

Reporters Without Borders

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Asia - Nepal

Encouraging arrest

Police arrest leading suspect in attack on newspaper reporter

25 August 2011

Reporters Without Borders congratulates the police in Chainpur, capital of the northwestern district of Bajhang, for today's arrest of Vikash (Bikash) Rai, the leading suspect in the 11 August attack on *Himalayan Times* and *Annapurna Post* reporter **Kishor Budhathoki**.

Another suspect who was arrested on 19 August, Rupak Rai, is still being held at Chainpur police headquarters.

"We salute the efforts of the police and we urge the authorities to pursue this investigation in order to bring all those involved in this brutal attack to justice," Reporters Without Borders said. "We also hope that a visit by a team from the office of the UN high commissioner for human rights will help to establish guarantees for journalists' safety."

Vikash Rai was arrested at the home of a relative early this morning by 13 policemen led by Deputy Inspector Mahendra Raj Karki. Rai, who is known to the local police and has served several prison sentences, was taken to district police headquarters.

Doctors say Budhathoki will have to spend another three weeks in Biratnagar's Nobel Medical College in order to fully recover from the injuries he received in the attack.

08.18.2011 - Sharp fall in ability of Nepalese journalists to work freely

Reporters Without Borders has noted an increase in threats and attacks against journalists since the start of the year in Nepal. After an apparent improvement in the situation in 2010, political instability and an increase in activity by several political parties and armed groups are threatening media freedom and the safety of journalists, especially in the districts.

"Some political leaders are providing political protection to people who are threatening and attacking journalists and media," Reporters Without Borders said. "This encourages a climate of impunity that is endangering all the achievements of previous months regarding press freedom."

The authorities were unable to bring the Youth Force leader Parshuram Basnet to justice for allegedly masterminding the beating of the journalist **Khilanath Dhakal** in the southeastern city of Biratnagar. Basnet is a leading member of a youth group affiliated to the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), the party of Jhala Nath Khanal, who has just resigned as prime minister. Several members of the Morang District police, including a deputy superintendent, have been relieved from duty for helping Basnet and his accomplices to escape.

"The Nepalese government must adopt measures to stop any collusion between officials and people who are wanted by the judicial authorities," Reporters Without Borders added, "The government must also protect journalists from the activities of politically-motivated groups."

Physical attacks

In one of the most recent cases of physical violence, **Kishor Budhathoki**, a journalist working for the *Himalayan Times* and the *Annapurna Post*, was brutally attacked at his home in the eastern district of Sankhuwasabha on 11 August by 10 armed men led by Vikas Rai, a notorious criminal in the region, police said.

Budhathoki was taken to Nobel Medical College hospital in Biratnagar with serious injuries to the head, legs and hands. Doctors described his condition as critical. The attack was prompted by a report on domestic violence carried by *radio Khandbari FM*, in which Budhathoki referred to Rai's violence against women.

Six teams consisting of members of the regular police and the Armed Police Force (APF) are reportedly looking for Budhathoki's assailants, who are still at large. Sankhuwasabha Chief District Officer Kailashnath Kharel said: "*All the political parties in the district have expressed willingness to help the administration to arrest the attackers.*"

Manoj Ghimire, a journalist with the national daily *Rajdhani*, was manhandled by police inspector Hari Basyal while trying to cover a sports event on 6 August in Kathmandu. Security officials then prevented him from entering the sports stadium.

Fourteen journalists were roughed up by employees of the Aaptari road toll during an informal meeting at a police station in south-central Chitwan district on 19 June, when the employees became angered by questions about their levying illegal supplementary tolls. They later apologized to the journalists.

An unidentified group threw **Bimal Hamal** and **Suman Malla**, journalists based in mid-western Himalayan District of Mugu, off a cliff on 2 June. On the same day, **Rajendra Awasthi**, the executive editor of the local daily *Angel Times*, was injured in an attack by three unidentified gang members in the far-western city of Mahendranagar.

Threats

Mahesh Basnet, the president of the Youth Association Nepal (YAN), threatened to close the daily *Nagarik* and jail its editor, **Narayan Wagle**, during a meeting of young activists in Biratnagar on 13 August. "*The day a new constitution is drafted in our favour, we will close down Nagarik daily and send its editor Narayan Wagle to jail,*" he said.

He also threatened to target journalists who criticize fellow youth leader Parshuram Basnet. "*We will settle scores with everyone sooner or later, if not tomorrow. We have made a list of all the names.*" Referring to the journalist Khilanath Dhakal, he added: "*We will show what happens when a nonentity takes us on.*"

Santosh Yadav, a reporter for *Rajdhani* national daily in southeastern Siraha District, was threatened on 8 August by the Rajan Mukti Faction, a clandestine armed group similar to Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM). He said that Vaskar Mukti, a key member of the group, posted this message on Facebook: "*Mr. Santosh, I've heard that you are working for the police administration. It was sure you had a role in the arrest of Morcha's leader, Jay Mukti. Contact us soon, otherwise the high command of the Morcha will take physical action against you.*"

Denying Vaskar Mukti's claims, Yadav said he had no role in an article about Jay Mukti's arrest that was published several weeks ago in the local daily *Anukalpa*, for which he also works as a reporter.

Keshav Ghimire, a journalist based in the eastern city of Dharan who edits the daily *Fast Times*, was threatened by local gang leader Thaman Gurung on 31 July, two days after publishing an article reporting that Gurung was responsible for a recent attack on a youth in the region.

Shreeram Sigdel, a correspondent for the *Himalayan Times* and *Annapurna Post* in south-central Nawalparasi District, was the target of death threats by Dronababu Shivakoti, a local leader of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), on 22 July in connection with an article quoting Shivakoti commenting on a case of smuggling involving a Young Communist League member.

The businessman Raju Shrestha telephoned **Udaya Singh Shrestha**, the editor of the daily *Nishpaksha Dhvani* in the mid-western city of Nepalgunj, on 21 June and threatened to kill him because of an article that supposedly hurt his business interests.

Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM), an armed group that claims to defend the interests of the population in the Terai region, sent intimidatory letters to several local newspapers in the southeastern Janakpur region on 21 June demanding that they begin publishing in the Maithili language within 35 days.

Nepal is ranked 119th out of 178 countries in the 2010 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).
