTP-N's merger with the MPRF-D. In response to this unilateral action by the TTP-N's Chairperson, the remaining TTP-N leadership expelled Laxman Tharu from the TTP-N for "working against the party interests, statute and manifesto". The TTP-N leadership furthermore accused the MPRF-D of "luring" Tharu leaders into its party in order to expand the MPRF-D's political base and weaken the cause of Tharus. The TTP-N also appealed to the public to "boycott" any Tharu leaders abandoning the TTP-N. Since his expulsion from the party, TTP-N cadres have been accusing Laxman Tharu of playing with the sentiments of Tharu people and devaluing Tharuhat martyrs and injured; one central member of the TTP-N even reportedly 'manhandled' Laxman Tharu on 28 October during a Dashain festival greeting programme organized by MPRF-D in Bansgadhi (Bardiya District). MPRF-D condemned the incident and warned that humiliating Tharu leaders publicly will weaken the Tharu movement.

At the moment, the degree of confrontation between the supporters of Tharuhat and UFW in the FWR is very low as compared to events in April and May earlier this year.⁴ However, the events in October are part of a number of incidents since May that indicate an increasing polarisation of politics and society around identity (in Kailali particularly); while tensions may seem to be currently in abeyance, the potential for conflict remains.

Alleged rape and murder case raises identity-based tensions in Biratnagar

Kiran Babu Basnet from Gograha in Biratnagar Sub-metropolis-4 was arrested by the police on 7 October on charges of raping and murdering a local 22-year-old woman from the Rajbanshi community. The woman's husband, Raj Kumar, filed a First Information Report (FIR) against Basnet at the District Police Office on 7 October claiming Basnet's involvement in the case. The alleged perpetrator in this case is a businessman and son of a former minister, Badri Narayan Basnet. The victim, a woman who was allegedly killed after she was raped, had been working as a domestic help at Basnet's home. Based on interviews with local interlocutors, this incident has gained a lot of attention by many Janjati organizations including NEFIN; these activists fear that a proper investigation may not be conducted by the police because the alleged perpetrator

¹ An activist group supporting the establishment of a UFW province in any new federal structure.

² The TTP-N was established on 11 August 2011 to promote Tharu identity, proportional representation of Tharu people in state mechanisms and to protect the Tharu culture; it forged alliances with other Tharu organizations and staged protest programmes during May 2012 demanding an autonomous Tharuhat province in any future federal state restructuring of Nepal.

³ The joint statement was issued by Acting Chairman – Bhanu Ram Tharu, senior leader – Gopal Dahit, Vice Chairman – Hari Narayan Chaudhary, General Secretary – Nanda Kumar Tharu, Secretary – Min Raj Chaudhary and Treasurer – Khadka Bahadur Chaudhary.

⁴ See UN RCHCO Field Bulletin #41 for background on these tensions: <http://un.org.np/headlines/rchco-field-bulletin-issue-41>.

belongs to a powerful and politically connected family. A small demonstration was carried out on 9 October in Biratnagar with the supporters of the victim carrying the victim's body and demanding justice. Later, NEFIN and other Janajati organizations obstructed the main highway in Biratnagar for six hours on 29 October demanding a speedy investigation and punishment for Basnet and all others allegedly involved in the case. Likewise, the UCPN-M, MPRF (Nepal) and 16 human rights organizations issued press statements demanding a proper investigation of the case and justice for the victim. The National Human Rights Commission is also closely following the police investigation.

The Nepal Police Central Crime Branch have reportedly taken up the investigation and Basnet is still in judicial custody. Cadres of NEFIN and other Janjati organizations protested again on 2 November when Basnet was taken to court for a recording of his statement. He was eventually taken to the court on 4 November amid the protests of both his supporters (including activists from Khas Chhateri Ekta Samaj and cadres associated with Youth Force) and those who want to see him imprisoned (including activists from NEFIN and Janjati organizations). According to the district police, around 200 policemen were deployed to control any encounter between the two sides. As of 5 November, the court hearing is ongoing amid protests by both protesting groups. Local commentators are concerned that the criminal case may become a catalyst for wider identity-based tension and conflict in the district and region.

VMLRs protest in Rapti Zone

In frustration of demands not yet met and grievances against the government and UCPN-M leadership, so-called 'VMLRs' organized a Rapti Zone *bandh* from October 2 to 3. Public and private vehicular movements came to a complete halt and markets, educational institutions and industries were closed in Dang, Rolpa, Pyuthan, Salyan and Rukum districts. Earlier this year, VMLRs submitted a five-point demand to the government, including removal of their 'disqualified' designation and provision of free treatment for injured and disabled Maoist Combatants among others.

According to the MWR Regional Coordinator for VMLRs⁵, the government and UCPN-M leadership are reluctant to fulfill their demands. Furthermore, he objected to the recent Cabinet decision to provide cash payments of NRs. 200,000 to VMLRs, saying that the decision was unilaterally issued by government without consultation with VMLRs. The VMLRs Negotiation Team boycotted talks with the MoPR on 21 September. VMLRs have been staging various protest programmes⁶ since October 2011 (including demonstrations in cantonments, disrupting the re-verification process and package distribution, forcibly entering the cantonments, organizing *bandh* programmes) claiming that their demands remained unheard and that, beyond simple compensation or cash, they need a resolution that gives them a "dignified life".

Increase in Donation Requests by Political Parties in Chitwan District

Local entrepreneurs and private school owners in Chitwan reported to the media that they faced increased donation requests from various sister organizations of different political parties and from the political parties themselves during the month of October. While these donation requests have reportedly been ongoing for the last two months, local entrepreneurs noted that demands for financial support intensified in October. The Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) was involved in donation requests to both local entrepreneurs and private schools for the party's Chitwan district-level convention that took place from 13-14 September. Similarly, health workers affiliated to the Nepali Congress collected donations from different educational institutions to organize their central level gathering in Chitwan on 27 September. Student unions affiliated to the CPN-Maoist also requested a fixed amount of money from local entrepreneurs and educational institutions for the organization of the general convention of the party's People's Volunteer Bureau, which was held in Kathmandu on 10 October.

The Chitwan District President of the Private and Boarding Schools' Organization Nepal (PABSON) complained that private schools would not be able to sustain operations should political parties continue to ask for donations. Similar concerns were expressed by the President of the Narayangarh Chamber of

⁵ Raju Thapa, Regional coordinator of VMLRs – interviewed on 30 October 2012 over telephone.

⁶ Please refer MWR Monthly Update of Oct-Dec 2011, Feb-Mar 2012 for details.

Commerce and Industry who stated that donation demands were having a negative impact in the business sector. On 11 October, the Nepal Police organized an interaction program with local entrepreneurs and political parties to try to bring an end to these practices. According to the afore-mentioned interlocutors, the requests for donations have stopped since then.

HUMANITARIAN UPDATE

Overview for the month – landslides and floods

October remained relatively calm in terms of disaster incidents and cases of humanitarian concerns except for a few incidents in the Eastern region. In Ilam District, 14 people were killed and another 11 were injured when a sudden landslide swept some vehicles off a mountain road along the Mechi Highway in the first week of October. On 2 October, a landslide triggered by incessant rains killed 5 people and displaced temporarily 69 families in Sankhuwasabha District. In addition, an accidental fire in Sankhuwasabha District destroyed 10 houses. Landslide risks continued in Okhaldhunga District during the first and second week of October as one school and one main road linking the district headquarters remained at high risk.

The District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC), together with the Nepal Red Cross Society and other humanitarian organizations, continued relief and response operations to families of people who were killed or affected by landslides in Ilam District. The DDRCs of Ilam and Sankhuwasabha districts provided NRs. 25,000 to families who lost relatives due to the landslides. Nepal Red Cross Volunteers administered first aid treatment to people injured in landslides.

Some of the residual issues from the late September monsoon floods were assessed and responded to in the Far Western and Eastern Regions. A joint assessment mission⁷ led by the Chief District Officer (CDO) visited the flood affected areas in Dadeldhura District on 6-7 October and had interactions with VDC Secretaries, Community Disaster Management Committee (CDMC), civil society members and affected communities. After the assessment mission, the DDRC organized a meeting on 9 October to assess the resources available for instant river control and recovery initiatives. District government agencies and INGOs committed approximately NRs. 1.2 million for river control activities in those affected communities. The construction work is to commence immediately after the *Tihar* festival mostly on a 'cash for work' basis. It was also decided that the District Agriculture Development Office (DADO) is to undertake a feasibility study to explore riverbed farming for livelihood support in partnership with other non-governmental organizations working in the district. The DDRCs in Sankhuwasabha and Jhapa districts requested additional assistance in NFRIs, food, cash and/or construction materials to support recovery from the damage caused by the recent landslides and flash floods. Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN – a national NGO) has agreed to support shelter construction to 55 families displaced by the September flash floods in Jhapa District. Reconstruction and rehabilitation activities for the September 2011 earthquake affected districts are ongoing with the support of Save the Children/UNDP.

Disaster Preparedness and Response Planning

On 15 October, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) together with OCHA co-chaired the NRRC Flagship II Advisory Committee meeting. Government representatives and partner organizations reviewed the expected outcomes, proposed activities and budget allocations for each of the four priority areas namely (a) institutional capacity building of national humanitarian partners, (b) disaster preparedness and response planning activities, (c) warehousing, infrastructures, logistics and stockpiling supports, and (d) preparedness for the facilitation of international humanitarians assistance. The Advisory Committee passed the latest version of the Flagship 2 work plan detailing emergency response and preparedness activities. The revision increased the budget from US\$28 million to \$56 million, mainly because of additional activities in support of disaster preparedness of the International Airport and Humanitarian Staging Areas.

⁷ CDO, LDO, and DDC planning Officer, DDC Programme Officer, Acting DADO, Agriculture technician, DSP, OXFAM Representative, IDeS Representative, VDMC Chair, and UNFCO Representative.

MoHA (at the national level) and the District Administration Office (as the chair to DDRC in districts) organized different programmes to mark the International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR) on 12 October, highlighting the theme of the year "women and girls - (in)visible force of resilience". The event at the central level was attended by officials from the Government, UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs, women, girls and other DRR actors in Nepal. The objective of the symposium was to provide information and generate understanding towards the need and importance of a proactive DRR policy and practices centred on women and girls. The Deputy Prime Minister/Home Minister launched the SAHANA software – a web based Disaster Information Management System which will help the NEOC directly link to 16 District EOCs across the country to record and generate disaster related information.

From 8-11 October, OCHA organised a civil-military coordination training for Cluster leads and relevant security forces in Nepal. Outcomes were a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Nepal Army, Armed Police Force and Nepal Police in the event of a mega-disaster in the Kathmandu Valley.

Under the consortium project⁸ entitled "Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Enhancing Response Capacity from Local to National Level in Nepal", OXFAM organized a review workshop (14-15 October) with representatives from the target communities. The workshop reviewed the status of the project to date, achievements, challenges together with the identification of gaps and way forward. Indicator based progress on Early Warning Systems and small scale mitigation works were shared, and discussions were held on project management and coordination.

RECENT MAPS AVAILABLE

The RCHCO IMU produced a number of mapping products, some of which are listed below and also available on the Nepal Information Platform: <http://www.un.org.np/resources/maps>.

Nepal: Report of Security Incident, 1-31 October 2012

<http://www.un.org.np/maps/nepal-report-security-incident-1-31-october-2012>

Nepal: Report of Bandhs/ Strike 1-30 September 2012

<http://www.un.org.np/maps/nepal-reports-bandhs-strike-1-31-october-2012>

Nepal: Incident Affecting Operational Space, May-Oct 2012

<http://www.un.org.np/maps/nepal-operational-space-may-oct-2012>

RECENT REPORTS AVAILABLE

Some of the recent reports available on the UN Nepal Information Platform are listed below:

Compendium of Sanitation Systems and Technologies (Nepali Version)

<http://un.org.np/reports/sanitation-compendium-nepali-version>

Recent Nepali Translation of RCHCO Field Bulletins

<http://un.org.np/sites/default/files/2012-09-18-issue-43-nepali.pdf>

<http://un.org.np/sites/default/files/2012-10-18-Field-Bulletin-36-Nepali.pdf>

<http://un.org.np/sites/default/files/2012-10-18-Field-Bulletin-35-Nepali.pdf>

<http://un.org.np/sites/default/files/2012-11-1-Field-Bulletin-Issue-2-Nepali.pdf>

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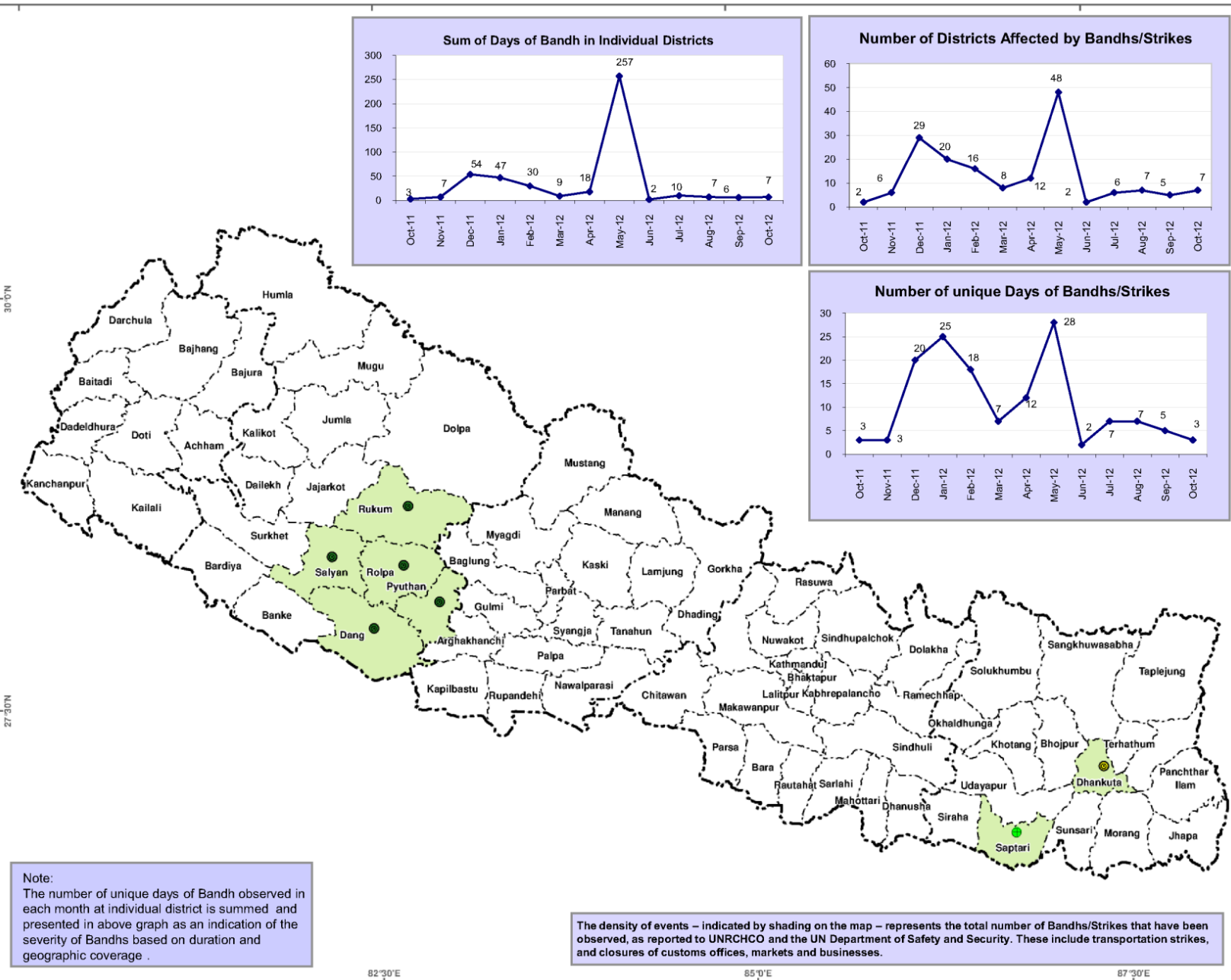
Visit the UN Nepal Information Platform at www.un.org.np

Disclaimer: The information in this report is consolidated from media, UN, NGO and other development and humanitarian partners, subject to availability of data. Although the RCHCO aims to confirm reports independently, occasional factual inaccuracies can occur.

⁸ Consortium of UNDP, UN OCHA and OXFAM and period: Mid March 2011 to Mid November 2012.

NEPAL - Reports of Bandhs/Strikes

1 - 31 October 2012



Legend

Administrative Boundaries

- International
- Development Region
- District

BANDHS

- 1
- 2
- No incidents reported

Groups Calling for Bandhs/Strikes

- Other/Unidentified
- Students/Teachers Unions
- Businessmen

Map Produced by RCHCO with information consolidated by UNDSS.

Department of Safety and Security

Map Doc Name: BandhStrike_Oct_2012_A4_7Nov2012_v01
 GLIDE Number: N/A
 Creation Date: 7 November 2012
 Projection/Datum: UTM 44N/WGS84
 Web Resources: <http://www.un.org.np>

0 50 100 kms

Map data source(s):
 International and domestic media and field reports from UN Agencies, Donors and INGOs. Geodata: GIST, ESRI

Disclaimers:
 The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

A service of the United Nations Country Team in Nepal.

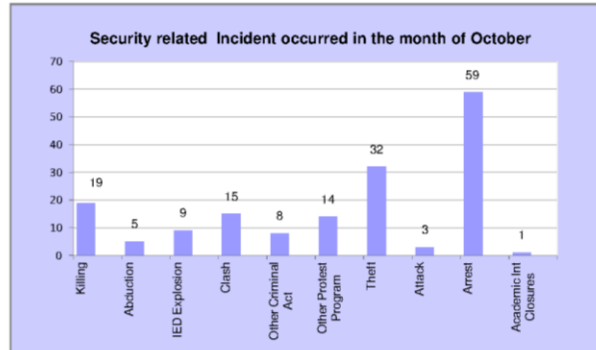
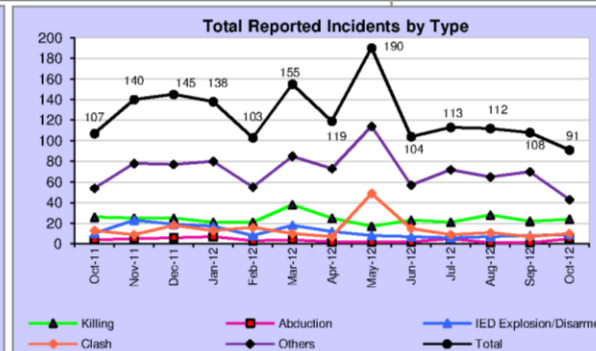
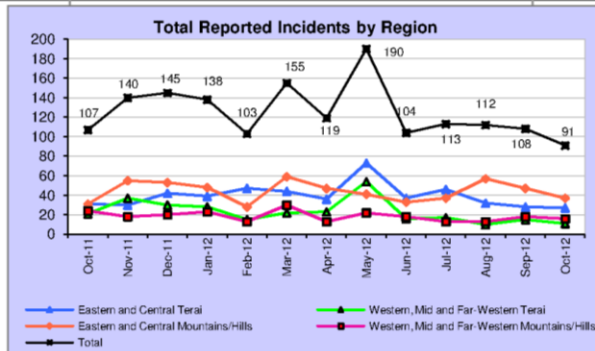


Note:
 The number of unique days of Bandh observed in each month at individual district is summed and presented in above graph as an indication of the severity of Bandhs based on duration and geographic coverage.

The density of events – indicated by shading on the map – represents the total number of Bandhs/Strikes that have been observed, as reported to UNRCHCO and the UN Department of Safety and Security. These include transportation strikes, and closures of customs offices, markets and businesses.

NEPAL - Reports of Security Incidents

1- 31 October 2012



Legend

Administrative Boundaries

- International
- Development Region
- District

Types of Incidents

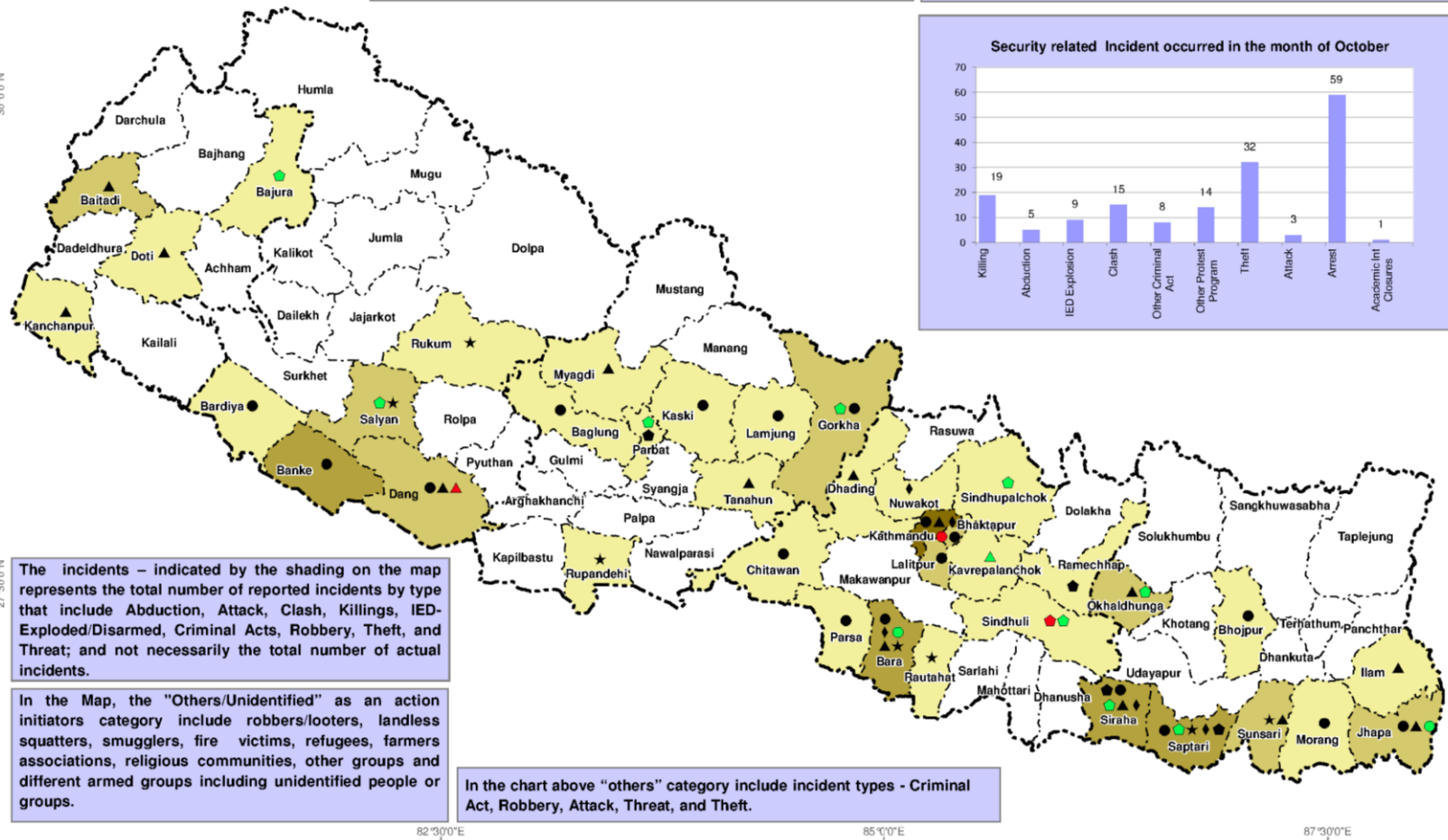
- Reports of Abductions
- Reports of Killings
- Reports of Clash
- Reports of Criminal Acts
- Reports of IED-Disarmed/Explosions

Number of Reported Incidents

- 1
- 2 - 3
- 4 - 6
- 19
- No incidents reported

Action Initiators (Symbol Colour)

- UCPN-M/YCL
- Terai Groups
- Political Parties/Locals/Students/Teacher Union/Transport Union
- Tharuhat/ Bramhan Samaj/ Chhetri Samaj
- Other/Unidentified



The incidents - indicated by the shading on the map represents the total number of reported incidents by type that include Abduction, Attack, Clash, Killings, IED-Exploded/Disarmed, Criminal Acts, Robbery, Theft, and Threat; and not necessarily the total number of actual incidents.

In the Map, the "Others/Unidentified" as an action initiators category include robbers/looters, landless squatters, smugglers, fire victims, refugees, farmers associations, religious communities, other groups and different armed groups including unidentified people or groups.

In the chart above "others" category include incident types - Criminal Act, Robbery, Attack, Threat, and Theft.

Map Produced by RCHCO with information consolidated by UNDSS.

Department of Safety and Security

Map Doc Name: Security_Incidents_Oct_2012_A4_7Nov2012_v1
 GLIDE Number: N/A
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Transition Support Strategy
 RCHCO Office, Nepal
 A service of the United Nations Country Team in Nepal.

