

Monthly Update – September 2013

UN Resident Coordinator's Office Nepal



This report is issued by the UN RCO with inputs from its UN Field Coordination Offices and other partners and sources. The report covers September 2013. The next report will be issued the first week of November 2013.

CONTEXT

Political update

After continuous rounds of political negotiations during September, the Interim Electoral Council of Ministers (IECM) and High level Political Committee (HLPC) continued onwards in preparing for Constituent Assembly (CA) elections on 19 November without bring on the remaining dissenting political parties. The nomination of election candidates in the first week of October marked the beginning of the final phase of election preparations. With just six weeks to go before polling, the election atmosphere is building and political parties are entering campaign mode. However, the dissenting 33 party alliance, predominantly led by the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist), has not joined the process and is threatening to disrupt the election with a programme of protests culminating in an all Nepal *bandh* from 11-20 November. The United Nations has called upon all parties, whether they are participating in the elections or not, to abide by the law and the election Code of Conduct and respect the peaceful democratic rights of others. Although details of the incident are still unclear, the first potential instance of serious campaign-related violence occurred on 4 October (the day after the submission of 'first past the post' candidates), when unknown gunmen shot a candidate for the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) in Bara district (see below for more information).

Operational space

The principal operation space difficulty faced by Basic Operating Guidelines (BOGs) signatories during September was an escalation of protest *bandhs* by various political parties and alliances opposed to the CA elections planned for 19 November—these *bandhs* included:

- 9 September—Splinter group of the Federal Limbuwan State Council (led by Dambar Chemjong) announced a *bandh* in nine districts east of the Arun River¹ (though most educational institutions remained closed, there was only partial closure of markets and sparse public vehicular movement);
- 11 September—Federal Republican National Front (FRNF)² carried out a *bandh* in the Limbuwan-Khambuwan and Tharuhat-Koch-Madhesh area³ (though it was reported as only effective in Morang and Sunsari districts and only partially effective in other districts)⁴;
- 12 September—Alliance of 33 parties opposed to the elections imposed *bandhs* in Kathmandu and the Eastern Region;
- 13 September—Alliance of 33 parties opposed to the elections imposed a *bandh* on 20 districts across the Far Western and Mid Western regions;
- 15 September—Alliance of 33 parties opposed to the elections imposed a *bandh* on the Central Tarai;
- 16 September—Alliance of 33 parties opposed to the elections imposed a *bandh* in four districts⁵ of the Mid Western Region and 10 districts⁶ of the Western Region.

Unless otherwise noted, the above *bandhs* were observed as effective with no public vehicular movements and markets and education institutions remaining closed. No obstructions to UN and diplomatic vehicles

¹ Jhapa, Ilam, Panchthar, Taplejung, Morang, Sunsari, Dhankuta, Tehrathum and Sankhuwasabha.

² FDNF is an alliance of seven small identity groups led by Kishor Biswas and Indrachang Khambu.

³ The *bandh* was reported effective only in the highway areas of Morang, Jhapa and Sunsari Districts, although the Front claims for Ramechhap, Dolakha, Sindhuli, Okhaldhunga, Khotang, Bhajpur, Udaipur, Sankhuwasabha, Dhankuta, Taplejung, Terhathum, Panchthar, Ilam Jhapa Morang, Sunsari, Siraha and Saptari districts as Khambuwan-Limbuwan and Tharuhat-Koch-Madhesh areas.

⁴ In a press-statement, the group specifically mentioned that they would not allow UN vehicle movements; however, no obstructions of UN vehicle movements were reported during the *bandh*.

⁵ Rukum, Salyan, Rolpa, Pyuthan of MWR.

⁶ Gulmi, Arghakhanchi, Palpa, Baglung, Myagdi, Gorkha, Manang, Mustang, Tanahun, Kaski, Parbat, Syangja, Kapilvastu And Nawalparasi districts of WR.

were reported during the *bandhs*; however, the *bandhs* did affect BOGs signatories (INGOs) as implementing partners and staff rely upon private vehicles and public transportation. Additionally, most BOGs signatories imposed self-restrictions on their movements and UN and other diplomatic agencies with blue-plated vehicles often limited their movements to only essential operations.

In addition, there were increased reports of donation demands in the Far and Mid Western regions. There were reports of political parties demanding donations from government officials, the business community and NGOs in Baitadi, Dadeldhura and Doti districts in the Far Western Region. Those development partners in Dadeldhura and Baitadi that received requests for donations responded by referring to the BOGs requirement that development partners do not make any contributions to political parties or affiliated groups. Similarly, the CPN-Maoist were reported to have requested donations from government officials and members of the business communities in Rukum District. However, BOG signatories in the district denied receiving any such donation demands from the party.

EMERGING ISSUES AFFECTING PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Continued protests by political parties opposed to the Constituent Assembly elections

Despite the upcoming 19 November elections, many districts were considered to be politically ‘quiet’ during September. This was partially attributed to political parties being busy with internal meetings, finalising their candidate nominations and engaging in final nomination parleys in Kathmandu. For the most part, mass public elections campaigning had not yet started during September as most parties were busy with internal organisational matters and campaigning is only expected to start in earnest following the announcement and registration of candidates.

The 33 party alliance (predominantly led by the CPN-Maoist) continued its ‘anti-poll’ campaign during September and conducted a series of nation-wide protests against the election process, including *bandhs*, torch rallies and other mass meetings. The CPN-Maoist and alliance party cadres were reported to have continued conducting ‘door to door’ campaigns to dissuade people from participating in the CA elections, particularly in the Far Western, Mid Western and Western regions. During August and September, the CPN-Maoist continued to conduct cadre orientations, form ‘youth squads’ or ‘task forces’⁷ and burn copies of the elections code of conduct⁸ in the Mid Western and Western regions. The Federal Limbuwan State Council affiliated with the Federal Democratic National Front (FLSC-FDNF) and the Federal Democratic National Front (FDNF)⁹ were the main parties undertaking protest programmes in the Eastern and Central Regions, carrying out pre-announced *bandhs* and mass assemblies.

In only a few instances did the protests result in violence or direct obstruction. On 15 September, CPN-Maoist cadres were reported to have set fire to a bus in Dhulikhel for defying the *bandh* while passengers were still on board (though no casualties were reported). A group of masked CPN-Maoist cadres was alleged to have looted election materials from Dashera and Khalanga Village Development Committees (VDCs) in Jajarkot District on 27 September (the materials were later found in the Khalanga VDC community forest on 30 September). In some locations, CPN-Maoist or other alliance members submitted letters to District Election Offices demanding a cessation of election preparation operations. The Dhankuta District chapter of the FLSC-FDNF reportedly issued letters to different political parties, urging them not to take part in the upcoming CA election. Police recovered 44 rifles and a 2-inch mortar from Raniban forest near the Jajarkot District Headquarters (reportedly originally looted from the Nepal Army and Nepal Police and cached during the decade-long internal armed conflict) on 16 September—though not directly linked to any one group, some commentators speculated that these weapons could have been intended for actors wishing to ‘influence’ the election¹⁰.

Despite all of the above protests, it is notable that no actions by the CPN-Maoist or alliance parties succeeded in obstructing the candidate submissions that took place across the country during the first week

⁷ Including Surkhet, Banke, Jajarkot and Kalikot districts.

⁸ CPN-Maoist burned copies in Banke, Dang, Rolpa, Kapilvastu, Tanahu and Kaski districts during August 2013.

⁹ FDNF is an alliance of seven small identity groups led by Kishor Biswas and Indrachang Khambu.

¹⁰ See Singh, B. & Nepal, J. ‘Huge haul of war era weapons’. *Kathmandu Post*, 15 September 2013.

of October. Importantly, in the Eastern Region, there were no reports that FLSC-FDNF plans to padlock VDCs and Municipalities in all districts east of the Arun River from 2 October onwards was being effectively implemented. While the FLSC-FDNF transportation strike in these districts on 3 October was reported as largely effective, it did not stop political parties from travelling to submit their candidate nominations—in the end, all parties were able to nominate their candidates across all so-called ‘Limbuwan’ districts. In order to avoid possible violence, large numbers of security personnel were deployed in strategic areas of the districts and police also reportedly escorted political party vehicles travelling to nominate their candidates in Sunsari, Morang and Jhapa districts. A clash between the Armed Police Force and FLSC-FDNF cadres at Kerkha in Jhapa District occurred as police escorted CPN-UML leader KP Sharma Oli and FLSC-FDNF cadres were reported to have vandalized two vehicles belonging to the CPN-UML and Rastriya Prajatantra Party–Nepal in Jhapa District. By the end of the day, police had arrested 18 FLSC-FDNF central level leaders and cadres from Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari and Ilam¹¹; however, there were no reports of actions by other parties in retaliation for the attempted obstruction by FLSC-FDNF cadres. In Eastern Region hill districts, such as Taplejung and Panchthar, FLSC-FDNF obstruction was reported to be relatively ‘peaceful’ as political party leaders were already located in the district headquarters and did not need to travel through the transportation strike.

The 33 party alliance has announced further protest plans in the weeks leading up to 19 November. This includes threats to obstruct candidates from entering VDCs for campaigning from 19 October onwards, as well as plans to ‘shut down’ districts wherever ‘top level leaders’ of mainstream political parties organize their visits. The alliance also plans to organize a Nepal *bandh* from 11-20 November in order to obstruct the CA election from happening on 19 November. In addition to this, the FLSC-FDNF plan a march-pass of ‘ten-thousand’ Limbuwan Volunteers in Damak (Jhapa District) on 24 October and a *bandh* in the nine districts east of the Arun River on 28 October.

Many stakeholders noted the ‘festive’ and energetic atmosphere on the candidate submission days and that, in many ways, this has signaled the shifting momentum towards the campaigning season. However, the series of anti-election protests by the CPN-Maoist and alliance members and its recent announcement of plans to disrupt the elections has also contributed to uncertainty about the timely holding of polls in the minds of some local stakeholders. A Dhankuta District member of Nepali Congress (NC) that received a letter from FLSC-FDNF did not believe that the party or wider alliance would have any significant effect on the election as he believed that the FLSC-FDNF has a “weak organization” in his district. Contrary to this, a local human right defender feared possible clashes between FLSC-FDNF cadres and those of other political parties who are participating in the upcoming CA election. He further noted that pre-election clashes may affect the participation of voters in certain parts of Dhankuta District. Overall, two distinct views are found amongst local political leaders and interlocutors—those who think the elections should and will be held on time with or even without the dissenting parties, and those who think elections will not (and perhaps should not) be held without first bringing on board the dissenting parties. In the current context, it is difficult to predict the strength of and counter-reactions to the opposition planned against the November elections.

CPN-UML election candidate shot by unidentified assailants in Bara District

A CPN-UML candidate for the 19 November elections, Mohammad Alam of Bara District Constituency No. 4, was shot by unidentified persons at Parwanipur in Bara on 4 October. Mr. Alam, who is a Central Committee Member of CPN-UML and a district Chairperson of “Muslim Itihad Sangh”, received a serious injury to the head and was transported to Kathmandu for treatment. Following this incident, CPN-UML cadres and sympathizers imposed a *Chakkajam* at Parwanipur for the rest of the day.

Although, the motives behind the shooting and the people involved are unknown, the security concerns of CA candidates have been raised by political party leaders and cadres in Bara District and elsewhere in the country. A journalist based in Parsa noted that more “untoward incidents are expected” with the approaching election date because there “are various interest groups that do not want this election to happen”. However, a member of CPN-UML Bara District committee that Mr Alam had never complained or shared that he had

¹¹ The FLSC-FDNF have since demanded the unconditional release of its arrested cadres and called for an indefinite *bandh* in the same nine districts starting from 4 October; however, at the time of writing, there was no reported effect of the *bandh* in any part of the named districts at the time of writing.

received any threats from any group or person.

While this incident cannot yet be confirmed as an example of 'campaign violence', local stakeholders in a number of regions have expressed fear that the lead-up to the elections may create a rise in tensions between cadres and youth wings of political parties, potentially leading to clashes—this may be especially raised in the context that major political parties have begun reviving or forming youth wings¹². A recent example of inter-youth wing violence includes supporters of the Nepal Student Union (affiliated to NC) being reportedly attacked on 25 September by supporters of the All Nepal National Independent Student's Union-Revolutionary (affiliated to CPN-Maoist) at the Lumjung Agriculture Campus hostel—ten sustained injuries, with *khukuris* and knives allegedly being used during the clash. Earlier in September, Tarun Dal (affiliated to NC) had reportedly attacked Young Communist League (affiliated to UCPN-M) cadres in Dang District while they were returning from a VDC level committee meeting. Even earlier, during June, tension between CPN-Maoist and NC cadres in Jumla District led to violent confrontations between cadres in the district that required curfews and police reinforcements.

Darchula-flood victims protest and demand relief package from government

The victims of the Darchula flood¹³ that occurred in mid-June intensified their protests at the District Headquarters, demanding immediate relief packages, restoration and compensation from the Government. On 17 September, the victims group blocked the local Nepal-India border bridge for two hours and then padlocked the District Election Office and the District Treasury Controller Office. A clash ensued after police intervened, with police firing tear gas to contain the situation (three people were reportedly injured). On 18 September, the victims enforced a district *bandh* denouncing police actions from the day before and picketed the District Administration Office. From 20-22 September, the victims group further enforced a *bandh* that shut down the entire DHQ for three days. Despite tensions, the week-long protests were largely peaceful and the victims have temporarily postponed their agitations, but plan to launch new protest programmes after the victims struggle committee's chairman returns from Kathmandu.

Darchula was the worst-affected district during mid-June Mahakali River floods, with more than 100 houses being destroyed and around 350 families being affected. The victims complain that even after three months, the government has paid no heed to their demands or provided with due compensations except for some initial temporary relief. The victims struggle committee's delegation team travelled to Kathmandu¹⁴ in July in order to press their demands. The victims may intensify protests in coming weeks if their grievances remain unaddressed; this could possibly affect the election environment in the district as parties or groups may use these grievances to mobilize victims for political party objectives.

HUMANITARIAN UPDATE

Overview of recent local disasters

The month of September remained relatively calm compared to previous months in terms of monsoon related incidents throughout the country.

However, in the Eastern Region and Central *Tarai*, a few deaths did occur due to other natural disasters, such as lightning, accidental fire, flash floods and landslides. One landslide in Mahabharat VDC of Dhankuta District affected 23 households and the Dharan-Dhankuta highway was also damaged. Likewise, a flash flood in Sunsari District killed two people with three people missing during the month. An earthquake tremor was recorded in the Eastern Region on 12 September but no damage or casualties were reported. In the Western Region, dengue Fever cases were reported in Rupandehi and Kapilvastu districts during the last weeks of September. The District Public Health Office in Rupandehi mobilized a rapid response team to conduct a public awareness campaign to prevent further cases. In the Far Western Region, a fire incident occurred on 15 September in Alital VDC of Dadeldhura District due to a short circuit and damaged 19 houses. One person died and one person was seriously injured. The District Disaster Relief Committee

¹² Nepali Congress (NC), Communist Party of Nepal - Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), Rastriya Prajatantra Party – Nepal (RPP-Nepal) have revived or formed their youth organizations in the districts.

¹³ Please see UNFO FWR Regional Monthly Updates (June-August 2013).

¹⁴ UNFO FWR Regional Monthly Updates (August 2013).

(DDRC) and local humanitarian organizations supported the affected people with relief items.

Ongoing responses to local disasters

The District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC) in Banke district sent a proposal on 4 September to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) to find a long term solution to the resettling of 257 families who were affected by the Rapti River flooding during August. The victims of the Mahakali River flood in Darchula District during June have intensified protest programmes demanding compensation packages (see above).

Disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction efforts

The Dadeldhura District Development Committee, supported by the SAFER Consortium, organized a master training-of-trainer programme. A total of 34 participants from the district administration offices, DDCs and humanitarian organizations working in six districts of Far-Western region participated in the training.

In a declaration program on 1 September, Dhangadhi Municipality decided to implement the building code across the municipality. After enforcement of the building code, which was adopted by the government one decade ago, the municipality will regulate the construction of earthquake resilient buildings within its jurisdiction. Dhangadhi Municipality have also identified a few open spaces to act as potential displaced people camps in case of any large scale disaster within the municipality.

RECENT MAPS AVAILABLE

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

Nepal: Report of Security Incidents September 2013

<http://un.org.np/maps/nepal-report-security-incident-1-30-september-2013>

Nepal: Reports of Bandh/Strikes September 2013

<http://un.org.np/maps/nepal-reports-bandhs-strike-1-30-september-2013>

Nepal: Security Incidents for Eastern Tarai District: July 2010 - July 2013

<http://www.un.org.np/maps/nepal-security-incidents-mahottari-district-july-2010-july-2013>

<http://www.un.org.np/maps/nepal-security-incidents-parsa-district-july-2010-july-2013>

RECENT REPORTS AVAILABLE

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

Sixth Consolidated Annual Progress Report on Activities Implemented under the United Nations Peace Fund for Nepal

<http://www.un.org.np/reports/sixth-consolidated-annual-progress>

Review of the Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium, August 2013

<http://www.un.org.np/reports/review-report>

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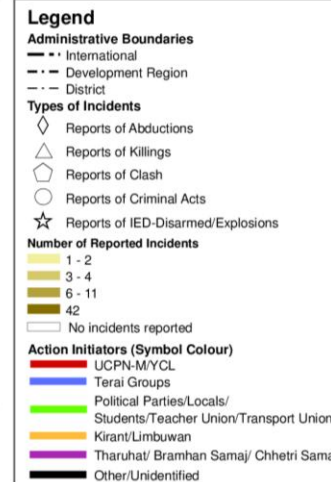
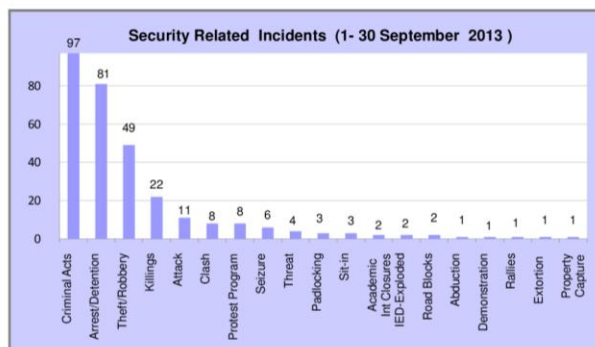
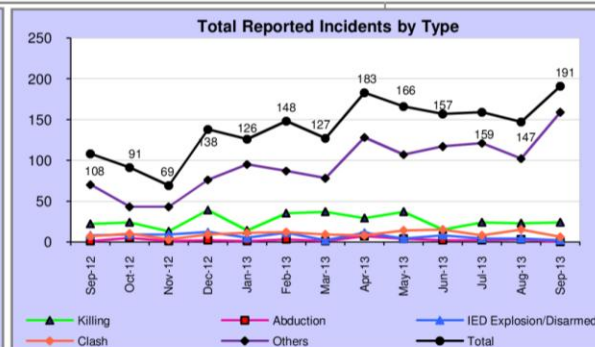
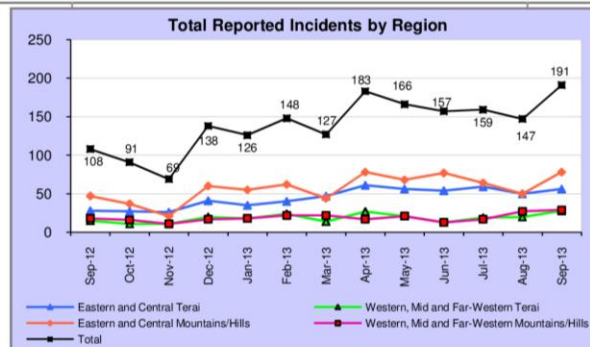
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Disclaimer: The information in this report is consolidated from media, UN, NGO and other development and humanitarian partners, subject to availability of data. Although the RCO aims to confirm reports independently, occasional factual inaccuracies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

NEPAL - Reports of Security Incidents

1- 30 September 2013



Map Produced by RCHCO with information consolidated by UNDS.

Department of Safety and Security

Map Doc Name: Security_Incidents_September_2013_131006_v1

GLIDE Number: n/a

Creation Date: 5 October 2013

Projection/Datum: UTM 44N/WGS84

Web Resources: <http://un.org.np/resources/maps>

Map data source(s): International and domestic media and field reports from UN Agencies, DFID-GIZ/RMO, Donors and I/NGOs.

Geodata: GIST, ESRI, UNOCHA COD/FOD

Projection/Datum: Modified Transverse Mercator

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.

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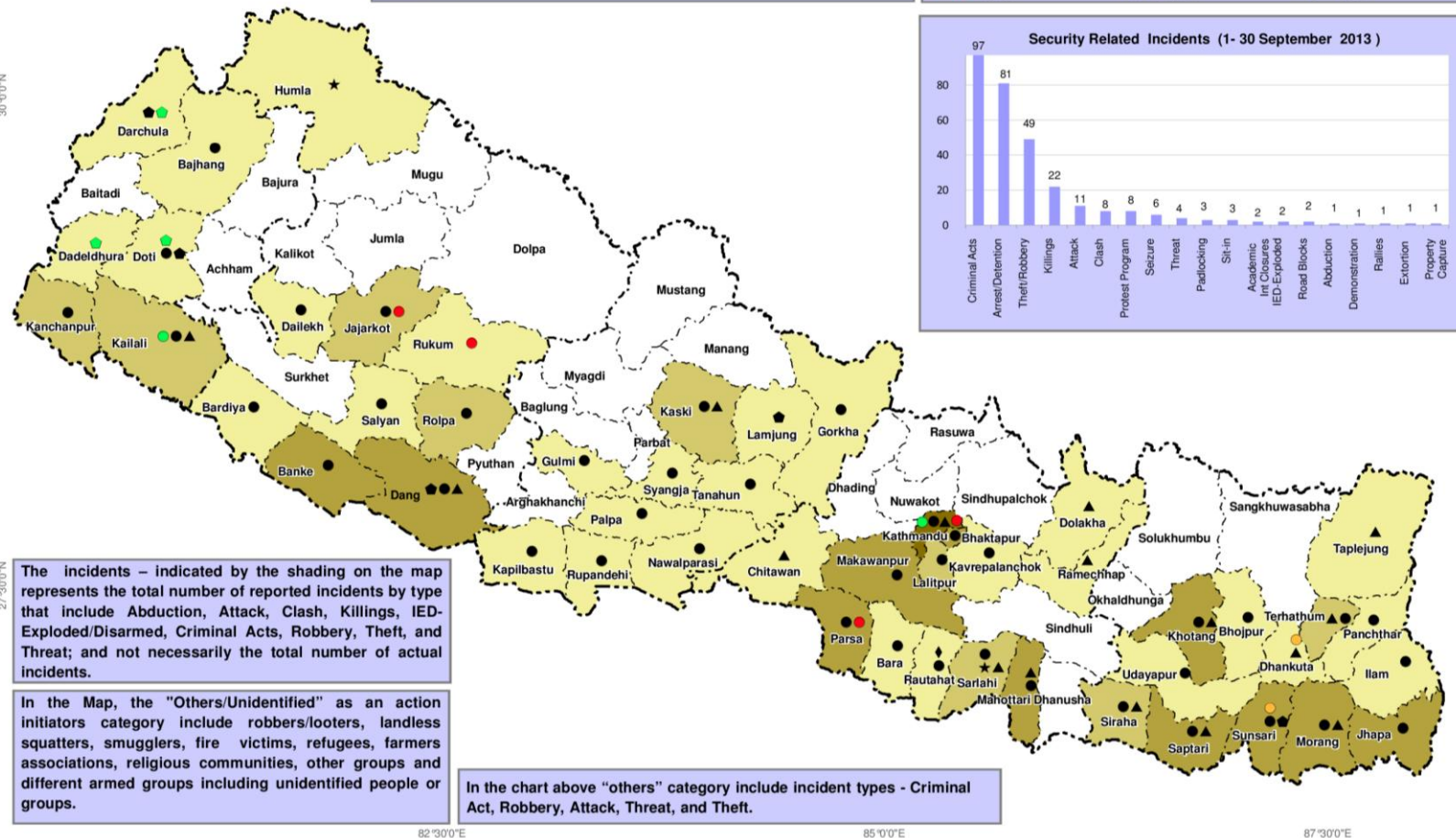
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The incidents – indicated by the shading on the map represents the total number of reported incidents by type that include Abduction, Attack, Clash, Killings, IED-Exploded/Disarmed, Criminal Acts, Robbery, Theft, and Threat; and not necessarily the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

NEPAL - Reports of Bandhs/Strikes

1 - 30 September 2013

